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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 33, NO. 1, JANUARY 1991



THE TOWNSENDS

(see page 6)



editorial

by David Pharr, Editor

It would be ridiculous to think that all our readers would agree with everything they read in **Carolina Christian**. Our best friends are expected to sometimes disagree both with things we say and how we say them. Still we are confident that most would agree that we provide a magazine that is scripturally sound, charitable in its tone, and helpful to readers in general and Carolinians in particular.

It is the case that readers occasionally do cancel their subscriptions; but it appears that when this is over editorial policy it usually is because we have a more conservative stance than they like. Of course we cannot read what is in people's hearts; but if there are objections that we seem too strict in adhering to the Bible, we certainly have no apology to make. We always want to be fair, kind, and balanced; but we will give place to false doctrine "...no not for an hour" (Gal. 2:5).

We are pleased that **Carolina Christian** has been selected for inclusion in the **Restoration Serials Index**. This is an index of significant publications connected with our brethren. Materials included are cataloged by librarians at Christian colleges, and other schools, for use by students and scholars. We are encouraged that **Carolina Christian** has been given this kind of recognition.

Even more so, however, we are thankful for the commendation and encouragement we receive from individual readers. You are the ones for whom the paper is published, and you are the ones who can help us the most. We appreciate your letters.

Numerous religious papers have been started, only to fail. In most cases the problem was lack of funds. We are now in our 33rd year of publication. We are confident about the future, but never unmindful of the financial problems. The economics are quite simple — the more subscribers we have, the more copies we have printed; and the

more copies printed, the less each copy costs. Thus the more subscriptions we have, the more likely we are to break even financially. (None of us are paid for our work with the magazine. Actually some expenses come from our own pockets.)

The point of all this is that we need a considerable increase in subscribers. We need to find several hundred more who will take **Carolina Christian**. This could be individual subscriptions or bundle orders from congregations. We are asking, therefore, for all

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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who appreciate the magazine to get behind a subscription drive.

We are launching a drive to add at least 500 new subscribers during 1991. Anyone sending in a club order, or a bundle order, will be sent a free copy of the books written by the late editor, Howard Winters.

Brothers and sisters, I love the church. I have a special love for the church in the Carolinas. I love **Carolina Christian**, both for its honorable history and the power of its potential. Johnny Melton, Dennis Conners, Bill Smith, the other board members, the various writers, and I all give much of our time and energy to keeping this magazine going. If you share our concern, please do all you can to help us add 500 subscribers in the next few months.

The Bible Is One Book

The Bible consists of sixty-six units; but each unit was composed under the watchful supervision of heaven. Divine guidance provided that each "book" of the Bible fits perfectly into the overall scheme. We may not always see the connection; but we are certain that there is a vital relationship, an essential connection, that each part of the Bible has with every other part.

Different parts of the Bible were written in different languages; but the words of the Bible were chosen by Him who knows all languages.

Hundreds of years were covered before its completion; but it was completed by One who sees the end from the beginning.

Writers came from high and low stations of life; but the actual Author knows the needs of all men.

Literary styles vary. There is poetry and history, prophecy and law. We find figures and symbols, narrative and commands. Careful students will observe these varieties. But there is still harmony throughout.

The personalities of the several inspired authors are reflected in their writings. This is shown in such things as vocabulary and sentence construction, as well as in obvious traits of temperament. So much the more, therefore, do we marvel that the Creator of all men could use such a variety of men to compose such a perfectly harmonious mes-

sage.

We must of necessity study only one part of the Bible at a time. We cannot, for example, read every chapter at the same instance. It is essential, though, that we consider every new idea that we encounter in its relationship to what we have learned before. By this I mean, for example, that Revelation cannot be divorced from Romans, and a study of Galatians cannot ignore Acts. Acts is primarily a book of history, while Romans is basically doctrine. It is folly, however, to think doctrine cannot be learned from Acts.

There seems to be a growing emphasis on recognizing the literary differences between the various sections of Scripture. Attention to this is not only good; it is essential to proper understanding. Serious students will want to know as much as possible about the word, including how different literary devices are used in different sections. The fact of these differences, however, does not nullify the absolute unity of the Sacred Volume. The truth that is taught by symbols or poetry is no less truth. Likewise the message of symbols and poetry can only complement that which is stated in literal language.

The Hebrews writer reminds us that God spoke through the Old Testament prophets "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). His message through His Son also uses variety of presentation. We learn truth not only by doctrine, but also by illustration (examples). The approved practices of the church in New Testament times exemplify the Divine plan. This means that we learn the will of God by doctrinal instruction, and we also have the additional advantage of a historical demonstration of how God's will is put into practice.

An illustration of the unity of the Bible which I use often is to compare a jigsaw puzzle. When the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are piled on a table they appear to be a thousand different items; but as one studies to put the pieces together he will find that every piece has its place and fits perfectly. When all the pieces are put into place, the result is a complete, harmonious picture.

Of course a lifetime of study will not exhaust all there is to know about the word

of God. The thoughtful, believing student will, however, discover more and more of how every piece of the Bible is interlocked with every other piece. Like the parts of a jigsaw puzzle, every part of the Bible has its place and purpose. It is essential to the total picture.

Book Review

In the September, 1990, issue there was a book review by Michael R. Mobley regarding Marvin Phillips' book: **Don't Shoot! We May Be on the Same Side**. Some readers understood the review to be a general endorsement of the book, which was not what brother Mobley intended. To clarify the matter, he has sent the following disclaimer:

"I understand that there has been some misunderstanding concerning my review of the Marvin Phillips book **Don't Shoot! We May Be on the Same Side** in the September

issue of the **Carolina Christian**. It appears that it gives the impression to some that I support the dangerous teachings of error concerning truth, fellowship, and authority found in the book. This is not true. I do not. However, I cannot escape the value of the book as a definitive source of what Phillips teaches, and not simply what "everyone else" says he teaches. It is dangerous to accept the word of others without searching it out. I do not know enough about the 'unity movement' to argue against it in the review. However, I do know enough to believe that it is a sinful and dangerous thing to the Lord's church. So, the intent of the review was simply to encourage the serious student to read this book and learn for himself from the man himself what he teaches and believes as a leader in the 'unity movement.' I believe that this will enhance a more accurate understanding of the issue. I do apologize for any misunderstanding that I may have caused."

Belief Vs. Unbelief

by Johnny Melton

Luke told Theophilus that he intended to write "an orderly account" of the "things that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:3, 1). While the expression "an orderly account" can suggest a chronological account, it may also suggest a well-organized account from a literary perspective. This latter notion is particularly apparent in the first two chapters of the Gospel. William Hendrikson called attention to what he called "the exquisite symmetry, the pleasing parallelism" in Luke 1 and 2. He observed, "Two births are promised: that of the herald and that of the One whom that herald is going to introduce to the people. In each case it is the angel Gabriel who foretells the birth. He predicts it respectively to the herald's prospective father Zechariah, and to the Great One's mother-to-be Mary (1:5-38). . . . Next in Luke's Gospel the two prospective mothers, Elizabeth and Mary are seen together, for Mary is visiting her relative Elizabeth, who lives in a town in the hill country of Judah. . . . Recorded also are the two births:

that of John, born to Elizabeth (1:57), and that of Jesus, born to Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. . . . In each case Luke relates the circumstances attending the birth, the circumcision and the naming of the child (1:58-66; 2:21). . . . The forerunner's life up to the time when he makes his public appearance is summarized in one verse (1:80). Very appropriately in the case of the chief figure, namely, Jesus himself, the evangelist goes into greater detail. We read about the presentation in the temple. Simeon's "Nunc Dimittis," Anna's thanksgiving and testimony, the return to Nazareth, and "the boy in the midst of the teachers" (2:22-52) (Hen-

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drikson, Luke, Baker, 1978, pp. 63-64).

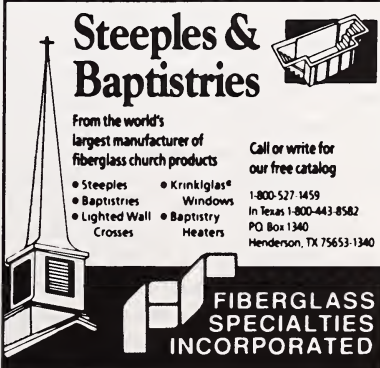
While there is "exquisite symmetry" and "pleasing parallelism" in the two birth announcements recorded in 1:5-38, there is also a significant contrast. One birth announcement is received in faith, the other is received in unbelief. Both the faith and the unbelief are unexpected.

In the first of these accounts, Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and declared his prayer had been heard, and that his wife would bear him a son, whose name would be John. Zechariah did not believe Gabriel's message (1:20) because he was an old man and his wife also was "well along in years" (v. 18). Zechariah, a man of faith (he was a priest who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, v. 5), in a place of faith (Gabriel appeared to Zechariah while he was inside the temple, right outside the Holy of Holies — the place where God's presence abode), engaged in an act of faith (he was burning incense, while "all the assembled worshippers were praying outside," v. 10), received a vision informing him that his prayer had been heard and that he and his wife would have a son — and he did not believe it! If ever there was a man who would have been expected to believe an announcement of this kind it would have been Zechariah. But he did not believe. Even though his life had been caught up in the activities of Israel's faith, and even though he had perhaps believed in God's power at some point (he had prayed for a son, v. 13), Zechariah was no longer walking by faith. He could not accept the angel's announcement because both he and his wife were old. Here is a classic example of living by sight and not by faith (cf., 2 Cor. 5:7). Despite the fact that he was married and that the birth of children to parents well advanced in years (Abraham and Sarah) or who otherwise had been unable to have a child (Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah) was a prominent feature in Israel's history, Zechariah did not believe. He could not see past his own limitations in order to see God's power and might. He could not see the possibilities. On the other hand, Gabriel's message to a young woman, who was both unmarried and a virgin, was received in simple faith. She said, "I am the Lord's servant, . . . May it be to me as you

have said" (v. 38). Mary believed the Lord's messenger. She could not see how the thing would be done. She asked, "How will this be, . . . since I am a virgin?" (v. 34). Her's was not a question fraught with doubt, but rather it was a request for information. Since she was a virgin, how would this wonderful event take place? That was the nature of Mary's question. A young woman, very likely still a teenager, unmarried, and unfamiliar with outward trappings of religious faith, yet she believed the angel's message. She was living by faith and not by sight (cf., 2 Cor. 5:7). To live by faith is to be open to the possibilities.

There is very often a cynicism that comes with age and experience. People who have long been engaged in religious activities must be careful to keep their faith alive. It is quite possible to be surrounded by the evidence of faith, and to participate in the activities of faith, and yet in one's heart to harbor unbelief. There is a freshness of faith that is often characteristic of youth that refuses to be limited by what has always been, and dares to see the possibilities.

Zechariah was not able to speak until John was born, because of his unbelief. Would that God was still silencing the voices of the doubters! On the other hand, Mary was inspired to sing a marvelous song (vv. 46-55), because of her faith. In 1991 may we guard our hearts against the insidious poison of unbelief, and may we be open to all the possibilities and promises of faith. Let all doubt be silenced; and let faith sing!



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“He Just Keeps on Rolling Along”

by Terry Gunnells

“I went down to the Mississippi River and stood there watching the swift water just roll by. I thought to myself, that ole river just keeps on rolling along, and here I am, a young man, and I’ve been told that I’m going to die.” — J. C. Townsend

In January 1970, 21 years ago, J. C. Townsend stood on the banks of the Mississippi River in Memphis, Tennessee, and thought the above thought. He had just come from the doctor who had told him that he had Lou Gehrig’s disease with a life expectancy of about 6 to 18 months. He and sister Townsend had two teenage daughters, and J. C. had ambitions of pursuing his Ph.D. at one of our nation’s major universities. These, along with many other things, weighed heavily on their hearts. They made preparations to accelerate the girls’ education and decided to put the Ph.D. on hold. A normal anticipatory grief process took place, and when it had run its course, brother Townsend made a decision to live every day, every hour, and every minute he had left, to the fullest.

This attitude and the providence of God took over his illness, and he has now possibly lived longer than anyone with this type of ALS. He has preached thousands of sermons since being diagnosed as having had this disease, and the last seven years he has been a language, history, and Bible professor for Alabama Christian School of Religion. When the Carolina Extension moved to Charlotte, brother Townsend retired from the pulpit and moved with the school to continue to teach until he could retire at age 65. He has taught slightly over 150 students, all of whom have the utmost respect for him. To accommodate some of his students, he has given up his personal time and taught Greek and Hebrew classes in his home at their convenience. J. C. has given his good theological library to be on the shelves with Howard Winters’ books in the Howard

Winters Memorial Library to help aspiring preachers for years to come.

His good wife of 44 years has stood by him but has never robbed him of his independence and his dignity by taking over the things he could do for himself. He drove his own car until about a year ago when he reluctantly took to his trusty “little rascal” and sometimes a wheel chair. Although standing is difficult, he still has some mobility in his legs. His speech is slightly slurred by this devastating disease, but his mind is “razor sharp”; he continues to read, and to listen to good classical music.

Brother Townsend said to me, “Lu is now my legs and arms. Without her I don’t know what I would do.” She has been very beneficial to him in helping him with many aids he has used in teaching and preaching. Her skill in developing teaching material is known by many who have attended her workshops. Her professionally prepared bulletin boards have touched many with their unique messages.

J. C. and I have driven several thousand miles together and he has never registered one complaint or shown signs of being ungrateful. He’s fallen several times in the past few years and had numerous stitches, fractures and bruises. I heard him say, after one such fall, “The only way to keep from falling is just to stay in a chair and do nothing; so I’ll risk falling.”

I have loved him much and have hurt with him every time I knew he was hurting, but I never tried to make him feel sorry for himself. In jest, I’ve often told him when we were going somewhere that if he fell I would just jump on him. Of course, he always got a good laugh out of such an obvious exaggeration, knowing that my reaction would be the very opposite. One time when we were together, he fell and I caught him by the coat sleeve which slipped on his arm and made it appear that I had

pulled off his arm. Some other preachers who were with us said at first glance that's what they thought had happened. Of course, that allowed us to laugh with J. C. about what had happened.

When not in the classroom in serious study, J. C.'s students are often relaxed by his sense of humor. He has a repertoire of jokes that is a mile long and most entertaining. Being an alumnus of the University of Florida, he is an avid "Gator" fan which has fostered many recreational "gigs" from some of his sports friends.

In February, J. C. and Lu will move to Miami, Florida, where they will be near their families; but J. C. will continue to teach those in that area who wish to study on a

college level, and Lou will continue to work with Bible schools in curriculum development.

Brother Townsend is at home with his books and his students. He's a scholar, a gentleman, a friend, a man without guile and most unselfish; most of all, he's one of God's most faithful soldiers.

J. C., just like the old Mississippi River, "you just keep on rolling along." The doctors don't understand it but those of us who know you and love you understand who keeps you "rolling."

[Terry works with the Providence Road church and the Carolina Extension of Alabama Christian School of Religion, 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.]

Baptistries and Baptisms

by A. Lowell Altizer

(Brother Altizer is a long-time preacher of the state of Virginia. The following, taken from his bulletin, recalls some interesting and amusing incidents connected with baptistries and baptisms. Altizer's address: P. O. Box 621, Fieldale, VA 24089.)

There was a time when inside baptistries were unknown, so we sought rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds, etc. Here are some such places I recall. There was "Hogan's Hole" in a creek back of Mt. Olivet in Pulaski, Virginia. Many times we baptized at night by auto light in New River Lake near Clark's mill. Once there in the murky water what we thought was a river rock was really a turtle. It took off and so almost did the baptizee.

In the creek below Laurel Hill we had many night baptisms by auto light. In a meeting there in 1945, nine were immersed in the creek; in '47, there were six; and in '48, there were nine.

Below Sledd's footlog at Copper Valley, back of Evie Shelton's store, Shelton baptized his second candidate in the same place where he had been baptized in 1930.

Other places were at Thompson's Camp Ground above Little River bridge; and at Criner's fish pond near the Laurel Hill Church building.

During a meeting at Copper Valley, one

Eddie Altizer, a near octogenarian, walked some two miles to services carrying a lantern. He requested that we talk the next day. We so did at his farm, and he was baptized in the river nearby.

When the building was under construction in Christiansburg, on a Wednesday afternoon, one came by who had heard our radio program, desiring to be baptized. It was mid-winter and he was taken to Roanoke for services that night and we used their improvised baptistry.

Once, earlier, a man from Roanoke called me to arrange for his wedding, insisting that the bride-to-be wanted to be baptized before the marriage. We sought a place to thus do below Roanoke and while seeking, the bride-to-be informed my wife, Faye, that she did not thus desire, and it was by request of the groom-to-be. Upon being informed, the baptism did not take place; but the wedding did, and soon came to naught.

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Once in Christiansburg during a gospel meeting and before service time, I was in my study, with building doors unlocked. I heard someone preaching (?) in the building. I found a pajama clad, barefoot man in the pulpit. His wife soon appeared and informed me that he was a patient in the hospital across the way, and was mentally disturbed. The police were called, the Chief being a member of the church. Before they arrived, the "preacher" observed the filled baptistry just back of the pulpit and plunged in, coming out preaching. He quietly submitted to the police, and his wife advised his being taken to the Veterans Hospital.

In Collinsville, one of our members in a nursing home roomed with a deaf mute. The deaf mute could read and write to a measure. This octogenarian sister taught the deaf mute and she requested baptism. How to get her confession? She turned to Acts 8:36 and placed her finger on "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" I placed my finger on, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." She then placed her finger upon, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." How easy to reach all in any state when it is done the Bible way.

One candidate for baptism insisted on running water. It was winter time and opening the filler faucet and the drainage valve a little satisfied him.

Carnice Mannon was baptizing an elderly man in Little River on Route 8 above Altizer Bridge. When he came up out of the water an object was noted floating down the river.

It was retrieved and found to be the candidate's billfold. Baptism, spiritually, washes away sins and, physically, also washes unsecured billfolds away.

I have a straight-back chair that has been baptized four times when used for non-ambulatory persons. [I was privileged to assist in one of these. — Editor]

When installing the baptistry in the Christiansburg church building in 1950, a man came by and asked, "What'cha doin'?" "Installing a baptistry," said I. "I'll be the first one therein," said he. And he was!

After the Christiansburg building was finished and in use, while working on the lawn one day, the local Presbyterian preacher, in his afternoon stroll, came by and stopped for a chat. I wanted him to see the baptistry and invited him to come and see our "spiritual maternity room." He understood not until I explained, "That's where folk are born again."

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Corrections 1990 Directory

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Ten Minutes of Prayer

by Mark Swindall

There are liars, real liars, and statisticians! Where do all these statistics come from? One statistic grabbed me recently... preachers, on the average, spend ten minutes per day praying. Whether this is accurate or not is not the point.

David prayed and wrote the Psalms. Daniel prayed and had the ear of the king. Isaiah prayed and became a prophet. Jesus prayed all night on several occasions. The 120 prayed in Acts 1. The house shook while the disciples were in prayer (Acts 4). Mission work was the result of prayer in Acts 13. Paul had a prayer list. Tradition says James prayed so much his knees were calloused.

Ten minutes! Can this be correct? This would explain why the world is lost. Ten

minutes in prayer will never evangelize the world. Ten minutes daily in prayer explains why churches are not growing. Ten minutes in prayer cannot build any church.

Pray for the elders, deacons, Bible school, missionaries, benevolence, and soul winning. Take a page per day from the membership directory and pray for each family. Pray for the sick, weak, hurt, lost, and the guilt ridden. Pray for expectant mothers and fathers, the young, the old, and the widowed. PRAY!

Pray for your preacher, his wife and his children. Pray for your preacher's sermons...they need it! **Ask yourself, do I pray for more than ten minutes per day???**

Reexamining the Fundamentals, XX

by David Pharr

In the last four installments we studied some basic things regarding the future coming of Christ and the end of the world. Particular attention was given to the conflict between Bible teaching and the popular theory of Premillennialism.

There is a strange, even astonishing, doctrine now troubling the church which teaches that all prophecies concerning Christ's coming, the resurrection, and the end of the world **have already been fulfilled—that everything foretold has already occurred.** The principal promoter of these bizarre notions is a brother named Max King. Hence, the doctrine is sometimes called "Kingism." It is also called "Realized Eschatology," meaning that the end time things have already been realized; we are no longer awaiting them. Since Kingism argues that the end of the world, the resurrection, the coming of Christ, etc., all took place at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, this doctrine is also called the "A.D. 70

Theory."

Before going further, we should clarify certain points to avoid misunderstanding. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is indeed a significant historical event and is the subject of **several** Bible prophecies. No serious Bible student can ignore that A.D. 70 saw the fulfillment of certain biblical predictions. One should not, therefore, assume that Kingism is being taught simply because attention is given to the destruction of Jerusalem. The thing to be on guard against is the idea that **all** prophecies were fulfilled at that time.

Some careful and sound Bible students have concluded that A.D. 70 marked the end of the miraculous age, and the end of the writing of Scripture. They would, for example, regard Revelation as having been written prior to A.D. 70. This is not, however, to be confused with Kingism. Whether we agree with their conclusions or not, we all realize that the age of miracles and inspira-

tion was over either before or not many years after Jerusalem's fall. The point to be remembered is that brethren who believe that inspiration ended in A.D. 70 are not agreeing with the King position that **everything** ended then.

Curious Doctrines

Space does not permit an expose of every false view of Kingism. Others have done excellent work in refuting this error, and those who want to do more study may consult their works. Our purpose in this article is simply to identify some of the more obvious errors in order that brethren may be alert to the problem. It is a heresy that is especially troubling churches of Christ. Apparently it first surfaced in Ohio, but it has been spread to other areas; we have heard of it even in the Carolinas.

The following list follows in part an outline prepared by Edwin S. Jones. Some of the curious errors taught by King and his followers are:

1. The resurrection of the dead occurred in A.D. 70. There will be no future resurrection. Great passages of hope such as John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15; and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 have already been fulfilled, and Christians today have no hope of a resurrection.

2. There will be no future day of judgment for all people. The judgment day took place when Jerusalem was destroyed. Passages such as Matthew 25:31ff; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:1, etc., no longer should be preached as future events.

3. The final appearance of Christ (what we usually call "the second coming") has already occurred, in A.D. 70. According to the theory, the promise of Acts 1:11 took place almost 2,000 years ago.

4. Our bodies will not be resurrected. Paul writes: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). But the A.D. 70 Theory denies this, saying that the resurrection is already past. (See 2 Tim. 2:18.)

5. Sins were not blotted out until A.D. 70. According to the theory, the atonement of the cross was not applied until Jerusalem was destroyed.

6. Christ's priesthood was not fully established until A.D. 70. Every student of Hebrews understands that Christ was made our high priest when He had offered Himself and sat down at the right hand of the Father. But the theory says otherwise.

7. Jesus' kingship was not proved or demonstrated until A.D. 70. They claim this in spite of Peter's explanation that Jesus was resurrected to be enthroned (Acts 2:30-35), and that God had made Him "Lord and Christ [anointed, as King]" (Acts 2:36).

8. Kingism teaches that Christ's atonement was not complete until almost 40 years after He was crucified (A.D. 70). So the theory contradicts passages such as Hebrews 7:25-28.

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9. They make 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 a figurative resurrection, claiming that it refers to the resurrection of the church from the carcass of Judaism.

10. The end of the world came in A.D. 70. According to their notion of Realized Eschatology, 2 Peter 3:3-14 all belongs to the past, and has nothing to do with the dissolution of the universe.

Such is a sample of the views being advocated. Churches have been split, people have been deceived, and the Bible has been made a mockery by this kind of teaching.

Special Insight

As is typical of those who are determined to lead away disciples after themselves (see Acts 20:30), Max King and his cohorts claim that they have a "key" to understanding the Bible that brethren have overlooked. Essentially their "key" is that almost everything must be understood in a non-literal sense. To apply their "key" they have developed a new vocabulary in which certain words are defined so as to suit the interpretation.

We have heard adherents of Kingism suggest that the whole theology is quite simple and that anyone ought to be able to see it.

What is amazing, therefore, is that almost no Bible student for 2,000 years ever noticed it. Of telling significance is the fact that people who lived and wrote just after A.D. 70, some of whom had been personally acquainted with apostles, did not realize that all eschatological prophecies had already been fulfilled. The fact is that Christian writers near the beginning of the second century were still anticipating the coming of Jesus. Isn't it strange that men whose lives overlapped the apostolic age did not even guess such an important truth as the King people claim they have now discovered?

Conclusion

As indicated above, the purpose of this article has not been so much to deal with the many aspects of this doctrine as it has been simply to alert brethren that such heresy is being taught. As with other false systems of interpretation, the King theory ultimately leads to a re-interpretation of practically everything in the Holy Word. (Suggested reading: *Studies in Biblical Eschatology, Vol. I*, by W. Terry Varner; and *The A.D. 70 Theory*, by Wayne Jackson.)

People Priority

by Mike Mays

The story is told of a king who was trying to decide which of his three sons should inherit the throne. They were to travel the world and come back with an answer to the question: "What is the most important thing in the world?"

The first returned dressed as a warrior. He concluded that power was the most important thing in the world. If he were king, he would expand the borders of the kingdom. The king could see his son floating in a river of blood.

The second son came back dressed as a scholar. He decided that knowledge is the most important thing in the world—knowledge to make efficient rules and regulations to govern people. The king saw the people of his kingdom lining up in the snow to fill

out forms.

The third son approached the king walking hand in hand with two of his children. To him the most important thing in the world was people. The king saw his son being carried on the shoulders of the people as the next king.

What is the most important thing in the world to you? When Jesus was on earth, He demonstrated that people were His priority. He loved them, served them, taught them, and eventually died for them.

For those who choose to follow Jesus, our priority will also be people. The Lord wills for us to love them, seek to lead them to Him, serve them, encourage them, bear their burdens, and help them along life's way. People are the only thing on this earth

that will last forever.

In the judgment scene recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, the factor emphasized in determining our eternal destiny is how we treat people. Those who inherit the kingdom of heaven are those who visit the sick and im-

prisoned, help the needy, and offer hospitality to strangers. Those who neglect serving people experience eternal punishment.

[631 Meadowbrook Road, Asheboro, NC 27203.]

That Is Not an Issue With Me

by D. Gene West

During the course of a conversation that we were having with an old friend who was also a close friend during our college days, he said, "You know, Gene, instrumental music is not as much of an issue with me as it once was."

My response was, "It is not an issue with me at all."

He replied, "Do you mean that you do not believe that the brethren in the Christian Church sinned against us when they introduced the instrument into the worship a hundred years ago?"

My reply was, "I didn't say that, I said that instrumental music is not an issue with me."

He said, "Well then, do you mean that you think that we in the churches of Christ have made too much of the issue, and have done too much preaching on it down through the years?"

Again, the reply was, "I didn't say that, I said instrumental music is not an issue with me."

He continued his questions by saying, "Do you believe that we should be silent about the instrument when we are speaking of unity with the people in the Christian Church?"

My reply for the third time was, "I didn't say that, I said instrumental music is not an issue with me."

By this time my friend was wondering what wall I had bounced off, and so I decided that it was probably time to make an explanation of what I was saying. Brethren, I can remember the time in our brotherhood when instrumental music in worship was not an issue with anyone. At least I had no knowledge of any person with whom it was an issue.

When, more than forty years ago, I became a Christian, and by the grace of God experienced the forgiveness of all my sins, I promised myself that it would be the thrust of my life to have my Lord but speak, and I would obey. A study of the New Testament taught me that the music that is acceptable while praising God in worship is a **capella** only. Once that wonderful lesson was learned from the holy scriptures, instrumental music was simply not an issue with me. The matter was settled by the voice of God who said, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God." (Eph. 5:18-21, NKJ).

It is not necessary for God to say a thing more than once for that thing to be true,

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but in this particular case the above great precious truth is repeated several times in the New Testament. For example, there is Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (NKJ). Again, in speaking of what he would do in the public worship of the church, the Holy Spirit had Paul to say, "What is (the result) then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." It is abundantly clear from these, and from other passages that we could call to bear that God desires that we sing when we worship Him. That being the case, since he is the Savior of my soul, what He wants is what I will try to give Him. Hence, instrumental music is not an issue with me. If God wanted me to worship Him standing on my head, then that would not be an issue with me, because it is not my desire to take issue with God on any matter. My only wish is to strive to do what He says. How else can I show my love for Him, or my appreciation for His wonderful grace in Christ?

It might be well if we would take a few moments to notice some other "issues" that have of late cropped up among the liberals and others unschooled in holy Scripture.

When we should eat the Lord's Supper in memory of Christ is not an issue with me. There are some today who teach that we may eat the memorial feast at any time, and upon any day of the week. I guess the matter of when God desires that we eat the bread and fruit of the vine in memory of Jesus is an issue with them. However, since God has made His will known on this matter, it is not an issue with me. Notice what the Bible says in the following lines: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7, NKJ). There was a very good reason why the disciples came together to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, or Sunday. That is the day of the week upon which Jesus arose from the dead. The day of His resurrection has not changed, nor has

the day upon which Christians come together to remember His death, burial and resurrection. If it be asked, "Would one do wrong to eat the Lord's Supper on Thursday?" we can only say, unless days are of no consequence to God, yes, it would be wrong to eat of it on another day.

The day upon which I eat the Lord's Supper in memory of Jesus is no more of an issue with me than the day when I lay by in store. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first (day) of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2, NKJ). It is as easy for me to accept that a collection can be taken any or every day of the week as it is that I may eat of the Lord's Supper at my convenience, or at the call of my emotions. The time and place of eating is not an issue with me. God has spoken His will clearly. If I have faith in His will, my response will be that of obedience; if not, my response will be to do as I please.

Whether or not women may teach over men publicly is another matter that is not an issue with me. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:11-14, NKJ). God has plainly stated His will in the matter. His will is that women are not to teach over men, nor to have authority over the man, but to learn in quietness. Since the will of God has been so plainly stated, and is so easily understood, it is not an issue with me. It is not a matter over which there can be any debate or argumentation. Why should one debate a matter that has been settled in heaven? **GOD HAS SPOKEN!**

If we were discussing the works of Shakespeare, one might take issue with the meaning of some of his more obscure statements. There are several passages in the works of the bard that may allow for more than one interpretation. However, such is not the case with 1 Timothy 2:11-14. The

only way one can set aside what is written there is by denying that the passage has any relevance for the present time. That is what some of our brethren are doing with their "based in culture" argument on this passage. However, for us there is no issue at all! Any time God has spoken, there can be no issue taken by mere man. To attempt to do so be-

trays an arrogance that is dangerous! May God help us to develop a faith that will never allow us to take issue with God on any matter.

[D. Gene West is the capable editor of **Bible Herald**, from which this article was borrowed. 69 Thistle Dr., N. Martinsville, WV 26155.]

Mark Twain and Evolution

by Dan Jenkins

One of the fallacies that has led to a belief in evolution is a failure to recognize that one cannot always project backwards on the basis of the current situation. Many evolutionists ignore the effect such would have on the formation of fossils, the origin of coal and soil (see Henry Morris' writings for a full discussion of the matter) and consequently reach conclusions that far miss the mark. In fact, Peter talks of those who argue that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" and shows how it had led to wrong conclusions in his day (2 Pet. 3).

That great American humorist Mark Twain vividly points out that one cannot always know the past simply by looking at the present. The following is from his pen:

"Since my own day on the Mississippi, cutoffs have been made at Hurricane Island; at Island 100; at Napoleon, Arkansas; at Walnut Bend; and at Council Bend. These shortened the River, in the aggregate, 67 miles. In my own time, a cutoff was made at American Bend which shortened the River ten miles or more.

"Therefore, the Mississippi between Cairo and New Orleans was 1,200 miles long 176 yrs. ago. It was 1,180 after the cutoff of 1772. It was 1040 after the American Bend cutoff. It has lost 67 miles since that time. Its present length is only 973 miles.

"Now if I want to be one of those ponderous scientific people, and 'let on' to prove what has occurred in the remote past by what has occurred in a given time in the recent past, or what will occur in the far future by what occurred in late years, what an oppor-

tunity is here! Geology never had such a chance, nor such exact data to argue from. Not 'Development of the Species,' either. Glacial epochs are great things, but they are vague.

"In the space of 176 years the lower Mississippi has shortened its self 240 miles. This is a trifle over one and one-third miles per year. Therefore, any calm person who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, the lower Mississippi was upwards of one million three hundred miles long and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing rod. And by the same token, any person can see that 742 years from now the lower Mississippi will be only one and three quarters of a mile long, and that Cairo and New Orleans will have joined their streets together and be plodding along under a single mayor.

"There is something fascinating about 'science.' One gets such a wholesale return of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."

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Who's So Smart?

by Ernie Thigpen

We often hear, "You don't have to be a scientist to understand that." But let me ask you. Who said scientists are smart?

Now, there's no argument that scientists have made important contributions to the progress of society. But just because they can develop a cream to get rid of pimples or invent a device that will let us change channels on the TV from across the room, why is what they have to say on all issues intelligent or important? Besides, scientists in their efforts to help can sometimes be downright stupid.

Case in point: Recently, two Canadian scientists survived a trip over Niagara Falls in a contraption they had built. And to justify this act of blatant bone-headedness the scientists said they went over the falls as—now get this—a protest against drugs!

You may be asking, "What has going over Niagara Falls got to do with drugs?" Good question! Scientist #1 replied, "When we went over the falls, we were safer than a young person is when he tries drugs. When you think about taking drugs, remember us going over the falls." Scientist #2 was even more profound. He said, "Don't go over the brink with drugs."

I'm sure drug use will now come to a standstill in this country. And if the drug lords in Colombia hear about this stunt, they'll burn all their crops. As for me, because of this I'm giving up my new sinus medicine!

Drugs are a serious problem, but these two "geniuses" did not help the first person. The problem they have is that they reached into their own experience and understanding and tried to deal with something totally unrelated.

In the church, we are tempted to make the same mistake. If we want to grow, someone will say: "The way Amway grows is this...." If we want to be organized, another will offer: "At my business, this is the procedure we use...." Careful! Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches, "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.**" We have the ultimate source of knowledge, God and His Holy Word. That alone is to be our guide.

[Ernie works with the Central Church, 2052 N. Church Street Place, Spartanburg, SC 29301.]

"It Might Have Been"

by Ron Newberry

An elderly man once secured a meeting with Dante G. Rossetti, the great poet and painter. The old gentleman brought some sketches for the master painter to examine and evaluate. Rossetti looked carefully at the drawings and told the man they were virtually worthless. The old man then placed before the artist some sketches made by a student. Rossetti immediately saw promise in the young artist's work. With enthusiasm he told the man that this young artist had promise and that he should encourage him. The elderly gentleman sat quietly, moved to tears. Finally he said, "**I was that student.**"

Life is filled with people with great potential. They litter the landscape in politics, education, art, sports and, yes, religion. There seems to be a great number of them in religion. They start well but finish poorly, if at all. Some have great gifts to give, but they never learn to give them to the Lord. They have wonderful talents, but they never use them for the Lord. They have tremendous potential, but they never develop it for the Lord.

One of the saddest, most tragic things I have ever encountered is the man or woman who could have a tremendous impact for the

Lord, but they choose to use their God-given abilities totally on themselves in selfish ways. They have the ability to motivate others, to communicate ideas and to cultivate relationships. They seem to believe that they can lay claim to all of that, and use it as they wish, without consideration for God's desires because they have worked hard at developing those skills.

How tragically wrong they are to believe that they, and they alone, are responsible for their success. How devastating it will be for them to learn that they cannot evade accountability to the Lord.

"From everyone who has been given

much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Does that sound like we can legitimately squander all of God's gifts on ourselves, our interests, or desires and avoid paying eternal consequences?

In the words of John Greenleaf Whittier, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" Sad indeed are these words as they pertain to potential for greatness in the church. Use your talents, gifts and abilities for the only cause that will ultimately matter.

Will It Last?

by Jeff Percer

"On the morrow the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save one, and that Jesus entered not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples went away alone (howbeit there came boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks): when the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed. They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:22-29).

Jesus had fed the entire multitude of five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish. The crowd was impressed. They figured that He must be the one spoken of in the Scriptures as the Prophet to come.

So they sought out Jesus to make Him a king, by force if necessary. However, Jesus defied their motives. He warned them about missing the sign and seeing only the food. The crowd had missed the point and could not grasp the spiritual lesson that the Lord had intended. He then challenged them not to labor for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life.

The people were right in seeking after Jesus, but their motivation was all wrong. They were more concerned about meeting the physical needs of the flesh than the spiritual needs of the soul. They desired food like the Israelites in the wilderness had. They wanted manna to fall from heaven. "But the kingdom of God is not food and drink," Paul tells us in Romans 14:17, "it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The value of anything must be determined by how long it will last. Spiritual things are of the greatest value because they are eternal. Therefore, doesn't it make sense for us to use our time, talents, and energy to seek after spiritual pursuits? Jesus alone offers the food that will never perish!

[Jeff is now working as Associate Minister in Rock Hill, SC, 339 Charlotte Ave., 29730.]

Sin + Time Does Not = Forgiveness

by Arthur Pigman

The Bible teaches Christians that the proper way to have forgiveness of sins is to repent, confess, and pray. When Simon sinned, he was told he must "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). He did repent and pray, therefore, he was forgiven. Another requirement is that Christians confess their sins. In 1 John 1:9 we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." A Christian must repent, confess, and pray in order to be forgiven of his sins.

Sometimes brethren operate by the formula that says $S+T=F$, or **sin plus time equals forgiveness**. They will commit a sin but will not repent. Then after a few weeks, months, or years, they will act as if the sin has been blotted out by the passage of time. It is the case that some will commit sins in one state, leave and go to another state, and place membership with a new congregation without ever repenting of those past sins. They seem to forget that God knows all about all of us in the world, and all of the time. **Separating** ourselves from sin with **time** and **distance** does not bring about forgiveness, even though some would like to believe that it does.

If that were the correct way to get forgiveness, then Peter should have told Simon, the sorcerer, "Yes, you for a few months, take a low profile in the activities of the church, then come back at a later time, and everything will be all right." Or, he might have told Simon to just go over and place membership with another congregation and act as if nothing had happened. Nobody over there will know what you have done, and it will be just fine! (See Acts 8:18-24.)

Passage of time does not bring about forgiveness. The children of Israel had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years because of their sin. If just the passage of time

equaled forgiveness, then all of them should have been allowed to enter the promised land; but all of them who were 20 years of age and above died instead of entering.

When a Christian sins, he must not act as if he is too proud to repent. He must admit he has sinned, confess that he has sinned, and pray for forgiveness. Then, he can be assured that God will forgive him.

The formula for Christians to be forgiven is $S(\text{sin}) + R(\text{repentance}) + C(\text{confession}) + P(\text{prayer}) = F(\text{forgiveness})$. It is not $S(\text{sin}) + T(\text{time}) = F(\text{forgiveness})$.

[P. O. Box 298, Clinton, TN 37716.

Brother Pigman is an adjunct instructor with East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.]

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Be Revived Again

by Raymond Cunningham
Elder, Tullahoma, TN

If you're one of God's dear children,
And you have shamed His precious
name,
Will you heed His tender calling,
And be revived again?

If your sins were once forgiven,
And you were washed as white as snow,
You, since, have soiled your garments,
And your life has lost its glow —
Be revived again.

When the saints of God assemble,
And you really don't want to go,
To sing and pray and praise the name
Of the One who loved you so —
Be revived again.

If you feel your Christian duty
Is done when you've sat in the pew,
And the cries of the poor and needy
Are of little concern to you —
Be revived again.

If you walk alone at evening,
Under skies where stars abound,
And you have no thoughts of heaven
Nor aspire to wear a crown —
Be revived again.

Some day this old house will crumble,
And will set your spirit free.
Where, oh where, dear careless one,
Will you spend eternity?
Be revived again.
(Psalms 85:6)

Brotherhood News

Around North Carolina . . .

Many of our churches in the Carolinas have been effected by Operation Desert Shield and the crisis in the Persian Gulf with many of their men and women having been shipped out. Even the Sunnycrest church of Christ in Reidsville has been touched directly by the crisis. Their preacher, brother Gary Payne, is in the Army Reserve and on December 27 he received his order for mobilization. Brother Payne has stated, "My commitment to Reidsville holds firm. I may return in one month or in six months. I plan to continue my work with the Sunnycrest congregation as much as possible during my absence and after my return." At this writing brother Payne had no indication of where he would be sent. . . . Charles Cruse is the new preacher for the Bladen church of Christ

in Elizabethtown. . . . The Providence Road church in Charlotte will be hosting its annual Youth Gathering March 15-17. . . . The Brooks Avenue church in Raleigh will be hosting the National Campus Ministry Seminar in August of 1992. . . . The Yadkinville church of Christ set a new Sunday a.m. worship attendance record of 112 last October 7. The occasion was a gospel meeting in

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which Geoffrey Sikes of Clarksville, Tenn., was preaching.

And South Carolina

Mike Winkler is now preaching for the St. Andrews Rd. church of Christ in Columbia. . . . The 1991 Carolina Lectures will be hosted by the Charlotte Ave. church in Rock Hill.

Calendar of Events:

February 4-8 55th Annual Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship, Henderson, Tenn. Theme: "Advancing Christianity."

March 15-17 Youth Gathering, Providence Rd. church of Christ, Charlotte, NC.

April 8-11 Carolina Lectures, Charlotte Ave. church of Christ, Rock Hill, SC.

May 23-24 5th Annual Small Church Workshop, Yadkinville church of Christ, Yadkinville, NC.

The Lord's wisdom will suffice, so be it:
Then why is it that lowly man can't see it?

Man tries so hard to have his own way,
Ignoring what the Lord has to say.
God's Word, man tries to rearrange it;
Why, oh why, does he try to change it?

God's Word, of course, is simply the best;
So simple, in fact, it can't be second guessed.
So try, vain man, if you possibly can,
To follow God's Word, not that of some man.

— Jack Anthony

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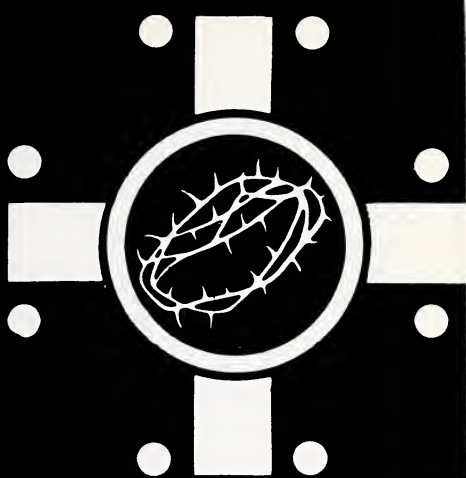
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**THE
CHRISTIAN
GRACES:
A RESPONSE
TO GRACE**



Guest Editorial

The Christian Graces: A Response to Grace

by Johnny Melton*

Christians are saved by the grace of God. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:8-10).

The finished work of Jesus at Calvary is the basis of our salvation. Paul wrote "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-26).

Peter describes the redemption Christians enjoy by grace through faith in glowing terms. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Pet. 1:3,4).

Saved by grace through faith (and not faith only; repentance, confession, and baptism are acts of faith which demonstrate and validate saving faith), Christians are recip-

ients of great and precious promises. Because we are saved and in order to maintain our relationship with God in Christ, Peter sounds out a call to Christian growth and develop-

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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ment. There are eight qualities, often called the "Christian Graces," enumerated in 2 Peter 1:5-7: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Peter declares that the possession of these traits "in increasing measure" will keep the Christian from being "ineffective and unproductive" in his "knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 2:8). The failure to develop these spiritual traits is taken to be evidence of spiritual myopia and amnesia. Peter says one without these traits is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins" (2 Pet. 1:9).

While we rejoice in the fact that we are saved, having had our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus, we must not treat that salvation as a basis for spiritual neglect. It simply is not the case that once saved, one can never be lost. One's calling and election must be made sure. Guy N. Woods has written clearly, "Salvation is indeed a 'calling' and an 'election'; it is God who calls and elects; but he calls by his gospel (2 Thess. 2:13,14), and he elects only those who place themselves in the way of salvation through obedience to his will (Matt. 7:21). Election and calling never operate to destroy the free agency of man. God's grace is not irresistible; man may make it void (Gal. 2:21) and receive it in vain (2 Cor. 6:1). God's calling is the invitation . . . ; the election . . . is man's acceptance. This calling and election is to be made sure (actually, **secure**), and this is done through human instrumentality. Here is a thorough and decisive refutation of the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy" (**A Commentary on New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude**, Gospel Advocate

Co., 1970, p. 154).

It should be noted that it is not required that the Christian excel in these graces. Nor is it required that one possess them to an absolute degree. The standard is "possessing them in increasing measure" (v. 8). We must not compare ourselves to those who are spiritually weak and then not exercise ourselves spiritually because we already possess these traits to a greater degree than they. The brother or sister who is weak must not become discouraged and quit because he or she has not developed spiritually to the same level as someone else. The requirement is that wherever we start we are to grow from that point, and we must never be content with our present level of spirituality. There will always be room for additional spiritual growth.

The assurance is that we will "never fall, and . . . will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10).

It is because of this promise and in response to divine grace that we are motivated to pursue holiness. The articles in this special issue of **Carolina Christian** have been written to hold up the qualities in Peter's list of "Christian Graces." Not only do these articles contain a word of explanation, but they also contain a word of exhortation as well. It is our prayer that every Christian who reads these articles will devote himself to the task of spiritual growth and development to the glory of God and the assurance of his own salvation.

*Guest Editor

[Johnny Melton, Managing Editor since 1988, has served as guest editor for the February issue since 1975.]

Faith

by Paul Jarrett

I would not wish to deny the importance of our coming to possess each of the virtues named by Peter in our text for this special issue of **Carolina Christian**. I would even concede that if any one of the seven that are

mentioned is to be viewed as more important than the others it would appear to be the crowning virtue of love, especially in light of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13.

I would suggest, however, that while

moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and, especially, love are of exceeding importance as the fruit and flower of a tree, faith is of singular importance as the seed from which the tree grows.

It is worth nothing that in 2 Peter 1:1, Peter addressed himself "to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours." Later in the chapter he exhorted those who possessed this faith to give all diligence to the supplying of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, "in your faith."

The spurious doctrine of salvation by "faith only" has been dealt with repeatedly in sermons preached and articles written by members of the Lord's church. It has been well noted that advocates of this false teaching have been guilty of ignoring and/or abusing many clearly taught commands of God. No doubt, those who are encouraged by this false doctrine to "join the church of their own choice" do so with the false security that comes from believing that their salvation rests solely on their profession of faith in Christ no matter how they may, or may not, choose to express that faith in daily living.

Texts such as the one under consideration in the articles written for this issue, as well as a number of others, show plainly that Biblical faith, saving faith, is not "faith only." Faith which will assure us of entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord is that which produces in abundance qualities such as those named by Peter in 1 Peter 1:8-12.

In our haste to confront the error of "faith only" we must be careful, however, not to do damage to the doctrine of "justification by faith" set forth by Paul in his epistle to the Romans. While Martin Luther did great harm to this doctrine when he inserted the word "only" into the following text, we may render harm of a different sort when we ignore the affirmation which reads: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1,2).

I seriously doubt that Martin Luther intended to encourage the kind of teaching and conduct that has resulted from his addition of the word "only" to Paul's affirmation of justification by faith. I suspect that if the religious climate of our day had existed in his lifetime, he might not have done so. However, we need to appreciate the religious climate of Luther's day that caused him to feel compelled to declare that salvation was by faith ALONE.

The church of Luther's day was characterized by a works system of salvation. In addition to having become badly distorted in the manner of their observance, New Testament practices such as baptism, communion, repentance, confession, prayer, offerings and, in general, all acts of obedience had come to be viewed as works of merit, rather than acts of faith. As works of merit they were set forth as the means of obtaining salvation through their ritualistic and obligatory performance. Salvation was viewed as being achieved by those who did these things and forfeited by those who failed to do them regardless of their faith, or lack of faith, in Christ.

I would suggest to you that three things appear (to me) to have happened from the time of the New Testament church to the time of Martin Luther to produce the conditions which led him to speak of salvation by faith alone.

First, acts of faith began to assume an identity of their own separate from the faith which was to prompt and shape them.

Second, certain acts came to be identified as essential to salvation on an equal footing with faith, leading ultimately to the point that the actions themselves came to be viewed as capable of producing salvation whether or not faith was present.

Finally, once certain actions came to be viewed as the basis of attaining salvation,

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what God had to say about the actions He desired and how those actions were to be expressed in men's lives became increasingly less important. In other words, men were no longer walking by the faith which comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Instead, they were walking by their own sight, or by the stated views of their religious leaders.

I have called your attention to the conditions that existed in Luther's day and to what I perceive as having occurred to produce those conditions because I see evidence from time to time of the same thing occurring in the church of our day. In our zeal to confront the obvious error of "faith only" salvation, we sometimes create the impression that some works of faith have power in and of themselves to save. Furthermore, the works of faith which are designated as essential to salvation by some are not always those which God would seem to be emphasizing in His word.

We must take care not to do damage to the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith in our zeal to confront the error of "faith only" salvation. We must not lose sight of the fact that faith is the seed from which all other graces grow. Whether those graces are those of character as described by Peter in our text, or those of a more active kind as described by Paul in texts such as Romans 12:6-8 and 2 Corinthians 8:6,7, they must spring from, and be directed and shaped by, the grace we call FAITH.

What is faith? By definition it is many things. It is trust. It is fidelity. It is conviction. It is reliance. It is constancy. It is what is believed, as well as how it is kept. While the word "faith" may be only one of these things in a given context, biblical faith must find expression in our lives in all of these ways. Furthermore, as noted by W. E. Vine, "New Testament faith is always faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual."

The error of "faith only" salvation lies in its failure to yield to the power of faith. James says the power of faith was such that it caused even the demons to tremble, but they refused to yield to it (cf. Jas. 2:19). The advocates of "faith only" do the same. They may pay lip service to the power of faith, but they refuse to yield their lives to its de-

mands.

The problem with a works salvation is the opposite. It will often find its adherents doing the things faith calls for, but they do so while failing to acknowledge that it is the power of faith that gives merit to their efforts. They are baptized, they commune, they attend worship services, they give of their offerings, they do many good works, and may even live morally upright lives. In the midst of doing so, however, they lose sight of the power of faith and the seeds of ruin are sown. It may not happen in their generation, but ultimately what happened to produce the works system of Luther's day happens.

Any individual, or church, which wishes to avoid embracing a works system of salvation must be careful not to lose sight of the fact that we are justified by faith. When the Jews asked Jesus, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" His response was, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:28,29).

While we know that "he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), we must not lose sight of the fact that it is our faith in the power of God at work in our baptism that truly saves us, not merely the act of being baptized (cf. Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). While we know from a study of Hebrews 11 that those who truly believe in God will perform the acts of obedience He requires, we must not think for a moment that it is the mere doing of the things commanded which commends the doers. Rather, it is the faith which prompts those actions which commends them to God (cf. Rom. 4:1-5).

In like manner the virtues of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and, yes, even love, must never come to be viewed as works of merit, engaged in to our own credit. Rather, they must always be seen as the natural fruit of the kind of faith that is ours "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ" in whom we have believed (cf. 2 Pet. 1:1).

[Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C. He can be reached at 182 Tamworth Drive, 28210.]

Goodness

by Phil Kinzer

We are living at a time when the road away from religion has become a congested freeway. Christian virtue suffers from a pale and monotonous image in American society. When our contemporaries hear tales of angels and demons, the Virgin Birth and the Second Coming, they have a hard time grasping them. They are struggling to live in a world of hard realities. They rarely bump into miracles.

Few in our day will find their turning point from the world to the Lord at the point of hearing abstractions. Not many of us (unfortunately) go around seeking truth, but all of us are after the good life, the meaningful life, the life that does not merely entertain but satisfies. And for most, experience speaks louder than words. Thus, it is goodness that first attracts the attention of the world to look favorably at Christianity.

The first quality Peter asks us to add to our faith is **goodness**. The origin of the word used by Peter is a positive one demanding positive action. It often referred to land that was fertile and productive. It could describe a good and effective friend. It points to a person who is an expert at the art of living well.

But conservative Christian goodness has acquired a tasteless and dull image. Too often it simply whines from the cloisters of church buildings about how bad the world is, mumbles excuses at parties, and shuffles along out of step and slightly behind the times. That brand of religious goodness is regarded in our day as a trivial pursuit. Compared to efforts to end world hunger and achieve world peace, preoccupations with dancing, foul language, and whether to sanction youth worship do not seem earthshaking.

When Peter speaks of goodness, he means, "What positive good are you in the world?" But conventional religious goodness is viewed primarily by society as something that avoids evil. And because it is perceived as the absence of something, that kind of

goodness is unable to inspire. Conventional religious goodness confronts a world full of threats — rock lyrics, suggestive TV shows, materialism at the mall — and has to turn away. To the conventionally good, the world is morally toxic: like a continuous stream of tobacco smoke blown in one's face. The easiest sermon to preach is why the world is going to hell.

When goodness is taught as avoidance, it will be stifling. When a people's primary focus is on remaining unsoiled by the world, they will invariably become petty in order to keep their particular patch of religious turf "undefiled."

The New Testament call to goodness is something very different from the pale, chill order of conventional goodness. We must rescue goodness from the petty and pedantic, and restore it to what God intended it to be: a high calling to affect people around us positively, an artful life, something with eternal resonance.

Our mission in goodness is to live transcendently in the midst of everyday life. We can't get so wrapped up in heaven that we're of no use on earth. Real Christian goodness involves loving service to a hurting world — with no strings attached.

What are we doing to clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and bear the burdens of the brokenhearted of our cities? When we answer those kinds of questions, then we are speaking of the kind of goodness to which Peter calls us. We must realize that before the world around us will allow us to have something to say, they need first to see what we are.

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Real goodness will show our neighborhoods who Jesus is by our actions to heal where they hurt. Then we will have an audience with ears opened to receive the good news. It is not unreasonable for the world to expect to see before they are willing to listen.

There is a great gap between conventional religious goodness and the kind of life Jesus lived. When socializing, conventional goodness refrains from throwing wild parties, avoids drinking or carousing, and issues no invitations to the impure. Jesus suggests something different: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed..." (Lk. 14:13-14).

Goodness submits to indignities without retaliation. Jesus wants something more. He wants us to be disarmingly — stunningly — good. Why not dumfound the oppressive Roman soldier who forces you

to carry his pack one mile by carrying it two? Conventional goodness fasts and prays and puts on a somber "spiritual" face. Jesus tells us to fast and pray and put on a red dress.

When Peter explains how to build on faith, the first item he says to add is goodness. And he doesn't mean the kind of goodness your mother meant when she said, "Be good" when you left the house. She didn't likely have in mind that you would help clothe a poor family while you were out with your friends. But Peter is speaking of goodness that is positive, bold, and requires great energy in impacting society with Christlikeness. It is that kind of goodness that will cause people to stop and wonder just what we've got that they are missing.

[Phil Kinzer preaches for the Providence Road church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C. He can be contacted at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, N.C. 28226.]

Knowledge

by Jerry Senn

Someone has said: "It's harder to conceal ignorance than to acquire knowledge." A growing portion of modern society spends its time attempting to conceal its ignorance, while an ever-shrinking number seek real knowledge. The message Jesus brought to man is jeered at, joked about and even held in utter contempt by vocal advocates of humanistic philosophy. The academic community, the entertainment world and even some so-called "believers" don't take revealed truth seriously. Their ignorance is hard to camouflage.

Such was the case in the days of Peter. He wrote to a body of believers who were severely intimidated by a mocking world. His summons is to see beyond the falsehood of gnostic philosophy and find true knowledge made available by the Father. Christians have always been urged by God to test faith with inspired facts. Here, in our text, Peter suggests an exciting process of spiritual growth, as disciples of Jesus. He urges hard

work to supplement our faith with virtue and knowledge. It is only as faith builds strength of character that true knowledge can be developed.

Knowledge (verse 5) is the Greek word **gnosis**. It is an ability "to decide rightly and to act honorably...in the day to day circumstances and situations of life" (Barclay). Vine defines **gnosis** as "primarily a seeking to know, an enquiry, investigation...especially spiritual truth." Bagster states the word means "knowledge acquired by learning, effort, or experience."

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This makes Peter's admonition very specific and clear. He isn't calling for mere memorization of facts or the development of arguments. He knew Paul was right when he said: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Corinth was plagued with a spirit of intellectual pride. Christians are not asked to combat the arrogant advocates of error with an equally prideful pronouncement of truth. Paul's disposition shows itself when he said to his immature brethren: "When I came to you...I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God in lofty words..." (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Concerning our text, Guy N. Woods states: "Knowledge (**gnosis**) is the discrimination indicated in Eph. 5:17 and Heb. 5:14." In Ephesians 5:17, we're instructed to "understand what the will of the Lord is." John R. W. Stott makes this insightful explanation: "Nothing is more important in life than to discover and do the will of God. Moreover, in seeking to discover it, it is essential to distinguish between his 'general' and his 'particular' will. The former is so called because it relates to the generality of his people and is the same for all of us, e.g., to make us like Christ. His particular will, however, extends to what career we shall follow, whether we should marry, and if so to whom. Only after this distinction has been made can we consider how we may find out what the will of the Lord is. His 'general' will is found in Scripture; the will of God for the people of God has been revealed in the Word of God. But we shall not find his 'particular' will in Scripture, but detailed decisions have to be made after careful thought and prayer and the seeking of advice from mature and experienced believers."

This **does** seem to be what Peter has in mind in our text. While a daily search of the Word of God is essential to growth, application of what we perceive to be His will constitutes the most difficult aspect of living for Jesus.

How are we to grow in "knowledge"? The key is our full and unquestioning confidence in the grace of God. Didn't Peter end this letter by tying grace to knowledge? He said: "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.

3:18). Grace comes first, then knowledge. Grace provides the motivation for seeking His will above our own.

We are reminded of the classic statement in Paul's letter to the Romans: "I appeal to you...by the mercies of God...be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2).

Acquiring "knowledge," then, is a personal venture by which we seek God's particular or specific will for our personal lives. Trust leads to a desire to be good and do good (virtue). On that holy motive, knowledge of this sort is possible. Selfish pursuits for knowledge bring tragic consequences, as we learn in Paul's first letter to the brethren in Corinth. Their "knowledge" (wisdom) missed the mark because the motive was self-glorification (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

It appears to me, modern disciples must learn to allow one another room to pursue God's will on a personal basis, without allowing every disagreement to become a "test of fellowship." Paul, in Romans 14, called for acceptance of one another as we individually seek to add "knowledge" (discernment) of God's will. This non-threatening atmosphere should prevail, even when we arrive at different conclusions (vv. 1,4,10,23). I'm afraid of any brother who seeks to force his conclusions upon the rest of us. We'll stand, after all, before God with **our own faith**.

Seeking "knowledge" (discernment of God's will) is a way of life which guarantees we'll "never stumble" and assures each of us an "abundantly supplied"... "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..." (2 Pet. 1:10-12).

[Jerry Senn preaches for the Hendersonville church of Christ. He can be contacted at 124 Cannon Drive, 28792.]

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Temperance

by Stan Dean

Self-restraint, self-government, self-mastery, or self-control all well define the word "temperance." Temperance is translated from **egkrateia**, derived from the words **en** and **krates**, meaning, "one who holds himself in," or "holding one's desires and appetites in hand." These definitions echo the fact that man exercises free will over his actions and that God holds him responsible for his choices. Thus, the trite expression "The devil made me do it" will not hold ground to this Christian Grace.

Immediate Context

Since the thrust of 2 Peter is a warning against false teachers, the command to be "self-controlled" must first be observed in this light. Characteristic with false teaching of that day (and often ours) was the titillating appeal of earthly wisdom and self-gratification. Their philosophy was rooted in self-indulgence (**akrasia**), which is the antonym of self-control (**egkrateia**).

In chapter 2, Peter describes the false teachers. He speaks of their "lascivious doings" (v. 2) and their walking "...after the flesh in the lust of defilement" (v. 10). Further, he warned that they had "...eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unsteadfast souls...uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption..." (v.14a, 18a).

Intermingling fornication with religious acts was not an anomaly in the world of Peter's audience. In Corinth we learn of Aphrodite who was worshipped by means of fornication. John wrote of the woman Jezebel who taught and seduced Christians to "commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20). Even Jude, who spoke of the same false teachers as Peter, penned that these men were "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness..." (Jude

4). However, Peter's message was to establish God's law of self-control regardless of how commonplace or appealing self-indulgence might be.

Another tenet that undergirded this false theology was that knowledge superseded any need for self-control. On the contrary, the inspired message was (and is) to add self-control to knowledge. Pertaining to this, Michael Green writes, "...Peter uses a word which must have cut the false teachers like a whiplash. They claimed that knowledge released them from the need for self-control (ii. 10ff., iii.3). Peter emphasized that true knowledge leads on to self-control. Any system which divorces religion from ethics is fundamental heresy" (**The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude**, Eerdmans, 1997, 69).

Thus, this libertine spirit provided the backdrop for Peter's inspired call for temperance. Of course, there is no less need in our day as will be discussed later.

Broader Biblical Context

Although temperance is extremely important to the life of each Christian, the word itself is not often found in Scripture. Outside of the two forms of **egkrateia** in 2 Peter 1:6, it occurs only four other times in the New Testament. Nevertheless, a brief look at these will aid in broadening our concept of this teaching.

In Acts 24, when Paul made his defense before Felix, he seized the opportunity to reason with him concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (v. 25). Even a superficial knowledge of Felix's back-



ground is enough to find a man of unbri-
dled lusts. Yet, even this man who was so
entwined in sin was called upon to incarcer-
ate his evil desires and live righteously.

In the Galatian letter, Paul enumerates
the fruit of the Spirit as being: "love, joy,
peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,
faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23).
Temperance can be contrasted with the pre-
ceding "works of the flesh," such as: "adul-
tery, fornication, uncleanness, lascivious-
ness," etc. (v. 19f).

Another occurrence of temperance is in
1 Corinthians 9. Here the apostle uses the
analogy of temperance in the Christian life
(his own in particular) to the self-control of
an athlete. "Everyone who competes for the
prize is temperate in all things. Now they
do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we
for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run
thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not
as one who beats the air. But I discipline my
body and bring it into subjection, lest, when
I have preached to others, I myself should
become disqualified" (vv. 24-27). In ancient
Isthmian games, athletes exercised strict self-
restraint in diet and chastity (cf. Phil.
3:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:7,8; 2 Tim. 4:7,8).

Temperance is also used as a virtue a man
must possess before he can serve as an elder
(Tit. 1:8). These passages constitute the sum
of the occurrences of temperance and its var-
iants in the original text. (Note: "temperate"
is translated in Tit. 2:2 in KJV, but it derives
from **sophron**.)

In all these passages, the resounding mes-
sage is to take control of our fleshly appe-
tites and propensities and to not let them
control us. Paul addressed this principle with
the words "All things are lawful for me, but
I will not be brought under the power of
any" (1 Cor. 6:12). To this verse, Winters
supplied these timely comments: "Appetites
and desires are lawful, but Paul would not
be so enslaved to them as to satisfy them
unlawfully. Many a man becomes a slave
to his freedom, but not Paul. He would not
improperly use lawful things to satisfy his
desires. Unlawful use of lawful things is the
very nature of sin, and to be addicted to the
unlawful use of a lawful thing...is abject
slavery" (**Commentary on First Corinthians**,
Carolina Christian, 1987, 75).

Twentieth Century Context

Zooming across the centuries one quickly
notices the vast changes in names, faces, and
cultures. Yet, in moral conditions of man
there is little to contrast. The Epicurean phi-
losophy of "eat, drink, and be merry for
tomorrow we die" still permeates our mod-
ern society. How pertinent the message of
temperance is to the population at large and
equally so to the local church. We live in
a tremendously permissive age, yet God's
will goes unaltered and He expects nothing
less than our best attempt to practice self-
control in all areas of our lives.

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With these thoughts in mind, let me offer a few practical suggestions that will help to cultivate more self-control in each of us:

1. Realize that temperance is part and parcel to a life in Christ (Gal. 4:22; 2 Pet. 1:6).
2. Pray for God's help in this area (Phil. 4:6).
3. Develop a support group of temperate Christians (Heb. 3:12-13).
4. Avoid situations where self-control is weakened (1 Thess. 5:22).
5. Consider the plight of an undisciplined life (Prov. 25:28).
6. Concentrate on the reward of temperance (Prov. 16:32).
7. Always remember: to be temperate is to be like Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

It is human nature to know better than we act, but desire to act better than we do. May God help us all to learn temperance!

Conclusion

My temper may urge me to curse — temperance bridles my tongue (Jas. 3:1-12).

My fleshly desires may tempt me to commit fornication — temperance constrains me to be faithful (1 Cor. 6:13).

My lust for material things may dare me to cheat or steal — temperance compels me to be honest (Eph. 4:25-28).

My zeal to be popular and accepted by the "crowd" may cause me to be a hypocrite — temperance says "be genuine" (Rom. 12:9-21).

My pride may cause me to get hurt and discouraged even to the point of "quitting the church" — temperance shakes me and declares, "No way!" (Gal. 6:9).

[Stan Dean preaches for the church in Gastonia, N.C. He may be contacted at 1624 Carolina Circle, 28054.]

Patience

by Ron Adams

It is difficult to come up with an expression that adequately conveys what is meant when Peter writes that we are to add "patience" to our faith (2 Pet. 1:6).

The problem is that patience, to most people, has come to mean virtually the opposite of irritability. It's what we need to control ourselves when the kids are running through the house screaming and fighting — again. Or, it's that hard-to-come-by calmness one needs to put that one million piece swing set together and one piece doesn't fit. It's also too often erroneously thought of as quietly folding your hands in the face of obstacles, obstruction and opposition. Patience, in the biblical sense of a character trait the Christian needs to cultivate, means much, much more than that.

Two words commonly used to translate the original Greek **hupomone** (literally, "abiding under") are endurance and perseverance. Neither is a complete equivalent. The character trait we need embraces both of these qualities.

Endurance is basically a passive trait. Something difficult is happening to you, but you are not being overwhelmed by it. You go on with your life in the midst of difficult circumstances which you cannot control. Endurance is truly "bearing up" under pressure. It is that ability to survive in the midst of adversity, to "take a licking and keep on ticking." Endurance is the courage to accept and withstand whatever life may bring. This ability to withstand is expressed in Scripture such as: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (Jas. 1:12). "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10).

But there is more. Perseverance is basically an active trait. It is the ability to advance against opposition. You are doing something worthwhile and encounter difficulty in continuing it or seeing it through to a conclusion, but you stick with the task,

even in the midst of criticism and opposition. Nehemiah is an example of a man who held on to his goal or dream. In the midst of great criticism and opposition he was able to advance. He did not give up because of his faith in God and his "patience."

This "active patience" is expressed in Scripture such as: "And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

What term can we use to embrace both of these important traits? Shall we settle for patience? Shall we use a descriptive phrase such as steadfast continuance? Or use Williams' translation, "patient endurance"? I believe we can use whatever term — perseverance, endurance, or steadfastness — seems to fit best at the time, while remembering that we're talking about a single trait of character that denotes the ability to keep on keeping on.

Christian patience is not a passive resignation but rather an active energy. It does not act and work boisterously or arrogantly but silently and powerfully.

One of the remarkable attributes of Christ in His earthly ministry was His patience. His blundering disciples misunderstood Him and sought to obstruct Him, but His loving patience is the prime example for the Christian today. His enemies hated Him and hounded Him, but His poise in their midst was a marvel to behold. The multitude rejected Him and cried, "Crucify him," but He wept over their city because of the hardness of their hearts and because of their impending doom. A disciple suggested, "Call down fire and destroy this Samaritan village that refused us hospitality and acceptance." Instead, He rebuked the "son of thunder" for his impatience. Jesus had a staying quality about Him. He didn't throw in the towel because life got tough. And He refused to quit when He did not get His way.

There is a quality of hopeful and joyful trust in Christian patience that distinguishes it from merely stoically bearing pain and frustration. Myron Augsburg in his chapter on "Accepting God's Will" says,

"One of the signs of spiritual maturity is patience, respecting God's right to work out plans beyond our understanding and serving in trust."

The Christian will always have struggles. Peter challenges Christians then and now to face those struggles and not lose sight of our mission which is to glorify God. There is a twofold reason why we must face our struggles and press on. What is the twofold reason? To produce something good and to become something good. We must never lose sight of these goals — and especially of the second when the first seems thwarted.

Harry Emerson Fosdick once said, "Not so much what life brings to us in her hands as what we bring to life in our spirit makes the difference between people." That spirit for the Christian is one clothed in patience.

[Ron Adams preaches for the Long Creek church in Columbia, SC. He may be contacted at 720 Longtown Rd., 29223.]

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Godliness

by David Vaughn

Our behavior reflects our attitudes. The one who acknowledges God and has an attitude of reverence toward Him will behave accordingly. The Bible calls this behavior godliness (**eusebeia**). **Eusebeia** is a compound word that was used by the ancient Greeks to refer to piety in the fulfillment of human relations, and in the religious sense, to show reverence toward Deity. A form of this word is used in Isaiah 11:2 and Proverbs 1:7 to express fear, reverence, piety toward God. Luke used the word to describe Cornelius as devout (Acts 10:2). The word does not mean godlikeness or to behave like God, but to have respect or reverence for God which leads to a changed life. **Eusebeia** (godliness) and its cognates are used only in Acts, the letters to Timothy and Titus, and Second Peter. However, the negative form is used elsewhere.

An aspiration of a Christian is to live acceptably before God. Christians are to be steadfast and unyielding in doctrine and in godly behavior. Paul told Timothy to "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16). Godliness is the result of harmony between what one teaches and how one lives.

Peter wrote his second epistle to Christian people who were being threatened by false prophets (2 Pet. 2:1,2). He calls the false teachers ungodly (**asebeia**) men whom God will judge (2:5,6; 3:7). In view of perdition awaiting the ungodly and the destruction of the earth by fire, Peter reasons that Christians should live holy and godly (3:8-11). A godly person will reject ungodly doctrine which ultimately leads to an ungodly life.

Peter begins his second epistle by urging believers to accept and practice what God has given. He assures them that in doing this they will not stumble. In his divine power, Christ "has granted [given, bestowed] to us everything pertaining to life and godliness"

(v. 3). All that has been granted to us is through divine knowledge; therefore, it is not based on devised fables (v. 16), but by men moved by the Holy Spirit (v. 21).

Through His glory and virtue, God has given promises that are called precious and magnificent by Peter. By the promises and all they include, we are blessed to share (same word as fellowship) in the divine nature. Through the incorruptible and abiding word of God we have been born again (1 Pet. 1:22,23). In our birth a restoration takes place. As God's children we have escaped the corruption of the world (v. 4) and "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col. 3:10). We were created in the image of God but that image, lost in the fall, is restored in our conversion where we have been created in "righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24).

In verse 5, Peter continues, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply...." In other words, do not delay, but with haste bring in "courage, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love" (vv. 5-7). These qualities are qualities of a believer. The word translated **supply** has an interesting background. The ancient Greeks produced some great plays and those works required choruses. Some wealthy citizens of Athens or another city would supply all the money for the expenses needed to train and maintain such choruses. Because of their love for the play, they did not withhold anything that was needed, but lavishly supplied all that was necessary. The word that was used to describe their willingness to supply the choruses is the word Peter uses in urging Christians to supply their lives with the "Christian graces."

Spiritual growth is an individual responsibility. God has given us all that is needed for this growth to take place and if we are to grow we must cooperate with God (Phil.

2:12,13). When we refuse to cooperate we show our blindness and forgetfulness which leads to unfruitfulness (v. 9). Even though we are involved in our growth, which is necessary for our salvation, we are saved by the grace of God, but grace doesn't relieve us of our responsibilities to cooperate with God in obeying the commands of Scripture. Our obedience to the commands of Scripture must never be considered meritorious, thus nullifying God's grace.

One of the virtues Peter says Christians are to generously supply is godliness. The grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness and to live godly (Tit. 2:11,12). This tells us that godliness is aware of, and honors, relationships toward God and humanity. When these relationships are not recognized and honored the result is ungodliness (Rom. 1:18-32). Such people are to be avoided (2 Tim. 3:5).

From what Peter has written about godliness, we know that God considers us responsible for our own growth in godliness. The letters of Paul to Timothy provide additional insights into godliness.

1. Godliness is the result of proper activities. Paul told Timothy to exercise himself in spiritual concerns because the benefits are both temporal and eternal (1 Tim. 4:7,8). Timothy was able to do something that would increase godliness in his life. The present tense meaning stresses continuance in such activities. Fables are destructive; godliness is life. The figure that Paul uses is the gymnasium, the place where individuals trained their physical bodies. Timothy is to reject anything that would take his focus away from his complete devotion to the Lord, as a physical athlete is to reject that which retards his training.

2. Sound doctrine and godliness go together (1 Tim 6:3). No one can have respect for God and view His word disparagingly. To honor God is to honor His word; it is His power to save us (1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16). The false teachers that Timothy faced in Ephesus were more concerned about fables, genealogies, and endless chatter than truth. This kind of teaching environment was precisely what led them to further ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16).

3. Greed and godliness do not go together (1 Tim. 6:5). In some manner the false teachers who had a depraved mind and were desitute of truth thought godliness was a means of financial gain. False doctrine can lead one to the point that all understanding is lost and godliness is not recognized. In this sense, "the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil." The godliness Paul had in mind was a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment (cf. Phil. 4:11,12). What a contrast between the perspective of the false teachers in Ephesus and Moses (Heb. 11:23-27).

4. The man of God pursues godliness (1 Tim. 6:11). There is an immense difference between the man who seeks the things of this world (1 Tim. 6:9,10) and the man of God. The present active imperative demands that the Christian live in daily pursuit of godliness. God is greater than the world and the person of God who neglects this pursuit has forgotten that he was lost, and he has also lost sight of what is truly important in life. He will surely stumble because he is not walking in the light of God's word.

As God's children, we follow after godliness because we are in a fight for our souls and the ungodly will not win this fight. God gives victory through Jesus Christ to those

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who have lived in respect of His word, been content to serve in His kingdom and honored Him by their lives. Such individuals have constantly looked to Jesus for strength to persevere. In distressing times they continue to respect God and to practice brotherly kindness toward others of precious faith.

People bound together by love for God and each other, supporting one another in

their pilgrim journey, and manifesting their godliness in practical ways will someday hear the words "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joys of thy lord." Is your life characterized by godliness?

[David Vaughn preaches for the Mebane St. church in Burlington, N.C. He may be contacted at 1610 N. Mebane St., 27216.]

Brotherly Kindness

by Dennis Conner

We must never lose sight of the greatness of God's salvation activity in our behalf, for a deep and abiding consciousness of what God has done empowers and sustains the life of virtue. What has God done for us? Peter knows. God has called us into possession of precious promises that surpass anything offered by the world, and through these same promises God has made us to partake of His own divine nature. And that's not all. God has also lifted us out of this world's corruption and placed us on a higher plane. Such divine activity should elicit some kind of response from us, unless we are unfeeling clods of dirt. Awe is an appropriate response to the glory and greatness of God's salvation. So is humility. The most appropriate response, however, is a fruitful life that never fails to gratefully recall the blessings of salvation (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Among the traits of the responsive life is that of "brotherly kindness" (literally, "love of the brethren"). It is no coincidence that in Peter's arrangement godliness precedes brotherly kindness. All professions to be a godly person must ultimately be put to the test of love for and kindness toward our brothers and sisters in God's family. As John expressed it, "Beloved, let us love one another . . . everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar . . ." (1 John 4:7, 18 ASV). Devotion to God is manifested in genuine love and kindness for our spiritual family.

All human relationships are demanding to various degrees, testing our willingness

to be kind. To those who possess only a professed godliness, those demands may easily become a bother. Kindness is more than just being nice and courteous, more than the exchange of a few pleasantries and a smile that costs nothing. Christian kindness, growing out of godliness, issues in specific acts of meeting needs, whether the one receiving our kindness is deserving or not. Jesus was being kind in reaching out to the leper when no one else would. He was being kind when He restored sanity and wholeness to the demon-possessed. The Lord was showing kindness when He took time for people. Kindness, then, reaches out to do what we can to satisfy the real needs of our brothers and sisters with no thought of merit or demands.

We must not assume, however, that as long as we do what we can for our spiritual family it doesn't really matter how we feel toward them. Paul told the believers in Eph-

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esus that in addition to being kind to one another, they should also possess a tender heart toward one another (Eph. 4:32). Do we assume too much in suggesting that when Jesus reached out to the lepers, the lame, the blind, and the sinners that at the same time He genuinely cared for them? The heart of Christ overflowed with feeling toward the hurting, the needing, and the wandering.

Have we made brotherly kindness an in-

tegral trait of our life response to God's kindness toward us? Look around you. Is there someone needing a word of encouragement? Speak it. Does someone need comfort? Offer it. Does someone need embracing? Open your arms. Does someone need to talk? Take time to listen. Does someone need love? Give it, whatever the cost. Do you think yourself to be godly? Then be kind.

Love

by Phil Stapp

It happened in New York on a cold, blustery evening as a small girl of ten and her younger brother were trying to sell some cheap trinkets at a busy intersection. Huddled together to keep warm, yet still shivering, they captured the sympathy of a wealthy lady who invited them to her penthouse for hot chocolate. As they stepped inside, tracking the carpet with their wet feet, the children's eyes surveyed the room with its beautiful paintings, draperies and furnishings. When the hot chocolate was served in cups with matching saucers, it was evident that they were further amazed. Finally, the little girl blurted out the question, "Lady, are you God's wife?" "Why, no," she replied. "What made you ask?" "Because," the girl answered softly, "you are so kind to us."

To this little girl, the love of God was reflected through an act of kindness and compassion. The concern of another for her welfare could only come, in her mind, from someone close to God. It is this love, a love that reflects God for the hurting and the lost, that concludes Peter's list in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

It is interesting to note that Peter's list begins with faith, the very foundation of our life in Christ, and ends with love, the ultimate goal of our life in Christ. This list contained for Peter's readers a mystic significance as it contains eight elements. In the ancient world, as well as in biblical literature, the number eight represented perfection. For Peter, it is no mistake that perfection (or maturity) in Christ is found in love.

Peter has already mentioned "love for brothers and sisters" (**philadelphia**) and now says to add to that "universal love" (**agape**). In the first century, **agape** was a seldom used word for love with no special meaning, but the church took it as its own to signify a love greater than that of people who are close to one another.

It came to represent the love of God. A love that is a free and decisive act. A love that is active and giving. This is the love God has for a lost and sinful world (John 3:16). This is a love that finds its greatest expression in Jesus Christ (1 John 4:9-11).

It is the love of God that has created new realities of us and given us "everything we need for life and godliness" (1:3-4). It is a response to this love on our part that leads us to "make every effort" to add to our faith (1:5). The natural conclusion, then, is that we develop the same kind of love for the lost and hurting in the world. The practical application of this kind of love will be a deep concern for the lost, the hurting, and the poor. A compassion that will drive us to action. We will feel compelled, like Jesus, to preach the Good News to the lost. We will want to feed the hungry and comfort the

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hurting. We will reach out beyond ourselves and the ones to whom we are close to help even those who hate and ridicule us. This is the love of God as demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

Saul was a young man full of hate and self-righteousness. As a Pharisee trained by Gamaliel, he hated everything that did not conform to his idea of religion. He especially hated those Jews who were followers of the man named Jesus. When Jesus' followers were brought before the Sanhedrin, Saul voted for them to be put to death. He stood by in approval as Stephen was stoned. His hate filled him so that he went to other cities to hunt down these Christians. He wanted to bring them back to Jerusalem to stand trial. It was on one of these trips to Damascus that Saul's life was changed forever.

After meeting the resurrected Christ, Saul's life was so transformed that few could believe it. After responding to the love of God, Saul was hated by those with whom he had once worked. He was now the hunted as they tried to kill or have him killed a number of times. But Saul was a new person. He was Paul, the apostle of Christ to the world. He carried the Good News of Jesus Christ to Gentiles. These were people that as a Pharisee he had once hated with a passion. He endured torture, prison, rejection, hatred and attempts on his life, all in an effort to carry the love of God to a lost and hurting world.

Paul is an example of one who added to his faith. He made every effort to grow spiritually and he taught others to do the

same. Paul taught and wrote about all of the "graces" listed in this passage and like Peter, he realized that the most important was love. Without love, the rest are superficial and will not last (see 1 Cor. 13). Paul knew this because he had been touched by the love of God and was responding to it.

The type of list that Peter has given us in this text reminds us that being a Christian is more than just intellectually believing that Jesus is the Son of God. It is more than agreeing to a set of doctrinal teachings. To be a Christian means to live as Jesus did. Following Jesus transforms the way we live, because we are touched by His love and then commit ourselves to become like Him. Once we have made this commitment, we will add these things to our faith, seeking to reflect the love of God. "For," as Peter concludes, "if these are present in you and growing, they will keep you from being either useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who lacks these things is blind and nearsighted; he has forgotten that he has been purified from his past sins. Therefore, brothers, be eager to make your calling and election permanent. If you do this, you will never fall. In this way, you will be richly provided with an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:8-11, my translation).

Reflect the love of God in your life and others will know that you are related to Him.

[Phil Stapp preaches for the Brewer Rd. church in Winston-Salem, NC. He may be contacted at 2010 Brewer Rd., 27127.]

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The Forsaken Christ

by David Allgood

In Matthew 27:46 we see Christ on the cross speaking the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What caused Jesus to say these words before His death? I have always heard it taught that at this point in time God turned His face away from Jesus because He had become sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). This has always caused a problem for me (i.e., God turning His face away from Himself) especially since the Bible never explicitly states that it happened. This is a conclusion which men have reached in order to deal with a puzzling phrase. To really understand this phrase we must realize that Jesus was not the author of these words. The Psalmist David penned these words in Psalm 22:1. I believe that Jesus was trying to give hope to the disciples and those of His followers who were at the cross that His death was not the end. This idea is clearly shown in Psalm 22. Examine this psalm with me as the Psalmist tries to rationalize what is happening to him.

First, it is clearly seen that David feels forsaken (Psa. 22:1-5). David has been praying for deliverance but so far God has not answered him. David reminds the Lord that He remembered the fathers of Israel and that God had heard them. Now since an answer was slow in coming David feels that God has forsaken Him.

This was just the feeling of the disciples as they watched Jesus die. They felt that the hopes for the kingdom had ended. Jesus would soon be dead and the kingdom would never happen. To put yourself back into the minds of the disciples it would appear that they felt that God had forsaken Jesus since the King of Kings was naked, hanging on a Roman cross, with His life leaving His body with every breath. They may have been thinking, "Why is this happening?" or "Why doesn't God stop this?"

Second, the Psalmist begins to explain that his enemies have taken control over him (Psa. 22:6-18). Something in the life of David has caused him to become a reproach to his enemies. They are making fun of him

and mocking him. David feels that all has been lost. He feels that his enemies are stronger than he, and this was causing him a great deal of suffering.

This feeling was also prevalent among those who were watching the crucifixion. As Jesus was hanging there people mocked Him. The soldiers had put a crown of thorns on His head and had said, "Hail the king." Even the thieves made fun of Him and mocked Him. It seemed that the forces of Rome were stronger than the forces of Christ. To an onlooker, it would appear that the enemies of Christ had gained the upper hand. It appears that Jesus has lost His struggle to save the world.

Third, David begins to change his tune (Psa. 22:19-31). He begins to praise the Lord and he says that he will praise God in the midst of the assembly (v. 22). What has caused David to change his tune? The answer is in verse 28: "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations" (NASV). David, during the writing of this psalm, has realized that God is in control. As King, Jehovah's will will be done. Nothing can prevent the will of God from being done. Therefore, in David's distress he comes back to the realization that God is in control.

Is this not the message of the cross? Jesus appears to be forsaken of God; His enemies appear to have the advantage over Him. To the contrary, what was taking place on the cross was the fulfillment of God's plan. What appears to have been defeat was in reality the greatest victory ever won by God. Jesus has conquered sin and death. The cross was not a defeat for Jesus, but a victory.

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Therefore, these words of Jesus are not a cry of desperation, but a cry of victory. He was not crying out in anguish, but He was trying to reassure His disciples that the cross was not the end, only the beginning. Now, when we see these words, let's be reminded of the victory of the cross, and not think of Jesus as a forsaken Savior. Rather

than being forsaken, Jesus obtained the victory that only He could have won — the forgiveness of our sins. Let us rejoice that Jesus was willing to make this sacrifice for our sins.

[David Allgood preaches for the church in West Jefferson, NC. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 117, 28694.]

Brotherhood News

Dennis Conner

Around South Carolina . . .

The **Charlotte Ave.** church in Rock Hill started off the new year in fine style with a record attendance of 348 for the Sunday morning of January 6. Charlotte Ave. will also be hosting this year's Carolina Lectures April 8-11. . . . The **ESSEX VILLAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Charleston will be hosting a Ladies Day on April 20. The speakers will be Lea Fowler of Newnun, Ga., and Alayne Swindall of Charleston. . . . The sisters of the **PLAZA CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Sumter will also be hosting a Ladies Day. The date is March 9 and the speaker will be Sandra Humphrey. . . . The **SIGSBEE ROAD** church in Spartanburg had a fruitful January. Samuel Means, who

preaches for the church, reports that there were seven baptisms during the month.

And North Carolina . . .

The ladies of the **FRIENDLY AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Greensboro will be hosting their 9th Annual Ladies Day on April 27. The theme is "Life in Christ: The Oasis," focusing on friendship and reaching out. . . . The 5th Annual Small Church Workshop will be hosted by the **YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST** May 23-24. This year's theme will be "Building Through Caring." Also Clois Cecil of Winston-Salem, NC, will be with the Yadkinville church in a gospel meeting May 24-26.

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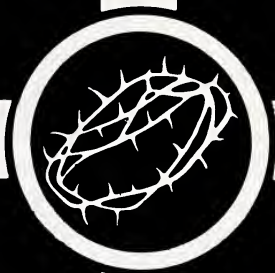
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editorial

by David Pharr

We will continue to update the Directory as changes are sent to us. It will be helpful in regard to fellowship and cooperation if we can be notified of new congregations, changes in addresses, etc. These will be printed in the magazine as we receive them.

A 5 1/4" floppy computer disk of the directory is available for \$5. Order this directly from Johnny Melton, Managing Editor (address in box below).

Carolina Lectures

The 47th Annual Carolina Lectures will be held April 8-11, hosted by the Charlotte Avenue congregation in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The theme will be based on the great 119th Psalm, with a broad selection of capable speakers. C. W. Bradley, a well-known former Carolina preacher, now living in Memphis, will speak each evening. Your editor will be a daily afternoon speaker.

The annual Carolina Lectures were begun 47 years ago with the purpose of encouraging fellowship and edification among the scattered congregations in the two Carolinas. The program goes to a different congregation each year, alternating between the two states. While the brotherhood in the Carolinas is much larger now than 47 years ago, the need for such occasions for fellowship and edification are no less important. The Carolina Christian Bookstore will have a display, as will others.

The Charlotte Avenue church in Rock Hill is well-known for its hospitality. We feel sure that all who attend will be pleased they did.

Sorrow and Concern

We have learned of the death of brother U. H. Ward last July. Brother Ward suc-

cumbed to cancer. His connection with the Carolinas was as the preacher at Siler City, NC, 1982-87; and at Union, SC, 1987-89.

Two North Carolina preachers have been called to active military duty in connection with the gulf war. Gary G. Payne is from the church in Reidsville, and Mel Powers is from the church in Scotland Neck. Both of these congregations are small, and we are sure their preachers are greatly missed. We must keep them in our daily prayers.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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ETSOPM Lectures

As this is being written, preparations are being finalized for the annual lectures of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. As always we are expecting a number of visitors from the Carolinas. The theme this year is "A Return to Distinctive Christianity." A book of the lectures is available, as are audio and video tapes.

A major announcement at this year's lectureship will be the plans to honor J. W. (Bill) Nicks by naming the school's new library building after him. A major fundraising program is underway to get the funds to construct this new facility. Brother Nicks, a veteran of fifty years of preaching at home and abroad, and a teacher at the school for several years, has announced his intention to retire from the school in July. Though nearing his 72nd birthday, he intends to continue preaching as long as the Lord allows it. The Nicks will be moving to Florida.

A Divisive Spirit

The Lord hates a divisive spirit (Prov. 6:19). The soldiers at the cross cut and tore the flesh of Christ. Are those who cut and divide the spiritual body of Christ any less sinful?

Perhaps the most abominable divisiveness is that which is done under cover of sweetness and love. Paul wrote of those who "came in privily," hiding their real agenda. We cannot, of course, read what is in the hearts of others; but the fruits of some strongly suggest that they are willing to divide the body of Christ in order to promote their philosophies.

We had no sympathy for this when we saw it in what came to be known as the "anti" movement. There is no excuse for it from among those who claim to be "conservative," but who are actually extremists. Likewise there is no room for that air of intellectual supremacy that is determined to pull the church away from its Biblical moorings. These will speak much of love, and exude sweet charisma; but their teaching is going to divide the church. One does not have to be a prophet to know that liberal teaching will drive those who still uphold Scriptural principles out of congregations.

Elders need to wake up and see what is really happening. When a "new hermeneutic" teacher gets himself and his agenda sufficiently in place, sound elders will find that they may be among the first to go. Few things can be so vicious as a sweet-talking liberal when he feels he is strong enough to take complete control.

Those who advocate an unscriptural change in the role of women in the church; those who have devised a hermeneutic that will allow for instrumental music in worship; those who deny that there is a New Testament pattern for the church; those who are ready for open fellowship regardless of faith and practice — all of these will ultimately cause division in the body of Christ (if they persist). Our plea to our brethren who are abandoning "the old paths" of truth is the same as has been our plea to the denominations: Back to the Bible! Don't divide the church in the name of intellectual sophistication and doctrinal progressivism.

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The Church Is the Assembly

by Johnny Melton

The nature of the church has been debated almost from its beginning. David Watson in **I Believe in the Church** discussed the nature of the church under the following heads: the Kingdom of God, the Church of God, the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Building of God, the Bride of Christ, and the Army of God.

Batsell Barrett Baxter, in **Family of God: A Study of the New Testament Church** suggested four analogies found in Scripture regarding the nature of the church. The church can be discussed in terms of a physical body. In this analogy Jesus is the head and Christians make up the various members of the body (Cf., Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:3-8). The church can also be discussed in terms of a kingdom. In this analogy Jesus is the King and Christians constitute His subjects. Passages like Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:19; Mark 9:1; Colossians 11:13; and Revelation 1:9 suggest that the kingdom has been prophesied, promised, anticipated and experienced. Another way to discuss the church is in terms of a building. Jesus is the chief cornerstone, His teachings are the foundation and Christians are the "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5) that are used to construct the spiritual house atop the foundation. The church can also be discussed in terms of a family. God is the Father, Jesus is *the* Son and elder brother, and individual Christians are children in the household (Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:6; Gal. 3:26).

In **Resident Aliens** Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon interact with John Howard Yoder's discussion of the church ("A People in the World: Theological Interpretation") under the heads: Activist Church, Conversionist Church, and Confessing Church. The activist church's focus is outward rather than inward. It is more concerned with society in the here and now than with either the church's commitment to its biblical heritage or its future in the world

to come. The conversionist church's focus is entirely upon itself and its members' individual standing before God. The confessing church's focus is on worshipping Christ in all things. The confessing church impacts its world most credibly as a "living, breathing, visible community of faith" (Hauerwas and Willimon, p. 47).

Yoder describes the confessing church as a church of the cross. C. Leonard Allen, has written a book addressing Churches of Christ entitled, **The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World**. Allen's book challenges churches of Christ to be the community of the cross. To be a community of the cross, the church must be in the world, but not of the world.

Allen writes, "We are tempted to think that we can be God's holy and separate people by shutting ourselves off from the world or isolating ourselves from it. But it is never that simple. For the 'world' is both without us and within us.

"The church thus does not simply withdraw from the 'world.' But it does stand apart from the 'world' as a distinct entity. . . . This separate, minority status does not mean isolating oneself from society or failing to care for it. It does not mean self-righteously elevating oneself above other sinful human beings.

"To the contrary, this sharp disavowal of the 'world' and its values is done for the sake of the 'world,' for the love of the 'world.' We form a separate, distinctive community not to isolate and protect ourselves but because we believe we can best serve the 'world' by being the church" (pp. 160-161).

In reality the notion that the church is to be in the world, but not of the world is caught up in its fundamental nature. The church is the assembly or the community of Jesus Christ. *Ekklesia*, the word usually translated church(es), appears 115 times in

the New Testament. Three times the word refers to a group or an assembly of people who are not Christians (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Two times the word refers to Israel in the Old Testament (Acts 17:38; Heb. 2:12). The remaining 110 times the word refers to a group of Christians, an assembly of saints.

The church is spoken of in both a universal as well as a local sense. Examples of *ekklesia* used in the universal sense include Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" and Ephesians 5:23, 25 where Paul reasoned, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Ninety of the 115 times *ekklesia* occurs in the New Testament it refers to the local church. Examples of *ekklesia* used in a local sense include Matthew 18:17, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector"; 1 Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours"; and 1 Corinthians 4:17, "For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church."

David Watson in **I Believe in the Church** observed, "Our English word 'church,' like the German *kirche*, Swedish *kyrka*, Slav *cerkov*, and Scottish *kirk*, stems from the Byzantine Greek form *kurike*, meaning 'belonging to the Lord' " (p. 65). The basic meaning of *ekklesia* is "assembly." "In the New Testament then, 'the universal church was the universal fellowship of believers who met visibly in local assemblies,' but these local assemblies were also called churches, even though they were visible manifestations of the one true church." This one true church is the assembly of God's people, called out of the world and into God's service. So the

church is a group of Christians. It is important to understand that God did not intend for Christianity to be practiced in isolation.

The church is not a museum for saints, but it is a hospital for sinners. Such a self-understanding of its function has not always been characteristic of God's church. Everett Ferguson in **Early Christians Speak** noted that "The third century saw controversy and schism develop over the nature of the church and its life. Under the impact of persecution from the state, the church had to define what was going to be its attitude to its members who did not live up to its ideals. Rigorists such as Hippolytus and Novatian said that the church is to be a community of the elite pure and cannot grant forgiveness to its members who fall into serious sins. Such sinful Christians may be forgiven by God at the Judgment if they are truly penitent, but the church is not to readmit them to its communion" (p. 18).

However, God has called sinners out of the world to live in mutual support groups. That is the significance of the Christian assembly — it is a group of people with a common purpose. Psychologists tell us that man is a social animal. He needs to belong. There is much emphasis today on the fact that we need a support group where needs are met. While it is possible to go overboard with such concepts, it is still the case that for Christians the place where needs are met, where support is received, the place where one receives a sense of belonging is the church.

The church addresses fundamental human needs. Sinners need to be forgiven. The church is made up of forgiven, forgiving people. Guilt is a heavy burden that weighs people down. The book of Acts has people asking, "What must I do to be saved?" When the question is first asked in Acts 2:37, Peter explained, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). One gets into the church by believing in Jesus as the atonement for sin (Rom. 3:22-26) and accepting the forgiveness that is available in Him through repentance and baptism.

People need to have a sense of worth. The church is the place where people can come to realize their real worth. Sinners

though they are, Jesus died to redeem them. The value of a thing is sometimes determined by the price that is paid for it. Acts 20:28 reveals the value of the church of God, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." What is true of the church collectively is true of Christians individually. First Corinthians 6:19, 20 contains the following exhortation, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

People need to be loved. The church is the place where we are loved without reservation. "For God so loved the world . . ." (John 3:16). Because God loves, Christians are reminded "we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:10). In the world people are easily lost in the shuffle. Many fall through the cracks of society. It is an amaz-

ing paradox, but people living in overcrowded conditions in the world are lonely. The church provides a community in which the love of God can be shared.

People need a sense of security. The church is the place where people can feel safe. The everlasting arms of God are underneath His people (Deut. 33:27). "Safe in the arms of Jesus" characterizes the security that is available to the church. Vulnerability plagues the modern mind. Locked doors are really marks of insecurity rather than security. People want to feel secure, unthreatened, safe. Certainly, the church should provide a secure haven from the insecurities and the storms of life.

People need hope. The church is the place where hope is kept alive. So many people live without hope. Their lives are lived in doubt and despair. Hopelessness is such a desperate word. God has graciously provided a place where hope is shared and nurtured. The church is that place.

Beneficial Times to Pray

by **Bob MacDonald**

Here is a beneficial time to pray each day. Just before you "enter" the world, having left the sanctuary of your Christian home, try a brief prayer in your employer's parking lot, asking God to help you remember

that Christ is with you, asking God for wisdom. Mothers at home, in your bedroom — before facing the cries and demands of your children — ask God for strength, wisdom, patience, courage, and zeal; and for

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love.

In the late afternoon, you can pray in a safe parking spot before making your re-entry into your little piece of God's kingdom on earth (which you and your family with God's help have created). Come into your home as if Christ were with you (and so He is). Wives at home, just before your husband reenters, refresh yourself with prayer, asking that you be loving, kind, and encouraging.

During the day, do you make decisions without praying to God for guidance? Why? God is not just someone beyond the clouds. Remember that he is near you, that he is in you! Ask Him for guidance so you will get all the needed facts; ask Him to help you think clearly so that you will consider all the pros and cons. Remember the mistake of good King Asa. Don't be like him toward the end of his days when he forgot to seek God's help (2 Chron. 16:7). On the spot, as you approach someone or a group in what might become a confrontation or crisis, ask God for strength, wisdom, alertness, courage, zeal, fairness and love. Jesus did that. At major moments in His ministry, He took time to pray. He did also in less than major times. We could do likewise, and surely benefit.

Prayer starts the moment you awaken: "Good morning, dear Father, thank You for this extra day." Hopefully you will add praise and supplication later on.

You could pray many times during the day, staying in touch with God, the God who is in you (2 Cor. 13:5). You can pray to God in thought and with joy as you walk, or mow, or iron, or vacuum. Pray not as a duty, but with joy as you simply think with God about His love and help.

Finally, a caution: you interfere with needed sleep if you try to organize your on-the-pillow prayer, if you try to remember all you should cover. So, before the pillow, at your bedside, mentally "talk" your final "formal" prayer. Then, when in bed just think meandering, loving thoughts in this final bedtime prayer. You may fall asleep as you do, but there is no better way to close the day than in God's arms.

With your "prayer channel" open to God all day, you talk to Him often, sometimes briefly, sometimes just in thought. Responding to Paul's admonition *does* enrich our lives. We can "be joyful always" and "pray continuously" (1 Thess. 5:16).

[Brother MacDonald is a member of the Hendersonville, NC congregation. His address: 2730 Holly Hill Dr., 28739.]

"Upon This Rock" Matthew 16:13-18

by David Pharr, Editor

Matthew 16:13-18 is familiar to Bible students as the text wherein Jesus first used the term "church" in the New Testament, and wherein He promised to build the church. This passage holds particular significance as it shows that the church was indeed in the redemptive plan of Christ, that it was at that time yet to be established, that Christ Himself would establish it, and that it would be His church.

Emphasis on the church from this passage is an important study. We should never fail to recognize and teach the Scriptural
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place of the church. At the same time, however, we must never forget that the church has meaning only because of the Christ who built it. Attention is called especially to the expression in verse 18: "upon this rock." By considering "this rock" in the light of the context we can see some points that should strengthen our faith.

The Unique Rock, vv. 13-14

Jesus asked His disciple "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" They replied that public opinion varied between

John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. People tend to associate anything new with the things with which they are already familiar. They were already familiar with John and the prophets. They saw various similarities between Jesus and John, or between Jesus and certain prophets. Their assumptions, however, were seriously flawed. Similarity is not identity. Jesus was unique. There is none other like Him. Historians often list Jesus with the great men of history. This concession is not enough. He cannot be classified with other men, even the greatest and best of men. He stands alone as the unique Rock of all the ages.

The Divine Rock, v. 15-16

The Lord then addressed the question to the apostles: "But whom say ye that I am?" The opinions of others had been described. How would those who knew Him best see Him? Turning the question directly to them was especially appropriate. Ultimately the issue must be, not what others think of Christ, but what do you believe about Him. Modern theological studies often seem to be making observations about religion rather than participating in it. Eventually, however, each person will have to answer the question: "But whom say ye that I am?" — What do you believe about Jesus?

Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was a confession of faith, a faith which had grown out of the evidence demonstrated in the life, teaching, and works he had seen in Jesus. This apostle was sometimes an impetuous man; but here was not an ill-conceived reply. The very wording of the confession presses the certainty of his conviction. In the Greek there are four articles ("the") which make Peter's statement emphatic. Literally, "Thou art **the** Christ, **the** Son of **the** God, **the** living God." There is one living God, and He has one Son, and Jesus is that anointed One. (The term "Christ" is the same as "Messiah" and indicates the One anointed by God.)

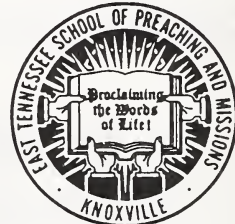
The Revealed Rock, v. 17

A blessing is pronounced on Peter for this declaration. It is important to recognize

that Jesus accepted it without reservation. Either this "Son of man" (v. 13) is Deity, or else He is the ultimate imposter. If ever there was an occasion to correct a mistake, this was it — if indeed Peter had made a mistake. But it was not a mistake. Jesus knew His Father, and He knew Himself. The apostle's confession was not exaggerated flattery, but the foundation truth of redemption.

Notice especially what the Lord shows is the source of such faith. The Father in heaven had revealed it. The apostles had seen the evidence God gave for the Deity of Jesus. It is not our purpose in this article to review that evidence. Instead, what we want to

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underscore is that none can know the true Christ except by revelation from God. Since Christ is revealed to us in the Scriptures (John 20:30-31), no one can know anything about Him except as the Scriptures are the source. Perhaps no notion is more dangerous than the notion that one can discover spiritual truth by his own intuition, or by any other natural means. John 6:44-45 speaks precisely to this point. No one can come to Christ without being taught of God. To be taught of God one must search the Scriptures (John 5:39; Rom. 10:17).

The Rock That Makes Rocks of Men, v. 18

What Jesus said next is most significant. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter. . . ." The background of this statement is found very early in Jesus' ministry. In John 1:42 Jesus said to Simon: "Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." "Cephas" is from the Aramaic for "rock." It corresponds to "Peter," which is from the Greek, meaning the same thing.

This was prophetic. Jesus saw a future for Simon. The Lord's language in John 1:42 is emphatic — "Thou **art** . . . thou **shalt be**." "Simon the son of Jona" indicated who he was by natural parentage. Jesus foresaw the time when he would be fittingly called "Peter" — a rock.

The prophecy of Peter's new name should be considered in connection with Matthew 16:18. It is in response to Simon's confession of faith that Jesus so emphatically declares: "I say also unto thee, That **thou art Peter**" — a rock. What was promised in John 1:42 was now a demonstrated fact. Simon had become a rock because of his faith. It is faith that makes a man "solid as a rock." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4b).

It is important to realize that the word translated "Peter" (which means "rock") is not the same word that Jesus next used when he continued: "And upon this **rock** I will build my church." Some have thought Jesus meant that the church would be built upon Peter, since the name does indeed mean a rock. But different words are used. Peter

is a translation of **petros**, a masculine noun; but the rock upon which Jesus said He would build His church is from a feminine noun, **petra**. The difference in meaning is that the church would be built (figuratively speaking) upon a massive ledge of rock, while Simon's new name only indicated a smaller portion of rock. Yes, there is some similarity in these words; but Peter is no more the rock upon which the church is built than John the Baptist was the Christ.

Some have sought to evade this distinction by arguing that Jesus spoke to Peter in the Aramaic language and that Aramaic makes no such distinctions. This argument fails on several points. In the first place, it cannot be known for certain that Jesus was speaking Aramaic. Jesus and the apostles were fluent in Greek. If Jesus had wanted to use Greek to emphasize this very distinction, it would have been quite natural for Him to do so. In the second place, this objection assumes that enough is known today about Aramaic usage to be certain that no such distinctions were possible. Clearly the distinction would have been possible by the use of additional Aramaic words, which if Matthew did bring over from Aramaic into Greek, would have conveyed the distinction that the Greek shows. Finally, those who deny that there is a significant distinction between **petros** and **petra**, apparently fail to recognize that Matthew, an inspired writer, who wrote in the precise Greek language, did indeed make such a distinction. Our faith in the verbal inspiration of Scripture affirms both the authenticity and the significance of the word distinctions Matthew employed.

On the other hand, faithful brethren, in trying to help people see that Peter is not the rock upon which the church is built, have sometimes overstated the case by saying that **petros** (Peter) only means a very small stone, perhaps a pebble. But such an explanation would trivialize the point Jesus was making. It is true that often in Peter's life he seems small enough to be kicked about by changing circumstances; but it is not this weakness in the apostle that Jesus presses in this text. In this text it is the firmness of Peter's faith that is being recognized. Why would Jesus have given such a pointed prophecy

in John 1:42 regarding Simon's future name, if all he intended was that he would become as a pebble to be tossed about? And why would Jesus use the lofty occasion of Peter's bold confession of faith to declare him to be no more than a piece of gravel? Certainly Simon frequently showed weakness; but never was his character more bold and his convictions more resolute than here when he declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ is the Rock that makes rocks out of men.

The Rock Foundation, v. 18

Paul leaves no doubt as to the foundation of the church. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). While our attention is often directed to how Jesus promised the church — and that is a vital point — we must not overlook that the focus of Matthew 16:13-18 is on Christ Himself. The church would come into being only because He is truly Who He is.

"And I say also unto thee . . ." (18). The emphasis here is not on a contrast between "Thou art Christ" and "Thou art Peter." Instead the emphasis is on how the Father had revealed one truth to Peter and now Jesus would reveal another. "Also" connects the truth revealed by the Father with the additional truth that Jesus would now declare. That truth was not merely that Simon was now Peter. The point about Simon's name was related, but absolutely secondary. Simon showed himself to be a rock by his resolute faith. But it is not Peter's faith that is the focal point; rather it is the object of that faith — Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Upon this rock Christ would build His church. If there had been no Christ,

there could have been no church. The church is, because Christ is.

The Rock That Remains, v. 18

The church would be composed of all who like Peter would be true believers in Christ. (I am careful to say **true** believers, not believers who will not obey.) This brings us the assurance stated in the last of verse 18. Jesus uses the expression "gates of hell [hades]" as a figure of death. Death would not prevail against the church. But whose death is in view? Jesus Himself would die. If He were not the Messiah Peter confessed Him to be, the church would be destroyed before it could even begin. A Messiah held behind the prison doors of death could never hold their faith.

But "God . . . loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). Thus "His soul was not left in hell [hades], neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31). The words and works of Jesus had already revealed this truth to Peter. But to all receptive hearts of all ages, He would be "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). We are in the church because we believe that death did not hold Christ, and that as He has the keys of hades and of death (Rev. 1:18), death will have no power to hold us either.

Through the centuries men and their ideas have been the bases of many movements. But men die, and eventually their ideas and movements die with them. But Jesus Christ is the Rock of Ages, the Rock that the chains of hades could not control and that the bars of death could never hold, the Rock that remains, the church's one foundation.

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Bad Things Do Happen

by George C. Carlisle

The Scripture gives all the good, the bad, and the ugly. Speaking of David, God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). But we find David, this great man of God, falling so low as to commit one of the ugliest of all sins. After impregnating another man's wife, David had the man killed in an effort to cover his own sinful deed. (2 Sam. 11:2-17).

We find God sending Nathan the prophet to David. The prophet revealed that this deed was known to God, and that God was not pleased. After hearing of the evil that was sure to come upon him, "David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Sam. 12:13).

My prayer for the church is that we, God's people, will seek to deal with the bad and ugly. Far too often sin is allowed to fester among us while we smile and look the other way. With David, it was business as usual until Nathan rubbed the King's nose in the stench of his own sins.

All sin has a stench before the nostrils of God, and is punishable by death (Rom. 6:23). "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them, as it is written the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7). "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened for examples and they are written

for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:9-11). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). The Scripture says "restore." I realize it takes time for some wounds to heal, but we must ask ourselves, are we interested more in restoration, or public relations?

Having fear of public, and brotherhood reactions there are congregations allowing murmuring, sowing of discord, and immorality to go unchecked. Growth is measured simply by observing the number baptized, the number in attendance, and the size of the contribution. These are helpful indicators, but they alone do not give a true picture of spiritual growth. We must become more active in restoring the erring, otherwise it shows we have more love for numbers than for the souls of men.

The Scripture is profitable for doctrine, teaching the lost sinner what he must do to be saved. The Scripture is also profitable "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Let us salute the ministers who dare preach the doctrine, leading men to Christ, as well as reproofing, correcting, and instructing the brethren as needed. We should salute the elderships and congregations who dare to be supportive of such men, preaching the whole counsel of God.

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How Oral Roberts "Led Me to Christ," I

by Jay C. Morris

[Editor's note: This is the first installment of a three-part series on how Jay Morris came to the truth. Brother Morris is now retired from secular employment, but works as a full-time volunteer for East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Of course Oral Roberts did not actually lead him to Christ; but it was in the pursuit of Roberts' offers that brother Morris finally found the truth. Be sure to read all three installments.]

This is the story of how I became a Christian. I was not always a Christian, although I ignorantly thought that I was. But today I know that I am a Christian, and I thank our long-suffering God, who was willing to bear with me in my ignorance for 52 years. Yet, ignorant and undeserving as I was, He still took me in, extending me full forgiveness for my sins, and full rights of citizenship in His kingdom. All He required of me was that by faith I would obey His commandments and dedicate the rest of my life to His service.

Early Life

During most of my life I didn't really know what Christianity was, or that there was anything such as being simply a Christian, or that anyone could choose to become just a Christian. I did not know anything about personal salvation, or even anything about being "saved." I assumed that everyone around me was a Christian, unless he was a Jew. And as to the rest of the world's religions (such as Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, etc.), I had no idea as to how they fit into the picture. In short, I was totally ignorant, and not very concerned regarding religious matters in general.

I remember in my school days that whenever we had to fill out some form that re-

quired us to name our religion, I was in a quandary as to how to answer. My father had died in a flu epidemic when I was six and a half years old, and I don't remember ever having attended any church. After his death my mother placed us three children in orphanage-type institutions. I entered Girard College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This is a forty-six acre campus within a ten-foot-high stone wall, containing many large and beautiful buildings. Our religious training here was strictly non-sectarian. I say strictly, because if any graduate of the school became a clergyman of any denomination, he was barred from the campus according to the will of the founder. Nevertheless, boys who were Catholic, or had some other religious upbringing, were permitted to go outside the school for the Sunday morning service if it was their mother's wish. So, in answer to the question of our religion on official forms, we were told to enter the word "Protestant." This solved the problem neatly for us and sounded intelligent as well. Little did we know that historically the name "Protestant" was given to those who were protesting against the evils of the Roman Catholic religion.

Our Sunday worship at Girard was conducted in the chapel, a truly beautiful marble building of unusual and imposing architecture, whose memory is cherished by every alumnus. The chapel also housed, nestled in the choir gallery at one end of the building, a mighty electric organ, in which the school took great pride. Our worship service consisted of (not necessarily in this order): introductory organ music, recital of the "Lord's Prayer," a Scripture reading by a member of the senior class, a non-sectarian address by a prominent business man, or a teacher, or perhaps a successful alumnus.

Once we even had as our speaker, Cornelius Aloysius McGillocudy (otherwise known as Connie Mack, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team). I recall this well because his full name had been spelled out on the announcement board, and it took up most of the space. Our service also included a prayer rendered by one of the officials of the school and the singing of hymns to the music of the organ. Even over the voices of 1500 boys swollen in song, the sonorous tones of this mighty instrument, played by a master organist, were heard well.

Our religious instruction at Girard, as best I can recall, was confined to the elementary school grades. During these years we were housed in groups of about thirty boys. The groups were known as Section A, Section B, etc., and each section was in the charge of a governess, or house mistress. Our lives were very regimented and we went everywhere in columns of two. On Sunday afternoon, following a recreation period, we would come into our living quarters and the governess would read to us, or more often have us read from the Bible: usually from one of the gospel accounts of the New Testament, or from one of the more familiar books of the Old Testament. This instruction was not according to any formal lesson plan and it never involved any interpretation of Scripture, but varied from grade to grade according to the individual governess in charge. We were not taught about the plan of salvation, nor that Christ is the central theme of the Bible. Neither was the Bible presented as something essential to our well-being. But we spent a lot of time memorizing various Psalms. Most remembered are the 1st, 15th, 23rd, etc., and in our evening service in the Junior School auditorium, we would be called by sections to stand and recite these Psalms. This session was conducted by one of the school officials who would name the Psalm, and call on the various groups in turn to stand and recite a number of verses until the Psalm was completed. He would notice if any section did better, and admonish the others to improve.

At this point, since this is a personal account, I feel I should give you a little more information about Girard College. As I said, my mother was widowed while we children

were all of school age. Since my mother had only a third grade education and no means of support, she arranged to place us in institutions that would provide for our needs while she tried to make a living working as a domestic. My brother, eleven years old, was beyond the age of admission for Girard College, and was placed in Hershey Industrial School. There, boys worked and lived on a system of dairy farms which provided the milk for the Hershey Chocolate Corporation. My sister was placed in a home for girls in Philadelphia, but was taken out when my mother later remarried. I, the youngest, was enrolled in Girard College, a school for "poor, white, male orphans," according to the will of the founder, a naturalized Frenchman, named Stephen Girard. Obviously the word "college" is used in the French sense and not the American, as the college only provides a twelfth-grade education.

Stephen Girard was an enterprising Frenchman from Bordeaux, who settled in Philadelphia and made his fortune as a banker, merchant and mariner. He became prominent for his humanitarian role during the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia in 1793, as the chief financier of the War of 1812, and as a philanthropist. The major part of his fortune he left for the founding of Girard College which opened in 1848. His will specified that the school was to be for the benefit of "poor, white, male orphans of the city of Philadelphia, and the state of Pennsylvania." It continued to be so until after World War II, when economic conditions brought many changes to the area, and public opinion and protests forced the will to be broken, opening the school to blacks, and more recently, to girls.

Adult Complacency

After I graduated from Girard, I had no particular religious belief to follow, and not knowing how to decide which church to attend, I simply didn't go to any. Occasionally I would go with my mother to the Christian Science Church in which she had developed an interest over the years. It seemed to have a non-sectarian air to it which appealed to me; possibly it reminded me of our services at Girard. My fondest memories of Girard were the times spent in the

chapel building, and the music and singing we enjoyed there.

World War II was in progress at this time. In October, 1944, I was inducted into the military service, and after completing basic infantry training, I was given two weeks leave. Then I was sent to Ft. Meade, Maryland, to have new prescription lenses made for my gas mask, which I had lost. This side trip I now see as providential, because it meant several weeks delay in going overseas, so that by the time I finally reached the combat theater most of the fighting was over. While I was at Ft. Meade I began to feel some trepidation about the prospect of going into combat with a mortal enemy and getting shot up or blown to pieces. I was considerably worried about my chances of survival. Our instructors in basic training had told us of their combat experiences, and from war films, newsreels, and news reports, we replacement trainees had received the clear message that we would be in a life and death struggle, and our own "blood and guts" were at issue. All the romance had been stripped away. I remember that I wrote to my mother about this, and she sent me the name and address of a Christian Science couple who lived in the area, and I went to visit them. I don't remember any of our conversation, but before I left they gave me two small books — a Bible and a copy of **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**, by Mary Baker Eddy. Although I have kept these books to this day, I confess that I never read Mrs. Eddy's book, and the Bible only occasionally, because the great war soon came to a close, and I assumed I was out of danger. Therefore, I put these books aside, not without feelings of guilt; but I just did not know how to apply them to my life, so I returned my attention to worldly matters.

My unit now became part of the occupation force in Germany and in the fall of 1945, after doing duty in various small country towns, we were ordered to the capital city of Berlin to relieve the 82nd Airborne Division, who were being sent home because of their long combat service. Berlin was a city in ruin with piles of rubble everywhere. The people there were defeated, and they knew it, and looked it. They were at the

mercy of the four powers of the occupying force, even down to the lowest private.

While I was in the big city of Berlin, I decided that it would be the best time and place to "sow my wild oats." I had never been a rowdy person, certainly never a hooligan. I had never drank anything but a little beer on a couple of occasions; but in wide-open Berlin, schnapps and cognac were easy to come by, and one could buy anything with American cigarettes, even girlfriends. I decided that I would try everything. During off-duty evenings some of us would go into town and get liquor of some kind, and spend the evening in the Enlisted Men's Club drinking and eating peanuts. Nearly every time some of the men would drink too much and get to shouting; then fighting would break out; and finally they would get carried out by the MPs. It was always an ugly sight. I remember thinking about the terrible face we American conquerors were showing to our vanquished foes as we wallowed in the gutters before them. Needless to say, this kind of behavior was not allowed to go on unchecked for long. My own tendency was to get happy as I drank, and then get sick, which brought an end to my foolishness, and all I wanted was to get back to the barracks and sleep.

Once again, as I now believe, providence intervened and put a crimp in my wild oats sowing. After one of the aforementioned evenings, while still feeling the effects of the alcohol, I and another soldier in the same condition went on duty in the guard house at the "Reichsdruckerei," (German equivalent of the US Bureau of Engraving and

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Printing). While we were there, two attractive women, one was blond and one was brunette, came in and asked to speak with one of the German officials, whom we immediately summoned. While they waited we attempted to talk with them and learned that they were mother and daughter. They had come in search of a friend or relative they had lost track of during the bombings. After their meeting I persuaded these ladies to write down their address for me so that I might pay them a visit.

Of course I wanted to visit them as soon as possible, but when I looked at that strange address, I realized that I had no idea of how to get there. But the problem was solved when a German boy approached me wanting to sell a camera. I offered him cigarettes if he would conduct me to their house, to which he readily agreed. I won't go into details here, but I became friendly with the Kopacz family and began dating their daughter, Vera. Our relationship grew as I learned to speak their language, so that we could communicate better. The following spring I proposed to Vera and she accepted with her parents' happy approval. This meant a sacrifice for them, as she was their only child and helper, and German families trying to live in the ruins of Berlin needed all the help they could get. Since marriage between American troops and German nationals was not yet allowed, all we could do was make

application and wait for the law to be changed. But in August of that year, 1946, I was sent back to the States, so I promised to send for Vera as soon as the law permitted. In April of 1947 she arrived in the United States, and we were married in my home town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania on May 24. Eventually we moved to the Washington, D. C., area where we settled and raised two children. All did not go well with our marriage, however, because we had different interests; and without God in our lives, we began to grow apart. We tried religion at first, believing that a proper family should go to church, but we did not make a sincere commitment, and without any encouraging friend or relative, we soon dropped out. We took our marriage vows lightly, and ignoring our spiritual needs we tried to find fulfillment in our jobs and social activities. This did not work; we were going two different ways. Finally, after 28 years of marriage, we decided to legally separate, break up our home, and go our own ways. We reasoned that since our children were grown and had left the home, they would not suffer so much. Since neither of us had any plans to remarry we decided to remain friends, and we would get together occasionally for birthday and holiday celebrations.

(To Be Continued)

A Sending Church

By Ernest Stewart

I am privileged to work with a rather unusual congregation, one which is almost unique among us. It is not unique in its doctrines, in its worship, nor in the social status of her members. It is not unique in its size, nor in the impact which it has within its county. And in the particular character of her uniqueness we wish that she were not unique; that is, we wish that every other congregation were putting us to shame in this respect.

The Wilkesboro Church of Christ is not a large congregation. The average attendance

is about eighty-five, with the number not infrequently reaching over the one hundred mark. But this congregation experiences a great blessing from the Lord which brings great joy to our hearts. Three of our members have departed from us to go "into all the world" with the message of salvation. Others are planning and preparing to go. Other congregations in the state have graciously pitched in to help with their support; but I am pleased to report that the Wilkesboro congregation has, with one voice, accepted the position that it is our

responsibility to stand behind these three who have gone out from us, whatever the expense and the cost may be. In one case the family of the missionary fully provides the necessary support. The other two are supported by the congregation with the help of others. In each case, the commitment to mission work is a long-term, perhaps lifetime, commitment.

Beth Elledge gave up a position as a teacher in the public school system to go to Yugoslavia. She spent two happy years in her work in Yugoslavia. She is now a part of the AIM missions' study program at Sunset School of Preaching, but she is anxious to return to her work in Yugoslavia.

Robert (Robby) Lewis at age thirty-eight gave up a position as a corporate pilot for Lowe's Corporation (based in Wilkesboro) to live on subsistence income as a missionary. Having completed a tour of duty in Malaysia he is now studying language in Germany and has been invited by Reiner Kalus to move with him into what was formerly East Germany in May of this year.

Barry Bentley has now spent nearly a full year beating the trails through the bush in the land of New Guinea in order to tell the tribes the Good News of salvation. Barry was only eighteen when he left us. We have heard not one suggestion that he has any regret over his decision.

David Phillips, a graduate of Pepperdine University, plans to leave for one of the African nations this summer. His is a five-year commitment.

Two other members of the congregation are enrolled in the next missions' training program of "Missions 1000" in Memphis, Tennessee.

And, to top it all off, the congregation hired an older missionary to do its preaching and said to him at the time of invitation: "We do not want you to do less for your work in Israel, but more."

Recently I was asked to tell the Wilkesboro story to the preacher's forum which meets at the Providence Road church building in Charlotte. In preparing for that presentation I requested that each family of the Wilkesboro congregation write a statement which would express their feelings about the missions' program. I would like

to share some of these statements with the readers of *Carolina Christian*.

"We have been so blessed by Beth and Robby and Barry. Their commitment to spreading God's Word has had a tremendous impact on the congregation and myself. Our unity and sense of purpose has really emerged."

"The efforts in this area have provided great examples for use in teaching our children."

"Beth, Robby and Barry are such an encouragement and wonderful example. They demonstrate sacrifice that puts any excuse I may have for not doing service for the Lord to shame. I admire their desire to live for the Lord and I feel privileged to be involved with the ministry no matter how small the part."

"As a body we are blessed by: a united effort; a common learning process; united prayer for the individual's safety and success; a larger concern for an outward reach; an opportunity to help those who will and can go."

"We think the whole congregation has to go the extra mile to keep these persons in the field, to keep them encouraged, to

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keep them motivated. In doing this we have to work together, reach a little deeper, try a little harder, set a few more goals. The result has been the blessing of a more cohesive unit, a stronger bond here, a stronger bond between us and those we support . . . there isn't time to disagree, to nit-pick. Further, we have the very special blessing of knowing that we are reaching the world."

"Our missionaries have blessed me by helping me keep focused. A line from Robby's letter to us . . . basically, 'it's easier when I think about the long-range goal — just make it to heaven and take as many with me as possible.'"

"I've seen a leap in fellowship, interest, purpose, and involvement with the sending off of our missionaries."

"To see our young people be involved in the Lord's work is a great inspiration to those of us who labor in the home fields. Their work as missionaries has also been

noticed by the communities they are from. May God bless them and keep them in His care."

"The missions' program here has been a blessing to me and my family. I teach my three children that helping in this program is necessary for the Lord's work. We are able to share the joy of baptisms of new brothers and sisters whom we may never meet while on earth. I was very happy to hear that our 1991 youth rally will center around mission work. I feel it is important for our youth to hear about mission work and maybe some will make it their goal, as Barry did."

Our God has never failed to pour out rich blessings upon those who do His will.

[Ernest Stewart himself has been much involved in overseas missions, especially in the nation of Israel. We are thankful that he is recovering from serious heart problems and surgery. P. O. Box 81, Wilkesboro, NC 28697]

Enthusiasm: The Mark of a Healthy Church

by Mark Swindall

Mr. Wrigley of chewing gum fame had a sign on his desk that read, "Nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without enthusiasm."

One manager of mine many years ago said, "You can show up at work without your brains and I will say nothing . . . but the day you show up without enthusiasm . . . that is your last day!"

Enthusiasm is as contagious as measles. I believe it! Enthusiasm is dynamite. The word enthusiasm comes from two Greek words, **en theos** meaning "God in you," or "full of God." Being enthusiastic is the way God made us.

You were born with enthusiasm. Did you ever watch a baby? My, how enthusiastic they are. Babies are alive, vibrant, excited, and active. Little children want to see everything, do everything, and be part of every-

thing. Little children not only want to, they believe they can do anything; they believe they can be anything. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, "Except you be converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

Batsell Barrett Baxter once said, "The genius of the human being is to carry the spirit of a child into old age."

This applies at church too. When we greet visitors, tell them something good about the church; don't expose the warts. When you participate in worship, do it with a smile, not a frown. Talk people up, not down. Talk ministries up, not down. Talk leadership up, not down.

Is everything perfect in the church? No! Will abundant enthusiasm and a good attitude influence people for good? Yes! Enthusiasm — catch it today!

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News & Notes

by Dennis Conner

For a people who profess to believe in evangelism and the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20, we have displayed a woeful lack of interest in foreign missions over the past 20 years. While estimates vary, depending on the source one goes to, it is generally agreed that American churches of Christ have less than 500 people in the foreign fields to preach the gospel to a lost world, and an estimate of 500 is generous. We talk a lot about taking Christ to the world, but talk is cheap. We thank God for the larger churches in the Carolinas that are involved in missions, but it is unfortunate that most of the smaller churches have convinced themselves that there is little or nothing that they can do in this area. Thus, we were greatly encouraged by the 1991 Missions Seminar

that was conducted last January 25-27 by the BREWER ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST in Winston-Salem, NC. Brewer Road averages around 100 for worship on Sunday mornings, but has been actively involved with missions for many years. They are currently supporting the Ed Ritchie family in Mons, Belgium. Also worthy of our imitation and commendation is the WILKESBORO CHURCH OF CHRIST in Wilkesboro, NC. This church of around 80 members has sent three of its own people to the mission field and a fourth is currently making preparations to go. Their preacher is Ernie Stewart, who was one of the pioneer missionaries to Israel in the 1960's. However, Wilkesboro was already involved deeply in missions before brother Stewart

came to them. Thank God for small churches with great faith and vision. . . . Speaking of small churches, it had been announced earlier that the Fifth Annual Small Church Workshop at the YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Yadkinville, NC, would be conducted May 23-24. Please note that the date has been changed to **May 9-10** to avoid a scheduling conflict with another event. The theme of this year's workshop is "Building Through Caring." The design of the workshop is to deal with the unique needs and challenges of the small church and to explore ways to make the small church more effective. . . . The THOMASVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST has recently reached a milestone. As of January 1 the church has become self-supporting. Since the beginning of the year attendance has been averaging 124 on Sunday morning. The elders are Reid Davis and Bob Hoots. The preacher is Rob Albright. . . . The CENTRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST in Spartanburg, SC, will be hosting its Sixth Annual Youth Rally **May 3-5**. At last year's rally over 600 youth and adults were registered. . . . Brother B.J. Barr, who preaches for the church at Bishopville, SC, was one of the keynote speakers at the recent Freed-Hardeman University Lectures in February. The theme of the lectureship was "Advancing Christianity." Brother Barr did the Carolinas proud. He

emphasized that the church should be advancing Christianity instead of digging in to defend it. . . . One of the first Scud missiles launched by Iran in its first attack on Israel landed near the home of brother Eli Abraham, the Jewish preacher for the church in Tel Aviv. He was only slightly injured, but his house was so damaged that he was not able to live in it. Fortunately, brother Abraham's wife and son were visiting in the States.

Calendar of Events:

April 8-11 — The annual Carolina Lectures, Charlotte Ave. church of Christ, Rock Hill, SC. Theme: "The Word of God — Psalm 119."

April 20 — Ladies' Day at the Essex Village church of Christ, Charleston, SC.

April 27 — Ladies' Day, Friendly Ave. church of Christ, Greensboro, NC.

April 27 — Teacher's Workshop, the church of Christ in West Jefferson, NC.

May 3-5 — Sixth Annual Youth Rally, Central church of Christ, Spartanburg, SC.

May 9-10 — Fifth Annual Small Church Workshop, Yadkinville church of Christ, Yadkinville, NC. Theme: "Building Through Caring."

Book Review

by Jim Mullican

Dynamic Living in Difficult Days, Doug Parsons, Star Bible Publications, Forth Worth, Texas 76118, 1989, 125 pages, paper, \$4.95.

Anyone familiar with the work of Doug Parsons, preacher for the Golf Course Road Church of Christ in Midland, Texas, knows him to be an excellent writer of bulletin articles. His insightful articles are reprinted in bulletins throughout the brotherhood. His recent book, **Dynamic Living in Difficult Days**, is a collection of brief essays on the problems which plague the Christian living in a non-Christian world. Each one is dealt

with in a unique way.

Preachers will find the book a useful source of bulletin material, and each article may be freely used as long as the credit line printed at the bottom of each page is included. With some additional material and development, many of the topics could be developed into good sermons. Any Christian will find it interesting and inspirational reading, providing good material for daily meditation.

[Jim is the preacher for the Central Haywood Church, P. O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]

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“The Word of God”
Psalm 119

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee.”
(Psalm 119:11)

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“The Interpretation of God’s Word”

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Walter Edwards
Jeff Trotter
B.J. Barr

Jack Cooper
Arthur Guest
Mark Claypool
Ernie Stewart
Jim Hunter
David Vaughn
Richard McWilliams
David Powell
Charles Fetters
Robert Curry

Special Ladies Class

Speakers: Terry Ward, Janet Bickle, Peggy Pharr, Julie Smith

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Christianity Is a God Religion

by Mark Swindall

God is the issue. Don't forget that God sent Jesus. Don't forget that Jesus is God. Don't forget that Jesus came to reveal God to men. God too often is involved in "bad press." Hurricanes, tornados, wars...God invariably gets blamed for just about everything. Remember these things about God:

We are always in a hurry. God is never in a hurry. Time is passing quickly, urgency abounds, sometimes it is too late. God is eternal. God has always known everything. Tomorrow is as real as today. God has a plan, not a timetable. That plan is His, not ours. God does not hurry. God is never in a rush. God knows and God cares. We must understand and believe it.

We are sometimes wrong. God is never wrong. This is hard for humans to grasp. It is mind-boggling. God never has made a mistake. God never will make a mistake! God does right. God knows what is going on...even in the Middle East. God is in control. We must understand and believe it.

We sometimes try to act like God. Only God is God! This is crucial. Grace, mercy, forgiveness. Many of us will not let God be God. Jonah even tried to protect God against Himself. Some of us will not even accept those God has forgiven. Forgiveness is not a God problem...it is a human problem. We must understand and believe it.

Christianity is a God religion!



editorial

by David Pharr

In a few days we will mark the third anniversary of the death of Howard Winters. Brother Winters went to be with the Lord on May 11, 1988. For almost twenty years he had been the beloved Editor of **Carolina Christian**, a responsibility he continued until just a few weeks before his passing. For thirty-seven years he was a gospel preacher, located for twenty-five of them in the Carolinas.

I have just finished reading again his book entitled **Up To Bethany**. Though somewhat brief, it is a careful and clear work which powerfully sets forth the restoration principle and plea which is advocated by faithful churches of Christ. Howard was not ashamed to proclaim the New Testament as providing the Divine pattern for the church. On page 15 of the book he wrote:

"...To go back to the Bible is either the right thing to do or else it is not the right thing to do. But if it is the right thing to do to return to the Scriptures to settle **one** matter, it is the right thing to do to go back to them to settle **all** things. That is to say, if we go back to the Bible for anything we have admitted the validity of the restoration principle and are therefore obligated to go back to the Bible for everything. If any doctrine or principle revealed in the Scriptures is bound on us then all doctrines and principles (which are applicable to us) are bound. Who has been given the right to say that one doctrine or principle is bound but that another doctrine or principle is not bound — that we must go back to the Bible for one doctrine or principle but not for another doctrine or principle? Who has the authority to say that we must go back to the Bible on the subject of faith but not on baptism? Who can decide that we ought to return to the Bible's teaching on repentance but not on the matter of the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week? Who can determine that we must appeal to the Bible for blood atonement but not for the blood-purchased

church? The fact is, we simply have not been given the divine right to choose and select the Scriptural subjects we will accept and practice. We must accept them all or else we have no reason to accept any. We must either obey the Bible as a whole or else we must wholly reject it. The restoration principle leaves no middle ground, if followed consistently."

Howard wrote several books, all of which have contributed significantly to the brotherhood's literature. He regarded **Up To Bethany**, however, as being his most im-

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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portant volume. In the preface, after making reference to other things he had written, he said: "But if one can read only one thing that I have written, I would like for it to be this little book on the Restoration Plea." Such was his commitment to New Testament Christianity.

In just the three years since brother Winters died, there have been some startling things develop in our brotherhood. Some who were once thought to uphold restoration principles are now saying there is no New Testament pattern for the church to follow. Others are moving farther toward a modernistic view of Scripture. If Howard were still with us he would know how to address these issues with fairness and firmness. I will not presume to speak for him; but of this I am sure: All he ever wrote or preached, from the day he became a Christian, till he wrote his final page, testifies of his loyalty to the Bible and to the Bible alone as our rule of faith and practice. May God give us more men with such solid convictions.

The present staff and board of **Carolina Christian**, joined by an uncountable host of others, want to express yet again our love

for the memory of this faithful brother. To his beloved wife Minnie, to Susie, Tim, and Jimmy — to all his family and closest friends: we continue to share in your loss and to rejoice that such a man once was a part of our lives also.

(**Up To Bethany**, as well as all of brother Winters' books still in print, can be ordered from Carolina Christian Bookstore. **Up To Bethany** is \$3.95; 12 or more at \$2.98. This is recommended reading for every Christian.)

Mission Opportunity

Brother C. E. Colley, an elder of the New York Avenue Church of Christ in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, has been conducting an extensive Bible correspondence program for several years. He recently told me of having had numerous students over several years from Greene County, North Carolina. The county seat is Snow Hill. As far as I know there is no congregation in Greene County. Any faithful brother who would be willing to follow up on the contacts brother Colley has made should write to him in care of New York Avenue Church of Christ, P. O. Box 3052, Oak Ridge, TN 37831.

Managing Editor's Column

The Ministry of Reconciliation

by Johnny Melton

Every Christian is a minister. This view of ministry is consistent with the concept of the "priesthood of believers" set forth in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. . . ." The phrase "a royal priesthood" describing Christians is taken from Exodus 19:3-6 where Israel is described as a nation of priests. Concerning this passage, James A. Wharton was exactly right when he remarked, "The only conceivable priestly function for such a people is ministry on behalf of those who stand outside of God's explicit holiness (Wharton, James A. "Theology and Ministry in the Hebrew Scriptures." In **A Biblical Basis for Minis-**

try, eds. Shelp, Earl E. and Ronald Sunderland. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

The function that God intended for Israel to perform as a nation of priests can serve as a model for Christian ministry. As a nation of priests, Israel was to mediate God's light and salvation to the nations. "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).

Certainly, it was God's ministry to fulfill the promise that He had made to Abram

in Genesis 12:1-3: "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"

However, as the promise states, God intended to bless all people through Abram. One of the means by which God intended to keep His promise to Abram was through the nation Israel. "Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites' " (Ex. 19:3-6).

Israel's ability to function as a nation of priests was based on the condition that she obey God fully and keep His covenant (v. 5). Israel understood that condition and responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said" (Ex. 19:8). It is a tragic truth that Israel did not keep covenant with God and while God did, in fact, keep His promise to Abraham, Israel's participation in that ministry was primarily passive.

Christian ministry can be understood in light of the "kingdom of priests" paradigm. When one becomes a Christian, one becomes a part of the New Testament "kingdom of priests" (see Rev. 1:6). "The only conceivable priestly function for such a people is ministry on behalf of those who stand outside of God's explicit holiness" to quote Wharton again. God is still in the business of keeping His promise to Abraham. He still has a ministry in which He is engaged. However, God intends for Christians to participate in that ministry as His instruments. Matthew 28:19, 20 clearly indicates that God intends for Christians to be actively engaged in ministry. "Therefore go and make disci-

ples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The ministry of making disciples is a function of God's ministry of reconciliation. Consider 2 Corinthians 5:18-6:1: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as

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though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain."

This ministry of reconciliation involves a "message of reconciliation," the proclamation of which is the responsibility of men, not God. The "message of reconciliation" Paul said was committed to him (v. 19). The "message of reconciliation" is the good news that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (v. 19). This is the good news of the Great Commission. "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). When Paul shared the "message of reconciliation" as the ambassador of Christ, it was "as though God were making his appeal through [him]" (v. 20). Paul was engaged in God's ministry as God's in-

strument. He described himself in 2 Corinthians 6:1 as one of "God's fellow workers." Christians today have committed to them the same "message of reconciliation." The work of reconciliation is God's function. But it is still "as though God were making his appeal through us" (v. 20).

Christian ministry involves a wholehearted commitment. There is no place for pride and vainglory, simply a spirit of service. Paul put it like this: "So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well" (2 Cor. 12:15). Paul was humbled by the knowledge that God's grace was the means by which he was able to succeed in his ministry (see 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Christians today will be humbled when they acknowledge the fact that they (being sinners) are empowered by the grace of God to participate in His ministry of reconciliation by sharing with others the "message of reconciliation."

The Sin of Racial Prejudice, I

by Paul E. Jarrett

(Note: The following is the written text of a sermon I delivered at the morning services of the Archdale Church of Christ in Charlotte, NC, on March 17, 1991. It was delivered as an addendum to a five-lesson study I had just completed on the "one-another" commandments of the New Testament that describe the relationship that needs to exist among members of the Lord's Body, the church. PEJ)

In the initial lesson in the five-part series we've just concluded I gave emphasis to the fact that if we are to truly obey the "one-another" commandments, and thereby achieve the relationship Christ desires us to have as members in His church, we must have a strong sense of and appreciation for the oneness that is ours in Him. As was also emphasized in that same lesson, this oneness is a oneness that is to be seen as existing despite the fact that we may differ in respect to our abilities (i.e., function within the body); level of spiritual maturity (i.e., both

knowledge and practice); economic and/or social status; and ethnic and/or racial identity.

Any of the things just mentioned can (and often do) pose a threat to the oneness that is ours in Christ when held with a spirit of partiality. However, it is the intent of this lesson to focus on what I see to be a major barrier to **our** (and I'm speaking here not just of the Archdale church, but of churches of Christ everywhere) truly bearing witness to the world around us of the oneness that is ours in Christ Jesus — **the sin of racial prejudice.**

I want to begin this study by addressing the question: "Why did God make different races?" It may not be possible to answer this question to everyone's satisfaction since I know of no text that responds to this question in just so many words. In fact I do not know of a text that tells us when God called into existence the different races.

Assuming we all accept the Genesis ac-

count of creation, we know that in the beginning there was only a single couple — Adam and Eve — from whom all races have descended. There was no white Adam and Eve, black Adam and Eve, and yellow Adam and Eve. There may have been a black Adam and a white Eve who gave birth to a yellow Seth, though I seriously doubt it.

It would seem more likely that God placed within the original genetic code of that first couple that which allowed for the development of different races in much the same manner that the original canines had a genetic makeup which allowed for the development of dogs, wolves, foxes, and other similar kinds of animals. We can be certain of one thing. While men are not beasts, birds, or fish, any more than dogs are cats, all men (be they black, white, yellow, or red) are of the same flesh (1 Cor. 15:39), and are (as the song says) equally precious in God's sight!

Some have suggested that the different races came to be following the flood, as each descended from a different one of Noah's three sons. This might seem to be a convenient explanation since Noah had three sons and there is generally accepted to be three races (though there are groups such as the American Indian that do not seem to fit conveniently into any one of these three racial identities). However, the listings of the descendants of Noah's sons in Genesis, chapter 10, and the peoples they fathered do not appear to support this claim.

Furthermore, I might note here that the theory that the three races descended from Noah's sons was popularized by those who were often attempting to justify their racist attitudes towards blacks whom they were attempting to identify with the curse of servitude placed on Ham and his son Canaan. This claim is totally spurious since the descendants of Canaan upon whom the curse fell were the Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, etc. (Gen. 10:15-20), who fell under the rule of the Israelites when they conquered the land of Canaan.

I would suggest to you that if there does exist a specific moment when God called the different races into existence (something I personally doubt) it is more likely to have occurred in conjunction with God's calling

into existence different languages at the time of the Tower of Babel as described in Genesis, chapter 11. Even if this was not the point of origin for the races, it is an incident that sheds light on why God chose to divide men into different languages, ethnic groups, and racial identities.

The answer to the question of why God made us different can be seen in what was occurring in men's lives at a time when they were all "one people" speaking the same language. Those of us who have thought, "If only we were all alike, what great things we could accomplish," can learn something from this incident. They were all alike. They all spoke the same language. And, yes, God Himself said that "nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them" (Gen. 11:6). Yet, despite circumstances which we might see as ideal, God stepped in and confused their language so that they could not understand one another's speech and thus put a stop to their work.

Why did God do this? Didn't He want the people to be united and to accomplish great things? The obvious answer is that God did what He did because the people were united in their opposition to His will. However, I believe there is a deeper message to be derived from this incident. It has to do with the kind of unity God wants. Furthermore, it serves to answer the question of why God made us different.

The kind of unity God wants is not a unity based on externals such as race, social status, economic status, education, or ethnic origin. They had that kind of unity on the plains of Babel, and it was leading to sin. Rather, God wants the kind of unity that is to be found in Christ Jesus — a unity in which racial, ethnic, economic, and social differences are not seen as barriers to our oneness. It is the kind of unity that flows from hearts filled with God's love and righteousness. It is not the kind of unity that harbors bitterness and malice, which are contrary to God's nature and which most often find expression in our treatment of those who are "different" than us.

The question that must be answered in the church is this: What kind of unity are we seeking to promote? Is it the kind that God condemned on the plains of Babel, or

is it the kind that God commends to us in Christ? I believe God made us different in order to cause us to confront that question and answer it honestly. My aim in this lesson is not to pick on anyone, nor to excuse anyone. Rather, I want to challenge each of us to confront the issue of the prejudices that exist in the hearts of all of us in various forms, and to varying degrees.

I would suggest to you that John 1:43-51 is the perfect text for use in addressing the issue of prejudices. In this text we find a description of what occurred when Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus. If you've not read this text recently I encourage you to take a moment to do so before continuing on with this reading. As you do, pay close attention to Nathanael's initial reaction to Philip's reference to Jesus as the Messiah. Also, take note of the example Nathanael set for us by his willingness to investigate Philip's claim. Finally, notice how Jesus described Nathanael's character. There are three points regarding prejudice that I want to make based on the events described in this text.

First, I want us to see that there is a sense in which all of us are prejudiced in that all of us are inclined to have certain preconceived ideas and hold opinions based on what may appear to be valid grounds, but which are in reality lacking in a complete understanding of all the facts. What I've just given you in this rather long sentence is an adaptation of the primary definition of prejudice found in the dictionary. It is also descriptive of Nathanael's initial reaction when Philip first informed him that Jesus of Nazareth was the longed-for Messiah.

Nathanael's immediate response was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" I think he said that because Nathanael **knew** what Nazarenes were like. He'd "read all the statistics" and had found them to be true of the few Nazarenes he'd ever known personally. In responding as he did, Nathanael was simply expressing the same kind of prejudices we all manifest when we make judgments about individuals based on group statistics and/or generalizations based on prior experiences with others of the same group. The problem was that Nathanael had not met this particular Nazarene, and if he

had allowed his prejudices to control him as we sometimes do, he never would have.

However, the second point I want to make from our text has to do with the example Nathanael set for us. He did not yield to his prejudice, but instead was willing to do as Philip requested. He was willing to "come and see." I'm convinced that a positive response to this three-word invitation is what holds the key to overcoming all prejudices. It is an invitation we all need to respond to in our treatment of each person, because as followers of Christ we are under obligation to respond to each person as an individual.

We are under obligation to respond to each person individually, and not a part of some group, because that is the example Jesus set for us to follow. He set this example for us when he talked to a **woman**, and worse yet a **Samaritan** in John 4. He set this example again at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-39), when he let a woman touch him who was "one of those kind of women." He did it again when he had the audacity to eat with a **short little tax collector** named Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-7).

Christ's example of relating to people as

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individuals and not according to class, or group, is not an easy one to follow. Just ask Simon Peter, who had to be thrice-prodded by God to get him to go into the household of a **Gentile** named Cornelius. However, the lesson Peter learned then is one that we must all learn. The lesson is that "God is no respecter of persons." God does not judge men and women on the basis of class, or group. Rather, He deals with us as individuals and accepts all who fear Him and do right (Acts 10:34, 35).

In the second chapter of James' epistle we are taught that we must follow Jesus' example in not being a respecter of persons, for to do otherwise is to blaspheme the name by which we are called (2:7); to violate the royal law to love our neighbor as ourself (2:8); to commit sin and be convicted as a transgressor (2:9); to be guilty of violating all the law as surely as if we'd committed adultery or murder (2:10,11); and to deny ourselves access to the mercy upon which we are all dependent for salvation (2:12,13).

We cannot read James 2:1-13 and take the sin of partiality lightly even though it is not an easy sin to avoid. Peter learned this in an incident described in Galatians 2:11-13 where Paul had to rebuke him because he yielded to the pressure of the Jews not to associate with the Gentiles. We are told how that on this occasion even Barnabas, the "son of encouragement," yielded to the pressure being exerted to exhibit prejudice. However, no matter how difficult it may be to

avoid the sin of partiality we must do so. We must "respect what is **right**" as we exhibit love without hypocrisy and display humility of mind through association (identification, perhaps) with the lowly in keeping with the example of Christ and the command of God (Rom. 12:9, 16, 17).

We can, and will, do what is right if we possess the character of Nathanael. This is the third point I want to note from our text. As already noted, Nathanael had his prejudice, but he was honest enough to express it; and was willing to investigate it; and deal with Jesus as an individual. He was able to do this because he was, according to Christ's own description of him, an Israelite "in whom is no guile."

I said earlier that we all have prejudices and I firmly believe that. We all hold opinions about certain groups of people which influence our initial response to individual members of those groups. Such prejudices are not wrong in and of themselves if we are willing to investigate the facts about individuals. However, there is a form of prejudice that is **always wrong**. It is the form that is defined in the dictionary as "judgment held in disregard of facts; unreasonable bias; suspicion; intolerance; or hatred." Nathanael did **not** have this form of prejudice and was, therefore, able to overcome his initial prejudice towards Christ.

(To Be Continued)

[P.O. Box 241002; Charlotte, NC 28224.]

"Goodnight, Sweetheart!"

by Terry Gunnells

This church family has recently witnessed one of most moving love stories ever told. To many it was only a sad tragedy of the death of a young, 38-year-old wife, daughter, sister and mother but to most of us it was a beautiful love story which superseded the pain of death and separation.

Roger Bentley married Debi, the mother of three children and diagnosed with terminal cancer, on August 1, 1986, knowing that their marriage would probably not last very

long. Such a bleak prognosis did not hinder two devoted Christians from sharing their love for the meaningful four years Debi lived. The Providence Road family stood by them in silent support as they demonstrated the kind of agape love which is such a vital part of any marriage. They were best friends, practicing the *philia* love which combined with the covenant quality of agape love holds marriage partners together like Christ and the church.

Perhaps this seemingly transcendent feeling was most obvious in the poems Roger wrote to Debi, one of which I read at her funeral on November 26, 1990. Roger wrote this poem as he traveled home from Winston-Salem, NC, where he had been working that day. Shadows fell across the highway as day began to give way to night and Roger's heart introspectively prepared for the inevitable. These lyrics captured his mood and affect as he wrote words pregnant with his love for his wounded, dying mate.

"DEBI"

Shadows grow long in the fall of the year
Much like fond memories that bring on a tear
But thank be to God who will hold you so
near

As you walk through those gates, you'll have
nothing to fear.

The hope of tomorrow makes me to smile
As I marvel at your struggle, mile after mile
You've never given up all this long while
That's not in your language, it's just not
your style.

In the waning years of your, oh, so brief life
You've inspired hundreds in your battle with
strife

Imagine me with no you? (It cuts like a
knife.)

I've loved you so much, my dear lovely wife.

A Personal Story

How Oral Roberts "Led Me to Christ," II

by Jay C. Morris

[Editor's note: This is the second installment of a three-part series on how Jay Morris came to the truth. Brother Morris is now retired from secular employment, but works as a full-time volunteer for East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Of course Oral Roberts did not actually lead him to Christ, but it was in the pursuit of Roberts' offers that brother Morris finally found the truth. Be sure to read all three installments.]

April 1991

With open arms, I've held you so tight
Knowing that some day you'd soar out of
sight
As God calls you to heaven whether morn-
ing or night
You'll soar like an eagle in that final great
flight.

No sorrow or sadness, there'll be no night
there

No pain and no worry, there's never a care
One day I'll join you in Heaven up there
My beautiful angel with flowing blonde hair.

As death came quietly across the threshold of the Bentley home and life bade farewell to that precious body around which so many tender memories dwelt, it was evident to Roger and Melba (Debi's faithful mother who had seen her take her first breath and now her last), that Debi was gone. Roger kissed her silent lips and said, "Goodnight, Sweetheart!"

[Editor's Note: This appears in the Providence Road bulletin. While most of our readers would not know the people involved, it is such a touching and beautiful story that we felt it should be shared with our readers. Terry is one of the preachers at Providence Road.]

Spiritual Concerns

By early 1978 I was beginning to feel the emptiness and loneliness of the life I was leading. I wasn't going anywhere, but merely existing. My life seemed to serve no useful purpose. I had a house all to myself, a job and a car, but I felt that I was taking up space that someone else could use to greater advantage. Basically, I was a creature who

worked at a rather pointless job, to earn money so that I could continue to work, come home, eat, watch television, sleep, and go to work again. I surely needed something more in my life, and since my physical needs were filled, I assumed that it was a spiritual need that was making itself known. Whenever I was out on a Sunday and saw people going in or out of churches, I felt a great longing to be a part of that: to share what they seemed to have. They looked contented, fulfilled, and happy, and it appeared that one had to go to church to get that joy; but which church? And how to choose out of so many? And what about "salvation"? Which church saves? I didn't know many people who went to church regularly, but most that I did know were Baptists or Catholic. Catholicism had never held any attraction for me. The Baptist religion I had sampled several times during the years I was married, but had never received any enlightenment from it.

I began to be a faithful watcher of Oral Roberts' Sunday morning program. His show was quite entertaining. There were always lots of singing by different individuals and groups, always beautifully staged. He would preach and pray. The audience was invited to join hands during the prayers. If you were at home by yourself, you could just clasp your hands together. For the invitation to accept Christ, we were invited to kneel and place one hand on the television set while Oral Roberts prayed and recited the "Sinner's Prayer" from Luke 18. I never felt really sure that I was saved by this — I was just too far away from the one doing the praying to receive any benefit from it. Oral Roberts' sermons were always about miracles of the Bible, and after each program, he would plug one of his books for viewers to order by mail, which I often did. These books were also centered on miracles, and how to "plant seeds of faith," which would help to get you the miracle you wanted. In the back of the books was a list of suggested contributions you might send with your book or prayer request. For some reason, which I've forgotten, the number seven figured prominently in this list of contributions, which started at \$7.77 and went up to \$77.77. Oral Roberts taught that the

greater the sacrifice, the greater your miracle would be. I soon graduated to the \$77.77 level and was convinced that I was doing a good thing, and would receive back many times what I was giving.

A Trip to Tulsa

At this time Oral Roberts was beginning to build his famous "City of Faith" hospital and clinic just across the highway from the Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was a huge and tremendously impressive enterprise, and all of his energies were spent in raising money to build it. He soon ran into trouble with the city of Tulsa, however, which was opposed to its construction on the grounds that it was too big, too much, and could not be supported. But Oral Roberts stuck to his guns. He envisioned his hospital as a magnet which would draw the sick from all over the world to be healed by medicine and prayer. He immediately appealed to his partners by mail and television to write to the city of Tulsa, expressing support for him. Evidently the opposition was overcome because he continued building, and in the month of May I received a surprise in the mail. It was a letter from the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association inviting me to come to Oral Roberts University at the end of July to attend a four-day seminar. I had only to provide my transportation, and they would furnish me three meals a day and housing in the student dorms. I was overjoyed at the prospect, because I was sure that Oral Roberts would help me to achieve the two goals that had formed in my mind: to be saved, and to find a church. Later I learned that Oral Roberts customarily holds a number of these seminars in the summer in order to raise money for the university, as well as other projects. At this time, as I mentioned, it was the "City of Faith," which God had in a vision (according to Roberts) commanded Oral to build, and even instructed him how to build it: so it was "God-ordained."

Buses were waiting at the Tulsa airport to take us to Oral Roberts University. A well-organized staff assigned us to our dorms (some to nearby motels) and provided us the necessary orientation. My roommate was

from Mississippi, and I learned that he had been a Pentecostal for some time. I didn't know what that was, but he had a Bible with him and seemed to know something about it, so I was impressed. I was looking forward to hearing Oral Roberts speak, and especially the invitation to be saved.

The seminar was conducted in a large circular amphitheater normally used for sports. It had a large stage at the center and the whole thing was divided in half by a wall-to-wall curtain. Under each seat was a King James Bible, a special gift from Oral Roberts for each guest. The Bible was a paperback edition issued by the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and had some of Roberts' sermons in the back. His sermon that first day was about miracles, as were nearly all of his sermons, because he claimed to be a miracle-worker, or faith-healer. He talked about Matthew 14:25-31, where Peter at Jesus' bidding walked to the Lord on the sea, until he saw the strength of the wind and lost his faith. When he began to sink Jesus reached out and lifted him up and said to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Then Oral related this incident to our own lives, and how we all wanted to have a miracle. He taught that we could have miracles in our lives too, if we had enough faith. We could increase our faith by sowing seeds of faith; this we could do by Bible study, leading godly lives, doing good, and giving of ourselves, our time, and our money. The more sacrificial our giving was, the more beneficial it would be. His preaching during these three days was designed to build up a desire in us to give just as much as we could to the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association.

Finally came the invitation to accept Christ. This I had been waiting for. I happily stood, and filled with emotion and relief, I raised my hand. There were a great many responses, and after praying for our souls, Oral Roberts led us in reciting the "Sinner's Prayer" (Luke 18:13): "God be merciful unto me, a sinner," and so I was "saved." So one of my goals was now realized, or so I thought. I had little knowledge or understanding of the Bible then, so I didn't question this salvation. We were then told that we could receive the "baptism of

the Holy Spirit" the very same night. I was happy to be saved, but still ready and willing to accept anything they had to offer. We walked around the circular building in silence and entered the auditorium on the opposite side of the curtain. I've often thought about that evening, and the long, emotion-filled walk along that broad hallway in the company of my fellow penitents. I wondered if the others were thinking as I was: What am I getting into? What will be expected of me? I was a little bit apprehensive. Suppose I wasn't able to do the things that were expected of me? Would this become another miserable failure like my marriage and my whole life had seemed to be?

My "Holy Spirit Baptism"

But there were no thoughts of turning back. We marched onward, and 180 degrees later passed through the doors to the opposite auditorium where we strode down the aisle and gathered before the stage. I was eager to know what this mysterious "baptism of the Holy Spirit" was all about, but it was all over very quickly. This all happened several years ago, and I remember very little of that baptism ceremony. Whatever was said or read to us, or whatever Scriptures were quoted, if any, or if we merely repeated some words, I no longer remember. But whatever transpired, it constituted our "baptism of the Holy Spirit," and I cannot recollect having had at that time, any understanding of the meaning of the ritual. Of course, as I now realize, how could I have? It was totally unbiblical. Ephesians 4:5 says regarding Christians, "There is...one baptism...." In Acts, the "book of conversions," there is no record of any person or group of persons being saved by reciting the "Sinner's Prayer" from Luke 18 to be saved, and then receiving the "baptism

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of the Holy Spirit" by the spoken words of some man, whatever those words might have been. Therefore, it is a false teaching. Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). If we believe the Bible as the inspired Word of God, it is easy to compare what it teaches with what men tell us, and then to judge whether they are right, as the noble Bereans did (Acts 17:11).

Next we were asked to spread out in the auditorium and seat ourselves, and students of the university would come and teach us how to "speak in tongues." This is something that Oral Roberts promotes as a means of communicating directly with God through the Spirit. He advised us that he likes for all of his partners to be able to "speak in tongues" for their own good. So, of course I wanted to learn this in order to please Oral Roberts. Yet, I deeply doubted that I could; I couldn't imagine this poor, miserable soul communicating directly with God, and even the prospect of speaking to God was fright-

ening to me. I sat back and tried to relax my throat and leave my mind open so that the Spirit could come in and take control. I tried, hoping for some telltale sound or feeling, but nothing was forthcoming. Maybe I should gargle a little to help out, I thought; it would show my earnest intentions, but still nothing happened. "Keep on trying," she advised, "it will come." I resolved to do my best, but I left there confused and doubting that I would ever "speak in tongues," and doubting my salvation since I had failed. Had I been unmercifully rejected, I wondered, because of my gross lack of faith, wretched as I am? So at the end of that first day, instead of being buoyed with confidence in the Lord's salvation, I was miserable and full of doubt.

My roommate said something that evening that gave me a straw of hope. He knew of another charismatic preacher who was coming to Tulsa on the next Saturday evening. His name was Ken Hagen, and he was going to hold a "tent meeting" in downtown Tulsa. My friend was familiar with Ken

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Hagen's work and seemed to regard him more highly than Oral Roberts. He planned to go to the meeting Saturday and invited me to come along if I wished. Though I disliked missing out on any of Oral Roberts' speeches, I determined that I would go, as I had a plan in mind. As I have said, I was having doubts about my salvation, and I was confused and uncertain because of my failure at tongue speaking. If I had known the Bible at that time, I could have saved myself all that anguish and doubt, for the New Testament, inspired by God, contains not a single example of one person teaching another how to "speak in tongues," or even suggesting such a thing. In fact, the power to speak in "other tongues" was received only by the direct outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles (Acts 2) in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10), and obviously in the later case of the apostle Paul; or else by the laying on of an apostle's hands (Acts 8:17; 19:6). The Scriptures further teach that the supernatural gifts, such as "speaking in tongues," were given for a specific purpose, which was to confirm the word being preached to all mankind (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:22). They also teach that these gifts were all temporary (I Cor. 13:10). They fulfilled their divine purpose and now that the New Testament, God's "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25) had been given to all men, miracles were no longer needed (John 20:30-31). My purpose for attending Ken Hagen's "tent meeting" was (assuming that he, too, would offer the invitation) that I would respond a second time and thus confirm my salvation and remove my doubts. So I anxiously awaited Saturday evening. In hindsight, I can readily see that my "salvation" was from men and not from God, and therein was the reason for my doubt and uncertainty.

Saturday morning was spent in the auditorium with Oral Roberts. We each received a full-color booklet to examine. It was illustrated in simplified form with all the parts and systems that went into the construction of the "City of Faith" buildings — from the reinforced concrete piers which were sunk fifty feet into the ground, to the superstructure and finished buildings, including everything contained within them with the cost of all the items noted. As Oral led

us through the book page by page, we were encouraged to "sow seeds of faith" by pledging our funds towards the purchase of any item we chose. Can you imagine the sums of money called for? The "City of Faith" complex consisted of three high-rise buildings finished, furnished, and equipped in the "state of the art." The approach roads were lavishly landscaped and the entrance way was dramatically overshadowed by huge, sculptured "praying hands" (to symbolize the "joining together of medicine and prayer"). All of this was to be paid for by private donations. You can see the total commitment Oral Roberts had for these summer seminars to raise the funds to keep construction going on. No doubt many would make pledges they would never fulfill. I'll never forget how everyone cheered when one woman firmly pledged \$75,000.00 based on her hopes of winning the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes. This amount, as I recall, would have paid for one of the concrete foundation piers. I don't know whether she ever carried out her pledge. My own pledge was more down-to-earth, but I figured that I could reasonably cover the cost of one of

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the \$1200.00 A/C units by giving \$77.77 per months for about sixteen months. Even so I felt that I should have been more generous, more sacrificing.

Trying Ken Hagen's Way

That evening I rode into Tulsa with my roommate to attend Ken Hagen's "tent meeting." It was being held in a large arena-type building in downtown Tulsa. It had been well advertised and was well attended. Many young people were there with their Bibles in hand and their children on their backs. We were early, but the place was filling fast and bustling with activity. There was noise from many conversations and singing broke out from time to time as musicians came onto the stage to tune their instruments. Eventually the program got started and I anxiously awaited the invitation. Even though I had already been "saved" by Oral Roberts, I was here because I wanted to "make sure." There was some singing on the stage and some introductions were made. Ken Hagen and his staff, including his son, were there, plus a number of other charismatic leaders. A man named Richard Copeland, who had a "singing ministry," was introduced. He sang and made a speech in behalf of a church which needed a bus, costing about \$45,000. At the close of his speech, he laid a \$20.00 bill on the stage at his feet and challenged the audience to match it or make some contribution. Immediately pandemonium broke out as people made their way to the platform to add their bills to the growing pile. I don't remember the amount that was collected, but it was almost enough for the bus.

After calm returned, more speeches were made and various people testified about mir-

acles of healing. One woman testified that she would give out handkerchiefs to the sick in her neighborhood, and even mailed them to people, and that they were healed miraculously by them. This was compared to Paul's works at Ephesus, recorded in Acts 19:11-12. Paul, of course, lived in the first century age of miracles and was an inspired apostle of the Lord. This woman had no such powers.

Finally, it was Ken Hagen's turn to speak. I don't remember much about his speech, but generally it was about faith and miracles. My mind was intent on the invitation announcement, which would come at the end. And when it came, I responded as before and once again I received salvation (according to man). Once more I was relieved, at least temporarily, of the burden of doubt. Again, this was followed by an offer of "baptism of the Holy Spirit," and instructions in "speaking in tongues." This time we stood in rows and the instructors walked back and forth, monitoring our efforts and encouraging us. I made a special effort this time, not only gargling, but agitating my tongue at the same time, in hopes of inducing the Holy Spirit to make Himself known. I heard sounds all around me, but didn't look to the right or left. One instructor came close to listen, and gave me sympathetic encouragement, saying I was beginning to get it and that I should keep practicing. Although I knew the sounds coming from my mouth were my own doing, yet I hoped that I might still be blessed with success if I worked hard. But I couldn't shake the nagging doubt that was deep inside asking, "Am I really and truly saved?" It was as though without really knowing it, my conscience was rejecting false doctrine. But

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where was the true doctrine?

When I returned to my seat, the healing activities were about to start. The line was about six across and reached to the far end of the arena. Ken Hagen and his staff stood in front of the stage and received the people as they came to the front, placing their hands on the head of each person, while an assistant stood behind. I could not hear from the balcony what was being said, but I presume that each person announced his healing need, after which he fell stiffly backward, eased to the floor by an assistant. After a few seconds he would get up and walk away. Then the next person would come up, and the same thing happened every time. I couldn't tell if any healing was taking place, but it was fascinating, and I must have watched for nearly an hour. Though I had no outstanding illness, I had been wearing eyeglasses since the age of nine and here I was, turning 52. I thought how nice it would be to take them off this very evening and never have the need of the bothersome things again. I pictured myself throwing them high into the air and shouting for joy as I ran out of there seeing everything with full, beautiful, 20/20 vision.

I went down and took a place in the line, which was shrinking fast. I was trying to think of what to say to the healing person, and decided that I would simply ask to have my vision restored. When my turn came I walked forward, and as Ken Hagen's son put his hands on my head, I stated my desire and waited for something to happen. Although I knew an assistant was behind me I did not collapse into his waiting hands. Nothing happened! I was embarrassed and confused, and not knowing what else to do or say, I stumbled toward the nearest exit so that I could just disappear. I felt as if I were the first and only one of the evening to be publicly rejected by the Lord Himself. But, believe it or not, I still slipped off my glasses to see if I had been healed. Oh, what a faithless person I was; how self-centered and greedy! I should have been grateful just for what I had, but now I was really frustrated. I had thought it would be a simple matter to achieve my goals: to be saved and to find a church. And it would have been easy had I gone to the proper authority —

the Bible, the Word of God. But I missed the mark. I went to a man instead, and got a man's opinion. Now I wasn't sure I was saved; I couldn't speak in tongues; I didn't get healed; and there was only one day left to find out about the church. I felt like a defeated man. It was a quiet ride back to Oral Roberts University campus that evening.

Instructions From Oral Roberts

The next day, Sunday, was the end of the seminar, and we gathered in the auditorium for Oral Roberts' last speech. I was looking forward to it, and holding on to a slim hope that Oral Roberts would now tell us what church to join, as sort of a grand finale. Maybe he had been saving it for this last moment, but his final words to us, delivered in a warm, friendly voice were, "Find yourself a good church home." At that point I realized that my two simple goals would not be realized here. As the entire audience filed across the stage in a grand exit, shaking hands with Oral Roberts and his staff, it crossed my mind that I might ask him quickly in passing about which church to join, but something told me that it was too late. I felt it would only put him on the spot and embarrass him. I understand now that he had already said all that he knew about the church, and that was nothing. The plain truth is that Oral Roberts does not know anything about the church of the Bible; he only knows about man-made churches, and he can't tell anyone which of these to join; for in the realm of man-made churches, one is as good as another. His philosophy is clear: you may attend the church of your choice.

Searching for a Church

The events of the seminar occupied my mind throughout the trip home. The nagging doubt about my "salvation" continued to bother me, and now was added to it the problem of how to find "my good church home." I recalled reading in one of Oral Roberts' books that his father had been a Methodist preacher, and that Oral attended the Methodist church whenever he was home. This helped me to decide where to go the next Sunday. There was a Methodist

church about three blocks from my house which I had never entered except to vote, and I decided it would be the logical place to start my search. I only have a vague memory of the Methodist service. It was the first and last I ever attended. There was an adult choir who paraded in wearing robes and who did most of the singing. Then some young boys came in carrying candle stands and other paraphernalia. There was some scripture reading, and the preacher, who wore a robe, presented a learned discourse on the subject of elders and deacons, something I had never heard about before. They passed a collection plate, but I don't remember whether the Lord's Supper was served, or whether an invitation was offered. After the service there was a fellowship period with light refreshments, and I met those who seemed to be the leadership of the congregation. I do not know whether they were the same kind of Methodists as Oral Roberts, but the mention of my attendance at his seminar seemed to get little reaction from them, certainly not a positive one. In fact, I got a vague feeling that Oral was not highly regarded here. Overall, the experience was pleasant, but as I thought about it through the week, I decided to continue my search elsewhere.

This time, I turned to the religious section of the newspaper and picked out a Pentecostal church somewhere in Fairfax, Virginia. It advertised a cappella singing and charismatic worship. It was hard to find, and I had to ask at a service station for directions, so I was a little late arriving and was ushered in during the first song. I noticed that many had their arms raised while they sang, as I had seen some do at the seminar in Tulsa. The preacher wore a colorful robe, and his sermon was about current events, and how he had predicted or warned of them. At one point, someone apparently

spoke something in "tongues" and another rose up and "interpreted," but I wasn't in a position to hear what either one said. I was impressed by the architecture of the building, and the beautiful country setting, but I wasn't sure about the worship. How was I to know if this was my "good church home"? I decided that I would come again and have another look, and that is what I set out to do the following Sunday, but I had forgotten the way and got so lost that I never found it again. So, having spent the whole worship hour trying unsuccessfully to locate the church, I headed for home by way of the Beltway.

I turned on the radio and a man was preaching. There was something attractive about his preaching. This was a long time ago, and only for a moment, so I don't remember what he was speaking about, but I liked the way he was saying it and I wanted to hear it all. I don't often pull off the highway to listen to the radio, but I wanted to hear the rest of this sermon and find out where it was coming from; and when he finished his speech I learned that he was broadcasting for the "Church of Christ" in Falls Church, Virginia. I made note of this, and when I got home, looked it up in the Yellow Pages. Having never heard of this church I was surprised to find a half-page listing of "Churches of Christ," including one in Alexandria not far from my home. Since it was closer to me I decided to go there that evening so that my Sunday would not be a total loss. I was still looking for that "church home" that Oral Roberts had advised me to find, and it seemed to me that the closer it was to my house the better.

(To Be Continued)

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Working With Youth

by Don Jones, Jr.

As is the case with most church programs we don't see "Youth Ministry" in the New Testament. While this is true, the Bible does not neglect the need for properly dealing with young people. Paul wrote these words to Timothy: "Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters in all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1,2). This passage is one in which we receive a guideline for working with people. For the purposes of this study we need to look a little closer at the parts which tell us to treat the younger people as younger brothers and sisters.

This is a good way of looking at youth work. The one who undertakes the task of working with the youth must first realize he is dealing with younger Christians. While this may seem self-evident, we sometimes forget that certain needs exist for younger Christians which many older ones do not consider. Sometimes a youth worker will find that one of his charges considers himself as having "arrived" in his growth. This person has a need to overcome pride and to recognize his limitations. Another problem is that most (if not all) youth groups are composed of both Christians and non-Christians. The factors which contribute to this are numerous, not the least of which is immaturity. The youth worker must remember that he wants all of these young people to become and remain Christians.

Like all Christians, young people have differences in their personalities, quirks, learning levels, etc. Realizing this fact, the youth worker must put out of his mind the thought of a "mob mentality" which some seem to think exists among young people. Also, keeping differences in mind will help the youth worker to accept that he will not always be able to win over all of the youth. The first key to overcoming these differences is to learn to listen to the young people's ideas, thoughts, concerns, and problems.

A third major fact to keep in mind is that

a youth worker should not assume the role of a parent. The young people should be treated as brethren — albeit younger brethren. This means that a youth worker should try to assume an "older brother" position in relation to the youth. Some of the ways a youth worker should do this would be by listening to their problems (no matter how trivial they seem to be); perhaps helping with homework; and by simply talking with them.

The fourth thing the youth worker must keep in mind about his relationship with youth is that he must be forgiving. Youth work can be frustrating when there is a lack of cooperation. The youth worker will find it easier to be forgiving if he does not allow bruised feelings to interfere with his work. There are times when the young people try one thousand and one arguments to get their way about activities. Some of the "arguments" may be actually personal attacks. The youth worker must draw upon his own maturity not to let these attacks affect his judgment. One must also remember that the youth have one of two alternatives when it comes to their activities: either to participate under the given guidelines, or not to participate.

The youth worker must also develop a relationship with the parents. He should treat the parents with respect. One should remember that the parents are the authorities God has placed over the youth (Eph. 6:1-4). The ideal situation for the youth worker is that his work should be supplemental to the training and encouragement the young people receive at home.

Listening to parental input is vital. If the parents were not concerned with the youth the youth worker would not be there. The parents know their children better than the youth worker.

Another thing to consider when dealing with the parents is that if the parents know the youth worker is taking the time to consider their thoughts they might be encouraged to increase their own involvement.

Sending letters out to the parents to report on the state of the youth work is a good way to increase parental interest.

Additional Thoughts

Education: Try to understand what is going on in the public schools. Keep abreast of the issues which face youth. They are concerned with these issues. And the public schools are attempting to answer their questions. Make sure the youth understand what is right.

Encouragement: The youth worker must do everything he can to be a Barnabas to the young people. Correct them if they are wrong. Urge them on in doing good. And love them as only an older brother can.

Teaching: Do not merely inform them of the Bible facts. The youth worker must remember that Christ died for him and them! It is the youth worker's responsibility to

show them Christ and His way. The youth worker must help them see Jesus in His word. How do we do that? "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching...be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest to all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:12,13,15,16).

Evangelism: The youth worker should remember that he is doing an evangelistic work. The younger "youth groupers" may become and remain Christians simply because a youth worker is doing his job.

[Don works with the South Fork Church, Winston-Salem, 205 Keating Dr., 27104.]

Growing Congregations

by Rob Albright

This is for certain — the gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16)! This being true, how much attention are we giving to distributing this "good news"? Jesus came into this world as "Savior" (Luke 2:11) because mankind has a major problem. The Bible calls this problem sin (John 1:29). God so loves us that He sent His Son into the world to save us from the eternal consequence of sin (John 3:16). This good news is to be made known to the world (Matt. 28:19-20).

What impression are we, as individuals and congregations, making in our communities? Are we "going" to our friends and neighbors with this good news? Are we prepared to give a Bible answer to those who ask us questions about our faith, baptism, worship and the church?

As Christians, do we have something to share with those outside the family of God? Something we dare not keep just to ourselves?

No, not everyone will want to listen to the message of salvation. But there are honest people who do not know the truth and

they will study the Bible with us. They will come to know Jesus as Savior and they will accept God's way of salvation. They too will reach out to others and God's family will continue to grow.

Every Christian's attitude should be that "It begins with me." When it comes to sharing the gospel, each of us should be personally willing to learn what to say, when to say it and how to say it. Each of us should explore different ways of teaching others (home studies, correspondence course, VCR tapes, etc.), and use what is best for us to share this great message of salvation.

God has promised that He will give the increase if we will go out and plant and wa-

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ter (I Cor. 3:5-8). Men and women not in Christ are in eternal danger (I John 5:11-12, 20; Gal. 3:26-27).

The key to growing congregations is membership involvement. Not just a few,

but each one must do his or her share (Eph. 4:16).

The field is ready for harvest (John 4:35).
*[Church of Christ, Route 4, Box 623,
Thomasville, NC 27360.]*

News and Notes

by Dennis Conner

The churches in the area of Winston-Salem, N.C., will be cooperating in an Area-Wide Campaign in conjunction with the One Nation Under God Campaign. The dates are **July 28-August 1**. The effort is being spearheaded by the WARNERS CHAPEL CHURCH OF CHRIST. The speakers will be Jack Evans and Wayne Kilpatrick. Warners Chapel will also be having Guy N. Woods for a gospel meeting **May 10-12**. . . . The Fifth Annual Small Church Workshop will be hosted by the YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Yadkinville, N.C., **May 9-10**. The theme will be "Building Through Caring." The value of a caring, sharing fellowship in building an effective church will be the focus. . . . The WEST JEFFERSON CHURCH OF CHRIST will be hosting a "Ladies Inspiration Day" on **May 18**. This would be a great way to spend a day in the mountains of North Carolina. It is easy to ignore the programs of smaller churches in out-of-the-way places in the Carolinas, and this is unfortunate. It would be a great service to churches like West Jeffer-

son if some of the Christian women from some of the larger churches within driving distance would support their programs. . . . The HILTON HEAD ISLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST in South Carolina has announced that Jim Denison will be their new preacher. Prior to coming to Hilton Head Island, brother Denison and his family lived in Florence, Alabama. . . . "Brotherhood Problems and Bible Answers" is the theme for the 11th Annual Tennessee Bible College Lectureship. The event will take place **May 5-9** in Cookeville, Tennessee. . . . Nashville will be the site of the 3rd Annual Nashville Jubilee. This year's theme is "Room at the Cross." The dates are **July 3-6**. . . . This choice morsel comes from the pen of brother Mike Mayes and appeared in the bulletin of the Meadowbrook Rd. Church of Christ in Asheboro, N.C.: "A non-serving Christian is a contradiction in terms." Mike preaches for the church in Asheboro. Any of these contradictions where you worship?

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THE GOOD CONFESSION

1 Timothy 6:12-13

C289, 21
C292

Acts 8:37

“I
BELIEVE
THAT
JESUS CHRIST
IS THE
SON OF GOD,”

Rom. 10:9-10

Phil. 2:9-11

OUR CREED (Matt. 16:16-18; 3:17;
Rom. 1:4; John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

ASSENT TO FACTS (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

ADMITS AUTHORITY (Matt. 28:18-20;
Luke 6:46; Matt. 7:21)

PROFESSION FOR LIFE (Titus 1:16;
Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23)

LOYALTY PLEDGED (John 6:66-69)

PLACE IN PLAN (Rom. 10:9-10;
Acts 8:35-39)

ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES (Matt. 10:32-33;
2 Pet. 2:1; John 12:42-43; Matt. 7:23)

REASON FOR HOPE (John 11:25-27)

See page 3.



editorial

by David Pharr

In terms of numerical growth, I know of no work in the Carolinas that has moved as swiftly as has the work in Bishopville, South Carolina. The congregation was established in 1988 — just over three years ago — and attendance is over 120 and continuing to increase. Clancy Etienne and B.J. Barr are co-laborers in this work. To God be the glory for giving this increase. Brother Barr sends the following report:

“Our work in Bishopville began in 1987 while I was minister at the Kingsbury congregation in Sumter. Vanetta Joye became a Christian in Columbia and wanted her mother to know the gospel. While visiting at home she brought her mother to worship in Sumter, introduced her to us, and shortly afterwards her mother was baptized. A study was set up in her home in Bishopville because of her excitement and love for her newfound truth. This continued for several months resulting in 24 souls. In January of 1988 the Bishopville congregation was established. We are still growing, with an attendance of 120-130 each Lord’s Day.

“Presently, we are erecting a building that can accommodate 250-300 people. It is factory-built from Deltec Corp. of Asheville, North Carolina. It is a very sturdy building with over 5000 sq. ft. The auditorium is circular in shape and has an extension for classrooms. It is very nice, and has become the talk of the town. We have always wanted an integrated work. Since the community now realizes that we are here to stay, we have had several white visitors in the last few weeks. I believe our building effort has a lot to do with it.

“We borrowed \$112,000 from the bank, but our costs will exceed that amount. We are greatly depending on our brethren to help us cover the cost of this building. Now that the exterior walls are up, we need funds for our heating and air system, pews, floor covering, baptistery, etc.”

Brethren, the work in Bishopville de-

serves our support. Congregations in the Carolinas could quickly, and with small sacrifice, provide the funds that are needed to help them finish their building. There are just over 230 congregations in North and South Carolina. Most of them are small, many receiving outside support. Still, even the smallest could send a small amount. In fact, if even one dollar per member were sent from each church, this would make a considerable difference. This way even the smallest congregations could participate. Imagine the good that could be done, and

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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the spiritual satisfaction that would be enjoyed, if over 200 congregations would cooperate together to help the work in Bishopville.

This is an appeal to every reader of **Carolina Christian** to bring the Bishopville work to the attention of their local congregation. Realistically, we realize that many churches probably will not respond. But some will. Bishopville will get help. Their building will be completed. Their work will go on.

Editorial Book Review

Serious problems are before the church because of the rise of new theories of how we should study and use the Bible. Under a wide umbrella being called "New Hermeneutics," the brotherhood is being told that our "traditional" use of the Scriptures as a pattern for the church has been wrong, and that our method of using the Bible as book-chapter-verse authority misses the meaning and purpose of the sacred Book. This new hermeneutic (method of interpretation) carried to its ultimate conclusion would effectively change almost every principle for which we have stood.

We have been greatly refreshed, therefore, by the publication of the book, **Harmonizing Hermeneutics**, by J.D. Thomas.

We commend brother Thomas for his work, and the Gospel Advocate Company for publishing it. Brother Thomas effectively shows that our "traditional" understanding and use of the Scriptures has not been wrong. Rather, it is a hermeneutic that is consistent with both the Bible itself and the logic of common sense.

J.D. Thomas' ability as an experienced scholar will hardly be questioned. Even those whose positions he questions must surely recognize his qualifications. The book shows that he is quite knowledgeable of current thinking among the new hermeneutic advocates. His loyalty to the basic principles of the restoration, however, are firm and clear.

While the book gives considerable attention to what has been said by the new thinkers, it is done with charitableness. Where the author refutes their positions, he does it as a brother correcting brethren. This spirit, we believe, will encourage a wider readership.

While there are some aspects of the book which we would have preferred to see handled differently (the use of the NIV for example), **Harmonizing Hermeneutics** is an essential book for all preachers, elders, and other serious Bible students. It could be adapted for use in adult classes. (Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore.)

The Good Confession

by David Pharr, Editor

See chart on front cover.

The confession of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:37 (KJV) states directly and concisely that which must be the foundation tenet of Christian faith: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Regardless of what textual critics may argue relative to the authenticity of this verse, none can deny that it is a clear statement of the good confession. Romans 10:9-10 shows that "with the mouth" such a confession is "unto" (eis, "in order to have") salvation.

Christ had Himself testified before Pilate that He came into the world to be King,

which is another way of expressing His Messiahship and Lordship (John 18:37). Paul refers to this as "a [the, Greek *ten*] good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). In the verse before (1 Tim. 6:12) the exact same words are used regarding a specific time when Timothy had "confessed the good confession." (The KJV reads, "professed a good profession"; but the Greek and the meaning is better understood as the confession.)

We have prepared this chart to summarize the place and implications of The Good Confession.

The confession is the foundation statement of the **creed** of the church. In Matthew 16:16-18, Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Affirming this as true, Jesus said He would build His church. Christ is the foundation of the church, and all who are built into the church hold the creed that He is Christ, God's Son. The confession is truth affirmed from heaven (Matt. 3:17). It was confirmed in Jesus' resurrection (Rom. 1:4). It is essential to our salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

In making the good confession, one is giving his **assent to the facts** of the gospel. Paul summarizes the foundation facts as the death of Christ for our sins, His burial, and resurrection the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

To confess Him as Christ and Lord is to **admit His authority**. He has all authority, and it is incumbent on every believer to obey all His commands (Matt. 28:18-20). To confess Him (merely saying that He is Lord) without submission to His authority is damnable hypocrisy (Luke 6:46; Matt. 7:21).

The good confession, therefore, is a **profession for life**. Again we are shown the hypocrisy of a confession which is contradicted by a reprobate lifestyle (Titus 1:16). The Greek word for confession is sometimes translated "profession." There is an overlapping of the meanings of the two English words. We are urged to "hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4:14). We must not give up or neglect to live by the confession we made in becoming Christians. Thus Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 10:23 use the faith we confess as that which should control the life we live.

John 6:66-69 is a dramatic situation. Many of Jesus' followers forsook Him. He asked the twelve if they would also leave Him — how genuine was their loyalty? Peter answered for them all that to leave would be futile; there was no one else who could give them the words of eternal life. Then Peter made the good confession: "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Their **loyalty was pledged** by this confession of faith.

This point about loyalty being pledged has important implications for us. When one confesses his faith, far more is involved than a mere assent to certain facts. The good confession is an acknowledgement of Christ's

place as the Lord of our lives. A pledge of allegiance is implied. From the moment the confession is made, it should be understood that a vow of life-long loyalty has been made.

The **place of the confession in the plan of salvation** is certain. Romans 10:9-10 shows that, like belief, it is "unto salvation." This is not to deny that confessing Christ is an ongoing duty of the Christian life; but it is certain that an affirmation of faith is an essential step in the plan of salvation for alien sinners. As already mentioned, some ancient texts omit the confession in Acts 8:37. Whether it was part of the original text or not, it is certain that the Ethiopian made his faith known before he was baptized. Neither Philip nor any other knowledgeable Christian would baptize someone whom he did not know to be a believer. Even if different words were used, it was essential that in some way his faith was manifested. The most likely means by which he would have manifested it would be in words like those which are found in the King James text.

Jesus made a plain statement regarding the **eternal consequences** of either confessing Him or denying Him (Matt. 10:32-33). This would extend, of course, throughout life. Peter writes of some who would "deny the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1), absolute evidence of their apostasy. There were, however, some who never became followers of Christ because they were afraid to confess Him (John 12:42-43). All such will be denied by the Lord in the judgment, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

The beautiful story of the meeting of Martha and Jesus after the death of Lazarus shows the good confession as the **reason for our hope** (John 11:25-27). The hope of the resurrection is founded on faith in Christ; and though Martha was unaware of what Jesus was about to do (He would raise Lazarus), she knew her hope had to be in the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so she made the good confession.

Finally, in the lower left of the chart we have listed Philippians 2:9-11. All men will not confess Christ in this world. But the time is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Sin of Racial Prejudice, II

by Paul E. Jarrett

[Editor's note: This is the conclusion of a written sermon preached by brother Jarrett at the Archdale congregation in Charlotte. The first part was in the April issue of Carolina Christian.]

As Christians we cannot claim to be followers of Christ and be intolerant, or hateful, towards any group of people. Such an attitude and the kind of conduct it generates stands in opposition to our calling as expressed by Paul in Ephesians 4:31-5:2. There we are told to put away such things as anger and malice and to be kind to one another. We are challenged to be imitators of God, and walk in love.

We cannot exhibit sweetness to those who are **like** us and exhibit bitterness toward those who are **different** from us, because a fountain cannot send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water (Jas. 3:11). If our unity is only with those who are "like us" it is the unity of Babel which God condemned and not the unity in Christ to which we are called—a unity in which there are no racial, social, and economic distinctions, but all are one in Christ Jesus! (Gal. 3:28).

At this point I would like to use the two types of prejudice that have been illustrated by our text to address the issue of what is, and what is not, the kind of prejudice which God condemns. I encourage you to pay close attention to what I believe to be the practical application of this lesson to our daily life.

First, I want to emphasize that I do not believe prejudice is the exclusive property of any one group, or class, of people. Rather, it is a sin problem which all sin-prone people must acknowledge and strive to overcome. This does not mean, however, that we can use the prejudices of others as an excuse for our own. Rather, we must each address this sin in our own lives.

Secondly, I do not believe (as the title of this lesson might suggest) that racial prejudice is the only form of prejudice. Prejudice can (and does) exist toward any group that is unlike the one we consider to be our

own. Prejudice may exist toward those who are of a different sex, age, ethnic group, social class, economic class, or religion, to name a few.

I have chosen to single out racial prejudice because it would seem to be the most prevalent form of prejudice in our society. Racial prejudice (particularly whites toward blacks and blacks toward whites) is a part of our heritage in much the same way that the Jews' prejudice toward all Gentiles, and especially Samaritans, was a part of their heritage. This is attributable to a history in which blacks were subjected to slavery for over 200 years because, in the minds of many, they were less than human. This in turn was followed by another hundred years in which they were legally denied equal rights, and even now are often viewed as second-class citizens. As a result, to attempt to discuss the sin of respect of persons and not to focus on racial prejudice would be, at best ludicrous, and at worst, cowardly and dishonest.

The third point of practical application of this lesson that I want to make stems from a point I've already emphasized. The point being that while I do not believe any of us are totally free of prejudice, I do believe that we must be free of the kind of unreasonable bias, suspicion, intolerance, and hatred such prejudice can promote if left unchallenged. In order to avoid this malevolent form of prejudice we must acknowledge our prejudices and be willing to investigate them.

I do not believe that our seeing certain groups of people as having certain traits (including negative traits) is proof of a prejudice in and of itself. If that is the case, then

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Paul exhibited a high degree of prejudice when he endorsed the statement of a poet who said “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12, 13). Such becomes prejudice, however, when we take what may be generally true and use it as a basis for interacting (or refusing to interact) with individuals. For example, it would be a case of extreme prejudice if Paul had refused to preach the gospel to those in Crete because of this description of them as a group.

I want to hasten to add two additional points here. First, I believe it is important for us to learn to avoid group references in describing individual conduct. I have felt for a long time that it must be very difficult to be black and have the misconduct of any individual fellow-black attributed to his race.

For example, notice how when a white man does something wrong he is described by name, whereas when a black man does something wrong he is more than likely going to be identified by his race by those telling the story. Even when the action being described may appear to be positive, the singling out of the person's race hints of prejudice. It's almost as if we're expressing surprise if a black person does something worthwhile. On a lighter note, perhaps, but with the same serious point in mind, I've often wondered what it would be like to be black and not be able to play basketball! Such is an example of typical stereotyping.

A second point that needs to be made regarding the danger of group references and description has to do with the prejudice that we exhibit when we fail to take into account the reasons why a certain group may be the way they are. When we fail to appreciate the circumstances that may have contributed to a group of people having fewer educational and/or work skills, or a higher incidence of immoral and/or criminal conduct, we are in danger of acting more like Simon the Pharisee than Jesus the Christ. We need to be sympathetic toward all men. We need to exhibit compassion in bearing their burdens rather than adding to those burdens by treating them in an unsympathetic and prejudiced manner (cf. Matt. 23:1-4 and Gal. 6:1, 2).

In reference to how we as Christians of

what is commonly referred to as the Caucasian race should conduct ourselves toward those of what is commonly referred to as the Negro race in order to exhibit compassion and sympathy, let me make the following statements:

First, I do **not** believe that opposition to school busing, job quotas, or any other **political** solution to our nation's racial problems in and of itself constitutes racial prejudice. I personally feel that money being spent on school busing could be better used to upgrade the quality of education being given to all students — Black and White — and in doing so prove more beneficial to the real problems facing Blacks. Also, I'm personally convinced that job quotas have done more to promote racial tension and prejudice than they have contributed to really solving the problems of Black America. However, I do believe that each of us as individuals must be honest about the condition of our heart that influences why we may oppose efforts at promoting integration and equal opportunity.

Secondly, I do **not** believe that an expression of opposition to interracial marriages in and of itself is proof of racial prejudice. As a minister and counselor I have counseled interracial couples who were contemplating marriage to give serious thought to the difficulties they and their children may encounter as a result of the racial climate in our society. Having said that, however, I know of no Biblical injunction that would condemn interracial marriages any more so than one exists to condemn a marriage between a rich person and a poor one. If the Bible forbids any mixed marriage, it is **not** between black and white, but between believer and unbeliever. Despite that, I've known Christians who would say they would rather see their child marry an unbeliever than to marry a Christian of another race. It concerns me greatly when attempts at integration of our churches can be thwarted by someone raising the specter of interracial dating and marriage. While the pressures exerted by racial prejudices on such relationships may make them unwise, it is to be deplored when such pressures are exerted by Christians who are called to view all Christians as one in Christ!

Thirdly, I do **not** believe that the use of certain words in and of themselves prove that one is prejudiced. For example, referring to a young black man as "boy" is no more proof of prejudice than referring to the "girls at the office" is proof of sexism. I do believe, however, that we must honestly examine our hearts to see what constitutes the true source of our speech. There are those who refer to "the girls at the office" in a way that smacks of sexism. Likewise, when adult Black males are referred to as "boys" in a patronizing manner it is racism.

It should be noted here that it is possible for even kind words to reflect condescension and other similar negative attitudes on the part of those who are voicing them. Likewise, even kind acts may serve as a mask for racial prejudice. In the political realm I'm personally convinced that many of the social and welfare programs that are supposedly designed to aid Black Americans have been spawned by liberals who hold a patronizing attitude toward Blacks. As a result many of these programs only serve to reinforce racial stereotypes and rob Blacks of a sense of their own self-worth.

What has happened in the nation has also occurred in the church. During the slave era white masters often fully supported black ministers in order to have them encourage their fellow-slaves to accept their conditions as being of God. Since the abolishment of slavery, white churches have often funded Black ministers and Black churches as a way of avoiding the need for having integrated churches. What has been promoted as benevolence has often been employed more as a means of "keeping Blacks in their place." It should be carefully stated, however, that all such support has not been for this purpose; but often from a genuine desire to serve them with the gospel.

Fourthly, in connection with what I've just said about our speech, let me say also that I do **not** believe that every person who ever told a racial joke did so because he was prejudiced. I've told all forms of ethnic jokes, and have myself, as a native West Virginian, been the butt of "Hillbilly" jokes. I don't believe that makes me prejudiced. However, it could make me insensitive, which is also a sin.

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The point that I've just made can be illustrated by an incident that I was a party to some years ago. We had a speaker for a graduation dinner for our teenagers. This man was a good Christian, but his joke repertoire centered around "fat jokes." There was a lady helping to serve this dinner who had a weight problem. She was also struggling with a faith problem and this man's jokes became an excuse for her abandoning her faith. I've tried not to forget that lesson. I know it was probably an excuse to do what she would probably have done anyway, but I can't help but recall that Paul taught us not to put an obstacle or stumbling block in our brother's way (Rom. 14:13).

The problem with racial jokes is that they can be used as a cover for our prejudice. We express our malice with "humor" so that if anyone says anything we can say "we were only joking" (see Prov. 26:18, 19). In response to those who might say, "I've heard Blacks tell racial jokes on themselves," let me simply note that I've heard overweight people do the same. In some cases they may truly be able to laugh about it; but in many instances they do it to hide the pain, or as a consequence of low self-esteem. Let's be

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Finally, I do **not** believe that the existence of separate congregations which are predominantly black or white with their distinctive cultural and economic personalities is in and of itself proof of racial prejudice. Even among White (and Black) churches you will find that they may each have their own distinctive personalities and/or homogeneous identity. I suspect this has always been true to some degree judging from the distinction made between Peter's ministry being to the Jews and Paul's to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7, 8). I have no doubt that a predominantly Black congregation can often be more effective in evangelizing a Black neighborhood than a White congregation would be (and vice versa).

Having conceded that, however, I believe we need to be careful not to allow our congregational identity to come to be centered around our racial make-up, anymore than it should be defined by our socio-economic class. We must not lose sight of the fact that our mission on earth also calls for us to set an example to the world of the oneness that is ours in Christ. We must be careful to be "the dog" in setting the example for "the tail," which is the world, and not allow "the tail of the world to wag us." I **know** it is prejudice when we feel that separate churches **must** exist and we **insist** on such.

In summation let me say first of all what I would hope would not need to be said, that is that I love this church and the souls of each of its members. I have not preached this sermon to condemn anyone, but to benefit everyone. I believe we all need the message of this lesson to cause us to confront our prejudices and deal with them in such a manner as to assure that they do not express themselves in intolerance and hatred.

I would not be so naive as to believe that this one lesson would correct all the error of racial prejudice. I would hope that it will have served to "lance the boil" in order that the balm of healing might be applied. If in "lancing the boil" I've caused any of you personal pain I do not apologize. Instead, I ask that you accept it as the necessary pain that must sometimes accompany the healing process.

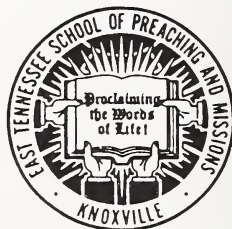
I would hope that as God's people there

will come a day when our only discussion of prejudice will deal with how we are to cope with it as its victims, rather than warnings against our promoting it. Jesus was a victim of prejudice and as His followers He has called us to be victims of, not perpetrators of, prejudice.

Most of all I would hope that some day we might achieve the maturity Christ spoke of when He called upon us to become as little children (Matt. 18:1-4). It is the kind of maturity borne of innocence that I saw illustrated in the life of my own daughter when she was in the first, or second, grade.

Michelle had talked to us for several weeks about a boy in her class at school

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whom she liked as a friend. When we went to school for a PTA program we asked her to point this boy out to us. We were surprised and pleased when she pointed out a black classmate of hers, because in all the weeks Michelle had spoken of this boy she'd never once mentioned the color of his skin!

I would to God that there would come a day in all of our churches that we would not feel the need to mention skin color in talking about churches and individual members of the Lord's church. I would to God that we could all stand and sing with child-like innocence the words of this children's song with which I bring this lesson to a close:

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and Yellow, Black and White,
They are precious in His sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus died for all the children,
All the children of the world.
Red and Yellow, Black and White
They are precious in His sight
Jesus died for all the children of the world.

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Warner's Chapel Spearheads Local One Nation Under God Campaign

The Warner's Chapel Church of Christ in Clemmons, North Carolina, in coordination with the nationwide **ONE NATION UNDER GOD** Campaign, is spearheading a local evangelistic effort involving an area-wide gospel meeting July 28 through August 1, 1991, at the new Coliseum Annex in Winston-Salem. Speakers for this meeting will be Wayne Kilpatrick, minister of the Homewood Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, and Dr. Jack Evans, President of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas. Barry Gilreath of Ringgold, Georgia will be the song leader.

Seventeen area congregations and several individuals have committed approximately \$52,000 to the local effort, which includes rental of the Coliseum Annex; speakers; and advertisements on billboards, radio, television, and newspapers. The elders at Warner's Chapel are grateful for the enthusiastic and generous support of the brethren in our area.

The nationwide **ONE NATION UNDER GOD** Campaign is a "first"! Only the U.S. government has ever attempted a mail-out to every home in the nation. We also believe the local effort is a North Carolina "first,"

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for the churches of Christ! Assuming our goal is realized, more members of the church, along with their friends and neighbors, will gather for worship at one time in one place than ever before in North Carolina. Thousands will assemble to hear the gospel preached and to sing praises to God. Hopefully, many will be led to Christ.

If you would like more information about the local effort, contact Allen Womack (day: 919-741-5343, night: 919-945-4446), or David Moore (day: 919-761-2257, night: 919-945-5238). For information concerning housing or video-audio copies of the program, contact Jack Simons at 919-766-6078 (leave message on answering machine if no one is available).

We gladly invite you to be a part of history-in-the-making by joining your brethren at the new Coliseum Annex in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, July 28-August 1.



How Oral Roberts "Led Me to Christ," III

by Jay C. Morris

[Editor's note: This is the last installment of the personal story of Jay C. Morris. Previously he has told of his early lack of religious training, the awakening of spiritual concerns, and his futile efforts to find salvation by following Oral Roberts and others. Brother Morris is now retired from secular work, but works as a full-time volunteer with East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.]

The Church of Christ

That Sunday evening at six o'clock, I entered the meeting place of the church of Christ in Alexandria for the first time. Little did I know that I had actually found, by the grace of God, my "good church home." The irony of this is that Oral Roberts apparently knows nothing about Christ's church, his doctrine is opposed to it. Although he refers to himself as a "full-gospel" preacher, he tiptoes around the precepts which distinguish the Lord's church from all the churches of men. He is dedicated to "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). He is one who says, "Lord, Lord," but does not do the things which the Lord commands (Luke 6:46).

Oral Roberts believes that faith alone is all that is necessary for salvation; but the Bible plainly teaches that "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:24, 26). Men must **do** certain things in order to be saved. For example, could Naaman the leper have received the healing he desired without **doing** the things which the prophet commanded? Only when Naaman obeyed the simple instructions of Elisha, and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, was he saved, delivered, from the disease that plagued him (2 Kings 5). God has not changed. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Even so today, we cannot receive heal-

ing from our sins unless and until we obey the simple commands of the Bible.

The Bible teaches that one must hear the word: "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17). One must believe: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is" (Heb. 11:6). One must repent of his sins (Acts 1:38; Luke 13:3). One must confess Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:13; Acts 22:16). And one must be baptized (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16). Of course I did not know these things then, but they were there in the Bible just the same, and had been there for nearly 2000 years. Oral Roberts should have known them, but if he did know, he failed to share the truth with those who came to him.

On my first visit to Christ's church in Alexandria, I guess what impressed me the most, was the simplicity of all things. The building itself is made of stone and concrete, plain and unadorned, located on a small triangle of land which includes a parking lot. There are no elaborate stained glass windows, and inside it is just as plain, with no religious paintings or sculptures, or ornate decoration. Even the worship service was plain and simple, in character with Christ Himself and the doctrines He preached. Isaiah chapter 53 describes the Lord, and verse 2 says, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." The Son of God Himself, was not recognizable by any specially attractive physical appearance. But the world is much caught up with physical beauty and adornment.

Neither was there a choir, or anyone carrying candles or other paraphernalia in procession, in the church of Christ. No robes were worn by anyone, not even the preacher, neither was any organ or other musical instrument present. Singing was by the entire congregation, making melody with their

heartstrings, not with harp strings. Prayers also were offered from the hearts of individual members, before and on behalf of the whole assembly. The Lord's Supper, both bread and fruit of the vine, was served to all members, and as I learned later it is served every Sunday according to the command of Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23-26), and the examples found in the Scriptures (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Likewise, in keeping with Bible teaching, a collection is taken each Lord's day to aid the church in its works (1 Cor. 16:2).

The preacher presented an intelligent and understandable sermon based on the Bible, and related the Scriptures which he quoted book, chapter, and verse, to the needs of men in the world today. Most of the audience seemed to be following the lesson in their Bibles, and some were taking notes. The preacher actually had a blackboard on the platform next to the pulpit and used it as a teacher does in a classroom. I had never seen this done before, and it impressed me that these people were serious about Bible study. Realizing that this was an opportunity to study the Bible intelligently, I noted my desire on the visitor's card that I filled out. I had tried a number of times to read the Bible, but had never got very far because the Bible is not an ordinary book. As I later learned, the Bible is the one Book that shows us the way to eternal life. It is the only Book that has the purpose of guiding us through this life so that we may be prepared for eternal life with God the Father, in heaven. This is true because it is the inspired word of God, as I learned, written down by men inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). It is in fact, as Jesus said, "Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

The Bible is a Book that was written once for all time and for all men, and as such was never meant to be merely read and put down. Paul told Timothy to "Study to show thyself unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15); He did not tell Timothy, "You have studied long enough, you may put away the Scriptures." Timothy had known the holy Scriptures from childhood and he knew that "They are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Therefore he knew he must study as long as he lived in order to reach heaven. And it is just as true for us living today, that Christianity (Christ's way) is not merely a weekly worship service, but indeed a way of life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me" (John 14:6).

Gospel Obedience

The next day at work I received a phone call from one of the deacons of the church. He wanted to arrange for the preacher to come to my house to study with me one evening a week and we decided on Thursday. I was surprised and happy that I would be able to study with the preacher himself, and I looked forward to our first hour together. As I recall, we studied a course called "Open Bible Study," which consisted of a work sheet that was used in conjunction with three or four question and answer lessons. The work sheet had a ladder drawn on one side with Scripture references on each rung which, when searched out and studied, explained God's will for all men. The questions and Scriptures were arranged in a logical sequence so as to lead one to "Heaven," which was printed on the topmost rung. Opposite the ladder, in a section called "Looking Back," were six questions designed to explore one's religious background; and below this was an outlined cross accompanied by a list of Scriptures about the nature of and forgiveness of sin. By writing his recognized sins on the cross, the student learns how Jesus took our sins upon Himself and died for them on that cross, washing them away with His innocent blood (Isa. 53:4-6). Finally on the last page were three Scriptures printed, with blank spaces left for the student to write in his own name, making himself the subject of the action, and thereby instructing him what he must do to be saved.

Of course this study was not completed in one Thursday evening. Instead, as nearly as I can recall, it was three or four weeks later that our studies brought us to the top of that ladder and I realized that the Bible is God's word, and His truth had led me there. As Jesus said, "They shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father,

cometh unto me" (John 6:45). Although men had told me that I was saved, I was fearful and doubting. Now I realized that my "salvation" had been of men and not of God, and that the right thing for me to do was to obey the commandments of Jesus, "If ye love me keep my commandments" (John 4:15); and "He that believeth and is

baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16) was His specific command. And if I obeyed Jesus, then I would be truly saved, and without doubt or fear. So that same night, with the same urgency expressed by the examples in the book of Acts, we went to the meeting place of the church of Christ and I was baptized; immersed in the name of Jesus; my

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sins were washed away by His blood; and I was raised up a new man. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are come new" (2 Cor. 5:17). This event took place on Thursday, September 7, 1978, in the presence of the elders of the Alexandria, Virginia, congregation. This is how Oral Roberts "led me to Christ." When I realized he could not show me the way, I sought the truth elsewhere.

In John 8:32 Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." As I continued to study with the preacher and other men at Alexandria, we also used chart lessons, slide film studies, and Biblical outlines for more in-depth learning; and as I worshiped with the congregation I began to understand more fully the meaning of John 8:32. Men had told me that I was saved merely by believing, but the Bible, "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), showed me the error of this way. Through continued study I learned that many other things that Oral Roberts and others had taught me were contrary to the word of God. Realizing this now, I had to realize that they are false teachers who are ignorant of and careless with the truth. I wrote to Oral Roberts about my new understanding and advised him that I would discontinue sending him the money I had pledged toward his "City of Faith" project. I received no reply.

Oral Roberts' Errors

Oral Roberts had pretended to bestow upon me the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," but I had no knowledge of it, or evidence or example from the Scriptures to confirm it. The Scriptures reveal that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a promise given to the apostles by Jesus shortly before He ascended to be with the Father in heaven. It was not promised to all men, only to the apostles. Certainly it is not given to men living today. Jesus had commanded them to stay in Jerusalem and "wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence (Acts 1:4-8). Verse 8 says that they would receive "power" after the Holy Spirit

came upon them and they would then start to spread the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and "to the uttermost part of the earth." That promise was fulfilled ten days later (Acts 2): "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And so they went forth proclaiming the good news and confirming the words they were preaching, with miracles and wonders and signs.

This baptism came directly from heaven and was given only to apostles except for the household of Cornelius, as recorded in Acts 10:45-46; 11:15-16. The purpose in Cornelius' case was to show that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). Thus representatives of both Jews and Gentiles had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:18).

Miraculous powers continued with the apostles during the first century, gradually disappearing until the apostles had died. They alone could pass on the miraculous gifts through the "laying on" of their hands (Acts 6:6 & 8:18). By the end of the first century, the gifts had ceased; but "that which is perfect [complete]" (1 Cor. 13:10) had come to take their place. The supernatural gifts had served their divine purpose: they had confirmed God's word from Jerusalem to the ends of the world, and now that the New Testament was completed (the revelation of God's will for all men), these special powers were no longer needed. As Paul wrote, "If there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8b-10, NAS).

Today there are no apostles living among men, and have not been since the first century. Oral Roberts, we can be sure, did not receive any supernatural powers from the hands of the inspired apostles. He cannot heal as they did; he cannot raise the dead, or speak in foreign tongues as they did. Certainly he cannot teach others to speak in foreign tongues. Not even the apostles "taught"

people how to speak in tongues. If he could do that, why could he not also teach others to heal? Not one example, or even a suggestion of such, may be found in the New Testament. Today, instead of miracles and signs and wonders, we have the written word of the New Testament to testify of the things which were said and done by Jesus and the apostles during the days leading up to the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. John wrote, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life in his name" (John 20:30-31).

Oral Roberts said to us on the final day of his Seminar, "Find yourself a good church home." This is a much beloved doctrine among the religious world and translates into the more popular expression we hear so much today, "Attend the church of your choice." This is the same as the saying, "One church is as good as another." For decades this sentiment has served to condone and promote the cause of denominationalism and division. This is surely "a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). It implies that there are many churches to choose from, but no such idea is presented in the New Testament. Jesus did not give us a list of churches we might select from; He only spoke of one church: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). "My church" means emphatically, one church; the church founded upon the rock of faith which Peter had just declared; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

In the first century, some men were aligning themselves under different preachers, and Paul rebuked them for it. The Corinthians were saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12); but Paul answered, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? were any of you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:13). Jesus had prayed for unity in all "which shall believe on me through their [the apostles'] word; that they all may

be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). Paul says of Christ, "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

What kind of monstrosity would it be if we had many bodies attached to one head? Or if one body were attached to many heads? Such an organism would be a far cry from the simple, beautiful, perfect creature which God had made in His image "in the beginning"; and so a church formed in that manner would be just as preposterous, and totally contrary to the church that Jesus established in the first century. But since Jesus is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), His church also shall always be the same. It will only have one head: Jesus Christ; and one body: Christ's living body, made up of many members, all working together in love, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:3-4, NAS).

The Lord's church today is the same as the church of the first century. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And He said, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18, 20). No man has the right to add to, or take away, anything from His church. It is still a simple church both outwardly and inwardly, as Jesus was simple in deed and doctrine. Isaiah 53:2b says that, "he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." The Bible, "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), is still the church's only creed. It's government is still as prescribed in the New Testament Scriptures, having one head, which is Christ, with elders appointed in each

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autonomous congregation to oversee the flock, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), and deacons who are appointed to help with the work (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

The Church Today

The Lord's church still meets every Lord's day for worship unto God, offering "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1), and "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). In the Lord's church today as in the beginning, the preacher is still constrained to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). And every congregation of the Lord's church still obeys the command to remember His death each Lord's day, by partaking of the elements He Himself authorized to symbolize His body and His blood; that is, the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (1 Cor. 11:26), "for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." That this was done every Lord's day is verified in Acts 20:7 when Paul came to Troas: "And on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (in remembrance of Jesus). The expression, "break bread," is a synecdoche, a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole ("break bread" for the Lord's Supper, both bread and fruit of the vine).

Another part of the worship of the Lord's church, and equally important as all others, was the sharing of worldly gain. Acts 2:44-45 says of the membership of the newborn church, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." In the same spirit, Paul wrote the Corinthians, "On the first day of the week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2, NASB). In the New

Testament church, the church of Christ, no tithing is commanded, yet each member feels his responsibility to give as he has been prospered by the God of love; he gives out of a joyful and generous heart, sacrificially and lovingly, "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19), and with grateful awareness of the magnitude of His blessings extended toward us, through the superior sacrifice of the body and blood of God's own Son on the cross.

From its beginning on that Pentecost Day, the Lord's church has been seeking to do what they know is right, in harmony with the written word, showing their great love and respect and admiration for Him who has given us every good thing. I know now that what was so attractive to me about the preaching I heard on my car radio that day in 1978, was the pure and boundless love of Almighty God shining through; Jesus was standing at the door and knocking, and He said "If any man hear my voice and open the door; I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." God, Jesus' Father and our Father, is in heaven. Not one of us can ever hope to get there except by Jesus' way. It is her unflinching loyalty to the Holy Scriptures that has made the Lord's church His distinctive body on earth, which it was, is today, and ever shall be. May God be with you as you seek the blessings found in His inspired word.

[Reprints of this series of articles, in booklet form, can be ordered for \$2.00 from East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931.]

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Confession: Our Agreement With Jesus

by Edwin S. Jones

When the plan of salvation for the Christian Age is viewed in light of the individual's response to the Gospel, there are five progressive steps that take one to salvation in Christ. Confession is one of those steps. When the plan of salvation is seen in terms of a Christian's continued response to Christ, confession is again a part of God's righteous response of faith. However, on both counts, that which is before and that which is after salvation, confession is often shortchanged and therefore not fully appreciated.

The meaning of the word is suggestive of its strong theological significance. As a translation of the Greek word **homologeō** and its various forms, the word confession carries the primary meaning of: "to say the same thing, thus to agree."

Before New Testament times **homologeō** had a strong association with legal proceedings and the world of commerce. Law courts with their emphasis on testimony require agreement with the words of others to confirm the truth. The business arena required contractual agreement to the words of various proposed transactions. In courts and in commerce, people must be able to agree on the same things, else law and business cannot function successfully.

Probably because of the association of the word "confession" with "profane" or secular matters, the Jews who produced the Septuagint used the word sparingly. Nevertheless, the ways the word was used are helpful to understand some of the nuances the word would have taken on by the time of the New Testament. The LXX used **homologeō** to stand for Hebrew words that meant: praise, make a vow, swear, freewill offering, vow, and honor. Here the ideas of appreciation, commitment, and voluntary service find clear expression.

Within the Jewish non-canonical writings the idea of confession was often tied to the idea of repentance and to confession of sin.

This links the word to thoughts of changed lives and forgiveness of sin.

Additional variations of meaning found in first-century Greek culture would include: consent, acknowledgement, avowal, promise, commitment, and confession.

In the New Testament the word applied usually to two basic considerations, confession of sin and confession of faith (Jas. 5:16; 1 John 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:12; Matt. 10:32). A notable exception to these broad categories is Philippians 2:11 where all will one day confess or agree to the sovereign rule of Jesus as Lord of all creation. This confession, however, will be too late for those who did not make a biblical confession of faith in this life (2 Cor. 5:10).

How does the place of an alien sinner relate to the discussion to this point? First of all, with regard to the alien's relationship to Christ, there can be absolutely no question that he must agree with Christ, or "say the same thing" as Christ, if he is to have any hope of salvation. Even as two cannot walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3), so the person who is outside of Christ must have a change of mind in repentance that brings him to agreement with Christ before he may be baptized.

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1 Timothy 6:12-13 is perhaps the classic case study for how confession relates to one outside of Christ. In these verses Paul recalls to Timothy that time when he had made "the good confession" before witnesses that was like "the good confession" Jesus made before Pilate. The definite article emphasizes that the confession in question with Timothy was not a general principle of confession but a **specific** occasion when he had made a confession. That specific occasion reasonably would have been when he became a Christian.

The King James Version makes a good point here by translating **homologeō** as "profession" in verse 12. The agreement that an alien sinner makes with Christ before becoming a Christian is an agreement to live a life with Jesus as one who will be dedicated to saying the same things that Jesus said. Such a person makes a profession out of his confession.

In context, Romans 10:9-10 supports the same basic truth as the passage from 1 Timothy. As Paul discusses the role of preaching to the lost (vs. 14-15), the subject is introduced by stating the harmonious working of belief and confession toward salvation. Unless one hears about Jesus one cannot believe on Him and therefore cannot agree with Him or say the same thing with Him. An agreement of both heart and hand with Jesus must precede baptism, and preaching must come before the process as a whole can be initiated.

In looking at Romans 10:10, it should be noted that both belief and confession are "unto" righteousness and salvation. "Unto" in both instances is from **eis**, a preposition that shows direction toward the object in view. This means that one believes and confesses in order to receive righteousness and salvation. This is the same **eis** that is translated "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38. It is evident, therefore, that this confession (as well as belief) precedes salvation.

Acts 8:37 also comments on the need for confession before baptism. Even though this verse is considered by many scholars to have been absent from the original text of Acts, would anyone deny that the eunuch's question, ". . . what does hinder me to be baptized?" could not have been favorably

answered by Philip if the eunuch was unwilling to demonstrate his agreement with Christ?

Since only believers are to be baptized (Mark 16:16), there must have been some way the eunuch's faith was made known before Philip baptized him. Surely Philip would not baptize one who had not made his faith known. Neither should we.

The need for the lost to make **homologeō** ("confession") of Christ is understandably required if one is ever to enter into Christ. Once one makes "the" good confession and follows through with his obedience of faith, confession takes on an even broader implication in the context of the Christian life. What one purposes to live out in the good confession one actually lives as a Christian.

The verse that best illustrates the living out of the principle of confession is Matthew 10:32. Here both the context and syntax unite to establish that this application of confession is for the Christian. The context of the passage deals with initial remarks concerning the Limited Commission, but it changes in verse 16 to address the situation the apostles will face as Christians in the Great Commission. In addition, the literal reading of the original speaks of Jesus' promise that anyone who "will confess in me, in him I will also confess before my Father." Christ dwells only in the Christian and only the Christian is in Christ.

Thus the confession made by an alien sinner is only the beginning of what would come to characterize the new life that begins after baptism. What better way to illustrate Christianity than to present it as the constant walk of agreement with Jesus. The "new mind" of repentance leads to the newly found agreement with the Savior.

When the steps of salvation, and in particular, the step of confession, are seen in the preceding light, God's plan cannot be relegated to a merely legalistic formula. Confession shows itself to be a spiritually rich principle that orients both the alien sinner and the sanctified saint to the need to agree with the Master.

[Edwin S. Jones is Dean of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931.]

Death and the Christian

by Bruce Green

Although there is much pain involved with every death (who could minimize that?), there are also some profound truths taught by death and it would be wrong for us not to learn them.

1. Death is a part of life. Expectedly or unexpectedly, death will come to you and to me. Perhaps we have never contemplated death in personal terms, but we should. With the notable exceptions of Enoch, Elijah and those living when Jesus returns, death will come to us all. We need to think of our lives in terms of our mortality — what it will be like when we are gone. Then we will know how we should have lived.

2. Death is the beginning, not the end of life. To the Christian, death is a servant. In many cases it means the end of slowly declining health or the end of great pain and suffering. But death is best thought of, not as an end, but as a beginning, because it delivers us into the loving arms of our heavenly

Father. Therefore, death should not be looked upon with fear or dread; but as a servant come to take us home.

3. People are what is important, not things. People are here today and gone tomorrow. People are standing on the brink of eternity. Our call is to love them, serve them, and to show them Jesus; to hold up the hands of those who hurt and mourn; to encourage each other to heaven.

Heaven! Too good to be true? No, too good not to be true. Do you fear that eternity will somehow be “boring”? That you will not “fit in” with endless song services and prayer meetings? (Where do we get those ideas anyway?) Do not worry, whatever heaven will be, you can trust that it is worth living for on earth. After all, we have got our Father’s word on it.

[P.O. Box 1385, Sumter, SC 29151. Bruce works with the Plaza church of Christ.]

People Power

by Mark Swindall

PEOPLE! Life boils down to people. Our basic mistakes are people mistakes. Life is one great adventure in human relations.

Some value money over people. This shows up in the way we treat people. A man’s worth to us is judged by his bank account. Whether we admit it or not this shows up at church. We want people to be assets — not liabilities. We respect/admire the successful; we look down upon the “losers.” Success too often has too much “I say” down at church.

Some value themselves over people. This means people are only important to us when serving us. People seldom realize their opinion of others is even more a confession of their own character. Paul tells us to count others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2). He repeatedly warns of “thinking too highly of ourselves.”

If we value people we will be valued: if we do not, we will not. If we want to be loved we must love others. What we give is what we get. What we use, develops; what we do not use, dies. True greatness is spelled S-E-R-V-I-C-E! Jesus was a servant; Christianity is servanthood, serving others.

1. Value people above everything except God.

2. Give to people above everything except God.

3. Make cooperation, courtesy, thoughtfulness a way of life.

4. Serve those you would lead.

Good leadership is not so much a matter of demanding performance as it is inspiring enthusiasm. PEOPLE POWER!

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News & Notes

The Carolina Lectures is the oldest lectureship program conducted by churches in the United States. There are older programs, but they are hosted by colleges. The 47th Annual Carolina Lectures was hosted last month (April 8-11) by the CHARLOTTE AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Rock Hill, S.C. The lectures were better attended than in last years and the Charlotte Ave. brethren are to be commended for a great effort. Many people are wondering what the future holds for the lectures. There are so many things that compete for our time and attention now. Further, it seems that in the minds of many we have outgrown the original purpose of the lectures, which was to provide an opportunity for fellowship and mutual edification for Christians across the Carolinas at a time when churches were few and far between. Is there still a need for the Carolina Lectures? In the mind of this writer, and many others, the answer is yes. With the proliferation of churches in the Carolinas (for which we thank God) there has also come a growing spirit of competitiveness and self-sufficiency. Could it be that we feel that we do not need each other as much as we once did? Perhaps the Carolina Lectures need to be re-evaluated and even adapted in some ways (which would be up to the individual churches hosting it from year to year), but it would surely be a sad day for the cause of Christ in the Carolinas if the lectures were allowed to pass quietly into obscurity because churches no longer feel the need to celebrate and share their "oneness" as they once did. Next year's lectures will be hosted by the BILTMORE CHURCH OF CHRIST in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountain city of Asheville, N.C. Hope to see you there! . . . The HAMPTON AVE. church in Aiken, S.C., has a new preacher. He is JERRY ROZIER. . . . The IRMO-CHAPIN CHURCH OF CHRIST in Irmo, S.C., has recently purchased some land that will serve as the site for a new church building. . . . Last April 14 the TWIN CITY church, which presently meets temporarily in the American Legion Building in Leesville,

S.C., had a Sunday morning worship attendance of 21. That afternoon, 12 of those people returned to go out into the community and tell others about the church. They may be a small church, but they have a big heart. . . . GUY BAKER is the new preacher for the SELMA CHURCH OF CHRIST in Selma, N.C. He has been preaching for them since January of this year. . . . Last February the MADISON CHURCH OF CHRIST in Madison, Tenn., sent more than 80,000 pounds of cargo to Romania in the first shipment of a new program they sponsor. The program is called Adopt-an-Orphanage. The shipment included more than \$35,000 worth of food and 5,000 Bibles. The shipment was the first of what is to be a two-year program of quarterly distributions. . . . Six people were baptized in the U.S.S.R. capital of Moscow as a result of a seminar held there March 18-21.

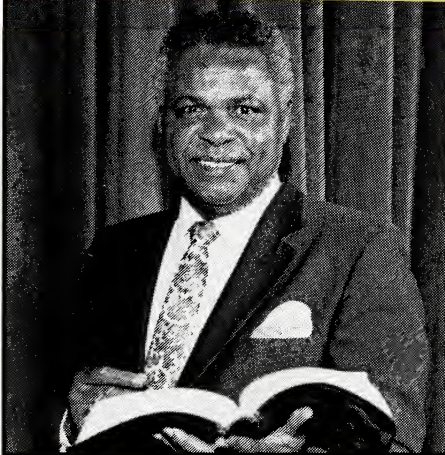
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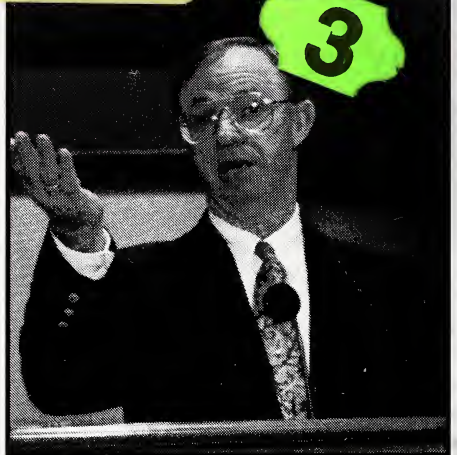
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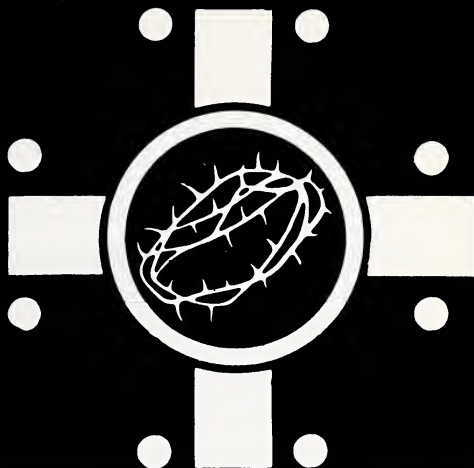
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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John Rudolph "Rudy" Senn
February 13, 1934-May 7, 1991

See Article on Page 3.



editorial

by David Pharr

We were shocked and saddened by the news of Rudy Senn's death. I was in Cookeville, Tennessee when my wife telephoned me with the information. The next morning I announced the news to the group I was with; several of them knew Rudy, especially the ones from the Chattanooga area. The news seemed unreal.

Obituary information is in a separate article.

I remember the first time I saw Rudy Senn. He was a college student, preparing to preach, and visited our little congregation meeting in a small building near North Wilkesboro. He preached for us that day. I was still in high school, and I remember well my thoughts that someday I wanted to be doing what he was doing.

My contacts with Rudy over the years have usually been only on brief occasions. Each time, however, I found him to be always pleasant in disposition, but serious in his purpose to be faithful in his work.

My last time to be with him was at the recent Carolina Lectures at Rock Hill. It happens though that since then I was in a meeting at Berea, Kentucky, one of the places where Rudy had preached. Members I talked with remembered with gratitude the good work the Senns had done when they were there. This is being written a few days before I am scheduled to be at Marion, North Carolina, another place where Rudy served.

Our sympathy and prayers go with all of Rudy's family. Their loss is immeasurable. Many, many, of his spiritual family will miss him too. I have lost a faithful friend. A pulpit will be empty. The church has lost a zealous minister. Our consolation though is that we "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

The Senn family means much to the cause of Christ in the Carolinas. We know that we join with thousands over the brotherhood in expressing our love and sympathy for Ann

and the children, as well as for all of Rudy's family. May God bless you with ever growing faith and hope.

The article by brother Senn in this issue was selected from one of his recent bulletins. It was already planned for this issue before his death. It reflects the scriptural and practical approach to Christian living that was characteristic of both his life and ministry.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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“Hi Rudy!”

John Rudolph “Rudy” Senn
February 13, 1934-May 7, 1991

On May 7, just before 6:00 PM, “Rudy” Senn died as a result of a chronic respiratory ailment he had battled for several years. Rudy was the eldest son of R.W. “Doc” and Vera Senn. He and his wife, Ann, had three children: Jerry Don, Lisa and Mike. Ann was a faithful helpmeet in Rudy’s ministry.

The Senn family is renown for producing gospel preachers and singers. Rudy had been teaching school and preaching for 37 years. He was presently the minister for the Albemarle Church of Christ where he had served for the past 18 months.

I have known Rudy for several years as a student, preacher, and most of all, a good friend. Just a short time ago, my wife and I spent a weekend with Rudy and Ann which was one of the most enjoyable mini-vacations we’ve ever spent. The Senns took us on a tour of their favorite spots; we went to Indian burial grounds, gold mines, mountains, historic sites, shopping at discount stores, and ate good food. Rudy was “happy as a lark.” His work was going well; he appeared to enjoy better health than he had in a long time. Life had so much pleasure and we all soaked up as much of it as we could.

I feel like an adopted son to “Doc” and Vera Senn. I’ve told the Senn boys in the past that I was their adopted brother whether they wanted me to be or not. . . . I really feel a personal loss from Rudy’s death, but I’m sure Jerry and David have pain that I cannot understand. The Senn brothers were very close to one another.

My wife spoke with Rudy by phone a few days before he died and he told her then that he had found some more interesting sites for us to visit and that we should plan to do so soon. There are unfinished things to do when a love one dies. This is an example of how Rudy’s wife, children, mother, father, and brothers feel. There was still so much more to do — more dreams to dream, places to see, songs to sing, people to love and make happy. There’s just never a convenient time

to give up a loved one — the only reason we ever give them up is because we must, and, if we must give them up, our only recourse is to be like David of old and look forward to being with them again where there are so many new sights to see, people to be reunited with, and perfect love to be shared.

I have used a story told by “Doc” so many times that it’s worn out. It was the first thing that came to my mind when I heard of Rudy’s death and it felt so appropriate for my personal feelings. “Doc” said he came home tired from a hard day’s work and Rudy had been being a normal boy as boys will be. Vera was exasperated as mothers of boys often are, and she said, “‘Doc,’ I want you to speak to your son!” “Doc” facetiously said, “Hi, Rudy.”

So many of us would like to say, “Hi, Rudy” just one more time. He was such a pleasure to be around. His mom spoke of his fierce competitiveness. “Doc” said when Rudy came to see him, he was not satisfied until he did something for him, if nothing but change the oil in the car. One daughter-in-law said, “He was the kindest man I’ve ever met.” Mike said he was Santa Claus, Coach, and Counselor; he was a compassionate daddy. A church member said, “Rudy always made people feel like he was glad to be with them and you knew for sure you were glad to be with him.” All of us have an opportunity to live in such a way to be with him again. And then we can say, “Hi, Rudy!”

[by Terry Gunnels]

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“Corncob” Christians

by Rudy Senn

I recently read the story of a man who was in the cattle business. His feed bill became so enormously expensive that he began to grind up his corncobs and mix them into his feed in order to cut his expenses. This seemed to work very well so he gradually increased the amount of corncobs until his feed consisted mostly of cobs. The result was, of course, that his cattle became thin, weak, and diseased. Many of them died of malnutrition.

This may not have really happened, few men would be so foolish in business matters. In spiritual matters, however, we literally starve ourselves to death. We feast on television programs, sports, books, magazines, etc. — composed mostly of “corncobs.” The majority of our mental, emotional and spiritual diet is lacking in the milk and meat of God’s word. Is it any wonder that we lack the power to overcome temptation and to survive spiritual disease?

Every babe in Christ is to “desire the sincere milk of the word that he may grow

thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). Gradually, strong meat ought to be added to our diet (Heb. 5:14). We also need daily spiritual exercise in order to develop power and strength (1 Tim. 4:7, 8). Often, the reason we don’t wear our Christian armor (Eph. 6:14-17) is simply because we are too weak to carry it around with us. The shield of faith droops lower and lower, and we hang the sword of the Spirit on the hat rack. We figure that we can do without these things since we are not planning to get involved in any “spiritual” conflicts.

A few “corncobs” may be all right, but it seems that many of us are near death spiritually from an over-indulgence on “corncobs.” Really now, we are going to feel so much better when we begin to get a more spiritual diet. We won’t be so grouchy and mean. Our backbones will stiffen, our stiff joints will loosen up, smiles will break across our faces, and a great feeling of joy and security will fill our hearts (Phil. 4:8-13). Don’t be a “corncob” Christian.

A Study of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

by David Pharr, Editor

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is a remarkable passage: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

When we compare Paul’s words to the permissiveness of the world, the text is remarkable in its frank condemnation of sin. Here is a catalog of transgressions, any of

which would prevent participation in the blessings of God’s kingdom. Criminals, false religionists, libertines, sexual perverts, greedy people, hateful people, etc. have no inheritance.

But the text is also remarkable in the way it shows the power of the gospel to change such characters and to make them fit for the kingdom. “And such were some of you.” Among the Corinthian Christians there were brothers and sisters who had once lived in the ways of the world and had practiced the heinous crimes the apostle had described. During Paul’s ministry at Corinth he had spent a year and a half teaching the word of God (Acts 18:11). “And many of the

Carolina Christian

Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). This exactly parallels the great commission (Mark 16:15-16).

We make a serious mistake when we think the gospel lacks sufficient power to change any man's life — no matter how low and depraved his character may be. No, everyone will not accept the gospel. Some are too hardened in sin to let it touch them. This is true as regards many who live in the gutters of moral filth. But it is equally true of many who appear to have the highest of moral standards. Everyone will not accept the gospel. Sometimes, however, as demonstrated at Corinth, the gospel can change characters that are vile and loathsome into persons that are pure and acceptable to God.

Three terms are used by Paul to show the completeness of their change from their old character to their new character; from their former lost condition to their present place among the saved. ". . . but ye are **washed**, but ye are **sanctified**, but ye are **justified**. . . ." These terms do not indicate three unrelated actions. Neither do they show successive stages over a period of time. Instead the apostle points to a specific point in their history when a great transformation occurred.

In verse 9 he had declared the "unrighteous" as unfit for the kingdom. To be "unrighteous" is to be "unjust" — both terms coming from the same root word. Those who had been "unjust" had been made "justified." Simply stated, justification means being in an approved relationship with God.

The use of the word "sanctified" is also especially fitting in the context. It means separation. They had formerly been a part of a sinful, lost world; but now they had been separated from the world and placed in a holy relationship with God. (The word "holy," though not found in this text, is from the same root word as "sanctified.") Their having previously been unfit for the kingdom and their now having been sanctified is parallel to what was said to the Colossians: "Who [God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

The expression, "ye are washed," deserves particular attention. At first glance one might assume that there is reference to

being washed, cleansed, by the blood of Christ. Certainly the blood washes from sin (Rev. 1:5; 7:14); but the use of the term here applies to baptism, as it does in several comparable passages. (See Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26; Ti. 3:5; Heb. 10:22.)

Especially significant is the fact that all three verbs — washed, sanctified, and justified — are in the Greek aorist tense, which is used to indicate a specific point in the past when these things simultaneously took place. All was accomplished in a single act. While, however, these verbs are all in the aorist tense, they are not in the same Greek voice. This distinction is remarkable in that it demonstrates both the human and the Divine involvement in conversion.

G.R. Beasley-Murray, citing other scholars, shows that the verb for "washed," in the middle voice, implies voluntary action, and that literally the clause should be rendered: "But you had yourselves washed. . . ." He calls attention to the coincidence of languages in Acts 22:16, where Saul is told to "Get baptized and wash away your sins. . . ." Being "washed" was something the Corinthians themselves had done. That is, they had submitted to baptism.

Their voluntary submission to washing implies that they were being obedient to a command. It is always helpful to remember that the only baptism commanded is water baptism. Holy Spirit baptism was a promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8), administered by the Lord, not men (Acts 2:33). Any time, therefore, that we find baptism commanded (Acts 2:38; et al.); or administered by men (Acts 8:38; et al.); or submitted to voluntarily (Acts 8:12, 16; 22:16, et al.): the reference is to water baptism. Such is the case in 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Their being "sanctified" and "justified," however, is expressed in the Greek passive voice, indicating something that had been done for them — the Divine action in conversion. The point made, therefore, is that when they had (by faith) voluntarily had themselves washed (baptized), they had at that point been sanctified and justified by the power of God. Emphasis on the Divine involvement in baptism as the rite of sanctification and justification is seen in the way being washed, sanctified, and justified are

all three said to be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This is the same emphasis found in Colossians 2:12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God. . . ."

The case for the washing of 1 Corinthians 6:11 being water baptism is further strengthened by a comparison with Ephesians 5:25-26. The "church of God" at Corinth was composed of "them that are sanctified" (1 Cor. 1:2). Those that were sanctified were those that had gotten themselves washed. According to the same writer, the church is sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of

water by the word" (Eph. 5:26).

It should also be remembered that the only washing identified in Scripture as "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is water baptism. This is beyond debate in Acts 10:47-48, and is further confirmed by Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5.

(The work cited above is G. R. Beasley-Murray, **Baptism in the New Testament**, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976, pp. 162ff. The author is himself a Baptist; but shows himself to be more devoted to scholarship than to denominational prejudices — in many ways a valuable work.)

Modern Religion, Irreverent and Irrelevant

by Mark Swindall

The Bible has been relentlessly attacked since the infancy of the Enlightenment. The age of Enlightenment (late 17th century) played a large role in shaping the modern religious mind. Enlightenment gave birth to the idea of **progress**. Progress was essentially a new idea of the late 17th century. Previously thinkers had been backward looking, they felt it might be possible to equal the magnificent accomplishments of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Enlightenment thinkers also created the idea of **social science**. They believed it was at least possible to create better societies and better people through **critical reasoning** rather than by religious beliefs. The **progressive** social thinking of Enlightenment had definite anti-religious implications. **Progressives** began to look at truth and morality in relative terms rather than absolute terms. Anything was possible and who could say what was right or wrong? Therefore, (and this is a key concept), in religion as in philosophy, the best hope for humanity was **open-minded toleration**.

Fundamental questions concerning the meaning of life, God, human nature and the conflict between good and evil were no

longer answered with Bible truth. Enlightened progressive thinkers would answer these questions with critical reasoning. Open-minded toleration would replace Bible-based ethics and morals.

Religious thought and teaching were profoundly affected by Enlightenment concepts. Intellectual reason replaced Biblical faith; cultural progress replaced Biblical tradition and religious toleration replaced Biblical morality. Thus, much of what passes for religion today is not Biblical; but is both irreverent and irrelevant!

Cal Thomas, a columnist for the **Los Angeles Times**, recently cataloged three incidents which vividly demonstrate the growing irreverence and irrelevance of many modern religions.

(1) A special committee of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) proposed that practicing homosexuals be ordained as ministers and that the Seventh Commandment proscribing adultery be disavowed, along with all other prohibitions against sex outside of marriage. It took the committee four years to concoct something it calls a **justice-love** test to supplant the doctrine it once espoused.

(2) A committee within the Episcopal

Church recommended that bishops be allowed to ordain homosexual seminarians to the priesthood. "I think the church is ready to take a little more **progressive** stance," said Bishop George Hunt of Providence, Rhode Island, who headed the committee.

(3) A new book by the gadfly Episcopal Bishop John Spong claims the apostle Paul, who condemned homosexual practice, was himself a repressed homosexual.

It used to be said of religious leaders, "They are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good." Surely it must now be said of these progressives, that they are so earthly minded, they are of no use to heaven or to anyone on earth.

The unchurched or non-religious might view these changes as immaterial and of little personal interest, but it is of great cultural significance when religion has lost its moral power and has become a prisoner, rather than a leader and liberator, of a culture. What moral impulse can a church exert on its community when it conforms itself to the world?

Religion in general once had power: moral power, spiritual power, the power to transform not only people's lives but also to heal some of society's deepest ills. That power, as the history of this and other countries has revealed, is greater than any government, no matter how much money it spends and no matter how many points of light it seeks to illuminate on its own.

I have seen demonstrated again and again the power of a living religion to reconstruct the individual human life. Repeatedly, churches of Christ that were Biblically sound addressed the ills of society by spiritually transforming people's inner lives. Thinking people can easily see that when individuals stop sinning communities benefit morally and financially.

Recently, we find many churches of Christ desiring to conform to the religious world around them. Some prominent speakers and leaders in the churches of Christ are promoting a **new hermeneutic**, which is not new, but is similar to the hermeneutic of denominational churches for at least the last 150 years.

Some progressives among the churches of Christ are beginning to promote or at least

allow the following: the use of instrumental music in worship assemblies, women speakers delivering keynote messages at Bible lectureships on university campuses before audiences of men and women, women preachers, elders and deacons, women leading prayer before public worship assemblies, and partaking of the Lord's Supper on days other than the Lord's Day. The list of liberal progressive tendencies will only increase if this new hermeneutic thinking is embraced.

How long will it be before the churches of Christ begin allowing practicing homosexuals into their fellowship? How long before a church of Christ allows a female to mount the pulpit and deliver the message to the local congregation? Which church of Christ will be first to appoint a woman elder? Will it be five or ten years before a church of Christ allows an active homosexual or lesbian to fill a pulpit and deliver the Sunday sermon?

An article by Robin Perrin appeared in the March, 1991 issue of **Christianity Today**. Perrin's report revealed the decline of church membership in several progressive mainline denominations. The plunge in church attendance was cataloged from 1965-1985. Four religious groups were cited: the Presbyterian Church (-24%), the Episcopal Church (-20%), the United Methodist Church (-16%) and the denomination which had the largest decrease, the Disciples of Christ (-42%). Each of these religious groups has promoted progressive liberal religious thinking and action. Each of them has steadily decreased in membership over the last two decades. Each con-

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tinues its decline into the 90's.

Mark Twin once wrote, "The only thing that people learn from history is that they don't learn anything from history."

Just one hundred years ago, the churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ were in fellowship. Members of the churches of Christ haven't forgotten that the Disciples of Christ separated themselves from the restoration movement and rushed headlong into liberal denominationalism, have they? Churches of Christ will not allow this progressive liberal thinking and watch their influence and membership decrease as well, will they?

What makes us think that we will grow if we move away from the Bible and conform to the denominational world around us? Paul said, "... do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). In the Old Testament Israel conformed to the idol worshipping religious world around it, and was soon banished from the promised land.

Americans are not searching for Biblically weak, liberal, wishy-washy, progressive social groups pawning themselves off as religion. Apparently they are looking for a vibrant church with strong Biblical and moral fiber. It is evident that they are leaving liberal progressive churches. The hearts of men and women desire to be challenged by something greater than themselves.

In the book of Acts we see a church with strong moral fiber and spiritual power. We

see disciples teaching gospel truth so powerful that people's lives were transformed. People stopped sinful practices such as adultery, fornication, and homosexuality (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

I pray that the churches of Christ will not conform to the progressive worship patterns or to the progressively lower standards of morality which most denominational churches around us espouse.

We must remember that all tradition is not bad and everything that is called progress is not good.

It is time for a revolution of the people of God who have not abandoned sound Biblical doctrine and decent morals. The churches of Christ have always used the Bible as their foundation. Promoting a revolution of **Back to the Bible** sounds peculiar, but is desperately needed. Only such a revolution will revive the churches of Christ, and only a revived church can bring help, healing, and a desperately needed moral conscience to our members and the communities in which they live.

Let us be **enlightened** by the word of God and conform to it. New Testament truths are infinitely precious. We must hold on to these truths tenaciously! Only the Scriptures provide the moral impulse and spiritual power which leads to salvation, inner peace, and ultimately heaven.

[2721 Cordwainer Court, Charleston, SC 29414.]

Evangelism Is War

by T. Douglas Couch

Man's accumulated knowledge has allowed him to make the mightiest weapons that have ever existed. Missiles may now be hurled at enemy targets which are thousands of miles and a few minutes away. Spy-satellites which can count the dimples on a golf ball monitor enemy activities. These powerful weapons have changed the world and have also instilled fear in many people.

In contrast, the weapons of a Christian are more powerful than any nuclear weapon. They "are not of the flesh but are mighty

before God" (2 Cor. 10:4). These weapons destroy carnal thinking, batter walls of prejudice, topple stubborn argumentation, and capture human techniques and devices (2 Cor. 10:5). The end product is a person who thinks and acts like Jesus. Revolutionary indeed! What are these weapons?

1. **A Faith Which Produces Influence** (1 Tim. 1:18-19). A life of faith always affects someone else. Those who admire our faith usually imitate it while those who hate it inflict persecution. Persecution is the

devil's attempt to evangelize.

2. **A Clear Conscience Which Inspires Confidence** (1 Tim. 1:19). When we realize no one can point an accusing finger we are filled with courage in speaking. Paul said that boldness was a token of our salvation and of our enemies' eminent destruction (Phil. 1:28). When men disobey God, they fear because they instinctively know that God has left them. The opposite of fear is faith (Matt. 8:26; 21:21).

3. **A Sword Which Touches the Soul** (Eph. 6:17). Truth cuts and pricks the human spirit. When we handle the truth properly, the Holy Spirit cooperates with our efforts. To hardened sinners, God's word

is like an executioner's axe; but to Christians, it is like a surgeon's scalpel. It is a verdict of death to those who reject it, but it is life-giving surgery to those who heed it.

4. **A Prayer Which Reaches Heaven** (Eph. 6:18). Bro. Cecil May writes "prayer is no substitute for the gospel but it (the gospel) is no substitute for prayer either. Because Christians pray . . . souls are saved that would be lost (Rom. 10:1)." Tennyson said: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

[Brother Couch once worked with the church at Asheboro, North Carolina. He is now with the church at 1115 Minerva Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37130.]

You Don't Have to Attend Every Service

by Robert Curry

Regular attendance of the worship services is the subject of powerful exhortation, sound preaching and Biblical teaching. Pulpits and classrooms alike echo with such insistence. However, there are those who are "exempt" from attending the regular worship services and Bible classes unless it is at their own convenience. The notion that the necessity of regular attendance applies to everyone is simply not true, for there are those who need not attend. Let us list three groups who are "exempt" and see if you and I fall into one or more.

A Spiritual Peak

One is "exempt" from regular attendance if he has reached his spiritual peak. Worship and Bible study would have little effect on him, for edification and exhortation would be a waste of time: he can learn no more and grow no further. He can forget the warning of Jesus to the church in Laodicea who thought they had "need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17), for he has advanced beyond any help the Lord could offer. Such a person has a brighter future than had the

apostle Paul, who felt he still had not achieved all he could, but rather continued "toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:13). Indeed, regular attendance with those of a like precious faith would be ridiculous because no one has a precious faith like his, seeing he has reached his spiritual peak!

Able to Save Oneself

One is "exempt" from regular attendance if he is able to save himself. You see, there are many who are "yet without strength" and who know that "in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). But a person who has reached his spiritual peak is far from being without enough strength to carry his load of sin. He can rejoice that such personal strength proves the Bible in error because it speaks of Jesus Christ and assumes "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). How fortunate one is to have such great power at his disposal, even though Jeremiah admitted to God that "it is not in man that

walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Since he has the ability to direct his own steps into eternal salvation his time would be more productively spent in things other than worship and Bible study with fellow Christians!

The Church Unimportant

Finally, one is "exempt" from regular attendance if he feels God's work to establish the church was unimportant. He has taken the time to observe God's carefully laid plans to bring mankind out of darkness, establishing a covenant between Himself and His own (Gen. 17:2, 7, 10; Ex. 34:10; Jer. 31:31). He is aware how God sent His Son to fulfill the continuance of eternal plans (Matt. 5:17), shedding His blood for the cleansing of unrighteous souls (Heb. 9:13, 14), and purchasing the church with that shed blood (Acts 20:28). He has read of those who risked life and limb to bring New Testament Christianity into the hearts of the unaware and apathetic, feeling the urgency to speak of the things they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20), and giving their all for a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:6-8). However, this information, means little to him. Therefore, regular attendance in worship would have little, if any, meaning to him!

Faithful Attendance Necessary

Of course these "exemptions" are ridiculous, for no one can ever fall into any of these categories. Therefore, seeing that no one has reached their spiritual peak, and that we are incapable of saving ourselves, we can conclude that any attempt to justify intentional absence from assembling with other Christians for worship and Bible study is just as ridiculous.

However, the last "exemption" might hit closer to home for some than we might desire to admit. Maybe the excuses and justifications reflect a true lack of interest in God's scheme of redemption. It is possible that apathy does keep us from regular attendance for "reasons" that would never keep us from some secular event.

Therefore, we need to attend every service of the Lord's church, but not merely because of a Biblical mandate to attend. The Christian should desire to assemble, understanding the privilege of expressing praise and adoration to the name of the Lord. David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1). Instead of "exemptions" or excuses, our attitude should reflect such gladness.

[P. O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.]

Is God's Word All Sufficient for Us Today?

by Ken Wyatt

In Matthew 24:25, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away." It is really a shame that so many who claim to be proclaimers of God's word reject clear passages of Scripture and give their opinions rather than accepting the infallible words of God.

We live in a world today that is not much different in its thinking than existed in the first century. For instance, the Pharisees and the scribes, who were familiar with the old law and the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, and with all the things that

would happen to Christ, rejected His teachings and miracles. Jesus said, they were blind and deaf, as we see in Matthew 13:13: "Therefore I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

We have many in the religious world today who fit the same pattern as did the Pharisees and scribes. When a man teaches God's word from the Bible and then openly says that the Bible can be interpreted in many ways; and that whatever you or I understand it to mean is acceptable unto God; I am both

ered deeply, because it says in effect, that God is the author of confusion. The apostle Paul, who was guided by the Holy Spirit, says that God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). One needs to read and study carefully 2 Peter 3:14-18, and if he is honest he will see that the Bible is not for private interpretation to be twisted to suit one's own ideas.

Our Savior said, "Beware of false prophets [false teachers], which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Paul warning the elders (bishops) at Ephesus wrote: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God [Christ], which He purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves [false teachers], enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves [elders], shall men arise speaking perverse [distorted] things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30).

My dear friends if we are unable to interpret the Bible as to its true meaning, then the words to Timothy, the young evangelist, are meaningless to us. Paul wrote, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts [desires], shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn their ears away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Remember that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles into all truth (John 16:13), not part truths! In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said, "All power [authority], is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing [Gr. **baptizo** — immersing], them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to **observe all things** whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Do you believe Jesus? Jesus said, "To observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Also one needs to read Matthew 7:21. The

apostle Paul warned the brethren at Galatia: "But though we [apostles], or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9). Does this sound as though we need further revelation?

The apostle Peter wrote, "According as His divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3). Read also 2 Peter 3:18. We cannot grow in grace and knowledge if we cannot interpret

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the Scriptures correctly, as some teach. My dear friends we are to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3).

Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Remember the words of Jesus, "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24). The Bible tells us that if we love not the truth, God will send us a strong delusion, which will cause us to believe a lie and be con-

demned (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

You and I are warned not to add to or to take away from God's word (Rev. 22:18-20). Let no one deceive you and say that the Bible can be interpreted in many ways and still be acceptable unto God. There is but one way of interpretation and it is, "Profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Yes, God's word is all sufficient for us today.

[Ken is now with the church in Newberry, SC, P. O. Box 515, 29108.]

The Preacher's Inward Struggle

by David R. Powell

As the preacher comes to the end of the week, he realizes that many of the things he had hoped to do have gone undone. With this realization comes a stressful awareness of inadequacy. A shut-in, a troubled church member, a member who is displaying signs of becoming inactive, a visitor who has recently attended services — go without the intended contact. Yes, the entire body/church has responsibilities, but the "preacher is being paid!" The preacher struggles with the dilemma of **exercising integrity in the pulpit or meeting the expectations of the people**. Often he cannot do both.

A preacher's weekly responsibilities may include the preparing of two sermons, studying to teach two adult classes, writing an article for the bulletin, typing, printing, and folding the bulletin, delivering five five-minute radio spots, reading various brotherhood articles, filing important information, visiting the members who are in the hospital — the list could be as long as the preacher would allow. The decision he often must make is one of meeting the challenges with integrity, or of "being with the people."

A preacher is busy throughout the week "being with people." On Saturday night he scans the sermon outline books and selects

"his" sermon for Sunday morning. On Sunday morning the "stolen" sermon is read as though it is original with him. On Sunday afternoon another sermon is selected from an outline book and then read at the evening service. Yet he is respected for he was "with the people."

Thus the preacher is faced with this question of **exercising integrity in the pulpit or meeting the expectations of the people**. The preacher can exercise integrity by studying and organizing his sermons, or he can "be

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with the people" and be carried along by means of a sermon outline book. With one choice comes inward peace, with the other choice comes peace with the people. If such should ever be the case when a preacher must choose between inward peace and peace with the people, we hope he will choose the course of integrity.

Preachers should understand that the Lord pays them their salaries, not the people. Members give upon the first day of the week. What one gives is no longer theirs; it is the Lord's. The Lord places the elders

as stewards over His money, and as stewards the elders pay the preachers. The Lord, through the Holy Spirit, through the Bible, instructs the preacher. "The people" must free the preacher so he can do what the Lord has appointed him to do — "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1-2); "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13); "study" (2 Tim. 2:15); and "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5).

[David R. Powell works with the North Main Street Church of Christ in Mocksville, NC, P. O. Box 321, 27028.]

A Word of Caution

by Robert Curry

It is a fact that humankind is never satisfied. If someone progresses from point A to point B, he will wish to continue on to point C, and so on. This fact has its positive implications for we are to continue to develop and mature. However, this fact also has its negative side as well. One might begin an endeavor or strike out in a particular direction that, for the moment, seems harmless enough, but on down the road could prove quite unfortunate.

I believe that this principle can and should be applied to spiritual matters. While we are to always grow in grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), always striving to do as Paul and keep moving forward toward spiritual refinement (Phil. 3:13-14), we must be cautious that our progression does not bring us into error. We live in a day that is seeing many ideas and practices arise that seem to have tremendous immediate potential, but too often we are failing to look at the long-range effect.

Are we coming to the day when we feel that good gospel preaching is a steady diet of love, happiness, and family: believing that such are all there is to successfully living the Christian life? Are we to be accused of "negative" preaching because we dare to speak of sin? Have we progressed to the place that our pulpits are to be filled with entertainment and smooth speeches to soothe us with

only pleasing thoughts? Will the day come when we will totally forget that the wiles of the devil will rob us of what, according to Christ's standards, are true spiritual happiness, Christian love, and a family dedicated to the cause of Christ?

Have we approached the day when our youth are incapable of learning and appreciating a Biblical message unless it is accompanied with fireworks, magicians, puppeteers and the like? Will they come to the point that when a teacher or rally speaker begins his illustrative actions and their interest is peaked, they are then dashed into boredom

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when he begins to read from God's eternal word?

Will we see the day when no one will come to an area singing, gospel meeting, or evangelistic seminar unless it bears slick, glamorous, neatly packaged titles like Celebration, Jubilee, Joy-fest, or Love-fest?

To be sure there is a time and place for a drama, skit, or some other illustrative method to illustrate a Bible lesson. When coupled with clear Biblical teaching this can be a very effective way to bring the Scriptures to light. Well-placed humor and a glossy presentation can be a good way to capture the attention of an audience as long as the thrust is pure gospel preaching. However, let us be cautious lest we find ourselves trapped by a mentality that will not (cannot) enjoy or allow the pure message of God's word, summed so well by Paul: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

However, just as we are to be cautious about our plans and methods developing into something far beyond the New Testament pattern, we are also to be cautious that in our attempts to walk the strait and narrow path we do not stagnate by putting a strangle-hold on perfectly legitimate and Biblical practices.

Our purpose should be to assemble as "true worshippers" (John 4:23, 24) for the purpose of praising God in song (Col. 3:16), praying to the Father (1 Tim. 2:8), seeking to edify the Church (1 Cor. 14:12), humbly bringing ourselves before the presence of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:25) and resting our hopes and faith upon the Bible as the inspired word of God that is capable of making the faithful complete (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Yet, congregations all over the brotherhood will refuse to seek out a more spiritual worship and a stronger fellowship merely because a congregation of "an unsure sound," or some denomination, does it. My friends, truth is truth no matter who proclaims or practices it. Does this mean we are to adopt a certain thing because a "liberal" congregation or denomination advocates it? Absolutely not! We practice it because the Bible authorizes it.

Dear friends, let us not cease in our spiritual development and growth because we

are afraid we will go too far. God's word will not allow us if it is our only measuring stick of right and wrong. Simply because we allow someone or some congregation to seek out greater spiritual awareness does not mean we should ever allow any violation of Biblical command. Paul told Ephesus, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14, 15).

If we continue to grow and develop into stronger, more spiritual Christians who come to realize the meaning of worship and praise to the Lord, then we will do so according to God's word. Anything else, no matter how good it looks on the outside, will prove itself empty and meaningless, causing the doers of such to not seek out true Christianity. Indeed, meaningful Christianity will not be found in the slick, glossy, love and joy practices of some who travel in opposition to the New Testament pattern, seeking to be "progressive" and "innovative." However, if we come to discover that a reasonable, Biblical method of greater fellowship and truer worship is being practiced by "them," we should not ignore it because "they" are doing it, neither should we adopt it because "they" are doing it; but let us put it into our lives because God authorizes it for the growth of someone striving to be a true servant of God.

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Why Did You Become a Christian?

by Bob Bickle

A small shop in Tel Aviv, "Sinai Snacks," is open on Friday evening and Saturday. "What's wrong with that?" you may ask. Being open at this time is a violation of the Jewish Sabbath. Municipal spokesman Shammai Golan noted that the Sabbath law applies nationwide and that as a general rule, only pubs, restaurants, cinemas, and some other businesses designated as entertainment sites can get Sabbath licenses in Tel Aviv. It is also believed that Arab owned shops in Jaffa are allowed to do business on the Sabbath.

One angry owner of a small store said, "They leave the prostitutes, thieves, and drug addicts alone, and instead bother someone who's trying to make an honest living." Another frustrated owner of a store in Tel Aviv said, "The guy who owns the candy store a few blocks away can stay open because he's an Arab, but we can't because we're Jews." Sasson is thinking of converting to Christianity. He'll gain two things — he won't have to do reserve duty and he won't get fined anymore."

Both of these reasons are very poor reasons for converting to Christ. Permit me to ask the reader, "Why did you become a Christian?" Some may answer, "It was the thing to do. All of my friends were being baptized and I didn't want to be the only one who wasn't." Others may answer, "My girlfriend/boyfriend said that he/she would not date anyone who wasn't a Christian." Still others may answer, "My life was so rotten. I thought that things would get better if I became a Christian." Of course, all of these reasons are the wrong ones and, in reality, these people are still nonChristians.

In Romans 6:17-18 Paul wrote, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." There

must be obedience from the heart! In Romans 10:9-10 it's stated, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Those Jews who heard the first gospel sermon on Pentecost were "pricked in their hearts." Solomon wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). It is important how we believe. Jesus said that we have to count the cost before becoming His disciples and love Him more than we love anyone else (Luke 14:25ff). Jesus also said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Every congregation has its share of "lukewarm" Christians. These are the ones who put in a "lukewarm" effort and produce a "lukewarm" profession of faith. They are the ones you can count on not counting on! They are the ones who have little fellowship with other Christians. They are also the ones who are quick to criticize when something is going on that they dislike in the church. They have probably never won a soul to Christ, and may very well be included in the ones that Jesus says, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

So, Sasson is thinking about becoming a Christian so he won't have to do reserve duty and won't get fined for being open on the Sabbath? But there is another benefit that will come to Sasson if he would obey God from the heart: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Why did you become a Christian?

[339 Charlotte Ave., Rock Hill, SC 29730.]

Times of Refreshing

by Gary G. Payne

The cross is terrifying. It is our sin which put the Holy and Righteous One on the cross.

Each of us can say, "I put that crown of thorns on His head. I spit in His face. I mocked Him. I beat Him. I nailed those spikes through His hands. And I still do it — every time I am unkind, every time I run someone down, every time I ignore those around me who are hurting, every time I live just for myself."

But God gives us hope. None of us really realizes how serious sin is. So God offers us times of refreshing. The apostle Peter tells us in a sermon he preached a long time ago: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

His words still hold true for us today. Isn't that good news? We do not have to live with guilt anymore. We do not have to go around feeling bad about ourselves. We can have the joy of knowing that we are forgiven. Our souls are refreshed. No longer do you have to go around feeling condemned. No longer do you have to wonder if God accepts you or not. If you will but accept it, God offers you forgiveness.

We have trouble with guilt. Everyone of us has done things of which we are ashamed. We have trouble forgiving ourselves. We have trouble forgiving others. But God will forgive.

If He forgave King David for adultery and murder, surely He will forgive you. If He forgave Saul for persecuting the church, and for being responsible for loss of life, surely He will forgive you. If He offers forgiveness to you, even though your sins put His Son on the cross, surely your guilt can be removed. And, if God is that forgiving, certainly each of us can find it in ourselves to be forgiving toward others. And, if God is that forgiving, certainly you can put the past behind, realizing that God has chosen to forget your past. What a debt we owe!

God gives us times of refreshing. The apostle Peter preached: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). J. W. McGarvey saw this verse as parallel with Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In other words "times of refreshing" and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" would be synonymous. If this is the case, then that means God is present. But, of course, we already know that is true.

Hope for your hurts. A way out of your guilt. And, in the end, when Jesus comes back "to restore all things" (Acts 3:21), life forever. God wants to bless you.

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Attention Youth Workers

If you work with teenagers in the Carolinas, **THIS IS FOR YOU!** Have you experienced the problem of planning an event only to find another congregation has selected the same weekend? Or perhaps you have wanted to schedule something "around" other events but cannot find out when those events are. Several of us have had similar experiences and so we offer this solution.

We will publish a calendar of events in **Carolina Christian** on a quarterly basis. Our

goal is to have definite dates for six months in advance. We realize that some overlap will occur. Selection and options are healthy.

If you would like to be a part of this solution, please send your information to our "volunteered" representative: Daryl Green, Providence Road Church of Christ, 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

IMPORTANT: Daryl will need your info at least six weeks prior to the event. For instance, if you have an event in September, please get your information in by July 15.

Youth Calendar

JUNE 23 Week #3 at Palmetto Bible Camp (Randy Smith, Director. Fee for this and all weeks at PBC is \$75.00 for those who pre-register.)

28-30 Opryland Youth Rally — Nashville, Tennessee

30 Week #4 at PBC (Jim Hunter, Director)

JULY 7 Week #5 at PBC (Jim Lamm, Director)

14 Week #6 at PBC (Senior Week — Jimmy Peden, Director)

21 Week #1 for Carolina Bible Camp at Camp WOW in Asheboro, NC (Johnny Melton, Director. Fee for this and all weeks at CBC is \$65.00.)

21 Week #7 at PBC (Junior Week — Jack Cooper, Director)

28 Week #2 at CBC (Dennis Conner, Director)

AUGUST 4 Week #3 at CBC (Wilson Burton, Director)

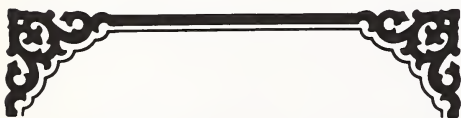
23-25 Youth Rally at Brooks Ave. Church of Christ in Raleigh, NC

27-29 Youth Rally at the Linville Forest Church of Christ in Kernersville, NC

News & Notes

We were shocked and saddened by the unexpected loss of brother RUDY SENN on May 7, 1991. Rudy died as the result of an acute asthma attack. Brother Senn was a native of Columbia, SC, and was respected throughout the Carolinas for his work and his Christian character. That is not surprising in view of the fact that the Senn family is one of the most respected Christian families in the Carolinas. Rudy's father, R.W. Senn, is an elder of the St. Andrews Rd. church in Columbia, SC, and his brother, Jerry, preaches for the church in Hendersonville, NC. Rudy was preaching for the church in Albemarle, NC. Our prayers are with his devoted wife, Ann, and all the family. . . . The SIGSBEE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Spartanburg, SC, is making plans to expand their facility, and for good reason. In 1984 the church had an average attendance of 40 each Lord's day. The church now averages 160. The church has had at least 20 baptisms a year since 1984. Samuel Means is the preacher. . . . The DURHAM CHURCH OF CHRIST in Durham, NC, which formerly

was located on Latta Road in north Durham, is currently sharing the facilities of the COLE MILL ROAD church in Durham. This is a temporary measure until a new congregation is established in the eastern or southeastern section of Durham County. The new congregation will consist of members from both the Durham and Cole Mill Rd. churches. The Durham church continues its existence as an autonomous group with its elders and preacher still serving as it worships in the Cole Mill Rd. library building. . . . The HENDERSONVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Hendersonville, NC, gave \$57,868 on May 5. The church has an average attendance of about 200. . . . Churches throughout the Carolinas will be conducting cooperative efforts with the ONE NATION UNDER GOD CAMPAIGN during the month of July. In the months ahead, we would be interested in publishing results of these efforts as they become known. Please be sure to send your information to me at this address: Dennis Connor, P.O. Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055.



*Should a man really be so bold,
As to think that God should be told,
How He should really save man's soul?*

*Although we have the way to choose,
God's Word, the Bible, is what we should use.
After all, only Jesus has the Good News.*

*No matter what some man may say,
It's God's commandments we should obey,
That we may go home with Jesus some day.*

Jack Anthony



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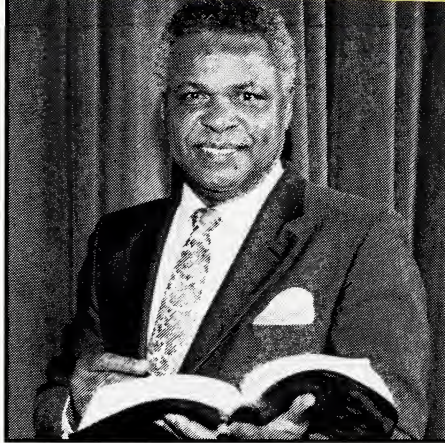
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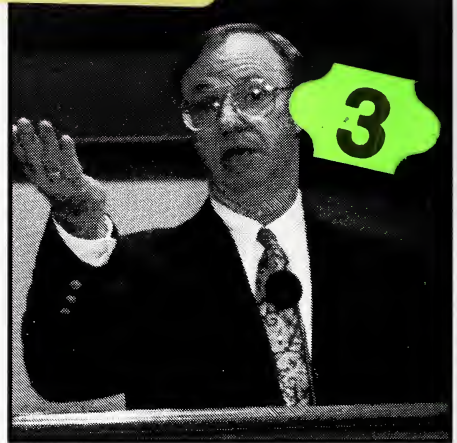
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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“Apply Yourself Totally to the Text; Apply the Text Totally to Yourself.”

by Mark Swindall

I had an extraordinary experience recently. I was able to attend a lecture series by Dr. Bruce M. Metzger. Bruce Metzger may be the foremost scholar of the Greek New Testament in the United States. Dr. Metzger has been on each of the translation committees which assembled the United Bible Societies **Greek New Testament**, the **Revised Standard Version** and the **New Revised Standard Version** of the Bible. At the conclusion of his last lecture Dr. Metzger quoted another biblical language scholar Dr. Bangle. The title to this article is that quotation from Dr. Bangle.

The Bible is more than theology, religious law, or a word study! You can so thoroughly analyze a leaf that you forget what the tree looks like. This explains why some great scholars who know so much still miss the boat. The fact is one can actually define all the words in a chapter and misinterpret that chapter. My statement is “One can know Greek and not know the Bible; one can know Jesus and not know Greek!” We need more than words.

We need systematic theology. This is a fancy way of saying we need an overview, a whole, a complete, a total concept of the Bible. Too many people wear blinders. Too many people know only narrow thinking. The Bible must never be at the mercy of one verse. Do we know the essential principles, doctrines, and concepts of the Bible?

We need a **high social I.Q.** Bible study, Bible classes and preaching involve the **people quotient** — relationships, grace, mercy, forgiveness, restoration, peace and love. People, life boils down to people!

Is it good to know Greek? Sure it is, but use your heart as well as your head. “Apply yourself totally to the text; apply the text totally to yourself.”



by David Pharr

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15). Though we "sorrow not, even as others, which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13), we are deeply touched by the passing of faithful servants in the kingdom of God. A few weeks ago we were shocked by news of the death of Rudy Senn, a dedicated Carolina preacher. Then on May 21 we received word of the death of Franklin Camp.

Brother Camp lived most of his life in Alabama, but he served the brotherhood in many states. He had a special interest in the Carolinas and often spoke on lecture programs in the Carolinas. He was also a regular speaker on the Freed-Hardeman Lectures, and on our programs here at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.

I have never known anyone who had a better overall grasp of the Bible. Brother Camp was a "preachers' preacher." That is, he led the best of Bible students into new levels of understanding. His faith in God's word was absolute.

Though firm in his convictions, he was kind and tolerant of others. He allowed for disagreement on moot points; but he was valiant for the truth regarding all fundamentals of the faith.

Hugo and Lois McCord of Portland, Oregon, sent me a copy of a letter written to Hazel Camp after Franklin's death. Among the many good things they said was the following paragraph:

"Franklin showed by his life that 'Christ lives in me,' 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20): a Christian man, a faithful husband, a caring father, a loving grandfather, a trustworthy evangelist, a gifted author, a man of good will, always spending and being spent through countless hours and months and years in helping young preachers, unselfish in every thought and deed! His preaching reshaped the lives of hundreds and hundreds through

the years, and his books and tape recordings will continue to mould people's lives for good. How we need such men!"

We have lost another close personal friend. He was an encourager and advisor. I am thankful in saying that he had a very great influence on my understanding and attitudes, always, I believe, for the best.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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Christian Education

by Don Jones, Jr.

Christian education is a topic which occupies the minds of most parents, young people, elders, and even youth directors. When we consider this topic most of us think of the colleges and universities which are administered by our brethren. But we also know that Christian education is more than higher learning. Many of us have a special interest in a congregation's educational program. The area of emphasis for most of these programs is on the children's classes. Apart from these classes there are the adult classes which take a variety of forms.

Today we have many materials involved in our educational programs. Catalogs from various brotherhood publishers fill our shelves and offer us teaching materials. These materials are complete with project suggestions, cut-outs, special teacher notes, and sometimes cassette tapes to aid the teacher. For adult classes we have lesson books, video tapes, and other materials designed for them. These things are good and helpful in most cases.

However, the biggest problem which faces Christian education today is not a lack of materials or institutions of learning (Christian schools and colleges). We are lacking the necessary intellectual tools with which we learn. What am I talking about? Many of us fail to appreciate the need for teaching people to read.

These days we hear about college students who are unable to read a menu. While this is surely tragic, the point of this article is not to claim that our problem is this type of illiteracy. The problem we face is the inability of people to read, understand, apply, and grow in their knowledge of the Bible. Christian education must be Bible centered. Most of our young people can tell about Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses and the ten commandments, etc. These things are told to them and by them as stories. Stories are good for little children. But there comes a time (sometime when a child turns 11-13 years of age) when their minds change and they are, as we often say, "at the age of ac-

countability." The Jews recognized this in ancient times and they instituted a rite of adulthood called bar (or bat) mitzvah (son or daughter of the commandments). At this point in a child's life we should change our teaching to a more adult program.

At the present time the majority of youth rallies, teen classes, and literature made for young people is directed toward "teen topics" (drug abuse, premarital sex, evolution, basic doctrines). We very rarely teach them why certain things are right and others are wrong. They never get any idea as to how to handle a book of the Bible such as the Gospel of John.

This thought concerns not only the young people. Ask any five people in your congregation what the book of Genesis is about. If you do this you may see my point. We need to develop basic reading comprehension and application skills in our brethren both young and old. This should not be impossible. I have personally had sixth graders ex-

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plain to me that the reason children look like their parents is due to the similarity of the genes found in the nucleus of cells. Do these people really need to be "spoon fed" in Bible classes when they are fifteen?

Some Interesting Questions

The following are questions based on reasons given for not wanting to study the Bible. Should not our homes be interested in the Bible? Are school work and activities more important because of the educational requirements of some colleges? Is there no room in an individual's education for character development, honesty, goodness, and equipping him for faithfulness? It is good that young people learn about certain top-

ics such as evolution, basic doctrines, alcohol, etc. But, is there any point in teaching on topics without making all of the Bible something special in their lives? Will we refuse to equip people with reading comprehension, study habits, and a desire for learning the Bible?

Many of these thoughts have been applied to young people. But they are just as applicable to older adults, adult converts, and those of us who need reminding that the Bible is a closed book until someone opens it to understand. This is where Christian education begins.

[Don works with the South Fork congregation, 205 Keating Dr., Winston-Salem, NC 27104.]

The Changing Pattern of Church Organization

by J.C. Townsend

It seems good from time to time to pay some attention to the organization of the New Testament Church and to the departures which took place during the early centuries of the church's existence. From the study of the Scriptures, it is clear that every congregation was independent and autonomous. No church had the authority to rule over another church. It seems to this writer that this fact needs a re-emphasis in our day. From time to time, there appears to be a disregard of the autonomy of the local congregation. Apparently, some feel that they can force congregations to fall in line with an action or policy which they take. The purpose of this study is to look briefly at some of the departures in church organization that took place in the early church and to cause us to be careful not to violate the autonomy of the local congregations. And so, a study of the changing pattern of church organization should be helpful and informative. This is especially true in view of some attitudes that have been expressed in some circles.

The Bible is very explicit in its teachings

on church organization (1 Tim. 3; Phil. 1:1-2). God set forth the details as to how the congregations are to be organized. He provided the offices necessary to carry forth the work which He ordained the churches to do. As for congregational organization, the churches existed in the beginning with two classes of officers, one known as bishops or presbyters and the other as deacons (Lightfoot, **Paul's Epistle to the Philippians**). By the time of Ignatius, the bishop was in some churches — Antioch and those of Asia — regarded as a different and superior officer. However, we are not to suppose that this was generally true. This change had not occurred in Philippi, Rome, or Corinth

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(Rainy, **Ancient Catholic Church**, p. 35). By the end of the second century, the office of bishop had been separated from the presbyters, although this distinction wasn't universally held. Sometimes, even at this time, these officers were named interchangeably. It required a period of time, but influences were beginning to work which brought about a departure from Scriptural church organization. The tendency was present to make one man the center of church affairs.

In the early church there were many details to be cared for and activities to be directed. A place of worship had to be secured, charities looked after, the teaching program carried forth, and other matters overseen. It wasn't always easy to find someone to care for these affairs. In order for all this work to be done, someone was needed full time. Naturally the most able and energetic Christian was selected. As the churches grew and more workers were required, some deacons began to devote their full time to the work (Rainy, p. 37).

When a presbyter was placed in the position of leading in the work, he began to acquire an influence above the others, and he became the center of the system. It seems that this individual became powerful in the small churches sooner than in the larger ones. Here the monarchical episcopate reared its ugly head sooner. There was a period of time in the early church when the bishop and deacons were the most prominent. The presbyters were demoted, the ruling bishop along with the deacon, exercised the greatest authority. But as the churches grew and more help was required, the presbyters gradually came back but did not assume a Scriptural position. It seems that the monarchical bishop came into being when a presbyter was called upon to devote himself to full-time church

work. Today, when an elder is employed by the church to serve on a full-time basis, care should be exercised not to regard him as the chief policy maker or the one with the greatest authority. The history of the early church provides us with a warning in this regard.

Near the beginning of the third century, there existed a presiding person who was different from the regular bishop (Rainey, p. 241). Although in some churches the offices of elders and deacons remained, the episcopate was gaining in influence. At this time the authority which was vested in the bishop was not despotic. They were not regarded as rulers who could commit no error. Their voice alone was not sufficient to establish any certain doctrine. It had to have a higher source than themselves. Despotic bishops was a development of a later date. They made decisions in church affairs and had a voice in the way things were operated. And very important is the fact that they had a voice in choosing the officers of the church.

Several controversies engaged the energies of the church in the first three centuries. Gnosticism was a challenge that had to be met. Montanism also appeared and had to be confronted. A very popular way of establishing what should be believed was to appeal to the men who were at the head of the most famous churches. Somehow these men were supposed to be doctrinally pure and their teaching was accepted. Irenaeus refers to their **charisma veritatis** but this is nowhere defined. So, in meeting the various heresies which appeared in the early days of the church, the power and position of the bishops were greatly enhanced. Gnosticism and Montanism hastened the growth of the episcopate. In dealing with these errors, another was allowed to be started which was destined to have a blighting influence on the

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history of the church. Here in formation are the tendencies which were to lead the church completely away from God's plan of church organization.

Synods were called to discuss important questions. They met in the various provinces once or twice a year. In these synods, a distinction was made between bishops and presbyters. The presbyters could attend these meetings but the bishops exercised the greatest authority (Rainey, p. 244). These provincial synods were usually called by the bishop of the largest city, which was the metropolis of the province. The civil power of the city usually determined its ecclesiastical position. These bishops gradually assumed a greater authority and were called the **Metropolitai** (Rainey, p. 244). This was carried out with greater regularity in the East. During this period, the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria became very important. However, there was no visible center of authority which was regarded as having the right to issue dogmatic and binding orders.

Perhaps the decisive step in the development of the hierarchy was the formation of the **parocia** one community of people (Rainey, p. 244). As the church grew it became more difficult to assemble the whole church in one place. Local sectional gatherings became more important. This resulted in the formation of quasi churches — churches not fully organized. Throughout a large city and its suburbs there would be several companies of Christians. A new bishop was not placed over each of these communities, but one bishop of the main church assumed the head of all these various groups.

The bishop began to rule several churches. He was placed in a position where he could become more and more influential and powerful. Parish presbyters were appointed in each congregation to do the work which was once done by the bishop. This freed him from the usual work which he was supposed to do and placed him in the position of a general superintendent or governor. This development was brought to bear upon the affairs of the churches and was an important influence in the apostasy taking place in church organization. Today, it is a very dangerous practice for one group of

elders to claim the right to discipline another congregation. When one eldership claims the right to tell another congregation what it must do, and withdraw fellowship if it doesn't, how long will it be before they think they can legislate to every congregation?

In rural areas, where the churches were smaller, the various congregations continued to be ruled by one bishop, sometimes called a country bishop. These were gradually done away and the churches grouped under the authority of the bishops in the large city churches.

Another interesting point in the rise of ecclesiasticism was in the method of electing a bishop. During the first two centuries, the appointment of the men to preside as bishops was done by the members of the local church. This was true even after a division was made in the office of bishop and presbyter. But in the third century, it became a practice for the neighboring bishops, not less than two or three, to preside at the election of a bishop. The idea grew that only bishops could make bishops (Rainey, p. 247). It is difficult to say exactly when these changes occurred as to specifying a definite date. They did not happen overnight. These are changes which took place gradually and over a period of years. It took the passing of time and a growing disrespect for Bible authority to bring these changes. The thing that we need to remember is that at this time the leaven of apostasy was silently working. Changes were being made which were to result in the complete departure of the church from Scriptural church organization. From

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these considerations, it is apparent that the power of the bishops was growing. It only became a question of time until one of these could gain precedence and claim control of the whole church, a position reserved for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

During this time, offices began to appear which are not found in the Scriptures. Note the offices which God set in the church (Eph. 4). The work of elders was gradually assumed by one man, the bishop. The work of deacons was supplemented by sub-deacons. They tried not to appoint more than seven deacons and when more were needed they were denominated sub-deacons. Acolytes (attendants) were servants. Exorcists dealt with people who were thought to possess evil spirits. Readers read the Scriptures which were to be used or discussed. Doorkeepers had charge of the place of meeting (Rainey, p. 311). These offices became accepted as the Western arrangement. Thus the tendency was to appoint offices and officers without regard for Scriptural authority. The feeling gradually grew that whatever the bishop did was right. He could make rules or establish offices whether the Scriptures authorized these things or not. Somehow he was thought to be kept from error. He could add to the Bible but remained free from error.

From 300-450, there were a number of significant changes that occurred. One interesting development that took place was the placing of deacons above the presbyters in authority. Imagine a departure of this magnitude. It completely reversed the Scriptural plan. This reminds one of those who have done the same thing as regards the plan of salvation. An office which appeared in some of the large churches during this period was the arch-deacon. Deacons became the right-hand man of the bishops and sometime were very influential. Many were elevated from the office of deacon to that of bishop. Athanasius was a deacon at Alexandria before he was made bishop.

A word should also be said concerning the formation of provinces. The political division of the empire formed the basis of these. Under Constantine the empire was divided into four great prefectures, the East, Eastern Illyricum, Italy and the Gauls (Rainey, p. 311). These were further divided

into fourteen "dioceses" of various sizes, each of which probably included many provinces. For instance, the diocese of the East included fifteen provinces and that of Rome. It became the accepted practice to place a "great" bishop at the head of each diocese.

Bishops in the cities of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople were the most powerful. In the years ahead these began to vie with each other for ascendancy. Rome came to the front in the West and this has greatly influenced the fortunes of Christendom. Her bishop eventually claimed supreme authority in the church. By 606 A.D. the Lord's church had completely succumbed to the inroads of error. Church organization at this time bore no semblance to that specified in the New Testament. The facts presented in this study should make us careful to guard and respect the autonomy of the local congregation.

[Brother Townsend has retired from his work with Alabama Christian School of Religion and the Providence Road congregation in Charlotte. The Townsends' new address is: 12901 SW 15th Court #105, Pembroke Pines, FL 33027.]

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Summer Madness

by Wayne Altman

Warm weather is almost here. Soon a form of madness will sweep the land as clothing is shed. Restaurants have to enforce dress codes to maintain an atmosphere conducive to the enjoyment of food. We live in a time of extreme informality and even vulgarity as far as dress is concerned. It is a difficult situation for the Christian who is dedicated to decency and modesty, especially the Christian woman.

Sexually, man is more visually oriented than woman. This fact is confirmed by every observant and perceptive man who is happily married. Ladies, this fact should influence you when you decide what you will wear in public. There will be times when you want your husband to be excited when he sees you, but you should never have that thought when it comes to other men. Examine your motives when choosing what you will wear. "Find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). If your life is centered in Him, then you will be able to do everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). That

is, you can honor Him even in what you wear.

Some of the clothing available was designed with the express purpose of making you sexually appealing. The fashion experts say so! If you are not aware of that fact, you may wear it, not to attract such attention, but simply to be "in style" or because that was the only thing available. The effect, however, is the same for the man as if you did it deliberately. Yes, the man, like Job, should be able to say, "I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1, NIV). But, sisters, you need to be willing to help him keep that covenant!

What you wear reveals more than your body; it reveals your mind and where it is centered. So give some thought to what you wear, to what it does for you and what it does for the opposite sex. Don't get caught up in "summer madness."

[413 Old Trolley Rd., Summerville, SC 29485.]

Worship In John 4:19-24

by David Pharr, Editor

Near to the Samaritan city of Sychar at Jacob's well, Jesus had an unusual conversation with a Samaritan woman (John 4:4-26). Among the things Jesus said to her were some significant points about worship.

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place to worship.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh,

and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (vv. 19-24).

Realizing that Jesus was a prophet, the woman presented Him with an issue of controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews. For several centuries the Samaritans had recognized Mount Gerizim as the sacred place for worship. It was near where they were: thus her reference to "this mountain." It should be remembered that there was absolutely no Divine authority for the worship

at Gerizim. It had been designated by men and perpetuated by tradition.

On the other hand, she observes, the Jews held that Jerusalem was the proper place for worship. This worship was at the temple in Jerusalem. Her statement was intended to gain a response from Jesus. Which system of worship is correct — the traditions of her fathers, or the teachings of the Jews? The Lord's answer shows us some important principles about worship.

A New System Coming (v. 21)

At the time of this conversation the Old Testament system was still in force. Jesus knew, however, that the time ("hour") was coming when the requirement that worship be at Jerusalem would be abolished. Very soon the issue regarding Gerizim and Jerusalem would be a totally moot question. The temple service would be ended and worship would be offered to God under a new covenant.

In the new system neither of these places (nor any other specific place) would be designated as the only place where worship would be acceptable. It is very important to keep in mind that the issue addressed was not whether worship is something that is performed at any place at all, but whether it was to be at either of these specific places. Jesus does not say, as some have imagined, that worship is something so inward and ethereal that there are no prescribed actions. Neither does He imply that the worship assembly (in whatever place it might be held) is not a vital part of the new system.

The Old System Valid (v. 22)

Some worship is not acceptable. In very plain words Jesus tells this woman that Samaritan worship was wrong. Because of their failure to follow the plan of God their worship was not pleasing to God. It was not that they did not know about God; they did claim to follow the five books of the Pentateuch (but not the rest of the Old Testament). But following the traditions of men ("our fathers") made their worship vain (cf. Matt. 15:3, 6). The point is not that no Samaritan was sincere in his worship. The Samaritan system of worship was wrong, whether they

were sincere or not.

The worship system of the Jews, however, was valid. Certainly Jesus was not saying that every Jew worshipped acceptably. His point is that the worship system which the Jews were supposed to be following, and which involved worship at Jerusalem, was based on the authority of God (Deut. 12:5-11; 1 Kings 9:3; 2 Chron. 7:12).

It is a serious mistake to think that because He foretold that a new system was coming — a system in which a specific place would not be required — that, therefore, the place was not important while the old system was still in force. Jesus in no way suggested that the Jerusalem requirement was not important at that time. Instead His words show that while the Mosaic law was still binding, obedience to the requirements of that law was essential, even as to the exact place where worship was to be offered.

The principle to be remembered is that while the different covenants have different specific requirements, the requirements of each covenant are bound on those to whom the covenant is given. Up to the time when the new system would come into place, the requirements of the Old Testament system were absolutely valid. We are not under that system. We do, however, worship the same God — a God who expects His requirements to be kept.

An Eternal Principle (vv. 23-24)

In verse 21 Jesus spoke of a new system of worship which was still future — "the hour cometh." The then existing law regulated the place of worship, but the future law would have no restrictions as to place. Covenants and their requirements are changed according to God's purposes. In verse 23, however, He declares a principle that does not change with the change of covenants. It is the eternal principle that worship must be in spirit and truth.

When we come to verse 23 we find that Jesus changes His words regarding time from what He had said in verse 21. There He speaks only of the future — "the hour cometh." But in verse 23 He speaks of the future and the present — "the hour cometh and now is." This is often explained to mean that the new era was so close that He could

refer to it as already present. Certainly the time was imminent, and this explanation is worthy of consideration. It seems more reasonable, however, to understand the words in a more natural sense: that is, that He was speaking of a principle that would apply under the new system, but that it also applied under the then present system. It was an eternal principle which had to be respected whether during the time when the Mosaic system of worship was required or during the coming age when there would be a new system of worship. Covenants change; eternal principles do not.

This point is significant because of the misuse some have made of the text. It is wrongfully assumed that worship in spirit and truth was not a requirement under the law of Moses. It is mistakenly thought that any worship that required certain prescribed rituals at a certain place could not be in spirit and truth. This totally misses the purpose of God in the Jewish system. Though often ignored by the people, it was always God's purpose that their worship be spiritual and certainly that it be according to truth. One who asserts that the Old Testament system was a system of legalism should reflect seriously on the fact that God was the author of that system. When under the law of Moses they worshipped sincerely and Scripturally at the temple in Jerusalem, they were true worshippers, the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. That was true worship in that hour that Jesus said "now is." When we sincerely worship as the New Testament teaches, this is true worship in the hour that Jesus said "cometh."

From Spirit to Spirit

The spirit of man is the inward man. External rituals alone do not suffice. The inward man must actively participate in every act of worship. God is a Spirit. Worship to the God who is Spirit must originate in the spirit of man. The nature of worship must be compatible with the nature of God; it must be spiritual. All obedience must be from the heart (Rom. 1:9; 6:17). Only hypocrites "honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6). If one's heart is not in it, he might carefully observe

all the proper acts of worship and still be worshipping in vain.

The Meaning of Truth

The truth is the revelation from God (John 17:17; 3:21; 8:32; 16:13). Worshipping in truth is to worship according to instructions from God. To worship by other standards is to worship in vain (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:20-23). Ordinances are to be kept according to apostolic instructions (1 Cor. 11:2). Under the Old Testament system the truth regarding worship involved the observance of the temple rites. We are now under a new covenant and the truth that applied under the temple system does not pertain to us. The principle which requires conformity to truth is the same, however, and under the New Testament system the truth regarding worship involves those things ordained by Christ through His apostles.

Some have argued that to worship "in truth" simply means to be genuine in what we do. While it might seem that some argument might be made for this in verse 24, it will not fit the context of verse 23. In verse 23 Jesus has already used an adjective for genuine ("true worshippers"). If "truth" is also to be understood as worship that is genuine, the words of Jesus contain a superficial redundancy. He would be saying that **genuine** worshippers worship in a **genuine** way. This would be a truism, like saying, "Red cars must be red"; or, "Real things must be real." Jesus was speaking to an ordinary woman and to her ordinary words would have their ordinary meaning.

Two Elements, One Worship

In the Greek only one preposition (**en**, "in") joins the two nouns, "spirit" and "truth." This emphasizes the fact that true worship is impossible without both elements. The single preposition does not indicate that both spirit and truth mean essentially the same thing, but that neither can be acceptable without the other. There can be no acceptable worship by the inward man without submission to the instructions of truth; neither can there be acceptable worship when the truth's instructions are only outwardly followed without the sincere participation

of the spirit within.

The Father Seeks Such to Worship Him

The woman had challenged Jesus with an issue that was sensitive to the Samaritans. Jesus did not retreat from the controversy. Instead He plainly stated the failure of Samaritan worship, upheld the correctness of the system then in place for the Jews, and stated clearly the eternal principle of worship that must be followed by Jews and Samaritans, as well as all others. There is more to the Lord's words to this woman, however, than just the rebuke.

Three times He speaks of worship to "the Father" (vv. 21, 23). What is more, He shows the possibility of God being her Father by the words, "ye shall . . . worship the Father" (v. 21). To this is added the assurance that "the Father seeketh such to worship him" (v. 23). It is the will of God that all people be His children and that they worship Him in spirit and truth. There is the implication that this woman, a woman living in sin and under a false system of reli-

gion, would be acceptable to God if she would accept the plan of God.

Application

There is an effort in some quarters to minimize the importance of Biblical instructions on worship. Some apparently are ready to adopt unscriptural practices. With many there appears to be a cancer of dissatisfaction with the New Testament order. On the other hand, some seem content to follow the form of New Testament worship without any real inward commitment. There is no sense of God's majesty, no overflowing heart of praise.

The words of Jesus address both errors. There is a principle that governs worship for all ages. The Father seeks those who give homage to Him from their hearts and who also express that worship in harmony with the instructions of His word of truth. This is the only worship that is pleasing to God. It is the only worship that any true worshipper will want to offer.

My Tuesday Buddy

by Bob MacDonald

" . . . to the extent that you did it to . . . the least, . . . you did it to me . . . " (Matt. 25:40).

Tuesday, 4:00 p.m.: You and I and a few others know that Tuesdays are always great: We "get our batteries recharged." We drive to a nursing home for the aged. We know that one of us could be there someday. Not one of us has relatives there. We each have a close friend there — a new friend, a "buddy."

The first time we did this we each went down separate hallways. As I walked, I asked God for strength and guidance. At first, all I did was smile and nod at everyone I passed. It was easy. I slowed down and said "hello" to some in wheelchairs. It was easy. To the one who smiled back, I asked a question. It was answered. The smile came on again. This was fun! We talked some more.

Now I have a close friend there. This lonely person has a friend who comes each Tuesday — me! I like that. I see that my new friend does also. How great! My aged shut-in now has a high point in each week; my new friend looks forward to Tuesdays. I do also!

I discovered that lonely people need to look forward to something. I fill that need. I discovered that lonely people usually love to talk about old times:

Blessed are they with a cheery smile,
Who stop to chat for a little while,
Blessed are they who know the ways,
To bring back the memories of yesterday.

— Oma Brugman, "Golden Age Prayers."

The local newspaper is a great ice-breaker. You can read or paraphrase the lo-

cal and the non-stressful national and international articles. These articles may get you both talking. Perhaps some days you will read some comic strips, or jokes from a magazine, or joke book.

Enjoy visiting. Pretend you are driving to your country club to meet a friend. **Enjoy** entering your "club." Let your friend see your enjoyment. Perhaps you never be-

longed to a country club. Now you do.

Multiply: Your new friend may become a buddy of someone even more in need of friendship. What a joy for both of them. What a joy for you. Your friend will become busy — hopefully still having time for you!

[Brother Bob MacDonald is a member of the Hendersonville, NC, congregation.]

When Was Jesus Anointed?

by Mary Beth Christy

We know that He was anointed because Jesus Himself says He was in Luke 4:18-21 as He announced that the Scripture in Isaiah 61:1-8 "is fulfilled." In Psalm 2:2 David acknowledges one with God as "his Anointed One" and Luke told of a prayer by Peter and John to God in which they quote this Psalm passage and describe Jesus as the one "whom you anointed."

While these Scriptures show that Jesus was anointed in fulfillment of prophesy, we still must answer our original question, "**When** was Jesus Anointed?" And this in turn leads to other questions. How was He anointed? Was it with oil the same as David in 1 Samuel 16:13? If so, when did this happen? Was it when the woman in Luke 7:38 poured perfume on His feet?

Is anointing always a pouring on of oil? In the Old Testament the anointing of Aaron was to consecrate him. A definition of consecrate is "set aside." From that time until Christ became our High Priest, the priests were descendants of Aaron the first high priest. We can also see that "things" were anointed or "consecrated." The same chapter tells how Moses anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, the altar and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand (Lev. 17:10-11). Oil was the substance used to anoint someone or something in those times. God was very specific, even giving them a recipe for the anointing oil in Exodus 30:22-25 and telling them that this oil would make them holy. God even pronounced a curse on anyone using this recipe for them-

selves.

But the new law changed many things. No longer would animal sacrifices bring about atonement. No longer were some things unclean to touch or eat.

It also appears that anointing is different. It still denotes a consecration, but is in the heart and mind. For example, we are God's if we obey; but we have an invisible mark. In 2 Corinthians 1:21 Paul explains to the Corinthians that God had anointed him and given him the Holy Spirit in his heart as a deposit. This of course applied to them and applies to us. So the Holy Spirit is a part in our anointing! Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 further point out that we are sealed or "branded" as God's by the Holy Spirit. This is the gift we are promised in Acts 2:38.

In exploring the question of when Jesus was anointed, we will also answer the question of who anointed Him. In Acts 10:38 it is clearly stated that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. . . ."

I think, then, that the anointing of Jesus was in this manner — a giving of power and the Holy Spirit to Jesus at a specific time,

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not a pouring of oil on His head.

If this is true, we can know exactly when Jesus was anointed by reading one Scripture — Luke 3:21-22. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came down from

heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." This was when God openly "placed his seal of approval" (John 6:27) and Jesus was anointed.

[Sister Christy is a member of the Essex Village congregation. Her address is: 64 Norview Dr., Charleston, SC 29407.]

Haiti: Land of Evangelistic Opportunity

by Bob Bickle

There is a foreign land that is just off of the Florida coast that is very open to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Haiti is an impoverished land marked by poverty and disease, but it's also a land that, for the most part, doesn't know the good news of Jesus Christ.

Unofficially Haiti is the poorest country in the world. Officially it's the poorest country in our hemisphere. For several years now the Providence Road church in Charlotte and the Charlotte Avenue church in Rock Hill have been cooperating together to evangelize Northern Haiti. Other Carolina congregations are also involved in various works down there.

Tim Mastenbrook, one of the elders at Providence Road, went to Cap-Haiten, the second largest city in Haiti, to explore the needs of the Haitian people. Almost single-handedly, Tim has championed evangelizing Northern Haiti. The fund-raising for evangelistic work in the country is now under the oversight of the Providence Road elders.

I know of no place in the world where the money spent on evangelistic work goes farther. There are several important works that are ongoing. Radio evangelism and World Bible School are supported by White's Ferry Road church in West Monroe, Louisiana. Mission schools are supported by Providence Road, Charlotte Avenue, and more recently by Pine Valley in Wilmington and South Fork in Winston-Salem. Mobile medical clinics are being supported by several congregations. An orphanage in Cap-Haiten,

which is doing an outstanding work, is supported by a congregation in Ada, Oklahoma, and a number of other congregations. Well drilling, which is a vital work, is sponsored by Manna, International.

In 1977 there were no known Christians in Northern Haiti. Today there are over 2,000 in more than 13 congregations. Haitian Christians want to help themselves. The schools are designed to become self-supporting. Teachers' salaries are \$100 per month. School administrators, who are also preachers, are paid \$125 per month. Secondary teachers are paid \$125 per month. There are many preachers who live on \$60.00 per month.

There are a number of preachers who receive no support. They live off of the produce of the land, a land which is not abundant, to say the least. These men don't complain! They have families to support. Many left denominational churches where they received a salary in order to preach undenominational Christianity where they receive no salary. They face almost overwhelming odds. However, they live by a tremendous faith in God who does take care of them.

The superstition, voodooism, and witchcraft that you've heard about in Haiti is true. The people are afraid of the powers of the voodoo witch doctor. These men are among the most prominent and powerful men in the villages. Yet their powers crumble when they come into contact with the power of

the gospel.

I would like to encourage churches and individuals to get involved in the Haitian work. At the present time brethren in this area have two regularly scheduled trips into Haiti. In January an on-site, fact-finding trip will be made. In June a mobile medical team will conduct clinics throughout the villages in the area. These trips will soon be expanded. Our hope next year is to add an additional trip to train the native preachers in basic Bible doctrines. I believe that this will become a regularly scheduled event. It's possible that there will be another medical missions trip that will be added to the agenda.

Managing Editor's Column

Brother Camp

by Johnny R. Melton

When I learned of the death of brother Franklin Camp I was filled with mixed emotions. I was happy for brother Camp. Like Paul, he has run his race and he has finished his course.

Absent from his body, he is present now with the Lord. He is enjoying a happy reunion with his darling Vivian, the blond-haired daughter who died in 1951 at the age of seven after being severely burned, about whom he spoke so tenderly. The transition from life to life for brother Camp was the object of his heart's desire and consequently I rejoiced for him.

On the other hand, I was sad. I was sad when I considered the grief of loss that sister Camp must feel. She has been a constant encouragement for brother Camp in his extensive ministry for many years. She must now adjust to life without her dear husband. I know that she will find comfort and strength in God's word. Brother Camp was not the only student of Scripture in his family. Sister Camp is an excellent student in her own right.

I was sad for the church. Brother Camp was a ripe scholar and he has made a significant contribution to the study and applica-

tion of Scripture in this generation. Brother Camp loved the church. He grieved over divisions within the church.

There are few places in this world where \$60-125 per month can accomplish so much! Even smaller congregations and individuals can become involved! If anyone is interested in receiving more information on this vital work, please contact either me or Tim Mastenbrook.

Every year in July, a little village just north of Cap-Haiten is host to voodoo practitioners from all over Haiti. Haiti is officially dedicated to Satan at this event. Let's dedicate Haiti to Jesus Christ! Satan has had this country long enough!

[339 Charlotte Avenue, Rock Hill, SC 29730.]

On one occasion, several years ago, I talked with him concerning opposition I had received because of my position on a particular matter. A challenge had been issued for me to defend my position publicly, and I was considering whether to accept the challenge or not. Since brother Camp and I believed the issue under consideration to be a matter of judgment, his counsel to me was to dismiss the challenge, even though I believed that I could successfully defend my position. He said, "It is better for you to suffer personal harm than to further splinter an already splintered brotherhood." I am glad that I listened to his sage counsel.

I was sad for myself. Even though Brother Camp and I were never close associates, I had the privilege of being with him on several occasions, and during those encounters I came to love him.

One of the reasons I loved Franklin Camp was because he encouraged me in my work in the Carolinas. Whenever we met he would ask about my work and the work in the Carolinas in general.

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Because one of his sons had lived in the Carolinas for a while, brother Camp developed an interest in the progress of the church in this area. Before his health began to fail, brother Camp would give priority to invitations to speak in the Carolinas. I have heard him say, both publicly and privately, that if he had his life to live over, he would consider coming to the Carolinas and devoting his life to building up the church in this region.

Another reason I loved brother Camp was his humility. He believed there was no place for a "big I and little you" in the kingdom of heaven. Brother Camp did not just mouth those concepts, he practiced them. On more than one occasion following a glowing introduction, brother Camp commented that he would rather be introduced simply as a faithful gospel preacher. As far as he was concerned no greater tribute could be given, and no more impressive credentials could be cited.

In September 1987 the Abilene church in Statesville, NC, hosted the North Carolina Lectures. I was the preacher for the Abilene church at the time. Steve Short from the Broad Street church, Stanley Crews from the Northview church and Barry Robinson from the Highland Acres church worked with me in planning that Lectureship. Brother Camp was a featured speaker in the Lectureship. Knowing how brother Camp felt about introductions prompted brethren Short, Crews, Robinson and I to determine that each speaker in the lectureship would be introduced simply as a faithful gospel preacher. While there is certainly a place for giving honor to whom honor is due, it was a refreshing experience to have preachers with a couple of years experience introduced in the same way as preachers with many years of experience and brotherhood-wide reputations.

I also loved brother Camp because he was a devoted student of Scripture who stood upon his convictions regarding the interpretation of passages, even when that interpretation differed from the way "we" had traditionally interpreted them. I did not always agree with brother Camp's interpretations; but I always learned from him, and I always respected him. Brother Camp did

not insist that one accept his interpretation of the biblical text, and he did not disparage those who disagreed with him.

In a tribute to Howard Winters, brother Camp remarked, "Brother Winters understands the importance of balance in preaching. Some equate balance with softness and compromise.

"This is a misunderstanding of the term. A synonym is equilibrium. Balanced preaching does not ignore error. Balanced preaching includes rebuke when necessary. Howard avoids extremes. One of the things that has impressed me with him is his grasp of the principles of the restoration. He knows how to distinguish between things that differ.

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'That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ' (Phil. 1:10). The ASV margin says the things that differ. One of the major problems of the restoration is distinguishing between matters of faith and judgment. One becomes unbalanced when one's scruples are made matters of faith. It is the grasp of these principles that gives him the ability to hold on to truth and avoid the extreme of binding where the Bible does not bind, or loosing where the Bible has bound. He knows when a matter of faith must not be sacrificed, and how to disagree over a matter of judgment without being divisive" (Carolina Christian, January 1988, p. 9). The reason brother Camp could detect the traits he commended in brother Winters is because he possessed them himself.

I loved brother Camp because he refused to do wrong in the name of doing right. I remember when he closed the pages of **First Century Christian** rather than allow an editorial policy with which he disagreed to continue. I remember when brother Camp was

accused of going soft on liberalism, because he would not stoop to mud-slinging. I remember when brother Camp said that if it ever should become necessary to tell someone that they were going to hell if they did not repent, that it had better be done with a tear in your eye and not a glint. There was a tear in brother Camp's eye when he made that statement. In recent years brother Camp observed that "Ugly-ism" was as great a threat to the church as either legalism or liberalism.

I will never know the Bible as well as Franklin Camp knew it. I will never be able to preach like he preached. However, I hope that I can learn from him to be an honest student, standing on my own understanding of the Sacred Text, rather than on the traditions of men; and I hope that I will always be simply a faithful gospel preacher.

I will always be thankful for the influence that J. Franklin Camp has had in my life.

Who Gets Abortions

by Jim Mullican

The efforts by Christians and other moral people to outlaw abortion are often countered with cries that "You would force a victim of rape or incest to bear that child and extend her suffering." However, statistics indicate that one percent of abortions performed are the result of rape or incest.

A survey conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute in 1987 of 9,480 women who had abortions showed some significant facts. Of these women, 63.3% had never been married; 17.2% were divorced, widowed, or separated; and 18.5% were married. As to age groups, 24.6% were 15-19; 33.1% were 20-24; and 22.3% were 25-29. Their income distribution was the same as in the general population. Religiously, 41.9% were considered Protestant; 31.5% Catholic; 22.2% had no religion; 1.4% were Jewish;

and 2.9% were "other." Racially, 68.6% were white and 31.4% were non-white.

Based on these statistics, the typical composite picture of the woman who has an abortion is that she is in her early twenties, has never been married, has an average income, and is a white Protestant. The pregnancy resulted from her choice to commit fornication, and now she seeks to avoid the inconvenient consequences.

There are two points we need to remember. 1. Because human laws approve something does not make it right. German law authorized Hitler to murder 6,000,000 Jews during World War II. Russian law authorized Stalin to murder several million of his own countrymen. Just so, the U.S. Supreme Court has authorized the murder of unwanted babies in this country; but none of

it is right. 2. Remember also that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10). The U.S. Supreme

Court is not the highest court, after all.

[Jim Mullican preaches for the Central Haywood Church of Christ, P.O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]

The Church Is Unique

by Mike Mays

The dictionary defines "unique" as "one and only; different from all others; having no like or equal." The church of Christ is unique in a number of ways.

A Unique Standard: The only authority we recognize in our religious faith and practice is the Bible. Our commitment is to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent. Unless the Bible authorizes the teaching or practice, it must not be bound as a matter of faith (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11).

A Unique Plea: We appeal to all who proclaim loyalty to Jesus to go back to the Bible as the basis for unity in the religious world. The unity that Jesus prayed for and that the Bible commands can only be achieved by giving up as a matter of religious faith everything that is not as old as New Testament teachings (John 17:20, 21; 1 Cor. 1:10). As the motto expresses it: "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love." The Bible only makes Christians only.

A Unique Plan of Salvation: During a time when a variety of ways are being taught as the way to make Jesus our Savior, what the Bible teaches is all that matters. The Bible tells us that after we come to believe in and trust Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior, we are to repent of all of our sins, and then be baptized into Christ to have those sins forgiven (John 8:24; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). In addition, we must confess Jesus with our lips and our life (Matt. 10:32, 33; Romans 12:9, 10).

A Unique Commitment: Once we are baptized into Christ, our new life and our

new walk with God have just begun. Because of our faith in and love for Jesus, we spend the rest of our lives serving Him. In fact, we make a commitment to obey all of the things He has commanded to the best of our ability (Matt. 28:18-20). Our lives become a "P.S." to say "Thank You, God, for the free gift of salvation."

A Unique Forgiveness: Christians are not perfect; they are forgiven. We are saved by God's grace. Our obedience to God is the evidence to prove how much we love Him, and the genuineness of our faith (1 John 5:3; Jas. 2:14-26).

Allowing God's Will to be done in His Way in our life is the only way to go to heaven. Don't you want to be just a Christian?



The Pattern Principle

by Jim Mullican

Those of us old enough to remember the 1950's or even earlier times are no doubt aware that our preaching has changed. Preaching once emphasized the "pattern principle" and the necessity of doing everything in the way God specified. Sermons stressed the examples of Naaman, Nadab and Abihu, Saul's sparing of Agag, and Moses' striking of the rock. We knew what "the law of exclusion" meant.

Then people began to say, "We know these things. Give us lessons relevant to the problems we face in everyday life." The result was that preachers, who eat only when the brethren are more or less happy, began to speak on subjects relevant to modern problems. These subjects did need to be covered, but like a pendulum, we may have swung to the opposite extreme.

In recent years, there has been some advocating from our pulpits that the use or non-use of instrumental music is a matter of opinion, not Scripture. A few are advocating women preachers and women elders

in an effort to "keep up with the times." One congregation whose bulletin I receive regularly holds a passover observance each spring. As J.D. Tant used to say, "Brethren, we are drifting."

Perhaps it is time we began to emphasize the basics of the Bible again. Too many of us seem to have little understanding of what's wrong with denominational worship. How many of us could teach someone from the Scriptures why we don't use soloists, choirs, pianos, or "testimonials"?

Do we need our teaching and preaching to be relevant? Of course we do, but I can't think of anything more relevant to the problems of modern life than a thorough knowledge of the principles of God's dealings with man. Is the "pattern principle" important? God seems to think so. In Hebrews 8:5, He said to Moses, "See that you make everything according to the pattern." When we depart from God's pattern, we depart from God.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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George R. Plagenz . . . Church Critic!

by Mark Swindall

George Plagenz is the church critic (like restaurant/movie critics) for the **Columbus Citizen Journal**. He visits churches, then gives stars in four categories — worship, music, sermon, and friendliness. He is not judging God — he is evaluating the people. Preachers, song leaders are often offended. He says they don't take to suggestions easily.

Some wealthy churches are blatantly unfriendly. He says there is no excuse for unfriendliness. He is talking about unfriendliness towards strangers. How would churches do if they were out in the marketplace like businesses? Would they go bankrupt?

He may be the only "official" critic in the USA, but there are millions of critics. Every visitor that walks in the door evaluates. They like this but not that. Our building, programs, leaders, etc., are appraised. However, the final critique concerns us, the members. Are we warm, humble, willing to serve? Does our community know that we exist? Are we positive or negative? What do others think? We will never convert many who neither know nor respect us!

Then there is the only real critic — God! Have you ever thought about how He feels? What about our hearts, preparation, singing, attitudes around the Lord's Supper, teaching, and preaching? What about our concern for visitors, the community, the hurting? Aren't you glad God is the judge and not man?

Public worship is vital; it is the key to evangelism. We are no better than our worship. Let us be friendly. Let us serve the community. Let us prepare our hearts. Let us worship.



by David Pharr

A few weeks ago I made my second visit to Bethany, West Virginia, the place where Alexander Campbell lived, preached, wrote, and was buried. I had been there about twenty-nine years ago. Bethany College, which is now affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination, has restored the Campbell home and the old Bethany meetinghouse. The Campbell Cemetery, near the house, is in need of repairs to the rock wall and the tombstones.

The courteous young lady who served as our guide expressed a notion which is typical of Disciples of Christ thinking. In telling about one of Campbell's sons marrying an Episcopalian, she explained that at that time it was unthinkable for one to marry outside his faith, especially in view of the fact that Campbell himself was "the founder of a faith." In disregard of both history and Scripture they freely assert that he was the founder of their denomination, the Disciples of Christ, sometimes called the Christian Church.

Alexander Campbell did not start a new religion. Much of his efforts were in opposition to any religion started by any man. The church he preached was the church founded by Christ. The name over the doors of the building where Campbell preached still says "Church of Christ." Campbell was a powerful advocate of New Testament Christianity and is remembered for his work in urging a return to Biblical principles, but he founded no denomination. Disciples of Christ claim a heritage from him, but there is very little similarity between the principles he taught and their theology and practice.

Looking past the erroneous interpretations of the hosts, however, a visit to Bethany stirs the heart as one reflects on the emphasis and progress made by Campbell toward undenominational Christianity and a return to the ancient order of the New Testament church. It was a visit to Bethany that encouraged the late Howard Winters to write

his book on restoration principles, which he entitled, **Up to Bethany.**

The Bethany meetinghouse is apparently just as it was when Campbell and his contemporaries preached in it. Standing by the pulpit, I tried to imagine some of the sermons that might have been preached. What would have been great and good in those sermons, however, is no different than what is great and good in a sermon today. Pulpit styles may have changed, and there may be few mental and rhetorical giants as was Campbell, but the only thing that ultimately

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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matters about a sermon is whether it effectively sets forth the truth of God.

In the meetinghouse there is no instrument of music, nor even a place for one. While Campbell and his influence lived at Bethany, the congregation rejected this innovation.

The Campbells' house is not remarkable in its architecture. Similar things would be found in many other houses of that period. But there are pieces of furniture, pictures, and memorabilia of historical significance. The guest wing of the house entertained famous Americans, including John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and James A. Garfield.

The study, a few feet from the house, where he spent several hours every day, is in need of restoration (and the guide indicated that this is planned). The bookshelves are all empty and his desk is no longer there, but from this tiny office Campbell published books and papers that attacked all human creeds and churches, and challenged men and women over the world to accept God's revelation and it alone as their only rule of faith and practice.

The Campbell Cemetery was called God's Acre. It is a quiet and peaceful spot. Here lies the remains of Thomas Campbell, Alexander himself, and many family members. Other famous names of the restoration are also found on tombstones. For all the great and good things done by these, they were nonetheless mortal. Our faith does not have its origin in one whose grave can be visited, but in the One whose tomb is empty.

As far as I know, there is no congregation in the present village of Bethany that worships after the New Testament order, as did Campbell and his contemporaries. Nor is there one that shows the same reverence for Bible authority. Though the college was founded by Campbell in 1840, Bethany College has long since abandoned its original religious heritage. Its theology is modernistic. The Bethany Memorial Church, just a short distance from the old meetinghouse, is affiliated with the liberals of the Disciples denomination.

Jim Smith (who formerly preached in Mooresville, NC, and who is now in Weirton, WV) and his family were with me at

Bethany. Jim has been studying the Bible with a man who lives only a block from the old Bethany meetinghouse. Jim's home is about forty miles from Bethany. He has been studying with this man in the very town where Alexander Campbell once preached the restoration of New Testament principles, but where now there apparently is not one person who teaches those same principles.

It is often observed that the church is always "one generation from apostasy." The point is that if one generation forgets the truth, all emphasis on New Testament faith and practice can disappear. A visit to Bethany can remind us of this. The little town where so much truth was once preached stands now a little over a century later as a place where much of that truth has been forgotten. There is no church of Christ in the very town where so much was preached and written to call people back to the church. The lesson of history is that we never take truth for granted. The call of history is that we be forever vigilant.

More Interesting History

I have just read a university thesis by brother Jim R. Martin on "The Secret Baptism of Abraham Lincoln."

Though Lincoln never publicly claimed membership in any church, several groups have tried to claim him. Among the more interesting such claims is that a brother secretly baptized him in Illinois. The reason for the secrecy was supposed to have been the strong opposition of Lincoln's wife.

Lincoln's father and stepmother were members of the church. Their conversion, however, did not occur until after Abraham no longer lived with them. Further, he was estranged from them, to the extent that he did not visit his father during Thomas Lincoln's final illness, nor did he attend the funeral. There is little likelihood that they influenced him toward the church.

There are variations in accounts of when and how Lincoln was supposed to have been baptized. All of them lack adequate proof and some show contradictions with known facts. Probably these errors were unintentional, based on faulty memory and rumors.

A letter from G. W. Weimer, dated October 5, 1842, is in the Restoration Library

of Freed-Hardeman University. This letter tells of a conversation with John O'Kane who claimed to have baptized Lincoln secretly near Springfield, Illinois. The letter tells why O'Kane had kept the matter secret for so many years, and why in turn Weimer also kept it a secret. The reason was that Lincoln's wife was so opposed.

As brother Martin clearly shows in his thesis, however, there are several incidental facts in Weimer's letter that are self-contradictory and which make the story extremely unlikely. Brother Martin attributes the confusion to the fact that Weimer was 85 years old when the letter was written and that he had undoubtedly confused incidents and conversations from earlier days.

There are other unverified accounts of Lincoln's baptism. It would seem, however, that he never was, or at least if he was he repudiated it. Lincoln himself flatly stated: "That I am not a member of any Christian Church is true...."

In the **Gospel Advocate**, July 24, 1873, David Lipscomb wrote: "Mr Lincoln never obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ or rendered that homage to him which his position demanded — never acknowledged before the world his allegiance to King Emmanuel."

Historians are interested in such things. God alone is the judge of Lincoln's soul. We might have a curiosity about Lincoln's possible connection with the church. There was one president who was a member — James A. Garfield. But our faith is neither based on, nor strengthened by the affiliation of any president. Our spiritual heritage, the roots of our faith, go back to a King — the "King of kings and Lord of lords"; yes, the President above all presidents.

Behold How Good and Pleasant

Psalms 133 exclaims the holy beauty of brethren being united in love.

Elsewhere in this issue there is an item about George Carlisle and his efforts to begin a new work at Turbeville. Some have known of the unhappy strife that developed at Manning that was the cause of brother Carlisle's leaving that work. We have received copies of letters from respected brothers in South Carolina which indicate a

complete reconciliation. A public apology was made to brother Carlisle.

The Carlisle family has suffered emotionally and financially because of things done and said against him. He is dedicated to mission work in South Carolina. Support for his efforts had been hindered because of misunderstandings regarding what happened at Manning. It's time now for brethren to get behind this faithful brother.

Good News From Bishopville

In the May issue we wrote of the building plans at Bishopville. B. J. Barr reports that the building "came out a lot better than we ever dreamed." Much of the work was done by the members. The contractor said that he had never seen members working so diligently together.

The Red Bank congregation in Chattanooga sent workers from there and from Soddy Daisy, Tennessee, to help with several aspects of the construction. Other churches also helped financially.

Recently there have been several more baptisms. Brother Barr says that now that the building work is almost complete, they can turn their attention more fully to evangelism.

Though the building is now in use, money is still needed to complete it. The Bishopville brethren really appreciate all who have helped (some apparently in response to our **Carolina Christian** editorial), but a few more contributions would put them into a position to finish everything. Contact B.J. Barr, 803-778-2951; or Clancy Etienne, 803-484-5433.

To God be the glory.

Special Issue

In the coming months we would like to do an issue featuring gospel preachers in the Carolinas who were previously affiliated with various denominations. If you are such, or know of such, please let me know.



Communicating Good News

by Johnny Melton

I have recently been listening to Jim Woodruff discuss the "Aroma of Christ." His theme is that "the fragrance of the knowledge of God" is to be spread by Christians. He suggests that 2 Corinthians 4:13 contains the key ingredient for being the aroma of Christ: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." When we truly believe the gospel, we cannot keep from sharing it with others.

Being the aroma of Christ is best accomplished in a natural setting. Woodruff appeals to Acts 8:4 as a text which suggests a natural way of sharing the gospel. The KJV reads, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

The word translated "preaching" is not the word *kerusso* which means to herald, proclaim or publish (e.g., in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word," the word preach is *keruxon*); but it is *euangelizomenoi*, which means bearing or sharing good news. Woodruff says it is the word for gossiping, where gossiping means "chatty talk." The early Christians were "gossiping" the gospel. This understanding is consistent with the observation that in the LXX "the verb [*euangelizo*] is used of any message intended to cheer the hearers" (W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 201).

The message of the gospel was communicated from house to house in the same way that any other good news would be spread: folks talked about it in casual conversation. However, it is apparent that this natural sharing of the good news is not taking place in very many places. Certainly not the "every where" of Acts 8:4.

There is much preaching or declaring the good news in a formal manner from pulpits and in various media. There is also some preaching, in the sense of declaring, being done from house to house; and while the declaration of the gospel in homes is usually more effective in bringing people to a

point of decision regarding the gospel than preaching to large audiences, it is not the same thing as sharing the good news informally from a subjective, as well as from an objective, perspective.

The insistence on a formal, objective presentation of the gospel has robbed us of one of the most important factors in successfully sharing the good news. It is a truism that "the best form of advertising is a satisfied customer." But when we declare the gospel without any subjective content (i.e., without any reference to our own personal experience of the gospel), then our preaching becomes sterile. "Just the facts" may make for good police work (*a la* Joe Friday and Dragnet) but it doesn't effectively communicate the gospel in 1991.

Christians in the first century were sharing the gospel informally with neighbors and friends as they went from place to place. There was not a sense of having to go somewhere to preach the gospel. It was not a matter of leaving place A to go to place B in order to preach the gospel in place B. It is interesting to note that the word *go* in Matthew 28:19-20 is not an imperative, but it is a participle. William A. Dyrness writes, "Why is it, I have often wondered, that Americans love to focus on the command to 'go' into all the world, when in Matthew 28:19 this command is altogether missing in the Greek? I used to feel that this was because English translations improperly translate the verse as a command (as the KJV for example does). Now I think this is a good example of our culturally conditioned reading of Scripture. We Americans are always in motion; therefore it is a strong temptation to see missions as going somewhere" (**How Does America Hear the Gospel?** p. 58). It is assumed that Christians will be "going" and so the text may be read, "as you are going, make disciples. . . ." As you are going to work, as you are going through the neighborhood, wherever you are going in life

make disciples as you go.

You don't have to be a formally trained missionary and you don't have to go anywhere you would not otherwise go in order to fulfill the Great Commission. (This is not to say that there is no place for formally trained missionaries; neither is it to say that targeting a place to go with the gospel is wrong.) You can tell the people in your life what the gospel has done for you and how they can experience the same benefits you have received. To quote Dyrness again, "The simple fact is that most Americans are not interested in hearing the gospel as a philosophical explanation of the world. But they are wrestling with family problems: how to encourage and protect teenagers, how to help

young married children, and so on. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that they are interested in hearing how the gospel relates to these problems" (pp. 54-55).

We can be the aroma of Christ in our neighborhoods. In fact, that is the essence of being a Christian. Instead of waiting until we can go somewhere special and proclaim the gospel formally, let's, as we are going about our daily routines, share, in chatty talk, how the gospel is making a difference in our lives. When we do that, we will have opportunities to make disciples "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. . ." (Matt. 28:19,20).

Turbeville, South Carolina

by David Pharr, Editor

With the endorsements of the Kingsbury Drive church of Christ in Sumter, George Carlisle and his family have committed themselves to establishing a congregation in Turbeville, South Carolina.

This is an area where no congregation has been located previously. Within a ten-mile radius are also the communities of New Zion, Gable, Sardinia, and Olanta. Brother Carlisle is ready to "plow some new ground" in these communities. "The mission field is not crowded and the need is so great," he writes.

Brother Carlisle is an experienced and dynamic preacher. After having him at West Jefferson for a gospel meeting, the late Howard Winters complimented him highly, and regarded him as one of the most effective preachers he had heard. We have no doubt but that George could fill the pulpits of large congregations. He has chosen instead, however, to work in mission areas of South Carolina.

Parts of South Carolina have never been evangelized. This is especially the case in the economically poorer counties. We must not forget the challenge to take the gospel to every person. The people of Turbeville need to hear God's good news.

Brother Carlisle needs financial support. The Kingsbury Drive congregation has accepted the responsibility of handling funds for him, but they cannot provide all that is needed. George writes, "I am not ashamed to ask, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Contact: Kingsbury Drive Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1494, Sumter, SC 29151, (803) 775-0510. Brother Carlisle's phone is (803) 481-4858.

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“That’s My Boy!”

by C. David Shuping

As a father of an only son, I recently enjoyed that popular rite of passage known as the “birthday party.” Family and friends were invited to witness my son’s debut into the “thrashing threes.” In the aftermath of this annual carnival, we sorted through his new assortment of toys and goodies only to find one of his father’s ever favorite “play things,” a ball and bat (Nerfstyle, thankfully). Within a matter of minutes, that little fellow had nearly mastered the art of eye-to-hand coordination. Repeatedly, he made smashing contact with that sponge ball and bat, reminiscent of his dad’s days in Little League. In the excitement of skill, I couldn’t help but shout, “That’s my boy!” Just then a strange thing happened to me. In a trance-like state I began to envision this 3-year-old’s future: Little League, Babe Ruth League, Legion ball, college, the pros. Me, his father, gratefully receiving that spacious home in appreciation for “pushing” him in the direction of his profession. Poof! The bubble burst!

As suddenly as the dream (my dream) had begun, a proverb of Solomon pierced through my head. “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Now I know that you are probably familiar with this passage. Perhaps you have even had someone beat you about the head with it when one of your children has pursued something other than righteousness.

Allowing for the traditional interpretation and translation of this passage, as most of us in the church have generally used it, my vision for Shaun’s future would seem to be substantiated with this Scripture. But, blackening this silver cloud was a Jewish interpretation of this proverb which I had recently read and which was made clear by Guy N. Woods. Brother Woods pointed out that a father should lead, train and support his children in the direction in life in which God has given them ability, talent and desire. “Train up the child according to his own way.”¹

My vision for Shaun playing for the Cincinnati Reds is fine, if **Shaun** wants to play pro baseball and if **Shaun** is gifted in that area. But what if he does not want to play pro ball? It would be unwise and unfair to his nature to try and force upon him a profession that he might not want to pursue or one in which he has not been so gifted. Have you ever known of a father who was determined to force his son into a sport or job that dad thought he just must do? Do you know what can happen when fathers do that? While you’re thinking, here is one example.

In the infamous work, **Mein Kampf**, Adolf Hitler wrote of his father’s vision for his son, “It was his basic opinion and intention that, like himself, his son would and must become a civil servant. . . . It was the pride of the self-made man which made him want his son to rise to the same position in life.”² But Hitler resisted his father’s dream with equal force, as he wrote, “I did not want to become a civil servant.”³ You see, by the age of 12, the young Adolf already had in his heart the desire to become an artist and God had given him the talent of drawing.⁴ But his father did not “train up his child in the way he would go” and his interests turned elsewhere. Who knows how our world would be different if just one father of one little boy had practiced one little proverb.

¹Guy N. Woods, **Questions and Answers — Open Forum** (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), 192.

²Adolf Hitler, **Mein Kampf**, translated by Ralph Manheim. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 7.

³Ibid, 8.

⁴Ibid, 9.

[349 33rd St., S. W., Hickory, NC 28602.]



The Old Testament Restoration

by Don Jones, Jr.

When Josiah the son of Amon was twenty-six years old, he commissioned the renovation of the temple of the Lord. During this project Hilkiah the High Priest sent a document to the king by way of Shaphan the scribe. The document was one of grave importance. Hilkiah said, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:8). Shaphan the scribe then read the law that had been found in the temple to the King.

Josiah's response is interesting. The Bible says that he "tore his clothes" — a sign of mourning. Yet, we read in verse 2 of the same chapter that he was a righteous man. The reason for his response was the past. "Great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do all that is written concerning us" (2 Kings 22:13).

But, even this thought did not discourage Josiah. For he asked of the prophetess Huldah what the Lord had to say concerning the sin of Israel. "Behold, I will bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read," was the Lord's answer. But for Josiah he had another statement. "Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse . . . behold . . . you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place" (2 Kings 22:16-20).

There are some points we want to consider here. The first of these is the character of Josiah. Josiah was a man who walked in the way of David his father. He did not turn aside from this path to go either to the right or the left. He was a righteous man who followed the law of his God in the way God wanted. He sought the ways of God. Since the temple of God was a fundamental

aspect of Israelite religion, a dishonored temple would not do. Therefore he made provisions to repair it. God also describes Josiah as being one whose heart is tender and as one who humbled himself when the wrath of God was revealed in His Word.

We may also want to note that, according to chapter 23, the book of law was but one of many items found in the temple. How did Josiah know that this book was the truth of God? There are no evidences presented. Nothing is said in the text to indicate that Shaphan the scribe compared the formation of the letters of the "document found" with another authentic document of the fifteenth century B.C. What about a sign from God to confirm this book? No, we find none of these things in the text. What we read is that Josiah is a tenderhearted man who seeks to walk in the way of righteousness. To such a person God's will is understood as such when it is made known.

We now have an important question. How did the book of the law become lost? Josiah answers the question by saying that the fathers neither listened to nor did the things written in the book. Many of us tend to lose the things we neglect.

When we look at chapter 23 we may well wonder what the worship of God was like when the book of the law was found. Verses 4-14 describe the places where Israel worships idols and even the idols of Baal and Astarte, which were in the temple.

Obviously, we can conclude from these passages that the religion of Moses had been replaced with the polytheism of Phoenicia, Moab, and Ammon. The only difference was that Jehovah of Israel was regarded as the king of the gods (cf. Jeremiah 7:1-11).

The reader of these chapters may also ask why Josiah waited until after the book of the law was read to act against these practices. We might conclude that the king, up to that time, had no idea that all of these other activities were wrong. When he knew God's will he acted accordingly by destroy-

ing the idols which corrupted the religious life of Israel.

Another point we want to consider is how Josiah regarded his relationship to God. Josiah read the book of the law. He taught it to his subjects. And he then swore to follow it "with all his heart and all his soul to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book" (2 Kings 23:3).

This king gives us an example of a person who willingly followed God in any way God chose to lead. Much is being said about the subject of hermeneutics. Restoration leaders are studied to pick apart their thoughts on this subject. Christian scholars gather to discuss this topic. All of these things are being done in the name of "the cause of Christ." Surely some good and

some bad will come from these things.

I believe that true restoration means being reconciled or restored to God. More of us today need to be restorationists like Josiah. We must approach God's word with a tender heart. We must have a humble mind as we read what He desires. We must be willing to accept and act upon what He teaches. If God gave Josiah a clear understanding about what needed to be done, then He will give us as clear an understanding of His will for us today. We need for members of the Lord's body to occupy themselves with the same pursuit as Josiah, "who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might."

[205 Keating Dr., Winston-Salem, NC 27104.]

Marion, North Carolina

by David Pharr, Editor

The State Street church of Christ in Marion, North Carolina, is a good example of a working congregation in a small town. The building, which is about forty years old, is situated at the corner of State Street and Ann Street. Attendance averages about 75. In recent years various improvements have been made to the building.

Marion has a population of around 4,000. The county is McDowell County, in the western part of the state. There is another congregation at nearby Dysartville. There is also a small congregation in Marion which opposes orphan homes and cooperative programs.

Will T. Winchester is the faithful full-time evangelist. Will and Nancy have been at Marion for sixteen years. A graduate of Memphis School of Preaching, Will has also been located with the churches in Waynesville, NC, and Spindale, NC. The Winchesters have four children, all of whom attend at Marion, and five grandchildren.

The Marion congregation has been self-supporting since 1985 and now maintains a weekly budget of \$1000. They are involved in supporting four mission projects on a regular basis. They have also been generous in

their support of Palmetto Bible Camp.

Men in the congregation are capable teachers and preachers. The good song leaders and enthusiastic congregation make their song services especially edifying. Visitors to the Marion church find a hospitable reception.

The church has a good reputation in the community. Their weekly newspaper column is widely read. About five years ago brother Winchester and the church led the way in opposition to legalizing alcoholic beverages. They worked to organize voters against it by canvassing every street in town. While the booze forces won the election, it was only by 31 votes out of 1680 ballots. The church has a reputation for moral courage.

This spring I had the opportunity to be with the Marion church in a gospel meeting. I was much encouraged by their love for the truth, their compassion for people who err, their zeal for the cause of Christ, and their friendly spirit.



The Salt of the Earth

by J. C. Townsend

Jesus was a unique person. He recognized that this world belonged to His Father and that He had come to carry out His will (John 8:28-30). He placed His eternal lessons of truth about the common things of life, making them impossible to misunderstand. Everywhere we turn we come face to face with this Master of life.

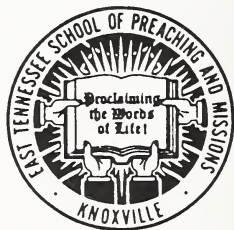
To break bread at mealtime is but to hear Him say, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). To turn a light switch on that lights up the room makes us hear Him say, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). To walk through the fields of flowers calls to mind His statement in Matthew 6:28-30, "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." To note the fall of a sparrow is to call to mind that wonderful statement of Jesus in Matthew 10, "Not one of them can fall to the ground against your Father's will." When we use salt in our homes, we are in His presence, remembering His utterance, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). Move wherever we will, the Master speaks to us.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus says some things to us that will bring added happiness to our lives. Here He makes us feel the weight of responsibility that comes in being a Christian and urges us to give unto His kingdom the loyalty that will make a difference. There are at least three lessons in this passage. First, Jesus says, **Be careful.** In a laboratory, it has been shown that the way salt is taken from the sea and made useable was the way it was done while Jesus lived. A small channel was made allowing the water to pour into a sunken place in the sand. Then the channel was dammed up and the sun dried the moisture from the salt. If the dried salt was not taken up immediately, it gathered from the atmosphere odors that made it worthless. This brings to mind Jesus' statement, "If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men."

This is the way that it is in the Christian life. If we are not surrounded by the spiritual help, strength, and courage of others, we will gather odors from the world that will destroy our Christian image and make it a thing to be despised by others rather than a thing to be gloried in.

In the laboratory experiment mentioned above, lessons were learned which undoubtedly were in the mind of the Master when He delivered this sermon. He says, "Be care-

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ful of your environment. It will make you or break you.” In the experiences of life it is not difficult to recall individuals whose lives have been spoiled because they didn’t heed this truth which Jesus declared. They did not keep their heart open to God — a tender conscience toward men and an inner life touched by the Master’s presence.

In a salt laboratory the chemist showed how it was brought up from the mines. Hot water was forced through great pipes which brought up the saline solution. The hotter the water the faster the salt is made and the better the quality. This is an important lesson that needs to be heeded by every church. At the heart of every great congregation must be the warm spirit that will produce Christians in abundance and will nurture their lives until they are able to stand by themselves. In a certain pulpit a thermometer was found. That is in order because the pulpit must have the right temperature for the church to feel a warmth that will melt the chilly influences which would prevent spiritual progress.

In a certain city an unused church building was bought by a company that operated a garage. Across the front of it was placed a sign, “We Mend Everything But a Broken Heart.” In a sense, that represented a tragedy. The only institution raised up by God to bind up the broken hearts of men sold its building to a company that could do everything but what the church was established to do. We hear our Lord say, “Make sure there is a warmth sufficient to attract sinners and that will keep those within the fellowship safe and sound.”

I read the story of a man who was involved in attacking the moral and social problems of the day. Different methods for doing this were discussed. He mentioned that one method is by force, but another is by creating an atmosphere in which evil things cannot live. He mentioned the example of the Gulf Stream with which all of us are familiar. He told how the Gulf Stream flows northward with its warm current to melt icebergs, and creating an environment in which the mass of ice cannot exist. Slowly the iceberg melts in the warm currents. So the church must have a warm heart and send out the warm currents that will melt the things which, if allowed to go on, will

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destroy the effectiveness of our individual and social life.

Then in the second place, Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:13, **Be faithful.** A group of people visited a salt mine, and on the way they passed by large conveyors which carried the product to the bins. Beside the belts carrying the salt were large boards. An individual asked, “How often do the boards have to be replaced?” The plant manager answered, “Never, for wood is a vegetable and it is preserved by the salt.”

Here again we are reminded of the striking statement of our Lord, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Wherever you live and work you are a preserving influence, keeping the decaying processes from going on in your own small world. There are times when most of us ask, “What is my importance in the scheme of things?” Here is Christ’s answer. “Those who love and follow me faithfully are the men and women who are retarding the processes that would bring the world to utter ruin. Be encouraged, my little flock, ye are the salt of the earth.” Rest in the confidence that you are keeping the decay of the world from spreading.

The story is told of a man who visited a laboratory where a preacher’s son performed an experiment. The boy took certain ingredients and mixed them together and placed the whole of it in an electric furnace. He then took the baked ball and hit it with a small hammer. It broke into many pieces. He repeated the experiment with the same ingredients except this time salt was added, and when he took the mass out of the furnace, and hit it with his hammer, it was impossible to break it. The observation was that the salt held all of the rest of the matter together. Someone asked him to comment further about this and he said that the salt acts like small fingers that go around each part of the mass holding all of it together. Again, we are reminded, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” You Christians, act like little fingers holding all the world together. Without your good influence, the world would fall apart.

Third, Jesus is saying, **Be joyful.** Our Lord was ever anxious to impart His abundant life unto us and to have us possess the joy of His Father. He wanted this to play

like music in our hearts, helping us to understand in a measure the significance of the abundant life which He came to give. In this reference to salt, He was imparting a lesson of joyfulness which grows out of the fact that we are important in God's kingdom. He would have us know that we are never lost in the crowd; we are so distinct from every other person in the world that to miss doing our part is to leave it forever unfinished. We are so important in the building of His eternal kingdom that He expects each of us to put forth our very best effort in order that His purpose might be fulfilled. A group of tourists visiting a salt mine in one of our western states heard a young chemist who served as the guide say, "Salt is not in the kind of mass that you would likely think. It is made up of individual grains; some are large, some small; some well-formed, some

flat, some round, but each are individual grains."

Hearing that observation, one could not help but remember Jesus saying, "Ye are the salt of the earth — You are a distinct individual in my sight. You have work to do that no one else can do. Be conscious of the glory, the dignity and the honor that God has placed upon you. As your good shepherd, I know your name. The very hairs of your head are numbered. God takes note of your needs as you make life's journey. Because of this, I say to you, Be joyful." We need to take inventory and see if we are functioning as a preserving force.

Jesus says to us in this verse to **be careful, be faithful, and be joyful.**

[J. C. Townsend, 12901 SW 15th Court #105, Pembroke Pines, FL 33027.]

New Work Planned

The John Moore family is moving back to their native Buncombe County, North Carolina, to establish another congregation in Asheville. There are other congregations in Asheville, but this new work will be in a different area.

John is a 1987 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Since his graduation, John and Diane have been in child care work under the auspices of East Tennessee Christian Services.

Brother Moore writes, God "has blessed

us more than we could ever tell, yet we still have a longing to go back to North Carolina and to establish a congregation in my home town. This was our goal when we came [to the school of preaching], because there are so many people in that area who have never heard the pure gospel. . . ."

Arrangements have already been made for a place to assemble. The Moores need financial assistance. Their address: Box 194, Charlotte Highway, Asheville, NC 28803. (704) 298-2118.

Fellowship or Confidence

by David Pharr, Editor

Perhaps readers will allow me to "think out loud" on a troublesome issue — the Scriptural boundaries of fellowship. Comments will be welcome.

Clearly there are boundaries of fellowship. God's people are not to be in fellowship with the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18); with immoral brethren (1 Cor. 5:9-11); with heretics (Titus 3:10); with those who cause

division by their doctrines (Rom. 16:17); with those who bring not Christ's truth (2 John 9-11); with unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11); and such like.

This article especially concerns fellowship (or the breaking of it) among preachers and congregations. When should we cease to have fellowship with a preacher, or another congregation? On the one hand, we realize

that some preachers (teachers) become so contrary to truth that they can no longer be tolerated in the fellowship of the saints (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 John 9-11; 2 Pet. 2:1-4; Rev. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Likewise a congregation may become so morally or spiritually corrupt that the Lord breaks fellowship with it (see Rev. 2 and 3), and certainly we would not want to fellowship those whom the Lord will not.

Our problem lies in knowing just where to draw the line. We do not break fellowship over every disagreement. Which issues are fellowship issues, and which are not? Without question some errors cannot be tolerated even for an hour (Gal. 2:5). But other errors are to be handled with patience (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8).

Love and unity are priorities (1 Pet. 4:8; Eph. 4:3). No real Christian enjoys breaking fellowship with any brother. On the other hand no real Christian will want to tolerate teachings and practices which would subvert men's faith and destroy the church. At what point and in regard to what issues does loyalty to truth require us to cease to accept others as **faithful** brethren?

I do not propose to give a complete answer, and I am certainly not in a position to **list** which errors are **fatal** errors and which are not so destructive. There is a distinction. I want to suggest some ideas, however, that may help in some situations.

When Paul and Barnabas planned their second missionary journey, there was a sharp disagreement between them over whether John Mark should go (Acts 15:36-40). Because they could not agree they went their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark with him, but Paul was unwilling to work with Mark.

This was not a break of fellowship between Paul and Barnabas, neither between Paul and John Mark. Instead Paul lacked confidence in Mark. It was a **confidence issue**, not a **fellowship issue**. They all still recognized one another as faithful Christians. Paul did not question the fellowship Mark had with Christ. Mark's earlier actions, however, had caused Paul to lose confidence in him.

I am persuaded that some issues that con-

front us should be treated as issues of confidence, not necessarily issues of **fellowship**. There may be, for example, certain preachers who use certain methods or hold certain ideas which I am convinced are questionable, or even dangerous. This does not mean, however, that they are apostates. I still would consider myself in fellowship with them. Still, I don't have **confidence** in them, especially in regard to the areas of concern.

At the risk of opening a Pandora's box, let me attempt to illustrate the point with a practical issue. Many of us have serious concerns over the errors in the **New International Version**. We do not recommend it for exegetical study, and we warn others of its dangers. There are sincere brethren, however, who do not see the NIV as such a serious problem. They think it is acceptable, even advantageous, to use it. Much has been said and written, often with vehemence, on both sides.

What is to be my position regarding a brother who uses the NIV (assuming, of course, that he teaches the truth out of it, calling attention to its flaws just as I would with the KJV)? Do I no longer regard him as a brother? Is he to be marked as a heretic? A liberal? Is our fellowship in Christ broken?

Remember that I am not defending the errors in the NIV. Neither do I consider it to be wise in general to teach from it. The question is whether disagreement over a version is a reason for withdrawing fellowship.

My thinking is that this should be an issue of confidence. One might have such serious concerns regarding the use of the NIV that he does not have complete confidence in the one who teaches from it. The version issue might even be tied to other concerns which would make confidence even more difficult. Because of the lack of confidence there might be hesitancy to recommend him



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(especially wherein those issues would be concerned). We might even refuse to participate in programs involving those for whom we lack confidence (just as Paul refused to work with John Mark). But a lack of confidence does not mean a lack of fellowship.

We should also keep in mind that lack of confidence in one aspect need not mean lack of confidence in everything else. We may doubt a person's wisdom in the matter of versions, for example, and still have confidence in other aspects of his person and work. The extent to which we work together must be determined by various factors.

Another example relates to congregations. We have sometimes known of a con-

gregation which brought in a guest speaker in whom we had little confidence. It even may have been felt that to have him was dangerous. These concerns prevented our participating in or encouraging that particular activity. But what of the rest of the time? Were they not still our brothers and sisters? Could we not participate with them in other things? Lack of confidence in regard to one thing should not mean a break of fellowship in all things.

This article is intended to stimulate thinking. I am certainly not advocating "open fellowship." I am, however, exploring how we might develop better relations among brethren. Let me hear from you.

Franklin Camp Preachers' Scholarship Fund

by Bobby Duncan

Our late beloved brother Franklin Camp was a man of many good works. He was best known throughout our brotherhood for his brilliant mind, his vast knowledge and tremendous understanding of the Bible, and his sagacity in the application of Biblical truth. Those of us who knew him quite well knew him as a warm and gentle person whose soul glowed with love for God, for the church, and for all mankind. One of the things closest to his heart was training and encouraging young men to preach the gospel. For the past three decades he has regularly conducted a preachers' class on a weekly basis, with preachers driving from many miles in every direction to attend.

A preachers' scholarship fund has been established in his memory and under his name to help deserving men prepare themselves to preach the gospel of Christ. This fund will not be tied to any one Christian college or preacher training school, but may be used to help support preacher students in different schools.

The fine elders of the church in Adamsville, Alabama, men who sustained a very close relationship to brother Camp during

the latter one-third of his life, and whose lives have been greatly influenced by him, have chosen to set up this fund as one of many works the Adamsville church is doing. The Adamsville church has already committed itself to a contribution of \$10,000. Since it will be a work of the church, the elders will oversee it and determine how it will be used. This arrangement will also make it possible for churches which wish to contribute to the fund to do so.

All contributions to the Franklin Camp Scholarship Fund, either by churches or individuals, will be acknowledged, and the names of all contributors will be sent to sister Camp.

What better way could there be to honor the memory of a man like Franklin Camp than to contribute to a fund to help train

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preachers?

The last sermon brother Camp preached was at Adamsville on Sunday morning, May 5. He spoke on some things the Bible teaches which had been reinforced by his own experiences. It was a classic! This sermon, and his last Bible class, which he taught that same morning, were recorded both on audio and video. When you mail your contribution to

the scholarship fund, you may wish to request a copy of this audio tape.

Checks should be made to Adamsville Church of Christ and earmarked for the **Franklin Camp Scholarship Fund**. They should be mailed to Adamsville Church of Christ, 4207 Adamsville Parkway, Adamsville, Alabama 35005.

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What Are Our Real Values?

by Mark Swindall

Yes, we do have nostalgia. We yearn for the simple times. We have an emptiness that craves to be filled. Real values are expressed not in what we say but what we do. We say we believe in family yet few are intact. We say we love the old yet barely visit them. We say we believe in marriage yet too many don't last. We say we love our children yet spend little time with them. What are real American values?

Look who our heroes are. The rich, famous, beautiful, athletic, the movie queens, articulate convicts who served time and now charm us on talk shows. OUCH! This "hits us below the belt." We say our heroes are servants. Look at the way we dress. Is that determined by servants — or athletic shoes, rock stars, movie stars? What is in? Out? Is this determined by servants? Fads come and go. Our heroes dictate our lives! Do you have a pair of athletic shoes named "the pump"? Heroes are good — only when they are good heroes!

What do you spend your money on? This is our **value**. This question is really "hitting below the belt." How can people living in

expensive houses, driving luxury cars, with all kinds of hobbies, and taking expensive vacations, fuss when preachers preach on giving? This is interesting: the **givers** never fuss. A man's check stubs are a real spiritual barometer. Man basically does what he wants to do. He spends his money on where his heart is.

What do you watch on TV? Come on, admit it — TV is violent, crude, lewd, adulterous — sleazy. Even TV newspaper critics now are up in arms over what they call the **sleaze factors**. If I see one more commercial with Madonna baring her bosom on TV I think I will... In the hot ratings war, language, suggestiveness, "hard-core filth" are now in living color.

We don't need to hoe weeds on the surface; we need a genuine root job. What are your real values? Are you loyal? Are you committed? Who are your heroes? (Hint: read the Sermon on the Mount and test yourself with the words of Jesus, Matt. 5-7.)

[2721 Cordwaiver Ct., Charleston, SC 29414.]

Courage

by David Vaughn

Winston Churchill said, "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others." Courage comes from the inside. Our convictions and our desires motivate us to act courageously. Some desires reflect the highest human aspiration. Paul said his heart's desire was for Israel's salvation (Rom. 10:1). Another expressed desire which serves as a positive example is the request of Caleb: "Now therefore give me this mountain..." (Josh. 14:12).

The request of Caleb reflected his courage. Years earlier, Caleb had gone into Canaan as one of the twelve spies. Now, forty-five years later, the Israelites are in Ca-

naan and Caleb makes his courage known by asking for part of the hill country. He knew the inhabitants of the land were powerful and their cities fortified. To face them required the same kind of courage Caleb had exhibited forty years earlier when he wanted to go and possess the land (Num. 14:30).

Caleb's courage was the result of his convictions and he had the courage to live by his convictions. God said Caleb had a "different spirit" (Num. 14:24). Such was the result of an unwavering faith in God. Caleb's courage was firm in the face of death (Num. 14:10). While others were doubting and fearful, he was full of faith and courageous.

We can be courageous when we believe.

Peter and John believed the Lord Jesus wanted them to preach and teach in His name. When the Sanhedrin Council of the Jews (who had sentenced Jesus to death only a few weeks earlier) commanded Peter and John to stop teaching in the name of Jesus, Peter answered the Council saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). They had courage to speak because they believed they were doing what God commanded to be right. When we "believe

God is for us," we join with Paul in asking, "Who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

In Joshua 14:8, 14 and Numbers 14:24, the Bible says Caleb "followed the Lord my God fully." As we learn the truth we follow the Lord out of the enslavement of sin into the freedom which only God gives (John 8:32). This is the key to courageous living. "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Believe in God and His word, live in faith, and live courageously.

[P.O. Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.]

Building The Church Through Caring

by David Vaughn

What kind of Bible would you have if some of the stories were as follows: A father and two sons are the main characters in the powerful story in Luke 15. The younger son asks for and receives his inheritance, and goes into a far country. After a period of time he is out of money and a famine [recession] is in this far country. The young man becomes a servant with the job of feeding swine. After a period of time the Bible says that "he came to his senses." Difficulties often bring us to our senses, helping us to see what is important and how fleeting and unfulfilling are the promises the world makes to us. One of my older brothers has been very successful in his work as an engineer. However, at this present time he has inoperable cancer in both lungs. He is not a Christian but this has brought him face to face with reality and he is thinking about his life and about God. What kind of version would you have if the young man returned home, as he did, and when he met his father, the father said, "Well, I see you have come back. What happened? Did you spend all of your money?" The son replies, "Yes." The father says, "Things are going to be different around here. I hope you have learned your lesson."

The story of the *Good Samaritan* is filled with meaning. What if you read the story and the Samaritan said to the beaten and bruised man: "Didn't you know this was a dangerous road for travellers? I don't have time to help you and I don't have extra money, because I may need what I have, but you need to be careful as you travel this road. Take care, bye."

Congregational Singing Workshops

by
Ken Forrest

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In John 8 a woman was brought before Jesus and charged with adultery. Jesus asks some key questions and then tells the men: "You know the Law of Moses and what it says. If she is guilty of adultery, you have the responsibility of doing what the Law commands you to do."

If there is such a version [there is not one in word, but there very well may be some in practice], it is cold and lifeless because it leaves compassion, caring, and concern out of the three stories. If caring is removed from these stories all we have is a common everyday headline that can be found in any major newspaper.

There is a popular song that says *God is watching you*; but He is not the only one watching us. The world is watching. The world recognizes the real challenge is for professed believers to match our actions with our claims. In the eyes of the world the church is built and nurtured through a love for humanity that is demonstrated through compassionate action. Paul wrote that "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). God's purpose is for us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10). Our lives are to mirror our doctrine. Too often we try to build the church through stories and doctrine which, if not practiced, is lifeless and useless.

Garfield, seated in a comfortable chair, sees his friend *Odie* at the window peering in eagerly. *Garfield* says to himself, "Poor *Odie*. Locked outside in the cold. I just can't bear to see him like this. I gotta do something." At this point *Garfield* gets up from his chair and closes the curtains! Surely, we have learned from James that our faith must be active, not in the meritorious sense, but in the great example of our Lord. Faith does not close curtains but seeks to express itself: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). Following Christ is much more than repentance, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and acapella singing [these are Scripturally correct and must not be neglected]. Following Jesus includes "doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God" (Mi-

cah 6:8). There is no place for neglecting that which is right before God (Matt. 23:23). Matthew 25 is a reminder of certain needs that exist among human beings and those needs are so demanding they will be met only by those who are caring people. Consider the following written by Portia Nelson, called **Autobiography in Five Short Chapters**:

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost. . . I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in the same place. But, it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall in. . . it's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

I walk down another street.

A powerful story that teaches a great lesson when we come to the point of understanding that excuses are not acceptable.

The Bible teaches that we are to be involved in "good deeds to meet pressing needs. . . (Titus 3:14). The unfaithful servant mentioned in Matthew 25 is a contradiction, he was good for nothing, and therefore was cast into outer darkness. Good deeds are attractive (Matt. 5:16), demonstrating faith (James 2:17-18; 1 Peter 2:12) to unbelievers and to other believers (Heb. 10:24). The church in Burlington has a local reputation of helping. Recently a person just released from prison came by the building and asked for some food. I asked how she heard of the church in Burlington and she said, "The word is that, if you are in need, the Mebane Street Church of Christ in Burlington will help." Years ago a member of the church in Battle Creek, Michigan [Eleanor Cope] was hospitalized. Numerous church members visited this Christian lady. Her hospital roommate was impressed with this demonstration of care. Sister Cope gave the name of this woman to my wife and me. We visited and studied with her and she be-

came a Christian. Good deeds do impress non-believers. Jesus tasted death for everyone (Heb. 2:9), therefore we as His people who wear His name, should minister as we have opportunities. Christ is to be exalted through our actions (Phil. 1:20).

The world should see Christians as a caring community offering principles that are Biblical. As the people of God we are involved in caring for the whole person (Eph. 4:28).

The world should see in our attitudes that

we love God with the fullness of our being and that we love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:34-40; Luke 4:18ff).

The world should see that we have a genuine love and concern for one another (John 13:34-35). In some sectors of society closeness tends to isolate, but in the body of believers, we are fellow pilgrims journeying toward eternity. Let us encourage one another and enlighten unbelievers by our compassionate actions toward them.

Brotherhood News

The NORTH RALEIGH CHURCH OF CHRIST in Raleigh celebrated its first anniversary July 20-21 with Jon Jones as their guest speaker. Jones preaches for the Richland Hills church in Fort Worth, Texas. The North Raleigh church began with an average attendance of 70, but in its first year that has grown to 125. . . . The CARY CHURCH OF CHRIST will host a Ladies' Day on October 19. The theme will be "Celebrations" with Doris Black as the speaker. . . . The annual AGAPE of N.C. "I-CAN" fund drive is set for December 8, 1991. The 1991 "I-CAN" chairman is RON NEWBERRY, preacher for the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, N.C. For more details about the AGAPE agency of the fund drive the office number is (919) 855-7107. . . . The IRMO-CHAPIN CHURCH OF CHRIST in Irmo, S.C., has a new preacher. He is Thurman E. Self. . . . The CHURCH OF CHRIST ON HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C., celebrated its second anniversary July 12-14 with a gospel meeting and groundbreaking celebration for a new worship facility. In early April a Christian requesting anonymity promised \$25,000 toward the building of a new facility if the church could raise an additional \$50,000 by June 1. The money was raised and the pledge was fulfilled. It took the church only 45 days to meet the challenge. . . . New presidents have been appointed at two Christian colleges. ROYCE MONEY is the new president of Abilene Christian University and KEN JOHNSON is the new president of MICHIGAN CHRIS-

TIAN COLLEGE. . . . The April 1991 issue of Applied Missiology from the department of missions at Abilene Christian University contains a survey of churches of Christ outside the United States and Canada that shows "significant growth in the number of churches and membership on the mission field." In 1988 there were a reported 7,103 churches outside North America with 452,970 members. Three years later the number of churches has grown to 9,823 with 576,267 members.

Youth Calendar

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October 18-20 — Youth Rally, Wilkesboro church of Christ, Wilkesboro, NC.

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“She Hath Done What She Could”

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“She hath done what she could” (Mk. 14:8). There is no station in life, however obscure; no condition, however humble; but that something may be done for the Lord. Mary was judged on the grounds that she had done what she could. It was not a great act when compared with Deborah or Esther, but it was the best she could do. One penny’s worth, if it is the limit of self denial, is as good as thousands of dollars. Jesus recognized this in what He said of the two mites the widow cast into the treasury.

Mary could not write like the apostle John, or preach like the apostle Peter, or plant churches like the apostle Paul, but in her humble station, she did her best. Everyone can do that. If this is done, the humble disciple can count himself committed to Christ. God is present in small opportunities and activities as well as where power is great, talents many, and opportunities unlimited.

What are you doing? It is a personal matter. Have you done anything in the past? Are you doing anything now to advance the glory of God? God will ask nothing beyond your power. Ask yourself, “Have I done what I could?” Am I ready to stand before the judgment bar of God and answer that question? God promises to help us do more as soon as we are willing to do something. He forgives us, as we forgive our debtors. The Lord expects some fruit from every tree.

— Ralph Jones



editorial

by David Pharr

“Legalism,” “legalistic” — harsh terms denoting a harsh system, the antithesis of grace. Properly defined, legalism is the opposite of the gospel. A legalistic system is one which understands salvation to be earned, deserved, by the keeping of laws. Legalism is an inordinate affection for rules and regulations. It devalues the riches of grace and exalts the significance of man’s own participation in his salvation.

The Scriptures clearly show that none are justified by any system of legalism. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom. 3:20; Cf. Gal. 3:10-12). While these passages have particular application to the law of Moses, they nevertheless reflect an unchanging principle. Whether we think in terms of the Old Testament or the New, the principle is the same: No person could possibly keep any law so successfully that he could thereby (and thereby alone) merit redemption. In fact, in view of the very nature of God, it is impossible for God to give mankind a law which could (solely by the keeping of it) give righteousness and life. This is the argument made in Galatians 3:21.

The positive answer to legalism is the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). The gospel includes laws that we are required to obey (Heb. 5:9). There is no justification without obedience (Jas. 2:24). The “gospel of **grace**” and the “**law** of Christ” are not contradictions in terms (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), and grace will not save the disobedient (2 Thess. 1:8). But the necessity of obedience in no way minimizes the fact that salvation is possible only because of, and by means of, the grace of God.

It is poor preaching that persuades men to obedience without winning them to grace. It is foolish confidence when a person thinks he is saved because he has done everything right. It is a sad religion that rests its hope on having kept all the rules. Legalism is not gospel; there is no “good news” in it. We

are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

But emphasizing grace does not de-emphasize obedience. To say that we are not saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9) is not to say that we are saved without works (Jas. 2:24). Being justified “freely by his grace” (Rom. 3:24) does not mean there is no obligation to keep the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21). As expressed by the late Roy Lanier, Sr.: “We are not under law as a system of justification, but we are under law as a rule of life. We cannot be justified by law, but we cannot disregard law and be saved.”

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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We find nothing in the New Testament that suggests that obedience to God's law is less important now than it was during the Mosaic dispensation. Indeed, the opposite is taught. Under the Christian system there are actually more fearful consequences for disobedience. If this is not taught in Hebrews 2:1-3 and Hebrews 10:28-30, then language has no meaning!

Still, having affirmed the above, we remain bold to renounce every tenet of legalism and to exalt grace to the highest degree possible. God forbid that any of us ever be guilty of upholding legalism, which the New Testament so soundly refutes.

There is a problem, though, in that some are careless and elusive in their use of words. They employ the terms "legalism" and "legalistic" prejudicially, with connotations convenient to their purposes. This is often the approach of liberals. They speak much of "grace versus law." Thus any emphasis on the necessity of obedience, any emphasis on following the New Testament pattern or on respecting Biblical authority, is branded "legalism." Being unable to refute the absolutes of Scripture, they camouflage their objections to the Bible way by calling us "legalistic." I resent this. First of all I resent it because I have put my trust altogether in the grace of God. Further, I resent it because I think a person who objects to the necessity of following any aspect of the law of Christ ought to be honest enough to admit it, rather than hiding his views by calling other people disgraceful names. (Pun intended: To be a "legalist" would "dis" — [deprived of] grace.)

This is not a new problem. Back in 1871 Moses E. Lard wrote: "Not to insist on obedience to these commandments is legalism. Against it, of late, not a little has been said and nothing wisely. The term legalism I do not like. It is an offensive term, with a bad sense, as popularly used, and should, therefore, not be employed. **Obedience to the commandments of Christ is its exact equivalent, [as false teachers employ it] and should always be used in its stead.** But few men, however, could be found bold enough to speak against obeying the commandments of Christ.... A more insidious method is adopted. Legalism is the thing inveighed

against. But the act amounts to the same. Legalism and obedience to Christ's commands are the same.... Nor have I any respect for the man who masks the law of Christ, and then speaks against it, than I have for him who insults it indirectly" (Quoted by Earl I. West, **The Search For the Ancient Order**, Vol. 2, p. 269). The reader understands, of course, that Lard was not discussing the correct meaning of the term legalism, but the misuse that was being made of it even in his time.

Years ago at Freed-Hardeman College the late G. K. Wallace cautioned us to beware of letting false teachers define their own terms. Today we are seeing some fancy word manipulation even among some brethren. The word "legalism" is a case in point. A middle Tennessee bulletin harshly attacked what the writer called "hardliners" in the church because of their "legalism." He compared such "legalists" to the hardline Communists of Russia, saying that both Communist hardliners and the members of the church which he considers legalistic are "diabolical" — of the devil. But how did he define legalism? He said it is "the restricting of honest dialoguing and [restricting] the pursuit of ever improving." Now, where did he get such a definition? It was, of course, a definition of convenience. But both the term and the definition are used skillfully. Surely every thoughtful person would oppose what he described. So the name calling dance step works like this: Use a term which already has a negative connotation; give it a definition which (though incorrect) makes it sound even worse; and then apply it to those who still insist on Bible authority.

If preaching obedience to the law of Christ, if insisting on Biblical authority, if calling for compliance to the New Testament pattern, or if refusing to accept the innovations of men, causes some to call me a legalist, so let it be. But in the real sense of the word I refuse to be a legalist. My faith stands on the grace given word; my redemption rests in the grace given Blood; and my hope holds to the grace given promises.

Theology of Church Growth

by Johnny Melton

This summer I took a course entitled "Acts and Church Growth" as a requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree. After studying selected passages in the book of Acts, the class proposed several "Church Growth Affirmations and Denials." One of the Affirmations was "Church Growth is the conversion of sinners to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit."

This affirmation understands church to be used in the universal sense of the spiritual body of Christ ("and God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way" (Eph. 1:22, 23).

It is this kind of growth that the book of Acts details in particular. That is why Acts is sometimes called "a book of conversions." J.W. McGarvey wrote: "Much of the greater part of Acts may be resolved into a detailed history of cases of conversion of sinners. If we extract from it all cases of this kind, with the facts and incidents preparatory to each and immediately consequent upon it, we will have exhausted almost the entire contents of the narrative. All other matters are merely incidental. The events of the first chapter were designed to prepare the apostles for the work of converting man; the gift of the Holy Spirit to them and to others was to qualify them for it; the admission of the Gentiles was an incident connected with the conversion of Cornelius, and others after him; the conference, in the fifteenth chapter, grew out of these conversions; and the long account of Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem, Cesarea, and Rome, with his sea-voyage and shipwreck, constitute but the connected history of his preaching to the mob in Jerusalem, to the Sanhedrin, to Felix, to Festus, to Agrippa, and to the Jews and Gentiles in Rome. The episode in the twelfth chapter, concerning the persecutions by Herod, and his death, is designed to show that, even under such circumstances, 'the word of God grew and multiplied.' All the remainder of

the history consists, unmistakably, in detailed accounts of conversions" (**Original Commentary on Acts**, 4).

The book of Acts is filled with examples of the gospel being preached. It is preached to great crowds (Acts 2) and to private individuals (Acts 8). It is preached by Apostles (Acts 2), deacons (Acts 7, 8) and ordinary Christians (Acts 8:4). The gospel is preached with success (Acts 14:21) and with failure (Acts 24, 24; Acts 26:28).

The book of Acts demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is involved in the conversion of men. It also demonstrates that the Holy Spirit does not work directly to convert, but rather He works indirectly through the preaching of the gospel to bring about conversion.

The definition of church growth as "the conversion of sinners to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit" is clearly demonstrated by a survey of Acts.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles and enabled them to speak in other languages. This demonstration of the Spirit's power attracted a crowd and "Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd" (Acts 2:14). He explained that the presence of the Holy Spirit was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that included the statement "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Peter then preached a message which proved that Jesus was the Lord in whom salvation could be found. After presenting an impressive array of arguments, Peter concluded, "Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

The people, cut to the heart by this charge, responded, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter explained, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37). "Those who accepted his mes-

sage were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).

While Peter was preaching to a great crowd and many were touched by his message, he insisted that an individual response was essential, “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” Only those individuals who were baptized received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit and were added to their number.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and 4 is mentioned in relationship to preaching. In Acts 2, following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter preached. In Acts 4:8, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit,” preached Jesus to them. In Acts 4:31, after the brethren had prayed, “the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

The Holy Spirit did not work directly on any sinner bringing conversion instantly. But the Spirit filled Christians so that they preached the gospel. This is consistent with Paul’s affirmation in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” And it also is consistent with Paul’s argument in Romans 10:13-17, “for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message.’ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

In Acts 8 the gospel is preached from house to house by ordinary Christians forced to flee Jerusalem as a result of the persecution that broke out when Stephen was stoned. Philip preached “Christ” to the crowds in Samaria. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus

Christ, they were baptized both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

The reception of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way required that Apostles (in this case, Peter and John) lay hands on individuals (Acts 8:14-17).

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch demonstrates the importance of the individual. Philip’s preaching to the crowds was bearing fruit, but an angel of the Lord sent him to a deserted stretch of road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). When Philip obeyed the voice of the angel he met the Ethiopian eunuch’s chariot. “The Spirit told Philip ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it’ ” (Acts 8:29). Philip did as the angel said and found the man reading from the Hebrew Scriptures. He engaged the man in conversation regarding his reading. When the Ethiopian requested help in understanding the text, Philip took the text the Ethiopian was reading (Isaiah 53) and “told him the good news about Jesus.” For some reason, after being told the good news about Jesus, the eunuch, upon coming to some water, said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” Philip baptized the eunuch and “the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).

It will be noted that an angel as well as the Holy Spirit are involved in the conversion of this man. The Spirit is mentioned at the beginning and at the conclusion of the story, but each time, the Spirit is dealing with the preacher. The convert was

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reached by the good news about Jesus — not by the direct intervention of either the angel or the Spirit.

It should also be noted that a request for baptism was the response to the good news about Jesus. When the gospel was preached in Jerusalem people responded and were baptized; when the gospel was preached in Samaria people responded and were baptized; when the Ethiopian heard the gospel he requested baptism. Surely a fair deduction from these accounts is that baptism is an element of the gospel. Baptism is not a work of merit, but rather it is a faith response to the good news about Jesus.

It is also interesting to note that both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, the eunuch was baptized, and then they came up out of the water. Such language emphasizes that baptism is an action to which one submits in water (i.e., immersion), and it is not an action that is done to water (i.e., sprinkling).

The conversion of Saul is recorded in Acts 9, 22 and 26. A composite of the three accounts demonstrates that Saul saw a vision of the risen Christ. The vision was associated with a bright light that blinded Saul. Jesus, after identifying Himself, said “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” Ananias, a preacher, was commissioned by Jesus to go to Saul in Damascus with words of instruction. Saul, far from rejoicing in salvation, spent three days fasting (Acts 9:9) and praying (Acts 9:11). He received his sight when Ananias laid his hands on him and he then responded to Ananias’ instruction, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).

Saul’s conversion is consistent with what has been seen in Acts 2 and Acts 8. Even though Saul had an encounter with Jesus, he was not told in the vision either that he was saved or what to do to be saved. He was told that he would receive instruction from a man about what he must do. That Saul believed in Jesus is demonstrated by the fact that he obeyed Jesus’ instruction. That Saul repented is evidenced by the fact that he arrived in Damascus, not to persecute Christians but to become one. His sorrow for sin

is revealed in the fact that he fasted and prayed three days. The preacher did not need to convince Saul of all this, what he needed to do was to instruct Saul in his final response of faith to the Lord’s call. In baptism, Saul’s sins were washed away (implying that up to that point he was still in his sin) and he was able to call on the name of the Lord (implying that up to that point he had not done so).

Saul understood his baptism to be the beginning of his new life. “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:3, 4).

In Acts 16, Lydia is converted through the preaching of Paul. “The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message” (Acts 16:14). Again, there is a divine element involved in this conversion, but it involves the message of the gospel.

Later in Acts 16, the jailer is converted. When Paul and Silas refused to escape in the aftermath of an earthquake, the jailer was so impressed that he asked them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 22:30). He was instructed, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household” (Acts 22:31). But the jailer did not know about Jesus and certainly his household did not know about Him. So the text continues, “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole family” (Acts 16:32-34).

Once more, baptism is seen to be the response that is made to the preaching of the word of the Lord. Baptism is also seen as a faith response. Following his baptism, the jailer was filled with joy “because he had come to believe in God” (Acts 16:34).

Paul’s preaching in Lystra (Acts 14) and Athens at the meeting of the Areopagus

(Acts 17) are important because they provide examples of the contextualization gospel.

Paul's argument for God against idols is a form of the teleological and cosmological arguments (i.e., God made the world and everything in it [cosmological] and the world shows signs of design [teleological]). "We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, He let all nations go their own way. Yet He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of good and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:15-18).

Paul did not reason with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the same way he did the Jews and God-fearers in the synagogues. Instead, he sought to present the gospel in terms with which they were familiar. He did not quote Moses and the prophets, but rather he quoted some of their own poets.

In both cases, however, he presented the good news about Jesus. While the method of getting attention and laying a foundation for his message differed depending on his audience, the fundamental theme of Paul's message remained the same. This must characterize any church growth method today. While methods may change, and Christians must be culturally sensitive, the integrity of the gospel message must not be compromised. There are limits to contextualization.

There is a second aspect of church growth that deserves attention. Church growth is also the building up and maturing of a local group of Christians. The book of Acts speaks to this aspect of church growth in Acts 11. After describing how the gospel was shared in Antioch, first to Jews only, but later they "began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus." Luke reveals, "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:20, 21). Barnabas was sent by the church in Jerusalem to the new church at Antioch. "When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord

with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:22-24). During his ministry at Antioch, Barnabas brought Saul (Paul) from Tarsus to assist him in his work. "So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people" (Acts 11:26).

This concern for discipling Christians is further noted in Acts 14:21, 22, 23. At the conclusion of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas "returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith;" and further, they "appointed elders for them in each church and with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

This concern for the development of the churches is the stated purpose of the second missionary journey: "Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing" (Acts 15:36). Even though disagreement over John Mark's suitability for this work caused Paul and Barnabas to part company, that disagreement did not hinder the proposed mission. Paul selected another associate, Silas, and "commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord[h]e went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:40, 41).

From this survey of Acts, the definition of church growth as "the conversion of sinners to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit" has been vindicated. Further, church growth on a local level as edification and maturation of the congregation by the discipling of individual members has also been demonstrated.

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“Do You Do Anything Just Because You Are a Christian?”

by Paul E. Jarrett

A friend of mine who attends a church in another state was relating to me a story regarding the work schedule of their young minister. It seems that anytime he performed a church-related function (be it hosting a youth group, making a hospital call, or visiting a funeral home) on an evening, or on his day off, he would take time off from his normal work schedule. This led one lady in the congregation who observed this practice to ask, “Do you do anything just because you’re a Christian?”

I’ve related this story because it reminds me of the kind of inner turmoil and conflict that can occur in the life of a minister in trying to come to grips with his being both a professional and a Christian. This conflict can manifest itself in a number of ways. It can impact the ministers self-esteem; his relationship with his wife and children; and his relationship with the church. My purpose in writing this article is to share some thoughts with my fellow-ministers and my fellow-Christians gleaned from twenty-five years of preaching that may help to resolve some of these conflicts.

The question “Do you do anything just because you’re a Christian?” is one I had to resolve a number of years ago to my own satisfaction for the sake of my own sense of self-worth. The impetus for doing so came when I found myself responding to someone who’d thanked me for visiting them in the hospital by saying, “That’s what I get paid to do.” It hit me that that probably didn’t make them feel very good about my visit, and it made me feel even worse.

I realized that I was getting no joy out of my Christian service because, while I enjoyed what I was doing I found I could never feel I was doing what I was doing in service to God. Rather, I was only doing what I was being paid to do. This feeling was often perpetuated by brethren who (perhaps jokingly) would make comments about things the preacher “was paid to do.”

After a great deal of thought I found myself resolving this inner conflict in two ways. First, I redefined what the support I was receiving was all about. I was not being paid to do anything. Everything I do I would (I trust) be doing even if I wasn’t a “full-time” minister. However, thanks to the kindness and generosity of the brethren who support me I am able to give all of my time to what I would be doing to whatever degree possible if I did not have their support. In other words I am not paid to minister but rather I’m afforded opportunity to devote my full-time to ministry because I am supported by my brethren.

While the point just made is one that most ministers have come to eventually, I know ministers who accept what I’ve just said, but who still can sympathize with Paul who saw fit not to accept support from the Corinthians in order to feel a sense of reward from his preaching (1 Cor. 9:18). In my own case my sense of reward has been achieved by making distinction in my own mind between my ministry in the word and a number of acts I perform simply as a matter of Christian service.

I view my preaching, teaching, and writing as the ministry for which I’m supported by my brethren to have time to do. On the other hand such things as hospital calls, fellowship activities, visits to funeral homes, etc. are things I do just as other Christians would be expected to do. I have committed myself to a schedule of lesson preparation and delivery which I maintain just as my fellow Christians maintain their secular jobs. Beyond that, like them, I seek to render good to all men as I have opportunity.

If I were responding to the question, “Do you do anything just because you are a Christian?” I would hope my response would not be unlike that required of all Christians. I would hope I would say, “I do everything I do because I’m a Christian!” I do such things as preparing lessons, teaching, and

writing on a full-time basis because I have brethren who are generous enough to support me so that I can give my full-time to these matters which I would be able to do only in a limited way if I had to work to support my family. However, I do other things such as already mentioned for the same reason all Christians should. Not because I get paid to do them, but because I'm a Christian.

I can sympathize with the young minister who saw fit to adjust his office schedule when he performed other church-related activities in that many do not realize that ministers really do not get time off from the ministry. The spouse and family members who must accept phone interruptions can attest to this. Even when there are no calls coming in, they have to live with a man whose thoughts are often on sermons to be preached and needs to be addressed even when he is "off work." Preaching more than any other profession, perhaps, occupies a person's mind twenty-four hours a day.

The mental demands of preaching put great strain on a minister's family even if the brethren don't make demands on his time and attention. This problem has been compounded with disastrous consequences when preachers themselves make their wives and children feel like they are competing with God for his time and attention. The minister who doesn't learn that his devotion to God must begin at home with the way he treats his wife and children is in grave danger of losing those souls most precious to him.

In closing, it behooves both ministers and churches to be aware of, and come to grips with, the turmoil and conflict that can result if there is no resolution of the preacher's identity as both professional and Christian. I hope these thoughts I've shared with you will help you, whether as a minister or a supporter of ministers, to do a better job of addressing these potential conflicts.

[1824 Tamworth Drive, Charlotte, NC 28210; Home: 704-553-2718; Office: 704-554-7733.]

Most Preachers Have Come From Poor Circumstances

by Donald Townsley

Brother J. W. McGarvey, in his **Chapel Talks** (which were delivered to the students of the College of the Bible in the school year 1910-11), shows that the title which I have chosen for this article was true in his day. Under the subject, "Poor Preachers," he said: "Some twenty-five or thirty years ago when we had about two hundred preachers in the state of Kentucky, I took pains to find out in regard to those whom I did not know personally how many of them were the sons of wealthy men, not millionaires, but such men as pass in rural sections as rich men. Out of all the number there were only two that were rich men's sons — one in a hundred. That tells the story in regards to Kentucky. On another occasion when chapel was more largely attended than it is today I called upon all students whose expenses at college were being paid by their parents to stand, and out of nearly a hundred only nine stood

up. That shows that not only was the preaching done by the poor, but it was the sons of the poor that were preparing to be the next generation of preachers. This has been the case all the way back to the beginning. So we can say of this as the Episcopalians so often say in their prayer book of another subject, "as it was from the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

I think brother McGarvey's statement is as true today as it was then. Poor boys are still making preachers and carrying the gos-

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pel to the lost of the world. But, someone may say, "Don't you think that one of the reasons we have a preacher shortage today is the way preachers are being paid?" With that attitude before us, let me remind all of us, preachers included, that **preachers are not made by wages!** I say to the extent that this (wages) keeps men from preaching is a blessing to the Lord's church! Brother McGarvey said it this way: "Any young man who declines preparing himself for the ministry for this reason (money) is not fit to enter upon it." And to the extent that the anticipation of poverty keeps men out of the ministry it keeps out those who would be an encumbrance, a dead weight, and a disadvantage. They are not fit to go into the pulpit who are controlled by this consideration."

The Lord and His church do not need men who are motivated to make preachers for the purpose of earthly gain or selfish ambition. The Lord needs men who are "faithful men" (2 Tim. 2:2). I shall never forget what brother Roy E. Cogdill told me when I was a young preacher. He said: "When a preacher becomes ambitious for himself, that is the end of his usefulness to the Lord and His cause." I have tried to live by that advice till this day. Where the cause of the Lord needs men most is not necessarily where the most money is: in fact, most of the time, where a preacher is needed most is where the **least** money is! A preacher's success in the Lord's cause is **not** measured by the size of his weekly salary, the kind of car he drives, the type of meeting house he preaches in, or the kind of clothing he can afford to wear. If these things are marks of a preacher's success, then John the Baptist was a complete failure (his raiment was "camel's hair" which was very similar to "sackcloth" — only the poorest of people wore garments of this kind of material, Matt. 3:4)! This preacher (John) did not eat too "high on the lamb" either: his diet consisted of "locusts and wild honey" — what the poorer class of that day ate.

Preacher, if you count your success in terms of what you can attain in a high salary, a large congregation to want your services, a popular name on the tongue of the masses, and the privilege to travel in the circles of

the socially elite, then I say that you have misunderstood what it means to be successful as a preacher. Please don't misunderstand — I am not against a preacher being paid a good salary or a large congregation wanting his services; I am not against his being popular (if preaching the gospel will make him so), and neither do I object to his traveling in the circles of the socially elite (if he doesn't get to thinking that this is the crowd he belongs with all the time). What I **am** saying is that when a man thinks of these things as his attainments of success and anything less than this marks him as a failure or is beneath him, then he has the wrong attitude toward the work of the Lord and what success in His cause is.

Faithful preachers must learn to endure some "hardness of affliction" (2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5) — things won't always be rosy, but that is no sign that he is a failure in the Lord's work. Men need to preach who have enough faith to trust the Lord to supply their needs (Matt. 6:24-33) as He supplied the needs of the twelve (Matt. 10:9,10); men who believe what David said in Psalms 37:35: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

I have not written this to justify those who might abuse preachers from the financial standpoint by not paying them adequately, but to show that "men of God" will not go hungry or without the necessities of life if they will faithfully preach the gospel to the lost.

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Restoration Through Separation

by Michael R. Mobley

The Amish people (culture) are a living demonstration of how a group's (or individual's) loyalty to their values and beliefs defines their way of life and identifies what they are. Their whole community is founded and built on the principle of yielding to a higher authority than any man perceives to hold, the authority of God. This principle molds their community and lives in three distinct ways.

One, it prevents them from being pulled away from what they believe and how they live and allows them the freedom to be true to what they are. It nourishes purity and loyalty.

Two, it confirms to the people of the world around them what it means to be what they are and believe. It testifies that they want nothing of the world or anything that is not true to the way they have chosen. It nourishes identity and fellowship.

Three, this principle molds their values and beliefs, their thinking and attitudes, their behavior and social structures. It teaches them who they are. That nourishes conviction and separation. They learn not to be conformed by compromise and pressures. They accept **being** different if being what they are is different.

This deliberate separating of themselves out from the world to serve God as they believe they should requires something that Christ taught as a fundamental element for anyone who would follow Him out of this world to their salvation — self-denial. Now, man disobeys God because he wants to decide for himself what is good and what is evil, he wants to be the god of his life, to be his own god. That is pathetic when we consider how man has allowed disobedience to God's will — what God has revealed to us to be good and evil — to warp his nature and sorely trouble his world. Yet, self-denial gives all that up and surrenders to obey God's will. Self-denial becomes a commitment to God that seeks to restore man to what God made him to be and save him from the corruption of sin in this world. By this

commitment, we choose Jehovah to be the God of our lives and not ourselves (Mark 8:34-38). That is why being a disciple of Christ, a Christian, a believer, is impossible without self-denial. This attitude or disposition maintains a self-imposed separation from the world, that we as disciples choose to be different. Christ is not simply condemning materialism in this text. He is teaching us to have the kind of mind that makes faithfulness to Him possible in every way because it thwarts any effects the materialistic and immoral spirit of our world might have on us. Therefore, we must not be ashamed of what we are and what we believe. We must not be afraid to be different.

The Rechabites also demonstrate that God favors those who are not ashamed to deliberately give up this world with all it has to offer in order to be faithful to God (Jere. 35). Jonadab Ben-Rechab gave his sons specific commandments to abstain from the prosperity and partying that was corrupting the society of God's people in the days surrounding the fall of Jerusalem. Fifty years later those sons and their families were still faithful to obey their father's teachings. They had separated themselves from the activities and practices and desires of their world in order to save themselves and to teach their world the need for repentance (vv. 6-10). God then uses these Rechabites to teach His people of all generations that salvation, obedience to God, and separation from this disobedient world are inseparable, and that Jehovah was going to destroy His people because they did not obey Him as the sons of Jonadab Ben-Rechab had obeyed Him (vv. 12-17). Yet, Jehovah would save the sons of Jonadab and their descendants because they did obey their father's teachings and sought to restore God's people back to God through repentance and separation (vv. 18-20). God's people and an evil world will not be saved together.

And what of God's faithful servants, the prophets, whose submission to Him set them apart and made them different from their

world? There is Elisha who is called "a madman" because of his message from "the word of the Lord" and because of his appearance as a man living in the wilderness. It was in this spiritually pure environment that Elijah trained Elisha and many other prophets.

There is Ezekiel, perhaps the strangest of all the prophets by our measures. God told Ezekiel to eat bread cooked over a fire fueled by animal dung to teach Israel of her need to repent of following the contaminating evil ways of her neighbors. Then there is John the Baptist, the grandest of all of God's ancient prophets. While he taught God's command to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance if they wanted to enter God's coming kingdom, he lived in the wilderness eating locust and wild honey for food and wearing camel's hide for clothes. Perhaps, by living separate and different from them, he was teaching them what this fruit worthy of repentance is and that to be in the kingdom of the saved one must forsake the world. Such behavior identified the prophets and their values or purpose of life: to restore man to God through a separation from the sinful world.

Now, the church is the community of God's people amidst this world. Yet it is that community of people that God has called out of the world to follow Christ out of the world to heaven. That is what a church is, the called out ones. It means that we are separated from the world. It means that we are different from the world. Peter identifies us as "a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9). We are different and separated; we are peculiar; because when we learn the truth and believe it, it changes us (Jn. 8:31-32). Jesus warns that if any congregation becomes "Laodiceaic" (complacent and worldly) He will snuff out its candle (Rev. 3:14-22)!

God has charged His people, the church, to work to restore man to Him. To do that, the church needs a strong identity in this world, her own identity! We must bear the image of God and not merely reflect back to the world the sinful place that it is (Matt. 5:13-16). We claim a restoration heritage, but this is much more than doctrine. It is also our rejection of materialistic, immoral, and unbelieving ways. We must forsake any

effort to compromise with the world, or to appease the world, or seek the world's approval and acceptance. The world must accept God and seek His approval if they will be saved.

Why did God command Israel to keep the Feast of the Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-44)? God did not want them to forget that He had singled them out, chosen them out, to be separated to Him to become His! The worship and fellowship of God's people today should demonstrate and declare to the world that God has called them to Himself and that by its very nature has separated them from this world (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). That will make us different. And that is the purpose of our salvation. God saves us from the world by separating us from the world, to free us from the world, to make us His own special people (Titus 2:11-14, Eph. 2:1-10). Let us be true to this principle!

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Here Am I . . . Lord, Send Me — Isaiah 6:8

by Larry Jelley

These were the words of the prophet Isaiah in response to a question posed by Almighty God.

In the preceding verses, Isaiah related how he had seen a glorious vision of the Lord in heavenly splendor. As he described the scene, he also related how frightened he became: a man of unclean lips whose eyes had seen the Lord of Hosts.

As soon as he became aware of his unworthiness, he was assured by a heavenly messenger that "...your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven" (v. 7).

At that point, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

There was a message men and women needed to hear: a warning of Divine wrath to be visited upon those who continued to ignore the Lord's will and a message of hope to those who would turn back to Him in their hearts and lives.

It would not be a message that would be easy to preach. It would anger most of those who heard and even endanger the life of the messenger.

Yet Isaiah said, "Here am I...send me!" Is it any wonder the Lord used him to address commoners and kings alike, or that to him was given the privilege of sounding out many of the prophecies of the coming Messiah?

Isaiah knew who he was and what wrongs he had done. He knew also that Almighty God had provided for his healing and that others would be healed as well if they would hear the message and respond.

Oh, that the spirit of Isaiah might live in each of us! We are a people who have seen in the Scriptures a glimpse of Almighty God in heavenly splendor. We have read and believed the beautiful truths of God incarnate — Jesus Christ. We know who we are and what we have done, yet are assured of gracious forgiveness and Divine support in our journey.

We, like Isaiah, are surrounded by a people of unclean lips who desperately need to hear and heed the holy warning and to embrace the hope of life in Christ.

What shall we say? What do **you** say brother, and **you**, sister? Every single one of us has abilities and opportunities to be used for the Lord.

There is too much work for a few to do, and specific work for you to do.

May each one of us display the spirit of Isaiah, lifting up our hearts, our voices, our very lives in service to the Lord." Here am I. Lord, send me!"

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"The Spirit Speaks"

by David Pharr, Editor

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

The text says that the Holy Spirit speaks. There is much interest among religionists regarding the Spirit. We should all be interested in what the Spirit has to say. Here are some observations from these few verses about how the Holy Spirit speaks.

The Spirit Speaks Scripturally. The apostle records the Spirit's message in the Bible. The Bible was written by Spirit-guided men (2 Pet. 1:21). We can know the plan of God by reading what the Spirit revealed through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5). Isn't it ironic that some people profess so much desire to hear something from the Holy Spirit, but seem to have little interest in what the Spirit says in the Scriptures?

The Spirit Speaks Specifically. "Expressly" in the King James means explicitly, specifically, and clearly. The Spirit's message is not vague. It does not provide unapplicable generalities. If preachers would use more of the specifics expressed by the Spirit, sermons would be more on target.

Consider too that the Bible tells us nothing about the Spirit "nudging" people or giving them "feelings." His speaking is in words, in the words of Scripture.

The Spirit Speaks Prophetically. We are using prophetically in the sense of predictions of the future. In the text the Spirit is foretelling the things of "latter times." Jesus told the apostles that the Spirit "will show you things to come" (Jn. 16:13). One of the strongest evidences of inspiration is the reliability of all of the Spirit's predictions.

The Spirit Speaks Doctrinally. Some resent the preaching of "doctrine." What the Spirit says here is doctrinal. It deals with religious issues, even issues which have been debated in modern times, such as ascetic celibacy and abstaining from meat. Like the Spirit, we should always speak "the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).

The Spirit Speaks Negatively. Some tell us not to be negative, that we should not condemn the beliefs and practices of others. The Holy Spirit of God, however, does so in the boldest of terms. Certainly we should not presume to go beyond what is written in judging others, but one will be very limited in his use of the Bible if he avoids everything that will sound negative.

The Spirit Speaks Narrowly. We are using the term "narrow" in the sense that is offensive to so many. They would like to recognize many faiths. The Spirit speaks of "the faith." (Cf. Eph. 4:5; Jude 3.) To insist that there is one faith and that to depart from it is apostasy is too narrow for the world. But on the issue of the one faith, the Spirit speaks narrowly.

The Spirit Speaks Absolutely. Modern religion rejects absolutes. It is said that we cannot be certain about anything, that it is absurd and vain to claim to know the truth. The Holy Spirit, however, speaks matter-of-factly about our believing and knowing the truth. Jesus himself had been equally plain (Jn. 8:32). Truth revealed is truth that can be known. Truth that can be known ought to be believed.

The Spirit Speaks Positively. It is as much an error to be altogether negative as it is to avoid being negative at all. Those who "believe and know the truth" are assured of their right to enjoy what God has provided. The single issue of eating meats treated here is typical of the abundant positive assurances that the Spirit gives throughout the Bible. The negative emphasis so often found in the Spirit's revelation is always more than counter-balanced by His blessed assurances.

The Community of Faith

by Dennis Conner

"What is the Church of Christ?" Likely you have been asked that question. How did you answer?

"We believe in restoring the church of the New Testament. We just try to be the church we read about in the Bible." That is the way we usually answer, and that's good. We do want to be like the church we read about in the Bible. Yet, sometimes I wonder how clear our understanding of the church in the Bible really is. Does simply doing things in a certain, outwardly prescribed way constitute the true nature of the church? Surely there is more to being the church than this. But what? What does it mean to be the church?

In 1 Peter 2:4-10 we find what has been called ". . . a stirring description of what it means to be a church." The word "church" does not appear in the text, but what is clear is that Peter is talking about the people of God. He sees the church as a believing community, not merely a collection of individual believers with each one going his own way. It was important that Peter's readers grasp the community aspect of faith, for when the winds of persecution would blow through the land, they would survive only through the strength of the community. They would need each other.

As Peter develops the community aspect of Christian faith, note the figures he employs and the truths they teach us about the church.

First, as the church, we are living stones, who, together, make up a spiritual house (v. 5). Coming to Christ involves incorporation into the community of faith. We do not live out our faith in isolation. Christ is the Living Stone rejected by men, but chosen by God. When we come to Him, we become living stones ourselves and are joined by God to all other believers, and together we make up a spiritual house. Warren Wiersbe has expressed well Peter's meaning by writing, "Each time someone trusts Christ, another stone is quarried out of the pit of sin and cemented by grace into the building." In

Christ, and in His church, we do not stand alone. When a brick, or stone, lies by itself it is useless; but when it is incorporated into a building and cemented with other bricks its whole existence takes on new meaning. A simplistic illustration, perhaps, but nevertheless true. So it is with the Christian. To realize fulfillment we cannot abide alone, but "must be built into the fabric of the church," as another writer put it. Peter's concern is to strengthen suffering believers in the realization that through faith they enjoy a solidarity with the Lord and with all other believers in the community of faith. Their experience in Christ and in life would be a shared experience.

The nature of the believing community is developed further in the ninth verse as Peter writes, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people. . . ." In the Old Testament God took a people, a nation, unto Himself. Now, in Christ, Peter indicates that God still has a chosen people. The terms once applied to Israel of old are now applied to the church, the new Israel. Believers in Christ constitute a chosen generation, as Israel was chosen; the church is God's elect. Further, the church is a "royal priesthood." In Revelation 1:6 John says that we have been made kings and priests. The privilege of priesthood is shared by all who are in Christ, and it becomes "royal" by virtue of its connection to Christ the King. The church is also pictured as a "holy nation." It is a spiritual nation called into being by God's grace, separated from sin and the world, and dedicated to God's service in the world. Finally, as the uniqueness of the believing community is highlighted, Peter writes that we are "His own special people." The church's whole existence and meaning derive from the fact that it is possessed by God. "We belong to God" is the distinctive claim of the church alone.

Taken together, what do these figures tell us about the nature of the church? That the church is a unique and distinctive commun-

ity of faith that exists because of and for God. The church is a privileged community; that is, it is a community that has been bestowed with many spiritual privileges. Privilege, however, begets responsibility. The question "What is the church?" encompasses not only who we are, but also what we do.

Growing out of our spiritual identity as a chosen generation, a holy and royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a special people is a two-fold function. First, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices (v. 5). These are sacrifices that issue from a committed heart. It is not enough that all the forms and patterns be correct. The heart must also be right. All that we offer to God in praise and service constitutes a spiritual sacrifice when it comes from the heart. Second, we are to proclaim the glory of God who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (v. 9). Peter's thought is that because of what God has made of us, we proclaim His glory to all. Because of what we were (hopeless nobodies), and what we now are (the people of God), we cannot keep silent. Because we

were lost, but now have obtained and experienced the power of divine mercy we are compelled to tell everyone about the goodness and the greatness of our God. The church is a sacrificing community, and a proclaiming community.

What, then, does it mean to be the church? It means that all believers are brought together by grace and mercy to make up a spiritual community that is uniquely blessed of God. It means that we are God's people, enjoying a common bond of faith. As the people who belong to God, we share together the responsibility that derives from that privilege. Together we live for our Lord and together we tell the world about Him. Peter wanted those early Christians to understand that they would find their identity and purpose in the community of faith, as together they shared in both the sufferings and the glory of Christ. The Scriptures recognize no spiritual hermits. They do speak of a body of believers who together make the pilgrimage through life in the world. They speak of the church.

Shall 700 People Destroy a Nation?

A couple of people requested the stats I gave in the sermon Sunday before last. Shall 700 people destroy a nation? Only 700 people — writers, producers, actors—mostly godless mercenaries, with utterly no regard for the morals of 250,000,000 Americans are, right now, in the process of destroying the greatest nation God ever allowed to exist.

This number of people with only wealth as their goal, produce 75 percent of all the shows on TV. Their religious and moral record, according to the reliable Lichter Rothman survey, is as follows: 86 percent never, or seldom, attend church or a synagogue. 84 percent say that government should have no laws regarding sex. 55 percent say that adultery is not immoral. 95 percent say that homosexuality is not wrong.

These 700 people make fun of religion and Christians. All Ten Commandments are disregarded in the name of "entertainment."

Millions of Christian viewers are lulled to sleep. Only a very few will ever protest.

Have we lost our moral backbone? Will we let our great nation go down the drain? By the time the average high school student graduates, he or she will have spent some 15,000 hours with TV (while only 12,000 with the teachers).

O God, wake up America, wake up Christians before it is forever too late!

— Robert Hawkins, Yukon, OK
Via Gospel News



The World's Greatest Criminal

Under the heading, "The World's Greatest Criminal," some unknown author composed the following:

I am the greatest criminal in history.
I have killed more men than have fallen
in all the wars of the world.
I have turned men into brutes.
I have made millions of homes unhappy.
I have transformed many ambitious
youth into hopeless parasites.
I have made smooth the downward path
of countless millions.
I destroy the weak and weaken the
strong.
I make the wise man a fool, and trample

the fool into his folly.

I ensnare the innocent.

The abandoned wife knows me; the hungry children know me; the parents, whose child has bowed their grey heads in sorrow, know me.

I have ruined millions and shall try to ruin millions more.

I AM ALCOHOL!

Truly, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whoso is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). "At the last it bites like a serpent" (Prov. 23:32).

— Robby Eversole

God's Finger

by Doug Couch

In 1834 Alexander Campbell (1786-1866) said "the word of God I hold to be the sum total of all the world knows of God. It is the annals of our creation, our providence, our redemption. It is His book of arguments, His book of persuasions, His book of promises." Three hundred years earlier, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had said "I have covenanted with the Lord that I would neither ask him for visions, nor for angels, nor for miracles, but I would be satisfied with His own word, and if I might but lay hold on Scripture by faith, that shall be enough for me."

Wherever the Bible has gone, modern civilization has followed. When its precepts have been ignored, conditions have deteriorated into paganistic chaos. The Scriptures contain all information we need to be whole, mature individuals. With promises for now and eternity, the Word of God sets before its reader life's challenges, demands, warnings, and affirmations.

On a mountain which burned with black smoke and shook with Heavenly voices, God took His finger and wrote into stone His idea of how humans should conduct themselves (Ex. 31:18). Today God no longer writes on stone but is instead looking for human hearts

on which He can inscribe His laws (2 Cor. 3:3). God's finger is the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; cf. with Luke 11:20). His stylus is the Bible (Eph. 6:17). The message which He wants to write is the life of Jesus fulfilled in your life. Will you let God's finger write?

[Doug was once the preacher at Ashesboro. His present address: Church of Christ, 1115 Minerva Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37130.]

Wanted:

Minister for the MYRTLE BEACH congregation located on the By-Pass and 38th Ave., N. Myrtle Beach, SC, with a membership of 125-plus. Send resume to Myrtle Beach Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1975, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577-1975.

Attn: Pulpit Committee

Thurman E. Self — a Friend, a Brother, a Soldier of the Cross — Goes Home

by Bud Gore

In the early morning on Saturday, August 3, 1991, our beloved Thurman Self slipped from the walks of men and went to be with the Lord. Funeral services were held on August 8 at the Arlington Funeral Home in Arlington, Texas, with about four hundred in attendance. The service at the funeral home was conducted by Johnny Ramsey, Phillip Pearson, Guy Caskey and Lynn Matheny. Bill Arnold and Glenn Williams conducted the graveside service.

Brother Self is survived by his devoted wife, Bertie Faye, daughters Carmen Coker and Sharon Crowson, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He was born in Lamesa, Texas on March 28, 1928. He was a Navy veteran and a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching and also held an

A.A. degree from the National Christian University. Prior to coming to South Carolina, brother Self had preached for churches in Roscoe, Grand Prairie and Fort Worth, Texas. He began his work as an evangelist with the Irmo-Chapin Church of Christ only a month before his death. He had expressed the hope upon his arrival that we might be able to have the congregation self-supporting and in our own building within the next four years.

The family has requested that memorials be made to the Irmo-Chapin Church of Christ Building Fund.

Thurman, our friend, our brother, a soldier of the cross, we will see you across the river on that happy day!

Brotherhood News

by Dennis Conner

The Fifth Annual Foothills Gospel Singing will be hosted by the FOREST CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST on Oct. 25. The singing will be held at the Cool Springs School Auditorium in Forest City, NC, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Congregational singing will be featured, although the Master's Touch Quartet and the McGregor Singers will also be appearing. . .The JERICHO CHURCH OF CHRIST in Mocksville, NC now has elders for the first time in its history. Although the oldest church in North Carolina, having been established by M. C. Kurfees in 1872, the Jericho church has never had elders. The new elders are Norman Forrest, Chuck Ramsey, and Doug Wall. . .The CARY CHURCH OF CHRIST in Cary, NC, will be hosting their Third Annual Ladies Day on Oct. 19. The theme will be "Celebrations" with Doris Black as the guest speaker. . .DON HUGHES is the new

preacher for the ALBEMARLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Albemarle, NC. Brother Hughes began his work with the church on Sept. 1. . . There is a new church meeting in Kernersville, NC. There are other churches in the area surrounding Kernersville, but the FAIRHAVENS CHURCH OF CHRIST is the first within the city limits of Kernersville. The Christians there are currently meeting at the Southside Square Shopping Center on Highway 150, one block south of I-40. Efforts are currently underway to find a preacher who can raise his own support. Any churches or individuals who may be interested in helping this young church should contact Ernest Taylor at (919) 788-4627. . . A team of 60 medical evangelism workers conducted a successful campaign in Guyana last June 4-12. As a result of their efforts, 92 people were baptized into Christ. The campaign was sponsored and overseen by the 6th and Izard Church in Little Rock, AR.

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*Deal with your fellowman in a manner wise;
That beggar might be an angel in disguise.
You never know how much good you can do,
Whose spirits you can lift with a kind word or two.
A cheerful word someone's day might have made,
Or spoiled the plans the devil might have laid.
It helps you, too, some good to do.
It'll go a long way, your spirit to renew.
In this life our love will be rejected by some,
Don't despair just because they're so dumb.
They see an ulterior motive behind every act;
They can't accept love as a natural fact.
Love is one thing that Jesus taught;
Love is something that can't be bought.
Some you love more; some to a lesser degree.
Try to love everybody, but especially me!*

—Jack Anthony



editorial

by David Pharr

Recently I enjoyed a visit with Mack Lyon of Edmond, Oklahoma, who is the speaker on the **Search** television program. **In Search of the Lord's Way** is a thirty-minute gospel broadcast produced by the East Ninth Church of Christ in Edmond.

On both broadcast stations and cable networks the program is now on over 600 systems in 42 states and in nine foreign countries.

Brother Lyon is a personable man with an obvious commitment to the gospel. His sincerity, kindness, and biblical soundness is evident in person and on the weekly program. All of the broadcasts I have seen have been quality productions which are certain to reach open-minded people. It's the kind of program that should be useful in every community. One special feature is interpretation for the deaf.

At a time when religious broadcasting in general has declined in prestige and when some think the public only wants religious entertainment, **Search** has demonstrated the effectiveness of a kind but frank presentation of New Testament truth.

Brother Lyon told of a sister who used the program to help a friend become interested in the gospel. The friend was converted. Later this new convert got another woman to watch **Search**. She was also converted. He also told me of hearing from a denominational preacher in North Carolina. The preacher expressed his appreciation for the honesty of the program and its biblical emphasis. Perhaps he will continue to learn and be won to the truth.

We must not lose confidence in the power of the gospel. Television and radio continue to be a means for reaching many. The A.C. Nielsen Co. (the TV ratings firm) recently found that four out of ten people watch at least one religious television program a week.

There seems to be a trend in many places for the church to turn its attention inward. Without detracting from the importance of

edifying the body, we need a renewed emphasis on outreach. This outreach must not be limited to messages on social issues and to current religious fads. It must be distinctive preaching of the true gospel.

Obviously television is an extremely effective means for reaching a large audience. It is rarely possible, however, for most congregations to produce television programs. Mack Lyon and the church in Edmond, therefore, are providing a valuable service in making **Search** available.

I am calling attention to **Search** because

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it is being broadcast in several Carolina communities. In most places it is only available on cable channels, but those who have access will find it helpful and enjoyable. Recommending it to others may open some doors for evangelism.

Some of the congregations in the Greenville, South Carolina, area are paying to have it broadcast over WGGG-TV (Channel 16) every Monday evening at 7:30. On cable networks it is shown in over forty Carolina communities without cost to the local congregation.

In North Carolina **Search** is on the **ACTS** network on the following cable systems: Albemarle, Archdale, Asheboro, Banner Elk, Brevard, Buies Creek, Burlington, Cencom, Charlotte, Enka, Greensboro, High Point, Jacksonville, Kannapolis-Concord, Lexington, Maiden, Monroe/Wingate, Morehead City, Raleigh, Roxboro, Salisbury, Statesville, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem.

Also in North Carolina the program is on the **FAMILY NET** of these cable systems: Asheville, Hendersonville, Lenoir, Reidsville, Rocky Mount, and Sanford.

In South Carolina the program is on the **ACTS** cable network in Anderson, Beech Island, Charleston, Columbia, Due West, Florence, Forest Acres/Harbisson, Georgetown/Andrews, Moncks Corner, North Augusta, Spartanburg, and Summerville. In Myrtle Beach/Conway it is on both **ACTS** and **FAMILY NET** cable.

Other areas might be able to persuade their local cable systems to add **Search**. For information on how the program might be brought to an area, contact the Church of Christ, P. O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083-0371.

Wilkesboro, NC

Recently I enjoyed a weekend gospel meeting with the Wilkesboro church. This is the town where I was born, and the congregation where I was born again.

Close to forty years ago my mother, father, sister, brother, and I left the Methodist denomination and were baptized into the body of Christ. Through those years there have been many changes. In many ways my thinking has been adjusted as I continue to learn. But while visiting back at Wilkes-

boro I reflected on the fact that my commitment to the basic principles of New Testament Christianity remains the same as when we first learned the truth.

Highlights of this most recent visit to North Carolina included some time to visit with my mother, who lives in Hickory. There was also time to visit with Cliff and Lucille Walter. Cliff baptized me in an icy creek near Wilkesboro on a December Sunday afternoon when I was a teenage boy. Then at Wilkesboro there was a pleasant visit with Tom and Nell Bryan, octogenarians who are faithful Christians and inspirational friends.

The Wilkesboro church is a loving family. They are a church committed to missions. Ernie Stewart, a man worthy of fame for his zeal in the kingdom, is their preacher. May God bless their efforts together.

Extremes

The remedy for an extreme is not another extreme. The answer to the liberal left is not the radical right. Wrongs in others never justify wrongs in self. An unscriptural position does not justify unscriptural opposition. The fact that someone mishandles the truth does not give me the right to mishandle his reputation.

Jesus warned of wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). These are false teachers who give the appearance of being good men. But what of "sheep" in wolves clothing? What profit is there in standing for truth while portraying an unchristlike spirit?

Our duty is not merely to speak; it is to speak the truth. It is not enough, however, just to speak the truth; we must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

How Shall We Build?

We speak often of building up the church. The church needs to be built up numerically and spiritually. Paul wrote of such building. "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. 3:10). The context shows that he referred to how others would build on the work which he had started.

Today we are building on the foundation laid by others. Ultimately we all trace our work back to the foundation laid by the ap-

ostles. Our work is a trust; we are entrusted with a stewardship to build properly, which is to say Scripturally. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

Most of us work where faithful men worked before us. There is also, therefore, a sense in which they laid the foundation. We build on the labors of others.

It has sometimes happened this way. A good man works hard and sacrifices much to establish and build a faithful congregation. He loves the truth and is loyal to God's pattern. Then in later years another arrives whose commitment is either weak or indifferent. In time, either because he is careless or because he holds unscriptural views, the people become weak in their convictions and open to unscriptural innovations. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

It is evident that some preachers (and others) have an agenda for change. They have inherited and enjoy the fruits of those who were before them. They come into congregations already established and doing well. It is expected that they will build sincerely on the foundation already laid. But they have a hidden agenda. They intend to reshape the church into something different from what was intended by those who worked before them.

We are talking about critical doctrines, not methods and expediencies. Every one should seek improvements. Spiritual growth means expansion of understanding and improvement of attitudes. Our protest is not with things like these. Instead, we object to those who represent themselves as standing for the same fundamentals while actually having the purpose of leading the church away from the foundation principles which were laid before. Some radicals have done this for the sake of their extremes. Some liberals have done it because they reject the aboluteness of Bible authority.

The issue is integrity. Everyone ought always to be honest and honorable. If he is convinced that he ought to change, then certainly he ought to change. If his conscience demands that he try to change the church, then this is what we would expect him to do. But he should be open and honest about it. No conscience should allow for a hidden agenda. God does not use covert agents.

We have known of a few denominational preachers who learned the truth and accepted it while they were still employed by the denomination. Should such a one begin to teach the truth? Yes. Should he try to change that denomination by showing them New Testament Christianity? Yes. Should he keep this purpose to himself and work slowly to convert the people while pretending still to be their preacher? No! Integrity demands that a person be open, honest, and up front regarding such intentions. How much more should this be the case when one is thought to be a gospel preacher and when people are accepting him as one who holds to the same principles they do?

Preachers have opportunities to exert tremendous influence. This is especially true where people have been greatly helped by preachers and where therefore preachers are naturally respected. In such a climate a preacher who has an agenda for change, or even one who is weak in his convictions, can soon build into the church much "wood, hay, stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12b).

There is no excuse for theological hypocrisy. We know that some keep their views to themselves because they fear they would be attacked if they expressed them openly. No one wants to be attacked, but surely that is better than believing one thing while pretending to believe the opposite. If a man believes instrumental music is acceptable, let him say so. If he accepts fellowship with denominations, he ought to be honest about it. If he no longer believes in the restoration ideal, he should state his position. If he is determined to stop the church from supporting cooperative works, he ought to make his intentions known. Open honesty in such matters might cost him his pulpit, but he ought to be honest about where he stands, for the sake of his own conscience as well as for the sake of those who are trusting him.

Recently someone described the following situation. I do not know the place or the persons. The elders of a certain congregation learned in private discussions with the preacher that he does not believe many of the fundamentals to which the congregation has always been committed. These elders know among themselves that he will not take a stand for certain vital Bible truths. But the

preacher is very personable. He has cultivated much love and admiration within the membership. His implication has been strong that should the elders seek to remove him because of his liberal views he will look to the membership to take his side. The members, of course, at this point do not know how different his views are. The elders feel a dilemma — if they keep the preacher, he will lead the church into error; if they remove him the church will be torn apart.

No excuse is made for the elders' seeming indecision. No criticism is made of the preacher's loving and attractive personality. In fact, though we may disagree, we are not herein criticizing the preacher for having different views. But what kind of man will accept a work with elders with whom he knows he cannot agree? How can simple integrity allow him to ingratiate himself among the members in order to make the elders feel helpless to do their duty? (See Rom. 16:17-18.)

What material are we using in the building? Will it stand the test? (See 1 Cor. 3:12ff.) Whether we think of the foundation laid by the apostles, or whether we think of the foundation as it has been laid in more recent times (assuming that they are the same), "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

Managing Editor's Column

A Matter of Confidence

by Johnny Melton

David Pharr's article regarding fellowship and confidence attempted to get at a very serious matter of concern for our brotherhood. I appreciated the spirit in which it was written. I believe that he has raised some useful points.

However, there are some areas of concern that I have. I find the use of Paul's lack of confidence in John Mark as a paradigm for being in fellowship with someone but refusing to participate in a spiritual activity with him less than convincing.

There are several reasons why I don't think Paul's refusal to participate with John Mark because he lacked confidence in him

Strange Rules

The following astonishing item is copied from the bulletin of the Centerville, Tennessee, church of Christ, by Paul Rogers:

"A high school senior in Atlanta recently was suspended for passing a handwritten note to a fellow student in a hallway. And what did the note say? It informed the recipient of the time and place for the next Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting. The student receiving the note was also given a written reprimand stating that any further possession of 'Christian material' could lead to suspension. Strange new rules!"

Strange Reports

We hear some strange reports. We want to think they are exaggerations. We would hope that such would never be.

Twice in as many weeks we have been told of adults wearing shorts to the worship assembly. One told of a man in shorts serving at the Lord's table. The same congregation was said to be heavy into clapping and cheering during the worship.

Perhaps the principle of Palms 89:7 needs some attention. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Consider also Ecclesiastes 5:1.

should be a model for us. First, it should be noted that Barnabas had enough confidence in John Mark that he defended him and wanted to take him along on the Second Missionary Journey. Whatever the cause of John Mark's turning back was, it apparently had nothing to do with his faithfulness to the Lord, so Barnabas considered it a matter of indifference. While Paul may have considered John Mark's decision to return early from the First Missionary Journey a matter of indifference he had a different attitude toward it than did Barnabas. Even though Paul may have been justified in his lack of confidence in John Mark, it does not

follow that the decision to refuse to allow him to participate in the Second Missionary Journey was warranted.

Second, I take it that Barnabas, at this point, was more spiritually mature than Paul. I see nothing in the narrative that indicates that an inspired decision was made by Paul to exclude John Mark. (If the Holy Spirit had wanted John Mark rejected then Barnabas would have been in error to take him and go in a different direction.)

Third, in his famous sermon on Barnabas, B. C. Goodpasture made a great point about the fact that Barnabas did for John Mark what he had earlier done for Saul of Tarsus — that is, he defended him and demonstrated confidence in him when it was unpopular to do so.

Fourth, Paul's later request for John Mark to be sent to him during his imprisonment may very well indicate that Barnabas' confidence in John Mark was vindicated. Why must it be reasoned that it was John Mark who had changed so that Paul's confidence in him was restored? Could it not be that it was Paul who had matured and was no longer willing to deny himself the service of a willing worker because of a disagreement?

There is certainly a matter of confidence that must be considered when we deal with issues of fellowship. However, rather than following Paul's lead and refusing to participate with a brother in whom one lacks confidence because of decisions the brother has made in matters of indifference, it would be far better to follow the lead of Barnabas and to continue to extend invitations to the brother, even if one is convinced that the decisions regarding the matters of indifference are serious matters which may have dire consequences.

What would have happened to John Mark if Barnabas had been influenced by Paul's concerns and had accepted the decision that Paul had made to refuse to participate in a good work if John Mark were there? Of course, it is only speculation, but could it be that John Mark would have been lost to the cause of Jesus altogether? Or, is it possible that he would not have understood that Paul was still in fellowship with him, but simply had no confidence in him, and

decided that Paul should be opposed for mistreating him?

Fortunately, Barnabas risked his own reputation by demonstrating confidence in John Mark by continuing to participate in spiritual activities with him. Did John Mark deserve Barnabas' confidence? I don't know. But I don't believe that Barnabas ever regretted the decision to incur the ire of Paul by standing by John Mark. Those who reflect on the biblical account are generally not impressed by Paul's stand against John Mark, but they are generally impressed by Barnabas' generous heart. I am persuaded that John Mark appreciated the stand that Barnabas took. I even think that Paul would likely handle matters differently were he able to relive that episode in his life.

If one is in Christ, then fellowship, on some level, exists with every other individual who is in Christ. Certainly, we must not encourage a brother in Christ who is in error to continue in error. However, we must be willing to give brethren room to make decisions with which we do not agree in matters of indifference, even decisions that we are convinced may hinder the Lord's work.

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(Apparently that was the basis for Paul's concern over the decision that John Mark had made to return before the missionary tour was completed. If there had been some moral failure, or some doctrinal error involved it would likely have been revealed.)

Further, if a matter is, in fact, a matter of indifference, then no matter who is concerned about it, and no matter how upset people may become regarding it, one is not helping the situation if the matter is allowed to achieve the status of a matter of faith.

For example, eating a meal in the church's meetinghouse is a matter of indifference. Since the issue of a church even having a meetinghouse is not a matter of biblical revelation, what is done in the meetinghouse (or any other property the church may acquire, for that matter), as long as it is not wrong within itself, is a matter of indifference. If one does not wish to eat in the meetinghouse, then one ought not be required to eat in the meetinghouse; but, at the same time, that one should be instructed that it is sin to bind one's convictions on matters of indifference on another. For example, Paul was willing to defer his liberty to eat meat for the sake of a weak, uninformed brother who did not understand that eating meat was a matter of indifference, and who was in jeopardy of losing his faith because of the influence of meat-eating brethren; but he instructed him that eating meat was, in fact, a matter of indifference, and he further instructed him not to judge his meat-eating brothers.

Reading the Bible in translation is a matter of liberty, just like eating in the church's meetinghouse, or eating meat as opposed to being a vegetarian are matters of indifference. There is no inspired translation. Error can be (and has been) taught from them all. The issue is not what translation does one read or teach from, but the issue is what does one teach from one's translation of choice. If the truth is taught, then the teacher's choice of translation must be respected as a matter of indifference, and the teacher must be accepted and not judged—neither should he be avoided because of a lack of confidence in his judgment in matters of indifference.

If one does not wish to read, study, or

teach from a particular translation, then one ought not be required to read, study, or teach from that translation; but, at the same time, that one should be instructed that it is sin to bind one's convictions on matters of indifference on another. Just as Paul was willing to defer his liberty to eat meat for the sake of a weak, uninformed brother who did not understand that eating meat was a matter of indifference, and who was in jeopardy of losing his faith because of meat-eating brethren, one should be willing to defer the liberty of teaching from a particular translation of the Bible for the sake of a weak, uninformed brother who does not understand that teaching the Bible in translation (any translation) is a matter of indifference, and who is in jeopardy of losing his faith because of the use of a particular translation; but, at the same time, one should instruct the brother that one's choice of translation is, in fact, a matter of indifference, and the brother should be instructed not to judge his brothers who use translations other than the one he uses.

The issue of confidence is obviously a highly subjective matter. One who readily uses several translations for the benefit that they provide may lack confidence in one who insists that everyone should use the same translation. One who simply has an appreciation for a particular translation may lack confidence in someone who does not appreciate that particular translation. If our involvement with brothers and sisters in good works is limited by our confidence in each other based on these kinds of issues, then our already divided brotherhood will be further divided.

Rather than Paul's attitude toward John Mark being the paradigm for dealing with matters of indifference and confidence, I commend the attitude (and actions) of Barnabas as a paradigm worthy of imitation.

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God's Cure for Fear

by Howard Winters

We live in a fearful time! Paul wrote, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). In the New Testament the usual connotation of the expression "the last days" is that of the Christian age, the period of time between Pentecost and the second coming of Christ, but here it seems to indicate that the end of that period will be characterized by perilous times. Whether we are living in the days which Paul described or not is not the point here. Our point is that Paul gives a good description of the perilous days in which we live, regardless of whether they are "the last days" or not. The condition of the present world is fearful to contemplate.

It is generally understood that there is enough nuclear bombs stockpiled by the United States and Russia alone to completely destroy civilization as we know it. Such a holocaust of war and misery could conceivably be started by a series of malfunctions or by the orders of one man (who may care nothing for human life or whose burdens may have strained his sanity). But that is not all: at the present time there is looming over all nations the possibility of a worldwide economic depression, the like of which may never have been experienced. In fact, some tell us that it has already struck its terror in some places. And here we are growing callous to the news and pictures of starving millions in the underdeveloped countries. But perhaps more fearful than these is the spread of selfishness and materialism, such as was described by Paul. We go to all extremes to get all we can for as little as we can, regard-

less of what it does to others and the world in which we live. We are like children who are always seeking new toys with which to play. Our philosophy is each man for himself and to the devil with the rest. And it is this very attitude that is causing man and the society in which he lives to fall to pieces. Men who have no anchor in God, men who have no hope beyond this world, have many reasons to live in fear. For "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). It is truly fearful times.

What is Fear?

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (unabridged, second edition) defines fear, in its first two usages (the only ones we are concerned with in this study), "1. to feel painful apprehension of, as some impending evil; to be afraid of; to dread. 2. to feel reverence for; to have a reverential awe of; to venerate." It should be seen from this that fear per se is not wrong. In the sense of the first definition one should fear a poisonous snake or a speeding car. He should fear a burning house or a raging storm. The fear of the consequences of war helps prevent war. Jesus taught that one should fear the devil because he has power to destroy the soul in hell (Luke 12:4, 5). In the sense of the second definition, the Bible commands fear. Solomon said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Again, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). Peter told the household of Cornelius, "...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

No one should be foolhardy: he should fear that which it is sensible to fear. But there is an abnormal fear — fear of things for which one should have no fear. This is be-

ing constantly terrified at what might be; unreasonable apprehension of things over which we have no control. John calls such fear torment (1 John 4:18). This kind of fear is prohibited in the Bible (John 14:27; Rev. 21:8). And it is this kind of fear for which God has a cure.

Causes of Fear

There are many causes of abnormal fear, some physical in nature, some psychological, and some mysterious (by "mysterious" we mean only that the cause is not known or cannot be determined). The very nature of creation and the chances we have to take to live are often causes of fear. This makes the subject much too broad to cover in a single study. We must therefore limit ourselves to a few illustrations of the many causes of fear. When we have found the causes, and then show how God provides the remedy to remove the causes, we will then have shown how God cures this terrifying and dreadfully destructive disease.

1. Fear of the Unknown. A child screams out in the night, not because of what he knows is there, but because of the unknown that he thinks may be lurking in the darkness. Fear of the unknown has given rise to all kinds of superstition and false belief, one of which is the rise and popularity of occultism, the belief in the mystic, such as spiritualism, black magic, alchemy, astrology and such like. The occult, with its supposed mystic communications with the unknown, may calm fear for a while, but by its very nature it leaves too many questions unanswered and thus generates more fear in the long run. Even the disciples of the Lord feared ghosts. One night while they were sailing on a troubled sea, "In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matt. 14:25-27). How many people live in constant terror because of their abnormal fear of the unknown? And some who do not believe in spiritualism, astrology and so forth remind me of my nephew who used to say, "I don't believe in ghosts, but I am afraid

of them anyway."

How can we overcome abnormal fear of the unknown? It can be done by realizing that God is the Creator of all things. He is in control of His world, the known as well as the unknown, the darkness as well as the light. God is in the storm just as much as He is in the calm. Thus if we follow God's directions we have no need to fear. Walk with God and fear not!

2. Fear of the Future. For some strange reason many people seem to be more concerned with the future, in which they may not live, than they are with the present, in which they do live. Since no one, to whom God has not revealed it, can know the future, not even a minute ahead of time, walking into the unknown becomes a necessary part of all our lives. What does the future hold—war, famine, prosperity, adversity, happiness, health, misfortune, death, etc.? No one really knows. And this is why the future is such a fearful thing to face. It is like taking a leap into the dark.

But the future need hold no fear for those who know and serve Him who holds the future. Paul could face the future with supreme confidence because of his trust in God (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He trusted the One who holds the future (2 Tim. 1:12). The peace that Paul enjoyed can belong to anyone who follows the same plan.

3. Fear of the End of Time. This fear could be healthy if it led one to prepare for the Lord's coming, but too many people fear without heeding their fears. They go on in their torment, hoping "that the end is not yet." But every strange occurrence, every unexplainable event, every unusual sight in the sky is interpreted to mean that the end of the world is coming. Then add to this the fact that false prognosticators professing to be preachers of prophecy fan the flames by setting dates and boldly proclaiming the soon coming of Jesus, and you have a recipe fit to keep any fearful mind constantly terrified.

Make no mistake about it: Jesus is coming back again and the world will end (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 2 Pet. 3:10), but the fear of that glorious event can be overcome by preparing for it, by looking forward with delight to the day in which the Lord will reward every man according to his work. Christians, rather than fearing, can love the

coming of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8). It will be a time of rejoicing for them (1 Pet. 4:13). It is a blessed hope (Titus 2:13) for them to look forward to rather than a dreadful fear.

4. Fear of Death. Death has been called "the king of terror." And no right-thinking person questions the fact that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). But many have such an abnormal fear of death that it makes life almost unbearable. The very thought of death strikes terror to their souls. They can find no relief because the graying hair, the growing population of the cemeteries, accidents, hurricanes, earthquakes, war, etc., are constant reminders that death is certain. There is no escape. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Every minute one lives he moves closer to that inevitable fate. We are all marching to the grave. And our fear does not change the fact.

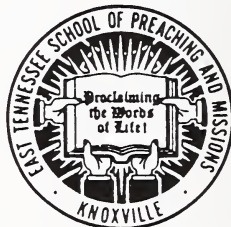
But for those who will accept Him, Christ came to deliver them from all the horrors connected with death. The Lord told Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). Of course a Christian must experience physical death, but Christ has removed all the horrors so that he can now shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (1 Cor. 15:55)? Christ delivers those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15). Why live in fear when we can live for Christ?

5. Fear of Judgment. Every man must stand before God, as He judges the world through Jesus Christ His Son (Acts 17:31), and be judged by the deeds done in his body. The Bible says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10; see also Rom. 14:10). Judgment becomes a fearful thought when we consider the fact that imperfect man will be judged by a perfect God using a perfect standard (John 12:48), and that nothing we have thought, done, or said will escape from His sight.

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14). Every idle word will be a part of justification or condemnation (Matt. 12:36). "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). There will be no second chance to prepare, no appeal from the decision, no probation, no shortened sentences. The decision will be final...for all eternity.

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of judgment. Although children of God must appear before the Judge, they will not have to stand on their own merits. They will be judged by the fact that they are in Christ, that they have accepted Him as their sin offering. Because they have put their trust in Christ and obeyed His will they can face judgment without being terrified.

6. The Fear of Hell. We must not be deceived: hell is real. The Bible presents man as an eternal being, one who must continue forever in one of two destinies. For the righteous, there is heaven, a place of supreme joy, peace, and rest; for the wicked, there is hell. As the Bible depicts it, hell is the most terrifying reality ever to confront the mind of man, so horrifying in fact that one cannot long retain his rationality and dwell in thought of the prospects of going there. It is described as eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46), everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9), outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12; 22:13), a lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:15) where "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44), a place of never-ending torment (Rev. 20:10), and the second death (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). In hell there is no rest (Rev. 14:11), no relief (Luke 16:24-26), no hope (Luke 16:26). What a fearful and horrible place to contemplate! No wonder men fear it.

But no one needs to live in fear of hell. God has a divine plan by which it can be escaped. We are all going into eternity to reap the rewards of this life. But Jesus promised to go prepare a place for His people and return again for them (John 14:1-6). Those who are prepared for His return have no reason to fear. As Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). So why should one fear when he can prepare? "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12).

There are many other causes of fear, but the six we have named and discussed are basic ones. They may well represent every cause. The same plan by which these can be overcome will work when applied to any

cause of fear. The plan, God's plan (as far as the individual is concerned), can be summed up in four short statements:

1. A Strong Faith in God. Fear and faith cannot dominate the same heart. One will drive the other out. We have understood from the day we became Christians that faith is a necessary part of God's plan to save (John 3:16; 8:24; Heb. 11:6). But the true function of faith does not end when one becomes a Christian. It is to permeate every aspect of the Christian's life and conduct. As it is written, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). This means that we must believe in God enough to let Him handle His affairs. Let God be God and believe His word. Believe Him when He makes a promise. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5, 6). There is no doubt about it, a considerable amount of fear is experienced by people who have little or no faith. If one's faith in God is strong enough, what is there to fear?

2. A Sure Trust in the Providence of God. God provides for His people! Jesus taught that we are never to be anxious about the necessities of life. God provides for the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field. Will He not therefore provide for man who is of infinite more worth than the fowls and lilies? (See Matt. 6:25-32.) Jesus concluded His discussion of these matters by saying, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). But the providence of God is not limited to the necessities of life alone. Paul emphatically states (Rom. 8:28) that all things work together for the good of those who love God. God uses everything for the benefit of His people — the people who love Him and desire with their whole being to do His will. This even includes the causes of fear. The unknown, the future, the end of time, death, judgment, and even hell (we mean the fact of it, not one going there) are all used by God for the good of those who put Him first in their lives. How could one fear that which

works for his good?

3. **An Abiding Love for God's Will.** To do God's will is the Christian's primary reason for being. Whatever comes in his life, regardless of the situation he finds himself in, he should desire with his whole heart, his whole being, to do the will of God. If this is one's attitude, every situation will present a challenge, a challenge to find and do what God would have one do. This presupposes that in every situation, whether it be life or death, things present or things to come, there is something that can be done that will please God. If we love the will of God, and see a challenge in every cause of fear to do His will, the very causes of fear will be a challenge — an awful thing perhaps but not a frightening thing. Thus there is no reason to fear when we can know and do God's will.

4. **A Lively Hope in God's Promises.** The Psalmist said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4). He could say this because he had hope in God. But if one could have such supreme confidence in God under the Old Testament system, where life beyond the grave had not been fully revealed, how much more should we have this side of the resurrection of Christ. Christ died, went into the grave, conquered and broke the power of death, and rose victoriously to give us hope — to take the question mark off the grave. So we can now exclaim with Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Christ has therefore cleared the way for us. He says in essence, "There is nothing to fear. I have made the way safe. Follow me." Hope thus removes fear. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and

peace and believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13).

Fear, therefore, can be overcome. God has given a plan for its cure.

Conclusion

The problem of fear is the problem of balance. There are some things we should fear, some things we must fear (if we are to please God), and some things we have no need to fear. Normal fear (things we should fear) does not torment us — it appears to help us meet emergencies. The fear of God (the things we must fear) should permeate the whole of life — reverential awe for the Creator that leads us to respect and obey the will and law of God. Abnormal fear (the fear we have no need of) is the problem — it is an overly amount of painful apprehension for that which there is no need to fear. It is the kind of fear for which God offers a cure, such as the fear of the unknown, the fear of the future, the fear of the end of time, etc. Christians can live above this; they can live in peace and tranquility. How? By having a strong faith in God, a sure trust in His providence, an abiding love for His will, and a lively hope in His promises. Robert Herrick expressed this thought well when he said:

*Lord, I am like the mistletoe,
Which has no root and cannot grow
Or prosper, but by that same tree
It clings about: so I by Thee.
What need I then to fear at all
So long as I about Thee crawl?
But if that tree should fall and die,
Tumble shall heaven, and so down will I.*

Christians have nothing to fear. As long as heaven is secure, so are they.

[Reprinted from May, 1975. Brother Winters served as Editor of *Carolina Christian* for nearly 20 years. e went to be with the Lord in May 1988.

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Training Children

by Mike Mayes

Fred Gosman has written a book entitled **Spoiled Rotten** that calls for a return to discipline, firm consequences, and high expectations in dealing with children. The need is apparent by the fact that many children have become head of the house, if the parents would honestly admit it. Gosman asks several questions to help parents see whether the kids are "ruling the roost":

When your child doesn't like what is planned for dinner, do you offer to fix him a sandwich?

Do you cave in and buy designer labels when you had not intended to?

Do you watch the TV program your child selects rather than the one you prefer?

Do you feel nervous tension before you confront your child the same as before you have to confront your supervisor?

When your child misses curfew, do you change the curfew?

How many times when you've caught him cold turkey, does he get off the hook or get to cop a plea?

He states that we are crippling our kids with kindness, and that we are giving them

"second" chances endlessly. The problem is that the parents don't want to be the bad guy and say no. Gosman explains that we try to provide a pain-free existence for our children instead of teaching them to cope. Discipline is a dirty word in modern society's vocabulary, but not in God's (Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 29:15).

Popularity is for teens, not for parents. Learning to say "no" and mean it, as well as making our children face the consequences of their actions, is essential if parents are to turn the tide and take charge.

Giving our children too much in the way of material things, not teaching them to work and handle responsibility, and not training them to properly manage their time and money will lead to their growing up to be lazy, irresponsible, ungrateful adults. What kids need from parents rather than "things" is our time and a balance of love and discipline. I pray that all of us who are parents will take seriously our responsibility to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Saving America

by Michael R. Mobley

In a previous article I wrote of what I believe is at the heart of the church's identity before the world and her relationship to the world — restoration through separation. However, that separation does not mean isolation or withdrawal. It is rejection of the world's ways that are void of God and truth in an effort to teach it repentance and to restore it back to God — to lead it to salvation. It is not retreat from the world because then we would not be able to teach and lead it. So, what can the church do through its separated state to save America? How can we be involved in God's great work to save the lost of our land?

When Abraham Lincoln delivered the

Gettysburg Address, he spoke of what he believed encompassed everything the American Civil War was all about. The last sentence of that speech identifies something that the church can give to America today:

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these honored dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

As America was struggling then for a rebirth of civil freedom, America needs today a rebirth of **spiritual freedom**. No nation can really be free under God until its people are spiritually free in Christ! The great task remaining before the church is that we highly resolve to give the last full measure of our devotion to saving this our nation by restoring it back to God. Our Lord and Savior has left us with the great work:

“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”

What can the church do everyday that will free America's people under Christ and create this rebirth of spiritual freedom?

First, she must repent of her own sins (John 8:11). Jesus did not condemn the woman outright. Rather he told her to go about her daily life and not sin anymore. Repentance is an act that frees us of the sin that we do. It will free America's people of the sin that is threatening the nation and destroying the lives of the people. No one can be doing evil when he or she is doing good. The church's own faithfulness to Christ and His righteousness can teach the world what it needs to do for its salvation.

Second, she must pray for the nation and its people (1 Tim. 2:1-3, Jam. 5:16). God has promised that the prayers of the faithful will not be wasted. We must take advantage of this power that God has given to us. Pray that America's leaders and people will humble themselves before God's throne, wisdom, and love. Pray that America's leaders will always understand and protect our freedom to serve and worship God and teach His truth.

Third, she must restore the gospel to our pulpits (2 Tim. 4:1-5). We have become so wrapped up in so many issues between ourselves that we have neglected the millions of lost souls living around us everyday! If we ignore the troubles within, the church will be lost. Yet, if we forsake preaching the sweet gospel to America, America will not be saved.

Fourth, she must make her congregations and homes schoolhouses for God (Deut. 6:4-9). We can teach our children, teach them some more, then teach them again. This will save their lives and bring goodness to the land. And more than this, it will train another generation to carry on the great task that is remaining before us. They will be equipped to train yet another generation and the work goes on.

Fifth, she must make herself known to America and its people (Matt. 5:13-16). The church needs a strong identity! We do not need to be hiding out in our church buildings and homes. We do need to be involved with people. We must ourselves initiate the contact with them. We should take advantage of every situation we find ourselves in, every responsibility we accept, and every relationship we establish, from the cashier at the market to guests we entertain, to the people we work with daily. We should engage people that we might influence and teach them. We should use the privilege to vote in service to God for the salvation of souls and the propagation of what is right and good. We should use the civil freedom we have to think and believe as we choose and to speak in our Lord's behalf in the public arena. For example, one might write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. We can support the “One Nation Under God” campaign. America will know we are present if we will but speak up and speak out. America will know God and truth if we will but create the opportunities for it to hear.

Sixth, she must never give up (Gal. 6:6-10). By His grace and our faith, God has made every Christian and congregation capable of all the good He has to release upon man from heaven. We do not need to deny or neglect it. We must use it to do what has been suggested so far and whatever other good thing that comes to mind.

May the people of God in America work to save this nation by working to save the lost of this land. May the people of God make themselves known in this land. May we, each one of us, remember who we are and what we have been given to do.

[P. O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.]

Observations of the Law

by C.R. Franks, Jr.

(Editor's note: C. R. Franks, Jr., has preached for many years in the Carolinas. For the last several he has worked with the congregation at Elizabethtown, NC. The Franks will be making their home now in Texas. We wish them the best.)

I wish I could get folks to believe the truth!

I mean specifically the truth that the law of Moses is dead and is of no effect, including the ten commandments, and that the Old Testament is not the law of Christianity, but principally the law and history of the Jewish people. That law was never given to any people other than to the Jews. It was not proclaimed to the patriarchs nor to any people other than the Jews. Hence it was not intended for the law of the way of life for any other people.

Why, then, was it ever given at all? The answer is in Galatians 3:19, explaining that it was added 430 years **after** the promise made to Abraham and that it was added because of transgressions and was intended, even when given, only to last "till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made." I wish I could get the world, including a great company of theologians, to believe the truth about this. Certainly the views and positions of the world would change drastically. But the traditional way has been repeated so many times and with such emphasis that people believe what they are told instead of reading the Scriptures and believing them. Also in Galatians 3, verse 21, we find that if there had been a law given

which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But instead of the law giving life it shut up or confined all under sin (Gal. 3:22).

So Christianity's first lesson for today is that salvation and forgiveness are contained in the gospel of Jesus, **not** in the law of Moses. Yet our "learned" preachers keep on preaching that the law is in effect today and if you'll just keep it you'll be saved. But God says not so! I wish I could get people to believe the truth!! Tradition may be comforting, but Scripture tells the mind, purpose, and plan of God. Many mock this and keep on telling you to keep the ten.

Many times simple truth clashes with traditions held dear, but the one with a good and honest heart seeking to obey God will take the word of Scripture and not the preaching and traditions of men, no matter how high or mighty such might be among humans.

The gospel was given that people might believe it, and that believing it we might have salvation in His (Christ's) name. The four gospels tell of Jesus and convince of His being truly God in flesh and the Savior. The book of Acts tells of how the apostles and others preached Jesus and His word and shows how people believed it, repented of sins, confessed their faith in Jesus and were baptized for the remission of sins. This is Scripture, not tradition. It is what we plead with all to believe and obey for there simply is no other way. Don't we all wish we could get people to believe the truth!

Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13

by David Pharr, Editor

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"

(1 Cor. 12:13).

The text is significant in declaring that it is by baptism that all enter into the one body of Christ. Christ is the Savior of the

body (Eph. 5:23); the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Just as baptism brings us into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), so in the same baptism we enter into the body, the church. This all, therefore, involves the same thing because to be in Christ is to be in His body, His church, and entrance into the church occurs at baptism (Acts 2:41, 47).

Those who are offended by the necessity of water baptism think they see a way to squeeze it out of 1 Corinthians 12:13. They argue that the phrase "by one Spirit" indicates that the baptism under consideration is Holy Spirit baptism. We have been asked to show why the baptism of this text is to be understood as baptism in water.

"All Baptized"

The apostle's concern in the context is for unity. Paul has shown that different members of the body have different gifts; there was diversity in the body. This diversity, however, should not be a cause for friction because each person's gift was from the same Spirit. Not only that, it was by the same Spirit that they all shared in common the one baptism that put them into the one body of Christ.

The apostle's use of baptism as an argument for unity is a simple one. There was an experience that they all had in common. It was the rite that initiated them into the Lord's body. Entrance into the one body was for each of them by the same baptism. Though the Spirit had provided different gifts to the members of the body, He had not provided for a difference in their baptisms. This was one thing that all had experienced equally and identically.

For the apostle's argument to be meaningful, therefore, he had to be referring to a baptism that was universal, that was common to "all" who were in the body. This is further emphasized by his saying that "we all" were so baptized "whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." It must be a baptismal experience that applies to every person of every nation who is in Christ. To determine what baptism is named in 1 Corinthians 12:13 we only have to determine what baptism has such an universal application.

Matthew 28:19 provides the answer. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here is the baptism that is intended for everyone, for "all nations." The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the one for "all," for "Jews or Gentiles," which is to say, for "all nations."

Having seen that, the next step in our consideration is equally easy. The baptism of Matthew 28:19 was to be administered by men. The only baptism that could be administered by men was water baptism (cf. Acts 8:38). Spirit baptism was administered by the Lord from heaven (Acts 1:4-8; 2:2, 33; 11:15-17; 15:8). Men can baptize in water, but only the Lord can baptize with the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:11). The points to be made are these: The baptism of the Great Commission was to be administered by men. The baptism of the Great Commission is the universal baptism — for "all," "Jews or Gentiles," "all nations." The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the universally required baptism (otherwise the apostle's argument would not apply). Thus the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the baptism administered by men, water baptism.

Mark's account of the Great Commission also helps us establish the point. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (16:16). (Notice again the universal application.) It happens that almost identical words are used in regard to the Corinthians, the very ones to whom the text we are studying is addressed. Acts 18:8 tells us that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." It also happens that in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul refers back to this very event. In showing that he had not baptized in his own name, he reminds them of how few of them

John A. Thurman, Sr. is preparing a video lesson for teaching non-Christians in their homes. He would like to hear from persons with experience in this kind of work. Financial assistance is also needed. Contact him: 90 Sleepy Hollow Dr., Asheville, NC 28805 — (704) 298-9333.

he had actually baptized (1:13-17). The rest were baptized by the hands of others. Their baptism was a baptism which was administered by Paul and other men; it was water baptism. All had been baptized by the same baptism, even though it had been administered by more than one man.

“Into One Body”

As the body is the church (Col. 1:18), the baptism that is into the body is the baptism that adds one to the church.

One obvious distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism is that one was commanded and the other was promised. Water baptism is a command to be obeyed (Acts 10:47-48). Each person chooses whether he will submit to the command of Christ in being baptized in water. But the baptism of the Spirit was a promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). The obvious implication of this is that any baptism which we find commanded must be water baptism. There is no way that a person can obey a promise. We can often determine whether a passage refers to water baptism or Spirit baptism, therefore, by determining whether it indicates a command or a promise.

This becomes significant when we notice that the baptism of Acts 2:38 is commanded and that people by their own choice submitted to it (v. 41). It should be noted, though, that it was in connection with their obedience in baptism that the text says that they were “added.” While neither the word “church” nor “body” is in the verse, the implication of their being “added” is that they were admitted into the body of Christ’s people when they were baptized.

In the next place we should remember that those who are in the body are those who have been saved. Christ is “the savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23). It follows then that the baptism that puts one into the body is the same baptism that saves.

Those who oppose the place of water baptism in the plan of salvation will argue that it is Spirit baptism that saves. But Peter is very direct in answering this error. After stating that Noah’s family were “saved by water,” he adds plainly: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Pet. 3:20-21). The statement is un-

deniable, and the connection of baptism with water is obvious. To make the matter more certain, however, we find that Peter explains that it is not because baptism is the “putting away of the filth of the flesh [washing dirt off the body as water would seem to do].” All other passages that treat the same subject lead us to the same conclusion (Acts 2:38; 22:16; et al.). The baptism that is into the one body is the baptism that saves, and the baptism that saves is water baptism.

“Into One Body,” “Into Christ”

The issue can be further considered in the fact that to be in the one body is to be in Christ, and that the baptism that is into one body is the baptism that is into Christ. The text we are studying speaks of being baptized into the body; other texts speak of being baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27-28; Rom. 6:3-4).

The Galatians passage is significant in the way that it uses much the same terminology as does 1 Corinthians 12:13. In both passages the emphasis is on oneness, regardless of race, position, or gender. This oneness is because of all having been baptized into Christ.

But what baptism is the baptism that is into Christ? It is Romans 6:3-4 that gives the answer. Here baptism that is “into Christ” is that baptism that is a “burial,” an obvious reference to immersion. We have no background history regarding the baptism of the Christians at Rome as we do in the case of the Corinthians (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:13-17). We would have to understand, however, that Paul’s point in the Romans 6 text requires that this was a baptism that was the common experience of all of them. If some of them had not experienced it, his argument that baptism had ended their continuance in sin would not have applied to all of them. Certainly, therefore, this reference to baptism refers to that baptism that is universal for all believers, which we have already shown has to be water baptism.

“One Body,” “One Baptism”

Ephesians 4:4-6 is another passage that emphasizes unity. As an argument for the necessity of unity, Paul cites seven things

which all true Christians have in common. Included are "one body" and "one baptism." The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 must be the same as the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Otherwise there would have been two baptisms, one that all the Corinthian Christians had experienced and another one which the Ephesian text names. This, of course, would be a contradiction. The only way that Paul's argument in either passage can be valid is for the reference to baptism to mean a baptism that is a part of the experience of every Christian. There is no evidence whatsoever that all Christians share in the baptism of the Spirit (a miracle recorded only in Acts 2 and 10). On the other hand, at the risk of seeming repetitive, we will emphasize again that the Great Commission shows a baptism applicable to all believers which is to be administered by men and which is therefore water baptism.

"By One Spirit"

If, as we have shown, the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is water baptism, why does the text say: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized..."? If it is water baptism, what does the Spirit have to do with it?

The fact is that water baptism is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is a work of the Spirit in that it is by the Spirit's instruction. Through the gospel the Spirit showed that it is the will of the Lord that believers be baptized. Our common English translation is correct. It is "by" the Spirit that we are baptized. The Spirit is the agent, the one who

by His teaching causes one to be baptized. The Spirit is not the element. While a translation that says "in" one Spirit can be allowed grammatically, it would not be consistent with other teaching on the subject.

Recognizing the Spirit as the agent and water as the element is consistent with Ephesians 5:26 which speaks of "the washing of water by the word [which is the instrument of the Spirit]."

Someone may ask how it can be that the Spirit is the agent by which people are baptized in water when in actuality men administer water baptism. The answer is simply that while men perform the act, it is under the instruction and authority of the Spirit. There is an exact parallel to this in John 4:1-2. We are told "that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples)." Jesus baptized in the sense that He authorized it. In actuality, though, His disciples were the ones doing the immersing.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11 (in the same epistle), Paul reminds how they had been "washed," "sanctified," and "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (See our article on this in the June 1991 **Carolina Christian**.) Here the reference to their washing parallels Acts 22:16, which indicated baptism in water. Yet in the text it is also said to be "by the Spirit." The two passages point to the same thing — water baptism by the direction and authority of the Holy Spirit.

Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

Around North Carolina. Since the early 1950's brother C.R. FRANKS has spent the greater part of his ministry in the Carolinas, including the past 12 years at the church in Elizabethtown, NC. Brother Franks has been "retired" for several years, but has remained active in the Lord's work. In early October C.R. and his wife, Mary Nelle, moved to Abilene, TX. Brother Franks labored faithfully and quietly for many years and the church in the Carolinas is stronger for his efforts. . . . ROSS THOM-

SON is the new pulpit minister for the BROOKS AVE. church in Raleigh. Brother Thomson is from Texas and began his work with Brooks Ave. in mid-October. . . . The new address for the LaGRANGE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Kinston is 114 N Caswell Street, Kinston, NC 28551. MIKE RAGSDALE is the preacher. . . . The Third Annual Carolina Celebration will be held on Nov. 3 at the Reynolds High School Auditorium in Winston-Salem. The speaker this year will be brother FLOYD

DETHROW, who preaches for the EASTSIDE church in Winston-Salem.

And South Carolina. The FOLLY RD church in Charleston will host its Third Annual Ladies Day on Oct. 26. The theme will be "Walking In The Light". . . . LYN POTTER is now preaching for the PORT ROYAL church in Port Royal. He had previously preached for the WESTSIDE church in Anderson. . . . The NEWBERRY church has been blessed with five baptisms in recent months. KEN WYATT diligently labors for the church in Newberry.

And Elsewhere for many years the mission

fields of Northeast Thailand have been difficult but prosperous. This area of the world is steeped in poverty and is flooded with refugees from Laos and Cambodia. Mission work there has been led by brother TED LINGREN. In a recent newsletter he reports that through June 1991, there have been 391 baptisms. . . . The African continent continues to be receptive to the gospel. Last June the 6th & Izard church in Little Rock, AR, sponsored a campaign to Georgetown, Guyana. The campaign yielded 92 conversions.

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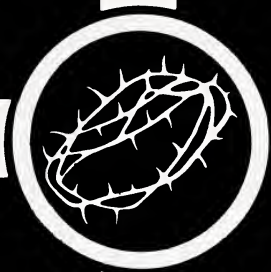
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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This Issue

Tom Bolick, Formerly a Lutheran

Paul J. Ditoro, Formerly a Presbyterian

Terry Gunnells, Formerly in Christian Church

Craig Hinrichs, Formerly a Methodist

Edwin Jones, Formerly an Episcopalian

Donald W. Nix, Formerly a Baptist

Clayton Winters, Formerly in Church of God



by David Pharr

Seven men have articles in this issue telling why they left their previous religious affiliations to be united in the church of Christ. They have briefly reviewed the reasons that effected their change.

Your editor and his immediate family left the Methodist denomination. (My only brother, Claude, works with the South Fork Church of Christ in Winston-Salem. Our only sister is a member of the Newberry, South Carolina, Church of Christ. Our mother is in the Hickory Church of Christ. Our father died several years ago.)

Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). In the immediate context he was dealing with the traditions of the Pharisees. He said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (v. 9). The Pharisees were the most prominent denomination among the Jews of that time. Even a powerful denomination like the Pharisees represented no more than blind guides leading the blind (v. 14).

We are certainly aware that wrong attitudes and extremes of emphasis can make a denomination out of even those who profess to be the church of Christ, and we should always be vigilant against this. This concern does not, however, deter us from condemning the errors of denominations and from upholding the church we find in the Bible. We are not embarrassed or hesitate to show why people should forsake all denominations and be simply Christians.

The following facts are evident:

1. Every denomination was established by men. The Catholic denominations (Roman, Greek, etc.) are the result of numerous departures from the New Testament pattern which eventually crystallized into the traditions that now characterize these sects. The major Protestant groups were established by men such as John Wesley, Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc. All other denominations

and cults have human origins. All exist in contradiction to the words of the Lord: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

2. Every denomination had its origin too late to be the Lord's church. The beginning of Christ's church is traced to the day of Pentecost following the death of Christ (Acts 2). Every other organization in Christendom was started many years later. In spite of their claims to the contrary, even the Catholic sects developed centuries after the apostolic age.

3. With rare exceptions, denominations have systems of church polity that are different

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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from the New Testament plan. Their hierarchies, with bishops, synods, conventions, etc., have replaced the simple Scriptural plan of elders and deacons in local congregations (Phil. 1:1), with no head or headquarters except Christ in heaven (Eph. 1:20-22).

4. Worship in denominations is after the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:9). It is according to human will and wisdom (Col. 2:23). There is not a single denomination in the world (at least to my knowledge) that has not either added unauthorized innovations, or removed required ordinances. And most have erred in both directions. The only Scriptural worship is that which is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

5. Denominations hold unscriptural doctrines. Typically each sect came into existence because of obsessions with certain doctrinal notions. False doctrines include faith only, predestination, once-saved-always-saved, premillennialism, false views of the Holy Spirit, etc.

6. A religious group may have many favorable features, but if it does not teach the truth relative to how people are saved, all else is in vain. The fact is, however, that almost no denomination teaches the truth on salvation. The New Testament is absolute in its requirements for conversion: faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, etc.).

7. Denominations cannot be identified with the church of the New Testament. The Scriptures show that there are certain features that identify the Lord's church. The only church in the modern world that can possibly be the true church is the one which can be found to match the essential features of the New Testament church. Kindly, but frankly, it must be affirmed without fear of contradiction that not a single modern denomination can be found in the Bible.

These things being true, we do not hesitate to urge people to leave their denominations and by gospel obedience become united with those who seek to be the church we read about in the Bible. People who have more loyalty to a denomination than they do to truth will resent this. People who prefer worldly acceptance over sound doctrine will cringe at our saying it. But every denomination ought to go out of business and every

believer ought to be in Christ's one church (Eph. 4:4; 2:16; 1:22-23).

As you read these articles, please consider what might otherwise have been their response if the preaching they heard in the church of Christ lacked a distinctive sound? In every case they were converted because they heard a strong emphasis on Scripture. They were not converted by buildings, psychology, family programs, etc., but by the truth.

Consider also what might have been the case if they had heard us say that there are sincere knowledgeable Christians in all denominations (as a few currently popular preachers are arguing). What if, when they began to ask serious doctrinal questions, they were told that we no longer think it's right to expose error in other religions? What if they were told (as some are currently saying) that we do not need to be concerned about the New Testament pattern?

I will speak plainly: I will be eternally thankful that those who helped me see the truth had both courage and conviction.

Will You Write to Him?

Below is a note we received from a man who is an inmate in an Ohio prison. His words speak for themselves. Perhaps some of our readers will write to him, maybe send him some gospel literature. Perhaps someone would like to order **Carolina Christian** for him?

I'm an inmate in a small Southwest Ohio prison. My fault? Yes! But I've learned from this first real mistake in my life. I've been confined almost four years, with still more time ahead of me. I've lost contact with those people whom I thought were my friends. I have no real family to speak of. . . . The days and nights in here are really long. Yet the hardest part of each day for me comes when mail is being passed. Just once, I'd like to see the guard stop and place a letter between the bars. Just one! I know that there are people out there who may care to write. Or at least I hope there still are. In an environment in which I live in which everything is hard and cold, it sure would be nice to read the soft words from a "New Found Friend." I'd be forever grateful if you could print my letter, or any part of it. Mr. George Orling 195-351, P. O. Box 56, Lebanon, OH 45036.

Truths That Made Me Leave the Lutheran Church

by Tom Bolick

She was pretty. Blue-eyed and blonde. I had to meet her. She was the first member of the church of Christ I had met. After several dates, her grandmother asked me some questions about my religious beliefs. I answered a strong "yes" when she asked, "Tom, do you believe the Bible is the word of God?" Little did I know how radically my life would change with that answer.

I was reared in the Lutheran Church in Hickory, North Carolina. My mother was the religious leader in our family. My sisters and I were at every service of the church from infancy. Between the ages of six and twelve, my summers were filled with studying the Catechisms of Martin Luther. At the age of twelve, I was confirmed into the Church. I had been "baptized" at two months of age. I still remember vividly my first Communion. I was taught many of the truths that I still believe fervently; the inspiration of the Scriptures; the deity of Christ; the reality of heaven and hell; love for God and man; and a morality based on the Scriptures. For this, I am eternally grateful.

I was eighteen when that grandmother asked me about my beliefs. As with many others telling their story, baptism was the first subject to be discussed. Soon Scriptures were read that described baptism as a burial. I had always been repulsed by the barbaric "dunking" of people in water as the Baptists did. I literally dusted off my Bible and began to study. Like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, I "examined the scriptures every day" to see what the Bible had to say. I stopped seeing the blonde, and spent a lot of time with the grandmother. She was a model of kindness and patience. She listened carefully to what I said, treated me with respect, and gently led me to the word.

Several things bothered me greatly. My status before God at birth (Was I born with Adam's guilt?); the mode of baptism (Was it immersion, sprinkling or affusion?); and my age at the time of my baptism. My Luth-

eran Creed taught me that I "... was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). It has been called original sin, total depravity, and Adamic sin. Was David born a sinner? My study of the Scriptures began in earnest. David was speaking of himself, not anyone else. Why would David's sin affect me? We know of no circumstances that indict David's mother as immoral. Even if she were, it would not make David responsible for her sin. David was a descendant of a line of ancestors that went back to the illicit relationship of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38:11-30). The Law said, "No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:2). David was within the scope of this law. But, this had only to do with Jews who congregated around the Tabernacle.

I was born in a house, but I am not a house. David was born into a world of sin, but that did not make him a sinner. He became a sinner when he interacted with his environment by lusting with eye and flesh, and letting pride rule his life (1 John 2:15, 16; Jas. 1:13-15).

I think the most probable explanation of Psalm 51:5 is David's use of hyperbole. This is a common figure of speech used by David. Hyperbole is the exaggeration of a meaning through passion. Such statements as "I could eat a cow," or "I am starved to death" are hyperbole. In Psalm 58:3, David said, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies." They are not born wicked, but go astray. It is physically impossible for a newborn to speak, let alone speak lies. David's hyperbolic statement emphasizes the truth that we all are subject to sin at an early age. In Psalm 6:6, 7, David speaks out of his misery. "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with

sorrow; they fail because of my foes." Flooding the bed with tears is an exaggeration to emphasize David's pain. Hyperbole is often used by inspired writers.

Psalm 51 was written by David after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the rebuke by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 12). For a "man after God's own heart," guilt weighed heavily on his spirit. His impenitence caused his "strength to be sapped as in the heat of summer" and his "bones wasted away through groaning all day long (Psa. 32:1-5). Notice all the poetic figures that he uses. For this sensitive soul, his adultery, coveting, pride, and murder made him feel like he had been "conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity."

The truth that any can understand is written unambiguously in Ezekiel 18. There are no figures of speech to explain, no chronologies to examine. "The soul that sins shall die." The old Jewish proverb "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" is disavowed by God. "The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son (v. 20). Each is admonished to "repent! turn from all your offenses . . ." (v. 30).

Having learned the truth that I was not born with the guilt of Adam's sin, but was responsible to God for my own sins, I questioned the need of my "baptism" at two months of age. Jesus used children as examples for those who would enter His kingdom. His disciples, looking for power and place in the kingdom, were rebuked by Jesus' words, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:2-4). Jesus did not use children to illustrate total depravity, but as examples of humility which would allow one to enter His kingdom. A totally depraved child would not have any humility (Mark 10:15).

Martin Luther taught justification by faith alone. That was the crucial doctrine that spurred on the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. This was in stark contrast to the works salvation of Catholicism. If an infant is born in original sin, and salvation is by faith, what is the destiny of

a child who dies before he is capable of faith? Luther solved the dilemma with the teaching of faith as a gift from God and baptism for the forgiveness of original sin. As a boy, I was taught from Acts 2:38 that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins.

Household baptisms were the rationale for infant baptism. My study of the households converted in the book of Acts revealed no infants baptized. The assumption that every household had infants is unfounded. In Acts 10:2, we read that Cornelius "and all his family were devout and God-fearing." These were the ones baptized at the end of the chapter. Infants are incapable of being "devout and God-fearing." Acts 18:8 tells us that Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized." No infants here! The entire household believed. After the jailer and his family were baptized in the middle of the night, Luke records that "he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole family" (Acts 16:29-34). Do infants believe and rejoice?

Luther expressed ambivalence about the mode of baptism as seen in one of his pamphlets, "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church in Three Treatises." "It is therefore indeed correct to say that baptism is a washing away of sins, but the expression is too mild and weak to bring out the full significance of baptism, which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason, I would have those who are to be baptized completely immersed in water, as the word means and as the mystery indicates. Not because I deem this necessary, but because it would be well to give a thing so perfect and complete a sign that is also complete and perfect. And this is doubtless the way in which it was instituted by Christ." It is acknowledged that Christ instituted baptism as a burial and resurrection, but according to Luther it is not necessary. Knowing that others will address baptism from the perspective of its meaning and usage in the Greek New Testament, I will simply say it is an immersion in water. Neither Jesus nor his disciples ever taught modes of baptism. They, guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), taught immersion (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

I learned these truths after about a year of study. The grandmother who stirred my interest, invited me to worship services. I refused for several months, but finally went with her. I expected snake-handling and riotous assembly. What a surprise to find friendly people and a worship service in which I could understand the preacher's sermon. He read and explained the Scriptures. My preacher often spoke in language which was hard to understand. I attended frequently, learning more and more.

The Sunday I was baptized is still fresh in my mind after 38 years. I recall looking down at my hands, knuckles white, when the invitation hymn was sung. Matthew 10:37 ran through my mind. "Anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. . . ." I released my grip on the pew back and stepped forward. While dressing after my baptism, I told the preacher I wanted to preach the gospel to others. I still feel the urgency to share that good news as I did then.

In my study I learned that Jesus built His church on His Deity (Matt. 16:16-19). There is no flaw in His work. Christ is the head over His one body (Eph. 1:22). Penitent sinners are baptized into Christ. They are baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), which is His church. There is no denomination to join, having been added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47).

Being a disciple of Christ (John 8:31, 32), a Christian (1 Pet. 4:14), I must be obedient. Jesus said, "And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Obedience is made easy when we love him as he loved us.

I can never return to a denominational system that is predicated on human creeds that are constantly being revised. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). My understanding may grow and mature, but Jesus and His word will never change. Apollos, the dynamic and eloquent preacher, came to Ephesus and preached the truth as he knew it. Aquilla and Priscilla took him home with them and "explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). Apollos could never preach what he had always preached. New knowledge made him accountable. It made

me accountable. These and other truths made me leave the Lutheran Church. I have never looked back.

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Why I Am No Longer a Presbyterian

by Paul J. Ditoro

In 1965, I learned that the Presbyterian Church was going to revise its "confessional position." I was indignant. How could any group of men revise something which, as I had thought, came from God? Since I really did not know much about Presbyterianism, or why I was a Presbyterian in the first place (other than the fact that my dad was a Presbyterian minister), I secured copies of the **Constitution of the Presbyterian Church**, and **The Proposal to Revise the Confessional Position of the United Presbyterian Church** to find out what it was that I was supposed to believe as a Presbyterian. My scanning of these books left me somewhat disappointed.

A comparison of some of their proposed revisions reveals some contradictions and inconsistencies with Bible teachings. Let us consider some of them. ". . . it [the United Presbyterian Church of North America] affirms the right and duty of a living Church to re-state its faith from time to time so as to display **any additional attainments in truth** it may have made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (emphasis mine, PJD).¹

However, the Holy Spirit does not today progressively guide the Lord's church into more truth. The one faith has been once for all time delivered to the saints (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3).

The Presbyterian denomination is not content to simply abide by the Bible as its sole rule of faith and practice. Notice some of their statements: "In order to speak in the context of the whole Reformed family and thus to draw upon the fullness of our tradition and its origins in the Reformation period, we have seen the wisdom of studying not only the Westminster documents but several others, including, e.g., the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession."² "We think it would be unwise to reduce the force of our historic statements by either amendment or reduction, but we consider it of great moment that we

see ourselves in a wider historical context than that of the British Churches of the 1640's."³

Notice that they say they are concerned with the Reformation, catechisms and confessions. We also notice their concern that they be viewed in a wider context of the early "British Churches," but there is no mention of desiring to be viewed in the context of the New Testament church, whose roots are firmly planted in that glorious Pentecost following the ascension of the Lord.

The admission is made that "These [confessional] standards have always stood subordinate to the Scriptures and have stated the faith in language appropriate to the evolving needs of the specific churches for which they have been composed."⁴ But if these standards are indeed subordinate to the Scriptures, why such emphasis on the Reformation, and catechisms, and confessions which were written by men? Instead of "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1), we are hearing "memorize the catechism," and "follow the Reformation." In the preface to their Proposed Revision reference is made to no less than nine confessions, catechisms and declarations. If they are all Biblical, why do we need them? If they are more or less than the Bible, we would be lost if we use them (2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

One may notice the direction the Presbyterian Church is taking by first looking at some of the questions which were asked of those men who applied for ordination as ministers of the denomination, and then looking at the proposed revision to those

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questions. "The present question (2) reads, 'Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?' In the late nineteenth century the emphasis shifted toward defining more precisely the nature of the authority of the Bible. The 'infallible rule' was taken by many to imply not merely matters 'of faith and life,' but the detailed inerrancy of the original manuscripts of the Bible. The word infallible, as a result, gave rise to acute difficulty when there was controversy concerning critical study of the Bible, and the problems posed by scientific developments (emp. mine, PJD).'" "Indeed!

The "infallible rule" likely complicated their handling of the creation. It seems as though men are willing to let science be the standard, and to interpret the Scriptures in the light of science.

They "obviated" their difficulty with the "infallible rule" by stating, "The Bible, in the proposed Confession of 1967, is not just one witness to Christ among others, but the 'normative' witness, — the norm or authority over all other witness." And so, in the ordination of their ministers, it was proposed that question (2) be worded, "Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the normative witness to Jesus Christ . . . ?" And so, instead of "infallible" we have "normative."

Question (3) had the candidate for ordination affirm that the "Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this church" contained the system of doctrine as taught in the Holy Scripture. They revised it to require the candidate to affirm obedience to Christ under the authority of the Scripture and the Confessions of this church." "How could there be a clearer admission that the Bible is just not enough? When the authority of the Bible is questioned, enter the doctrines and commandments of men.

Of course, as with many denominational religions, ". . . baptism applies as much to the children of the faithful as to those who are of age and discretion . . ." "In other words, one is not required to "obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered . . ." (Rom. 6:17), for a certain degree of "age" and "discretion" is required

of the one who would so obey the gospel.

Many of the teachings of the Presbyterian Church have their roots in Calvinism. The TULIP formula may be found in the Calvinistic teachings of Presbyterianism: Total Hereditary Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

Their doctrine of "Total Hereditary Depravity" holds that "[Adam and Eve], being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation." "In contrast to this, God said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. . . ." (Ezek. 18:20). The Presbyterians say, "the guilt of this sin is imputed." Hereditary Depravity is not a Bible teaching.

Their doctrine of "Election" has, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." "It would seem from this that God is perfectly willing for some men to perish and to never come to repentance, in spite of what God has said (2 Pet. 3:9).

"Limited Atonement" informs us that "These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." "It would seem from this that, once God had decided which way we were to go, that decision was final. If this were the case the preaching of the Lord Himself was a sham, for if He knew it was impossible for men to repent who were not elected, then why did he preach "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)? What cruel deception, giving men a hope of heaven whom he had already predestined to hell. The doctrine is false and a discouragement to evangelism, yet many souls have found happiness in being a part of such a religion. The atonement is limited to only those God has called. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call . . ." "

The "Perseverance of the Saints" com-

monly referred to as "Once Saved, Always Saved," is described as, "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified: and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's Fatherly displeasure . . ." ¹² The Bible tells of those who actually were severed from Christ and were fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

After giving this great weight of instruction on the Eternal Decree that from all eternity our destinies have been sealed, we learn that "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ . . ." ¹³ Then as an explanation of this we read, ". . . it is not to be regarded that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases." ¹⁴ If our destiny is sealed by God from all eternity, and some are predestined to be lost from all eternity, those who die in infancy, according to Presbyterian doctrine, must have been predestined to die in infancy. What a doctrine of sadness and hopelessness! Thank God for the glorious gospel — that we can teach to others that if they will, they may come.

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am

the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17). Yes brethren, let us tell them, "Whosoever will."

End Notes

1. The Proposal to Revise the Confessional Position of the United Presbyterian Church to the United States of America, p. 9.
2. Ibid. p. 11.
3. Ibid. p. 12.
4. Ibid. p. 9.
5. Ibid. p. 41.
6. Ibid. p. 64.
7. Ibid. p. 64.
8. The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A. p. 22.
9. Ibid. p. 20.
10. Ibid. p. 20.
11. Ibid. p. 25.
12. Ibid. p. 26.
13. Ibid. p. 25.
14. Ibid. p. 44.

[Paul Ditoro preaches in Washington, NC 27889; P.O. Box 834.]

Why I Left the Christian Church

by Terry Gunnells

My interest in the Restoration principle was the same during the 14 years I preached for the Christian Church as it is now. My new understanding of the church of Christ caused me to think that I would be more in the center of the movement by making the transition than by staying where I was. I've never questioned or doubted that I made the correct choice.

Ironically some of the issues with which I was uncomfortable in the Christian Church have now become common and acceptable within some churches of Christ. To that segment of the church the things I might mention would now be moot points.

It also seems fair to say that many of my

perspectives have changed by growth, but the basic truths remain the same.

The practice that caused me the most concern was how elders were selected. One church I preached for had an elder who was not married. I made an issue out of this until he very graciously resigned. After becoming a member of the church of Christ, I heard a well-known "patriarch" of the church say that Paul did not mean one had to be married to be an elder, but that if he was married he must rule his house well. In his eyes the unmarried man could have remained an elder. Of course this was not the consensus of the church, but it did cause me some concern up front. It also served as a

warning that not everyone agrees with me on my interpretation of the Bible.

Another Christian Church I served would on an annual basis put all of the men, 21 years or older, on a list and then have the members vote on them for elders and deacons. The top five vote getters were appointed elders and the next ten were appointed deacons. These fifteen men formed a board and were official policy makers of the church. A twenty-one year old man whose attendance was spasmodic was the top vote getter. His dad had been the preacher there for several years and I'm sure the members unconsciously were voting for the man's father. He was wise enough to know that he was not qualified and refused to be appointed.

The practice of rotating elders out of the eldership every third or fourth year was becoming popular when I left the Christian Church. This was not consistent with what I thought the Bible taught which was that elders were appointed for life and were removed when they were no longer qualified to serve, whatever the reason might be.

Observing the Lord's Supper on days other than the first day of the week was not a widespread practice, but occasionally was done. This would not have been tolerated by the church of Christ when I first became acquainted with it. In recent years a small percentage of preachers are privately saying they would not object to eating the supper on a weekday. Further, they are saying that there is no precedent for the first day of the week eating of the supper.

Though the preponderance of the Christian Churches believed baptism was for the remission of sins, it didn't seem as important as just being immersed. This became evident when those who placed membership were asked if they had been immersed — hardly ever were they taught or quizzed as to their real purpose for being baptized. Some of those who were never baptized for the remission of sins were eventually appointed elders and simple deduction says they could not consciously require others to be immersed for the remission of sins if they themselves had not been.

Hermeneutics played a large part in the decision to leave the Christian Church. Their argument was that since the Scripture was silent on the use of an instrument, there was an option either to use or not to use it.

Based on the specific versus generic method of interpretation I had come to believe that the Scriptures specified what kind of music was to be used. This new understanding made my transition much easier.

Please understand that Christian Churches are autonomous like we are. Not all Christian Churches practice the same thing. This article was written in view of my feelings at the time I made the transition. Whether good or bad, both brotherhoods have changed since then. I also must add that the trend in both cases has been more toward liberal than toward the conservative position.

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Truths That Made Me Leave the Methodist Church

by Craig Hinrichs

The Methodist church was the church of my youth, primarily, because it was the one nearest our home in rural South Carolina. It was my parents' decision that I attend there as a child. It was my decision to stop going when I left home as a young adult. Initially, I did not leave the Methodist church for any biblical reasons. I simply did not want to go. Still, I considered myself a Methodist. I attended when I visited my parents' home. My ultimate break with the Methodist Church came years later as a result of gradual growth in understanding what God taught in His word in comparison with Methodist teachings. The specific truths that effected my breach with the Methodist Church are the subject of this article. Documentation for the statements of Methodist doctrine comes from a book given to me by a Methodist preacher trying to persuade me to return to Methodism. Although, I knew these things before I received the book, I refer to it so that I will not be accused of destroying a "straw man" that I have created. The title of the book is **About Being United Methodist . . . A Guide to Effective Church Membership** (Greenfield, Mass.: Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., 1977). Page references in this article are from this book.

The following are the primary truths that resulted in my permanently leaving the Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church Did Not Come From God

"John Wesley was an ordained Anglican priest. At a prayer meeting in London on May 24, 1738, he gained the **new inspiration** (emphasis mine, C.H.) which led him to become the first teacher of 'Methodism.' . . . After his experience in 1738 Wesley set out with his brother Charles to form societies of 'Methodists' . . . Wesley never intended to break from the Church of England, and died an Anglican priest. . . . In America, itinerant preachers spread Wesley's

(emphasis mine, C.H.) words to the settlers. After the Revolution a separate church was formed, the Methodist Episcopal Church. Other Wesleyan denominations also formed" (pp. 2-3). From this we see that what is now known as the Methodist Church began with the "new inspiration" of John Wesley. There was no Methodist Church prior to John Wesley.

The Lord tells us in His word that He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). It came into existence as revealed in Acts 2. God's message to the Ephesians reveals to us that this church is the one He will save (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). No other has been started by God. No other has His promise of salvation. An organization based on "new inspiration" given in 1738 cannot be the one the Lord revealed in the New Testament. Clearly, the Methodist Church did not come from God.

Methodist Faith Is Not From God

"Sources for their (Methodists) faith include the Bible, John Wesley's writings, Methodist theologians' writings, church literature, the United Methodist **Book of Discipline**" (p. 4).

The Lord tells us that the source of our faith must be His revealed word (Rom. 10:17). God has revealed completely what we are to believe, once and for all, by means of His apostles and prophets during New Testament times (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). Any deviations from the faith system revealed in the pages of the New Testament are of demonic origin (1 Tim. 4:1-3). This same passage tells us that deviations would occur even as they have. Since faith in and of Christ is a salvation matter (Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 2:8), it is imperative that the content of our faith be what God has said and not human changes. By their own admission, the Bible is but a part of the source material for what Methodists believe. The rest comes from humans. Either they must

claim latter day revelation, in which case if such a claim were true all should be Methodists, or they have uninspired humans telling us the mind of God. The Scriptures, as we have seen, tell us that neither of these is possible. Clearly, the Methodist faith is not from God.

Methodist Baptism Is Not From God

“United Methodists practice baptism as a symbol of God’s forgiveness and the cleansing of our sins . . . a sign of regeneration or new birth. The vows that are made by the child’s parents at baptism are later assumed by the child when old enough to appreciate them (at confirmation). Methodists baptize by sprinkling, immersion, or pouring” (p. 8). Discussion with various Methodists has indicated that they do not believe a person must be baptized to be saved.

God tells us there is one baptism (Eph. 4:5). It is immersion for the remission of sins of penitent believers (not babies) and is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Obedience to baptism must be from the heart (Rom. 6:3-18), with understanding and sincerity. The incident recorded in Acts 19:1-5 shows us that the mere act of being immersed in water does nothing unless accompanied with proper understanding which can come only from God’s word. To embrace Methodist teaching concerning baptism is to embrace misunderstanding. The result is that such a baptism is vain and accomplishes nothing. The person remains in a lost condition while thinking he is saved. Methodist baptism is not from God.

The Structure, Laws, and Authority of the Methodist Church Are Not From God

“Distinguishing Methodism from other denominations is the structure. . . . The government of the United Methodist Church is a complex arrangement of councils and conferences. . . It is similar to American democratic government with an executive, legislative, and judicial branch” (p. 12). A brief look at each branch will show the inconsistency of the entire system with Scripture.

The executive branch is made up of

Bishops. “Methodist Bishops . . . function as both spiritual and administrative leaders for their area, and participate in governing the whole church organization” (p. 12).

God says that Jesus is the head of His church (Col. 1:18). Any administration is by Jesus through His word, the Bible. In congregations where there are qualified men, a plurality of elders (bishops, pastors) exercises the oversight of a single congregation of which they are a part (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 18; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). The Methodist Church also distinguishes between the individuals that serve as bishops and pastors, a distinction which God does not make.

The legislative branch of the Methodist Church consists of conferences made up of both “clergy” and “laity.” “The General Conference is the **primary law-making body**” (emphasis mine, C.H.) (p. 13).

The Lord’s church has no earthly legislative branch. All law making was done in heaven and revealed to us through God’s selected men (Jas. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). As has previously been stated, this revelation was complete. It is not to be modified by humans whatsoever.

The judicial branch of the Methodist Church is made up of the Judicial Council comprised of nine people from the “clergy” and “laity.” It “is the court of ultimate appeal in the church. The authority and basis of all decisions is **The Book of Discipline**” (p. 13).

All authority resides in Christ (Matt. 28:20). His complete, not-to-be-changed message was revealed through men He selected nearly 2000 years ago. Changes by anyone are forbidden (Gal. 1:6-9). To use the man-made **Book of Discipline** as final authority in church matters is to deny the authority of Christ. To become and remain a Methodist one must pledge loyalty to some authority other than Christ. The basis of our lives and hope will be the Methodist Church, not Christ. If we do this Jesus will cast us away from His presence at judgment (Matt. 7:21-23).

Summary

The Methodist Church and the Lord’s church are two different entities. They have different origins, beliefs, baptisms, struc-

tures, laws, and authorities. One cannot belong to both. They are mutually exclusive. One must make a decision to either make the originators of the Methodist doctrine the object of his faith and follow it, or to make the author of the Bible the object of his faith

and follow it.

Why did I leave the Methodist Church? I chose God and His word, the Bible.

[Brother Hinrichs preaches in Winnsboro, SC. P. O. Box 97; 29180.]

Truths That Made Me Leave the Episcopal Church

by Edwin S. Jones

Confirmation classes in the Episcopal Church are essentially the equivalent of the Roman Catholic catechism. Here those who have been christened confirm that they will embrace the faith they were associated with by proxy in their infancy.

I had been christened in the Methodist Church before my mother's side of the family moved into the ornate ritual and extensive liturgy of the Episcopal Church. The move had been motivated by the upward mobility of my maternal relations that sought a church more suited to their newfound sophistication; a sophistication my father and mother never acquired.

When we first began attending services at The Church of the Incarnation in southwest Atlanta I was 12 years old. Being unaccustomed to the finery and ritual of the Anglican tradition my first reaction was that it was cool to be an Episcopalian. A youthful elitism began to develop. This soon was dampened by the fact that those who worshipped with my family on Sundays did not choose to associate with those of lowly estate during the week. This was my first real awareness that the goodwill I associated with Christianity might depend more on socioeconomic status than on spiritual conviction. I felt that something was wrong.

By the age of 14 my time came for confirmation classes. Here I would study with a small group of potential new communicants under the direction of the Rector (priest/preacher) of the local congregates. At last I felt that I would be given an opportunity to better understand Christianity and the Bible and finally begin to make some sense of things that had become increasingly mys-

terious to me. I was wrong!

The class did not study the Bible in any direct way at all. The 39 articles of the Episcopal Church and the many traditions of the church were the topics of the indoctrination sessions. But at least I could ask my questions and even raise my objections.

I wanted to know why Episcopalians did what they did. I knew almost nothing about the Bible, but I was convinced that Christianity must surely be based on its teachings. I became greatly distressed when traditions and credal statements were called up to answer questions and to enlighten me in the ways of the church. The Bible remained in the shadows, at best given only an occasional obligatory reference. I was amazed. What was the Bible for, I wondered, if it had little or nothing to do with the practice of Christianity?

As classes came to a close the day for confirmation soon arrived. We were in for a special treat. The Bishop of the Southeastern Diocese would be present to touch the water to our foreheads and officially welcome us into the fellowship of the church. I still vividly recall the excitement of my cousins when they learned who would confirm me. "He will make you think the Lord Himself confirmed you," they told me in their obviously delighted state. I can also remember thinking when the big day arrived and I met the Bishop, "He looks like Santa Clause without a beard."

I was now a full fledged Episcopalian. My biblical ignorance and the obvious lack of there being any substantial relationship between the Scriptures and the Episcopal Church apparently were of but little impor-

tance. The only problem was that the indoctrination hadn't taken. I was still not convinced. Godliness and the Bible must surely be important, I reasoned.

The summer following my winter's confirmation saw most of my mother's family go to Florida on vacation. There I was able to spend time with my Aunt Dot from Philadelphia. I had developed a great like for her through spending a recent summer in her home. One day as my aunt and I were sitting apart from the family she made a statement that prompted a major turning point in my life. With a mixture of sadness and aggravation she said, "They think that they are Christians, but being a Christian is more than just going to church."

Someone else had taken note of the game being played. And not just any someone, an adult had seen that "the emperor had no clothes." The courage I needed to act on my convictions was beginning to form. It took time. I was 17 when I turned in my Server's robes and cross (a Server is a step up from an Acolyte; he helps the Rector serve communion) and told my mother I would not be going to church any more. My aunt's statement rang out in defense of my decision, "Being a Christian is more than just going to church." I would no longer even outwardly appear to endorse the hypocrisy I had for some time inwardly rejected. Unfortunately, I went too far. I decided that Christianity itself must be relatively unimportant. Further, I even lost interest in learning about the Bible. Why bother with a book "Christians" paid no attention to?

The next major event in my religious pilgrimage introduced the positive element I needed to complete my departure from my Episcopalian past. I still fancied myself a non-church-going Episcopalian. That was soon to change.

The Church of the Incarnation participated in a program to distribute Bibles in the surrounding neighborhoods of the congregation. I felt this made little or no sense since they didn't use the Bible for much of anything but a brief Sunday morning reading. My mother, however, did her duty and went out to supply the neighbors, mostly Baptists, with Bibles. I was not prepared for what would happen.

My mother returned home in tears. A Baptist preacher had, as she put it, "blessed her out." A preacher blessing out someone for handing out free Bibles was a truly amazing thing. The plot thickened. It seems his objection was that my mother had been handing out "Satan's Bible," the **Good News for Modern Man** version. I would have to check this Bible out for myself.

Let me interrupt my story at this point for a disclaimer. I don't believe that the **Good News Bible**, as it is now called, is a very good translation. I've probably gotten about a dozen people to trade theirs in on a more reliable translation. Nevertheless, I found the basic elements of truth in it. At the time I began reading it, I was almost 20 years old and still in high school. To say the least I was no scholar. The English of my mother's translation had caused a struggle in my previous efforts of Bible study. I could, however, comfortably read the GNB. For all its shortcomings, and there are many, I could read it and understand what I read. In it I saw the big picture that almost no translation, however bad, can totally obscure.

I was determined to find out how anyone could object to a Bible with a vigor that would send a grown woman home in tears. Yet I soon forgot about the initial motivation for looking into the "Devil's Bible." I was caught up in something far more compelling and captivating. I became lost in the most engaging account about the most remarkable man I had ever encountered. The story of Jesus captured my heart and brought a direction to my life that has shaped my character from that day to this. I found that there was a basis for Christianity in the person and teaching of this singularly inspiring man.

The negative reactions against religion I had held for so long were now replaced with a positive direction. The stifled articles of the Episcopal church were now seen in contrast to the vibrant, true to life, practical teachings of God's word. The cold formalism and ritualism of my former religion now became even more foolish when seen beside the true religion the Bible presented.

My journey toward God had shifted into high gear. One night as I lay on my bed lis-

tening to Billy Graham on television, he spoke of repentance, he used Scripture and I was moved. One thing was missing. I had read enough about baptism to know it ought to be part of his preaching. I wrote him about it and one of his associates responded by asking me for money. Still, I purposed to God on that evening that if He would lead me to people who wanted to truly follow the Bible, I would join with them to support the truth. I began looking more intently. But there was more. I promised God that if He would help me to find the truth I would devote my life to preaching. I knew I would find what I was looking for. I knew it was just a matter of time. I believed that if God could send Jesus, He would find a way to see to it that Edwin Jones would find salvation.

I went to the Episcopal Church building and found the new Rector. I told him about the things I had been reading in the Bible. I thought he would be as happy to discuss them as I had been to discover them. I was wrong.

Next, I went to visit the Methodist Church we had attended when I was a small boy. The "pastor" informed me that if I went to a Methodist school I might be told there was no virgin birth and no resurrection. He said he believed these things, but that if they weren't true it wouldn't really bother him. End of conversation.

I sought out the local Baptist preacher at the church most of the people in my neighborhood attended. Again, no satisfaction.

I kept reading and studying and searching. One day I found an interesting tract that mentioned the idea of the "New Testament Church." Another piece of the puzzle was found. The church could and should be the church you could read about in the Bible. There ought not to be but one church.

Then I remembered a friend of mind, Phil Johnson. He and I had attended high school together and his dad was a preacher. I had always admired Phil. He was president of our 2500 student high school and highly respected by everyone. Through a mutual friend I learned where Phil's dad, Max, preached. I went the next Sunday.

Brother Johnson preached on first principles and he used the Bible in a clear and understandable way. I responded to the in-

vation, but I needed more. I had seen too much foolishness not to ask some questions. We spent the afternoon in Bible study. Every time I asked a question, Max Johnson would open his Bible to a passage and have me read it. Brother Johnson was letting God do the talking. At last, thank God, the truth had been found. I was baptized that afternoon. The wandering, searching sinner found relief at last in the blood of Christ.

Friends and family could not understand my decision. My mother told friends I was going over "fool's hill," but that I would one day come down. I haven't. My high school friends thought I was kidding. I wasn't. My best friend and I were scheduled to room together at West Georgia College. He never has understood why I went off to be a preacher.

The Episcopal Church had a long history, scholarly creed, and an elaborate ritual. But its history was not long enough; its creed was man's wisdom, not God's; and its ritual could never meet man's need for a religion that deals with real life. Tradition is strong; God's word is stronger. The words of men cannot compare with the Word of God.

I thank God that I found His grace. I'm thankful that there were others who had determined to be the true followers of Christ. I would be remiss, however, if, having said this, I did not add the following thought. What would have happened to me if I had gone to a congregation where compromise and pop psychology dominated the pulpit and where the preacher was uncomfortable to speak God's plan with a sure and certain sound?

I left behind what many of my brethren are now trying to become. With all their high sounding rhetoric and "scholarly" ways, many of my brethren are hiding the gospel from those who hunger and thirst to find it. If I believed in what they are doing, I might just as well go back to the Episcopal Church. I'm not going back! My mother thought I was crazy. If I may appropriate the words of Paul Simon, I'm "still crazy after all these years"! Thank God I could be so "crazy" as to think that an honest seeker could go to the Bible and find the truth.

[Brother Jones is the Dean of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931.]

Truths That Made Me Leave the Baptist Church

by Donald W. Nix

I must admit that my first contact with the church of Christ had nothing to do with things spiritual. I had met a young red-headed girl (now my wife of 26 years) at the grocery store in which I was working and had dated her on several occasions when she invited me to attend a gospel meeting in La-Fayette, Alabama. I was amazed at the number of Scriptures that the speaker gave to support his points and went away with the notion that these people were really serious about their religion.

I began to attend services on every occasion that I could, still with the primary motivation of getting to see that lovely girl. I also began to question some of the things I had always thought were right.

I found myself in a state of confusion since preachers for the Baptist church were saying one thing and preachers for the church of Christ were saying another. I also had been taught all my life that each person could have their own belief concerning the Bible and that as long as one was sincere and of good moral character both could go to heaven, even though they disagreed. I did not change my mind about this until I decided that it does not matter what preachers say, but rather what does the Bible, in context, say. It was then that I began to make progress in understanding what was biblically right and wrong.

Having been involved in singing solos at the Baptist church, the subject of instrumental music was one of the first things that challenged further study. With the help of Shirley, my then girl friend, and the local preacher, I studied such passages as Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, as well as every other passage in the New Testament where music is mentioned. I saw (1) there was not one mention of instrumental music in the New Testament worship of the church; (2) that the instrument could not do what vocal music could do, namely, "Speak to yourselves," or "teach," nor "admonish."

Although I had a difficult time adjusting to singing without an instrument, I knew that it was the right thing to do.

Some of the other problems I had were: (1) the one church. Though I had been taught "We're all going to the same place (heaven), just in different churches, I learned that Matthew 16:13-19; Ephesians 1:22-23; and Ephesians 4:1-6 clearly pointed out that there is only one church and that the way to heaven was in that one church (Acts 2:47). (2) To be a Baptist I had been voted on by members for acceptance. I learned from Acts 2:47 that the Lord adds the saved to the church and no one had the right to vote me acceptable or unacceptable. (3) The subject of baptism by immersion was not a problem since that was their teaching as well, but, the necessity of baptism for the forgiveness of sins was a problem. They had asked me before baptism if I "believed that God for Christ's sake had pardoned my sins" and when I responded "yes," I was voted on for membership in the Baptist church. A time was then set for my baptism to be about two weeks later. My study of the Bible showed that sin is forgiven only in baptism and not before. (See Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21.) Every case of New Testament conversion that indicates a time for baptism shows an immediate response and compliance to the command to be baptized and not a setting of a future date.

It was at this point that I became keenly aware of the fact that I was not in a church mentioned in the Bible and that I had never been Scripturally baptized. At the age of nineteen and against the wishes of my parents I was baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins.

I would close by saying to anyone who has never been baptized for the remission of their sins to please lay aside every preconceived idea and to simply take the Bible and do everything it authorizes and eliminate all those things for which you can not find any

authority. Remember, the ultimate responsibility for your soul is in your hands. Others may have misled you, but you have the responsibility to weigh the evidence and decide.

[Brother Nix works with the Union Church of Christ. His address is: Rt. 6, Box 681; Union, SC 29379.]

The Church of God: Lack of Central Authority

by Clayton Winters

My religious experiences, from my earliest remembrances of childhood, were centered around what might best be described as an apostate Christian Church: apostate, not in the sense of the usual departures we think of — instrumental music, missionary societies, women in positions of authority, etc. — but rather open to anything that held a semblance of Christianity. Any preacher or group who wanted to was allowed to conduct meetings in the building, and usually were well supported by the people of the community.

This resulted in my first exposure to the "Church of God" denomination. Probably they used the meeting place more than any other outside religious group, filling the building with their members, their critics, and the curious. As a child I can remember being very scared when the "spirit" really moved. Dad (who was not very religious at the time, and certainly not in sympathy with such emotional gyrations), afforded us youngsters a sense of security as he stood with his five-cell flashlight in hand, declaring he would "quench their spirit" if they hurt one of his children. Still, they were only exaggerated practitioners of the same melodramatic services we were accustomed to.

The activities of that community church might best be described as intermittent: disbanding and reorganizing were two of its most salient characteristics. It was during one of those "off" periods that my brother Howard and I started attending a nearby Church of God. We never did actually join the church, but were immediately accepted as one of them. We found them to be very fine people, very zealous in the things they believed.

It wasn't long, however, until some ser-

ious questions began to gnaw at us. Not many doctrinal issues had caught our attention at this time, but we did have some doubts about miraculous healing. We prayed fervently, but to no avail: the sick remained sick, and the crippled still walked with crutches. Surely the Bible would hold an answer for this challenge to faith, and to it we began to turn with increasing frequency.

It was at this point we were to learn a very vital truth. The good, honest, sincere people who made up the Church of God had no real interest in the Bible or its message. In reality no Bible was needed. They had the witness within them, and that became their only recognized authority. Feelings were more important than divine revelation. One did not need to obey God's plan to obtain salvation. It came in response to diligent seeking, and when received was "better felt than told." Christian practices? Each individual became a law to himself. If one felt a practice was right, it was right; if he felt it was wrong, it was wrong. That settled it. There simply was no central standard by which truth and religious practices could be measured. It became increasingly evident that they were "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves," and in so doing were "not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12).

When emotions rule, the Bible becomes a useless appendage. This is the basic error of the Church of God (or any other religious group who accepts an inner feeling or conscience as authoritative). God's word is emphatic in asserting that such a concept is divisive and deadly error. It plainly affirms, (1) that man has no internal, authoritative guide, and (2) that the Bible is the complete and final authority in all matters religious.

Let's study further, and in that order, these two dramatic truths.

Man Has No Internal Authoritative Religious Guide. With reference to this, note carefully the following definitive statements from the Scriptures. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9). "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). We allow these Scriptures to stand without comment; they are so decisive they need none. Man has no internal religious guide; rather, he must depend solely on a spiritual guide that is inspired and external.

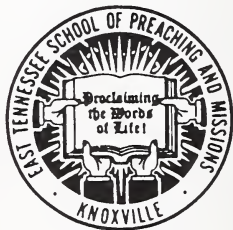
God's Word, Revealed, Confirmed, and Written is Our Only Authoritative Guide in Religious Matters. The Church of God labors under the conviction that the miraculous element characteristic of the early church was a permanent gift, and thus an abiding means of personal conviction and guidance. The error thus espoused is twofold.

First, they fail to recognize that during the first century revelation was an on-going process. Jesus gave His message directly, or by means of the Holy Spirit, to the apostles (Matt. 10:19, 20, 27; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:14; Gal. 1:11, 12). In lieu of a written New Testament (none was available at the time), newly organized churches were imparted spiritual gifts (knowledge, wisdom, etc.) to firmly establish them, and to perfect their knowledge in Christ (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 14:1, 24, 30, 31). As time passed, some of the New Testament revelation was committed to writing. During that

period churches were getting it both ways: partially by means of the written word, partially through their spiritual gifts (Acts 16:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:27; 1 Cor. 14:37-40; 1 Tim. 4:13, 14). In due time all revelation was committed to writing and the term **finality** inscribed across its contents (Rev. 22:18, 19). When that happened, miracles had served their purpose and ceased (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3, 4; 1 Cor. 13:9, 10; Eph. 4:8-16).

Secondly, failing to recognize the purpose of the miraculous as being simply God's vehicle to deliver a confirmed and completed written guide (John 20:30, 31), the Church

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of God rejects the finished product itself — the Word of God. But reject it though they may it still stands as verbally inspired (1 Cor. 2:12, 13), complete (2 Tim. 3:16, 17); authoritative (1 Cor. 4:6; 14:37); final (Rev. 22:18, 19), and as the standard by which we will be judged in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-15).

Are We Ready to Espouse Their Error?

Just a few years ago the charismatic movement took root among us. When that happened, whether we recognized it or not, respect for the authoritative word of God flew out the window. It could not be any other way. If I have my own personal guide, communicating directly to me God's will, guiding my every step in life, what possible use could I have for a Bible? It becomes excess baggage, serving no greater purpose than to cumber my spiritual progress.

This primrose path to perdition is devastating to the precious body of Christ. It is laying the groundwork for every conceivable apostasy — baptism need not be for the remission of sins, mechanical instruments of music acceptable in Christian worship, Christian women's subjection a matter of culture, modest apparel unnecessary (it's a shame

what some women wear to worship these days) — to mention only a few.

Like ancient Israel, it seems that the only thing we can learn from the false religions around us is to practice what they preach. And like them, we seem to be fast approaching the time when there is no King among us; rather every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6).

Brethren, are we going to escape from religious error only to allow it to devour us again? Such must never be the case. Instead, let us recall and imbibe the message given to Isaiah: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Or perhaps the warning of the apostle Paul: "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." Gospel truth is still the only thing that will save the world; let us not compromise it.

[123 Toney St., Erwin, TN 37650. Clayton is a brother of the late Howard Winters, long-time editor of Carolina Christian.]

Brotherhood News

The WARNERS CHAPEL CHURCH OF CHRIST in Clemmons, NC, was featured in a recent edition of the One Nation Under God Campaign **UPDATE** publication. The same **UPDATE** also noted that North Carolina to date has received nearly 8,000 responses to the campaign. Only Texas has had more responses than North Carolina. Several churches in both Carolinas have reported baptisms as a direct result of the campaign. . . . VIRGIL TROUT concluded his work with the LINVILLE FOREST CHURCH OF CHRIST near Kernersville, NC, on October 27. Brother Trout had been at Linville Forest almost two years. He is now the pulpit minister for the Maxwell Ave. church in Ardmore, OK. . . . The ALBEMARLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Albemarle, NC, enjoyed a record Sunday morning attendance of 97 on October 13. DON HUGHES is the new preacher in Albemarle. . . . LINDA NEWTON, a member of the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC, was honored at

a banquet last September 21, as one of the top 100 nurses in North Carolina. . . . STEPHEN GUY is the new preacher for the MYRTLE BEACH CHURCH OF CHRIST in Myrtle Beach, SC. The previous 16 years of brother Guy's preaching ministry was spent in California. . . . DAVID VAUGHN, who preached for nearly ten years for the MEBANE ST. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Burlington, NC, is now preaching for the GASTONIA CHURCH OF CHRIST in Gastonia, NC. . . . In the wake of the zeal created by the recent One Nation Under God Campaign, the elders of the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, TN, are launching a \$1.2 million domestic tele-evangelism effort called "Campaign America." The project features a 30-minute talk show program with a regular host and a panel of guests from local congregations participating in the campaign. It is projected that the initial broadcast may reach as many as 75 million people. . . .

[Dennis Conner, Yadkinville, NC]

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**Central Haywood
Clyde, North Carolina**

The Church in Western North Carolina

by Jim Mullican, Guest Editor

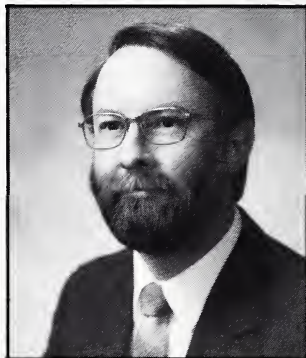
Visitors from Tennessee are often surprised to find the churches of Christ in western North Carolina fewer in number and smaller in size than those just a few hours away in Tennessee. A combination of history and geography seems to be the reason for this. Until relatively recent times, the people of western North Carolina were somewhat isolated, due to the difficulty of travel through the mountains. The influence of such men as David Lipscomb greatly strengthened the church of Christ in Tennessee and elsewhere, but little of that influence penetrated the Smoky Mountains.

In the twentieth century, with the construction of modern roads, the gospel has penetrated the mountains and found fertile soil in many good and honest hearts. Statistics on church growth around the country indicate that the church is growing faster in western North Carolina than in most other areas.

It is a beautiful area in which to live; it is filled with good people, many of whom are anxious to serve God; and it is rapidly being filled with good congregations. Anyone looking for a good place to retire or a good place to work is invited to investigate this area.

I appreciate the opportunity extended to me by David Pharr to coordinate the writing of this issue to introduce the churches of Christ in western North Carolina. It is my hope that the information will be interesting and enlightening to many.

[P. O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]



EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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Introducing Central Haywood Church of Christ

by Jim Mullican

The Central Haywood congregation became a legal entity in 1980, when the members of the Old Thicket Church of Christ agreed to change the name and move to a better location. It was with regret that the historic old building in its quiet and rustic setting was vacated, but the desire to more effectively reach the community with the gospel was the primary concern. Lack of parking space, lack of classroom space, and the isolated location were all impediments to growth. The new church building, located between the hospital and the driver's license office, is seen by everyone in the county at some time. In January 1981, the church began meeting in its new location, with Mike Burns as the preacher.

The new building with seating for 100 people seemed large to the fifteen members who comprised the church at that time. During the next decade, while the population of the county actually declined slightly, the church grew to six times that original number, so that today the membership numbers 85 and the attendance slightly more than that.

In 1985, Mike Burns moved to Tennessee and was replaced by Jim Mullican as the regular preacher for the Central Haywood church.

The year 1986 was a milestone year for the congregation. That year the church ceased to be a mission work needing financial support from others and became self-supporting. On November 9, 1986, the church also reached its goal of being organized according to the scriptural pattern by appointing elders to serve as shepherds for the flock. A few months later, deacons were also appointed.

Beginning in 1987, the church embarked on a program to assist others as it had been assisted. Monthly support was provided for E. R. Bruce in his work with the church at Cherokee, North Carolina. Ron Clayton's mission work in India and the new congregation at Atlantic Beach, Florida, are works currently included in the mission budget of Central Haywood.

In 1990, two programs to benefit the young people of the church were instituted. One was the Western North Carolina Bible Bowl, discussed more fully in another article in this issue. The other was the clearing of adjacent property to be used as a softball field for periodic games and fellowship activities.

Plans for the future include expansion of the present 100-seat auditorium to accommodate approximately 200. In the summer and fall, when visitors come to the mountains, many must sit on folding chairs set up at the front or back of the auditorium.

One strong point of the Central Haywood church is the even distribution of its membership throughout all age groups. There are children of all ages, with approximately twelve in the teen class. There are several young married couples, others in their middle years, and a number of retirees and senior citizens. Each makes a unique contribution to the life of the church and to the Bible classes which are offered for all age groups.

Visitors and newcomers often comment on the friendliness and warmth of the Central Haywood church. It is a church which seeks to welcome each person and help that individual find his or her unique place of service in the kingdom of God. The members love one another and others are able to feel this. Jesus said, *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35).

Anyone seeking this kind of Christian love and fellowship is invited to any of the Bible classes and worship services listed below.

Schedule of Meetings

Sunday

Bible Class	9:30 a.m.
Worship	10:30 a.m.
Worship	6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class	6:30 p.m.
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History of the Old Thickety Church of Christ 1899-1980

by Henrietta Caylor

The Old Thickety Church of Christ, fore-runner of the Central Haywood Church of Christ, was located in the Thickety community of eastern Haywood County, North Carolina. According to court records it was established in 1899 when the late W. P. and Sarah W. Ford transferred a deed for a building site to W. G. Ford and J. D. Holland, trustees; the church to be known as "The Old Thickety Church of Christ." Formerly a small log house, which served as both a church and a school, was located near the building. W. P. Ford was a teacher in this school.

A small frame meeting house was erected on the land and a congregation met there for many years. Early records are scarce, but a Thickety resident, the late Harley Wright, remembered an early preacher whose last name was "Kimball," and a later one whose name was Jason Hughes. He remembered the building was struck by lightening several times and that a bad storm damaged the structure so extensively that one of the walls

collapsed and "slid down the hill." At that time members of the community pledged work and money towards repairs with amounts ranging from \$.25 to \$5.00. The total collected was \$36.80 which apparently was sufficient for the need. The undated pledge sheets are in possession of the Central Haywood Church of Christ.

An interesting feature of the church was an old tolling bell which was used to toll the deaths of community members and to announce church services. After the Thickety building was dismantled, the bell was moved to a special place at the Central Haywood Church property.

Eventually the early members of the church either died or moved away, and the building was abandoned except for occasional funeral services, reunions, or infrequent religious services by a visiting preacher.

In the summer of 1973, Bob Rigdon, minister of the Sylva Church of Christ, brought David Bryant and Oran Rhodes



(both natives of Texas) to visit Troy and Marge Clark, members of the church who had returned to the Thickety community, and were attending services in Asheville. Marge was a descendant of the Ford family and had attended services at Old Thickety when she was a child. It was explained that the men wanted to start a church in the area. Having decided there was a potential for a work in Haywood County, Rhodes and Bryant returned to Texas and moved their families to Canton, a small town in the eastern part of the county, bringing their financial aid with them. A group of about 20, including both families from Texas, began meeting at the home of the Rhodes family.

The small congregation soon began searching for a public place to worship. Research of land records revealed that the Old Thickety site had been deeded to the "Church of Christ forever" and a decision was made to renovate the dilapidated building and use it for a meeting place. Troy Clark, Don Osborn, and Oran Rhodes were appointed as trustees to oversee improvements to the structure and to oversee the business of the congregation.

After extensive renovations, the building was ready for services in October 1973. David Bryant returned to Texas and Oran Rhodes moved into the Thickety community. He left in January 1976 for a ministry in West Plains, Missouri, and today serves as Director of the Mid-West School of Biblical Studies in Independence, Missouri.

The Old Thickety congregation was instrumental in starting monthly fourth Sunday singings in western North Carolina. The first singing was held in 1974 and was so successful that other congregations began alternating as hosts for the occasion. However, the place everyone seemed to enjoy the most was the quaint old building at Thickety. This activity continued for several years.


After the departure of Oran Rhodes, the congregation was most fortunate in having men from the Sylva, and sometimes the Asheville and Hendersonville congregations, serve as teachers, speakers, and song leaders for Sunday services. Troy Clark, along with the assistance of the late Sherrill Jimison and Jeff Myron, taught the mid-week Bible classes and filled in whenever and December 1991

wherever there was a need.

In October 1977 Vernon Wallace moved from Taylor, Michigan, to Haywood County and began a full time ministry with the church. He remained until 1980, during which time a decision was made by the members that a new location would be needed in order to have room for future growth of the church.

Land was subsequently bought on Jones Cove Road near the U. S. 19-23 Bypass between Clyde and Waynesville and in the geographic center of the county. An existing house on the property became the preacher's

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home and a new brick building was built beside it for worship and Bible classes. This structure was first used for services on January 24, 1981.

Vernon Wallace returned to Michigan in March 1980 and until August of that year, men from Sylva and other nearby congregations conducted services as they had in the past.

In August 1981 Mike Burns and Howard Horton moved into the area to share evangelistic responsibilities. Howard remained until December, but Mike stayed after the congregation moved into the new building in Clyde, moving to Tennessee in March 1985.

Membership at Old Thickety ranged from nine to twenty at various times, but the congregation was blessed with dedicated workers and outstanding support from other congregations. Troy and the late Marge Clark made great sacrifices of time, effort, and service. Esmond and Lucille Sanders, summer residents, provided much guidance and financial support. Ralph Jones served as a trustee, along with brothers Clark and Sanders, and made further improvements on the old building. The Sylva congregation sent able men to conduct services when there was no preacher. The most frequent speakers were Wally Bembree, John Baker, Clarence Hubbel, Dell Reid, Leland Waters, Robert Teal, Kenny Nicholson, and Joseph Suttles. Other churches in the area sent speakers to help out when there was a need. The Huntingdon Church of Christ of Huntingdon, Tennessee, and the Mesquite and Rusk Church of Christ in Ranger, Texas, provided early financial support and conducted revivals as well as Vacation Bible Schools. At a later time, the Sycamore Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee, took responsibility for preacher support, and other financial support was provided by the Cary Church of Christ in Cary, North Carolina. Various groups from the Sycamore church assisted with visitation and Vacation Bible School programs.

After the congregation moved to the Clyde site the Old Thickety building was maintained for several years, but insurance and vandalism became problems. Finally, and with reluctance, it was decided to dis-

mantle the structure and donate the small plot on which it was located to Thickety residents for the purpose of expanding the Thickety Community Cemetery which already bordered it on two sides. It is in a beautiful setting and a number of members of the Old Thickety congregation are buried there.

Those of us who worshipped at Old Thickety were privileged to have a part in reestablishing the church and to have had the assistance and support of so many dedicated workers from other congregations. Some of the members of the Old Thickety Church, whom we loved and worked with, are no longer with us and we miss them. Those of us who remain will always remember our years at Old Thickety with a special nostalgia.

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What We Believe

by Jim Mullican

Because churches of Christ are each autonomous and self-governing, it is impossible for any one person to speak for all of them. Because of a desire to adhere to the Scriptures as the final authority on all questions pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), churches of Christ have always refused to acknowledge any other "creed" or statement of beliefs as authoritative. However, for those who may not be familiar with churches of Christ, the following paragraphs represent views generally held by those who seek salvation by grace through faith in Jesus (Eph. 2:8) and who worship together as the churches of Christ all over the world.

The Head of the Church

First, Jesus is always regarded as the only head of the church (Eph. 5:23). Each congregation is accountable only to him for its practices and beliefs. There is no denominational structure above the local church, and therefore, no one to dictate what others must believe or practice.

The Source of Authority

In light of this unusual fact, how do the many thousands of congregations maintain any semblance of unity and uniformity? The answer lies in their agreement that the New Testament of Jesus is the only authority for the church. This will be the standard by which all are judged on the last day (John 12:48). While each is free to arrive at his or her own conclusions in light of the teachings of the New Testament, there are surprisingly few major disagreements. When these arise, sincere brethren are able to study the Scriptures together and usually arrive at a conclusion acceptable to all. When agreement cannot be reached, each is always free to render obedience to Christ as he or she understands it to be required by the Lord and in keeping with the principles laid down in Romans 14.

Salvation

The churches of Christ strive to teach and follow the same plan of salvation as revealed in the New Testament. While recognizing that salvation is by grace and completely undeserved (Eph. 2:8) it is also recognized that man is free to choose whether he will accept or reject God's offer (2 Pet. 1:10; 3:9). In the New Testament, becoming a Christian involved the foundation of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. It is on this rock that Jesus promised Peter the church would be built (Matt. 16:16-18). Paul emphasized that the gospel offers "salvation to everyone who has faith" (Rom. 1:16). However, there is living, vibrant faith; and there is also inactive, dead faith (Jas. 2:17; 2:26).

The living, vibrant faith which will lead to salvation produces a complete surrender to God, in which the sinner is moved to repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19), publicly confess his obedience to the call of Christ by being immersed (baptized) in water as a reenactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:17). Only a faith which motivates full obedience can be regarded as a saving faith.

Organization

The churches of Christ are today organized according to the same simple Scriptural pattern as were the churches of Christ in the New Testament. This pattern provides for a group of elders or bishops to oversee each individual congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 20:28; Tit. 1:5). The characteristics and qualities which must characterize such men are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Their work is that of shepherding and guiding the congregation.

A group of specially appointed servants, deacons, is also described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These are men to whom the church has entrusted important responsibilities of ministering to the needs of particular groups or to the church as a whole.

In addition, there are men who devote

themselves fully to the work of preaching. They are commonly called preachers, evangelists, or ministers (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). Many others serve as teachers, or in various necessary roles within the worship and Bible classes of each congregation.

Men and Women

Churches of Christ also seek to maintain the Scriptural distinctions between the roles of men and women in the church. While the New Testament recognizes the equal value of both men and women in God's sight (Gal. 3:28), it also assigns differing areas of responsibility to men and women, prohibiting women from positions of authority over men in the church (1 Tim. 3:12) and from leadership of the public worship (1 Tim. 3:11; 1 Cor. 14:33-37). The talents of many gifted women are utilized in teaching children and other women (Tit. 2:3-5), and it is always recognized that they are the source of greatest influence on the character of their own children, thus shaping the future of the world.

Worship

The worship of churches of Christ is also patterned after the New Testament commands and examples. It consists of prayer (1 Tim. 2:8), singing (Eph. 5:18,19), preaching from God's word (2 Tim. 4:1-5), and on the first day of each week, participation in the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30), and a financial offering of sacrifice to the Lord (1 Cor. 16:1,2).

One thing which visitors often notice about the worship is that no musical instruments are used with the singing. This is due to the Biblical commands (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16), the prohibitions against adding what God has not authorized (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18; 1 Cor. 4:6, RSV), and the law of exclusion (Heb. 7:13-14), which is the rule that the failure to specifically authorize something in effect prohibits it. There is also the evidence of history, which shows that musical instruments were never a part of early Christian worship, and in fact came into general use by most denominations just a few generations ago.

Bible Classes

Most churches of Christ choose to have Bible classes for all age groups on Sunday morning and Wednesday nights. Some have them at other times in addition to or in place of these times. This is because, while the New Testament certainly stresses the need for Christians to know and understand the Scriptures, it never stipulates just how that knowledge is to be gained, and weekly Bible classes have proved to accomplish this goal when fully utilized.

The Church of Christ

Estimates vary, but there are generally thought to be approximately 14,000 churches of Christ in the United States, with perhaps a similar number in foreign lands, primarily in India and various African nations. There are approximately 1,300,000 active and faithful members of the churches of Christ in the United States, besides those who are Christians in foreign lands.

Modern churches of Christ exist as the result of an effort to restore simple, non-denominational Christianity in the modern world. In Romans 16:16, the early congregations were called "churches of Christ," and in this too the modern churches seek to continue the original form of Christianity.

If this approach is appealing to anyone reading this, please contact the church of Christ nearest you for information and Bible study. You will find a group of friendly and loving Christians, who will extend a warm welcome as you seek to do the will of God. "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16).

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The Impressions of a New Member

by Cheryl Leduc

August 1990 brought all sorts of new adventures to our family! Being a native of Florida for 36 years, with all of my family and lifetime friends there, and my two teenage daughters feeling the same emotional ties, leaving all behind and moving to a "new world" was a big adjustment. It was a scary but exciting time. Among one of the scary "new things," but the most important, was finding a new congregation. My family had been at one church all of my life. The church in Auburndale, Florida, was "my family." Leaving them was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I never expected to find a church that felt like family again.

Our first visit to Central Haywood was just myself and my two daughters, Joy and Hope. My husband, Gary, was working. Feeling very anxious, we approached the building with great uncertainty. That was quickly put behind us! The first step inside the door, we were greeted warmly and with genuine affection. I have never felt so "at home" and welcome anywhere I've ever visited. All were warm and friendly and went out of their way to make us feel at ease. Jim and his family stayed for an hour or more

after services and talked to us, filling us in on some things in the community and the history behind the church. Needless to say, we looked no farther for a congregation. The next few Sundays we went as a family. After a few weeks, my youngest daughter, Hope, then 13 years old, was baptized and my husband, Gary, was restored after 8 years of non-attendance, and is now actively involved in the work of the church.

Our family has grown closer due to God's family. We all feel close to our "new family" here at Central Haywood. We cannot imagine being anywhere else than here in God's beautiful mountains! Jim and his family have been and are a wonderful inspiration to all of us. We have found our "family" here at Central Haywood and love all of them dearly! I cannot stress enough the importance of a "warm welcome." First impressions really do mean a lot. The warm and friendly welcome we received at Central Haywood was the deciding factor which determined where we would worship.

[1030 Walnut Creek Road, Waynesville, NC 28786.]

A Boon for Young People

by Jim Mullican

In late 1989, the elders of the Central Haywood congregation met with the teenagers and their parents to discuss programs and activities which the young people would like to see implemented. Among the ideas suggested by the young people was a Bible Bowl.

Some may not be familiar with the concept. It can be organized and executed in various ways, but it is a contest in which teams of young people compete with each other to determine who has the greatest Bible knowledge.

In July 1990, the first Western North Carolina Bible Bowl was held at Central Haywood. After a short period of singing and prayer, the competition begins with a

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written test over four chapters of the New Testament, beginning with Matthew 1-4 and continuing through Revelation. The test consists of twenty questions which must be answered in twenty minutes. Most teams find it best to assign each member a few ques-



tions. For example, a four-member team could each answer five questions. The written test is open-Bible, and members may help each other and discuss answers, as each team is in a separate classroom. They then combine all answers on one test which is submitted for grading.

When the twenty-minute test period is ended, all groups meet together again to grade the tests. For the sake of uniformity, the wording of the King James Version is used, although all may use whatever translation they choose at other times. If there is a tie between two teams at this point, oral tiebreaker questions are asked. The teams have one minute to agree on an answer, with Bibles closed, and write it down. The young people on these teams learn the material so well that often several tie-breakers are answered before a winner is finally determined. This winning team receives a small trophy to keep and a plaque to display until the next month's contest.

However, as Jeff Golson, former youth minister at Hendersonville, has often said, "All the young people who participate are winners, because they are gaining a thorough knowledge of the Bible." Many have observed in recent years that our Bible classes are no longer resulting in teens who know the Word of God, but this is a good program which does result in increased knowledge and understanding.

At this time, six congregations in western North Carolina are participating, and others have expressed an interest in becoming involved in the future. Teams vary from two members to seven or eight, but the smaller teams have frequently won the competition. Some congregations use one of their weekly Bible class periods to prepare for the Bible Bowl, some use both, and some use a separate time, such as 3:00 Sunday afternoon. The person who prepares the test should not be the one who leads the study sessions. The host congregation is different each month.

Following the Bible Bowl competition, there is a period of social fellowship and a meal together. This is the second major benefit of the Bible Bowl. Since most congregations in western North Carolina are relatively small, the young people have an opportunity to become acquainted with other



Central Haywood Bible Bowl winners, October 1991: Nicole Naylor, Alissa Busby, Lyle Mullican, Justin Naylor, Hope Leduc, Cathy Mullican.

Christian young people in the area. Many friendships have already developed, and in time perhaps some romantic relationships may also develop.

Anyone interested in participating in this monthly competition or in starting similar ones in other areas, is invited to write or call for more information.

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The Church in Sylva, North Carolina

by Bob Rigdon

The church in Jackson County began with the Ledbetter and Moses families. Jack Ledbetter had been baptized while working in South Carolina, and his wife, Bernita, was baptized by Brother J. W. Brents, who came to Western North Carolina from Nashville, Tennessee, a number of summers during the decade of the 1940's and early 1950's to preach and locate Christians in this area. Bard and Cleo Moses, "Doc" Moses, and Gatha Moses Hooper were the four members in the county. The Ledbetter family drove to Waynesville, North Carolina, to meet with the small congregation there during the 1950's, and in 1953 a Sunday afternoon service was begun either in the home or the store of the Moses family.

Also in 1953, Helen Swayngim moved from Missouri to Caney Fork, and a Bible Study was conducted there during the week by Bob Rigdon, who had moved to Waynesville to preach. Lucille Nicholson, Geneva Kirchberg and their children began driving to Waynesville to worship. During 1956-57, Hazel Bradsher and Jean McConnell obeyed the gospel, and the church began meeting in the Woodmen of the World Hall. Twenty-three people were present for the first meeting on March 2, 1956. Bible studies were held regularly in homes of the members.

A Sunday morning worship service was begun in the American Legion Hall in the spring of 1957, when Bob Rigdon and his family moved to Sylva to work with the church. The current property was purchased with the help of the Polytechnic congregation in Ft. Worth, Texas, and Christians throughout the United States. An auditorium seating approximately 125 people and a classroom wing were constructed in 1957. The first service was held on August 4, 1957. Bob worked under the oversight of the Polytechnic elders who provided his salary from 1957-1968, when the church in Sylva became self-supporting. A minister's home was completed in the fall of 1958. In 1971 an adjoining lot on Bartlett Street and a second house (21 Josephine Street) were purchased. A new auditorium with a seating capacity of over 200

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was built in 1976, and renovation of the old auditorium and classrooms was undertaken shortly thereafter.

James E. McAlister was hired to do personal work in 1971. Also serving in this capacity were A. L. Stewart, Kay Phillips, Fred Harper and Marcus Sparks. Lynn Tucker was hired to do youth work in 1977. Joseph Suttle followed him in 1978. Vernon Dugger moved to Sylva to continue this work in 1987 and remains with the congregation.

In the fall of 1983, the first elders, Wallace Bemby and Bob Rigdon were appointed. Early in 1984, the first deacons, Eddie Lee, Clause McConnell and Kenny Nicholson were appointed.

The following sample of Sunday morning attendance and contribution figures illustrate the growth of the church in Sylva:

January 4, 1959	39	\$ 53.99
June 6, 1965	51	138.12
September 6, 1970	79	250.20
August 3, 1975	128	583.75
October 25, 1980	139	1,111.20
December 2, 1984	157	1,886.63
July 18, 1989	157	2,536.27
October 21, 1990	174	3,000.00
Average contribution to date for 1991 —		\$2,873.20 per Sunday.

Since 1953 there have been approximately 238 baptisms, 149 to place membership, 180 to move away, and 29 deaths.

In addition to the evangelistic efforts in Jackson County, the Sylva church has aided in the beginning of and growth of churches in the Cherokee Indian Reservation, Andrews, Hayesville, Franklin, Bryson City, Clyde and Robbinsville, North Carolina.

We are involved in missionary efforts in China, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Thailand, and the World Radio.

Also, we have a television program over WLOS (ABC), Channel 13, Asheville, North Carolina, approximately 26 weeks each year.

[P. O. Box 101, Sylva, NC 28779.]

The Church of Christ in Hendersonville, North Carolina

by Jerry Senn

A group of members of the church of Christ began meeting in Hendersonville, North Carolina, on September 23, 1951, at the Henderson County Court House. William Roe, a Christian from the state of Florida, and a summer visitor to Hendersonville, had located a few families who were members of the church and encouraged them to begin gathering for worship.

Shortly after this first meeting, the group began worshipping in the old Woodman of the World building, with W. L. George conducting the services. Later, William Roe purchased a piece of property at 1201 Oakland Street. He would later donate the lumber from another piece of personal property, and build there a place of worship for the small group of believers. These early beginnings are largely due to the devotion and love for Christ's cause demonstrated by William Roe.

In November 1954 Jim Davis and family moved to Hendersonville to work with the church as its first full-time minister. Brother Davis continued with the church until 1965. Jim Davis still lives in Hendersonville, as a retired preacher and counselor. During a one-year period, the Davises moved to Valdese, North Carolina, but returned to Hendersonville immediately thereafter. During his absence, Roy Fudge filled the pulpit.

The General Electric Company and Olin Corporation moved into the area, bringing new Christians with them. With these additional members, the church began to grow. Also, an increasing number of believers came to this area to spend their summers in the cool mountains. This trend continues today.

In 1965, a group of members from Hendersonville decided to begin meeting for worship in Brevard, North Carolina. Jim Davis became their preacher. This was a cooperative effort and has resulted in a thriving body of believers in Transylvania County.

K. M. Kelly, Ken Willis, Carter Geer and Frank Milton served as preachers in Hendersonville from 1965 through 1976. Ken

Willis would later move to Malaysia and Carter Geer to Africa, with their families, to do mission work. They each left the congregation in increasingly stable circumstances.

In June 1976, Donald Wood moved to Hendersonville to serve the group of 85 members. The first two elders to serve the church were Bud Gibson and J. B. Henderson. The first deacons were Ben Cochran, Bud Dill, Floyd Grindstaff and Frank Love.

With the purchase of six acres of land by the church in 1979 a building was constructed on the site of 1975 Haywood Road (Highway 191). The church continues to use this facility. The building has been paid for and a new annex building providing classrooms and fellowship hall is under construction at this writing.

From 1982 until 1984, Franklin Moore served as the preacher. He and his family then moved to Scotland as missionaries. In 1984, Jerry Senn and family came to Hendersonville to work with the church and have continued there to the present.

The present elders are J. B. Henderson, Jim Keevert and Jerry Senn. Those who have faithfully served as elders since those first appointed in the late 1970's are Ken Merritt, Sr., and Hagood Godley. The present deacons are Herman Hoots, Floyd Grindstaff, Mark Kelly, Bud Dill, Bill LaFever, Ben Cochran, and Rod Price. Others who have served as deacons have been Andy Newberry, Bill Beech and Bob Ledford.

Jeff Golson worked as an associate minister from 1989 until 1991. He and his wife, Lisa, now live in Dyersburg, Tennessee. An active youth work was begun and continues. Wayne Scott also worked for two summers with our young people.

The congregation has been active in supporting mission work in the Carolinas. We help the following churches in North Carolina: Albemarle, Forest City, and Red Oak (Weaverville). We also provide some support

for the church in Easley, South Carolina. We have assisted Palmetto Bible Camp, Southeastern Children's Home and Mt. Dora Children's Home for many years.

With an average attendance of 200 for Sunday worship, the church has a weekly budget of \$3,050. As we complete our new annex building, we desire to greatly expand our ability to serve the community in areas of benevolence and evangelism. The new fellowship hall will seat 200 and the additional classrooms will provide room for growth in our Bible school program over the next ten year period. With the new building, we are doubling the size of our present facilities.

Our ladies presently engage in a weekly morning Bible class, a monthly ladies night out program, and an annual retreat. A group of seniors meets bimonthly for study and fellowship. Calling themselves "Pathfinders," they take numerous trips together and plan to develop an outreach program. We conduct a quarterly breakfast for all men, at which opportunity is given for input into the work of the church. A group of younger adults meets once a month for fellowship.

Once each month a faithful group conducts devotionals in local rest homes. We have an active benevolent program, carried on by our deacons. A visitation program has continued for six years, with 32 Christians gathering monthly for fellowship and assignments.

Though we believe we are in the formative stages for reaching into our community with the gospel message, we do have a growing spirit of love and harmony. I have never known a group of Christians with greater concern and genuine love for one another.

Henderson County has a population of 69,000. The growth rate is rapid and consists of many retirees from all across the nation. The beauty of this mountain area and the proximity to shopping and medical facilities make this an attractive center for future growth. We believe the church in Hendersonville also provides an additional and important appeal to folks who desire to retire and remain active in the Lord's work.

[1975 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28739.]

History of the Church in Brevard, North Carolina

by Henry Colbert

The history of the church of Christ meeting in Brevard began in 1965. Until that time, there was no assembly of the Lord's people in the area. There were some members of the church living here, but they worshipped in Hendersonville some twenty miles away.

In the summer of that year, plans were made to establish a congregation in Brevard. An eleven hundred dollar contribution from the Hendersonville brethren began the working phase. The search for a place to assemble began.

Jim Davis was the preacher at Hendersonville, and he gave his full support to the plans. He began working with Warren and Ruby Cline, Chuck and Linda Bruner, Charles and Juanita Dooley, Novice and Edna Taylor, and Andy and Mary Ann Martin. Many congregations have started with less. This was a fairsized group with which to begin. There were also some summer res-

idents. Harvey and Cassie Smith and Bryon and Hadie Broach participated in the opening phase of the work.

To introduce the church to the Brevard area, Jim Davis began a daily radio program on the Brevard radio station. It was a five-minute program called "Gems from the Bible." He would later become the first preacher for the fledgling congregation. One of the older Methodist churches had just moved into a new building and their old one



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was vacant. They agreed to rent their old building to the newly-formed congregation.

The building was about one hundred years old but still in pretty good shape. It was heated by the old style fuel oil space heater. Regulation of the heat was almost nonexistent, and it was either too hot or too cold. Brother Andy Martin would go up early on Sunday morning, in the winter, to get the heat going. He remembers one of the members always saying, "They have got it too hot in here." Of course the "they" was always him. One thing for sure — there never was a problem with the plumbing freezing because there was none. Bathroom facilities consisted of a little building out back. This is a not-so-pleasant memory of the past for many of us older folks. One sister says it was rarely visited by the ladies because of spiders who had taken a liking to it and made their abode there.

Located around the building was one of Transylvania County's oldest cemeteries. Andy Martin tells me that they walked among the grave markers reading the names of people who had passed from this life.

Jim Davis contacted the Graymere congregation in Columbia, Tennessee, seeking support for the new work. He explained the local situation to the elders there. In August 1965 several of Graymere's elders and deacons visited Brevard and met with the families planning the work. They agreed to support the work by paying the salary of a preacher to work with the church. James A. (Jim) Davis accepted the work with this group in September 1965. The church held its first assembly on September 5 of that year and had 55 in attendance. Included in that number were many from Columbia, Tennessee, who came to offer their encouragement to the work.

The old building proved to have many inconveniences, and plans were made in the summer of 1967 to erect a building for worship. Warren Cline spearheaded this drive that culminated with the dedication of a new and modern building on November 10, 1968. The Graymere congregation played a major role in the beginning of this work. Their support was no longer needed after August 1977, the mortgage having been paid off in July of that year.

Those who have worked as full-time evangelists with this congregation are James A. Davis (September 1965 to May 1975), Danny L. Weedle (June 1975 to November 1976), Michael D. Stone (January 1977 to June 1977), Ernest Thigpen (February 1978 to March 1989), Henry Colbert (March 1989 until the present time).

Elders were first installed on April 30, 1978. Those serving as shepherds of the flock are Quentin Clark, Warren Cline and Ernest Thigpen.

At present there is one deacon, Dan Payne, with plans to install more deacons soon. There have been others who have served as deacons and are no longer here. They are John Lee, Roby Shore, Jimmy Lampley and Fred Gore.

The congregation has had its ups and downs but has remained self-supporting since 1977. During the first nine months of 1991, the Sunday morning attendance has averaged 50 and the weekly contribution has averaged \$886.00. The congregation sends support on a monthly basis to three good works: East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, Southeastern Children's Home, and Palmetto Bible Camp. This is all because of the generosity of the people here. Special one-time contributions have been sent to Palmetto Bible Camp to help in their building program. Most recently the congregation has sent money on two occasions in support of the "One Nation Under God" campaign for a total of \$2090.00. This was done by the elders pledging 75% or more from the church treasury and the people giving extra amounts above their regular contribution.

We look to the future as we put our trust in the Lord for the blessings of growth. As we continue to plant and water, we know this growth will come as He wills. With the prevailing friendliness and generosity of the members, the future looks bright.

[1426 Country Club Road, Brevard, NC 28712.]



History of the Church of Christ in Buncombe County

by Jim Hunter

Asheville

Sometime in the 1920s four people began meeting in the room of a Mrs. Harriet Taylor in the old Langren Hotel in Asheville. Other than Mrs. Taylor, there were a Mrs. Earl West and a Mr. and Mrs. Wynn. All four were Christians. It appears they met in Mrs. Taylor's room for a year or two. Mrs. Taylor contacted Thomas Burton, who lived and preached in the Nashville, Tennessee area, and invited him to come and conduct a tent meeting in the West Asheville area. After this first tent meeting, there was an immediate need to begin meeting regularly in a larger facility. Therefore, the church began meeting in the old Aycock School building in West Asheville. Thomas Burton returned two or three times to conduct other tent meetings during the next several years. They met in the school building for two or three years, and then began meeting in the upstairs of the Oddfellows' Lodge on Hanover Street, which was just a short distance from the Aycock School building. One of the families converted during the tent meetings was the Hinson family from the Candler, North Carolina area. During the summers, George B. Hoover from Tampa, Florida would come up to Asheville and preach for the group then meeting in West Asheville, and he would stay with the Hinson family. During the time Mr. Hoover was in Florida, other men of the congregation would alternate in leading the worship services.

It was just a short time after they began meeting in the Oddfellows' Lodge when they began planning to purchase property and build a building. A small lot was purchased on Hanover Street, and sometime in 1928 they held their first Bible study and worship service in the new facility. John Stewart, from Colorado, was their first full-time preacher. It's thought that the church met on Hanover Street for about six or seven years and continued to grow until a larger December 1991

facility was needed. The small lot on Hanover Street would not accommodate a larger building. Therefore, property was bought on Vance Street in downtown Asheville. Before the new property had been located and purchased, it's reported that the church met in the home of the Hinson family who lived on the Pisgah Highway in Hominy Valley, west of Candler.

The Vance Street Church

In the late 1930s the church meeting on Hanover Street outgrew their building and a larger lot with a house was purchased on 16 Vance Street in Asheville, across from the present Court House. It isn't certain who the first preacher was, but he and his wife lived in the upstairs of the house and the church met in the basement. One of the ladies, Miss Alice Pratt, was instrumental in helping to secure this meeting place and influenced other congregations to help with its financial needs. By the mid-1940s, they had outgrown this facility and purchased property on Haywood Road in West Asheville. Roy L. Ruckman was the preacher at this time, and he moved with the church to Haywood Road when the new building was completed during the latter months of 1948.

After moving to 892 Haywood Road in West Asheville, some of the brethren desired to reestablish a meeting place in downtown Asheville, across the French Broad River. This group had its first meeting in the American Legion Hall at 72 Broadway on August 5, 1951. Twenty-two people were present at this first meeting. This congregation was first known as the Central Church of Christ, and Frank Johnson was the preacher. Frank Johnson had been preaching for the Old Refuge (now known as Red Oak in Weaverville) congregation, located about twenty miles north of Asheville. He was supported with \$50.00 per month by the Trinity Lane Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and \$50.00

per month by the church in Lebanon, Tennessee. His apartment rent, amounting to \$50.00 per month, was paid by the church now meeting on Broadway.

In the spring of 1952, the church purchased a lot at 54 Vance Street for \$3,500.00, paying \$500.00 down and \$30.00 per month. This new property was just a few blocks from the old location previously mentioned. In March 1953 construction began on the basement portion of the new facility. In August 1954 eighteen members began meeting in the newly constructed basement. Frank Johnson resigned in November 1955 and the men who were in this area, with some young men who were in the area from Harding College (now Harding University) in Searcy, Arkansas, did the preaching. On August 1, 1957, Wayman W. Love began his work with the church and labored with them until 1960. The Red Bank congregation in Chattanooga, Tennessee sent financial support for Wayman Love's salary and the church provided his house and utilities.

According to the *Asheville Times* newspaper dated Saturday, March 14, 1959, construction on the auditorium was completed in 1959, and the first worship service was conducted in the new facility on March 15 by Frank Johnson, who then lived in Floral City, Florida.

On November 1, 1960, Leslie G. Thomas began his work with this church. There were several good years for the Lord's cause by the Christians meeting at this location. In 1965, records indicate that there was an average of 138 members in attendance. But in 1966 word was received from the city of Asheville that, due to the city's urban redevelopment program, the building site would be taken over by the city, and a search was begun for a new building site. It appears that Leslie Thomas resigned sometime in 1967 and C. R. Franks, Jr., began work with the congregation on October 1, 1967.

Some members thought this would be an ideal time to begin a new work in the Biltmore section, in south Asheville, and thus began a search for property in that area.

Haywood Road

In 1946 or 1947, property was purchased at 892 Haywood Road in West Asheville,

and by late 1948 the church met in this new facility for the first time. As mentioned earlier, Roy L. Ruckman was the preacher for the original Vance Street congregation, and when this group moved to Haywood Road, Roy Ruckman moved with them. This new building would seat 180 and had five classrooms. During April 19-23, 1954, this church hosted the Tenth Annual Carolina Lectureship. In 1957, J. Norice Taylor was the preacher, and they were self-supporting with an average of 35 members. Today they number approximately 60 members.

In the late fifties, B. C. Morton, Ray McCurry and other members from the Candler, North Carolina, area thought it would be good to begin a new work in the Hominy Valley community and purchased property in that area.

Candler

By February 1957 the old Gladly School house was purchased and the church was meeting on a regular basis. The members of this new group of Christians consisted mainly of those in the Candler area. For several years this congregation was known as the Gladly Church of Christ, but is now known as the Candler Church of Christ. It is located on the Pisgah Highway about sixteen miles southeast of Asheville, in the Hominy Valley area. Terry Hall is the current preacher and has been working with them for a number of years. Their average attendance is about twenty-two. They are presently meeting on Sunday mornings only for Bible class and worship.

Gaston Street

In 1945 Celester Jones began talking about the church with a Mr. Ledford who did some "part-time" preaching for the church of Christ in Asheville. Mr. Jones, at the time, was a Baptist deacon and was good friends with Mr. John Henry Rout, a Baptist preacher. Both men, Mr. Jones and Mr. Rout, were invited by a lady member of the Vance Street church and they began visiting. Mr. E. C. McKenzie, a white preacher, was invited by the church on Vance Street to come to Asheville and conduct a tent meeting, and the lady member invited

Mr. Jones and Mr. Rout. The two men were convinced that many of their religious beliefs were erroneous. About three months after the tent meeting had closed, Forrest A. Johnson of Vance Street (their current preacher), moved to Hickory, North Carolina. Soon after Mr. Johnson moved to Hickory, Mr. Rout called him and asked if he could come to Hickory to talk to him. Mr. Rout went to Hickory and was baptized. He returned to Asheville and baptized Mrs. Rout and both Mr. and Mrs. Jones. They began meeting in the home of Celester and Artie Jones at 130 Livingston Street in Asheville. It was necessary to move furniture from the meeting room in order to have enough room, and they were still crowded. During the first five weeks they had saved \$71.00 and had an average of ten members meeting regularly.

Needing more space, they began meeting in the home of brother Rout's mother, who lived on Ralph Street. A short time later they began renting a store on Southside and French Broad. They met at this location for about two years. By this time, Roy L. Ruckman had moved to the Vance Street church, and he and brother Rout became very close friends. In fact, Rout stated that brother Ruckman was his "teacher for a number of years."

After two years, they were able to purchase a large house at 331 Southside Street. Brother Rout and his wife lived upstairs and the church met downstairs. Sometime in late 1957 or early 1958, property was purchased on Gaston Street, and the present church building was built. The Routs moved to Gaffney, South Carolina, in 1965. It wasn't long after that that Ivory Hunter began preaching for the congregation. Records indicate that during this time of Rout's work with this congregation, he personally baptized at least eighty-five people. Others were probably baptized by other members and preachers during their gospel meetings. They have a current average attendance of 55-65 for their morning worship and continue to meet each Sunday evening and Wednesday night as well.

East Chestnut

Due to the city of Asheville's urban redevelopment program, the church property December 1991

at 54 Vance Street was purchased by the city, and new property was purchased at 127 East Chestnut Street. Several members thought it best to remain in the business section of the city. Therefore, the East Chestnut Street lot was purchased. Due to the lack of information provided and/or available, we can only give an approximate date of the first meeting in this new facility. It appears that this group began meeting sometime between mid-1968 and early 1969. We do have a February 1969 directory indicating the church was already in their new facility. It is a very nice building and is located about two blocks north of I-240 which runs through the city of Asheville.

According to the Vance Street bulletin of October 1, 1967, Leslie G. Thomas had moved a few months prior to this time, and the church was expecting C. R. Franks, Jr., to begin working with them immediately. This indicates that C. R. Franks, Jr., would have been the first preacher for the East Chestnut congregation. Their February 1, 1969 directory lists C. R. Franks, Jr. as their minister. J. M. Powell preached for East Chestnut for a while. Charles Freeman is their current preacher, and attendance for Sunday morning is between 30 and 40.

Weaverville

About 1940, according to Mrs. Betty Snelson (current member of this congregation), Carl Hyder, with his wife and children, moved to the Jupiter community near Weaverville, North Carolina. Mr. Hyder and his family began meeting in the old Presbyterian church building, but the Presbyterians soon wanted to use the building for their own purposes. Several had been baptized and other families had moved into the area, so progress was being made. This small group began another search for a suitable meeting site. They soon began meeting in an abandoned school building that had also been used in previous years as a church building in the Red Oak community, still near Weaverville. The people in the community called this building the "Campbellite church" because during the late 1800's, those who had been taught by Alexander Campbell and others like him had begun meeting in the building and were teaching "baptism for the

remission of sins." Although the people of the community called it the "Campbellite church," the members meeting there called it "Refuge" or "Old Refuge." This group met at this location for two or three years and was able to purchase five or six acres adjoining the "Old Refuge" property and build a small building. In 1952 or 1953, the present building on Jupiter Road was completed, and the congregation became known as Red Oak Church of Christ. The church building is located about twenty miles north of Asheville. In 1960 this church was allowed to open its own cemetery, and the first person laid to rest in this "church cemetery" was Mr. Wayne Snelson.

Mr. Hyder was also instrumental in establishing the church in Burnsville, North Carolina, and the Red Oak church helped this work financially as well as by sending members to help in this effort each week. Although the Red Oak church has always been a small congregation, they never lost sight of their mission to be evangelistic, and their willingness to help areas such as Burnsville and other mission points demonstrates this very well. Bruce Curd is the present preacher, and they have an average Sunday morning attendance of 20-30. They also meet Sunday evening and Wednesday night.

Biltmore

The Biltmore Church of Christ began in March 1967 with approximately 35 members. The church building at 54 Vance Street had been purchased by the city of Asheville because of their urban redevelopment program. Several members thought this would be an ideal time to begin a new effort for Christ in this section of the city. In April 1967, they were able to purchase a house and property in the Biltmore area in south Asheville on Fairview Street. In June of that year, Don and Jo Gettys moved here with Don to become the first "full-time" preacher for this new congregation. From its inception, the congregation has been very active. On July 4, 1967, they began an annual July 4th outing for Christian families of the Western Carolinas, but interest in this outing slipped in later years. In August 1967 they hosted a lectureship for Western North Carolina and conducted their first Vacation Bible School.

For the first two years, the congregation met on Sundays in the Biltmore Dairy Bar. Because the congregation was new and small, it was necessary to seek additional financial assistance in order to build a permanent meeting place. In December 1967, the Northwood Hills (now Carriage Hills) church in Florence, Alabama responded to that need and began to give full support to the Gettys. The Westside church in Sheffield, Alabama and the Green Hills church in Nashville, Tennessee also began giving monthly assistance toward a working fund. In 1968 and 1969 time was purchased on a local radio station and a radio program entitled "Faith in Action" was begun and continued for several years.

The year 1967 saw many other efforts, such as work with young people, a banquet for the senior citizens, the beginning of a ladies' Bible class, and the beginning of a visitation program. At the end of 1967 there were 47 members and an average weekly contribution of \$220.00.

During June and August 1968 campaigns were conducted throughout the area around the new location with many outside workers assisting, and due to these efforts, many were won to Christ and many others heard for the first time of the efforts of the churches of Christ to restore New Testament Christianity.

In the latter part of 1968 and the early part of 1969, efforts were turned toward the completion of the new building. A successful bond issue for \$80,000 was completed. On June 15, 1969, a special service was conducted to dedicate the use of the new facility to God's glory. Following that, outside workers conducted a campaign centering around a nightly Vacation Bible School. By 1970, there were approximately seventy-five members and the congregation was still growing.

By 1973, the 4th and Elm Church of Christ in Sweetwater, Texas was the only congregation still supporting the work financially. On January 23, 1977 Biltmore ordained its first elders, Criss Carter and A. B. Wexler. By August 1979 there was a need for more deacons, and in November 1979 six deacons were appointed. This congregation also became self-supporting in 1979.

Biltmore continued to grow and by 1989 plans began for the construction of a new educational wing to be added to the existing building. Construction was completed in the summer of 1990, and a "Bring Your Neighbor Day" and "Dedication Day" was conducted on Sunday, December 2, 1990. A new record attendance was established with 308 in attendance. Gene Rainey conducted the worship service and Biltmore's present preacher, Jim Hunter, conducted the dedication service after the noon fellowship meal in the new facility.

The Biltmore congregation continues to be blessed by the Lord with many doors of opportunity opening. It is a friendly, working church, seeking only to follow God's instructions and to serve in any possible way. Presently, the average Sunday morning attendance is 235-245. The Biltmore church now has three elders — Hoyt Abney, Criss Carter and A. B. Wexler — and five deacons.

Fairview

This newest congregation in Western North Carolina had its beginning on Sunday, September 22, 1991 and was the ful-

fillment of a long-time dream of Mr. John Moore. Brother Moore grew up in the Fairview community, and after having been baptized for the remission of his sins, desired to begin a new work in his home area.

Mr. Moore moved to Knoxville, Tennessee in 1985 and attended the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. After completing two years of intense Bible study and training, he and his wife, Diane, were asked to be house parents for needy children. The Moores accepted this challenge, but still had a great desire to come back "home" and begin a new work in their home area.

His dream came true in 1991, and during the first worship service, twenty-one people were in attendance. This group is presently meeting in the Fairview Community Center in Fairview, North Carolina, located fourteen miles south of Asheville on Highway 74. Because of their being unable to rent this facility during the week, they are presently not meeting for mid-week Bible classes, but are meeting each Sunday morning and Sunday night. Mr. Moore, at present, is still seeking financial assistance for this new work.

[P. O. Box 5651, Asheville, NC 28813.]

Book Review

The Book of Philippians, Jackson; Quality Publications, P.O. Box 1069, Abilene, TX 79604; 115 pages, paper \$4.95.

As the book's subtitle suggests, this book is a grammatical and practical study of Paul's letter to the congregation in Philippi designed for classroom or private study. It deals with the joy and hope of the Christian life's devotion, of the nature of the congregation's fellowship, our heavenly citizenship's nature, and the contented life. This study confronts the dangers of false teachers and offers words of encouragement for living the spiritual life in our unspiritual world. The student will enjoy and appreciate also the three special studies: "The Life and Labors of Paul, the Apostle," "Jesus of Nazareth — Who Was He?," and "The

Resurrection of The Dead." (These special studies have become a mark of the author in his study books, for which we are grateful). In the beginning of the book, the student will also find a section on grammatical notes. Also, in the lesson on Philippians 2:1-4, the author has included an addendum entitled "The Beauty of Unity" that will inspire you to love one another and feel good about it as you study it. This is a book that supplies the teacher of Philippians with the groundwork needed to build some good lessons, the student with a sound basis to understand the letter itself and some of the problems that he finds threatening the church, and the preacher with a rich source of materials.

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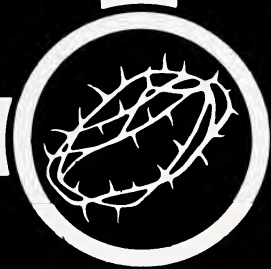
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“Sing to the Lord a New Song”

by Paul Watson

For the earliest Christian communities, singing was not an option but a necessity. These Christians were instructed to sing (Eph. 5:18-20 and Col. 3:16-17); and they came together with songs on their lips and in their hearts (1 Cor. 14:26). They sang when happy (James 5:13), they sang when in sorrow or distress (Acts 16:25).

Why? Why was singing so important for them, and for us today? As the best means we have of praising God, to be sure. But also as a way of allowing ourselves to be formed, shaped, instructed by the very songs that we sing. Consider these comments made by Wendy Wright in a recent issue of the devotional journal **Weavings**:

“Singing is one medium through which our hearts and minds are formed. It is one very powerful way in which we become re-made in the image of God, one way in which the Christ story enters our lives and becomes the narrative through which our own stories unfold. To truly sing a new song to the Lord is to open ourselves to transformation of the most profound sort. . . . Whether undergirded by a complex metaphysics or simply the result of inspired common sense, the praying church has for centuries sung its way to God. And it has known that the singing is essential to the spiritual journey, the singing claims, changes, and shapes our hearts. . . . To sing is to be formed into what one sings.”



editorial

by David Pharr

Most of our readers are familiar with the **Gospel Advocate**. Because of its wide circulation the **Advocate** has considerable influence. A century ago the **Advocate** was a leading voice against the apostasy that was dividing the church at that time. At other times it has stood firm and effectively against such errors as premillennialism, the anti-cooperation error, and Crossroadsism.

I am encouraged to see that the **Advocate** is currently publishing some articles regarding dangers now facing the church. In their December issue there are several good articles in defense of the restoration principle. I want to encourage readers of **Carolina Christian** to obtain and read the December **Gospel Advocate**. I have been advised that their February issue will feature articles on current trends toward apostasy. I have not yet seen those articles, but the editors have described them as containing some warnings that I believe are greatly needed.

Other publications have, of course, dealt with the same issues, often in a very effective way. Our particular interest in the articles in the **Gospel Advocate** is because of its considerable circulation and influence. I may not always agree with everything in the **Advocate**, including their judgment in some of their publication policies, but in regard to some of the current dangers before us, I am thankful to see the stand they are taking.

Some consider me to be an alarmist. I confess to being alarmed. I confess to being alarmed that others are not more alarmed over the things that are alarming me.

Brethren that have known me well through the years would agree, I think, that I have tried to be fair in dealing with others. My tendency has been to give others the benefit of the doubt — that is, to assume one is right until I am absolutely convinced he is wrong, regardless of what others say. I conscientiously followed this approach when the Crossroads issue first arose. Some

accused me of being soft. Later, when I had considered the evidence and started to warn people about Crossroadsism, others accused me of being mean. Some of these later saw the same things I saw and also came to oppose Crossroadsism themselves. The fact is that I have gotten more criticism over the years for being too soft, than for being too harsh. I am absolutely convinced, however, that we are now facing some critical dangers, some trends which if left unchecked will lead to another major digression and division. The congregations in the Carolinas are

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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hardly less threatened than those in other places.

Some time ago I privately expressed concern that a certain preacher was headed toward breaking away from the church and starting a "community church" which would abandon New Testament principles. Some of my friends thought I was exaggerating the problem. When I wrote to the preacher himself, he did not reply, choosing instead (as I learned later) to play the part of a heartbroken martyr. But what happened? The seeds of apostasy that were then being planted grew into an open departure from the faith.

Brethren, I am reading and hearing vicious attacks against the truth and the church. We are hearing that it is foolish to seek a restoration of the New Testament church, that instrumental music is only a matter of opinion, that teaching the Bible regarding the role of husbands and wives leads to incest, that we have never preached grace, that there is no New Testament pattern, and that we ought to have fellowship with the denominations. I am alarmed! Are you?

I recognize that a degree of judgment is involved as to when and whether we should use books and articles written by men who openly teach errors. Likewise I recognize that judgment may differ as to whether to use such men in local programs, or to participate with them in programs. Certainly men may have some useful and Scriptural things to present on some subjects even though they may be seriously in error on other issues. I have wanted to "go the second mile" with many such. There comes a point, however, when we have to ask how dangerous is it to continue to lend support to those who are known to openly teach error.

Those who love the church have no joy in the prospect of division. Every legitimate effort must be made to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But the sad reality arises that there are some things to which we cannot give "place by way of subjection, no, not for an hour" (Gal. 2:5). Each must let his own conscience decide when, where, and how to speak against error. But for my part I cannot keep quiet when influential preachers are denying the validity of the restoration, when they compromise on instrumental music and openly

fellowship with denominations, when they make fun of the gospel we preach.

It puzzles me greatly that so many seem to feel that we ought to sit quiet while the church is being attacked and the truth is being compromised.

It has not been so long a time since when if a preacher in a denomination attacked our plea for following the New Testament pattern, numerous bold and saintly men would rise to refute him. Now, however, when one of our own brethren makes the same kind of attack against the restoration plea, only a few "hardliners" dare to speak up. Others buy their books and make them featured speakers at lectureships, workshops, and retreats.

I am thankful that the **Gospel Advocate**, using writers far more qualified than I am, is taking a stand on some of these issues.

Howard Winters

Elsewhere in the issue is an item about plans to build a cabin at Carolina Bible Camp in memory of our late editor Howard Winters. We are thankful for the Mebane Street congregation in Burlington for their love for Howard and for the camp that has caused them to initiate this project.

Brother Winters' fine book **Up To Bethany** continues to be widely read and appreciated. Howard believed in the restoration principle. He was not ashamed to uphold the authority of the Scriptures. **Up to Bethany** is a study of restoration principles. It would be a good study guide for every adult Bible class.

Steven K. Guy

We welcome Steven Guy as the new preacher for the congregation that meets at 38th Avenue North on the 17 By-Pass in Myrtle Beach. Brother Guy has an excellent educational background and previously taught in the Southern California School of Evangelism. He would like to hear from anyone who might be interested in establishing a similar training program in the Carolinas. Write to him, P. O. Box 1975, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577.

We have recently learned that C.R. Franks, long-time Carolina preacher, is seriously ill with cancer. The Franks' new address is: 2118 Parramore, Abilene, TX 79603.

We have received another request from a prisoner who would like to correspond with someone. Kenneth E. Waybright, P. O. Box 56, #208-560, Lebanon, OH 45036.

Managing Editor's Column

Serving God or Money

by Johnny Melton

Shakespeare had Iago explain to Othello,

Good name in man and woman,
dear my Lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their
souls;
Who steals my purse steals trash;
'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been
slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my
good name
Robs me of that which not enriches
him,
And makes me poor indeed.

I suspect that there are folks who love money to the point that they would take issue with Shakespeare on the line that goes "Who steals my purse steals trash." It was Ivan Boesky who, a few years ago, extolled the virtues of greed. While that attitude seemed to typify the eighties, and there has been some reassessment of values as we have entered the nineties; it remains that many continue to secretly harbor in their heart of hearts, "Money is the most important thing to me."

This is not simply a problem confronting people at the end of the twentieth century. It was a significant problem in Jesus' day.

In Luke 16 Jesus taught His disciples about the proper use of money by telling them a parable. He also challenged the perspective of the Pharisees regarding money by means of a second parable. These parables are recorded in the greater context of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. On this jour-

ney Jesus engaged His disciples, tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees and teachers of the Law in discussions regarding the nature of the kingdom of heaven (Luke 15) and the cost of discipleship (Luke 14).

The two parables in Luke 16 have to do with the same topic. They begin with the same statement, "There was a rich man" (Luke 16:1, 19). However, the parables are addressed to different groups; and they teach different lessons.

The two parables are hinged together by Luke 16:14-18. The first parable (the Unjust Stewart) anticipates these verses and the second parable (the Rich Man and Lazarus) illustrates them.

The point of the first parable is stated in Luke 16:9, 13: "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. . . . No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Jesus told the first parable as He did in order to get the attention of the Pharisees. I believe that even though Jesus spoke the parable to His disciples, He spoke it for the benefit of the Pharisees. The disciples would have been startled by the parable told by Jesus. Without doubt, they would have anticipated a dishonest steward to have been condemned by Jesus; and the Pharisees, who were overhearing this discussion between Jesus and the disciples, would have been scandalized by Jesus' apparent commendation of dishonesty as well.

There has been a great deal of effort spent in seeking to justify Jesus' commendation of this dishonest man. However, it is the nature of parables to challenge, to subvert the status quo. The parable was told as it was in order to grab the attention of both disciples and Pharisees. We are not left to speculate about the meaning of the parable. Money must be appropriately used, and the appropriate use of money is to secure "eternal dwellings."

"The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus." There are many modern-day Pharisees who hear messages regarding the appropriate attitude toward money and sneer — if not outwardly, at least, they do so inwardly. People love money and use people as much in our day as ever before in history. There is still the tendency to ignore God and to "justify [oneself] in the eyes of men." But God still knows the hearts, and it is still the case that "What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

Because the Pharisees loved money they had a theology of prosperity that would justify that attitude. They would argue from Deuteronomy 28 that material wealth constituted prima facie evidence that God was well pleased with an individual. They would further argue that poverty was evidence that an individual was outside of God's favor. However, they were mistaken in their reading of their Bibles.

Even though Deuteronomy 28 did promise material prosperity to Israel if they "fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands" (Deut. 28:1) and a loss of prosperity for failure to obey and carefully follow God's commands and decrees (v. 15), the view that wealth was a sure sign of God's approval and poverty was a sure sign of God's disapproval was unwarranted. The story of Job challenged such a theology. Instructions in Deuteronomy regarding the treatment of fellow Israelites who were poor did not fit such a theology. Such a theology revealed a failure to consider the message of Psalm 73 where the obvious prosperity of the wicked was questioned.

Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to refute the theology of wealth accepted by the Pharisees.

Again, the parable contained a zinger. Lazarus was described in detestable terms.

That the hero of the parable was named has caused a great deal of unwarranted argument whether or not this was a parable or an actual historical account. The point made by the story did not depend on whether or not it was a parable. The fact that this impoverished, ceremonially unclean (as a result of direct contact with dogs) individual was the hero of the story was simply underscored by the name that he was given: the name Lazarus meant "one whom God helps" (**Reading Luke**, Charles Talbert, 157).

The first part of the parable challenged the Pharisees who loved their money. They were scandalized by the fact that the beggar (whom they considered to be a sinner) died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom and that the rich man (whom they considered to be righteous) died, was buried and found himself in hell.

The second part of the parable illustrated the point made in verses 16-18: participation in the kingdom of God required commitment to the law of God. The reference to divorce in verse 18 should be seen as an illustration of commitment to all of God's will. Instruction regarding divorce was given in Deuteronomy 24 in a broader context of economic legislation. Since divorce was a significant problem of the day and the prevailing view was unacceptable to Jesus (see Matthew 19), we should not be surprised that divorce was used to illustrate the point of commitment to the will of God as a requirement for participation in the kingdom of God.

What may we learn from these parables? Learn first that God, and God alone, deserves our devotion. Second, money is not an end within itself, but it is a means to an end. It is a tool to be used appropriately. Third, the appropriate use of money will result in securing for oneself "eternal dwellings." Are we willing to evaluate our jobs in terms of their spiritual implications? Will you accept a promotion and a raise in order to build a mansion here and risk the spiritual welfare of yourself and your family? Or, will you decide to forego the mansion down here in order to secure an eternal dwelling in the world beyond? Fourth, understand that the message of the second parable is that inappropriate use of wealth resulted in the

rich man landing in hell. Fifth, Lazarus was carried to Abraham's side, not because he was poor, but in spite of his poverty. While there is no particular virtue in poverty, neither is there inherent condemnation. Be careful of generalizations that stigmatize the

poor. Sixth, observe that one's destiny at death, based on one's life, is unalterable.

May God help us to learn these important lessons regarding money and wealth and to commit ourselves to the will of God revealed in Holy Scripture through faith in Jesus.

Worship and Applause

by Richard T. McWilliams

"Let's give God a round of applause!" So instructed one brother to a recent gathering of Christian teens. This is not an isolated instance. Applause is on the increase as an accepted practice in some worship assemblies of Christians. Why is this happening? Is it acceptable to God? Have we been wrong in the past by not having it? Is it just a matter of opinion whether it is done? Let us examine this subject and see what the Bible teaches about applause.

First, we should note the *Webster's New World Dictionary* meaning of the word "applaud." This word means "to show approval (of) by clapping the hands or by cheering, stamping the feet, etc." or "to praise, approve, or commend." Thus "applause" is "approval or praise esp. as shown by clapping hands, cheering, etc."

Historically, applause first entered Christian worship in the fourth century as a form of praise for preachers who by this time were composing sermons primarily "according to the rules of human eloquence, and rather adapted to excite the stupid admiration of the populace who delight in vain embellishments, than to enlighten the understanding or to reform the heart." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I, p. 106) Mosheim goes on to point out that until that time, applause was reserved for actors in the theatre and orators in the forum. Today, as worship is perceived more and more in terms of entertainment for us rather than something we give to God, and as some preachers try primarily to entertain their hearers, why would it be surprising for people to respond with applause as though they were being entertained?

From the Scripture though, the answer to the question of applause may be answered as a question of authority. All things religious are either authorized by God or only

by men (Luke 20:1-8). Jesus claimed to have all authority from His Father (Matt. 28:18-20). In the realm of worship, Jesus said God must be worshiped in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23-24). Since God's message is truth (John 17:17) and His apostles taught that message (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 14:37-38), it is to that message we look for our answer.

Granted that applause is praise, the question still remains, "Is applause an appropriate form of praise to God?" One verse answers that question. "Through him [i.e., Christ] then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (Heb. 13:15, ASV). Here praise to God is clearly defined.

By the authority of Christ, we praise God by the fruit of lips in prayer, song, or other speaking. Where is any such authority for applause? There is none. So applause as praise to God is as foreign to worship in spirit and truth as is humming, or whistling, or instrumental music.

But what about applause as approval for other things? For agreement of what is said in prayer or in other speaking. There is a way which is scriptural, but may sound old fashioned to some. The word "amen" is used to express agreement and thus approval of what is said. (See I Cor. 14:16; Rev. 5:13-14; 19:1-4; 22:20.) This word is used in various ways in the original language, but in this sort of usage, "amen" expresses approval with intent to strengthen the preceding statement.

Therefore, it becomes clear that verbal praise and verbal expressions of approval are appropriate in our assemblies, but applause must be left to the world and its foolish obsession with entertainment, pomp, and vanity.

[6337 Rivers Ave., North Charleston, SC 29418.]

CBC to Honor Howard Winters

Few men have wielded as much positive influence on the church of our Lord in the Carolinas as the late Howard Winters. Brother Winters loved the church and utilized any means available to him to build it up. As a faithful preacher of Christ's gospel he built up the church through the pulpit. As a gifted writer, he strengthened the church through his pen as the editor of **Carolina Christian** for nearly twenty years. Brother Winters also realized the value of Christian camping as a tool of the kingdom and for many years served on the board of directors of Carolina Bible Camp. He was also involved in actual camp operations every summer, serving in a variety of capacities through the years.

The Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center near Mocksville, NC, is now nearing completion, and funding to build a cabin in honor of brother Winters is being sought. Members

of the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC, where Howard preached for five years, already have made substantial pledges toward the construction of a cabin in his memory. The Christians in Burlington desire to honor Howard with their donations in recognition of his work and devotion to the cause of Christ both in Burlington and throughout the Carolinas. The board of directors of CBC, Inc. is deeply appreciative of the generosity of these Christians and are seeking additional support of other Christians who also would like to be a part of honoring Howard in this special way. The board itself honored Howard Winters in 1988 by inducting him into the Carolina Bible Camp Hall of Fame.

Those interested in contributing to the construction of the Howard Winters Cabin may send their donations to: Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, c/o Ed Thomas, #4 Wildberry Court, Greensboro, NC 27409.

Accommodation, Concession, or Conviction

by Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The religious community has been doing it for years: accommodation! The denominations are making religion palatable that way! Concession! What do I mean? Copy the world! Find out how the world is going and go that way too! But, be sophisticated! What is the world view of the family? Find out — then accommodate! If society accepts homosexuality, then let religion concede! Even ordain them as priests and clergy, for after all, God loves all men.

Don't be involved! Push a button and let the electronic church serve as your religion by way of the television screen. Be entertained and let your worship be performance oriented. Send your money, but be personally detached. That's cultural religion!

Let's face it: religion has copied the trap-

pings of this world. It's no wonder that church is ranked number 25 on the list of value makers in America. It has lost its savor: no punch! no power! no impact! Such is the way of worldly religion!

But, what about the New Testament church? Aren't we supposed to impact our world? Confront, not compromise? Convert, not concede?

But, alas! Some want to accommodate! Those in multiple, unscriptural marriages must be loved, forgiven and accepted where they are, we are told. What God has plainly said is to be abandoned, and we must accommodate men. Sad! Others say we must please the baby-boomers! Concede to them or they won't be back. Streamline the worship. Give it more entertainment and performance!

Liven it up! Congregational singing is not culturally up-to-date — and our songs and music belong to another age! Be Contemporary!

Oh! Incidentally, your whole approach to the Bible is obsolete! You need a new hermeneutic. The one we've used doesn't serve well in our changing times! So accommodate — concede! Be real — approach it with contemporary values in mind! Make it relevant today!

Churches of Christ face critical times! Sadly, there are many who would surrender the ground that has been gained. There are those, a breed apart, who criticize the dedicated preachers of the past generation who helped us through difficult times. Some speak as though nobody ever preached on grace, or the cross, until they came along. I resent the so-called "scholars" who speak disparagingly of the great pioneers who spent hours with the book — loved it and the souls to whom they communicated it, and who with very little remuneration kept on keeping on — because they were devoted to Him, who is its author.

Truth is Truth; Gospel is Gospel; and Bible is Bible! What the Bible teaches, it has always taught. "Forever O Lord, thy word is settled in Heaven." It is settled, fixed! It is not subject to man's whims, fancies, or fads! It crosses time and culture. It is like its author — unchanging! It is man who needs to change! But, it's easier to change the Bible to accommodate us! It's tragic when we abandon the word and concede to the world!

Let the Word be the Word! Let the church be the church! Let's confront the world caringly and lovingly where it is — and bring it to the Word — then make the changes necessary to please God. Let the church be clean, so we can influence a filthy world! Let the church be happy, so we can affect a dismal world. Let the church be convicted, so we can affect an apathetic world. And, let it be alive, so we can affect a dying world; healthy, so we can save a sick world.

Accommodation and concession — NO!
Conviction — YES!

[Brother DeLoach preaches for the Walnut St. Church of Christ, Dickson, TN 37055.]

Truths That Made Me Leave the Roman Catholic Church

by Jim Coviello

I left the Roman Catholic Church to become a member of the Lord's church in 1971 at age 18. My acquaintance with the church of Christ began several months earlier when a friend invited me to attend services. I accepted the invitation and attended Sunday evening services each week. For the first time in my life I heard the Bible taught in purity and simplicity. What a change this was from my Catholic upbringing! As a Catholic, I was never taught the Bible or encouraged

to study it. Catechism class and the priest's sermons emphasized church doctrine rather than Bible doctrine. The idea of proving all things with the Scripture was a new concept to me. It did not take very long for me to realize that there were serious discrepancies between the Bible and the Catholic Church.

Identity of the Church

As a Catholic, I believed that the church is a religious government headed by the Pope

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and having authority over the lives of its members. I also believed this organization began in the first century with Peter as the first Pope. The Scripture, however, teaches a very different lesson.

First, the Lord's church is not a religious government. The church has a government, but it is not itself a religious government. The church is the spiritual body of Christ. It consists of all those whom Christ has saved (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23-25; Acts 2:47). It is simply the body of all Christians throughout the whole world.

Second, the church is not organized under earthly rulers, nor does it have an earthly headquarters. Jesus is the head of the church and rules it from heaven (Col. 1:18; Heb. 8:1,2).

The idea that Peter was the first Pope is merely wishful thinking on the part of the Catholic Church. The office of the Pope developed several hundred years after the apostolic age. The Scripture never calls Peter a pope or the head of the church; nor does the Scripture teach that Peter would have successors.

Catholics often quote Matthew 16:17-19 as a proof text for Peter being a Pope and having successors. The passage speaks of the deity of Christ being the foundation of the church. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus then declared that, "on this rock I will build my church." The "rock" is clearly the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus was not promising to build the church on Peter. Furthermore, the passage does not even hint at the "succession of Peter."

Third, New Testament congregations were self-governing under their own elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28). There was not an earthly hierarchy over the whole church. All Christians and congregations are guided by the authority of God's word.

These simple truths made me realize that the Catholic Church possesses an organization and identity that is contrary to the simple plan revealed in the Bible. Therefore, I realized that the Catholic Church could not possibly be the "first church."

The Plan of Redemption

As a Catholic, I never learned the significance of the death of Christ nor its relation-

ship with the plan of redemption.

"The Church" taught all Catholics to attend confession on a regular basis. One was promised forgiveness of sins as a result of confessing sins to a priest and then reciting a prescribed number of prayers. If one were to die between confessions, his soul would go to "Purgatory" (assuming he had committed only lesser sins since his last confession). Purgatory is said to be a place where the soul is cleansed from unforgiven sins and made fit to enter heaven. This cleansing is accomplished by partial punishment (a kind of partial hell). Years spent in Purgatory may be shortened by one's own good works while on earth and the prayers and good deeds performed by other Catholics for the "poor souls in Purgatory."

The elaborate remedial system of the Catholic Church exalts works over the grace of God and is utterly refuted by the Bible. The Scripture does not authorize the Catholic doctrine of confession. There is only one mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). No other person is authorized to serve as an official mediator for salvation. A Christian confesses his sins to God and receives cleansing by the blood of Christ without being required to do works of merit (1 John 1:6-2:2). A faithful Christian is cleansed by the blood of Christ while he lives (1 John 1:7; Eph. 1:7). Therefore, his atonement is complete in Christ. There will not be any sins "hanging over" after death to be cleansed by partial punishment or paid for by the works of others.

In my later years as a Catholic, I, like many others, abandoned the old idea that only Catholics have the hope of heaven. With changes in Catholic thought brought on by the "ecumenical movement," I believed that anyone could be saved who believed in God and is sincere. Without a clear understanding of the death of Christ it was easy to accept this broad idea.

During the months I visited the church of Christ, I came to learn that there is more to salvation than sincerity and good works. Jesus gave his life as an atonement for sin (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). While this sacrifice was made for the whole world, only those who obey Christ have access to His atoning blood (Heb. 5:9). It is essential that one hear the gospel of Christ and believe it (Rom. 10:13,14). The

MARCH
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SUNDAY		MONDAY
FOR INFORMATION: East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions 6608 Beaver Ridge Road Knoxville, TN 37931 (615) 691-7411 (615) 691-7444	8:30- 9:00	Integrity in Using the Scriptures Gene West
	9:15- 10:00	The Franklin Camp Legacy — Bobby Duncan
Never Forget the Mission — Bill Nicks	10:15- 10:35	The Work in Eastern Kentucky John Brown Results From "One Nation Under God" Campaign — Tim Shoulders
Neither to the Right Nor to the Left — E. Claude Gardner	10:40- 11:15	Foundation for Brotherhood Un Charles Mullins Lessons From I Cor. 8 — Jeff Trotter
	11:30- 12:00	What Legalism Really Is — Dennis Curd
Lunch Hosted Each Day by Members of the Karns Church		
(A lectureship book will be published.)	1:30 2:10	The Prophets Speak Against To Legalism — Johnny Ramsey
	2:20- 3:00	Dangers From Liberalism — William Woodson
	3:15- 4:15	Classes: Max King Doctrine — Robert Taylor Galatians — Al Simmons Daily Evangelism — Arthur Gu
Singing	7:00	Singing
The Future of the Church: Who Will Preach? — Dowell Flatt	7:30	The Future of the Church: Evangelistic Zeal — David Phar

1, 1992

THING AND MISSIONS LECTURES

Nor to the Left”

TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Integrity in Controversy — Gene West	Integrity in Evangelism — Gene West
How Christians Should React to Criticism — Roger MacKenzie	If the Foundation Be Destroyed, What Can the Righteous Do? — Rod Rutherford
(There will be a special ladies class each day)	The Work in Upper East Tennessee — Tim Hall The Work in SW Virginia — Larry Phillips
	Unchanging Gospel in a Changing World — Garnett Randolph Phariseeism — Lessons From Matt. 23 — Steve Lusk
What Liberalism Really Is — Edwin Jones	What Conservatism Really Is Charles Brown
The Prophets Speak Against Today's Legalism — Johnny Ramsey	The Prophets Speak Against Today's Legalism — Johnny Ramsey
Dangers From Liberalism — William Woodson	Dangers From Liberalism — William Woodson
Classes: The Extreme of Racism — Mark Swindall Causes & Cures of Extremism — Richard McWilliams	Classes: Romans 14 — Eddie Craft
Singing	Singing
The Future of the Church: Standing Fast — Johnny Ramsey	The Future of the Church: Love the Brotherhood — C.W. Bradley

one who believes must respond to the gospel by obeying what it commands. Those who heard and believed on the day of Pentecost were required to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Salvation is promised to the believer who is baptized (Mark 16:15, 16).

These truths, coupled with the conviction that the Bible is the authoritative word of God, led me out of the Catholic Church. Having no reason to remain in the Catholic Church, and wishing to become a New Testament Christian, I obeyed the gospel plan of salvation. As a result, I was added, by God, to His one true church (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13).

Observations

I doubt that I would be a Christian today if it had not been for powerful "book-chapter-and verse" preaching. During the months I visited the church, I was impressed by lessons on the authority of the Bible, the identity of the church, the plan of salvation, and the Christian life. No one had a home study with me. Almost everything I learned that convicted me of sin and transformed my thinking was from pulpit lessons. There

is power in the word to convict men of sin and religious error. We should never be ashamed of preaching the truth regarding the church and the plan of salvation. And we certainly should not be ashamed of those who so preach.

There is also power in a simple invitation to visit the services of the church. Let us never assume that a friend or associate wouldn't appreciate an invitation. We, as a brotherhood, need to get back into the practice of using the assembly as an evangelistic tool.

The plea for simple New Testament Christianity is as relevant and powerful as it has always been. It is as a light shining in a dark place. Let us do what we can to get the message out to a lost and dying world.

[Jim is an active worker in the South Stokes congregation, King, NC. His address is: 3412 Valley Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27106.]

Editor's Note: Brother Coviello has a tract in print: "Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church." It is published by Barber Printing. The tract gives more details than space allowed in this article.

"Wild Fire"

by C. David Shuping

The evening news was especially depressing tonight. "Twenty-four confirmed dead. More than thirty persons missing and/or unaccounted. Hundreds injured and hospitalized." Those were the chilling words of the anchor-person relaying the tragic account of the Berkeley Hills wild fire. The conditions were perfect for such a tragedy: warm and arid easterly winds, a continuing five-year drought. Even an area architect noted that the Berkeley Hills development was "built to burn." There, in northern California, were all the right ingredients for one of the worst fires, in terms of human life, in American history.

This author is an ex-firefighter (if there really is such a thing — firefighting is something in your blood of which you can never completely rid yourself) and knows the furi-

ous, destructive nature of fire, especially, an uncontrollable fire. He has watched timber burn as it left its ugly, charred relic of a forest. He has empathized with families as they viewed, not just their homes, but their lives and dreams consumed by the ravages of fire. Having known so intimately the catastrophic nature of fire, this writer understands why God chose to use fear of fire in relation to eternal punishment from His presence.

Now that your mind is on the subject of fire, consider how James, likened a mouth (tongue) that is out of control to that of the nature of fire. "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the

whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3:5-6; NKJV).

Just as wild fire can destroy in a few days a forest that took hundred of years to produce, an unbridled tongue (mouth) can devastate a Christian's growth in a matter of moments. A wild-fire rumor can destroy a godly reputation of a preacher, husband, wife, or Christian servant in only a few hours. The modus operandi of the wild-fire tongue is much like that of the lawyer-juror relationship. Have you seen this movie before? The courtroom is filled with onlookers. The defendant is charged with a heinous crime, he even looks guilty. The jurors are carefully screened and selected from the community because of their high character and assurance of fairness to the state and the defendant. As the counselor argues his case he looks dead into the eyes of the jurors and an accusation about the defendant is launched. The audience explodes. "Objection your honor," cries the opposing attorney, as he states his case. The judge replies, "Objection sustained," and then turns to the jurors and exhorts them to disregard (strike from their memory) the lawyer's accusation and let it not alter their judgment in the case. Right, and a porcupine is a wonderful help-meet for a balloon!

Here's the point. The fiery arrows that are hurled at the good character of someone not only have the potential of starting a roaring "forest fire" but may leave spot fires that can never be extinguished with the truth. How often has been the case in some brotherhood publications when grapevine, hearsay, or that good old justifier, "a reli-

able source," was the alleged origin of some half-truth or outright lie. Phones ring, pens write, typewriters bang out their deadly poison in what is often a self-righteous attempt to "set that brother straight." Sometimes a vicious fire is started just because someone misunderstood another and instead of clarification, assassination seemed more profitable. God help us.

As a firefighter, this author's life was spent in earnest preparation, anticipation and training, waiting for the opportunity to rush to the scene of the fire and squelch the flames. The firefighting crew desires to reach the fire as quickly as possible in order to save that which has not been damaged by the uncontrolled flames.

As this article is being written, a two-week ban on burning is being lifted from the Carolinas. The conditions were highly favorable for open fires to get out of control. Our congregations are like the forests, they may be fresh and green, moist with rain and difficult to burn. These churches are filled with love (1 Pet. 1:22), are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14) and do not, therefore, offer a suitable environment for "wild fire." Others are unloving, self-righteous and fault-finders (Matt. 7:1-5), perfect conditions for "wild fire." The church can inoculate herself and lessen the likelihood of "wild fire" by dwelling on and exemplifying the spirit of Christ.

Every Christian should be on constant vigil, prepared at a moment's notice, not to add fuel to the hateful fires of rumor, but to quickly and lovingly douse the flames that can so quickly destroy a neighbor.

[349 33rd St. SW, Hickory, NC 28601.]

ETSOPM Lectureship

The annual Lectureship of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions is scheduled for March 1-4 in Knoxville, Tennessee, on the theme "Neither to the Right Nor to the Left." The lectures will be held in the new six-hundred seat auditorium of the Karns Church of Christ, which oversees the school.

The emphasis of the series will be on avoiding doctrinal extremes. E. Claude Gardner will deliver the keynote address on

Sunday morning. Over thirty-five lessons are scheduled for the four-day program.

William Woodson, Gene West, and Johnny Ramsey will each deliver a series covering issues related to liberalism, radicalism, and integrity. C. W. Bradley will conclude the lectureship Wednesday night on the subject: "Love the Brotherhood."

Contact ETSOPM for a complete schedule: 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931; (615) 691-7444 or 691-7411.

Christians in Action

Numerous demographic studies in recent years reveal that we live today in an aging society. As a result of the post-World War II baby boom, America is aging at an accelerated pace. North Carolinians are not exempted from this trend. Presently there are over one million North Carolinians who are over age 60. It is estimated that by the year 2010 that number will grow to over 1.6 million. In response to this trend a group of concerned Christians met in late 1986 to form Christians In Action.

Christians In Action is a non-profit organization whose main project at the present time is the operation of a Family Care Home in Raleigh. The home opened in November 1988 and provides care for as many as six residents. The board of directors is made up of Christians from the Raleigh area. Many

other Christians volunteer their time to provide numerous services for the home. The home is staffed by a full-time live-in manager and one or more part-time employees. Funding for the facility comes from private donations, although it is hoped that eventually the home will become self-supporting.

The original emphasis of Christians In Action was on providing much needed care for the elderly. That emphasis is still very much a part of Christians In Action, but there are other good works planned for the future and the current outreach extends even to non-Christians. (Since its opening in 1988 three residents of the home have been won to Christ.) If you are interested in learning more about the services and needs of Christians In Action you may call (919) 851-6113.

I Want to Be Like Jesus in How He Dealt With Temptation

by J.C. Watkins

Soon after Adam and Eve were created and placed in the beautiful garden of Eden, Satan came to tempt them to disobey God. They yielded to temptation and sinned (Gen. 3). As a result, death came upon them and all humanity (Rom. 5:12). Lost in sin, man is separated from God and without hope (Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:12). In order for man to overcome temptation, sin, and death and to gain the hope of eternal life, someone had to show him the way. The only one who could do that was Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God! Christ died for all mankind, He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Christ died for us while we were still separated from God in sin, lost, and without hope (Rom. 5:8).

The Bible explains, "Seeing that we have a high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feel-

ing of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16). Jesus, as our high priest, stands between God and man to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). The fact that Christ understands our needs and is sympathetic toward us makes Him an effective high priest in our behalf. Since He has been tempted, He understands our temptations! And by overcoming temptation in His life, He becomes our example for overcoming the temptations we experience in our own lives. Therefore, each one of us should want to be like Christ in how He dealt with temptation!

The Temptation of Jesus

Matthew, Mark, and Luke give the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Adam and Eve's temptation came upon them soon after they were created and were enjoying the bliss of Eden. Likewise, the temptation of Jesus came upon him after a significant event in His life — His baptism. "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and was with wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13). Mark's statement clearly shows that Jesus did not invite temptation. Matthew points out, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1). Some might have the idea that it was impossible for Christ to be tempted. However, it must be remembered that God sent his Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). He "was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:8). If Jesus had not been subject to temptation, He could not have been placed in Adam's position. He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain! If it were possible for us to be tempted in some way Christ had not been tempted, if something appealed to humanity that did not appeal to Christ, then He would not be in the position to sympathize with fallen humanity! Jesus, as a human being, was subject to temptation and the devil knew it! But Jesus resisted the devil and overcame temptation!

How Jesus Dealt With Temptation

Jesus had fasted for forty days when He was confronted by the devil. The Scripture says, "he was afterward an hungered" (Matt. 4:2). Satan's first attempt to overcome Him was to strike at His hunger. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4:3). Satan had heard God say at Jesus' baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). If he could just convince Christ to disbelieve the testimony of God, he would be able to overcome Him. Satan's hope was that in Christ's extreme hunger, He would lose faith in His Father and work a miracle in His own behalf. That would destroy Christ and forever thwart God's plan for the salvation of mankind! Notice the doubt that Satan tried to put into the mind of Christ, "if thou be the Son of

God." Surely God would not allow His Son to be in the position in which Jesus now found Himself. Would God leave His Son in a wilderness filled with wild beasts, without food, or any means of comfort? Satan insinuates that God never meant for His Son to be in such a situation. Therefore he chides, "if thou be the Son of God."

We are reminded of Satan's approach to Eve in Eden. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden" (Gen. 3:1)? As he did with Jesus, Satan used the word of God in a contemptible manner toward what God had said. His aim with Eve was to cause her to doubt the truthfulness of God's word. Why would God withhold a fruit which was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise (Gen. 3:6)? Unfortunately Eve allowed her mind to be filled with doubt and disbelief and she yielded to Satan's temptation.

What a contrast we see in Christ! He refused to allow His faith and trust in God to be shaken! He met Satan's challenge with, "It is written." In every temptation, the weapon of Jesus' warfare was the word of God! Strengthened with the memory of God's testimony, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Christ declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Though He was tempted in all points just as we are, Jesus trusted God and maintained faith in His word and its power. With that confidence and trust He was able to deal with and to overcome temptation!

Jesus Is Our Example

Satan is always at hand to take advantage of our every weakness! Whenever we are encompassed with the problems, trials, and tribulations of life, Satan attacks (I Pet. 5:8). He wants to fill our minds with doubt and to destroy our faith and trust in God! It is in those times that we must remember to look to Jesus and to be like Him in how He dealt with temptation. Like Him, we must remember God's promise that we will not be tempted above what we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). Jesus has shown us the way to overcome temptation. Only by the

power of the word of God could He deal with temptation! God's word assures us we are given great and precious promises that we might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Every precious promise of God is ours and, as Jesus has taught us, we are not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God! When we are tempted, we must remember God's promise that we will not be tempted above what we are able to bear. We must look to God and His word for the way of escape! We must be like Jesus in how He dealt with temptation by keeping God's word in our hearts and by calling upon the power of that word in times of temptation. Like

Him we must rest upon the strength of the heavenly Father and the power of His word to overcome temptation! Jesus assures us, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). As partakers of the divine nature, we too can overcome the world by steadfastly walking in the steps of the Savior and following His example in dealing with temptation!

[Brother Watkins worked for the Edgewood congregation, Greenville, SC, before locating in Cowan, TN, 104 S. Willow St., 37318.]

The King of Zechariah

by Don Jones

The prophet Zechariah wrote at a time when Israel really needed the encouragement of God. The period in which Zechariah worked was some twenty years after the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity. The Babylonians had taken an idolatrous nation of Judah captive in the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, during the time of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

When the time came for the Return, following the fall of Babylon, Cyrus II of Persia issued a decree which states: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2,3). With this decree, and help from the royal treasury, the people of Israel and Judah left their captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah.

No sooner had the people moved back to Palestine than they began to experience trouble from those who inhabited the land. The interference of these people caused another decree to come from the Persian throne which put a stop to the work done on the temple. After this time, every man concentrated on his own affairs and left the temple

in ruins, with the exception of the foundation which already had been laid and not disturbed. It would seem that Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel still dreamed of one day completing the temple.

Then about twenty years later God called Haggai, and after him Zechariah, to exhort the people to begin again the work on the house of Jehovah. Zerubbabel and Joshua responded and the people were motivated to resume the work.

The Samaritans and the Jews wrote to the King of Persia to settle the issue of the reconstruction of the temple. A search of the royal records turned up the original decree of Cyrus at Ecbatana which required the Jews to rebuild the temple and for the throne to finance the work. So Darius I issued a confirmation decree which ordered the execution of the original one.

However, Zechariah's prophecy was much more than an exhortation to "rise up and build" the temple. The Jews were missing another important element of their society — the king of Israel. The Davidic dynasty had been one of the stabilizing elements of Israelitish life before the division of the land and the captivities. The last three kings of Judah (David's line) were weak puppets of the King of Babylon and rebellious

before God. Because of this problem, the prophet Ezekiel was guided to write the following concerning the monarchy in Judah: "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, until he whose right it is; and I will give it to him (Ezek. 21:26,27). The returning Jews must have understood this prophecy to mean that they were not to put any man on the throne as king. The Persians would not have allowed Jews to set themselves up a king either. The right to set up a king anywhere in the Medo-Persian realm was reserved for the Persian monarch. Yet, we can see from the "book of the genealogy of Christ" that Zerubbabel was in the blood line to be the king of Israel (Matt. 1:1-12).

Ezekiel's prophecy echoes the prophecy of Jacob from the last part of the book of Genesis: "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; unto him shall be the gathering of the people" (Gen. 49:10). We see in this passage the word "Shiloh" which means "the one to whom it belongs." This is the "one" of whom Ezekiel refers in his prophecy.

Now, one may say, "but the prophecy in Genesis sounds unconditional, that the Jews would have a king until Shiloh comes?" The prophecy of Jacob says that the right of rulership would not depart from Judah. It does not say that there will be a king on the throne of Israel always. Look at David's explanation of God's covenant with the king: "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and that whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me saying, **if thy children take heed to their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel**" (1 Kings 2:4, emp. added). Therefore, the privilege of the people having a king to sit on the

throne was conditioned upon the actions of those kings. By the time of Ezekiel we see where God has had enough of the disobedience of the kings which He had set upon the throne to reign over His people. He now would use heathen nations to rule over them.

Zechariah deals with this situation. God has designed it so that the people must have faith in Him that they may have stability in their lives. But the mystery of "Shiloh" had not yet been solved. There were many kingdom/restoration prophecies that were yet to be fulfilled. How were they going to be fulfilled? Zechariah shows that the kingdom prophecies would be fulfilled through "Shiloh." The King is the major theme of the book of Zechariah.

The Branch

One description that Zechariah makes of the coming King is with the term "Branch." In the third chapter of the book, Zechariah sees a vision where the people will be redeemed. Joshua the high priest is seen clothed in filthy rags. These rags are exchanged for a clean (pure) garment placed on him by an angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord speaks to Joshua and says: "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold I will engrave the gravings thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree" (Zech. 3:8-10). Since this vision has to do with redemption, we understand the Branch has something to do with redemption.

The theme of the Branch in the prophets began with the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 11:1 the prophet says that from the stump (stem in the KJV) shall come forth the Branch which will grow up out of the roots. Isaiah goes on to say that this Branch will be one man on whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest which will give him wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, and knowledge. All of these characterize a good leader.

Jeremiah also brought out the theme of the Branch in his prophecy, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5,6). Jeremiah says that the Branch shall also be King over Judah, and Israel, and the earth.

According to these prophets, we see that the Branch is tied to Restoration and Kingship. Isaiah paints a picture for us of the dead stump of Jesse (the condition of the royal house foreseen by Isaiah). Out of this stump from the root comes a green sprig. This means there is still life in the roots. The sprig then grows into something strong. Jeremiah later adds that the Branch is a king who will execute judgment with justice. His kingdom will be a place of safety.

This is the background for Zechariah's prophecy of the Branch. He shows the redemption of the nation in his detailed vision. He then ties it with a sense of ever watchfulness by the stone which has seven eyes. This should remind us of the "seven shepherds and eight principle men" which is a description of how God will care for His people in the time of the Messiah (Micah 5:5).

Later in his book, Zechariah discusses another characteristic of the Branch. In chapter six of his prophecy, he takes Joshua the high priest before the leading men of the city, makes a crown of silver and gold, and places it on the head of Joshua. Then Zechariah makes a startling prophecy. "Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord: and he shall bear the glory, and **shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne:** and the counsel of peace shall be upon them both. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.

And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Zech. 6:12b-15, emp. added).

Zechariah shows in this prophecy that the Branch will hold the offices of both the High Priest and the King. This presents another question. If the Branch is in fact the promised Messiah then how can the King (from Judah) also be a priest (from Levi)? The book of Hebrews answers: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change in the law also" (Heb. 7:12). Zechariah was foretelling the change of the covenants in his prophecy.

Zechariah has given us additional information concerning the role of the Branch and the change which will come about because of Him. Now the prophet is ready to move to how the Branch will affect the world. He says at the beginning that those who are "far off" will come and build in the temple. Obviously, the temple Zechariah is discussing is a new kind of temple which will be built under a new covenant.

"They that are far off" must refer to the Gentiles (see also Acts 2:39; 10:34-35; 11:38). Zechariah refers back to Genesis where God promised Abram that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). When the foundation of Zerubbabel's temple was laid, the people from the surrounding territories came to them wishing to help in the building of the Temple. Zerubbabel and Joshua refused their help saying that the Jews and the people around them had nothing to do with one another (Ezra 4:3). They were right in refusing the aid of the idolatrous Samaritans. The Jews were the ones whose covenant with God called for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, they were the only ones with the divine commission to build the temple of Jehovah. But Zechariah states that God is going to make a new covenant which will include the Gentiles.

The King of Peace and Righteousness

Zechariah has given us a job description of the King which was to come to Israel. He will be a King who has God with him. He will give a new covenant. Now the prophet is ready to tell us what the nature of this King will be.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation: lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon the colt of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall seek peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea and the river even unto the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water. Turn you to the strong, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee” (Zech. 9:9-12). The King that Zechariah is presenting to us is not the type of king that worldly people would expect. The King is not one who rides up from the east with one million horsemen on white chargers in Arthurian style. No, this King rides in on a donkey — an animal only a pauper would be riding. His kingdom is not one where conquest is the rule. He will not need chariots from Ephraim, or horses from Jerusalem, or archers. He will be like the king that God wanted from the beginning (Deut. 17:14-20). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when he entered the city of Jerusalem. The people recognized the fulfillment of this prophecy when they cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt. 21:9). However, the crowd did not realize the chilling fulfillment of the rest of the prophecy. They did not understand that when Zechariah made reference to “the blood of thy covenant,” the blood would be that of their King.

The Smitten Shepherd

Zechariah moved from the encouraging statements about the reign of the Messiah

to the troubling passage which will be discussed here. Before we get to it, we will look at the value that the people of Israel had placed on their God. God said to them to give Him His price. The price they paid was thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12). The attitude of the people would be such that their King would not be worth much to them.

Yet, that was not all that would happen to the King. “Awake, O swords against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones” (Zech. 13:7). This prophecy is concerned with the death of the Messiah. It was probably just as disheartening to hear as it was for Daniel (Dan. 9:26). The disciples of the shepherd will be left without one to care for them. They will be left to themselves with no guidance. This prophecy was fulfilled at the crucifixion of Jesus. For three days the people who had spent three years with Him were without Him. He was killed by those who did not believe the prophet.

The Victory of the Branch

The book of Zechariah ends with a description of the victory for everyone who trusts in God and His King. There will be safety for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. There will be blessings for those who worship the King. The resurrection of the King is implied in the last prophecy. The kingdom would take in all the earth. Anyone could come to worship the King. And there will be an abundance of blessings for those who do (Zech. 14:16-21).

[Don is the associate minister at South Fork, Winston-Salem.]

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brotherhood News

by Dennis Conner

Around North Carolina. The church in THOMASVILLE appointed additional elders last September. Those currently serving as elders are Kirby Ball, Reid Davis, Bob Hoots and Walter Staton. The church began the year averaging 103 in attendance, but in September the average was 140. Rob Albright is the preacher. . . . The 48th Annual Carolina Lectures will be hosted April 6-9, 1992, by the BILTMORE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Asheville. The theme will be "Treasures From the Parables of Jesus." The preacher at Biltmore is Jim Hunter and the elders are Criss Carter, A.B. Wexler, and Hoyt Abney. . . . The WILKESBORO CHURCH OF CHRIST is in the process of securing a new preacher. ERNIE STEWART, after much thought and prayer, has decided to devote himself full time to the work of recruiting and fund raising for missions in the Middle East. Brother Stewart is now living in Georgia and is being supported in this work by a congregation there. Resumes should be sent to Dale Isom, c/o Wilkesboro Church of Christ, P.O. Box 81, Wilkesboro, NC 28697.

And South Carolina. An areawide Teachers Workshop will be co-hosted by the AZALEA DRIVE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Charleston and the SUMMERVILLE

CHURCH OF CHRIST, Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 1992. The Friday evening program will be conducted at Azalea Drive and the Saturday program will be hosted by the Summerville church. . . . MARSHALL HENSON is the new preacher for the LEXINGTON CHURCH OF CHRIST. Brother Henson comes to Lexington from Springdale, Arkansas, and began his ministry at Lexington on January 5.

And Beyond. The WHITE'S FERRY ROAD church in West Monroe, Louisiana, has been overseeing the raising of medical supplies, food and clothing for Croatia. As of Nov. 26, 1991, \$175,000 worth of supplies have been sent to relieve the suffering caused by civil war. White's Ferry Road also reports that through the end of November more than 150 people have been baptized into Christ in Romania. . . . RAJI STEPHAN, the preacher for the Arab church in Jerusalem, Israel, has received numerous threats on his life from Palestinian Moslems if he continues to teach Arabs about Christ. And JOSEPH SHULAM, the Jewish preacher in Jerusalem, had his car fire bombed. Neither he nor his wife were harmed. Both of these men are partially supported by the BROOKS AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Raleigh, NC.

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WHATEVER BECAME OF SIN?

**(A Study of the
Seven Deadly Sins)**

The Seven Deadly Sins

By Johnny R. Melton

In 1973 Dr. Karl Menninger published in a significant book entitled **Whatever Became of Sin?** in which he lamented that the word *sin* had almost disappeared from the American vocabulary. However, refusal to deal forthrightly with the issue of sin eliminated neither the fact of sin nor its impact on lives.

In recent months there has been a renewed interest in religion. The December 17, 1990 issue of *Newsweek* contained a significant article on the Baby Boomer's return to organized religion. This renewed concern for religion by a large segment of the population is both encouraging and distressing. Obviously, whenever anyone seeks God we are encouraged. However, it is distressing to know that some are seeking God on their own terms, and not God's. In the *Newsweek* article John Myrick explained the general attitude of people at "Shepherd of the Hills" church, "The attitude is that they are for life, love and liberty—it's more *for* things than *against* things." According to the article the preacher has "banished hell fire and damnation." (Which is one thing if it means that an arrogant, self-righteous spirit has been abandoned, but something else entirely if it means that biblical standards of right and wrong have been jettisoned.) Another member settled the matter with the observation that the church "totally accepts people as they are without any sort of don'ts and do's."

A section of the article appeared under the subheading "Lost Sin." Mark Gottwald, associate director of Milwaukee's Young Adult Ministry, a Catholic organization, observed that young adults returning to religion "have a keen eye for the sins of society, but as for individual sin, it's kind of lost."

Other articles of importance have appeared in *Newsweek* lately. The January 6, 1992 issue featured a cover story entitled "Talking to God, An Intimate Look at the Way We Pray." The six page article talked about the value and importance of prayer and the growing respect for prayer in the fields of psychology and medicine. But the

word *sin* never occurred in the text; even though Scripture clearly emphasizes the relationship of prayer and the forgiveness of sin. The publican in Jesus' story beat his breast and prayed, "God have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Peter urged Simon in Acts 8 to "Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." To which Simon responded, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me" (vv.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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22-24). James concluded, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

The January 13, 1992 issue of *Newsweek* featured "The Legacy of Divorce" on its cover. The article was well-done and demonstrated the negative impact divorce has on families, especially children. Despite the fact that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), the word *sin* does not appear in the article.

Rejoice that Baby Boomers are beginning to seek God. Celebrate that religious faith is being taken seriously. Cheer that divorce is no longer considered fashionable, but is now being recognized for the evil that it is. But understand that no one can successfully seek God without coming to grips with personal sin. Recognize that the practice of religion is pointless unless it is rooted in an understanding of the grace of God given to sinners. Comprehend that divorce is evil not only because it causes pain, but because it violates God's will (Matt. 19:9).

Sin. It's serious business. During the early centuries of the church, theologians developed a list of "deadly" sins. (Actually there were several lists with some variations in the sins listed. The list followed in this series is the one compiled by Gregory the Great [d. 604]). A doctrine developed around 1 John 5:16-17 "If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrong doing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death."

The sin that did not lead to death was labeled a venial sin. Venial means excusable or pardonable. Contrasting venial sins with mortal sins eventually led to the view that venial sins were trifling and did not require great consideration. It was surely misguided to dismiss any sin as being inconsequential in nature. Sin, any sin, all sin, is an affront to the holy character of God. No sin should be dismissed as trifling or inconsequential. But, since Scripture identifies sin that does not lead to death and sin that does lead to death, what is the difference between them?

Guy Woods explained the difference between venial and mortal sins: "In the event of sin in one's life, there is 'an Advocate, with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous (2:1), and the promise that 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1:8). The Apostle's teaching on the theme is abundant, and the significance thereof clear. It is susceptible of being reduced to logical form: 1. The Lord will forgive every sin, of whatever nature, that a brother confesses (1 John 5:16.) 2. There is, however, a sin which the Lord will not forgive (1 John 5:16.) 3. Therefore, the sin which the Lord will not forgive, is simply *a sin, any sin, all sin that a brother will not confess!*" (*A Commentary on the New Testaments of Peter, John, and Jude*, pp. 321-22).

Woods is right on target. The difference between sins is whether or not they are confessed and placed under the blood of Jesus. However, that ancient list of deadly sins can be a useful way for us to think about the destructive impact that sin has had in our world and in our lives. There is no attempt in this special issue of *Carolina Christian* to suggest that there are only seven sins that can condemn. Rather, it is our purpose to present this material in order to remind all of us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and to point us to "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

[Johnny Melton has served as Guest Editor of the February issue of Carolina Christian since 1975. He preaches for the church in Hickory, NC. He is the Managing Editor of Carolina Christian, and also serves on the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. Contact him at Route 2 Box 137, Conover, NC 28613.]

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Pride

By Ron Newberry

In his remarkable little book, **Mere Christianity**, C. S. Lewis wrote these lines: "There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. . . . And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit. . . . Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison."

Lewis shares the thoughts of medieval theologians who compiled the "*seven deadly sins*." Pride was considered the greatest sin. It stands as the essence of all others. Lewis contends that all other sins flow from this singularly horrible sin of pride. It is the center of all strife between man and man, and between man and God.

By consulting a good concordance, one can locate several Scriptures that address the negative side of pride. For example, the book of Proverbs records no less than fifteen verses that speak to arrogant pride. A compilation of these passages would tell us that God hates haughty attitudes, pride and arrogance. He detests a proud heart. Pride precedes destruction.

Jesus speaks in Mark 7:21-22 of arrogance that has its origin in the heart. It is the character of one with an inflated estimate of his own abilities or accomplishments. The problem is not that others look up to him because of his achievements. The heart problem involved is that he looks down on others and treats them with contempt.

The central issue of pride is the strife, friction, discord and contention it creates. As long as we look down on others, we will not look up to God. If we never look up, we will never comprehend our true self. We will only see our false superiority. One looking up to God, the One who is unquestionably superior, will not look down on others. We will bring into focus the meaning of Isaiah 64:6, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts

are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

Arrogant pride appears in all aspects of life. Relationships are ruined by pride. The very nature of pride allows it to infiltrate our religion. Perhaps we are more susceptible to pride in religion than any other segment of life. How ironic that religion would be the place where destructive pride remains so prevalent.

It is the vice for which we must ever be on guard. We struggle to overcome lust, greed, lying, envy, etc. As we congratulate ourselves on having achieved "purity of heart," we may be trapped by pride. We congratulate ourselves on restoring "purity of doctrine" and we are snagged by pride. From our spiritual height, we may survey the landscape and thank God that we are not like all those sinners that come into view. If that sounds familiar, it should.

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus told a parable to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else. The Pharisee was filled with pride in his ability to fast more often than the law required. He was not a thief or an immoral man. He was generous with his income. However, he pointed God to his life instead of pointing his life toward God. He never looked up to God; he looked down at everyone else. God will justify the sinner who has a broken and a true appreciation of his sin. He will not justify the religiously self-righteous. One recognizes his total dependence on God for salvation; the other depends on his own self-righteousness. He eliminates grace by inserting his deeds that are nothing but filthy rags.

Jesus stressed that it is not what goes into a man's body that makes him unclean. It is what comes out of a man's heart that makes him unclean. In Mark 7:20-23 He notes thirteen evils that come from the heart and make one unclean. Among the evils are murder, adultery and (arrogance). If we detested pride as much as we do murder, we

would witness an overnight healing of relationships, particularly in the Lord's body. If we were as relentless in our efforts to define "living in pride" as we are to define "living in adultery," we would extend the same mercy to others we want for ourselves. If we were as appalled at pride in the church as we are at immorality, we would root it out of our lives immediately. We would have that attitude, if we could only see it as God does.

Pride is the distilled essence of all other sins. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). In the next verse Peter assures us that if we humble ourselves

under the mighty hand of God, then He will lift us up. The cure for pride in any man is a humble spirit that recognizes that his righteousness from merit lies as filthy rags compared to the righteousness of the Lord.

When we get the urge to feel superior and a hint of arrogance slips into our tone, we need to compare ourselves to the absolute standard of holiness. An honest look will cure us of pride.

[Ron Newberry preaches for the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. He can be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.]

Sloth

By Phil Stapp

He was proud of himself. His master had gone on a long journey and left him in charge of enough money to last him and his family for over eight years. It was a tremendous responsibility and he knew his master, so he hid the money for safe keeping. What a great idea, or so he thought.

The master returned from his journey after a long time and began to settle accounts with his servants. The one who had been given enough money to take care of a family for over 40 years had put it to work and it had doubled. The one who had been given enough money to last a family for over 16 years had also put it to work and it too had doubled. The master was so proud. He put them in charge of many things and said, "Come and share your master's happiness."

Finally it was his turn. All of a sudden, compared with the first two, his idea did not seem so great. He made his excuses and presented his master with all that he had been given. At least he had not lost any of it, surely he would be rewarded for that. The master was outraged. "You wicked, lazy servant!" the master shouts. The servant is rebuked. The money is taken from him and he is cast out of the master's house. What had happened?

The paraphrase above is an attempt to convey the picture that Jesus draws for us in his parable in Matthew 25:14-30. Each servant is given a tremendous amount of

money. Two put it to work and earn even more for their master. The third thinks that hanging on to what he has is enough. He knows his master. But he is wrong. It is taken away from him. Why? Because he is lazy and worthless to his master.

The aim of laziness (sloth) is discussed in various ways throughout scripture. Laziness in life and work is ridiculed and condemned (see Prov. 6:6,9; 10:4,26; 12:24,27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16; Eccl. 10:18; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). The people of God are not to be the ones in society who are lazy and worthless. We are the ones who are to do everything to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). As Paul writes, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (1 Thess. 4:11-12).

The greater problem, however, is spiritual laziness. This is the focus of Jesus' parable. Every Christian has been given wondrous gifts by God and has the responsibility to put them to work. If we do not, they will be taken from us and we will be cast out of God's household to the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. As people who owe everything to God, we must not be lazy in any aspect of our spiritual lives.

We must not be lazy in our spiritual training. We, like Timothy, must train ourselves to be godly (1 Tim. 4:7-8). This means we must not be lazy in the spiritual exercises. Exercises like prayer, meditation and Bible study. If we are lazy in our spiritual training, our spiritual bodies, like our physical bodies, will become unhealthy and weak. Spiritual exercise must be a priority because it holds "promise for both the present life and the life to come." The strength we receive from God through these exercises enables us to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness, and to fight the good fight of the faith (1 Tim. 6:11-12).

Nor are we to be lazy in using the spiritual gifts that God has given us. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to "never tire of doing what is right" (2 Thess. 3:13). He reminds us in Ephesians that we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works (2:10). The leaders of the church are to prepare God's people for works of service (4:11-12). The body of Christ "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (4:16). He encourages the Christians in Rome to use whatever gift God has given them (Rom. 12:6-8). The Christian life is one that is to be active, not lazy. As we exercise our spiritual lives we are able to do the work that God has given us to do.

I am afraid that many Christians today have hidden their gifts, seldom if ever putting them to work for God. Some think that being a member of the Church of Christ is enough. Some are deceived into thinking that

they can hide behind doctrinal soundness. They believe all the right things. They perform all the correct forms of worship. But where is the living, active faith that is put to work to serve God and others. Where are the efforts to reach the lost, heal the hurting and feed the hungry.

We may think that if we can just hang on to what we have, God will be pleased with us. But like the servant in the parable, we are in for a rude awakening. We will find out that we do not know the master as well as we think we do. No matter what we believe or how we do things, if we are not putting our gifts to work for God, we are worthless in him and will be cast out.

When God looks at your life, does He see an active life of service? It may seem risky, but God's gifts will not come back empty when put to work to serve him. As we serve him we are invited to share his happiness. Does this mean that we earn our salvation? No! We are saved by grace through faith. But as James writes, "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. . . You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. . . . As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:18, 24, 26).

[Phil Stapp preaches for the Brewer Road church in Winston-Salem. Contact him at 2010 Brewer Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127.]

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Envy

By Dennis Conner

Public opinion has never been known for its sensitivity. Saul and David are a case in point. David had quickly become the nation's darling, having killed the Philistine champion Goliath while Saul watched from the sidelines. This is the stuff of legends, so the women of the cities of Israel greeted the returning hero with this victory song, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And they apparently voiced their praise in the hearing of King Saul. The words cut him to the heart and from that day on Saul eyed David with suspicion. But had not Saul earlier taken David into his own home and treated him like a son? Why such fickleness? Because Saul possessed an envious spirit. "Envy," said the man of wisdom, "is a rotteness to the bones" (Prov. 14:30). It produces a stinking, rotting effect in the inward man. It is a cancerous spirit that eats away at emotional and spiritual health. In Saul's case, he was terminally ill.

Envy is to be distinguished from jealousy, its next of kin. While jealousy is afraid of losing what it already has, envy is pained at seeing what others have. It is one thing to be jealous concerning my wife, but it is quite another to envy another man for his wife. Saul was pained at the favor heaped upon David by the people. He wanted the praise and glory to be his, so in a fit of envious rage Saul sought David's ruin as he cast a spear at the youth, shouting "I will pin David to the wall!" Envy gone to seed.

Envy. "This evil is the deadliest fruit of selfishness," said Charles Bridges. "Nothing flourishes under its shade." While it is quite true that nothing flourishes under the shade of envy, it is also true that out of its blackened soil spring the weeds of covetousness, bitterness and ill will toward others. God hates it.

No one is exempt from envy's threat, not even us religious folks. Paul warned the Christians in Rome to "cast off the works of darkness." Works such as partying and drunkenness, lewdness and lust. . . and envy. By the time Paul penned 1 Corinthians 3:3

many of the Christians in Corinth had already succumbed to this "carnal" attitude. Envy of spiritual gifts, and who knows what else, had ravaged that supposedly spiritual community. And it was the religious establishment, remember, who because of envy put to death Heaven's Gift. Even the hardened Pilate could see it (Matt. 27:18).

Today, the brother who has little envies the brother who has much. One preacher envies another for his ability and recognition. One church envies another for its growth and prosperity. So because of envy one brother backbites another, one preacher propagates rumors about another, and one church questions the faithfulness of another. . . and God hates it.

Certainly none of us want to be guilty of anything that is an abomination to God, so what can we do to guard our hearts against infection by this deadly spiritual virus? First, we can learn to be content with what God has given us, whether it has to do with abilities or possessions. Envy betrays a fundamental dissatisfaction with God. It says, "God has not been fair with me. He has given me so little. I want more." Now, while we certainly would not argue for a slothful maintenance of the status quo, we are yet reminded of the words of the author of Hebrews, ". . . be content with such things as you have." Thank God for what you do have instead of begrudging Him for what you don't have. Trust God's wisdom in His dealings with you. It may well be that God knows you would make a better poor man than a rich one! Second, in guarding against envy, strive to cultivate a rejoicing spirit. As Paul put it, "Rejoice with those who rejoice." Learn to share the joy that results when God has blessed one of His children. Finally, don't take your eyes off the cross of Jesus, for when we look there we are reminded of our sinfulness and selfishness, and we are rebuked and humbled by the selflessness of Christ. When we see only Christ and His cross anything anyone else may have becomes worthless and unappeal-

ing in comparison to the possession of eternal life and love. Why long for paste jewelry when you can have the real thing in Christ?

Envy. It's a rottenness to the bones. And God hates it.

[Dennis Conner preaches for the church in Yadkinville, NC. He serves on the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. Contact him at Rt. 6 Box 697, Yadkinville, NC 27055.]

Anger

By Jerry Senn

In this article we are to discuss the vice of anger. It is true, anger is a God-given attribute and a constructive, even vital part of our nature, serving worthy purposes. "There are times when it is not only right to be angry, but wrong not to be." Properly directed and motivated, anger is one of the positive forces within us. It propels us from our safe positions as onlookers to the field of battle. And, God's children are at war with the "prince" of this world's systems.

"Psychologist Carol Tavris writes in **Anger, The Misunderstood Emotion** that anger is a 'moral emotion'. . . . Of justifiable anger she says, 'I watch with admiration those who use anger to probe for truth, who challenge and change the complacent injustices of life, who take unpopular center stage while others say "shhhh" from the wings'" (Ken Durham, **Speaking from the Heart**, p. 62). Yes, anger is a virtue as well as a vice.

But, anger is just one letter short of danger. Paul says when you are angry "don't sin" (Eph. 4:26) and James tells us to be "slow to anger" (James 1:19). There are good reasons for taking seriously the dangers involved in anger.

1. Anger is fun. It is truly one of the pleasures of sin. Yes, it grows out of frustration brought on by deprivation of needs or by painful assaults, which are negatives. But, anger may cause us to fight back, to seek control over a person or situation for selfish reasons. Anger has been called the most enjoyable of the vices. "Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to

come, to savor the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back; in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you" (Frederick Buechner, **Wishful Thinking**).

Inflicting pain, either verbal or otherwise, gives us a feeling of momentary satisfaction or power. It feels so good to lash out knowing we've been wronged. But, as Buechner says, "the skeleton. . . is you." "Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret."

2. Anger left alone will destroy. Suppressions holding a feeling on the inside, not expressing it. Repression is denying and ignoring our feelings. There are times when we must suppress (control) or not express our angry feelings (Prov. 29:11). But, the feelings must be faced and dealt with constructively. Jesus instructs us to deal with destructive feelings by praying for wisdom (Matt. 7:7-11), giving time for our minds to catch up with our emotions. We must learn to allow Him to be the avenger (Rom. 12:17-21). Our response is to be controlled by His law of love (1 Cor. 13), not by negative feelings.

However, repression is more dangerous because it will do internal damage. "Bury your anger, it has been said, and it may bury you. When repressed anger goes underground, it often surfaces in other ways such as depression, sarcasm, or general irritability. It has been linked to such physical distress as headaches, hypertension, and ulcers" (Ken Durham, **Speaking from the Heart**, p. 67).

We are therefore caught between two difficulties. To express our anger thoughtlessly

and swiftly brings momentary pleasure but ultimate regret. But, to fail to express our feelings will only postpone the painful consequences.

3. Anger expressed demands maturity. Growing up involves learning to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 5:15). The old expression, "speak the truth and let the chips fall where they may" isn't a biblical concept if it doesn't take into account the person to whom you speak. "It is impossible to express love with a clenched fist." Dealing honestly with our anger is perhaps the most difficult thing Christ's followers are called on to do. Paul says to grow spiritually we must "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Submission of our wills is essential. Anger will be a tool of our flesh or of God's Spirit, one or the other. We choose which it will be in every case. Allowing God to control our responses to circumstances is what growing in Christ is all about. We'll fail often and may become discouraged with our performance frequently. But, through His wisdom, and our yielded spirits, we'll develop control.

4. Anger must be confessed. This is a vital key to overcoming its negative effects. Cain is a Bible example of one who refused to deal with his true feelings toward his brother. God saw it on his face and read it in his heart. But, Cain was enjoying the feeling which seemed so natural and justified. Do you recall how God questioned Cain? He said, "Why are you so angry? Why is your face downcast?" (Gen. 4:5). Cain refused to examine his own heart, to face his feelings honestly. Next, God warned "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door: it desires to have you, but you must master it (Gen. 4:6-7).

What was the "right thing" for Cain? I believe God wanted Cain to humble his heart, to yield, to submit his will in obedience. He had some confessing to do. But his stubborn will would not yield. As a result, anger took control and he became the first murderer on record. How many millions have suffered since for the same reasons? Cain's life was ruined by a single moment of anger. We're told today that one half of all murders take place in the home, where anger gets the upper hand.

Confession of anger should take place first within our own hearts. Then, it may be proper to confess our anger to the one to whom it is directed, admitting our feelings openly. This may not always be best, but our confession of anger to God is always an essential ingredient for healing to occur (1 John 1:5,7).

Sin is crouching at our door when we're angry. That's why Paul urges us to take appropriate action. His words should remain fresh in our minds: "In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26-27).

[Jerry Senn serves the church in Hendersonville, NC as an elder and preacher. He also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. Contact him at 1975 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28739.]



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Greed

By David Vaughn

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* Mammon is shown as the least erect of all the angels as he "went about with eyes rather for the pavement of the heavenly streets, trodden gold," than for the high and noble beauties of the place. The phrase, "Going for the gold" is fine for the Olympic Games, but it is an appalling guide for life. Jesus said "you cannot serve both God and money."

Greed is an attitude which says there is more to be had and I want it. In Classical Greek literature the words "greed" and "covetous" came from two words with the basic meaning of "more and "have." Greek writers "did not confine their use of these words merely to the desire for more material possessions." The earliest use referred to "immoral lust for power." The great Greek philosophers used the word "negatively in the sense of desire and covetousness, including sexual desire." According to their understanding and use of the word there is no room for greed in a just society.

In the Septuagint the word was used by the prophets to denounce dishonest gain which came about by violence or political power. Jeremiah warned the king of Judah about his lack of restraint saying: "But your eyes and your heart are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood and on practicing oppression and extortion" (Jer. 22:17). Ezekiel registered a list of Israel's sins and said that they were "destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain" (Ezek. 22:27). The Psalmist saw a great contrast between the way of God and the way of dishonest gain and prayed that he might be delivered from greediness (Psalm 119:36).

In the New Testament this word *plexonia* was used by Jesus when He taught that defilement comes from the heart and not from hands that are not washed before eating (Mark 7:1-6,14-23). According to Jesus, a rapacious appetite for more defiles a person. Luke told about a man asking Jesus to settle a family dispute over an inheritance. Jesus did not try to resolve the difference but He

did give a strong warning against covetousness (Luke 12:13-15). The reason for this advice is a person's life is not based on possessions (Luke 12:15). Therefore, we should pursue a faithful relationship with God and not covet the temporal things of this world.

Peter denounced the greed of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:3,14) because they form their words to make merchandise of all who listen. In verse 14 the Apostle says their heart is **trained** in greed. Peter says this is an ongoing practice, because the greedy or covetous person is never satisfied. We learn something about the nature of greed from Proverbs 27:20: "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied." When one takes an objective look at life, and what brings meaning to life, that one sees greed as an emptiness that can never be filled. This is the lesson from Ecclesiastes 4:8: "There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, 'And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?' This too is vanity and it is a grievous task." The destructiveness of greed can be seen in Peter's use of Balaam to illustrate how covetousness can blind a person to the point where all rational is lost. Peter also makes adultery and covetousness parallels.

Paul knew that some people at Corinth opposed his ministry and he vigorously defended his work as an apostle. Part of his defense was his claim that he had not taken advantage of them in any way (2 Cor. 7:2; 12:17-18), that could be regarded as greedy. He had informed the Corinthians in the First Epistle that covetousness was a part of the world (1 Cor. 5:10) and that the people who practiced such would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10).

As we observe the standards, or lack of standards, in modern life, we see, on all levels, the ugliness of greed. One reason that greed is so unsightly is that the greedy person has a depraved mind (Rom. 1:28-29).

The depraved mind is unauthentic because it has rejected God and is not concerned with meeting the test of godly standards. The mind, as an abandoned building, is subject to being filled with all kinds of undesirable activities as mentioned in Romans 1:28-32.

Greediness is not confined to material gain. In the New Testament it is often connected with sexual indulgence (Eph. 4:19). Desire that is not restricted by God's will, is out of control and it may be directed toward sexual behavior. This kind of behavior is always in rebellion to the will of God, manifesting the heart that is hardened toward God and pursues what it wants regardless of the consequences. Paul said it is not proper for Christian people to even speak about such (Eph. 5:3). When Nathan told David the story of the rich man with great flocks taking the "one little ewe lamb" from the poor man, David was angry saying the rich man showed no compassion. Nathan, of course, was pointing out David's sin in taking Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. God had given David many wives and "if that had been too little, I would have added you many more things than these" (2 Sam. 12:8). However, covetousness runs beyond God to lay claim on whatever it desires, whether lawful or unlawful. Our Lord taught us to have an eternal perspective on life, not a temporal greedy perspective.

Biblical teaching informs us that greed: (1) is a sure sign of little faith (Luke 12:28); (2) causes defilement (Mark 7:21-23); (3) is

idolatry (Col. 3:5); (4) severs the relationship between God and the covetous person (Rom. 1:28); (5) cuts one off from Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 5:11); (6) causes one to pervert the gospel (2 Pet. 2:3,14); (7) kills contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-8); (8) gives a false hope (1 Tim. 6:18); (9) points us away from Jesus (Heb. 12:3) and focuses our attention on things; (10) will lead to an eternal separation from God (1 Cor. 6:11).

The distinguishing characteristic of the Christian is **faith**, not possessions. Our society is an acquisitive one, and we must guard against the pressures of conformity (Rom. 12:1). The following story illustrates the true nature of greed—it is not how much one has but the condition of one's heart. In the ruins of Pompeii the body of a woman clutching her jewels was found. From the position of her body it was easy to see she had gone back into her home to get the jewels. It cost her her life. The life fueled by greed loses joy, beauty, friend, and family in its pursuit. Ultimately, life itself is lost. Greed can be expelled from the heart by a new love and affection for God. Greed and love for the Father cannot dwell in the same heart. Let us continue to set our minds on the things that are of an eternal nature; let us continue to look to Jesus as the true value.

[David Vaughn is now preaching for the church in Gastonia, NC following a long ministry in Burlington, NC. Contact him at 1919 North New Hope Road, Gastonia, NC 28054.]

Gluttony

By David Allgood

Everyone would agree that if a person were a drunkard, he would need to repent and to overcome this obsession with alcohol. It seems that every Christian knows about the evils associated with being an alcoholic. A sin that keeps close company with the abuse of alcohol, but which is not talked about seriously very often, is gluttony. In Proverbs 23:20,21 and in Deuteronomy 21:20 both gluttony and drunkenness are mentioned in a way which suggests that they are related, and that they both lead to destruction.

It seems that the church has properly emphasized the dangers of drinking, but has largely ignored the dangers of gluttony. Ernest Clevenger painstakingly wrote an index to the **Gospel Advocate Teacher's Commentary** which shows this oversight. For example, from 1922 to 1963 there were four lessons on the problems associated with drinking, but during the same time period gluttony was not addressed. One would think that if gluttony keeps company with the abuse of alcohol it should be discussed and taught against as well.

A glutton, as defined by Webster, is "a person who greedily eats too much." This would be a person who allows his taste to control what he eats. An excessive example of this was practiced during the days of the Roman empire. The Romans would have a feast and people would eat until they were stuffed. They would then visit the vomitorium, tickle their throats until they vomited, and then return to the feast ready to eat more. This was gluttony to the extreme. We may not practice such things today, but still gluttony is with us. In Proverbs 25:16 Solomon writes, "Have you found honey? Eat only what you need, lest you have it in excess and vomit it." Here is an example of one who eats too much honey because it tastes good. To please his mouth he eats until the sweet honey makes him sick. This is gluttony. Is this not very much like an alcoholic? To eat and to be unable to control it is to sin just as the alcoholic sins when he does not control what he drinks.

The real problem with gluttony is that it is a lack of self-control. Remember the prodigal son of Luke 15 who squandered his estate with "riotous" (without) living? Once he got his money, he wasted it on excess food and drink. He had no self-control and therefore, he wasted his money away. Other actions which show a lack of self-control can be found in Romans 13:13 and Galatians 5:19,20. Among the items cataloged in these passages are drunkenness, sexual impurity, and outbursts of anger, all of which anyone would call sin.

Now that gluttony is being considered, think about the behavior at fellowship meals. The members of the congregation get together and eat until they can hardly walk. When the congregation takes a meal together and people allow their eyes and taste buds to control the amount of food they eat, then collectively they are becoming gluttons.

After the baptism of the Lord, He went into the wilderness and there fasted for forty days (Matt. 4:1-11). When He was at His weakest point, Satan came to tempt Him with the physical temptation of food. Satan knew that Jesus would be weak from hunger. However, Jesus did not misuse His power in order to fill his belly, and He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to give Him power over the

temptation. The last part of that verse reads, "man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus did not allow His appetite to control His actions. It would have been easy for Him to satisfy His hunger by misusing His power, but he resisted because He knew that man should be in control of his body. In the same manner, Christians should strive for the same strength. Think about the couch potato who sits in front of the T.V. and consumes food. He has no restraint and he eats in excess while he gets lazier and lazier. Our Lord was self-disciplined and in control of His body. As His disciples, Christians should strive to be free from all the desires of the flesh. The problem is that to be free from them is easy to talk about, but it is hard to do.

In Proverbs 23:1-3 Solomon shows how serious gluttony is and how a person might control it. He writes: "When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man of great appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for it is a deceptive food." Solomon suggests that a person should take extreme measures in order to control his appetite. He says to put a knife to your throat in order to control your eating. That is pretty extreme; but it is effective. It would be very difficult for a person to swallow if a knife was pressed against his throat. This is an example of exaggeration which is used to show the seriousness of the condition.

Notice also how Solomon describes the food. It is described as delicacies. This brings to mind a table filled with food just waiting to be eaten. Much like a dessert table in a fine restaurant or at a fellowship meal. The description of the food sounds almost too alluring to be resisted, just like drink is alluring to the winebibber. It is the lust of the eyes that brings the glutton to destruction. Solomon also declares that the glutton will come to poverty (Prov. 23:21). In Proverbs 28:7 he declares that a glutton will humiliate his father. He knew that gluttony would lead a person to ruin. That is why he said to put a knife to your throat if you see a table full of delicacies. The bottom line is that sin separates a person from God. There-

fore, sin requires extreme measures to be taken to overcome the weakness. Think about your actions, and take measures to prevent you from becoming or remaining a glutton. Remember that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. One can afford to starve himself from food, but one

cannot afford to starve himself from the word of God. Gluttony is sin. If one must fill himself up with reckless abandon, let him fill himself up with the word of God.

[David Allgood preaches for the church in West Jefferson, NC. Contact him at P.O. Box 117, West Jefferson, 28694.]

Lust

By Steven K. Guy

Lust is at the root of every sin. The only way we can keep from sinning as often as we do is to control our passion to lust. There are five Hebrew and five Greek words that are rendered "lust" in the Bible. What is interesting to note is that the concept of lust has both good and bad connotations in Scripture, depending on what is being lusted after. The most frequently used Greek word for lust is **epithumia**, and the term means earnest desire. Jesus used the term twice in one verse to describe His earnest desire to eat the Passover meal with His disciples one last time (Luke 22:15). An equivalent Hebrew word for lust is **awah** and in the book of Deuteronomy, it is always used in a good sense (of fulfilling a desire of the soul within the will of God [Deut. 12:15,20,21; 14:26]). The earnest desiring of something is not the issue, it is what we earnestly desire that makes the concept of lust so dangerous. Unfortunately, the majority of the time, man's earnest desires are of the fleshly nature and thus, the term "to lust" is used predominately in Scripture to depict evil desires. A few Biblical examples of lust used in this fashion are Psalm 81:10-12; John 8:44; 1 Timothy 6:9; 2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Peter 2:10,18; 1 John 2:16,17. Lawrence Richards observes, "the translators of the NIV have chosen to restrict the use of the English word 'lust' to passages in the Old Testament and New Testament where sexual passions is implied (except in 1 John 2:16)." (**Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, p.423)

More often than not, this is the context we think of when the term lust is mentioned. The wise man Solomon advised, "lust not after her beauty in thine heart. . ." (Prov. 6:25a). The same Hebrew word (to lust or

covet) used here is used by Moses in Exodus 20:17, "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife. . . ." Jesus brought this deadly practice into focus by stating, "but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Further, Paul indicted the Roman world, as well as ours, by explaining that their homosexual practices were rooted in lustful desires of hearts which "God had given up unto vile passions" (Rom. 1:24-27). How alarming and insightful are these biblical truths in light of the contemporary headlines of our local newspaper: CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO ACCUSATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT; RAPE TRIAL DRAWS NATIONAL ATTENTION; AIDS EPIDEMIC ON THE RISE; NATIONAL SPORTS FIGURE CAMPAIGNS FOR SAFE SEX. All of these matters could be corrected and eliminated by going to the heart of the matter, lust, and checking it with clean and pure hearts. For example, King David's sin of adultery could have been avoided, and was forgiven, by such a condition (Psalm 51:10); and Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's wife was checked by such a heart (Gen. 39:9; Matt. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:22).

We, however, must not think that lust only applies to sexual matters. Any earnest desire outside of God's will is deadly lust. King Solomon, who warned of sexual lust, also wrote the book of Ecclesiastes which chronicles a life of desiring and participating in every act of the flesh, only to find that all of it was vanity (i.e., no profit). And the classic conclusion of the whole matter is for one to desire and participate in having an

awe—respect of God—and keeping His commandments (Ecc. 1:1,2; 12:13,14). God did not tell Moses to stop writing when He commanded “thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife,” but added “anything that is thy neighbors” (Ex. 20:17). Therefore, any earnest desire for what is not of God and would not be given to us by God (because He knows what is best for us) constitutes deadly lust (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:3; James 4:5). Thus, the lust to sin can be committed out of ignorance (1 Pet. 1:14); or, ironically, from knowledge (Rom. 7:7-13). When God told Eve not to eat of the tree, her desire to do so was stirred up and increased till she ate of it. Illustration: tell a child or an adult not to look, and what will they inevitably do? Why? Because we are carnal (Rom. 7:14). Having these desires in us, James says that a man is tempted to sin when he allows himself to be drawn away from what is spiritual by his own fleshly desires and that if they are not immediately checked, will conceive sin that produces death (James 1:13-15).

How can we keep this scenario from happening so often in our lives? The Bible says: by falling out of love with the world that will only condemn us (1 John 2:15-17; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 11:32) and growing in love with the Lord who will save us (Matt. 6:24; John 14:15; 15:14; 8:29; 12:25,26). Then, our desires will be His desires and when the temptations of the world (lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of

life [1 John 2:16]) come our way, we will be able to handle them.

Admittedly, this lifestyle at first can be viewed as an uphill battle, flesh versus spirit (1 Pet. 2:11; James 4:1-5; Gal. 5:16,17). It would be impossible to win if it were not for the fact that Jesus has already won it for us at the cross and resurrection morning (Titus 2:11-14). This does not mean however, that we do not have our daily skirmishes. But they can be met with the following mindset: (1) by putting to death daily our fleshly desires and resurrecting our spiritual desires through his power found in baptism, and drawing upon them every day of our lives (Rom. 6; Col. 2:12; 3; Eph. 4:20-32; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 1 Cor. 9:27; 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; (2) by not purposely putting ourselves into situations that would be making provisions for the flesh (Rom. 13:4; 1 Thess. 5:22; Matt. 6:13); (3) by remembering the cost of salvation (John 3:16-17) and the price of sin (Rom. 6:23); and (4) by seeing things and others through the loving eyes of our blessed Savior (Rom. 13:9).

We have the choice of beginning/continuing to put our fleshly desires to death daily or dying spiritually for eternity—because lust is at the root of every sin—and it is deadly!

(Steven Guy preaches for the church in Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact him at P.O. Box 1975, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578-1975.)

The Tragedy of “Cataracts”

By C. David Shuping

When God, the Great and Supreme Designer, fashioned the carbon-based creature known as human, He established within it a host of complex and extraordinary organs. Not the least of those organs is the human eye. So wonderful and so grand are the everyday blessings that this taken-for-granted organ provides, that only those who have had their sight and lost it truly appreciate its value and worth.

Of the many disorders which may cause one to lose his sight is development of a cataract. According to a recent article on cat-

aracts, an authority writes, “The condition is an almost inevitable part of the aging process. Eye care specialists estimate that over 700,000 people develop cataracts each year. In fact, cataracts have been pinpointed as the third leading cause of blindness” (Ann Little, “A Closer Look at Cataract Surgery,” *Health First*, October 1991). This awful malady will continue to rob thousands each year of their clear vision until we learn how to effectively prevent its occurrence.

As precious as our physical sight is to us, there is something that should be even

more cherished: our spiritual eyesight. The Pharisees, a largely self-righteous sect of first century Judaism, were afflicted with a spiritual blindness that was appalling to Jesus. After healing the physical blindness of one man Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." The arrogant Pharisees responded, "Are we blind, too?" The Lord rejoined, "If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, We see. Therefore, your sins remain" (John 9:39-41). Because of spiritual blindness (in the case of the Pharisees, a heart that was uncompassionate and unwilling to accept truth that caused internal change), the Pharisee was doomed to remain in his sin.

Cataracts of the eyes are caused by "the formation of new fibers on the lens, naturally occurring chemical changes, and accumulated years of exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun" (Little). In other words, years of exposure to the harshness of our world can cloud and destroy our vision. Christians should be aware that constant exposure to the harsh realities of our world can cause spiritual "cataracts" to form on their spiritual "eyes." The constant bombardment of movies, magazines, music and other media that promote nothing less than a "worldly" (devilish) agenda will eventually take its toll on the soul. There is a real danger that Christians, whose eyes were once opened and enlightened with truth, can develop those "spiritual cataracts." When this happens, their spiritual eyesight becomes clouded, or even blinded, and righteousness

and truth become more difficult to discern. With "cataracts" over our eyes it becomes very difficult to distinguish behavior that will separate us from the world around us. It is paramount we remember that whatever we mediate upon becomes a part of us. For this very reason, Paul admonished the Philippians to meditate upon truth, nobility, justice, purity, loveliness, goodness, virtue and anything worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8).

What can we do if cataracts have already formed on our eyes? Physically speaking, Ms. Little writes, "Once a person has developed cataracts, the only way to correct the condition is through surgery." Once a person has clouded or blinded his spiritual vision with the cataracts of worldliness, sin, and impurity, there is only one remedy: surgery, spiritual surgery. The Lord Jesus once said, "And if your eye makes you sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire — where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47). Jesus spoke in spiritual, not literal, terms of surgically removing the thing that is causing us to sin. By removing sinful elements we might effect spiritual cataract surgery. Once this is done, we will be able again to see clearly the will of the Lord and the beauty of living in the righteousness of Christ. If you have "cataracts" on your "eyes," I hope you schedule some emergency "surgery" today!

[David preaches for the West Hickory congregation: 349 33rd St. SW, Hickory, NC 28601.]

Reflections on the Baptism of My Children

By Bob Prichard

Recently I had the privilege of baptizing my son Nathan. I now have had the opportunity to baptize all three of my children, and I am rightly proud of all three of them. As a father, I know of nothing that can compare to the joy of seeing one's children being obedient to the Lord. Just as I rejoiced in the days

of their birth, I have rejoiced in their days of rebirth. As parents we spend many hours teaching our children, both directly and indirectly. Since the task of parenting is no doubt the most difficult task a person can ever be asked to do, it is especially encouraging to see our children being baptized into Christ.

Solomon advises us to "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). "Train up" is derived from a term describing the action of the Hebrew midwife. It was common for the midwife who had assisted in the birth to dip her finger in a small pool of crushed grapes or dates, and then massage the gums of the child. This action would create a thirst. We should also create a thirst in our children for God's will. We must teach our children in such a way that we will nurture a desire for preaching the Lord early in life. This desire should be so ingrained that it will carry into and through adulthood. Training our children in "the way they should go" involves finding their natural talents and desires, and helping to channel those talents and desires into useful service to the Lord.

When children stray from the Lord parents feel an acute sense of failure. "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

But it must be remembered that each person has freewill to choose to obey or disobey the Lord. "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth" (Prov. 10:17). The teaching we give our children can never be enough to meet every challenge the world will throw at them — Satan is much too clever. We must do the very best we can, and then trust them to the Lord's care. Good teaching, even if initially rejected, will bear fruit. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children" (Prov. 13:10).

Offer a prayer for me today, that I will be the proper teacher and example as a father for my children. Each of us that is a parent has an awesome responsibility. We cannot hope to be effective parents and teachers without the Lord's help. My prayers today are for all Christian fathers, mothers, and grandparents that they will make the truth of Proverbs 22:6 shine forth in their children.

[P.O. Box 532, Morristown, TN 37815.]

Thank You, Elders

By Rob Albright

This month (November) marks the start of my third year as a preacher working with the Thomasville congregation. My family and I feel very blessed to be here and having the opportunity to work with such a growing congregation.

Preachers get a heap of praise for their work and comments and expressions of love are appreciated. It is certainly a benefit to any preacher to know of the support and appreciation of the church family.

The progress and growth of the church really falls on the shoulders of the elders. They are the leaders in the work of the church. They are the ones who see to it that the flock is tended and that every form of nurturing and care is provided (Acts 20:28).

Our elders have provided us with the kind of supervision that has given opportunity for growth, harmony and sound teaching in doing the Lord's work. Thank you, Elders!

We do not always say thank you for a job well done. Too often we criticize instead

of honor. Following their lead brings occasion for joy and provides an atmosphere for growth and unity (Heb. 13:17).

The church needs elders. The church needs men who are willing to take the responsibility of oversight and lead in the God-given way described in the New Testament. They are men doing a "good work" (I Tim. 3:1).

I am so thankful for our eldership. It is the dominant reason for the success and growth of our family. They rule well. They deserve our attention and appreciation.

Thank you, Elders!

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A Book Review

By Michael R. Mobley

When God Became Man, Burt Groves. Quality Publications, P.O. Box 312, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper, 101 pages.

This wonderful lesson book studies the life and teachings of Christ by harmonizing the four gospel accounts chronologically. The 26 pages containing this harmony are presented in a split page format. The left column contains a brief commentary of the teaching given in the text and a brief explanation of the where, who, what, and when of the event in Christ's life and how it effects or bears on an understanding of that teaching. Each lesson ends with a set of discussion questions.

The study provides a refreshing approach to the busy and full active life of our Lord while here among us. It demonstrates a clear progression of events and relationships in His life. It emphasizes that the gospel accounts are a story of the truth. The Holy Spirit and these four evangelists did not reduce Christ's life to a proliferation of logical or scientific arguments of doctrine. Rather, it is the story of a life, the life of the Living Truth, the life of God when He became a real and living human being. It is a beautiful study for personal or class use for teens and adults. You must read this.

The Sermon on the Mount for Modern Living, Tom Seals. Quality Publications, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper, 171 pages.

The study the author presents of the greatest and most moving sermon ever spoken is divided into eleven lessons. His purpose is to personally challenge the reader to take hold of the sermon with his heart and mind and soul and to make it live in his daily life. To do this, he demonstrates how the sermon describes the righteous life of Christ's people, of how to live Christianity. As a result, he describes the believer's non-conformist relationship with God. It provides a text on how to make the Christian life healthy, happy, and saved; and why some Christians are uncomfortable with their

faith and miserable with their Christianity.

The reader will find the relationship the author establishes between each section of the sermon especially rewarding. He will especially appreciate his discussion of the golden rule, the law, and the teaching concerning our judging others. This study presents both the spiritual and practical nature of the believer's religion and righteousness. It is highly recommended for class study and personal use.

Gems From Greek, Basil Overton. Quality Publications, P.O. Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper, 190 pages.

For sixteen years, Dr. Overton has been writing the "Gems From Greek" column for "The World Evangelist," a paper he founded and edits. Most of those columns are included in this book. They provide for us a rich treasure of practical and often homespun insight into New Testament passages by discussing words from the original Greek language. This book successfully achieves its goal of demonstrating some great spiritual truths and lessons that will encourage us to serve God better.

Chapter One is an introduction to the use of the Greek words the Holy Spirit and the writers used to reveal spiritual in God's Holy Word. The remaining fifteen chapters contain an average of thirteen word studies, each grouped under a variety of headings. Two chapters contain gems from the book of Matthew, two from John, three from Acts, and additional chapters contain gems from Romans, Peter, Corinthians, and sundry subjects.

This book is an excellent source of sermon seeds and illustrations for devotions and invitations and classes. It is recommended for study, teaching and enjoyable reading.

The Tabitha Bible Class, Volume Two, Sharon Bryan. Quality Publications, P.O. Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper.

This thirteen lesson training course for young girls, including teacher's manual and

student workbook, is designed to help prepare young girls for Christian womanhood. While studying this book the student will learn to apply God's Word to her life, develop the desire to do God's will, and to become a young woman full of good works.

The workbook is divided into five sections. Section one deals with the direction God gives concerning life's purpose, our identity, and our need for wisdom. Section two discusses ways in which we can develop and use our senses of hearing, speech, and sight to glorify God. The third section is a practical and exciting study of how Satan tempts us and how to handle our sin problem. Section four discusses faithfulness, love, and happiness. The last section deals with the choices and responsibilities that a Christian woman will make in her life. Together these five sections give a well rounded picture of the Christian life.

Each lesson contains four parts aimed at Bible reading, Bible understanding, and Bible application. The lesson itself is presented in outline form that directs the student to the Bible. The review section contains both Scripture completion and a set of discussions questions. Each lesson concludes with a service project that makes use of the memory verse. This study is excellent for Bible classes, group study, and for home study.

Easy Does It Bible Games #1: Triple and Animal Match, Donna B. Smith and Joy Averitt and **Easy Does it Bible Games #2: Happy Pigs and Jerusalem Squares**, Donna B. Smith, Joy Averitt and Jared Smith. Quality Publications, P.O. Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper.

Complete with all necessary materials and instructions, these four games in two books will help to create a learning activity for any pre-school class that is both fun and educational. They do not require hours of preparation on the part of the teacher and they are simple enough for the students to follow, yet challenging enough for them to learn effectively. "Triple" is a card game whose object is to collect a set of three Bible names or objects that go together. "Animal Match" is a matching game in which players pick two cards they think go together. "Happy

Pigs" is also a matching game in which the player matches the question with the answer. "Jerusalem Squares" is a tic-tac-toe game that the student plays by answering Bible questions about Bible characters. This game, especially, can easily be added to. All four games are a good way to encourage children to remember Bible stories.

Living For Eternity, Benny and Gwen Bristow. Quality Publications, P.O. Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper, 172 pages.

This ladies class study is divided into two sections in an effort to discuss a practical everyday Christian life that finds its way to heaven for every woman. It rests in the belief that this life is a steppingstone to greater things and therefore follows a particular path that leads to those greater things. Section One contains the thirteen lessons for class study which cover such subjects as the woman's worth, her identity, purpose, death, reward, faith and faithfulness of life. Each lesson contains the lesson outline, discussion questions, teacher's notes, visual aids and inspirational thoughts. Section Two, entitled "Projects for Serving," contains thirty-three items that serve as a practical reinforcement of the study's theme. This is a good book for private or group study.

[Michael R. Mobley preaches for the church in Mooresville and reviews books regularly of Carolina Christian. Contact him at P.O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.]



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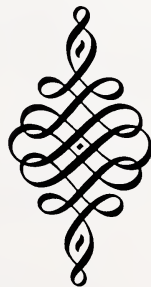
Brotherhood News

Around South Carolina . . . In November, 1991, the ESSEX VILLAGE Church in Charleston conducted a special Victory Sunday building fund effort. The result was a contribution of more than \$68,000 in cash! The money will be used to renovate the auditorium and to construct additional Bible school/administration/fellowship facilities. MARK SWINDALL, who serves the church as its preacher, reports that Essex Village is growing with 30 adult baptisms and average attendance of 278 on Sunday morning.

And North Carolina . . . A.W. CHISM is the new preacher for the LINVILLE FOREST CHURCH OF CHRIST in Kernersville. He began his ministry with Linville Forest on February 2. . . . The YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST will host its sixth annual Small Church Workshop, May 7-8. This year's theme will be "Small Churches Are the Right Size: Building on the Strength of the Small Church." For more information you may call (919) 679-8924. . . . The EASTCHESTER CHURCH OF CHRIST in High Point will have BERT THOMPSON with them March 13-15. Brother Thompson will be conducting a seminar entitled "Science and Nature: Two Votes for God." The Eastchester brethren are now served by two new elders, DON HIGHMAN and GARY DURHAM. There were 13 baptisms at Eastchester in 1991. . . . There is a new assembly of believers meeting in Alamance County. The EAST ALAMANCE CHURCH OF CHRIST presently meets in rented quarters at 4th & Clay Streets. Times of Sunday services are 9:30 a.m., Bible study 10:30 a.m., worship and 6:30 p.m. worship. The Wednesday evening Bible study is at 7:30 p.m. The address is 712 Wilba Rd., Mebane, NC 27302.

And Elsewhere . . . We have been asked to make special mention of DONNA DAVIS FLORICH. Donna is a native North Carolinian. She and her family have many Christian friends in the Carolinas. Donna was diagnosed with Leukemia last September and was scheduled to undergo a bone mar-

row transplant in February. Her father, Wilton Davis, was the donor. Donna's oldest sister, Cindy, is married to Stephen Guy, who preaches for the Myrtle Beach Church of Christ. Her youngest sister, Judy, is the wife of Stan Dean, who preached for many years for the church in Gastonia. Friends may write to Donna at: First Hill Apts., Apt. 409, 400 10th Ave., Seattle, Washington, 98122. . . . On September 29, 1991, the Tema congregation in Ghana installed five elders. The significance of this event is that these are the first men to serve as elders in the nation of Ghana. The Tema congregation has 650 members. . . . Two great men of faith have gone to be with the Lord in recent weeks. GEORGE BENSON, preacher, missionary, author, and former president of Harding University, died on December 13, 1991 at the age of 93. Benson has been called "one of the foremost leaders of the church of Christ in this century. L.O. SANDERSON renowned preacher and hymn writer, died on January 17, 1992 in Memphis, Tennessee. His funeral was conducted at the Wooddale church of Christ in Memphis.



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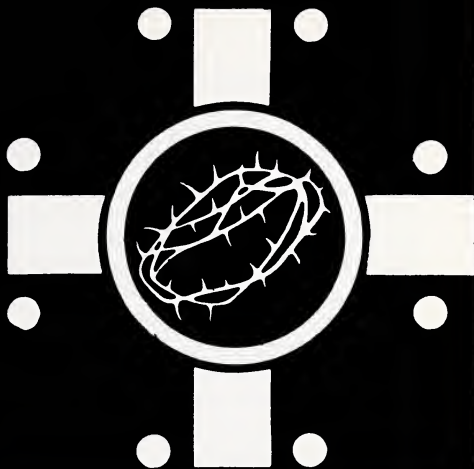
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editorial

by David Pharr

I have recently completed a second reading of **The Cruciform Church** (C. Leonard Allen, ACU Press, 1990). "Cruciform" suggests the need for being a church whose hearts and lives are patterned after the cross of Christ. Surely we must be a Christ-like people, and we will have lost sight of what this means to the degree that we lose sight of the meaning of the cross (Matt. 16:26). Brother Allen's subtitle is: "Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World."

There can hardly be disagreement with the emphasis on our need to be more like Jesus (Rom. 8:29). There is disagreement over some of what brother Allen identifies as our problems, as well as some of the solutions he proposes. My purpose in this editorial, however, is not to address these matters at this time, but rather to consider one troublesome point made in the book-troublesome because it calls attention to a very real danger.

Brother Allen charges that the cross has too often been missing from our preaching and that this has resulted in a "distorted and anemic gospel. The gospel of grace became a gospel of duty, law, and perfect obedience." In this connection he quotes the late G. C. Brewer: "Some have been wont to show that there was a human side and a divine side to salvation, and in doing so they have made the **human coordinate with the divine**" (*Gospel Advocate*, May 11, 1933).

Now, there may be good reasons for taking umbrage at these charges. In many ways I think brother Allen has overstated the case and brother Brewer's observation certainly does not always apply. A strong Scriptural case can, of course, be made for the necessity of emphasizing human responsibility as regards the gospel. Instead of arguing these points in this article, however, I want to react more in a spirit of self-examination. I especially urge those whose doctrinal stance would likely be parallel to mine to critically reflect on these things with me.

In my own sermons I have often shown that there is both a human side and a divine side to salvation. This is what the Bible teaches. But it certainly has never been my intention to imply that each has an equal part, or that what we must do is to any degree coordinate with what God does. I do not know of any instance wherein anyone has so misunderstood me. I pray that such has never been the case. Still, even a remote possibility of being so misunderstood should be cause for concern.

Ephesians 2:8 forever denies any human **contribution** toward redemption. "And that

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” This is not saying that faith is a gift from God. Actually, it is not even saying that grace is a gift from God. Rather, it is the whole of salvation. Justification can be viewed in no way except as a gift.

It is a “free gift” (Rom. 5:15,16). It is a “gift by grace” (Rom. 5:15). We are “justified freely by his grace” (Rom. 3:24). God, who gave His Son, will “with him also freely give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). The only thing anyone can merit, or earn (“wages”), is death; eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23).

As this is true, the cross of Christ is the central theme, indeed the whole theme, of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:2). It is the centrifugal force that pushes the gospel out to the world (1 Cor. 1:18-24). It is the centripetal force that draws the world in (John 12:32-33; Eph. 2:16). “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

Because we are saved by grace-without grace salvation is impossible-there is no room for thinking that what we do in any way contributes anything to our redemption. Nothing could be plainer than that justification is not a reward for our works, but altogether a gift of grace. Romans 4:4 says: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Again, in Romans 11:6: “And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. . . .” If we to any degree perceive our obedience to be deserving of God’s blessings, we have to that degree nullified the significance of grace.

We are certainly aware that our acceptance of God’s free gift of grace requires obedience (Heb. 5:9). Being saved by grace involves submission to the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21), which includes fearing God and working righteousness (Acts 10:34-35). Even the faith that accepts God’s offer of salvation is a work (John 6:28-29) which one must do (Acts 16:30-31). Baptism is into the death (cross, blood) of Christ (Rom. 6:3) and must be obeyed from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18). All of these essentials must be taught plainly.

At the same time, however, we must guard ourselves lest in our zeal to persuade

people to obey we allow them the impression that their obedience has to some degree made them worthy of redemption. The “divine side and human side” presentation of the gospel may be especially susceptible to such a misinterpretation. This is not to say that there is no human side as well as divine side in the plan of salvation, because people must indeed respond to God’s requirements. A problem arises, however, when the perception is that God has already contributed His part, and that now we must **contribute** our part to complete the contract. The truth is that God contributes everything. Our compliance with the gospel commands is nothing more than our acceptance of an unearned and unearnable gift.

A friend recently called my attention to what he perceived to be an all too common attitude. Whether it is an attitude that is widespread in the church need not be debated. If it is found in even one it is tragic. The attitude might be summarized like this: “We are saved **because** we are in the true church.” Or, “We are acceptable **because** we worship right and don’t use instruments of music.” Or, “We are God’s people **because** we don’t engage in sinful things.”

The error in such thinking may be subtle, but it is nonetheless error. It is not that one errs by being in the true church, or by worshipping Scripturally, or by avoiding sin. Instead the error—a very grievous error—is in thinking that right conduct in such matters earns for us a right standing before God. The arrogant Pharisee of Luke 18:10ff was not only wrong because of his disdain for the publican, but also because he thought his personal goodness was worthy of God’s blessing. Self-righteousness is not so much how one views himself in comparison to his neighbor as it is in how he views himself in relationship to the goodness and grace of God. The Pharisee may have had all the integrity he claimed to have. The one essential thing he lacked, however, was awareness of his total dependence on the mercy of God (see v. 13).

The one time the Bible uses the expression, “ye are fallen from grace,” it is in a warning against trusting in law keeping instead of trusting in Christ (Gal. 5:4). The context is dealing with those who sought to

be justified by the law of Moses, but the principle is the same regardless of what law. Law keeping per se will save no one (Gal. 3:21); only Christ can save. Believing truth and practicing righteousness does not earn justification; we are justified by grace. We are under the law of Christ and must be committed to following its principles, but the obedience that **bought** our pardon was Jesus' obedience, not our own.

The Bible does not teach salvation by grace only. It is regrettable that some are teaching this as well as other false ideas about grace. The answer to such error, though, is not to minimize the place of grace. Let us examine ourselves and our teaching to see that we keep the right perspective. Salvation is not a "do-it-yourself" project. "For by grace are ye saved."

Managing Editor's Column

Reflections On Isaiah 42:1-4

by Johnny R. Melton

Isaiah ben Amoz was a prophet in Jerusalem from 740 B.C. until at least the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C., the occasion of his last public appearance. (It is possible that this date could be extended to 688 B.C. if Sennacherib, as some scholars contend, undertook a second unsuccessful invasion against Jerusalem.) Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah and he died, according to Jewish tradition, by being sawed asunder during the reign of Manasseh. R. K. Harrison observed regarding the demise of Isaiah during the reign of Manasseh, "Whether this actually occurred or not, it is quite possible for Isaiah to have survived into the time of Manasseh (687/86-642/41 B.C.);" (R. K. Harrison, **Introduction to the Old Testament**, p. 780).

The second major section of Isaiah (Chapters 40-66), sometimes called "The Volume of Comfort," follows logically on the heels of the first section (Chapters 1-39). E. J. Young contended that chapters 1-39 can be viewed as a "staircase, as it were, which gradually leads one from the Assyrian to the Chaldean period. The two belong together, since the former is the preparation for the latter, and the latter is the completion of the former." Gleason Archer elaborated, "the atmosphere of Isaiah's day was filled with the threat of exile. Samaria had already been carried away captive by the Assyrians in 722; Sennacherib made a supreme attempt to do the same to Jerusalem in 701.

With deliberate purpose, Isaiah placed chapters 38 and 39 (even though they narrated earlier events from about 712 B.C.) after chapters 36 and 37, which narrate episodes occurring in 701. This is because chapters 38 and 39 lead up to the reason for the coming Babylonian Exile: the pride of Hezekiah in displaying his wealth to the Babylonian envoys. Hence chapter 39 closes with an ominous prediction of the Chaldean captivity (**A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**, p. 325). So Chapters 40-66 anticipate the restoration from captivity and the renewal of God's covenant with his people.

Isaiah 42:1-4 is the second "Servant Song" in the second division of Isaiah. The identity of the "Servant" in the various "Servant Songs" has been a point of contention with scholars. John T. Willis suggests that at times the prophet "changes from one identification of the servant to another, even within the same paragraph." **My Servants the Prophets, Vol. 2**, p. 75). Willis lists three identifications of the servant in chapters 40-55: (1) Israel (41:8; 42:18-19) (2) the Remnant of Israel (43:8, 10; 46:3,4) and (3) Jesus Christ (52:13-53:12; 49:5).

Throughout chapters 40-66, the prophet characterizes God as loving, just and merciful. "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" (40:11).

At 41:8 it is Israel who is God's servant and Jacob who has been chosen. Israel and

Jacob are personifications of the nation. God declared, "I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (41:10). God would help His people (41:14) and He would use them as His instrument: "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp with many teeth" (41:15). But God also has another servant: "I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who calls on my name" (41:25). This servant is identified later as Cyrus in 44:28 and 45:1, 13. Cyrus, the servant of the Lord, is summoned "For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, . . ." (45:4).

In 45:1 Cyrus is referred to as the Lord's anointed, "This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of. . . ." The nation of Israel as the Lord's servant is not referred to as "anointed." In 42:1 God says of the servant "I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." This is a description of anointing. For this reason, it can be reasonably assumed that the servant in 42:1-4 has a primary reference to Cyrus.

The servant in 42:1-4 does not act on his own initiative. It is God who upholds, chooses, and delights in the servant. It is God who anoints the servant with his own Spirit so that justice (God's justice) is brought to the nations. Justice will be brought forth by the servant "in faithfulness" (i.e., faithfulness to God). It is because it is God's justice that the servant will not falter or become discouraged until justice is established (God will see to it).

The theme of the passage is the establishment of justice (*mishpat*). Justice is a two-sided sword. On one side, justice demands mercy for the innocent and the repentant; on the other side, justice demands punishment for the wicked and the unrepentant.

God's justice required that He punish His own servant's wickedness: "Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.

So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart" (42:24, 25). However, that punishment would not be forever. God would deliver His people. He would deliver them because they were called by His name and because they were created by Him for His own glory (43:7). It would be for God's own sake that he would restore his servant Israel, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remember your sins no more" (43:25).

In 42:1-4 the accomplishment of justice is the activity of God. God brings about justice through the instrumentality of His servant. God's justice is merciful ("a bruised reed" will not be broken, neither will a "smoldering wick" be snuffed out [42:3]). God's justice is also the foundation for hope (42:4).

God used Cyrus to bring His justice on behalf of Israel following the Babylonian captivity. God used His servant Israel to carry the message of His everlasting love to the nations. God has brought ultimate justice in His greater servant, Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 describes God's justice: "But now a righteousness from God apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed before unpunished — He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

The Command and Privilege of Worship, I

by Robert Curry

An article came across my desk that reflected a very disturbing, but more and more popular view of New Testament worship. The opinion of the writer is that nowhere in the New Testament is the Christian required to assemble for worship, nor are there any specific acts associated with it.

I view this type of teaching as not only erroneous, but catastrophic, for it reflects the present migration of some away from first century Christianity. Too many neglect the assembly, feeling they can worship at home, and an article such as the one I recently read will only fuel that mistaken fire. If placed in the hands of the new convert it could do irreparable harm to a newfound faith.

In part one let us examine what New Testament worship is, addressing the question of assembly in part two.

John 4:23

In his discussion of the "acts of worship" the writer states: "When Jesus declared that 'a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23), it is certain that He did not have in mind a 'worship service' or even specific 'acts of worship.'" I do not believe this to be a "certain" perspective at all. His basis of evaluation is the term "in spirit and in truth," where he applies the word "spirit" as "an appropriate frame of mind, mood or attitude." The original word here is *pneuma*, meaning the inner self "as distinguished from outward show or form" (Moulton, *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 331). The context of John 4:23 is Christ's teaching to a Samaritan woman who said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (v. 20). To her worship was in a "holy place," such as a mountain or a city. Jesus did not advocate an elimination of any form or act of worship altog-

ether, but only an exclusive place: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (v. 21). Even though Jesus is removing the thought of a sacred place of worship, this does not negate the necessity of assembly with others who desire to worship God.

Jesus goes on to explain that instead of the ritualistic worship of the Samaritans (v. 22), or even that of the Jews, God wishes His worship to be done "in truth" (v. 23). Translated from *aletheia*, the term means "truth, verity; love of truth, sincerity; practice in accordance with gospel truth." How can one say that there is no specific pattern or form of worship when such is to be done according to truth; i.e., as Jesus would have us worship?

There is nothing in John 4:23, or in the surrounding context, that invalidates the observance of certain "acts" of worship, but is only a foretelling of the coming abandonment of the ordinances of Judaism (Col. 2:21), resulting in a worship of God with understanding from within.

Acts of Worship

The New Testament does, indeed, speak of various "acts" practiced in first century worship. Acts 20:7 tells us that the disciples came together on the first day of the week "to break bread," or to commune together in remembrance of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. During this assembly Paul preached until midnight. Paul instructed the Corinthians to "lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). On the day of Pentecost the baptized believers "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

These are all acts of worship to God. The skeptic will say that nowhere is it recorded that at every church these things were done

in their worship, but the fact is that these acts are recorded in the worship of a body of Christians at various times and places. For one to say that there is no command for such demands an instance of condemnation. If there is no condemnation, then all that is left is the record of these acts being done. The writer also attempts to validate his view by citing men of the reformation who sought "a simpler religion," such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Even if the work of the reformers would be justification for New Testament practice, they would not support the writer's view.

The work of Martin Luther centered for a time around his "95 Theses" which condemned certain Catholic practices such as the sale of indulgences, the misuse of monies and the doctrine of purgatory. To say that Luther, whether in his "95 Theses" or any other context, condemned an ordering of acts of worship, or that he sought simplicity in worship is to not understand the historical facts. In 1529 Luther wrote two "catechisms," the "Large Catechism" for adults and the "Small Catechism" for children. In them Luther outlines the proper use of the "Lord's Prayer," the Ten Commandments, the meaning of baptism, the offices of the church, and so on. The question of observing Sunday as a special day is answered: "We observe Sunday...in order to have time and opportunity for public worship" (Luther, *Small Catechism*).

What Is Worship?

The writer of the aforementioned article shows a misunderstanding of what worship is when he writes that it is "the whole of man's response to God, his entire life lived for his Creator's glory." His conclusion is that all we do is worship to God.

Such a belief is simply not true, and even

foolish. There are many things one does in day-to-day life that certainly does not constitute worship: working, eating (which Paul condemned Corinth for doing during their communion), bathing, and a host of other examples. The atheist does these things, yet is surely not worshiping God. Worship is done in love, adoration and praise to God and His "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Recall that the writer stated that worship is done "in spirit and in truth." How can I be worshiping God from my inner self (spirit, *pneuma*) and with sincerity (truth, *aletheia*) when I am doing no more than what the skeptic is doing? While it is true that one's whole life is to be lived in godliness and righteousness, my acceptable worship requires me to be distinctive, separate, and apart from the skeptic and atheist as I praise God and uplift those of like precious faith (Rom. 12:2; I Pet. 2:9).

Conclusion

In spite of the writer's attempt to validate his claim there is no truth to the opinion that worship does not consist of specific acts (such as prayer, communion, and our contribution). No amount of Scriptural study will change that, for even a casual examination of the text surrounding John 4:23 reveals the true focus of Christ to the Samaritan woman. No amount of word study will change the truth, for the very meaning of "spirit" and "truth" indicate a type of praise and adoration that cannot be found in day-to-day, non-spiritual activities.

As I worship the Lord I should desire that my praise reveal my love to Him who has offered me more than my earthly hopes and dreams could ever achieve.

(To Be Continued)

[P. O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334]

Slaying the Goliath

by Michael R. Mobley

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David

and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths

of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11:32-34, NKJV).

During the American Civil War, in the first battle of Bull Run, a colonel of a New York regiment was mortally wounded in a charge. He ordered his men to lift him and prop him against a tree facing the firing enemy. This done, at whatever cost in pain a dying man would suffer from a fatal bullet wound, he said faintly, “Tell mother I died with my face to the enemy.” The message taken, the man died.

The people of God have always been in a war with this world. It is the struggle between good and evil, each trying to destroy the other for control over the minds of every person (2 Cor. 10:1-6). The battles of this war are being fought in the lives and souls of each and every person. The conflict is being fought by the world who serves the wicked prince of Hell against the disciples of Christ who serve the only Living and True Almighty God of Heaven (Eph. 6:10-19; 1 Pet. 5:6-11; Rev. 12; Col. 2:1-3:11; John 18:1-20:31). It began with Adam’s fall and will not stop until the end of creation’s time.

Without a courageous spirit, the soldier will leave the battlefield. Without a like courageous spirit, the believer will not faithfully live his holy life and will not fight the world for the souls of all its people and will not stand up for Christ in this world for his own soul. Like the pounding of the heart for the body, courage gives the human spirit the energy and desire to rise up against the believer’s enemy. Courage, it is the heart of the soldier for it lets the soldier fight and that is what he does. And the church is God’s army on the earth. Courage is the will of the human spirit to believe God and the power to do something about it—to follow Christ through this world.

The story of David and Goliath is the story of Goliath against Israel, the story of the world against the people of God, and of one believer’s courage to stand up to it when others would not (1 Sam. 17). God’s people live by His law and teaching of the truth. Notice that it was Goliath who issued the challenge. So, the problem is not with God’s people; we have done no wrong by obeying God. The problem comes from this evil and wicked world; it will chal-

lenge the authority of God because it is threatened by the truth. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:18-21, NKJV). The world hates the truth and that is its self-defense. So, what can we learn from this story about our relationship with the world and about ourselves? You see, it is not us against them, but them against us, for we want to save them while they want to stop us.

Goliath represents the world that wants to challenge God’s people, even God’s kingdom, to stand up and fight, to stand up and be counted, to take a stand and stand our ground (1 Sam. 17:4-10). The world wants to see if we will sell out with compromise, or to give up the truth altogether. If the world can overcome us with its hatred, it will stop us (Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Matt. 4:1-11). So, it will attack the integrity, dignity, and credibility of the truth to challenge God’s authority. It will use ridicule and intimidation, or the subversive doctrines of evolution, humanism, materialism, hedonism, denominationalism, cultism, and occultism. The minds and lives of people are the arenas where this war is being fought and these are the swords and spears and javelins that the world comes to fight with! These are not the weapons of truth they claim to be, but weapons of hate!

Israel represents the church, or the individual Christian, who will not take up the challenge, who will not stand up to be heard and seen and to deal with sin’s giant (1 Sam. 17:24-26). God shows the hypocrisy of their fear or indifference. Goliath had defied God and defied them, and they did nothing about it! Rather, they ran away from the battle!

Peter vividly demonstrates what fear does to a Christian’s spirit. He denied Christ! “I don’t have any association with that man! How can I know him?” And then he began to curse and swear (Mark 14:66-72). Making excuses

for our sin and our refusal to repent of it is an effort to be "just like everybody else" and not what we are really supposed to be. We make excuses because we are afraid to be known as the believers that God's people are (2 Pet. 2:5-10). Yet, always remember that Peter repented and lived and died by courage (John 21:15-19). Are we afraid to speak up? Are we afraid to act and do something about the evil that is around us? Are we afraid to get involved?

Finally, David represents that congregation, or Christian, who takes up the world's challenges (1 Sam. 17:38-47). He put himself in such a position that Goliath had to deal with him. God shows the courageous spirit of His soldier. Courage is characterized by a sense of duty, loyalty, conviction, and reverence for God in the midst of man's wicked world of unbelief. "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into my hands'" (1 Sam. 17:45-47, NKJV). When we believe that in our own lives we can slay the Goliath, we can have the courage not to sell out, and keep the world's wicked ways out of our own lives. God does give victory to those who believe they can win (1 John 5:3-4). Yes, take the name of Jesus with you everywhere you go, but take it with a courageous spirit and expect a victory (1 Cor. 16:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:6-8 and 17-18).

The Goliath that rises up to stop the believer and the church of Christ comes to do battle in many forms. There are the many structures of society in which he rules through their leaders: governments with all their bureaucracies, schools, marketplaces, the fourth estate (media), the many religions with all of their associated organizations, etc. (Mark 8:34-38). There are the unbelieving family members, friends, and associates of our everyday lives (Matt 10:34-39). Also there are the more personal Goliaths: failing health, failures, finan-

cial losses, emotional distresses, addiction, lusts, tragedies and crises, dying, and so many other things (2 Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 4:10-13; Psa. 6 and 16 and 18). On the job, at the marketplace, at school, next door, we need a courageous spirit so that we will not be pushed around by these Goliaths. For example, we must have the courage to worship God with fellow believers even though one's spouse or family will not. It is having the courage to do the right thing even though your employer wants you to do the wrong thing. Above all, it is the courage to speak out in public through whatever forum is available in your community. We need the courage to get involved beyond the "church building" to do something about the evil and unbelief that is in the world and in the lives of people we meet everyday.

Yes, this is the courage to live the believer's life. It is also the courage to stand up and let it be heard and seen that one is a citizen of the kingdom of God. It is the courage to serve God and not be manhandled, duped, manipulated, and pushed around by the world. It is the believer who will rise up from his pew, take the mantle of righteousness and truth, go out amidst the people and do battle in the name of the Lord for the souls of all. Yes, this is the courage to make your own path through this world and the compassion to leave a trail. Then your courage can inspire courage in the hearts of your fellow believers (1 Sam. 17:48-54).

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss;
From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed."

— George Duffield

[P. O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115]



48th Annual Carolina Lectureship April 6-9

“Treasures from the Parables of Jesus”

Biltmore Church of Christ

Asheville, NC

Jim Hunter, Minister

Monday

April 6, 1992

- 8:30 — Registration and Welcome
- 9:00 — Introduction to the Parables, Johnny Melton
- 10:00 — (Ladies Class) The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10), Vivian Morgan
— Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9), Ken Wyatt
- 11:00 — The Marriage Feast (Matt. 22:1-14), Robert Curry
- 12:00 — Lunch
- 1:30 — The Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50), Mike Mays
- 2:30 — The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Quillie Brooker
- 3:30 — The Unrighteous Steward (Luke 16:1-13), Jack Cooper
- 4:30 — Supper
- 7:00 — The Two Builders (Matt. 7:24-32), David Vaughn
- 7:30 — Counting the Cost (Luke 14:25-33), Jerry Senn

Tuesday

April 7, 1992

- 9:00 — The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13), Don Rhodes
- 10:00 — (Ladies Class) Looking for Chief Seats (Luke 14:7-11), Mary Thigpen
— The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7), Harding Lowry
- 11:00 — The Parable of the Leaven (Matt. 13:33), Mike Winkler
- 12:00 — Lunch
- 1:30 — The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31-32), Steve Short
- 2:30 — The Parable of the Net (Matt. 13:47-50), Randy Smith
- 3:30 — The Foolish Farmer (Luke 12:13-21), Kent Massey
- 4:30 — Supper
- 7:00 — The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24), Will T. Winchester
- 7:30 — A Parable of Watchfulness (Luke 12:35-41), Floyd Dethrow

Wednesday
April 8, 1992

- 9:00 — Parable of Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32), Walter Wagner
10:00 — (Ladies Class) The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18), Shirley Nix
— The Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23-35), Jim Mullican
11:00 — The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9), Hosie Byrd
12:00 — Lunch
1:30 — The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14), Scotty Sparks
2:30 — The Unprofitable Servant (Luke 17:5-10), Jeff Williams
3:30 — Growth of the Gospel (Mark 4:26-29), Bob Bickle
4:30 — Supper
7:00 — The Great Supper (Luke 14:15-24), Mike Mobley
7:30 — Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), Don Nix

Thursday
April 9, 1992

- 9:00 — The Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30), Henry Colbert
10:00 — (Ladies Class) The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-11), Nancy Winchester
— Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), Don Hughes
11:00 — The Rich Man and Lazarus, Gilbert Tripp (Luke 16:19-31)
12:00 — Lunch
1:30 — The Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), Kirk Sams
2:30 — The Wicked Husbandman (Matt. 21:33-44), Craig Hendrichs
3:30 — The Faithful and Wise Steward (Luke 12:41-48), Stephen Guy
4:30 — Supper
7:00 — The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), Richard McWilliams
7:30 — The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:44-48),
Wallace Beasley

ANNOUNCING

The First Annual
North Charleston Lectures
September 25-27, 1992

Theme: *The Restoration Movement*

Speakers: David Pharr and Earl I. West
Plus Numerous Others From
Across the State

(Details to Follow)

“God Moves in a Mysterious Way”

by Jim Mullican

“God moves in a mysterious way” so wrote William Cowper, a man who wrestled long with the adversities of life. Paul expressed it somewhat differently in Romans 8:28 by saying, “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.”

The truth of what both men wrote was vividly demonstrated on November 17, 1991, when Bill Frisbee wheeled himself down the aisle as the invitation was extended, confessed his faith in Jesus, and was baptized for the forgiveness of sins. A little background will be necessary to show how God’s providential hand was so apparent in this man’s conversion.

Bill was brought up by devoutly religious grandparents who sought to instill in him the teachings of Jesus as they understood them. According to his own account, he grew up and strayed from the good teaching he had received, as so many young people do. He began to drink, and sometimes heavily.

On Friday, November 23, 1990, he had been drinking heavily at more than one location. Finally, in a local restaurant, according to witnesses, he stood on a balcony railing and reached for an overhead rafter, deluded by the alcohol as to his actual abilities. He slipped and fell approximately thirteen feet, breaking his back, and spending the next several months hospitalized. After more than a year of therapy, he is able to do most things for himself, and cares for his son who was born six months after the fall, but he is confined to a wheelchair most of the time.

This tragedy caused Bill to reexamine his life and priorities, and to realize the futility of the way of life he had followed for the past several years. He set his heart to seek God and his will, and to bring up his infant son in the way of the Lord.

One of his nurses was a Jehovah’s Witness, and put him in contact with a couple who began coming to his house regularly to

teach their doctrine, which was quite different from what he had heard before. They also encouraged him to go to the kingdom hall on Sunday, and in August of 1991 he decided to do that. However, he was not able to locate the kingdom hall, but did find our meeting house and stopped to worship. This resulted in a home visit, discussions, and Bible study. He soon asked the Jehovah’s Witnesses to cease their teaching efforts, and on November 17, 1991, became a Christian by responding to the gospel of Christ, just as three thousand did on Pentecost in Acts 2. His expressed desire is to help young people avoid the pitfalls of alcohol which entrapped him.

Here is a man who has suffered an apparent tragedy in life, and yet God has been able to work through that tragedy to open his eyes to what is really important in life and to bring good out of seeming evil. He is grateful for a wife who has stood by him faithfully in circumstances where other men in similar circumstances have been left to face them alone. Because of his accident, he is able to spend most of his time with his beautiful little boy, who bears the illustrious name of Aaron. But best of all, he has found “the peace of God, which passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7).

Romans 8:28 is still inspired truth, but let us not live in such a way that tragedy is required to bring us back to God. At the same time, rejoice with Bill that he can look forward to a home in heaven and a body which is strong and healthy there. Notes of encouragement may be sent to him in care of the church address.

[Jim Mullican is an evangelist with Central Haywood Church of Christ, P.O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]

In the Privacy of Your Own Home

by Dean M. Roach

Most everyone feels secure in his house. It is a fact that children usually feel more safe in the comfort of their home. Husbands and wives usually find the home to be the focal point of family activity.

A house is not a home. A house is a man-made dwelling in which one is protected from the elements, intruders, and the such like. Yet, the home has also become a place where one can sin and never be caught, so some believe.

Often people are talked into sin by the alluring, reassurance of secrecy: "You can do it in the privacy of your own home." Television ads sell everything from wills to insurance with the benefit of being able to fill out the forms in the privacy of your home. While privacy in our home is needed and desired it can lead into a sinful path.

Living in a world of sin, many conclude that a person has the right to do whatever he pleases in his own home. While this is true, to some degree, it can mislead people into the idea that God cannot see into the home. We, as Americans, are protected by law to the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These rights, unquestionably, come at great expenses. But what one may call freedom, God may call sin!

Is it true that what a person does in his home is his own affair? Many would reply, "Yes." But what a person does in private will effect how he behaves in public!

King David, from the privacy of his own home, lusted for Bathsheba, (2 Sam. 11:2-3). In the privacy of his own home he committed adultery with her, (2 Sam. 11:4). As a result of this illegitimate relationship, David had to cover up what he had done. His sinful actions led to the murder of Uriah, an innocent bystander. This shows how far man will go to hide his sin!

But whose business was it anyway? David was a high political official. Wasn't he exempt from the law? No! David and Bathsheba were two consenting adults in the

privacy of David's home, so who needs to know what they had done? Some, especially today, would argue it wasn't anyone's business, save David and Bathsheba. Yet, God who knows more than man, made it His business. God sent Nathan to David because of what he had done in his home (2 Sam. 12:1-7).

David totally disregarded God's commandments. David did not honor his Father. He murdered, he stole, he bore false witness, and he coveted his neighbor's wife (see Ex. 20:12-17). He threatened his aide with bodily harm (2 Sam. 11:25). He did all this from within the confines of his own home.

Noah, after the flood, planted a vineyard and drank the fruit thereof. He was drunk in his own home, "and was uncovered within his tent." As a result of Noah's actions, Ham saw his father's nakedness. If Noah had not been drunk Ham would not have seen his father's nakedness. This is not to make excuses for Ham, but if Noah had been sober, then Canaan would not have been cursed (Gen. 9:20-25). This writer wonders how that father felt, knowing he played a part in the fall of his son.

Parents drink in front of their children, giving them an example not to follow. While drunk, parents commit unspeakable acts to themselves, to their children and to others. Some folks drink in their homes and then drive on public roads with no regard for anyone or anything. These drunks kill, maim, cripple, and destroy because of what they have done in the privacy of their own homes.

Lot, in the privacy of his home, committed incest (Gen. 19:30-36). From his drunkenness, Lot became the father of his grandchildren. From the wombs of these two girls came bloodshed. Lot's daughters bore the fathers of Moab and Ammon, bitter enemies in history. What Lot and his daughters did, in their home, cost men their lives in future wars between these two countries.

King Solomon had many wives, which

he was forbidden to have, "But king Solomon loved many strange women.... Of these nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods" (1 Kings 11:1,2). At an old age Solomon served the imaginary gods of mankind. God was not pleased with Solomon's lifestyle, "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel" (1 Kings 11:9). Eventually Solomon's kingdom was taken from him, by God, for his actions. Rehoboam, Solomon's son (1 Kings 12:21) reigned in his stead.

It would seem that Rehoboam was influenced by his father's life. Rehoboam was one of the worst kings Judah ever had to endure. Because Solomon forsook God, Rehoboam was not a godly man. The nation suffered more due to how this king lived.

Many people want to use the excuse, "I did it in the privacy of my own home," so that what they have done is not open to public debate or conversation. Yet what they do in their home will eventually come into public and then what they practice in secret becomes open to public awareness!

Some men and women engage in homosexual relations in their homes. This relationship is strictly forbidden by God (Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9). In private these people commit abomination and then

come into society with their hideous lifestyle.

How many homosexuals have donated blood after committing such acts? How many innocent persons have contracted the HIV virus, which will lead to AIDS, because they have received blood from one of these vile persons? Remember Ryan White!

Jeffery Dohmer murdered and mutilated innocent people in the privacy of his home. Should he be exempt from the civil authorities because his sin was a private sin?

We are all free moral agents. God has given us the ability to choose the lifestyle we desire to live. But we must keep in mind that we will stand in judgment for the life we lead, "As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11,12). "For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:14).

Is there privacy in our homes? To some degree. You can digest drugs in your home, watch an "R" or "X" rated movie in your home, or you can carry on a relationship that is not lawful in your home. Or you can serve the God of Heaven in your home, as all men should! No matter where we sin God knows of it, we cannot hide from our sin. "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee" (Psa. 69:5).

[P. O. Box 140, Kenton, OH 43326]

The Thief on the Cross

by David B. Thompson

Have you ever wondered why Luke included the story of the thief on the cross? I do not know how many times I have been asked, "What about the thief on the cross; he was not baptized?" Obviously many people have missed the reason why we are told about the thief.

Luke tells a beautiful story of a man who had a change of heart. The man was a criminal, who had been sentenced to die on a cross. What his exact crimes were we do not know, but he himself recognized that he deserved to be put to death. From the other accounts, we learn that at first he spoke

against Jesus, but later had a change of heart. What caused this man to change to the point that he realized that Jesus was the Son of God? To determine what changed him, we need to look at the things which he might have seen.

He might have seen Jesus being beaten by the Roman soldiers. He witnessed this man stand not saying a word of hatred to the soldiers. He might have witnessed the soldiers placing the crown of thorns on Jesus' head and spitting on Him. The thief might have thought that this man must be

a coward, a weak example of a man. Here was Jesus, a man who was physically strong, taking all this punishment and not saying a word.

The thief had to know what was being said about Jesus. He may not have heard a lesson from the lips of Jesus, but we can be sure that he had heard what others were saying about him. He knew that some people believed that Jesus was a man from God. Jesus had healed the sick and raised the dead. He must have heard about all the wonderful things which Jesus had done.

But what changed this man's life to the point that he would speak up for Jesus? Let's look at what he saw that day. Here was a man who had been beaten, spat upon and was wearing a crown of thorns. But he said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk. 23:28, NKJV). "Wait a minute! This man is suffering great pain and embarrassment, but he tells the people not to mourn for him. This man must be crazy." So the thief may have thought to himself.

Then Jesus from the cross said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:24). Can you imagine the shock on the face of the thief, as Jesus asks God to forgive the people who were killing

him? These people for whom He was praying were the very people who just a few hours before were screaming for His death, but he is willing to forgive them. The thief was witnessing the greatest example of love that one can have for another (John 15:13). No doubt the things he saw on this day convinced him that Jesus was the Son of God.

We are greatly blessed by Luke's account of the repentance of the thief on the cross. In it, we can see that even in the face of death Jesus had compassion for others. This compassion reached a man to the point that it changed his life. This should encourage us to have the same kind of compassion toward others.

Luke did not record this story as an example of the steps of conversion. It is instead an example of the compassion of our Lord, the kind of compassion we should show to others. It is also an example of how even a hardened man like the thief can be so touched by the Lord that his hard heart can also become compassionate. The story of the thief encourages us to see in Jesus such qualities of heart and life that it will make us want to be with Him and like Him.

[Brother Thompson is a deacon at the Charlotte Avenue congregation, Rock Hill, SC.]

Another Wake-Up Call

by Mark Swindall

Earvin Johnson, Jr., the "Magic" man. He has thrilled us with his sensational athletic ability. The thrill is gone. Magic has abruptly retired from the Los Angeles Lakers. My heart goes out to Magic Johnson. I wouldn't wish this upon anyone. Magic has tested HIV positive. He has the virus that leads to AIDS. (AIDS has taken 120,000 lives across America.) This cruel revelation was made Thursday evening, November 7th. It shocked America. I hope it causes America to wake-up. A recent report on AIDS found that Americans are too often indifferent to the dangers of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Will this awaken parents and teenagers? I pray it will.

HIV infections are escalating within the

heterosexual community. Especially among teens and single adults. Tom Brokaw recently reported on NBC **Nightly News** that, "in 1960 there were five known sexually transmitted diseases. According to the **Center for Disease Control** in Atlanta, in 1991 there are fifty-five." Too many people who warn against AIDS, herpes and the like are proponents of **safe sex**. The only **safe sex** is marital sex. Sexual relations only with your uninfected spouse, for life.

Some say that people who are infected are being punished by God. Nope! God doesn't operate that way. What is happening is that long ago, at creation, God set certain natural laws and functions into motion. When any person insists on breaking these

laws he pays some horrible consequences. In Romans chapter one Paul demonstrates the concept. He writes, "Women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and **receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error**" (emphasis, MS) (Rom. 1:26-27).

Notice the emphasized phrase above; **their own sinful actions** caused these individuals physical suffering. Don't blame God. He has warned us adequately. The specific sins mentioned contextually are homosexuality and lesbianism. Included in the New Testament are adultery, fornication and drug abuse. All harm the body. All contribute to the spread of venereal disease. Paul also says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Robert C. Noble, M.D., a professor of medicine at the University of Kentucky, in a

Newsweek article said there is no such thing as safe sex outside of a monogamous marriage. Dr. Noble lobbies for virginity, abstinence, or a lifetime of sex with one mutually faithful, uninfected partner. He said, "I'm going to tell my daughters that having sex is dangerous and that condoms give a false sense of security. Reducing the risk is not the same as eliminating the risk. The truth is doctors can't fix most of the things you can catch out there. There's no cure for AIDS or herpes or genital warts. So, just say No! No! No! a thousand times No!"

Husbands, wives, parents, teenagers, singles, are you listening? We called it sin, and not many listened. Jerry Smith, former tight end for the Washington Redskins, died from AIDS. Rock Hudson died from AIDS. Apparently Magic wasn't paying attention. Now for the National Basketball Association's record holder for assists, there is no quick outlet pass he can make. No sudden move that will set him free. The message is crystal clear, if the Magic man can be infected, anybody can!

[2721 Cordwaiver Ct., Charleston, SC 29414.]

"What I am to Be I am Now Becoming"

by Wayne Altman

She was now over ninety years old. A couple who lived next door paid her bills. She accused them of keeping part of her money. They took her meals. She accused them of trying to poison her. I said, "Well, she is old. Maybe her mind is bad." Another neighbor, who had known her for many years, said, "No, it's not her age. She was that when she was young."

"What I am to be, I am now becoming." According to Earl Nightengale, this was Dr. W.L. Ewing's favorite quotation. Dr. Ewing, a preacher, had it printed on small cards and passed it out to members of his congregation. Nightengale cited a similar thought from W. Clement Stone: "If I continue what I am presently doing, where will I be five years from now?"

What a powerful thought! Simple and yet profound. Why not put it on paper and tape it to the bathroom mirror where it will be seen first thing in the morning. It could make a difference in the way we approach each day. If I continue what I'm doing, where will I be in my prayer life? My knowledge of God's word? My char-

acter? Will I love more and hate less? Be more kind and gentle? Be easier for others to live with?

By observing our habits and tendencies, we can tell our fortunes. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Gal. 6:7). Gray hair will not magically transform us into nice people. Traits of character and attitudes become increasingly fixed as we grow older. We will just be "more" of what we are now, good or bad! By the grace of God, we can change.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

*"What I am to be, I am now becoming."
[413 Trolley Road, Summerville, SC 29485.]*

The Bible: Love Letter, Legal Brief, or Both?

by B. J. Clarke

More and more we are hearing the assertion that the Bible is a love letter rather than a legal brief. This view is being advanced especially by promoters of the "new hermeneutic." Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the New Testament is the main focus of the controversy. Many grant that the Old Testament had a legal emphasis while denying that this legal aspect is carried over into the New Covenant. This antinomianism is nothing new and yet it seems to manifest itself in different garb every few years. As is often the case, the truth lies between two extremes.

Is the Bible a love letter? Unquestionably, yes! From Genesis to Revelation the love of God for man shines through the pages of Holy Writ. The seed promise in Genesis 3:15, given after the fall of man, was prompted by the love of God and realized in the giving of His only begotten Son (John 3:16). God's promise to Abraham reiterated the initial seed promise and added form to it (Gen. 12:1-3). This promise was fulfilled through the development and preservation of Israel, God's chosen people. God chose them to be His special people because of His love and unmerited favor toward them (Deut. 7:6-8). In connection with this love, God set forth a legal requirement of His people to love him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations (Deut. 7:9). Here we see love and law combined in perfect harmony. God loved them and they were to show their love in return by keeping His commandments. Because of God's love for humanity and His faithfulness to keep His word, He continued to preserve a righteous remnant of His nation to carry on the seed through which the Messiah would come. Even when His people were overflowing with iniquity and sent into captivity as a consequence, God would always bring home a remnant to carry on. WHY? Because of his great love! The culmination of this love is seen in the coming of Jesus into the world. "In this was manifested the love of God to-

ward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). The New Testament is most assuredly a love letter telling us of the greatest love story ever conceived.

Is the Bible a legal brief? Does the New Testament set forth legal requirements that must be looked to as a pattern for obedience? Absolutely so! Again and again, God's love for man and His laws binding upon man are inseparably connected. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Six verses later the Master said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:23,24). How could the Savior have made it any plainer? If we have truly understood the message of His love found in the Bible letters, then we will be eager to meet the legal requirements set forth in those same letters. The New Testament is not just a love letter. It is not just a legal brief. It is both! Are love and law mutually exclusive? Are they incompatible? Obviously not! Jesus tied love and lawkeeping together! I can well remember as a boy, coming home after school to find a note written to me by my father. The note would almost always have some command written down upon it for me to obey and then close with an expression of love from my Dad. When I read the note, I saw two elements present. There was a command for me to obey given by one who had authority over me. Then there was an expression of love for me given by one who had fervent affection for me. There was law and there was love! When I was in college I would often receive a love letter from my Mom and Dad with certain requests for me to obey scattered at various points

throughout the letter. Imagine that—a love letter with requirements in it as well.

This is precisely what the New Testament is—a love letter with legal requirements combined. It is a treatise filled with expressions of grace, mercy and love (Eph. 2:1-10). It is also the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21). Whereas, we are not under the law of Moses (Rom. 3:28; 6:14), we are obliged to observe the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25) and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ

(Rom. 8:1). “Precept and promise, law and love combining, till night shall vanish in eternal day”!

[Editor's note: This article was taken from Power, a monthly publication of the Southhaven, Mississippi, Church of Christ. Brother Clarke is the Editor. The excellent paper will be sent free to elders and preachers who request it. Others are invited to subscribe for \$5.00 per year. Power, P.O. Box 128, Southhaven, MS 38671.]

Why My Sons Can't Beat Me At Tennis

by Paul E. Jarrett

First Jay and now Chad have tried to beat me at tennis. Both have failed. They always will. They will never beat me at tennis, or anything else for that matter.

Now, before they read this and start beating on me with their tennis racquets, let me explain what I'm saying. I am not saying they have never outscored me in tennis. If I said that, they would be quick to tell you otherwise. They would be right and I would be wrong. They have outscored me. They just have never beaten me.

“How is that possible,” you ask. Let me explain. You see when they outscore me, I do not view it as a defeat. That's because, as their father, my pride in their accomplishments as my sons makes their victories, my victories. While, like most sons, they may sometimes be inclined to compete with me, I am never inclined to compete with them. Rather my love for them is such that I take more pleasure in their triumphs than I do my own.

I've told you about how I feel when my sons outscore me in tennis in order to tell you how God must feel towards us as our Heavenly Father. God takes no pleasure in our defeats. God is not “out to get us.” He is not just waiting for us to mess up so He can pounce on us. In fact God has told us He takes no pleasure in the death (cf. defeat) of the wicked (Eze. 18:23). Rather, God finds pleasure in the triumph of His sons and daughters.

I also told you about my feelings towards my sons in order to remind you of how we need to feel towards each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not in competition with one another, though we all compete. However, when one of us wins we all win and when one of us loses we all hurt for each other (1 Cor. 12:26). I've long maintained that the only area in which God's people should compete with one another is found in Romans 12:10. This text when translated literally reads: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **outdo one another in showing honor**” (emphasis, PEJ).

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Carolina Christian Bookstore Under New Ownership

At the October meeting of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., the sale of Carolina Christian Bookstore was unanimously approved. The new owner is Dora Conner of Clemmons, North Carolina. Sister Conner is a faithful member of the Yadkinville Church of Christ.

For several years the bookstore was managed by Dennis Conner, who preaches for the Yadkinville Church of Christ and serves as News Editor of **Carolina Christian** magazine. With the growth of the bookstore over the past seven years came a corresponding growth in demands upon brother Conner's time. It was no longer feasible for him to continue as manager of the bookstore and at the same time devote full attention to his local ministry. It was the feeling of the Board of Directors that it would be in the best interests of all concerned to find a buyer, which was done after a period of time.

Proceeds from a sale of the bookstore will help to stabilize the financial status of the mag-

azine. In addition, sister Conner has pledged a portion of her profits each year to go to the magazine as a demonstration of her belief in and support of the ministry of **Carolina Christian**. By continuing to purchase your materials from Carolina Christian Bookstore you will still be contributing to the support of **Carolina Christian** magazine.

Brother Dennis Conner states, "I would like to thank all of those who have become faithful patrons of Carolina Christian Bookstore. Your friendship and loyalty have been a great blessing to us and have contributed to the remarkable growth of the bookstore. We have certain limitations because of our size, but we have always tried to make up for that with personal service that is unequalled by any. The Board of Directors encourages you to continue your patronage of Carolina Christian Bookstore, and thereby continue to support **Carolina Christian** magazine." Brother Conner will continue to be associated with the bookstore in a limited way as a consultant.

The Myth of the Perfect Minister

by Paul E. Jarrett

Among the definitions given for the word myth is this one: "any imaginary person or thing spoken of as though existing." Using this definition I would like to point out that there is no such thing as a perfect minister. While I used to think that as a minister I should always know the right thing to say and do in every situation, I now realize that that is a dangerous myth.

I say the myth of the perfect minister is dangerous for two reasons. First, if the minister believes it to be true he will become arrogant in his treatment of others. He will become both offensive to those who resist his counsel and defensive towards those who question his judgment. Secondly, if the members believe in this myth they are doomed to disappointment and disillusionment. They will become upset with and critical of the minister who does not "measure up." Worse, if they should deceive themselves into believing they have found a perfect minister they

may end up following him, rather than the only truly perfect minister, Jesus Christ.

Rather than bemoaning the fact that a perfect minister is a myth, we should realize that the acknowledgement of imperfections can help us to be better ministers. This is true whether one wears a title of "minister," or whether one is simply a minister in the sense that all Christians are called to be servants. When we acknowledge our weaknesses we achieve a level of spirituality which enables us to minister to others in a spirit of gentleness. We are no longer inclined to be boastful, challenging one another and envying one another, because we no longer have a too-high opinion of ourselves (see Gal. 5:26-6:3). The minister who acknowledges his own imperfections "can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided since he himself also is beset with weakness" (Heb. 5:2).

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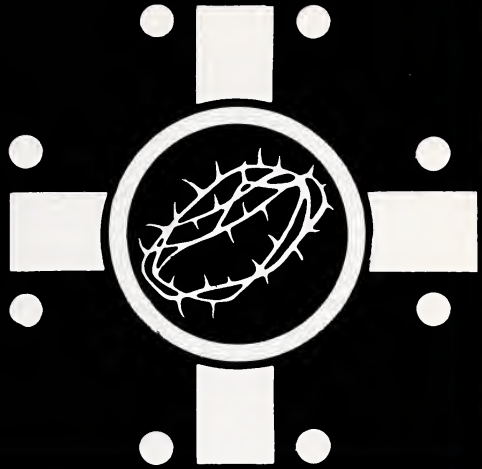
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A Modern-Day Parable

by Paul E. Jarrett

A man went shopping for a car for his family. The salesman at the first dealership he went to said to him, "I think you'll like our cars. **None of them have a gas pedal.** You don't have to worry about them going too fast. You don't have to worry about them going off in the wrong direction. They really stand firm! They are especially good for parents with teenage drivers. You don't have to worry about them going where they shouldn't go, doing what they shouldn't do, or being influenced by their friends to behave rashly."

The man decided to go to another dealership before making a decision. The salesman at this second dealership said to him, "I know you are going to love our cars. They are the fastest cars on the highway. **They have no brake pedals.** You don't have to worry about anything slowing you down. You can go in any direction you want to go without someone putting on the brakes. They can really move! They are especially popular with teenage drivers. They can go anywhere, do anything, and their friends will love riding with them."

With which of these two dealerships do you think the man ended up doing business? Did he buy a car with no gas pedal which he knew would "stand firm"? Or, did he buy a car with no brake pedal which he knew would "really move"? Or, do you think he went looking for a third dealership that would have cars with both gas and brake pedals?

I know this parable sounds foolish. No one would think of trying to sell or buy a car with no gas pedals; nor would anyone think of trying to sell or buy a car with no brakes. However, it seems to me that what is foolishness in the realm of car sales has become the norm among some churches. On the one hand you have people promoting and searching for churches that "stand firm." On the other hand you have others promoting and searching for churches that "really move." But, if it's all the same to you, I think I'll look for a church with both brakes and gas and the wisdom to know when to apply both.



editorial

by David Pharr

A few days after this issue is mailed we will mark the fourth anniversary of Howard Winters' death. He gave up his earthly home on May 11, 1988. Time dries tears, but he continues to be missed.

A year ago I wrote of the value of one of his books, **Up To Bethany**. A few days ago a preacher talked with me about it and said he thought it was Howard's most valuable book. Howard felt the same way. He told me not long before he died that he was more pleased with **Up To Bethany** than with any other writing he had done. It would strengthen the church if it had a wider circulation.

Our prayer ought to be for more men like Howard Winters. He was not perfect, of course, but he exhibited the traits of honesty, courage, compassion, scholarship, and unwavering faith that make men real men—men that make a difference.

In this issue we are reprinting some selections from some of his editorials. They are simple but important comments that remain always relevant.

Worldliness

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:15-17).

What is worldliness? Many sermons have been preached against drinking, dancing, immodest attire, etc. as being things that are worldly. We would not in the slightest discount the sinfulness of such things. It must be insisted, however, that worldliness is inclusive of far more than a few easily defined vices.

The more insidious threat of the world involves those things which may have a facade of honor. There are things which may of themselves have merit and which com-

mend themselves as being wholesome, useful, and even essential. They are things which belong to this world and must be used by all who are a part of this world. They are not sinful when they properly serve us, but we sin when we begin to serve them.

Materialism is such a thing. The word has an ugly, vulgar tone and few would welcome being called materialistic. We know though that we live in a material world. Survival requires food, clothing, lodging, transportation, etc. It is right even that we enjoy a bounty of such things (Eccl. 2:24; 5:19). There is no inherent virtue in poverty, there

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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is no inherent vice in wealth.

Materialism becomes a cancer in the soul, however, when we allow the necessities, gadgets, and luxuries of such things to become an obsession. Constantly the world advertises its offerings and we are lured into the swirling vortex of wanting more and more, and upon having more, to hold onto it dearly. Jesus spoke of the danger of being "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14).

The subtle encroachments of materialism have become a particular snare for the church in America. What we may consider blessed advantages may in reality be the highway to ruin. We have arrived (generally speaking) in middle class America. We are in the economic mainstream. Look at our cars, our clothes, our places of worship. This is not necessarily evil. It can and should be reason for godly gratitude and for more effective service. The critical issue is not prosperity itself, but how prosperity affects us.

Is it possible that materialism is one reason why so many seem so willing to compromise? Has worldly comfort taken the edge off our commitment to truth? Does being in the economic mainstream tempt us to want to be in the religious mainstream as well?

Another worldly threat to the church is **philosophy**. Philosophy simply means the way things are viewed. It is the way one perceives the world and his place in it. Obviously everyone has a philosophy because everyone has a perception of things, himself, life, God, etc. A philosophy is good to the degree that it is in harmony with God's will. A philosophy is false to the degree that it is contrary to the will of God.

While most of us may not give much thought to philosophy as such, the fact is that our culture, the world in which we live, is shaped by certain philosophic presuppositions. People may never study philosophy, but they are continually being taught philosophy nonetheless. The philosophy of the world is never right (Col. 2:8), but it can be so pervasive and persuasive that the church can be brought under its spell.

Our present world is greatly influenced by nihilism. This philosophy holds that there are no absolutes of good and evil, but rather

that we must live on the basis of relative values. Things are to be believed, practiced, and defended only with a view to their relative worth. Relativism is by its nature subjective. It does not tolerate the concept of absolute authority, such as the authority of Christ and the Bible.

The entertainment world, as well as the news media, accept and promote this philosophy. Most people probably never realize it, but their personal philosophies, their viewpoints, have been molded by this influence of the world. This is worldliness in full bloom.

The church has, of course, resisted such philosophy, but it may have had more influence on us than we want to admit. It is reflected in the trend which avoids definiteness. Rather than taking unwavering positions (in harmony with God's word), we are tempted to appeal to people's sense of values. We may be less ready to insist that people conform to the truth, and more ready to have the church conform to what people perceive to be important, to be valuable.

It is the business of the church to provide for human needs, but those needs are what God sees that they need, not what humans themselves think they need. Adjusting the gospel, reshaping the church, to make it more compatible with current values is absolutely contrary to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:15-17. The church may be in transition, but the only right changes are those which make it more in conformity to the plan of God, never as it conforms to the "progress" and "enlightenment" of the world.

Scholarship is another of those things which are useful and good, but which can become our master instead of our servant. Education is essential. We can be thankful for the educational advantages enjoyed by those who use their learning in the proclamation of God's truth. It is good that solid men have pursued scholarship and are ably prepared to explain and to defend what is right. One should seek all the education that he has the spiritual capacity to rightly use.

It is easy, though, to fall under the spell of academic elitism. Preachers sometimes become more intent on sharing their superior learning than on sharing the simple gos-

pel. Congregations may become more content with their preacher's degrees than with his soundness in the faith. One who would feel awkward citing book, chapter, and verse seems perfectly comfortable citing the works of theologians and philosophers.

An inordinate reverence for what is considered to be scholarship is worldliness. John warned of "the pride of life" as one thing that was "of the world" (1 John 2:16). Paul wrote of those who "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22). It is folly not to appreciate the value of a good education. It is likewise folly to allow learning to become a substitute for Biblical faith.

Managing Editor's Column

The Good Samaritan

by Johnny R. Melton

Luke 10:29-37 is a part of a major section of Luke's gospel which begins at 9:51 and concludes with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem at 19:44. References to the journey to Jerusalem occur throughout the section (9:51, 53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28). It is significant that the geographical details mentioned in this section do not reflect an intentioned journey to Jerusalem, consequently, it is generally argued that the travel motif is an editorial framework in which Luke arranges didactic material. (Cf. Craddock, **Luke**, 140 and Talbert, **Reading Luke**, 111)

Luke 10:29-37 is a part of a larger section 10:25-42. Charles Talbert sees this larger section as "an exposition, in haggadic form and in reverse order, of the two great love commandments of 10:27. The story of the Good Samaritan, vss. 29-37, deals with the meaning of the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself (vs. 27b); the story of Martha and Mary, vss. 38-42, interprets the injunction to love God with one's whole self (vs. 27a)." (Talbert, 120)

That verses 29-37 are an explanation on what it means to love one's neighbor is apparent on the surface. Having identified the

As long as we are in the world we will be threatened by the world. Worldliness cannot be defined as only certain obvious vices. It involves attitudes, perceptions, and reactions. We are hardly able to judge the influence of the world on ourselves, much less fully measure its impact on others. Jesus was especially sensitive to the threat of worldliness, thus His prayer that began this article. This should show us that worldliness is not a danger to be taken lightly.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

basis for inheriting eternal life according to the Law as "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with your soul and with all your mind;" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (10:27), the lawyer asked Jesus directly, "And who is my neighbor?" (10:29). Jesus, in response to that question, told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the story of Martha and Mary there is not the direct reference to the command to love God. The episode is presented as an actual occurrence, not as a parable. However, there is still merit to Talbert's observation.

If Luke is arranging didactic material into an editorial framework of the actual movement of Jesus in the direction of Jerusalem, then he is at liberty to arrange the episodes so that they serve a purpose greater than simply recording history. It may very well be that Luke intended this event to serve as commentary on the command to love God in order to balance the presentation. However, the evidence hardly warrants dogmatism.

There is an apparent relationship between the encounter with a lawyer here and what is recorded in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark

12:28-31. However, there are significant differences. The Matthew and Mark accounts are in a different setting and at a later time (at the temple, following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem). The question in Matthew and Mark has to do with the greatest of the commandments, in Luke the question is "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (vs. 25). In Matthew and Mark Jesus gives the answer, in Luke, Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer and the lawyer answers. Matthew's account of the episode ends with Jesus' response. Mark's account includes a word of commendation from the lawyer for Jesus' answer, and a brief explanation as to why he agreed with Jesus, followed by a word from Jesus to the effect that the man was not far from the kingdom of heaven. In Luke, the lawyer accepts Jesus' answer regarding the way to eternal life, but asks a follow-up question in an effort to "justify himself." It is in response to this effort to justify himself that Jesus tells the parable in vs. 30-36. Since the only points in common between the accounts of Matthew and Mark with this story in Luke are the fact that a lawyer engages Jesus in conversation and reference is made to the commands to love God and to love neighbor, it is doubtful that Luke has taken such extreme editorial liberty with the episode, and it would be best to see them as independent, though similar, events.

Jesus is encountered by "an expert in the law." There is no reference to the place or the occasion. The expert asked Jesus "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In the style of rabbinic debate, Jesus turned the question back on the expert. The expert cited Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 in response to the question. Jesus agreed with the answer, so he commended it, and said, "Do this and you will live" (i.e., you will "inherit eternal life"). At this point, the expert asked another question, "And who is my neighbor?" This would be an acceptable question, except for the fact that Luke says it was asked because "he wanted to justify himself" (vs. 29). Jesus' response to the question was in the form of a parable (or an example story), followed by a question. The difference between the expert's question and Jesus' question is quite significant. The

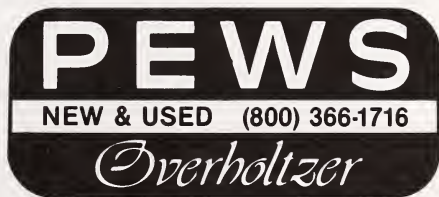
expert had asked "who is my neighbor?", but Jesus asked "who was a neighbor?" One question focuses on identity, and the other focuses on action. The expert gave a response to Jesus' question, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus agreed with the response, and said, "Go and do likewise." So in this encounter there are two exchanges of questions. The expert asked a question, and Jesus turned it back on him. The expert replied, and Jesus agreed. The expert asked a second question, and Jesus told a story, modified the question, and turned it back on the expert. The expert answered, and Jesus agreed, and encouraged the expert to action.

This passage provides an explanation of what it means to love one's neighbor. It further demonstrates that eternal life is not simply a matter of status, but that it involves commitment and action as well.

The parable was not intended to simply illustrate the truth that Jesus was attempting to make. The parable had the subversive effect of disrupting the *status quo*. Very likely, the expert had in mind that a neighbor was one with whom he shared a covenant relationship. In other words, a neighbor would have been a Jew, and not just a Jew, but a faithful Jew (as opposed to publicans and sinners). This expert loved those neighbors, so he could justify himself on that basis.

Jesus' story subverted the *status quo*. The priest and the Levite had to choose between duty to maintain ceremonial cleanness, on the one hand, and duty to be compassionate, on the other hand. Their first obligation was to God, consequently, they chose to maintain ceremonial cleanness, and passed by the injured, at-the-point-of-death, man. The expert would not have challenged the behavior of either the priest or the Levite. Likely, he would have made the same decision.

When Jesus identified the Samaritan as



the one who helped the injured man, he was challenging the expert's sense of religious propriety. The Samaritan was religiously unclean; he was not a partner in the covenant. He was unacceptable. But when Jesus put the question to the expert regarding who was a neighbor to the man, to his credit, the expert answered truthfully. Being a neighbor is action not status.

Today people tend to pay lip service to the notion of loving one's neighbor. In many places, the term neighborhood means nothing. People do not know the people who live next door to them, much less the people who live down the street. In those places where the situation is not quite as extreme as that described above, being a neighbor is considered a privilege to be exercised, and not an obligation to be fulfilled.

Few though they may be, there are those who have learned the responsibility to render assistance to those who are in need, who have

learned that one's neighbor is anyone one has the opportunity and ability to assist whether one knows them or not. For these folk, there is another aspect of this passage. The injured man received help from someone he very likely would not have wanted to have had help him. Some have such extreme prejudice that they would rather suffer than to receive aid from someone they consider "unclean." With racial and national prejudice apparently on the rise, as well as a tendency to treat certain classes of people as "untouchables," the story of the Good Samaritan challenges folk to not only show mercy, but to be willing to receive mercy as well.

The Samaritan sacrificed time, comfort, convenience, and money to meet the needs of the injured man. Showing mercy is expensive. Being a neighbor means becoming vulnerable to the needs of others.

Reach Out

by Charles R. Lambert

It was a balmy summer day as we peddled our bikes along the white sandy road that led to the airport in my home town. I met two buddies who were going to show me a swimming hole. When we arrived, I surveyed the hole and it looked good to me. The hole of water was formed by a huge pipe that drained off the runway during rainy weather. The swimming hole had a sandy bottom with crystal clear rain water. Looking out across the hole of water there was a small sandy beach on one side and some cattails growing on the other side.

I was the first one to take my shoes off. I forgot that I could not swim, but I was only going to wade. The water from the huge pipe flowed over a concrete slab called a spillway and down into the swimming hole. I ran right out into the middle of the spillway, for I was delighted to cool my feet.

The next step I took was a disaster, for I slipped off the spillway, into deep water, and went right under. I began to fight the water which I was swallowing as I stayed under, fighting for my life. I could see wa-

ter all around me and above me and I began to tire from fighting it. Then I had a vision of myself lying in a coffin. I realized I was about to drown. But the next instant my hands felt a stick and I caught it. My friends pulled me back onto the bank. I coughed, gagged, and cried all at the same time. God had spared my life.

I think of my narrow escape from death and I remember Philip and the Eunuch. Philip was teaching the man about Christ. Just as soon as he learned he had to be baptized he said, "Here is water; baptize me." Now Philip did not hand him a stick, but he saved the Eunuch's life by preaching the gospel to him. Philip saved the soul of the Eunuch in much the same way as my friends saved my life at the swimming hole. You can find the story of Philip and the Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.

Another place where water was involved was when Jesus and his disciples boarded a ship to cross over the sea to a place called Gadarenes. Jesus was asleep in the back of the ship and a storm arose. It was so violent

that the disciples were afraid for their lives. They woke Jesus, "Master carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus got up and rebuked the storm. He said, "Peace, be still." The wind ceased, and there was a great calm (Mark 4:35-41). In a sense, He just extended out His hand and saved them from certain death.

On another occasion, Jesus sent His disciples on a ship across the sea. He had been teaching all evening and had sent the crowds away. He then went to a mountain to pray. When He had finished, He went to His disciples walking on the water. They were afraid when they saw Him walking on the water. Peter asked Jesus if he could come to Him?

Jesus said, "Come." Although Peter started to walk to Jesus on the water, he began to sink; but Jesus was there to rescue him by giving him a hand, and saving him from the sea (Matt. 14:22ff).

Jesus was always extending His hand to people that needed Him. I certainly do feel that God was close by when the boys pulled me out of the swimming hole before I drowned. If you take Christ by the hand He will comfort you, and give you life everlasting. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Play On, Miss Bertha"

by Roy Deaver

These words are sad words — some of the saddest ever uttered in all restoration history. The dictionary says that "sad" means "to be associated with sorrow...." Some words are sad because of their inherent connotations. Some words are sad because of the circumstances out of which they came. Some words are sad because of the consequences which they brought.

On Monday, September 1, 1873, in the pioneer village of Thorp Spring, in Texas, Thorp Spring College came into being. This year — 1973 — is the centennial year. In celebration, the ex-students of Thorp Spring Christian College held a reunion "on campus" July 21 and 22. At the time, I was in a gospel meeting at nearby Morgan Mill, and was privileged to attend the reunion. Brother Don Morris spoke on Saturday afternoon, and brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was the speaker on Saturday night. Because of my own preaching engagement I did not get to hear brother Wallace, but I did get to hear brother Morris. Brother Morris spoke on "Add-Ran and its Heirs." His lecture was tremendous. It will become an exceedingly valuable document in Restoration literature.

Brother Morris spoke at length about unscriptural organizations in Texas, and the consequent divisions among brethren. He spoke of the steps which led to the forma-

tion of the "Texas Christian Missionary Society" in Austin, Texas in 1866.

Brother Morris then discussed the introduction of mechanical instruments into Christian worship. He mentioned that the instrument was introduced "...first in congregations in Dallas, San Marcos, Waco, and Palestine." He continued as follows: "But the place at which the introduction of the organ received most attention was, without doubt, Thorp Spring, in Add-Ran College. The occasion was a gospel meeting in February, 1894. The speaker was B. B. Sanders, and the song director, E. M. Douthitt. These two often worked as a team and were known to use the instrument in worship. Before the meeting began, there was much discussion — on and off the campus of Add-Ran — about whether the organ would be used. As the meeting began, a crisis at Add-Ran was developing. It proved to affect the church throughout the state.

On February 20, 1894, the climax was reached. Before the service began, Joseph Addison Clark — the father and pioneer — and his wife took seats at the front of the auditorium. Their son, Addison Clark, the president arose to begin the service. Joseph Addison Clark arose, walked toward the pulpit, took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to his son. It was a petition. The

petition was signed by the elder Clark and more than a hundred others who asked that the organ not be used, on the ground that it was not authorized in the New Testament. Addison read the petition, conferred briefly with his brother Randolph, and then announced that he had promised the students the organ could be used in the meeting and that he could not go back on his word. He turned to the organist and said, "Play on, Miss Bertha."

At this point, brother Don Morris was not able to continue for several moments. He wept audibly, and most of the audience wept with him. Brother Morris continued: "As the organ and singing started, Joseph Addison arose with his wife and led the opposition out of the auditorium. He was a gray bearded man, seventy-eight years old, and with a cane. About 140 people, according to Randolph's son, Joseph Lynn, followed the elderly Clark out of the building. Many in the remaining congregation wept. My father, who was a student that year, was present, and he told me many times about Uncle Joe Clark — how he appealed to the audience not to use the organ and how he led the group out of the auditorium."

Brother Morris closed his great speech

as follows: "...we of churches of Christ today are the real heirs of the first years of Add-Ran and of the gospel taught in the first Texas churches. This is true because today we continue in the slogan first used by Texas pioneers and the Campbells before them: 'We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.' This principle has been followed by the Thorp Spring Church from the beginning in 1873 until now. And we believe that this is the true pattern for church organization, for purity in worship, and for all things religious. To use this pattern is more important than excelling in numbers or affluence. We look to the New Testament as the guide in restoring the Lord's church, and we pray that He may bless us as we attempt to follow it."

And right now, more so than ever before in my lifetime — there are in the church those who are saying, "Miss Bertha, play on!" May God help us to have the faith, the conviction, the courage of Joseph Addison Clark.

[Editor's Note: This article was published in The Spiritual Sword, October 1978. The Spiritual Sword is an excellent quarterly magazine (\$5 per year). 1511 Getwell Road, Memphis, TN 38111.]

A Tribute to My Dad

by John Michael Senn

[Editor's Note: John Randolph "Rudy" Senn passed away on May 7, 1991. Rudy was working with the church in Albemarle, NC at the time of his death. This tribute was written by one of his children. It reflects just one of the ways his influence lives on. "He being dead yet speaketh."]

My very first memories of Dad were the songs:

"Go To Sleep Little Baby."

"Away in a Manger."

These were songs he would sing to me in that big black rocking chair late at night to try to get me to sleep. It always worked. He fell asleep and I crawled down on the floor to play. Mom would come in to wake him and he, of course, would say, "I wasn't asleep. I was just resting my eyes." A line he also used when falling asleep while driv-

ing. But the songs were great and they're comforting still today.

Christmases with Dad were great. He was the perennial Santa Claus from South Carolina. Dad would always stay up most of the night putting stuff together—bikes, stereos, walkie-talkies—and then hurry back to bed for an hour or so of sleep so we would think Santa really came. Of course on Christmas morning we never saw Dad. All we saw of Dad was a set of four huge floodlights and the big lens of a 16mm camera, Dad's latest toy for our family Christmas production. He made everything so exciting and fun.

Dad even took a shot at being a veterinarian once. We had a dearly loved family pet—a black Cocker Spaniel—who had a bad habit of chasing cars...and catching

them. On one occasion our dog slid into a truck and consequently was knocked unconscious while in pursuit. In a last ditch effort to save the family from mortal sorrow, Dad grabbed the dog and proceeded to initiate "Dog cardiac shock resuscitation." He took an old extension cord, spliced it, plugged it in, and zapped the dog several times with 240 volts of electricity. If it didn't revive the dog it would certainly put him out of his misery so we were happy to see him try. The dog didn't make it, but Dad became a veterinary genius since we had never seen such innovative medical technology used before.

Dad was so many things to so many. I cannot even begin to sum Dad up in such a short time, but I'll try to give you an idea of who he was.

He was a cub master. He was the leader of our den pack. That was a big deal to a ten year old—"My Dad is the cub master." He helped me carve a block of wood into the sleekest, fastest, best designed race car of all time. We won the biggest trophies I ever got for anything. Dad wanted to win as much, or more, than I did.

Dad was a coach. He taught me how to shoot the basketball, how to squint your eyes at the basket, how to fade away when you shot. He always made me believe I could do anything. I wasn't that good but to talk to Dad you wouldn't know it. He didn't miss a game. Once I did run two touchdowns in a football game. Dad missed it while getting popcorn from the concession stand. He never told me, but that was just how Dad was.

Dad was a great youth leader. He impacted so many teens' lives. He drove our joy bus. You can't believe how much fun he was—all the kids on the joy bus used to yell "Tooty-fruity, Kick it Rudy." Dad always had fun. No one knew how to have more fun than Dad. He never missed a good laugh. He never missed an opportunity to do something new and exciting. He was so spontaneous. We would do so many fun things just out of the blue. Dad was never content to sit around and do nothing. He was alive and didn't want to miss a thing.

Dad could get angry, too. It took a lot, but once he was mad you didn't mess with him. Like the time on vacation when I shot out the car window with the BB gun, or like

the time I leaned on the car while all four tires were on jacks and Dad was under the car. Although he got mad, he always loved us and there was no doubting that—ever!

Dad was a man of conviction. He loved God and the Bible. He had beliefs and he held on to them tenaciously. He studied it for hours a day and always talked about it, even in the last week of his life.

Dad was a peacemaker. He was always the one to stop the family arguments and help us love and understand each other. He was the glue that kept us together. We would not have made it without his incredible compassion and love.

Dad was selfless. He always put us and others before himself. Most of the time you didn't even know it. He made you think that what you wanted to do was exactly what he wanted to do. Oh how he loved to give. He gave up many dreams and plans to give to other's needs even when it hurt him deeply. But Dad...he never complained.

Dad had an unquestionable love and loyalty about him. He was always there, always forgiving, always accepting, and it was always when we didn't deserve it. I would call him at 10:00 p.m. and tell him I needed to meet and talk, and without question he would drive hours one way and stay up all night talking...just because you asked. And the truth is—he thought nothing of it. He would have done anything for those he loved.

When I got word that Dad was gone the world did not even seem to notice. The wind continued to blow through the leaves of the trees. The sun continued to fall toward the distant horizon. People continued to hurriedly jump into their cars and scurry home after a long day on the job. I wanted the world to stop and recognize the passing of a great man but it would not. And if we're

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not careful we will leave here today and quickly forget what Dad's life meant and what he tried to teach us all.

Dad would have wanted us to remember to love each other. To forgive wrongs done. To tear down walls of pride that separate us. To treat each other today as if it's our last day. To stop putting off the things we need to say and do for each other that would show our love. He would tell us to step out of the rat race for money, fame, and just the busyness of life, and take time to have fun and enjoy the simple things in life. Dad never missed a sunrise over the ocean when he was at the coast. He never missed a chance to spend time and to be with his family. He never passed up a hug or a roll on the floor with his kids.

Dad had a dream for the church. He wanted a church full of love. He wanted the church to grow because of its love. He wanted everyone to make it to Heaven—in fact, he would have given his last breath to see some of you obey the gospel. To Dad,

people and their relationship with God was the only thing that mattered. He invested his life in people and not in this world. As we sit here today, we are his investment.

You know, growing up, something happens. Your dad goes from being your greatest hero to being someone who seems a little behind the times and somewhat archaic. You become critical and judgmental. You start thinking that you know more and can do things better—not making the same mistakes that he did. It takes something like this to see things clearly sometimes.

At this point in my life I would be content if only I could be as good a man as Dad. Dad was the greatest man I have ever known. Dad never wrote a book. He never commanded great masses. His death will not be mentioned on the national news. In fact the world will not even notice his passing. But I know...I know...and I will always stand in his shadow.

We'll miss you Dad and we will never forget what you've taught us.

The First Day of Christianity

by Claude Pharr

It was a Sunday just seven weeks after the death and resurrection of Christ on a Jewish holiday called Pentecost. It was an exciting, historic day—a day which forever changed the face of religion in the world. The story of the first day of Christianity is found in Acts chapter two.

The chapter opens with the miraculous out pouring of the Holy Spirit.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared upon them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (vv. 1-4).

Religious people from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem on that day. The apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit

began to speak in all their different languages. The multitude in utter amazement at this miracle began to ask, “What meaneth this?” This gave Peter the opportunity to preach.

Peter's sermon on that day set forth the basic facts of Christian belief. He spoke of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

It was a great sermon and it drew a great response. Men were convicted and wanted to know what to do to be saved. The story continues:

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for

the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:37-38). These verses are packed with meaning. Nearly every phrase is significant. Let’s take a close look at several important items.

First, there is the pain of guilt. Peter’s sermon brought these people face to face with the sin in their lives. They were confronted with the fact that they had crucified the very Son of God. The text says, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.” Actually it was more than a prick. The original Greek word is better translated “cut.” And we might add “cut deeply.”

Guilt is the common lot of us all. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). For some of you who read this there may be one big outstanding sin in your life, some evil deed of your past which continues to haunt you. You are probably able to push it aside and go on with a normal life but every once in a while it raises its ugly head and torments your conscience. For others of you it is not so much one big sin but rather the accumulation of little sins over a life time. These little sins gradually deaden the conscience and harden the heart. Either way, whether by “big” sins or “little” ones, we have all lost our innocence and stand guilty before God.

Second, there is a call to repentance. The people asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter commanded, “Repent, and be baptized.” Repentance means change. Literally it means to change one’s mind and it always brings about a change in one’s life. This is basic to Christianity. No one can be a Christian unless he is willing to change his lifestyle and to bring it into conformity to the teachings of Christ.

Third, there is the command to be baptized. Peter not only commanded repentance, he also commanded baptism. He said, “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

Baptism is an essential part of the salvation process. This is always true in the New Testament. In every passage where both baptism and salvation are mentioned together, baptism always comes first. In spite of the fact that many religious teachers try to disconnect baptism from salvation, the Bible

clearly connects them. Read Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:21.

Fourth, there is the name of Christ. Peter told them to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” The name of Christ is of the utmost importance. Peter said on another occasion concerning this name, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Throughout the book of Acts, baptism is found tied to the name of Christ. See Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5.

Fifth, there is the remission of sins. Peter commanded these people to repent and be baptized “for the remission of sins.” Many of the newer versions translate it “the forgiveness of sins.” The original Greek word means “to release” or “to cancel.” To have the forgiveness of sins means that we are released from both the guilt and the punishment of our sins. Another way to put it is to say our sins have been canceled. Picture a giant ledger with all the sins of man recorded in it, each man having his own page. Open the ledger, turn to your page, and see all your sins written there. Then watch as the hand of God writes “canceled” over your sins. That’s what the forgiveness of sins means. It means having them marked canceled by the grace of God. What a wonderful promise.

But how can this be? How is it possible for God to just cancel all my sins. The answer is the blood of Christ. Jesus died to pay the price for our sins. The great prophet Isaiah put it this way: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5-6). This is really our only hope. Without forgiveness no man would be able to stand before God. The Psalmist wrote: “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (Psa. 130:3-4).

Sixth, there is the gift of the Holy Ghost. In addition to the remission of sins the gift of the Holy Ghost is promised to all those

who repent and are baptized. Peter said, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Seventh, there is the promise. Peter said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). What Peter taught on the day Christianity began is not limited to that first day but is to be for all time. It is as much for us today as it was for them.

The story concludes in these words: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

Modern religious teachers have tampered

with God's simple plan. Today when men are convicted of sin and ask what they must do, instead of being told to repent and be baptized, they are told to "just accept Christ as their personal Savior." They are told to do this by praying "the sinner's prayer" which goes something like this: "I confess that I am a sinner and now accept Christ as my personal Savior." But this "sinner's prayer" and this way of being saved is not in the Bible. We need to return to God's plan and to say to sinners who inquire about salvation, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This was God's plan on the first day of Christianity and it still is God's plan.

[Claude works with the South Fork church in Winston-Salem.]

The Command and Privilege of Worship, II

by Robert Curry

In Part I we examined the mistaken view that the New Testament does not record or authorize specific "acts" of worship. One writer attempted to support this erroneous opinion with John 4:23, that worship is to be done "in spirit and in truth." An exegesis shows this passage to be completely oblivious to any such claim, but is the teaching of Jesus that worship to God is not mere ritual, but heart-felt and from the inner-self.

Commanded to Assemble

The writer we are reviewing makes a serious error in stating that "there are no New Testament passages which command Christians to assemble together for the purpose of worshipping."

In the New Testament the term "church" is translated from *ekklesia*, meaning "a proper assembly, the church, the congregation" and, as **Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible** records, "that which is called out." Consider Paul's command to the churches in Corinth and Galatia to "lay

by in store" on the first day of the week. Here is a specific act, at a specific time. In Acts 2:42 and 20:7, which we examined in Part I, the disciples were assembled together to carry out worship to God. When Paul condemned Corinth for their abuse of the communion service his rebuke was that they had houses where they could eat (1 Cor. 11:22). In other words, they were to eat their meals at home, but here, in the assembly, they were to observe their remembrance of Jesus Christ. These brethren had come together at a specific time, the first day of the week, and had observed specific acts together in their praise and remembrance of God, His word, and their common bond of Christianity.

Edification

The writer believes "the New Testament clearly teaches that the first-century assemblies were for the purpose of edification," citing 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Hebrews 10:24,25. His point, I assume, is that their

purpose of assembly was not for worship, but only for edification, suggesting that the terms are separate ideas. Indeed, edification was a real part of first-century Christianity (Eph. 4:12). After the conversion of Saul (Paul) the churches of Judea, Galilee and Samaria were relieved for a time from persecution "and were edified" (Acts 9:31).

The word translated "edify" is from the original *oikodomos*, having a base meaning of the building of a house so, therefore, "to construct." Harold K. Moulton, in his *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, applies the term in Acts 9:31 as "to make spiritual advancement, be edified." In fact almost every form of *oikodomos* listed by Moulton carries the idea of "spiritual advancement."

I believe it would be error to claim that edification and worship are synonymous. Paul told Corinth that his authority to "terrify" them "by letters" was given him "for edification" (2 Cor. 10:8,9). The writer is partially correct in stating that edification can be accomplished in our everyday service to Christ (Rom. 14:18,19). However, to say that the first-century assemblies were only for edification and not for worship is error, for by that one concludes that edification is not and cannot be a part of acceptable worship.

Even though worship and edification are not synonymous, edification is gained in an assembly of worship. The majority of passages speaking of worship by name translates that word from *proskune*, meaning "to do reverence or homage by kissing the hand; to do reverence or homage by prostration; to pay divine homage, worship, adore; to bow one's self in adoration" (Moulton, 350-51). When Troas assembled on the first day of the week they communed together (Acts 20:7). In their remembrance of the crucifixion of Christ were they not paying homage, reverence and adoration to Him who died that we might live? In so doing, can it not be said that their communion offered "spiritual advancement" or building up, which we earlier established as edification?

Actually, most of what the writer would assumedly place only within edification fulfills the definition of *proskune* or worship. When Paul preached in the assembly at Troas can any honest man say he was not

proclaiming the worthiness of God for adoration, reverence and homage? Would not this proclamation lift up the assembly there in a realization of the greatness of God whom they served? What the first-century Christians did in their assemblies on the first day of the week was worship and that worship was done toward edifying those who were assembled.

Conclusion

I believe the view that the New Testament nowhere reveals the practice of a worship service or specific acts of worship, but that their assemblies were only for edification, is erroneous and tragic. While it is true that New Testament practice did not follow the "traditional" pattern used by most today, that certainly does not negate our present-day practices. What it does tell us is that first-century Christianity relied on a more "spontaneous" and less habitual format than what is only too common today. It also tells us, cries aloud, that first-century Christians did worship in their assemblies through song, prayer, preaching, communion and showed their common sense of the church's importance by contributing to its work.

I applaud anyone who will examine closely the work and practice of the congregations of the Lord's Church, not holding on to tradition for tradition's sake. Too often the intended praise of the Lord and edification of the assembly is replaced by tedious habit and ritual. However, I stand in opposition to anyone and anything that opposes New Testament teaching, practice and example. The New Testament Christian is commanded to worship and this worship, through its various parts, is capable of edification in its adoration, reverence and homage to God.

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Editorial Selections

by Howard Winters, deceased

Things Not In Heaven (November 1978)

Watch the Action (July 1978)

“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. 21:4).

Here John names a number of things that will not be in heaven: there will be no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain. But when one stops to think about it the most characteristic things in a modern city will not be in heaven. For example:

There will be no drunkenness, no prostitution, no dens of vice and gambling, no red light districts, no crime, no sin of any kind.

There will be no jails or prisons, no courts of law, no juries, no penalties.

There will be no police department, no fire department, no water department, no employment department, no welfare department, no education department.

There will be no grocery stores, no gas stations, no bake shops, no newsstands, no insurance companies, no real estate agencies, no manufacturing companies.

There will be no blind, no deaf, no maimed, no deformed, no mentally retarded.

There will be no slums, no undesirable sections, no elite neighborhoods.

There will be no accidents, no rescue missions, no emergency rooms, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no orphan homes, no homes for the aged.

There will be no hatred, no race prejudice, no cliques, no social ostracism, no poor, no rejected, no inferiors, no superiors.

In heaven there will be nothing undesirable. Everything will be just as it ought to be. The only thing missing will be those who failed to prepare for it—those who should have been there but were not because they failed to obey the Lord in this life.

When a command of God involves a specific action, that command cannot be obeyed by performing some other action. To perform another act in its stead is to depart from the will of God. And God has warned by example after example in the Old Testament (e.g., Lev. 10:2, 1; Num. 20:1-12) that no such departures from His word will be tolerated. Thus we must be careful in our service to God to always perform the very act which He commands. One act cannot be Scripturally substituted for another act. For example:

The Lord commands baptism. The action in baptism is immersion. (That is the meaning of the Greek word, and the Bible calls it a burial, Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). In baptism the action is a burial—immersion is thus the action commanded. But in sprinkling and pouring, popular substitutes for baptism, the action is entirely different. In the action of baptism the subject is buried in the element; in sprinkling and pouring, the element is sprinkled or poured. In the former the action is the immersion of a believer in water; in the latter the action is the sprinkling or pouring of the water. Thus the action of baptism and the action of sprinkling and pouring are entirely different.

But take another example, that of singing. The Lord commands His people to sing and singing involves a specific action—that action of the vocal cords. When one sings he is performing the exact act commanded by the Lord. But playing on an instrument is an entirely different action than that commanded. And there is simply no way to perform the act of singing by the act of playing. Playing is thus an act different than the act (singing) commanded. One cannot obey God's command to sing by playing. Producing instrumental music is one act; singing is another act. The act that God commanded in worship and service to Him is singing. Instrumental music involves an act not commanded. But since all acts of Christian

service to God must be acts of obedience to God's will, instrumental music is, therefore, unscriptural in the worship of and service to God. It is unscriptural because it involves an act different than that commanded.

Thus in service to God we must always watch the act—we must be sure that the act performed is the act commanded.

Worship Instructions (March 1977)

Error has an uncanny way of painting itself into a corner.

We have a friend who says, in trying to defend the use of instrumental music in Christian worship, that God has given no instructions on how to worship—that each individual is left free to determine how he can best express his devotion to God. This leads us to the conclusion that one of two propositions is true: (1) God has told us how to worship Him, or (2) God has not told us how to worship Him.

If God has told us how to worship, it would be presumptuous on our part to worship Him in any other way; if He has not told us how to worship, then there is no such thing as an unscriptural act of worship. Gus Nichols told of a man who took a lip full of snuff (from the snuff box lid) as the Lord's Supper was passed to him rather than the fruit of the vine. Now we ask in all candor, "If the Lord has not told us how to worship, what would be wrong with taking a dip of snuff instead of the fruit of the vine when we observe the Lord's Supper?"

Wisdom (October 1977)

James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). There is no question but that God gives wisdom...and that He gives it in answer to prayer. But the fact itself does not determine the method. God may give it directly or indirectly (through means). If He gives it directly, then it is done instantly and miraculously. If He does it indirectly, then it may develop with age, experience and maturity. We believe that it is given indirectly or providentially.

There is a distinction between wisdom

and knowledge. Knowledge is what one knows and wisdom is knowing how to use the knowledge one has. One might know a vast amount but not know how to use it. He would be learned but not wise. If one lacks knowledge, he can correct it by study—he can attain knowledge through the process of learning. But since wisdom is knowing how to use knowledge—it is simply putting to a wise use what one knows—if one lacks it, he must seek it from God. God gives it freely and liberally.

But how does God give wisdom? We believe that it is done through providence—through experience, age, and maturity. Our very dear friend and preacher of the gospel for more than 52 years, Milton S. Parker, does the best job in preaching a funeral of any man we know. He seems to always know just what to say and when to say it, where to go and when to go, and what to do and when to do it. When he conducts a funeral everything falls beautifully into place. He has wisdom! But how did he attain it? We believe God gave it to him, gave it to him over the years as he saw and experienced death after death, as he made sincere efforts to console the bereaved, as he suffered losses himself, and as he offered words of comfort, preached the truth, and tried to help grief-stricken souls accept the inevitable and search for God. Nothing miraculous was involved. The wisdom developed providentially over the years of faithful service.

The rod and reproof gives wisdom to a child (Prov. 19:15). Thus when we ask God for wisdom, we should not overlook the fact that He may give it to us providentially through sorrow, hardship, experience, or the everyday occurrences of life. It is not something that is automatically poured into our hearts and minds; it is developed through providential means. And it is a gift of God because God provides the means by which it is developed.

Bibliolatry (September 1976)

Several years ago we had a long discussion with a preacher (who was then preaching for one of the churches of Christ in the Carolinas) with a broad liberal streak right down the middle of his theology, and he told

us in words to the following effect: "You have become so strong in urging people to follow the Bible that you have forgotten Christ and become a bibliolatrists." This did not disturb us then (nor would it disturb us now) because we knew that one could not forget Christ while honoring and loving His word or fail to preach Christ while preaching the word and the fact that it derives all of its authority from Christ. In fact we knew (and pointed out to our liberal friend) that even he had to depend on the Bible for everything he knew, or could know, about Christ or anything else that pertains to the will of God to man. The only possible thing any man can preach about Christ must come from the Scriptures. There is no other source. Thus for one to preach Christ he must preach the Bible. The Bible is the revealed will of God (the revelation of Jesus Christ) and no man can preach that will (or preach Christ, which is the same thing) without preaching the word of God. Nor can one preach the Bible without instilling love and appreciation for it, for all that it is and all that it says. Anyone who preaches the will of God must, therefore, preach the Bible.

This conversation was brought to mind recently as we read the following (quoted by E. G. Echols from *Studies in the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, a book by J. Cynddylan Jones published in 1881): "Some of our popular preachers have been descanting of late upon what they call 'bibliolatry'—idolatry of the Bible. The people they contact with, I conjecture, make too much of the Bible. I wish I knew where such people live. I should like to go and live amongst them. The people I know make too little of the Bible, a great deal too little. They read it too little, study it too little, believe it too little. I would travel far to see an idolater of the Bible. I have not seen one yet. The truth is, that as to love Christ supremely is not idolatry of His human nature, so to believe the Bible intensely is not idolatry of mere thoughts and words."

That's it, precisely!

All aggressive people are in a battle, and nearly everyone fights something (we use the word here as Paul did when he said, "I have fought a good fight," not in the sense of swinging fists, shooting guns, or dropping bombs). One of our fellow editors, an extraordinary writer, has entered into such a heated battle against what he calls the producers and distributors of "yellow journalism" that his own editorials on the subject have become worse than the "yellow sheets" he so violently opposes—he is blinded to his own shade of "yellow." In the "anti" movement, the paper that had long led the battle for that position decided to change its stance and stop fighting. It stopped fighting orphan homes and cooperative efforts, but then it nearly killed itself fighting its own brethren. Even the "sweet spirited" souls, who oppose fighting, fight against those who fight. In former days members of the Lord's church were united in their uncompromised and uncompromising stand for truth and right, and they faced the battle as one man against all who distorted truth, regardless of whether they were infidels, liberals, Catholics, denominationalists, worldly minded, or the cold and indifferent within the church itself. But a few years ago some became, by the process of learning from the opposition, so broad-minded that they considered it unchristian to fight the forces of evil; they became too sophisticated to soil their hands in battle. But then the usual occurred: when they stopped fighting the enemy they started fighting the church for fighting the foe. The only difference in then and now is that then we all fought a common enemy and now they are fighting the brethren for continuing the battle. They are still fighting, except now they are allied with those who oppose truth and right.

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The Essence of Marriage

by Paul E. Jarrett

It is my aim in this article to call your attention to the essence of marriage. To speak of the essence of something is to refer to that which makes something what it is, or its fundamental nature. The essence of marriage is described in Scripture as two people, a man and his wife, becoming one (Gen. 2:23,24). The marital relationship was created by God in the beginning because He saw, "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

The ideal of marriage having at its core two people who are living and functioning as one is upheld when man and woman express their desire to live their lives together in the holy state of matrimony. In the late sixties the *Beach Boys* expressed the enthusiasm with which couples typically enter into marriage in the song, "Wouldn't It Be Nice?", when they wrote:

Wouldn't it be nice, if we could
wake up in the morning when the
day is new?

And then to have to spend the
day together, hold each other close
the whole day through.

We could be married and then
we'd be happy.

Wouldn't it be nice.

The answer to the question posed by this song is answered with an enthusiastic "yes" by couples looking forward to spending the rest of their lives together. Unfortunately, it is answered with a resounding "no" by many couples after they have been married for awhile. What happens to change the answer from an enthusiastic "yes" to a frustrated and/or angry "no"?

While each marriage may bring its own set of unique reasons for the change, I would suggest that there is one overriding reason that often goes unnoticed until it's too late. The reason I would suggest is that somewhere between the honeymoon and the divorce court couples lose sight of the essence of marriage. Husbands and wives who entered into marriage because they wanted to

spend the rest of their lives together find themselves spending little or no quality time together.

It has been estimated that the average couple spends less than 30 minutes of quality time together per week. There are a number of reasons for this, though none should be viewed as a valid excuse for neglecting the essence of the marital relationship. These reasons include legitimate demands on our time posed by work, children, domestic chores, church and civic responsibilities, etc.

The problem is compounded when the pressures imposed by busy schedules and daily cares lead couples to make the time they do have together less than quality time. When time is spent arguing over bills, complaining about schedules, differing over the children, etc., many couples start seeking relief from each other. Hence, they pursue their own recreational interests and forms of relaxation at the further expense of quality time they might be spending together.

What can be done to avoid the scenario I've just described which occurs all too frequently in today's marriages? I would suggest that the first step is to reaffirm one's commitment to the essence of marriage. Husbands and wives must make a commitment to being together. We've all heard such quotes as "The couple that plays together stays together" or "The couple that prays together stays together." While spending recreational time together is important and sharing devotional times together is even more important, I would suggest that the definitive quote regarding the key to staying together would read, "The couple that stays together stays together."

Both husband and wife need to make a concentrated effort to be together. This togetherness must be evidenced in their conversation and their recreational and social activities. It must also be seen in their maintaining a close physical (both non-sexual and sexual) and spiritual relationship. Also, they must work together in meeting financial obligations, the demands posed by maintain-

ing a household, and the challenges of parenting. In all of these areas they must view themselves as being one with each other in facing the challenges of daily living.

It is easy for couples to begin to function as individuals if a conscious effort is not given to maintaining the essence of their relationship. This is a trap that husbands can fall into when they begin focusing on their work and assign the household duties (from cleaning to child-rearing) to the wife. When this occurs wives are often inclined to seek to call attention to their husband's failure to give time to the family in a manner that makes their time spent together less than quality time. The end result, as was noted earlier, is seen in couples seeking relief by going their separate ways rather than finding solace from and strength to face the burdens of life by means of their being together.

To counteract this I would suggest that couples need to give priority to their personal relationship just as they did when they were dating. In other words they need to date. Newlyweds need to maintain, and those

couples who've lost it need to reclaim, the joy of dating. Time needs to be given to enjoying one another.

To those who say they don't have time to date, I would point out that you cannot afford not to make time. Didn't you get married to "spend the rest of your life together"? If you live separate lives you are not together even when you are under the same roof. Furthermore, if you fail to spend time together the chances are very good you will end up not spending the rest of your lives together.

When couples reaffirm their oneness they will bring greater joy and peace to their marriage. In doing so they will also find an escape in each other's arms from many of the cares and pressures of life. Finally, the financial demands, household chores, and parenting duties that tend to cause a house divided to fall can be withstood and overcome by two people who are truly working as one to meet those challenges.

[1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.]

Sodom Revisited

by T. Douglas Couch

Only God knows where the ancient ruins of Sodom are located. Some scholars believe that the four cities which were destroyed by the fire and brimstone (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim-Deut. 29:23) are now under the southern, shallow waters of the Dead Sea. In its heyday, the southern end of Palestine was abundant in water and vegetation (Gen. 13:10) and this made its inhabitants exceedingly prosperous. Any wealthy nation, ancient or modern, must take heed lest it also fall into the same temptations of Sodom (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

What were Sodom's sins? Ezekiel described four conditions: they were proud and arrogant, they had an abundance of food, they had much time for leisure which promoted laziness, and they neglected the poor (Ezek. 16:49-50). Moses told how the men of Sodom were ready to commit violent crimes (Gen. 19:10). Jude said that God de-

stroyed them because of Sodomy (Jude 7).

What did God think of Sodom? God thought that they were wicked and great sinners (Gen. 13:13) and that their sin was very grievous (Gen. 18:20). He saw how they proudly displayed and flaunted their iniquity (Isa. 3:9). Justice dictated that God destroy them to show others this example of His holy standard (Jude 7). Other nations which followed in Sodom's footsteps were also doomed by God's justice (1 Kings 14:24; Rom. 1:18,27,32).

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Prosperous nations often become soft, lazy, greedy, and immoral. Eventually they forfeit their right to exist and God brings about their destruction (Dan. 5:21,28). Ten righteous people would have preserved Sodom. Righteous people now preserve America but who knows for how much longer?

The next time you hear of people openly demonstrating for their "right" to commit abortion, to view pornography, or to practice sodomy, just visualize the smoke of Sodom as God reduced it to ashes (Gen. 19:28). Remember to speak out against all sin. Your survival may depend on it.

Brotherhood News

A new congregation has been established in Goose Creek, S. C. The SOUTH BERKELEY church began meeting on February 2 in the community room of the Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Inc. in Goose Creek. JOHN BECKLOFF and LESTER FARRELL serve as the evangelists. The church is off to a good start with a Sunday morning average worship attendance of 33 for the month of February with two home Bible studies in progress . . . The sisters of the FRIENDLY AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Greensboro, N. C., will be hosting their tenth annual Ladies Day on October 3. The theme will be "Celebrating A Festival To The Lord" . . . The BROOKS AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Raleigh, N. C., will host the National Campus Ministries Seminar August 5-9. There will be no N. C. Evangelism Seminar August 5-9. For more information call BAILEY FORREST, the campus minister at Brooks Ave., at (919) 821-2400 . . . The YADKINVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Yadkinville, N. C., will host its sixth annual Small Church Workshop May 7-8. The theme is "Small

Churches Are the Right Size: Building On The Strengths Of The Small Church." For more information call (919) 679-8924 or 679-3499 . . . The disintegration of the Soviet Union has opened not doors, but gateways, for the Gospel. Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama, and Tennessee Bible College, in Cookeville, Tennessee, have sent teachers to teach the Bible in Russian universities. In recent months two new congregations have been established in the former Soviet nation of Ukraine following 35 baptisms. Reports such as these are becoming commonplace. In the former Eastern bloc nation of Romania, nearly 200 people were baptized during 1991. By the end of the year, 250 believers were meeting for worship in a rented hall in the city of Bucharest. The remarkable turn of events over the past three years is truly inspiring, and not without a touch of irony. Paul Harvey, in a recent radio newscast, told the story of one American man who went to Russia to do what he was not allowed to do here in America — place free Bibles in public schools!

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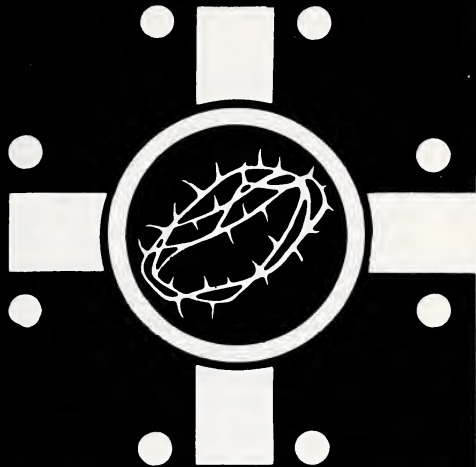
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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See Page 6 Hendersonville Growth



editorial

by David Pharr

The news recently reported the execution in California of a convicted murderer. During the last few hours before the gas chamber there were several stays granted by the courts, each of which was overturned by a higher court. One point made by the news was that fourteen years transpired between the time he was found guilty and the time he was put to death.

Regardless of one's views on capital punishment, it would seem obvious that such long delays between crime and punishment must surely dull a criminal's fear of punishment. It is frequently reported that a felon commits another crime while he is on bond awaiting trial for a previous crime. Such cases seem to say that the consequences of crime are not greatly feared.

Though ordained by God (Rom. 13:1ff), civil administration of justice will always have its shortcomings. Not so with the justice of God. It will be applied without respect of persons. It will be applied without failure, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:11,16).

There is, though, an interval of time between the sowing and the reaping. God's justice is rarely administered at the instant of sin. Because the punishment is not swift many deceive themselves into thinking that the consequences of sin are not certain (see Gal. 6:7-8). The wise writer of Ecclesiastes wrote about this: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (8:11).

Romans 1:16 Vindicated

Jim Mullican recently had the following paragraph in the Central Haywood (Clyde, NC) bulletin:

"The March, 1992, issue of **Magnolia Messenger** contains the story of a small Mormon congregation near Cedar City, Utah,

which studied the Bible until they realized their Mormon teaching and practice did not agree with the scripture. There were about twenty adults as well as several children. They wanted to be simply Christians, and since they knew of no one else who shared their views, they baptized each other for the remission of sins. In the next few months, they became aware of the churches of Christ as a result of TV programs such as 'In Search of the Lord's Way' and the 'One Nation Under God' effort. They are presently meeting with the leaders of the Cedar City Church of Christ about merging. Paul said, 'I am

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith...’ It still is.”

Your editor has been rejoicing in the successful use of his book “The Beginning of Our Confidence” in the former Soviet Union. Several lessons from the book were translated into Russian. The woman hired to do the translating was an unbeliever. When she finished the translation of the lessons she said she wanted to be a Christian. Such is the power of gospel truth.

Abortion Debate

The abortion issue is much in the news and the Supreme Court is expected to give a new ruling on the subject very soon. The propaganda of the pro-abortion side has much to say about freedom of choice, women’s rights, etc. Most of their arguments, however, come down to one concern — convenience. If it is not convenient to have a baby, they contend that it is alright to kill it.

To willfully kill a baby is murder. The law says it is murder if the baby is killed the week after he is born. Why is it not murder a week before the baby is born? And if it is murder a week before birth, why is it not two weeks before? six weeks before? etc.?

The pro-abortion people want to hide from reality. Not only do they protest any law that would limit abortion, they strongly oppose any legislation that would fully inform the mother of what really happens in an abortion. They want the awful reality concealed.

That FCC Petition Again

According to a report in the May **Christian Chronicle** there is a new flurry of activity to send petitions to the Federal Communications Commission to stop atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair’s efforts to stop religious broadcasting. The FCC insists that it has never had to deal with O’Hair on this issue and that an effort by others to stop religious broadcasting had been rejected in 1975. A spokesperson for the FCC explained that under the constitution they could not stop religious broadcasting.

The O’Hair hoax has arisen several times in the last several years. Conscientious people have gotten excited about it and millions of signatures have been sent to the FCC over this non-existent issue. What happens to the millions of letters the FCC receives regarding this? They are dumped in a landfill at taxpayers’ expense.

A comment from the **Baptist Messenger** quoted in the **Christian Chronicle** seems especially appropriate. “The FCC-O’Hair-RM 2493 rumor is just another of many hoaxes being pulled on Christians which diverts them from what they ought to be doing.”

ETSOPM Library Building

Many of our readers already know of our efforts to build a new library facility at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. The 2500 sq. ft. facility is urgently needed. The building will be named the “Bill Nicks Library” in honor of his years of mission work and of his years of service to the school. The exterior shell of the building has been completed, but we need more funds to complete the project.

Our good friend D. Gene West recently published a two-page editorial in the **Bible Herald** in support of ETSOPM and the library project. What follows are some of the encouraging things he said:

“Nestled in the beautiful mountains of east Tennessee is a lovely little community just outside of Knoxville, called Karns. There is in that community an ambitious, peaceful, and hardworking community of believers known as the Karns Church of Christ.”

“...For several years they have been doing a great work that has become known to several of us. They have established and maintained, under the oversight of their good elders, the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.... They have educated, free of charge, men from several states of the union to carry the gospel to the lost.... Due to the growth and development of this school there has been a need to expand many of their facilities, which the church has done at their own expenses. Among the things needed is a larger facility to house the library, which is so vital to the education of the fine

men who are there and who will be there in the future.... Due to a lack of funds, the construction on this badly needed facility must cease until sufficient funds are raised to complete it. This is where we come in. There is a dire and urgent need for \$25,000.00 to

complete the library. This money will be spent on materials, and the future construction will be completed by the talented members of the Karns church at no expense to the church.”

Managing Editor's Column

God's Sovereignty: A Theology of Genesis 1-11

by Johnny Melton

The first story of Genesis is not about the created universe, but it is about the creating God. The story of creation is told because it is the beginning of the sovereign activity of God. It is not insignificant that the word God ('elohim) occurs 35 times in the creation narrative in Genesis 1:1-2:3. God is the dominant word in the text, because God is the theme of the text. God creates. God moves. God speaks and that which was previously non-existent, exists. God passes judgment on His own creative activity.

Claus Westermann is probably right to suggest that Genesis 1 has the tone of a hymn of praise. He writes, "The first chapter of the Bible strikes one who reads it for the first time like a mysterious song, like a festal celebration — one could almost say, like a heavenly liturgy. With a solemn, ponderous rhythm the same phrases keep reappearing throughout the entire chapter. It affects one as a litany. This great rhythm which governs the chapter as the character of a tremendous monotone, comparable to the monotonous breaking of the sea on the shore" (**The Genesis Account of Creation**, p. 6).

Genesis 1 is a fitting introduction not only to the book of Genesis, but also to the entire Bible. Just as God is the dominant theme of Genesis 1, He is the theme of Scripture. The Bible is God's book. In Scripture God is subject neither to anything nor to anyone. He is sovereign. He acts on His own initiative and for His own purposes.

The sovereignty of God exhibited in the creation narrative of Genesis 1 is the key

theological theme throughout Genesis 1-11. Since Genesis 1-11 serves as a preface or introduction to Genesis 12-50, and Genesis itself serves as an introduction to the remainder of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments), one would anticipate that any significant theme in those chapters would prove to be a significant theme for the entire Bible.

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God certainly meets that standard. The sovereignty of God serves as a foundation for the claim that the Bible is fundamentally God's book. God and His love for His own creation serves as the theological center of Scripture. It is the principle of sovereignty that undergirds God's freedom to love unconditionally.

The sovereignty of God is the overarching theme of the stories of Genesis 1-11. Genesis 1 demonstrates the sovereignty of God in creation. Genesis 2:4-25 tells the story of creation from another perspective.

Genesis 2 should not be viewed as a competing version of the narrative in Genesis 1, written by a different author from a different era. Much has been made of the difference in the divine names in Genesis 1 and 2 in support of the notion that the two accounts come from different authors in different places with different agendas. 'Elohim occurs 35 times in 1:1-2:3, but abruptly at 2:4 the divine name changes to YHWH 'Elohim (LORD God). YHWH 'Elohim occurs 11 times in 2:4-25. YHWH is the covenant name of God. It is the name God used to

identify Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:13, 14). The use of YHWH is the basis on which some have argued that the covenant with Israel is the filter through which the creation account is to be interpreted. However, YHWH may not be God's covenant name with Israel; it may be God's **covenant name**.

In 2:4-25 the creation account is retold with an emphasis on the creation of man. Adam and Eve are named in this account. YHWH 'Elohim enters into covenant relationship with Adam and Eve whom He has created in His own image. The use of YHWH 'Elohim signals the purpose of this repetition of the creation event. God is not only the God of awesome power and might who speaks the universe into existence, but He is also the covenant making God who has a name and who initiates a relationship with His own creation.

God made Adam a home (2:8), gave him a job (2:15), established rules of conduct for him (2:16,17), and provided him with suitable companionship (2:18ff). This covenantal activity was initiated by God — not Adam. Covenant making is a function of divine sovereignty. YHWH reveals himself to whom he chooses and he initiates a covenant relationship on his own terms.

The next story should also be understood in light of God's sovereignty. The covenant agreement is broken by Eve and then by Adam. God enters the garden unbidden. He initiates contact with Adam and Eve. When He challenges Adam and Eve regarding their sin, He interprets His own stated penalty for the transgression, "for when you eat of [the forbidden tree] you will surely die" (2:17). God demonstrates His sovereign power, not only over Adam and Eve, but also over the serpent (animal life) and over the ground (plant life).

God's sovereignty is further demonstrated in His dealings with Cain and Abel. He accepts Abel's sacrifice and He rejects Cain's. This indicates that God has the right to establish standards for worship. He is not obligated to accept whatever man chooses to offer. The question YHWH put to Cain after rejecting Cain's sacrifice demonstrates that there is a standard by which the sacrifice was judged. "Why are you angry? Why

is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" (4:6, 7). There was something "right" that Cain could do. The question also suggests that YHWH is giving Cain a second chance to meet his standards.

When Cain continues to rebel and ultimately kills Abel, YHWH punishes him. Cain is sent away under a curse to be a restless wanderer. YHWH places a mark on Cain "so that no one who found him would kill him" (4:15). God by His sovereign will determines the punishment for sin, executes that punishment, but He also sets limits for vengeance.

In chapter five God's sovereignty is demonstrated again. The phrase "and he died" is repeated 8 times in the account of Adam's descendants. However, God demonstrates His sovereign will in the life of Enoch. The text says, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (5:24). God, who establishes natural law, is not bound by that law. If He, in His sovereign will, chooses for someone not to die, He simply takes him away.

The flood is further, and quite dramatic, evidence of God's sovereignty. God judges the human family and determines their fate. Because humankind has broken covenant with YHWH and sinned so terribly, YHWH is "grieved that he had made man on the earth" (6:6). He determines to "wipe mankind . . . from the face of the earth" (6:7). However, He chooses to spare Noah and his family because "Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH" (6:18).

God creates. He destroys His creation. God condemns mankind in general, but chooses to spare Noah in particular. God's will is sovereign. He acts as He chooses. When the flood is over, YHWH chooses to enter into covenant relationship with mankind once more. Once more the terms of the



covenant are set. The divine name in the first part of the flood narrative is YHWH, suggesting that the flood is the judgment of YHWH against mankind for breaking covenant with God. When the rain begins reference to the divine name changes to 'Elohim. It is the God of power and might who wipes out humanity, and wipes clean the face of the earth.

When the flood is over Noah disembarks the ark, builds an altar, and sacrifices some of the clean animals to God. At this point in the story, the divine name changes again. YHWH enters into a covenant with Noah and his family promising to limit the exercise of his power, "never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done" (8:21).

Having exercised his sovereign will in sending the flood, YHWH promises to refrain from intervening in the laws of nature in the future: "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (8:22). When the details of this covenant are enumerated in chapter 9, the divine name in that narrative is 'Elohim,

perhaps underscoring God's willingness to exercise restraint in the use of his power and might and his determination to pursue covenant relationship with mankind.

The final story in Genesis 1-11, the tower of Babel story, also reflects the sovereignty of God. God had commanded Noah's family to "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth" (9:1). Genesis 11:4 suggests that Noah's descendants were determined to remain together "and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." These people had a goal, a plan to meet that goal, and they had gone to work following the plan. YHWH, however, intervenes. He disrupts their strategy and "scattered them over all the earth" (11:8). When God determines that a thing is to be done, He has the ability and the right — the sovereign right — to see that it is done.

Throughout Genesis 1-11 God is the principle character. God acts on His own initiative. God is sovereign. This theological principle undergirds the remainder of Scripture. It is God's sovereign will at work in the call to Abram, the choice between Jacob and Esau, etc.

Indeed, the Bible is God's book. Genesis 1-11 with its clear demonstration of the sovereignty of God, prepares the reader for the revelation which follows.

Hendersonville Growth

by J.H. Henderson

The Lord continues to bless the church in Hendersonville with spiritual as well as physical growth; and we thank God for our blessings.

In December 1979, we moved into our new building at 1975 Haywood Road. That physical facility was planned to serve our projected needs for the next ten years. In 1990 a Building Planning Committee was established by the elders to formulate and develop a plan for additional facilities that would be needed for the next ten years. After evaluation of total needs, the committee recommended to the elders that a combined classroom and fellowship area of 7,424 square feet be constructed as a separate free-standing building adjacent to the original building constructed in 1979. The proposal consisted of a two-story facility with the fel-

lowship area on the first floor that would seat up to 250 people in one open area, or the space could be subdivided later for classrooms if needed. On the second floor level, nine classrooms were developed with each room different in size based on the forecasted size of each class. In addition, a work room for teachers was recommended as was a room for our benevolent ministry.

The elders accepted the developed plan and proceeded with final drawings and specifications by the architect. The estimated total costs were \$455,000 and the actual costs were \$464,000. The contract was awarded in July, 1991 with construction completed in January, and our first use of the new facilities was the first Sunday in February, 1992.

The new annex will meet our physical facility needs for the next ten years, and our tentative plans for physical facilities by the year 2000 would be to build a new worship

auditorium directly behind the facility we occupied in 1979.

Praise the Lord for our growth and we pray that he will continue to bless us.

The Preacher and Pride (I)

by Dennis Conner

A word to my preaching brothers. You and I both understand, better than most, that an indispensable trait of true Christian character is humility. Yet, by the same token, every preacher also knows the insidious temptation to pride to which the ministry, and the pulpit in particular, exposes him. Preaching is by nature a position of prominence in that we are constantly required to be before people. The preacher is on center stage as he carries out the responsibilities of the ministry of the word, and therein lies the potential danger. As Charles Bridges has noted in his classic work **The Christian Ministry**, "Human nature can never be raised to distinction without being tempted to vanity." If there is a besetting sin of the preaching ministry, it is pride, destroying more effective ministries than perhaps any other sin. As Richard Baxter observed more than 300 years ago, "It is this pride at the root that feedeth all the rest of our sins." The one who devotes himself to the ministry of the word is rightfully expected to be an example of godliness and holiness, so I do not think it an exaggeration to suggest that for this reason pride is even more hateful in the preacher than in other men.

At the heart of our pride, of course, is the inclination to place too high an estimation upon self. That inclination is manifested in a number of different, but equally destructive, ways. In this article the problem of pride will be dealt with from two perspectives: its manifestations and its remedy.

Manifestations of Pride

Pride may manifest itself first of all in the very desire to preach. In **The Preciousness of Preaching** brother Eldred Stevens wrote, "It seems that there may be some correlation between the presence of pride and

the desire to preach. After all, the preacher is the one on whom most eyes are fixed...He does enjoy great prominence. Many a man in whose heart a spark of pride wishes to burst into flame, thinks, 'That's for me!' and looks upon the ministry as an opportunity to shine among men and the pulpit as a platform upon which to display his admirable beauties and talents." It should be our desire to preach to impress people. Yes, it should be our desire to preach so that people hear God speaking through the Scriptures and are impressed with the glory of His majesty and the wonder of His gift in Christ. Any other desire springs from a base pride in self that contaminates all the preacher's motives and deeds. The problem we often encounter in preaching is that, to quote Bridges again, "We wish for eminence rather than usefulness." We have all experienced that inordinate pleasure that comes from the praise of others when we have preached well. Henry Martyn understood well the dilemma created by pride in preaching, "Men frequently admire me, and I am pleased; but I abhor the pleasure that I feel." Every preacher would do well to commit to memory and heart 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord."

Pride may also be manifested in an insistence upon having things our way. Disagree if you like, brother, but we often seem to labor with the attitude that we always know what is best, and that it is the place

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of others to yield to my superior understanding. How many times have preachers been given to murmuring and complaining when a program was rejected, or a pet idea rebuffed? Enough said.

Third, there is the pride revealed in the value that we place upon our own opinions and judgments. While we decry the sectarian concept of a clergy that interprets Scripture for the laity and does their thinking for them, many of us are guilty of maintaining essentially the same arrangement in only slightly dissimilar forms. We are ready to proclaim in theory that every individual has the right to study Scripture for himself or herself and then come to one's own conclusions, but we are uncomfortable with it in practice. It is fine for folks to do that, so long as their conclusions agree with ours! But let them come to some different conclusion and alarms start going off in our brains, bells ring and red flags are raised. The contrary opinion must be answered, rather than respected, or so we think. Do we preachers dare to think of ourselves as repositories of exhaustive truth and understanding? No? Then cut the brethren some slack. Swallow your pride. We might be pleasantly surprised at what the brother or sister in the pew can teach us.

Then there is that pride which is evidenced in the failure to practice what we preach. Listen again to Baxter, "It is a sad thing that so many of us preach our hearers asleep; but it is sadder still if we have studied and preached ourselves asleep, and have talked too long against hardness of heart, till our own has grown hardened under the noise of our own reproofs." There is the tendency to take great delight in the sins, faults and failures of others while our own go unnoticed and unconfessed. Others are often judged by a stricter standard than the one by which we judge ourselves. It seems that we find it easier to extend mercy and patience to ourselves than to others. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful..." I don't think He meant "Blessed are those who heap mercy upon themselves." Do we delight in the failures of others and respond with effortless criticism? Do we judge the spirituality of others because they don't meet our standards of faithfulness? And how do we

react when we are reprov'd or corrected by another? Better keep an eye on that pride meter!

Another way that pride manifests itself in our ministries is in an envy of other preachers. How many times do we forget that we are enlisted in a cause greater than ourselves and become envious of the talents or position of another brother? How often do we truly rejoice with the man who preaches better than we do, or who preaches for a larger and more dynamic church than we do? We are reluctant to admire greater talents, even when they are devoted to the same cause that we are. The unsettling truth is that we unwittingly betray through our envy a dissatisfaction with God Himself. We are saying, in essence, that we are not satisfied with the gifts with which God has endowed us: Underlying such a dissatisfaction is a preoccupation with self-glory rather than God's.

There are likely numerous other areas in which our pride may be manifested, but these are painful enough. The question now arises, "How can we effectively deal with the problem?" In next month's concluding article we will give attention to pride's remedy. Since you have come this far, you will hopefully give it a good reading as well, unless, of course, you are too prideful!

[Yadkinville, NC]



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No Rest for the Weary

by Gary G. Payne

“No rest for the weary.” Are you familiar with that saying? Sometimes we are more familiar with it than we would like to be. Problems in life can be overbearing. There is another saying: “When it rains, it pours.” Sometimes we get about as much, or more, as we think we can take. We feel like giving up. We get a care-less attitude.

Weariness is really one of the big issues with euthanasia. A loved one is helpless — a “vegetable.” The family’s nerves are frayed. They hurt for the person they love.

On the TV show “20/20” there was a mother who had a small child almost drown in the family swimming pool. The child lived; but there was extensive brain damage. It was pitiful. The mother commented, “There are worse things than death.” I hoped I would never have to face what she did.

On a less extreme note, other things can eat at us — for example, child-rearing. It is not easy to discipline a child. You spank him and five minutes later the kid gets back up and goes right back to what he was doing before. You get tired of giving spankings. Some parents just stop. They give up.

It happens in the Christian life too. Satan tries to wear you down. He throws everything at you he can. After a while you get tired. You feel like throwing in the towel. It is more than you can take.

I’m talking about spiritual weariness. Inner conflicts will do it. In other words, you know you are not what you ought to be. A brother in Christ holds a grudge against another in the congregation. He knows he is wrong. He hates himself for it. Yet grudges are hard to shake off. He thinks, “How can I go to worship like that? I feel like a hypocrite.” Unless he does something about it, he will grow weary and probably quit coming. Or, when guilt eats at us, we may question our salvation. We need encouragement. You think you should get it at the worship services, but sometimes you don’t.

It is possible to be religious, dedicated, and busy; yet still be spiritually weary. Some have stick-shift faith. When you first learn to

drive a stick-shift car, you are very cautious. You don’t want to grind the gears. But later, after you learn how, you don’t think much about it. Shifting gears becomes a matter of instinct. But we cannot rely on our instinct to get us through our spiritual lives. Satan is too busy! We cannot allow ourselves to lapse into a faith that only goes through the motions.

How can you tell if you are spiritually weary or not? Consider your devotional life. I am not asking if you pray often or not. Sometimes praying can become a ritual too. I am asking if you deeply love God. Do you sometimes just break out and praise Him? Or sing because you feel close to Him? Another telltale sigh in this: giving until it hurts — and liking it. Is there a fire within you which cannot be put out? If not, even if you are being religious, you may be spiritually weary.

Spiritual weariness is the reason God had the book of Hebrews written. Some things never change. Christians then grew tired like Christians do now. The Hebrews writer encourages us: “Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.... Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast” (Heb. 3:1-6).

Here is our message: spiritual stick-to-it-ness. Don’t give up. God never promised an easy road for Christians. In this life, there is no rest for the weary. But when this life is over, if you have spiritual stick-to-it-ness, there is rest. “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest” (Heb. 4:9-11).

We will live with God forever, in His presence at the throne. Whatever concerns you have now will vanish. Worries will be meaningless. All that will matter is being with our God. Stick to Jesus. Be determined to allow God to have all of your life: service, attitudes, emotions — everything.

[907 Courtland Ave., Reidsville, NC 27320.]

There But for the Grace of God Go I

by Paul E. Jarrett

The title for this article is a familiar statement that we've all heard, and probably even made on occasion. It is often uttered when we observe someone whom we see as lacking in some degree the blessings we have received. The circumstances which prompt this observation invariably seem to focus on some physical, or material, blessing. It is when we observe someone who is physically, mentally, or economically disadvantaged that we are most likely to say, "there but for the grace of God go I."

Certainly in light of the fact that God is the source of every good and perfect gift (Jas. 1:17) it is right for us to acknowledge all our material blessings as coming from Him. However, if it is true that our physical and economic blessings are from God, isn't it also true that our spiritual standing is even more a product of God's grace. Rather than behaving like the Pharisee who bragged about his righteousness and viewed others with contempt (Luke 18:9-12), wouldn't it be better for us to acknowledge that "there but for the grace of God go I?"

In a recent editorial in *Carolina Christian* (March, 1992) David Pharr called attention to a possible danger of viewing God's plan of salvation as consisting of a human side as well as a divine side. As David well noted, "Ephesians 2:8 forever denies any human contribution toward redemption." Rather, the whole of salvation is a gift of God, a product of God's grace. How this is so can best be appreciated when we make application of the truism expressed in the statement, "there but for the grace of God go I," to the matter of our spiritual standing.

Before illustrating how this principle applies I would first call your attention to the fact that grace is portrayed in Scripture as a teacher in bringing salvation to all men. Paul says it like this in Titus 2:11,12: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **instructing** us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live

sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age." The "grace of God" appeared and brought salvation to all men in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one whom John said is "full of grace and truth" and to receive Him is to receive "grace upon grace" (John 1:14,16,17).

In receiving Jesus we must be willing to hear Him. The focus of our role in salvation is not to be on **what** we know, but on **Whom** we know. Our emphasis on faith in our handling of Romans 10:17 has (I fear) often placed emphasis on **what** is heard to the point of causing us to become like the Jews of whom Paul wrote: "seeking to establish their own (righteousness), they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). In order to avoid this trap we need to give greater emphasis to the fact that the faith which saves comes from "hearing the word of Christ." It comes from *Whom* we hear because "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4).

When we focus on Him whom we are to hear it will not mean that we will do less. Rather, it simply means that our confidence will lie in the One whose commands we are following and not in the fact that we have kept His commands. We will not be inclined to lose sight of the fact that He is the author of our salvation and to become arrogant when we do as He commands. On the other hand by focusing on Him as the means of our salvation we will also not despair when we realize our imperfections in keeping His commands. Nor will we judge critically those who have not yet achieved **our** personal level of knowledge and/or performance.

I'll try to illustrate what I'm trying to say by using three examples. First, I want to consider the significance of the examples of faith found in Hebrews 11. Secondly, I want to consider the significance of the familiar parable of the talents found in Matthew 25. Finally, I want to note the error

of the Jews Paul called attention to in Romans 2.

First, consider if you will, the faith of the patriarchs described in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. I've heard (and even preached) sermons in which these examples of faith were cited as proof of man's having an equal part to play in His salvation. We've all noted how Noah "prepared an ark for the salvation of his household" and how the walls of Jericho fell down only "after they had encircled for seven days." The point that we may have overlooked in citing these examples is that it was the grace of God which instructed Noah to build the ark and that told Joshua to march around Jericho thirteen times in seven days.

The point to be made of this is that the grace of God is seen in the building of the ark and the marching as much as it is in the rain and the falling walls. Noah would never have built an ark and Joshua would never have commanded the people to march if God hadn't by His grace, told them to do so. Likewise, it is only by the grace of God that we know to make an appeal to God for the forgiveness of our sins in baptism (Col. 1:12; I Pet. 3:21).

The second thing I would invite you to consider pertains to the message to be found in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. While we have generally applied this parable to differences in gifts (i.e. talents) and opportunities, the message has application to everything that is ours as a gift of God. This would include everything that is good, including our level of knowledge.

When applied to our spiritual standing the parable shows us three things. First, it shows us that what we are given initially in the way of knowledge is a gift of God. Secondly, it shows us that by faithful use of what we know and have, it is possible to increase our knowledge. Finally, it shows us that God's wrath is reserved solely for those who willfully refuse to use the knowledge they have been given. The stewards who were rewarded were commended for their faithfulness, not their accomplishments. Likewise, the one talent man was condemned for his unfaithfulness, not for his lack of accomplishment.

The master in the parable did not pun-

ish the one-talent man because he only had one talent. This would have been unfair since He was the one who had given him only one talent. Instead, He punished him for burying what he had been given. In a similar way we should not look with disdain on those who have less knowledge than we possess.

Rather, we should help all to see that they need not be afraid that they cannot please God. Rather, we should encourage them to use whatever knowledge they have been given by the Father and to seek to add to that knowledge through faithful study and application with the full assurance that God will reward all who humbly seek him.

The third example I would call to your attention is the one provided in Romans 2 in Paul's criticism of the Jews. Paul was aware that the Jews had indeed been granted a high spiritual standing by the grace of God (see Rom. 3:1,2). However, he points out in Romans 2:17-25 that their standing was going for nought because they were arrogant regarding the knowledge they had received, while lacking in the kind of faithful performance that knowledge had been given to promote.

In Romans 2:14-16, 26-29 Paul argues that those Gentiles who had been granted far less in the way of spiritual enlightenment by God would be accepted ahead of the more enlightened Jews because of their faithfulness in the performance of what they knew. The message should be obvious for those of us who may be tempted to look with disdain on those involved in the error of denominational Christianity. We should not take comfort in our superior knowledge to the point of holding them in contempt. It may very well be that on the day when "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" they will find acceptance for what they did with their limited knowledge, while we will be rejected for our failure to act in accordance with our greater knowledge.

In saying that, I would in no way wish to suggest that what Paul taught in Romans 2 should be so handled as to take away from the point made in Romans 3 that all are under indictment for sin (v. 9-23). Rather, I would emphasize that, taken together, the message of both chapters underscores the need we all have for God's grace as the

means of our being acceptable to Him (3:20-22).

Furthermore, the point I want to make should not be viewed simply as an argument for the acceptance by God of those who are seeking to do His will while surrounded by error. Instead, my main point is to elicit a higher degree of humility in respect to what God's grace has granted unto us. Also, I would hope that in recognizing that our spir-

itual standing is a product of God's grace we might better be able to look with compassion on others less fortunate than ourselves. Rather than being made arrogant in our knowledge, I would hope that we would in love use our knowledge to edify others in awareness of the fact that "there but for the grace of God go I."

[1824 Tamworth Drive, Charlotte, NC 28210.]

God's Power to Save

by Rob Albright

There are so many in our world who think that living the Christian life is a waste of time and energy and so they never take the time to investigate the Bible and see what living for Jesus is all about.

Then there are others who will study and invest themselves in following the teachings of Jesus because they have come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. This is essential because Jesus said: "If you do not believe I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24).

The Bible presents eye-witness accounts of the life of Christ and his teachings. The gospel writer Luke carefully investigated the information about Jesus from eye-witnesses to be sure that what he wrote was true. He did this so we can know for a certainty that Jesus was who he claimed to be (Luke 1:1-4).

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have given us the events and teachings of Jesus'

life. They are true in every way.

The gospel is God's power to save those who believe (Rom. 1:16). The Lord's life, death and resurrection are facts that instill faith in men and women today. This faith leads them to start a new life in living for Jesus. This new life begins when faith leads to obeying the words of Jesus (Heb. 5:8-9), and then a right relationship is formed. We become children of God (Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12).

God's power must be preached to "all creation." The gospel is for all because "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

God's power to save is the gospel of Jesus Christ. What a message to share with others! What a privilege! What a responsibility!

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Can Homicide Be Part of Healing?

by Mark Swindall

"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven — A time to give birth...and a time to die" (Eccl. 3:1-2a).

"Death with dignity," is what it's called. "The easy way out." Nope! To both statements. Society must not condone such renegade behavior. The state of Michigan is going to revoke the medical license of "Dr. Death." Retired pathologist Jack Kevorkian will not kill again. Washington voters also made the right decision. The state of Washington will not become "the killing fields."

Doing away with those who no longer meet society's standards as worthy human beings, whether it be by abortion or euthanasia, is homicide. It is immoral. It is sin.

What a sordid business, this deciding who is worthy to live and die. The three women Kevorkian advised, assisted, and did everything for except administer the poison himself, were scared, suffering, and full of pain. But they were alive. He had no right to dishonor his fellow healers by his personal perversion of right and wrong.

"He only has six months to live." How does a doctor know this? How does anyone know this? Recent studies show that if you ask ten different physicians to diagnose the same desperately ill patient — you guessed it — they will come up with ten different "educated guesses" concerning that person's longevity! No one can say with any certainty how long a person may live. And that person may be depressed and distraught, and in no condition to make a decision of such magnitude and finality. My personal experience after hundreds and hundreds of hospital visits is that people who are not expected to live...often survive. People who are expected to do just fine...often die.

The potential consequences to the "Dr. Death" mentality are ugly. Watch the progression: first, abortion, killing unborn babies; next, assisting death for the seriously ill; next, suggesting death for the severely ill; to finally insisting on death for the seriously ill! Why keep poverty stricken, des-

perately sick people alive at taxpayers' expense? If the elderly ill are lingering too long, why not free up their beds for those younger and more valuable to society? Repulsive!

Sick or depressed people sometimes protest that society isn't giving them a choice. But prior to severe illness, we have the choice to state in a "living will" that we don't desire extraordinary life prolonging measures.

By all means, heal as much as possible. Give aid, comfort and healing to the seriously infirmed. And when healing is no longer possible, make painkilling drugs available. Their living and dying should be as normal and natural as possible. Who knows the determination and strength of will they may impart to others?

We must not spawn hospitals and/or medical specialists that are nothing more than agents of death. If we add euthanasia to abortion we will complete the circle of death! Womb to death bed...society must not participate in such unethical transgressions!

As human beings we have a time to be born and a time to die. We must trust that our time here has a purpose even though we may not fully understand what that purpose is.



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The Three "Bears" of Galatians 6

by David Lynch

Paul uses the word "bear" three times in Galatians Chapter 6: "Bear one another's burdens" (6:2); "For every man shall bear his own load" (6:5); and "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (6:17).

The first "bear" is in connection with restoring a brother who has sinned. Paul says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The burden spoken of here is the joint effort of the brethren to bear the load together in restoring a fallen Christian. When a brother or sister falls away, those who are spiritual should band together in an effort to restore them. The principle of the golden rule can be applied here. Paul said, "Considering yourself lest you also be tempted." We are to do for this individual what we would want done for us if we were the fallen one. We are to restore them "in a spirit of gentleness" just as we would want to be restored.

Too often the responsibility to restore a fallen brother is not carried out by the brethren as a whole. People are slack in helping to carry the burden. They leave it up to certain individuals to do it, namely the preacher or the elders, and if they do not do it, it just does not get done.

I recently read what was said to be a true story about a congregation that had just moved into a new building. Some individuals had taken up a collection and bought two nice new plants for the new building. These plants were beautifully displayed at the entrance of the building. After several weeks these plants disappeared and were immediately missed. The congregation was showered with announcements concerning the missing plants. A search committee was formed to find them. Apologies were made to those who had donated the money for the plants. And the missing plants were the topic of conversation among the brethren in and

out of the assembly.

After two months had gone by the preacher virtually ended the search. He pointed out to the congregation how that for two months a lot of effort had been placed on finding and retrieving these plants. He then pointed out that there were many brethren in the congregation who had fallen away and were lost. He said that if a tenth of the effort had been made to retrieve or restore the lost brethren as had been made to find the lost plants, surely many of them could have been restored.

The second "bear" of which Paul speaks is one that can't be shifted or shared. "For each one shall bear his own load" (6:5). This is in connection with what he has said in verse 4, "But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." We all have the burden or responsibility to obey the gospel and live a godly life. No one can serve the Lord for us. No one can obey the gospel for us. It is a responsibility that is ours and ours alone. We must all carry our own load.

The story is told of a young lady who was taking care of a sick elderly man whom she loved very much. One day when it was time for him to take his medicine he asked her if she would pour it for him. He told her to measure out a tablespoon and then put it in a nearby wine glass. She did all that he asked her to do and then she brought it to him, but instead of him taking it from her he quietly said to her, "Now, dear, will you drink it for me?" But she explained, "You know it won't do you any good, unless you take it yourself." The elderly man agreed with her and then pointed out that it is the same way with Jesus. He told her that no one can believe in Jesus for her, she must do this for herself.

This young lady could only do so much to help this man take his medicine. She could pour it for him, and carry it to him, but she could not take it for him. The medicine could only help him if he took it himself. This is how it is with Christ; there is only so much

that can be done for us. Christ died for us, others may teach us about Christ, but no one can obey Christ for us. Paul said, "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

The third "bear" is Paul's personal reference to the marks that are on his body because of the many beatings that he has undergone for the sake of Christ. He says, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

There were those who were troubling Paul by questioning his apostleship. He points out that he is still suffering persecution for the cause of Christ (Gal. 5:10-11). No one had the right to question Paul's sincerity because they knew of his persecution, they could see for themselves the stripes he bore. These stripes were a mark or a brand which could testify of his dedication and servitude to his Master.

Today we may not claim to bear the marks of Christ in our bodies the way Paul did. But at the same time it is the duty of Christians everywhere to bear the "marks"

of Christ in their lives. As it was obvious that Paul was a dedicated servant of Christ by his physical marks, it should be just as obvious that Christians are dedicated servants of Christ by their lifestyle. As Paul said in Romans 1:12, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

I remember an event that took place in my own life a few years ago. A man came up to me on the street and told me that he was going to be honest with me. He said, "I need a drink," and then he asked me if I would give him some money so he could buy himself some wine. I kindly told this man that I was going to be honest with him. I told him that I do not drink, nor do I support drinking. I thanked him for being honest with me, but I told him that I could not give him any money for wine. The man immediately looked at me and smiled and said, "You're a Christian, aren't you?"

[David is a student at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.]

"And Above All Things..."

by Terry Wheeler

"And above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins," (1 Pet. 4:8).

"But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14).

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

If there were one commandment out of all the New Testament that you would stress above all others, what would it be? Preachers, if you had one last message to leave to the church, what would you stress? In fact, what is the stress of your lessons now? What is the recurring theme?

Is it baptism (Mark 16:16)? Church attendance (Heb. 10:25)? Righteous living (1 Pet. 1:16)? Protection from false teaching (Acts 20:29-31)? Giving (1 Cor. 16:1,2)? Perhaps it is Christ Himself (Acts 8:5), the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-11; Rom. 1:16), or the

church (Eph. 1:22,23). Maybe it is Judgment Day and the final destiny of all (Acts 24:25; Matt. 25:46).

Notice what Jesus' emphasis was to His disciples before His crucifixion (John 13:34,35; 15:12; 17:26). Have you noticed that Peter stresses love five times in the five chapters of his first letter (1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 5:14)?

Why this emphasis? Is love all there is to it? Well, yes, if we are understanding the concept God's way. After all, Jesus said loving God and our neighbor was what the Law and the Prophets were all about (Matt. 22:35-40).

And Paul had this to say, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'

'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,'" (Rom. 13:8,9).

Paul's message is that love says it all! But we need to know the ramifications and qualifications of this love, not to mention encouragement to do it. So there are many verses and chapters and books of the Bible to explain it to us and to reveal Him who is love to us.

Still, after it has all been said, the "weightiest" matter of the word is plainly stated. What God expects "above all else" is emphasized over and over. Not that we ignore any of the other. But love is what it is all about: God showing His love for us, and our loving response back toward Him.

Love God? Oh, yes! How? By loving each other as He has shown and commanded (1 John 4:21). Keep His commandments? Certainly! And what is the commandment He expects us to keep if we love Him? Love that neighbor, love that brother (1 John 3:23).

Having God's love in us will turn us toward each other, will cause us to care, will prompt us to help in kindness (Rom. 5:5). It will cause us to rebuke sin and give our life

to save the sinner (Gal. 6:1; Tit. 1:12,13; Jude 20-23). It will encourage us to love the truth and hate falsehood (2 Thess. 2:9-15). We will be zealous for every good work (Tit. 2:14). We will spread the Good News of God's grace to all, and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth with the brethren in our area, encouraging them according to Christ Jesus (Heb. 10:19-25). We will constantly look to Jesus, anxiously await Him who loves us most and has shown us how to love, and set our hope fully on heavenly glory (Heb. 9:27,28). We will keep ourselves pure for Him and be loyal unto death (1 Pet. 1:13-21).

Yes, all the Bible is vital. We cannot do without one jot or tittle. But the Bible has one message, one emphasis, one focus. Failure to see this and hold on to it means a dwarfed growth, an unbalanced walk, a short-sighted view.

As Paul summed up, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

[1020 Pauline Blvd., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Terry worked for several years with the church in Duncan, SC.]

Can the Impossible Become Possible?

by David Pharr

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23).

Most of our preaching has the expectation that people should and can change their lives. Jeremiah seems to say that it is impossible for some to ever change. The prophet had prayed, preached, and wept. They were so accustomed to doing evil, so set in the ways of sin, that it seemed impossible for them to change.

The Bible shows the hardening effects of repeated sin. The conscience can become "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2) and some are "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19). Someone has said that many lives are like concrete: "thoroughly mixed up and permanently set." Love of sin can have a mighty hold on people.

Regarding the possibility of change, the world is generally quite skeptical. "He'll never change, and if he does it won't last." Someone wryly observed that prison reform has never worked and never will until we start sending a better class of people to prison!

Our own experiences often confirm how hard it is to change the leopard's spots. How hard it is, for example, to change a habit. Habits erode deep grooves in the mind. "We first make a habit and then habits make us." Past failures haunt us and make us think failures will always follow. "I've tried, but it's just no use." "I am what I am and that's all I'll ever be."

Some foolish psychology has tried to solve the dilemma by telling people to just accept themselves as they are. It is evident, though, that where sin is involved, it is not

acceptable to accept what we are.

In fact, though, some people do make dramatic changes. Bad habits can be broken, personalities can be reshaped, character can be changed. The ultimate issue, however, is forgiveness. You may reform your life, but you can no more forgive your own sins than the leopard can change his own spots.

God makes the impossible possible. Mary asked, "How shall this be...?" The angel replied, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:34,37). After Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved, the disciples asked incredulously, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus declared: "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:23-27).

It is as impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom as it is for an Ethiopian to change his skin. But it is likewise as impossible for a poor man to be saved as it is for the leopard to change his spots. Men cannot save themselves by themselves. But with God all things are possible.

*I wish that there were some wonderful
place*

*Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heart-
aches*

*And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat
at the door,*

And never be put on again.

— Louisa Fletcher

There is such a place — a spiritual place — where lives can begin again, where the slate is wiped clean, where the past is forgiven, and where the rest of life can be different. That place is in Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Other texts reinforce this assurance. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). "As far as the east is from

the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12).

Forgiveness makes a new character possible. Forgiveness is not intended as a fresh start for the old lifestyle. The old man is taken away that the new man might be put on (Eph. 4:22-24). We can be better people than we were. This means better habits, better attitudes, better personalities, better character.

There is a good thought in the statement, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." But this point needs to be added: "No, they aren't perfect but they are doing much better than they were doing." The hymnist John Newton wrote: "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be; but, by the grace of God, I am not what I was."

Meaningful life changes can be effected only by the grace of God. There is powerful motivation sometimes simply because of the expectations of others. Fear of hell may persuade one to change. More powerful still is a genuine desire for heaven (see 1 John 3:3). But the most powerful motivation of all is the captivating love of Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us...that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

The gospel shows the man who is a failure that he does not have to be a failure, the criminal that he does not have to be a criminal, the sinner that he is not hopelessly trapped in his sin. God can change the leopard's spots!

There is a corny old joke that goes like this: "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" "Just one, but the light bulb has got to want to change!" That is where the issue is left. Jesus does His part. Your life can be changed. But not unless you want to change.

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Brotherhood News

by Dennis Conner

It is one thing to talk about the need for world missions, but quite another to do something about it. Twenty high-school students, college students and adults from the BROOKS AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Raleigh, NC, will go to Trujillo, Honduras June 6-20 in an evangelistic effort. It appears that to these Christians the great commission is to be more than just a great discussion.... JIM HUNTER, who preaches for the Biltmore congregation in Asheville, NC, underwent surgery for colon cancer in March. The surgery was successful and the prognosis for Jim is excellent, for which we give thanks to God.... The 49th Annual Carolina Lectures will be hosted in 1992 by the GREER CHURCH OF CHRIST in Greer, SC. The 1993 Lectures will be hosted by the HICK-

ORY CHURCH OF CHRIST on Fairgrove Church Road in Hickory, NC. Our thanks to the BILTMORE CHURCH OF CHRIST for hosting the Lectures last month.... On March 6, 1992, President George Bush spoke at Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts as part of his campaign tour. About 8,000 people attended the event.... DAVE and MARY ARNY of the GREENVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Greenville, NC, began missionary service in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, last February. Dave will be preaching and teaching for churches in the region while Mary will be teaching Bible classes for women and children. They will remain in Nigeria for two to three years.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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Words — Words and More Words

Colors fade. Shorelines erode. Temples erode. Empires fall. But **suitable** words spoken under the right circumstances endure! Mark Twain once wrote: “The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug!”

Like Jell-O, concepts assume the mold of the words into which they are poured. Who has not been stabbed awake by the use of a particular word? Who has not found relief from a well-timed word spoken at the precise moment of need? Who has not been crushed in spirit through another’s word? Who has not gathered fresh courage because a word of hope penetrated the fog of self-doubt?

The finest examples of **suitable** words are the words and phrases of Jesus:

“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many **words**” (Matt. 6:7).

“Therefore everyone who hears these **words** of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock” (Matt. 7:24).

“For by your **words** you shall be justified, and by your **words** you shall be condemned” (Matt. 12:37).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My **words** shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

J.B. Phillips has correctly said: “If words are to enter men’s hearts and bear fruit, they must be shaped cunningly to pass men’s defenses and explode silently and effectually within their minds.”

Jesus is the Master wordsmith! Listen and do....

— Mark Swindall



editorial

by David Pharr

One impact of television and radio is that people believe very little of what they hear. We are continually being told that a certain product is the best, followed by another huckster that says his product is better. We are unlikely to believe that a certain toothpaste, deodorant, or laundry detergent is going to bring success to our lives, no matter how sincere and certain the spokesman seems. Commercials may have subliminal effects, but most of us rarely take these messages at face value. We are a society that of necessity must be skeptical. We do not believe everything that we are told.

It may be that many who listen to preaching do so with much the same detachment and dubiousness with which they tolerate commercials. I am not referring to the practice of testing doctrines by the Scriptures (1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11). Rather our concern is with the tendency to subconsciously dismiss preaching as little more than one man's opinion, or maybe just the claims of the "sponsor" (the church).

If there is any place that ought to deal with absolutes, it is the pulpit. The one place where people ought to expect certainties is in gospel sermons. Most of what is being communicated in the world is without authority. The girl in the toothpaste commercial cannot back her assertions with any real authority. But preachers can and must deliver an authoritative message. "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15).

What makes preaching authoritative? The Bible. A sermon is as valid as it is biblical, it is as certain as it is scriptural, it is as absolute as it is "Thus saith the Lord."

Certainly a message's scripturalness is not determined by how many or how few texts are cited in it. We have heard solid and helpful discourses developed from just a few words of text. There have been speeches crammed full of passages which were little more than a presentation of the preacher's

prejudices. Since, however, the only message with authority is the Bible's message, it ought always to be made clear that "This is what God's word teaches." Why would any man of God not delight in confirming what he says with citations of Scripture?

We hear criticism of "proof-text preaching." If what is being criticized is the practice of using texts out of context, of misapplying passages, or of just throwing in numerous passages in hopes of camouflaging a lack of meaningful study, then such ought to be criticized. On the other hand, we are bound to commend a preacher who

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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conscientiously shows the congregation that everything he teaches can be found in the Bible. It is a foolish sophistication that thinks it is outmoded or unintellectual to frequently cite the Bible. It is not enough to say that preaching ought to be **primarily** biblical, it ought to be **altogether** biblical. Sermons are enriched by the use of Scripture, they are impoverished by their absence.

Two things are accomplished by the meaningful use of the Bible as the basis and framework of every sermon. First, proving everything by the Bible inspires appreciation for the authority of the Scriptures. A preacher owes it to the people to show them that he has complete confidence in the sacred Book. The more he demonstrates this by appealing to the Bible for proof, the more they will be encouraged to have the same confidence.

Secondly, it is only when it is affirmed by the Bible that people can know that a proposition is true. One may speak eloquently, learnedly, and persuasively, but there is no authority in what he says unless it is backed by Divine truth. People need an authoritative message. They deserve to be told what is right and to be shown that they can know it is right because it is what the Bible teaches.

Some preachers give more attention to quoting men than to quoting God. Sermons cite authors, philosophers, psychologists, and theologians as "authorities" on various issues. There is a place for quoting men for purposes of illustration or to show a more effective way of expressing some truth. But the problem with citing them as "authorities" is that they have no authority. It would be radical to assume that a preacher is questionable simply because he quotes from various authors. We are, however, somewhat astonished when sermons are marked more by discussions of what men have said than by references to the truth of the Lord. Advertisers often try to convince the public by using the testimony of movie stars and famous athletes. But how is a baseball star an authority on the right toothpaste? And why should we be convinced of any spiritual truth simply because some theologian says so?

Of course many people do not like Bible preaching. They are "turned off" by sermons that are heavy with Scripture. Many do not want to hear much that sounds ab-

solute. Clear Bible preaching will often drive such away. But what value is there in giving them an alternative to get them to stay? Are we so naive, so weak in our convictions, that we think one can be saved who is not convinced by the Bible and who does not rejoice in hearing the Bible? We should want to see the church grow, but preachers need to come back to the reality that it is not our job to bring in and hold large attendances; it is our job to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2).

As an example, consider that the Bible teaches some things regarding parental duties in rearing children. These things ought to be taught. One might cite child psychologists, or other "experts," to illustrate what the Bible teaches, or to show how the Bible's principles have been demonstrated in practical experience. But we should never cite such as "authorities" which confirm the Bible. (An equal number of such "authorities" could, of course, be cited to contradict the Bible.) I have no problem with a preacher showing that "experts" agree with Scripture, but I am offended with any implication that the Bible is right because it agrees with the "experts."

Again, let us be clear that a sermon may be biblical even though there are few texts cited in it. A preacher might ask himself, however, how his sermons are being perceived. It is not unusual to hear complaints that sermons have little scriptural content. It might be defended that the Bible is in it even though book, chapter and verse are not given. The question, however, is how are such sermons perceived. I am reminded of how someone defended a broadcast which was supposed to be evangelistic: "If you listen carefully you can hear the plan of salvation in every program." But that is the point: If one has to "listen carefully" to hear that a sermon is Bible based, it probably is not so perceived by most people.

Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16). Can we dare to be ashamed? Dare we to be ashamed to preach that gospel right out of God's Book? Are we embarrassed to read and quote Scripture? Are we uncomfortable with giving book, chapter and verse references?

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

Genesis and the New Testament

by Johnny Melton

The Book of Genesis is not only the introduction to the Pentateuch, and thereby, an introduction to the entire Old Testament, but it also serves to introduce the whole Bible. Perhaps it is not saying too much to affirm that Genesis is the key to the Bible.

Genesis provides the background necessary for an understanding of the origin of the nation of Israel. Against the modern scholars who want to read Genesis only in light of Exodus, Terence E. Fretheim has recently argued that "it is imperative to begin reading Exodus, indeed the entire Old Testament, with Genesis as the point of departure" ("The Reclamation of Creation," **Interpretation**, 45 [October, 1991], p. 355).

While the Old Testament is a record of God's dealing with Israel, it is important to understand that God was "effectively engaged in the lives of individuals and peoples long before Israel came into being" (Fretheim). Yet, unless one understands the origin of Israel, one reads the remainder of the Old Testament engulfed in a fog.

Unless one understands the origin of Israel, and Israel's relationship to Abraham, and the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants, then one cannot understand the work of Jesus described in the New Testament. For example, Paul argued in Galatians 3 that believers are descendants of Abraham (v. 7). Further, he argued that the gospel was declared to Abraham in advance, and he quoted Genesis 12:3, "All nations will be blessed through you" (v. 8). The promise to Abraham was exegeted in Galatians 3:16-18. Paul made two points: first, the Law did not set aside the covenant, the blessings were granted on the basis of promise and not law, "God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise" (v. 18). Second, the promise of blessing was made to Abraham and his seed (singular), not seeds (plural). Paul argued that the reference to seed meant "one person, who is Christ" (v. 16). Without a knowledge of Genesis one

could not understand Paul's reasoning. In the next chapter of the same epistle, Paul made a point regarding the old covenant and the new covenant by building an allegory on the story of Hagar and Sarah. The point of the allegory is lost if one does not know about the relationship of Sarah and Hagar recorded in Genesis.

The foregoing illustrates how important an understanding of Genesis is to an understanding of the New Testament. There are other examples that could be cited to illustrate this point. Consider the following examples.

Paul's explanation of the doctrine of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 involves a reference to the first Adam and the last Adam. Without Genesis one would not understand the reference to Adam.

Paul explained the necessity of women praying and prophesying with their heads covered by an appeal to the creation story in Genesis 2. "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:8,9). Paul refused to allow women to "teach or to have authority over a man . . ." (1 Tim. 2:12). His position was founded on principles derived from the stories of creation (Genesis 1,2), and the fall (Genesis 3). "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim. 2:13,14). These are practical issues in the work and worship of the church that are informed by Genesis.

Peter used Noah's deliverance from the flood to illustrate the connection of baptism to salvation from sin. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being

built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

Peter also used the flood story in his second epistle to challenge the scoffers who denied that there would be a “day of the Lord” in which the worlds would be destroyed. “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:3-7). Peter’s use of the flood to illustrate two different doctrines demonstrates

that Scripture is rich with meaning; but these points are lost if one does not have a knowledge of Genesis.

James illustrated the difference between living faith and dead faith with the story of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice. “You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (James 2:20-24). Again, one should be impressed with the range of applications for the stories of Genesis.

Preaching and teaching the great doctrines of the New Testament in a theologically sound manner cannot be accomplished without resorting to Genesis.

Salvation Is By

by Ed Carruth

Many of us are like the Pharisees, we are still asking which is the most important requirement. See Matthew 22:36-38.

1. Salvation is by love, John 3:16, John 13:34-35.
2. Salvation is by grace, Ephesians 2:8.
3. Salvation is by truth, John 8:32.
4. Salvation is by the gospel, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
5. Salvation is by faith, Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24.
6. Salvation is by repentance, Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30.
7. Salvation is by confession, Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37.
8. Salvation is by baptism, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Peter 3:21.
9. Salvation is by obedience, Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 6:16.
10. Salvation is by water, John 3:3-7; Acts 10:47.

11. Salvation is by the word, 1 Peter 1:22-23.

12. Salvation is by works, James 2:17-24.

When we sinned, and all have if they have reached the age of accountability (Rom. 3:23), our sins separated us from God. We were without God and without hope. God in His mercy and by His grace provided a way in which we could come back into a right relationship with Him. He allowed His only Son to take our place on the cross. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus died to

PULPIT OPENING

The Pine Valley Church in Wilmington, NC is now accepting resumes for a pulpit vacancy beginning in August 1992. Interested individuals should send resumes to: Elders, 3601 South College Road, Wilmington, NC 28403.

satisfy the requirement that sin must be removed.

While Jesus was here on the earth He pointed out a number of things that were required by those who would be His disciples. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Not many people were willing to follow Him then, and not many people are willing to follow Him now. The idea of obedience has been changed by men to the idea of acceptance. The words of the writer of Hebrews still say, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

Peter says, "For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God: [which is the church, 1 Tim. 3:15] and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17-18). Paul says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Surely one would realize from a study of the above Scriptures that there is no hope for anyone who would refuse to obey the gospel. And so the question comes up, how does one obey the gospel? And what are we talking about when we are talking about the gospel? Will you accept Paul's answer to these questions? "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4). That is the good news (gospel), Jesus

has overcome the power of death. Again allow Paul to explain how you obey it. "What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:1-5). "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18).

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith brings about a change of heart.

"I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repentance brings about a change in behavior. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Baptism changes the relationship. It puts one into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). When one is baptized for the remission of his sins, he becomes a part of the family of God (Gal. 3:26-27).

You may have a good automobile, but you and I know you can't drive it to town if you don't have gasoline in the tank. You would be very foolish to think you could drive it very far if you didn't have water in the radiator, fluid in the transmission, oil in the crank case, and air in the tires. Even with a full tank of gasoline, you don't go anywhere without the other requirements.

Going to heaven requires more than faith only. "But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22).

[812 Brookdale Dr., Greer, SC 29651.]

Serving God on the College Campus

by Cliff Mann

One concern many Christian parents have as they get ready to send their son or daughter off to college is his or her faithfulness to Christ. It is certainly a time of change and transition for both parents and child. This time of "leaving" home and being on one's own can be particularly difficult if the person is attending a larger state university in another city or state. In an effort to provide spiritual nourishment for Christian students, and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the lost young people on our university campuses throughout the country, many congregations have a full-time staff minister to work, especially and directly, with college students. This is especially true in the Carolinas and in Virginia. In almost all the cities with a major university there is a congregation of the Lord's people with a campus minister and a desire to reach out to college students. I would like, with the permission of and on behalf of my colleagues, to explain what we have going on in our area in terms of campus ministry; and what parents and friends can do to help keep our young people faithful to the Lord beyond high school.

The campus ministers in North Carolina have, what I think is, a very special and unique relationship. And, from talking with campus ministers from across the country, it is one of the few working relationships and/or support networks of its kind. Almost once a month, the campus ministers from the following universities: Western Carolina, Appalachian State, North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina State, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke, East Carolina, North Carolina at Wilmington, and Virginia Tech, meet for a day in a relatively centralized location. This year the main focus of most of our meetings has been to plan the 1992 Campus Ministries Seminar to be held in Raleigh, NC on August 5-8. However, we also meet to plan joint Fall and Spring retreats, and to simply discuss our

various struggles and successes in our respective ministries. We also gather in January for a campus ministers family retreat at one of our church buildings or student centers. This past January we met in Blacksburg, Virginia on the campus of Virginia Tech. We try to hold this retreat on a different campus each time to give us the opportunity to visit places we may not have been before, and also to see the church and area where each of us serves the Lord.

One of the amazing aspects of the nature of God and the church is unity in diversity. This is a blessing this group of campus ministers has been able to enjoy as well. Each of us has our own unique personality, style of ministry, and particular talents. We have not tried to change each other into some particular type of minister, but have come to love each other as we are because of the bond we have in Christ. Because of our differences, we have been able to learn a great deal from each other, to work together, to share theological and practical ideas, to challenge each other's thinking, and, then, to return to our own congregations and campuses with a greater love for God, for each other, and, especially, for the lost.

I thank God for the men I meet with on a regular basis! I work with one of the most loving, supportive congregations and elderships in the country; yet, I honestly do not think I could have survived these early years in the campus ministry without the constant

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love, encouragement, and dedication of my fellow campus ministers and their families in this state and area.

The main reason for us, as campus ministers, meeting together at all is to encourage and to support each other in our efforts to minister to Christian young people from churches all over this state, country, and even the world who are attending a local college or university. However, we cannot serve and encourage those Christian young people on our respective campuses if we do not know they are there. This is where the dedication and commitment of the student's families and local congregations to their young people's Christian growth becomes vitally important. I am thankful that many parents are actively involved in great youth programs for teenagers, and I am thankful that many congregations realize the importance of training young people to serve in the Lord's church. However, for some reason, when it comes time to send those same young people to college in another city, many parents often never take time to inquire about, to contact, or much less to visit the congregation in that city which their child is likely to attend, or that may have a campus ministry to serve them the four or more years they are in school. If you, as a parent, or as a member of a local congregation, know of students presently attending or planning to attend any college, but especially those in this state and area, please contact and visit the local congregation in that city which may have such a campus ministry. We make every effort we can to contact and to show love to your children. We let them know of the activities and worship opportunities we have

available, but it is still up to the individual to make the decision to come and to get involved.

The following congregations are the ones I am aware of that have a specific ministry to reach out to college students in their city (if there are others, please let me and other congregations know, so that we may all work together in keeping our Christian young people faithful to the Lord and reaching others that may be seeking a relationship with Him): Clemson Church of Christ, Clemson, SC (Clemson University); Charlotte Ave. Church of Christ, Rock Hill, SC (Winthrop College); Sylva Church of Christ, Sylva, NC (Western Carolina University); Boone Church of Christ, Boone, NC (Appalachian State University); Friendly Ave. Church of Christ, Greensboro, NC (UNC-Greensboro, NC A & T State University, Guilford College); Brooks Ave. Church of Christ, Raleigh, NC (NC State University, St. Augustine College, Meredith College); Cole Mill Road Church of Christ, Durham, NC (UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University); Greenville Church of Christ, Greenville, NC (East Carolina State University); Pine Valley Church of Christ, Wilmington, NC (UNC-Wilmington); Wilkesboro Church of Christ, Wilkesboro, NC (Wilkesboro Community College); Blacksburg Church of Christ, Blacksburg, VA (Virginia Tech); Rugby Ave. Church of Christ, Charlottesville, VA (University of Virginia).

May God bless us all as we continue to serve in His kingdom with love and unity of purpose and spirit.

[Cliff Mann may be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.]

Denial

by Paul R. Mobley

Denial is a small, but, an important word and activity in everyone's life. Its effects can be helpful or harmful depending on when, where, and how it is used.

In America, denial is opposed to a widespread idea that every pleasure and material object is acceptable and deserved. Yet, neither parents, government, employers, friends, nor God has promised us a "rose

garden." Stirred well into that philosophy is the further idea that whatever one thinks or does is good and should be accepted, or at least excused, by society; and that God will also find it acceptable. Strengthening these ideas is the behavior of giving up personal control to commercials, television projected desires and ideas, to peers and to the fads of society. In other words, denial be-

comes obsolete and foreign.

It is true that human nature does not like to think of denial, for it seems to represent only deprivation of things and ideas which may seem good for us, especially those that superficially appear good but are in fact harmful. But the practice of denial is not so simple, for there is: denial that takes away something a person must have to live; a refusal of ideas and things that would make it better for us without them; a subtle repression of our own potential; denial that causes us to search, test by standards, and select only the best for us; and a denial of the truth which voids all genuine benefits for ourselves.

When we fail to give to a beggar, or provide for a needy person, we deny that person and his immediate needs. The thought controlling such action is that we have provided for ourselves, so all others can, and should do the same. The idea is good when applied to self, but can we judge others (Matt. 7:1-2) without indicting ourselves should we find ourselves in the same position someday? Shouldn't we practice brotherly love (Matt. 25:35-46) and by so doing avoid denying God His part, and His honor in these activities, thereby drawing people to God? But, like the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22) we hold on to the wealth God has given us, jealous of it, and thinking that if we give it, it is gone forever and we may need it. But doesn't that kind of thinking forget 2 Corinthians 8:15; 9:6-8, that the giver for God will always have to give and have for his own needs.

Our thinking about contributions to church work is often similar and unlike giving as we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). We forget the widow and her mites (Luke 21:1-4) who gave the last cent she had, trusting in God. But then we forget, and even seem to disbelieve, the comfort God offers freely (Matt. 6:24-34) to all Christians who trust in Him and support themselves and God's work with His help. There is a tendency to deny God's efforts on our behalf and to act separately and independently.

Unfortunately our attitude toward working for God by doing Christ's work of teaching and preaching at every opportunity is

similar. We find every excuse imaginable to avoid it.

Whether we like to think of it or not, we do practice denial in some way everyday and if it were analyzed it would likely prove a strange mixture.

In practicing denial, we often fail to deny ourselves things which are harmful. This ranges from a poor diet to sinister injuries. Paul names things which are deadly and ought to be denied: adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, anger, hatred, strife, heresies, drunkenness, revelings, theft, murmuring, abusers of self, and the like (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Cor. 10:10). These, and others named elsewhere, harm health, diminish social acceptance, produce conflict, and put practitioners in the position of incurring the wrath of Christ (1 Cor. 10:9).

We also deny ourselves things which are good for us, that are in our best interest. How many of us apply fifty, sixty, or more hours a week improving our potential in our jobs? But how many of us exercise the same effort toward achieving our highest potential for Christ? If not, are we not denying ourselves our potential both for ourselves and for Christ? Are we not thereby failing to receive the greater rewards available to us now?

Perhaps the second greatest denial of all is that of denying oneself truth—regardless of the subject. We are willing to accept blindly what others say, and too often the truth is missed as a result. We need to be like the Bereans, readily receiving messages, but searching daily, especially the Scriptures, to determine whether each message is in fact the truth (Acts 17:11). It is only then that burdens will be lifted. It is then that internal and external conflicts will largely disappear, replaced by personal peace and happiness. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"



(John 8:32) and what greater treasure could we share with others than the truth?

Should we deny others the truth? Christians have specific instructions to teach others truth, just as we are to help the needy. Paul said, "Preach [or teach] the word; be instant in season, out of season [at every encounter] reprove, rebuke [contradict and correct falsehood], and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." This means to urge, admonish and warn with patience and persistence (2 Tim. 4:2). Jesus meant the same thing, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The instructions are clear and when we fail, we are denying other people, and God.

The ultimate denial is that of denying

God, Christ, and God's word in part or in whole. It is a fearful thing to deny Christ, for He will deny such people before God (Matt. 10:33; Cf. Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 10:1-2; and Matt. 12:41-42).

Rather, the thoughtful person will grasp the truth holding to it without fear of any man (Matt. 10:28) fearing only God (Eccl. 12:13-14). Like the Beareans we need to search the Scriptures daily concerning all matters, then having learned, follow the truths gained.

[Rt. 2, Box 410, Cynthia, KY 41031-9434. Brother Mobley is the father of Michael Mobley who preaches at Mooresville, NC, and who reviews books for Carolina Christian.]

Echoes From the Past

by Guy N. Woods

Few indeed of those among us who preach the gospel today have just occasion to complain at the churches for inadequate support. Most ministers live, if not in comfort, at least with a sufficiency of this world's goods enabling them to subsist without wanting the necessities of life.

It has not always been so.

Older preachers will recall with poignancy the lean years of the early thirties of this century during those depression days when it was a struggle for churches to meet current obligations much less support, in substantial fashion, the preaching of the gospel. Though those days were difficult ones, most preachers managed to eat; to provide the necessities for their families and to maintain automobiles essential to effective work. Harsh though those years were, the lot of the preachers was easy compared with that of the generation immediately preceding them.

Lest we forget, we ought from time to time to review the trying experiences of those wonderfully dedicated and devoted men of the early years of this century, and to be ever mindful of the painful sacrifices they made to preach the primitively pure gospel to the lost. These worthy men, despite the hard-

ships, difficulties and painful trials under which they labored, preached the word solely from love of the Lord and regard for his cause, usually with little, or no support but who, by such great sacrifice and unremitting effort, laid securely the foundation for our present, proud position, enabling us to enjoy in our day a pure faith and a faultless practice. Such stories are legion; they may be discovered in the lives of most gospel preachers of those earlier years.

A classic example of this will be seen in the experiences of that unique and irrepresible man, J. D. Tant, who sent the following report to the **Gospel Advocate**:

"After being away from home since July 28 (the report was dated December 11), preaching the gospel in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Illinois, I am at home again for only two days, then off for a six-days' debate, and then back to the farm for several months.... Since coming home I have received a kind letter and a ten-dollar check from sister J. W. Shepherd of Detroit, Mich. She states that she mentioned to her Bible class of young girls the fact that I walked six miles in the rain to preach the gospel and was paid fifty cents for the meeting. She says that she and her girls send this as a starter

for a car fund which will enable me to do more preaching. I was forced to think that sister Shepherd is a preacher's wife and knows something of the hardships of a preacher's life. But I could have told her of a church calling me for a ten days' meeting in July of this year. They had promised to meet me at the railroad station, thirty-two miles away. They did not do this, but left it up to me to walk. They also promised to have some songbooks, but failed. But I went and preached the gospel faithfully for twelve days (counting the time consumed in going and coming), baptized one fine young man and five girls, and put all to work; and as the congregation had been in a dormant condition for years, they appreciated my work greatly and paid me two dollars per day above railroad fare, and considered me well paid, as they could hire a man to work all day on the farm for a dollar and a half. They want me for another meeting next year.

"I thank sister Shepherd and her class very kindly, in his name, for the ten dollars, and shall use it to support my family while preaching the gospel. As to the 'car fund' the days of miracles are over. Nothing would suit me better than a good second hand car in good enough condition that I would not have to haul it around behind a wagon all the time. I would ask for a new car, but some of my brethren would want to get out papers and locate me in an insane asylum to wish for so much. I have never been able to own a car. If one-fourth of the many thousands of people I have baptized and the many churches I have started to work would donate to the Lord one-tenth of the money they will spend for pleasure during Christmas, more preachers like myself could afford automobiles in which to reach hundreds more people with the gospel than we can on foot. Also, it would enable my family to drive to Guy, a distance of ten miles, or sixteen miles to Heber Springs, to church, these being the nearest congregations to us, and thus enjoy more Christian association. We have our Lord's day worship in our home.

"But I learned to preach the gospel before the days of automobiles, and in the days of the long ago we all tried to preach to please the Lord and not the people. That kind of preaching does not appeal to men

who are able to help buy cars; and as I am now too old to try to learn a new gospel, that would cause all the other preachers to stop their meetings and come to hear it, I shall continue to preach it straight, and ride to my meetings when I happen to find a brother going my way, and walk when I cannot. I shall strive the harder to preach the Word as Paul charged Timothy, knowing that soon I shall reach my Master's home, and maybe I can fly and not have to drive a car over there."

What marvelous dedication and devotion to the worthy Name does this evidence! **Brother Tant was willing to walk here on earth in order that he might be able to fly in heaven!** Hard of heart indeed must one be to be unmoved by this poignant and moving narrative of unwavering faith and unflagging zeal in the service of the Master. When we are disposed to complain of our lot and to feel that the brethren could do better by us, it would be instructive for us to review the experiences of men who had no homes of their own, no automobiles, no color television sets, no automatic washers and dryers, no telephones, no radios, but whose love for the Lord was such that no difficulty was regarded as sufficiently great to restrain them in the proclamation of the saving message. Because of their determination to preach the gospel at all odds, and by such great sacrifices as was characteristic of those days, they will have greatly increased the population of heaven.

With what disfavor then must the Lord regard that group among us who exhibit contempt for, and show disrespect toward these valiant heroes of the faith? What must be his feeling toward those who scoff at the plan of salvation, who seek fellowship with errorists, and who would, if they could, obliterate any distinction between the church and denominationalism? Never has the need for the plain, unadorned proclamation of the Word been greater. May all those who love the Lord and who believe his Word renew their determination to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

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The Reformation Movement Comes to South Carolina

by Robert Curry

The New Testament Church was established upon the rock-solid foundation of Jesus Christ's sonship to the Father (Matthew 16:1-16,18). Brave and faithful disciples of our Lord carried the message of truth throughout the known world, facing the persecution of the Jews (Acts 4:3-7; 21:32). It was not long before the persistence and success of these Christians caught the eye of Rome (Acts 18:12; 23:24; 25:13; 25:11) and persecution intensified.

Such intolerance came to an end, however, when Constantine, through the Edict of Milan (Mediolanum), declared that Christianity be allowed to exist and flourish. Even though error and digression had occurred before Constantine's edict, the door of heresy was now opened wide and a "universal" (catholic) church was established.

In an effort of reform, men such as Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564) in Switzerland, and John Knox, George Wishart, and Thomas Cartwright in Great Britain sought to fine-tune the existing religious community, but their efforts ran counter to the Roman Catholic mentality. Splinter groups began to form, giving rise to various "denominations" such as Lutheranism, Methodism, and Presbyterianism.

With the settlement of the New World came these denominations and, as they progressed and flourished, the call was heard by others who felt the efforts of reform had not gone far enough. Many began to look back, beyond the centuries of heresy, and see a New Testament Church. One of the colonies, later a state, that heard this plea was South Carolina.

As was the case throughout the Restoration Movement the cause of reform in South Carolina was begun, in part, through the pages of two major publications: the **Christian Baptist** and the **Millennial Harbinger**. Both were the products of Alexander Campbell, a major figure in Restoration history.

Campbell had struggled through Presbyterianism and had emerged a leading voice for true religious reform.

Samuel G. Earle of Evergreen, in the Pendleton district, had come to know of such efforts of true reform through the **Christian Baptist** in or before 1830, later establishing the first congregation of the Restoration in Evergreen in 1831. Upon his death Campbell wrote that Earle had been "the first reader of the **Christian Baptist** in the Carolinas—indeed, in all the South. In South Carolina, as well as Georgia, he introduced our name and writings" (**Millennial Harbinger**, 1848, 175).

Earle had entered the Restoration when a dissatisfied religious community had begun to rethink its doctrine. Someone, in describing this religious rethinking, wrote to the **Christian Baptist**: "I have before me a letter received from a Baptist preacher in Wake county, NC, stating that nine churches of the Raleigh Baptist Association have rent themselves from that Association, in consequence of the annoyance they have met with from missionary schemes and missionary beggars. They call themselves 'Reformed Baptist Churches'.... This is, indeed, making a bold stand...."

Dr. William R. and Gen. James D. Erwin were some of the first to face the inevitable trouble that follows any effort of true reform. These "two distinguished Baptist laymen...were excluded from the Kirkland Baptist Church because they held **Christian Baptist** views." As a result they built a new church building at Antioch in 1833, the second congregation of the Restoration in South Carolina.

As the **Christian Baptist** faded out of the picture in 1830, the **Millennial Harbinger** rose onto the scene and continued for forty years. Its readership included many of the names listed in the **Christian Baptist**. Within its great storehouse of information is the recording of those who stood strong for the cause of the Restoration Movement. An ex-

ample is Samuel Smith of the Anderson District who reported of "the little church" that had been forced to separate themselves from a larger Baptist fellowship due to "the intolerance of Mr. S_____ V_____, who wished them to worship the image he had set up." Mr. S_____ V_____ had accused them of reading and encouraging Campbell's writings, "works dangerous and heretical, calculated to poison and corrupt the minds of readers." Smith concluded his report by saying that "the conduct of this very consistent and zealous propagator of his own-ism towards us, is disapproved by some of the Baptist brethren" (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1832, 140).

The preachers of the South Carolina Restoration Movement are too many for our limited space. One of the more prominent examples was Ephraim A. Smith of Danville, Kentucky, "a colored missionary" (*Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 2, 607). Smith had come to the Barnwell District upon the invitation of Dr. William R. Erwin and worked within the boundaries of some of the more hostile of opposition to the cause. Upon his death the *Harbinger* printed a two and one half page tribute to his work. It in-

cluded: "He was not a popular preacher, in the usual acceptation of the word, yet, he labored much in various states of the Union, but more especially in South Carolina and Georgia, where his memory is dear to a numerous circle of brethren, many of whom were brought into the kingdom of the Lord by his ministry." Campbell added to the tribute by calling Smith, "a brother most highly esteemed and much beloved by me" (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1859, 112-114).

Sadly, many of the congregations who had adopted the doctrines of true reform are now returned to denominational names and methods, while others took up a new, but erring, cause. Questions of religious societies, instrumental music in worship, the Christian's participation in war, the issue of slavery, and so on took its toll on many.

The cause of the Restoration continued and is ongoing today. We face many of the same issues, seeking answers to many of the same questions. I believe much can be learned by those who asked the questions and sought an "ancient order" before us. The cause is still valid, the plea is still clear, and the rewards are still eternal.

[P.O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.]

Problems With Worship

by David Pharr, Editor

Because we are flesh, our failures are many. In considering attitudes and demeanor in worship we realize that even at our best we fall short of the reverence due our heavenly Father. It is with humble awareness of our own shortcomings that we suggest any criticisms of the failures of others (see Gal. 6:1). No doubt some who read this will say I am being judgmental. Still there are some things that need to be said.

The things mentioned here may be symptoms of deeper problems. Worship rituals performed by unregenerated people are an offense to God. The principle that caused the Lord to reject the worship of Israel applies still. "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.... Take away from Me the noise of your songs" (Amos 5:21, 23, NASV). Rituals without godliness, rites without righteousness, never please God.

Sunday Priority

Sunday is the Lord's Day, the day of each week in which worship should be every Christian's priority. This priority is not a mere priority of duty, it should be a priority of the heart. Our anticipation of assembling with other saints, our joy in the fellowship of worship, our satisfaction in learning and being exhorted—these ought to be natural feelings of regenerated hearts. A Christian's attitude

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about the Lord's Day ought to echo the eagerness of the psalmist: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psa. 122:1).

We have been told often that to forsake assembling is sin (Heb. 10:25) and most who read this article will not casually stay away. We preachers have made sure that the members know they are supposed to be present. What we may not have always communicated, however, is that we are supposed to bring our hearts with us! Being present, but wishing to be somewhere else is not worshipping in spirit and in truth. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8).

We are not bound by the rules of the Old Testament Sabbath (Col. 2:14-17). Activities on Sunday are not restricted as they were for the Sabbath. The issue, then, is not whether it is sinful to cut grass on Sunday, to go shopping, to go boating, or to take a trip. Instead the issue is priority. Is our emphasis on the use of Sundays on worship or is it on something else?

Consider this scenario:

"Sunday would be a great day for a picnic at the park."

"It surely would, but you know we will have to go to church first."

"But if we don't get to the park early all the good tables will be taken."

"Here's what we can do. We will have everything ready and get to church at the last minute so the food won't have time to spoil. Then we will leave during the invitation song so we won't be held up speaking to people."

"Great! We can enjoy most of the day at the park and still not feel guilty about missing church.... But what about Bible class?"

"Oh, I don't think it will hurt to miss. Besides, I don't know where the lesson is, since we were too late for class last Sunday."

Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:21).

Reverential Modesty

Modesty in clothing ought to be the rule for every public place, but it would seem to be especially important for worship. God is

not impressed by how well or how poorly one dresses and neither should we be (Jas. 2:2-4). God does, however, observe the heart and the attitudes of the heart are often reflected in how we dress (1 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:9-10). No, I cannot judge the hearts of others, only the Lord can do that. But some questions are in order. Why will a man come to worship with his shirt opened halfway down his chest? Why does a woman choose a miniskirt, or an open backed dress? What spiritual defense can be made for entering the assembly in running shorts? What intent prompts an inordinate show of jewelry and costly apparel? It should be noted that 1 Timothy 2:9-10 is in a context pertaining to public worship. It should also be noted that the principle given there regarding modest apparel is that it should be appropriate for "women professing godliness." The NASV says, "as befits women making a claim to godliness." Certainly a like principle should be applied by men.

Time for Fellowship

It is beautiful to see the glad exchange of greetings as brothers and sisters assemble together for worship. The way many linger afterwards to share joys and sorrows, faith and concerns is equally enriching. This kind of fellowship is an essential part of Christian experience. In our scattered and busy lives there is scarce time for being together. Worship gatherings provide a special opportunity. The feeling of the Psalmist comes to mind: "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psa. 55:14).

There seems to be a sad trend, however, for people to give less and less attention to those who worship with them. The acts of worship may be tolerated as necessary rituals, but let us get in place! get it done! and get gone! Some do not speak to visitors, but actually they don't know they are visitors because they have never taken time to get to know the members. Some, of course, must hurry away because of responsibilities. It appears, though, that for some the urgency is to escape having to spend more time with other Christians than is absolutely necessary.

The Bible says, "Greet one another with

a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16, NASV). It is the kiss part that is an outmoded tradition, the greeting part still applies.

Profitable Preaching

Of what value is a sermon? Some sermons are worth little because they contain little. But what about the majority of messages given by faithful preachers? What do we expect from them? How can they change and help our lives?

We fear that too many have an attitude that preaching is just a necessary exercise, a ritual of the church that really makes little difference. It may be that some feel one must endure a certain amount of preaching to get to heaven, but otherwise it is just something **he** does up there while **we** sit back here. Too seldom does it occur that preaching is something needed for our souls, that the message from God's word is of eternal significance. The closing point of the sermon ought to be the beginning point of a better life.

Some think that the answer to indifference toward preaching is to have less preaching. For some this would involve the substitution of special singing, drama, etc., things thought to be more suited for contemporary society. Some such things are at best faddish and at worst unscriptural. Preaching was an important part of the life of the New Testament church. Denigrating preach-

ing is not the answer to people's indifference toward learning and exhortation. Even profitable activities ought not to replace preaching. The apostles insisted, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6:2).

Some preaching is not profitable, but that is not the problem being considered here. Now we are asking whether our delight is in the law of the Lord (Psa. 1:2). There is something dreadfully wrong when we would rather watch three hours of TV than to meditate thirty minutes on the word of God.

Conclusion

These are some random thoughts which have been stated plainly in the hope of helping. They are not intended to discourage the weak, nor are they said by one who is spiritually superior. The underlying concern is that we recognize that worship is a serious undertaking, never to be trivialized.

Moses was told to remove his shoes because "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). Our assemblies of worship are "holy ground." There we must remove the shoes of secularity and stand with bared hearts before the Lord.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psa. 89:7).

I Am Woman, Let Me Not Speak

by Jone Purvis

There is a growing concern in the church today regarding women assuming leadership roles. Many argue that times have changed and women's roles have changed. This is true. Society today is vastly different in many aspects than ever before. Women's roles in society have changed greatly.

Women are now executives in corporations, lawyers, doctors, small business owners, electricians, and carpenters as well as homemakers. More and more demands are being placed upon women. Along with these demands has come recognition and leadership skills. Although a great many women

choose to have a career, many women must work out of economic necessity. Divorce and promiscuity have resulted in many single parent families of which the majority are headed by single mothers. The days where Mom



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stayed at home and took care of the home and children have all but disappeared. The traditional family is now an endangered species.

This change in the role of women in society has affected how women are perceived by the world. It is unfortunate that this is spilling over into the church of our Lord. Women need guidance today more than ever. For although their role in society has changed, God has not! How thankful we should be that God does not change and His word is absolute (Mal. 3:6a; Jas. 1:17; 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16). We can trust in God; He is still in control.

Satan is at work deceiving women. He is appealing to her pride, "You're an important corporate executive supervising many men at work. Surely God doesn't care if you take a leading role in the church. Why would He give you leadership capabilities if He didn't expect you to use them?" In like manner Satan is deceiving men into agreeing and allowing women's pride to rule over God's law. Satan likes to find our weaknesses and prey upon them (1 Pet. 5:8).

We must remember that God is our creator. Genesis 1:27 tells us He created us male and female. God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows the works for which we are best suited. Whose plan could be better for mankind than that of His creator? In His ultimate wisdom God knew there could be but one head of the body.

He made Jesus the head of the church just as He made men to be the heads of their families (Eph. 5:23). Do we think we know better than God? We need to remember that the ways and thoughts of God are higher than the ways and thoughts of mankind (Isa. 55:8-9).

I am woman. Love me enough to not allow me to usurp the role God has given me. Love me enough to correct my willful spirit. Love me enough to point out how Satan is at work, finding my weakness and using it to pull me away from Christ. Encourage me to use the talents God has given me to His glory. If I have leadership skills, encourage me to use them in the church in appropriate ways. Encourage me to speak at ladies programs, to help in their planning, to teach other women and children. Help me to see the wonderful role God has given women in the church. Help me to see the many ways I can be useful in God's kingdom. Let me do what I can do to God's glory and correct me when I overstep my bounds. Paul, by divine inspiration, said that a woman is forbidden from taking a leading role in the assembly of the saints (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). For the sake of the church and for my soul, I am woman, let me not speak.

[Jones is from Rock Hill, SC, currently living in Knoxville, where her husband William is a student at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.]

The Preacher and Pride, II

by Dennis Conner

Preaching is an indispensable element in the proclamation of the Christian message. From the first century to the present God has seen fit to use preaching as the primary means of making known His saving grace. Preaching is by its very nature, therefore, a ministry of some degree of prominence, and accompanying that prominence is the temptation to pridefulness. The previous article (May, 1992) gave attention to the most common manifestations of pride in the preaching ministry. There is in every preacher a spark of pride that "wishes to

burst into flame," as Eldred Stevens put it.

An effective ministry of the Word and an unchecked pride are mutually exclusive. Is it possible to keep pride in check, and if so, how? In Romans 12:6-8 we find an answer, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with

cheerfulness.” The spark of pride is reduced to a fading ember by the greater glory of God’s graciousness toward us.

In this passage Paul exhorts the Christians in Rome to serve God with their spiritual gifts, focusing on the greater good of the body. Two things should be observed about spiritual gifts in this context before we go any further. First, only one of these gifts may possibly be viewed as miraculous in nature, that being the gift of prophecy. The others are natural abilities. Second, this list is not meant to be exhaustive. The principles of Paul’s instruction here are to be applied to any spiritual ability, including preaching. In other words, this passage speaks directly to our modern situation as well as that of the church in Rome.

Now, with these observations in mind, let’s get back to the problem of pride. In verse 3 Paul addresses the pride problem directly, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think....” A bunch of haughty people in the church would lead to disharmony and strife, so the reminder of the need for balance in one’s self estimate. All are members of the same body, using their various gifts for the common good to the glory of God. There is the tendency, however, for those with the more noticeable gifts and abilities to begin to glory in their gifts. The corrective for this is found in verse 6, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us....” The key phrase is “according to the grace.” No one has the right to boast about his gift, for it is the product

of God’s grace. As Howard Winters observes in his **Commentary on Romans**, “No man made himself or gave to himself what he has...All gifts are by the favor of God and not by man’s own power or doings.” Here Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that they are what they are, and they have what they have, by the grace of God, and so it remains today.

Now, to relate all this to the problem of pride in preaching. First, we recognize that preaching, too, is a gift. Second, we preachers often need to be reminded that we tend to think more highly of our abilities and value more than other folks do. A little sobriety, or balance, would serve us well. Humble pie is not nearly so distasteful as we think! To achieve and maintain that balance we recognize, third, that we are what we are by the grace of God, and it is this truth that is the key to dealing with pride in the preaching ministry. Is a man a good preacher or scholar? Then let him thank God for that, not himself. It is each man’s responsibility to develop his gifts and abilities, but no man is responsible for the presence of the gift itself. It is divinely bestowed, not self-bestowed. If we glory, let us glory in what God has done for us, and not in what we have done with His gift. The bottom line, then, is that you and I have nothing to be prideful about, for we are but one of many equally important members in the body, and God is responsible for the gifts we possess.

So, to keep pride in check, and to be truly useful to the church, keep remembering with Paul, “But by the grace of God I am what I am...” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Situational or Dispositional?

by Paul E. Jarrett

My daughter was talking to me recently about something she had been studying in her freshman sociology class in college. The class had been talking about two ways of interpreting one’s own actions and the actions of others. These two ways were situational and dispositional. Situational refers to viewing actions in terms of circumstances. Dispositional refers to interpreting actions

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in terms of personality, or temperament.

As a general rule most of us are inclined to interpret our own actions as situational and the actions of others in dispositional terms. For example, if I become upset when someone cuts me off in traffic my anger is appropriate to the situation, whereas the one who cut me off is thoughtless, rude and a menacing driver.

This tendency to interpret our own actions in situational terms and the actions of others in terms of their disposition can wreck havoc on our relationships. When we see our conduct in the home as appropriate to the situation and our wife's (or husband, parents, children, siblings, etc.) as dispositional we are inclined to excuse our own faults while pointing the finger of blame at the other family members. This same principle holds true at work, in our neighborhoods, and even in our leisure time activities.

This tendency to view the actions of others in dispositional terms and our own in terms of situational terms also impacts the way we interact with our church family and with outsiders in the religious world. When we sin, or act in ignorance, it is because we were tempted, or lacked opportunity to know better. However, when someone

else sins, or acts in ignorance, it's because they are sinners and/or don't care to know, or to do, better.

I truly believe that the Scriptures call upon Christians to learn to look at others the way we look at ourselves and to treat them accordingly. If we are going to fulfill the Golden Rule to do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matt. 7:12), we are going to have to make this adjustment in the way we view the conduct of others. Our first inclination must be to assume that the misconduct and the ignorance of others is situational, not dispositional.

We must assume that their sin, or their lack of knowledge, is correctable if we will help them to address the situation that produced it. While we will find those whose disposition is to sin and who have no desire to know God's will, this must not be our first assumption. Rather, we must grant them the same consideration we grant ourselves in seeking to minister to them. We must share the attitude of Christ whose first inclination was to see men "as sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36) rather than as "stubborn old goats."

[1824 Tamworth Drive, Charlotte, NC 28210.]

A Book Review

by Michael R. Mobley

Isaiah: God's Prophet of Doom and Deliverance, Wayne Jackson. Quality Publications, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, Texas 79604-1060; 139 pages, paper.

Isaiah's book has long captured the imagination and the heart of many a Bible reader. Unfortunately, many have carried it away into the fantasy of many a falsehood. To redirect the Bible student into the mind of God as Isaiah reveals it, the author divides the book into fourteen manageable and intelligible sections. The student will especially enjoy the way Jackson draws out the vividness of the Messianic sections of Isaiah's book—the suffering servant and the future glory of God's people.

This study discusses many themes in the

Book of Isaiah. Among them are: judgment and mercy, prophecy and salvation, trouble and hope, and vengeance and love. Isaiah teaches us to believe God and trust His sovereignty, majesty, and power. Finally, this study will impress the student with the glorious purpose and nature of the Lord's church. This book is a worthwhile addition to any library for both personal and class study.

How Many Miles to Jesus, Lucille Bechdolt. Quality Publications, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, Texas 79604-1060; 49 pages, paper.

The intended audience for this book are those still looking and those yet to seek truth

and life, hope and faith, in God and Christianity. We all need truth and hope at any stage in our lives and the author believes that Jesus is that truth and hope and life. She encourages all people to seek Him. This retired public school teacher gives us the stepping-stones on our journey to Jesus. She begins with the idea that where we are is set by our freedom of choice to follow Jesus or not. The end of the search comes with faith and a life of obedience to God. This is an enjoyable and encouraging little book.

Building An Effective Leadership Team, J.J. Turner. Quality Publications, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, Texas 79604-1060; 155 pages, paper.

The concept of this very practical study

is effective leadership through teamwork—the teamwork of the congregation. It develops the effectiveness and value of teamwork, that the church is God's team of workers, planners. It also exalts the value and fundamentals of each Christian being the member of a team. The study abounds with Biblical application, sensible insight, and life illustrations. It concludes with an encouragement for each congregation not to surrender its dream and vision to grow. Be bold and work hard for it! Every congregation can serve the Lord and do the work he has given them to do. Do not make excuses but think, plan for, and execute growth.

[Contact Mike Mobley at P. O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.]

Brotherhood News

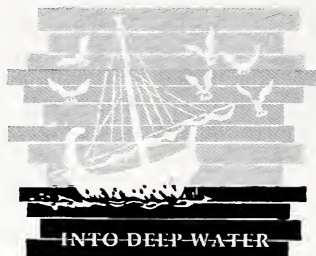
by Dennis Conner

The SEASIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST has been meeting in Kitty Hawk, N.C., since January. They have been meeting in the cafeteria of the Kitty Hawk Elementary School. If you would like more information about this new congregation call (919) 473-3814 or 441-5245. . . . You might want to note in your Carolina Christian Directory that the new phone number for the MOORESVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST, Mooresville, N.C., is (704) 663-7414. . . . MARK CLAYPOOL, who has enjoyed a successful eight year ministry at the PINE VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST in Wilmington, N.C., is leaving to begin work with a church in Norfolk, Va. Consequently, Pine Valley is now in the process of securing a new preacher. Those interested should send a resume to the elders of the church, 3601 S. College Rd., Wilmington, N.C., 28403. . . . DARYL GREEN, youth minister for the PROVIDENCE RD. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Charlotte, N.C., will be leaving in August to enroll in a marriage and family therapy program at Abilene Christian University. . . . The new CAROLINA BIBLE CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER celebrated its grand opening on May 30 with a pig-pickin' and guided tours. Carolina Bible Camp will be conducted July

5-August 1. After that, the facility will be available for rental to churches and groups. . . . The BROOKS AVE. church in Raleigh, N.C., has begun a program for feeding and teaching homeless men. . . . The first person to die in the recent Los Angeles riots was Louis Watson, an 18-year-old who was a member of the Figueroa Church of Christ. . . . The All African Conference, a historical meeting of African church leaders from 16 African nations, met the first two weeks in April at Thuchi River Lodge in Kenya. A total of 206 people attended the conference met to consider the mission of the church. The theme of the conference was "Africans Claiming Africa." Sam Shoemaker, who coordinated the conference, said, "This was the single most significant event of churches of Christ in Africa in my lifetime, and I believe it will have a great impact in the Kingdom for decades to come." Another gathering is scheduled for Nigeria in 1996.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 34, NO. 7, JULY 1992



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**According to the Lord's Word,
The Lord's People,
In the Lord's Church,
Assemble on the Lord's Day,
To commemorate the Lord's Death,
In the Lord's Supper,
Until the Lord's Return.**



editorial

by David Pharr

One of the obvious differences between churches of Christ and most other religious groups is our weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. It is often thought by others to be strange that we would commune every Sunday. As regards the Supper much of our attention is given to showing the Scriptural evidence for the weekly observance. While it is important, of course, that we confirm this practice by the Bible, it is also important that we have a good understanding not only of why we have it when we have it, but also of what it should mean to us and how our hearts and lives should be affected by it.

This issue is dedicated to studies regarding the Lord's Supper. We have called upon several Carolina preachers to provide articles of both doctrinal and devotional significance. I believe readers will be pleased and helped by what these brethren have produced. We are truly grateful for their help.

In addition to articles dealing with specific issues, we have several which we have designated **Table Meditations**. These are intended to suggest thoughts that might be expressed by those presiding at the Table, or perhaps reflected upon privately as we partake. They are not intended so much as exact words that might be used, but rather as suggestive of ideas that might be expressed in various terms.

The frequency of Communion should no more dull our appreciation of it than does the frequency of prayer. Still, there is an ever present need that we keep our thoughts regarding the Lord's Supper clear and fresh. It must not become a mindless routine, a meaningless ritual. It is often said that the song before Communion is "to prepare our minds for the Lord's Supper." This is fine, and we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the song leaders who do this. The men making remarks at the table and those who bless the emblems should also be acutely aware of the importance of their service.

This special issue is sent forth with the prayer that it will help many Christians have

a better understanding and more thoughtful appreciation of the breaking of the bread.

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Significance and Purpose

by David Pharr

In the Old Testament, at the institution of the Passover, Moses told the people that the time would come when their children would ask, "What mean ye by this service?" This would give an opportunity to explain the purpose and significance of the Passover memorial (Ex. 12:26-27). Every generation needed to understand what was being done and what was being remembered.

In the Christian system, our memorial is not the Passover, but the Lord's Supper. Every week we partake of the bread and the cup in remembrance of Christ. Everyone, young and old, should have a clear understanding of the significance of this sacred ceremony. It is the greatest memorial ever known to men. It memorializes the greatest Person. It has been observed as a memorial by more people. No symbol, no monument, has reached human hearts as has this simple, but holy meal.

Jesus' institution of the Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-35. While we may assume that we are familiar with these texts, it would be profitable to reread and reconsider them frequently.

Significant Details

As the Supper was instituted during the time of the Passover, the bread was unleavened bread. It was absolutely forbidden that leavened bread be used in the Passover, so the bread Jesus used was unleavened bread. No specific explanation is given of any significance in the fact that the bread of communion must be unleavened, but leaven was frequently used as a symbol of sin. Though he was not referring directly to the Supper but to holiness of life, it is useful to read Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 5:8. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Jesus blessed the bread, which means that

He gave thanks, as is clear from a comparison of the parallel accounts. "In like manner," to use the words of Luke and Paul, He also gave thanks before passing the cup.

The cup refers to the fruit of the vine. The significance was not in the container, but in the contents. It should be noticed that the Bible text does not use the term "wine," but "fruit of the vine."

"This is my body which is given for you." The bread calls attention to the body of Jesus which was sacrificed for us. As He instituted the Supper, He had not yet been crucified. The wording therefore is prophetic. In the bread we are reminded that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7), that He in "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

The cup is explained by Jesus as "my blood of the new testament," or "the new testament in my blood." The new testament (covenant) which His death would provide would be one which would provide perfect forgiveness of sins (Heb. 8:12; 9:14). Thus He refers to His blood as being "shed for many for the remission of sins."

As already noted, He speaks prophetically when the Supper is first introduced. There is, however, in His words a wonderful certainty. As Burton Coffman in his **Commentary on Mark** observes: "In context, here was a mighty declaration of the Godhead of Jesus. On the morrow, He would die; but on that night He instituted a memorial looking to the centuries afterward, a memorial in which His body and blood were offered in the symbols chosen as the soul's true food."

Jesus said to the disciples, "Drink ye all of it." This meant that each was to drink. The idea of a priest drinking it in place of the rest of the communicants is not found in the Bible.

Symbols

It should be evident that Jesus used the bread and the juice as symbols. The apos-

bles were not eating His literal flesh, nor drinking His literal blood. Jesus used a common figure of speech, which is easily seen and understood in other places. For example, He said, "I am the vine" (John 15:5). He was not literally a vine. His statements about the bread and the cup being His body and blood are no more to be understood literally than we are to understand that He had already been crucified when He spoke of His death in the present tense.

One of the most extreme superstitions in this connection is the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine holds that when the priest blesses the elements they literally turn into the body and blood of Christ. Of course Catholic teachers have had to resort to some fanciful explanations as to why the bread still looks, feels, and tastes like bread, but they nevertheless insist that the actual substance has changed. Lutherans hold a modified view called consubstantiation (or impanation). They do not insist that there is an actual change of substance, but that in some way the flesh of Christ is in or with the bread. These doctrines have no foundation in Scripture and they defy common sense. It is strange indeed that anyone could ever imagine that the apostles supposed that the bread Jesus held in His hand was actually His own body. Notice that Paul calls it "bread" repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 11:26-28. It was bread before it was blessed, and it was bread after it was blessed. The careful reader will observe that when Jesus instituted the Supper He concluded by saying, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). "This fruit of the vine" to which He referred was the fruit of the vine that He had just blessed. He had blessed it, but it was still fruit of the vine. This is exactly what Jesus described it as being. He had blessed it, but its substance had not changed. "Does anyone actually believe that there are men on earth today [such as Catholic priests] who can do what Christ did not do, and who can bless 'the fruit of the vine' in such a manner that it becomes the 'actual blood' of Christ? Could their blessing in any way accomplish what the Lord's failed to accomplish" (Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Matthew*)? It is

sufficient to believe no more than what Jesus intended, that the bread and fruit of the vine are symbols which represent His body and blood.

Not a Sacrament

It is not unusual to hear people referring to the communion service as a sacrament. It is not a sacrament. The notion of sacraments comes from Catholic teaching. Properly understood a sacrament is a rite by which God's grace is bestowed. The sacerdotal system of Catholicism makes the priest essential to the administration of a sacrament, thereby making the people dependent upon the priest. When we partake of the Lord's Supper this is not a rite by which we obtain grace. It is not a sacrament.

It should be emphasized in this connection that the way we receive forgiveness of sins is not by partaking of communion. Occasionally we have encountered the notion that one's sins of the past week are forgiven when he receives the Lord's Supper. Nothing in the Bible teaches this. Forgiveness of sins is by the blood of Jesus, but the forgiving efficacy of His blood is not applied by the communion service.

Closely related is another Catholic error, one that is an open and direct contradiction of the Bible. The Roman Church holds that in what they regard as the sacrament of the mass (their terminology and ideas regarding communion), Jesus Christ is actually sacrificed again each time. Every time the mass is celebrated, Jesus is offered in sacrifice again. Of course the Lord never said anything about the Supper being in any sense a sacrifice. And the very plain declaration of the New Testament is that He offered Himself **once** (Heb. 7:27; 9:25-28).

A Memorial

The Lord instructed: "This do in remembrance of me." For the Christian it is not to make him remember Christ, but because he remembers Christ. While the symbols focus attention on His death, remembering Him involves more than just the Calvary event. We are to remember **Him**.

"The world builds monuments to her great men of the most durable material, and

engraves on them records of their valorous deeds; but, even when not destroyed by man, the relentless mill of time grinds them to powder. But the Lord's Supper, builded of such perishable material, has endured through the centuries and is as fresh today as when builded" (C. R. Nichol, R. L. Whiteside, **Sound Doctrine, Vol. 1**).

The Lord's Day is a memorial to Christ's resurrection; the Lord's Supper gives particular testimony to our faith in His death. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). By these symbols we say to the world that Christ died for our sins. A thoughtful unbeliever might ask not only what does this mean, but also when did this observance begin. It must have begun somewhere, by someone, for some reason. What is the explanation? Only the cross of Christ can explain it.

Brethren Nichol and Whiteside continue: "It is the Lord's monument. Let skeptics account for its existence. It is not enough that they tell us we keep it because of tradition. Let them tell us how it began; let them tell us why the first group ate their supper. If it celebrates a myth let them tell us who fooled the first group into sitting down to the table to celebrate that which never existed."

A Communion

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16)? The word "communion" is from the same word which is translated "fellowship." The Supper emphasizes our oneness with Christ, especially in the realization that our redemption is by the sacrifice He made for us.

The apostle compares how that as the Jews under the law were partakers of the altar as they ate of the sacrifices, so also as we partake of the bread and the cup we are partakers with Christ. He also calls attention to the fact that partaking of the sacrifices offered to idols, which he says are not God but devils, means having fellowship with devils. This then leads to the conclusion

that one who fellowships (communes) with the blood and body of Christ cannot with consistency and approval also fellowship with evil. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10:16-21).

Incidentally, 1 Corinthians 10:16 identifies for us what is meant by the New Testament reference to the breaking of [the] bread, as in Acts 2:42; 20:11. Breaking the bread is a way of describing the Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

It is possible that we do not always participate in the breaking of bread with the reverence that the Supper deserves. I cannot know the hearts of others, but for myself there is an all too frequent temptation to let the mind wander away. When such is the case, the problem is not with the Supper nor with the frequency of weekly observance, the problem is with us. I find no evidence that the Communion is the most important part of worship (though I have often heard well-meaning people so state), but it has absolute importance and deserves the concentration of mind and soul. Probably 1 Corinthians 11:28 applies especially to examining the attitudes brothers and sisters have toward one another, and such examination is very important, but the principle of self examination can be extended to include all of one's heart and life. Let us heed well, therefore, the caution: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

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One Body, One Bread

by Richard McWilliams

The Lord's Supper, despite its extreme simplicity, is full of meaning and implications for the believer far beyond what might be suspected by the casual observer. Not only is there the primary objective of remembering Christ, proclaiming His death, and looking toward His return, but also there are implications for the participants' relationship with each other (1 Cor. 11:23-29). The apostle Paul emphasized this to the Corinthian congregation by bringing out the fact that sharing in Christ, as portrayed in the Lord's Supper, means that His followers are one body. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). This oneness, or unity and harmony, of the body is thus given visible expression as each part of the body partakes in the one bread.

The relationship of the body and the bread is given its foundation by Christ Himself when He taught that He is the life giving bread come down out of heaven as a gift from God (John 6:32-35). This bread gives life to the world, but it must be eaten, that is believed and obeyed, in order to actually give life to anyone (John 6:47-50). Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). While Jesus focused on Himself as the source of life and the sacrifice of His flesh as the purchase price of this life, He made it clear that this blessing is available to people through the message of eternal life when truly believed. Peter expressed it this way, "...thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68b-69).

Coming to the One who is the bread of life also means coming to be part of His one

body. Both Jews and Gentiles are brought near to God by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:11-13). But notice that this brings all mankind into one body (Eph. 2:14-17). Peace has been established because the enmity has been put to death. Therefore, the participation of believers in the one bread must reflect the oneness they actually have. If it does not, then it is no longer an eating the Lord's Supper, but a meal of self-condemnation (1 Cor. 11:20, 27-29).

Such dangers require the greatest attention and effort on our part to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3). Attitudes of humility and gentleness patiently shown in forbearance toward each other are essential to keeping what God has provided in the "seven ones" of Ephesians chapter four. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Our Father reigns over us and dwells in us, promoting unity and harmony.

Each piece of bread broken from the loaf not only says of the participants, "My life comes from Christ," but it also says, "I am part of Him, as is every other brother and sister who participates in Christ and this bread." Therefore, the simple act of partaking of the one bread, when properly understood and accompanied by proper meditation, promotes the unity of the body.

This strengthening of unity happens when we recall that every Christian is part of the body. In fact, Paul wrote that "God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18). But unity is also reinforced when we recognize that just as our body needs nourishment from bread, we each receive our life and strength from Him, not ourselves (Eph. 4:15-16). Accordingly, the Head of the body should be the object of our devotion, the measure of our need, and the stimulus of true humility toward each other. Humility is so crucial to

unity that Paul plainly warned every Christian not to "think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3). The stimulus to sober self evaluation is to focus on Christ and God (1 Cor. 1:31; 3:6-7).

Further, sharing in the one bread should remind us of the blessings of God's love and compassion toward us and the resulting obligation to express that same love and compassion especially toward our fellow Christians (Phil. 2:1-4). Such oneness must be expressed in a harmony of thought, purpose and action that cannot fail to bring glory to God (1 Cor. 1:10; 10:31).

But there is one last threat to the true oneness with Christ and His body that should be reflected upon and diminished by partaking of the one bread. All too often there are competing "loaves" in life that can render our communion of the body of Christ a mere sham. In the first part of the same chapter of 1 Corinthians 10, Paul reminded the church that Israel had participated in a "baptism" and in spiritual food and drink. Yet the death of most of them in the wilderness resulted from participating in sinful attitudes, words, and deeds. Because they got involved in sin, many Israelites never made it to the promised land, despite the bread (manna) God provided from Heaven (1 Cor. 10:1-11). The application is clear: The bread of the Lord's Supper is no magical cure for the one who will not turn from sin. We can only reach the "promised land" of Heaven by true participation in Christ, not by mere ceremony. The suffering of Christ to save us from sin as recalled in the bread, representing His body, and in the cup, representing His blood, should continue to call us from the very things from which He died to save us. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreements hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch

not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1).

Included in this threat of sin, is involvement in false religion (1 Cor. 10:7). False religion removes one from the Head who is the source of life for every part of the body. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2:18-19). Therefore, it is clear that true oneness with Christ and His body cannot be maintained without purity of life and religion.

For this reason, let us flee from every thing that would disrupt our oneness with Christ and with our faithful brothers and sisters. In this way we truly fulfill the intent of that meal which our Savior established in His memory. We partake of one bread and are one body.

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In the Ante-Nicene Writings

by Robert Curry

After the close of the first century A.D. a body of writings emerged, collected into what is now called the **Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to 325 A.D.** They contain the works of men such as Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr (103-165 A.D.), Irenaeus (130-200), Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Tertullian (155-223), Hippolytus (170-236), and Cyprian of Carthage (195-268). Unlike the writings of the apostles, these were uninspired, but are still valuable for study in that they offer an insight into the practices and beliefs of the church immediately after the first century.

One of the topics discussed by these early Christians is that of the Lord's Supper. Contrary to the belief of some, it was done "on the day that is called Sunday" (Justin Martyr, **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 1, 185). As one historian writes, "In answer to the opinion that Constantine changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, it should be observed that the writing of Justin...shows clearly that the early Christians observed the first day of the week as the general practice one hundred and fifty years before Constantine" (Mattox, **External Kingdom**, 119).

One of the strongest points made by these early writers is the utmost respect and reverence held for the Lord's Supper. Since it commemorated the Lord's shedding of blood for the salvation of sinners, the Lord's Supper was given to faithful Christians only. Justin Martyr insisted that "no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true...who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins...and who is so living as Christ enjoined" (Justin Martyr, **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 1, 185). To them the fellowship of the Lord's Supper was more than just by those who had been immersed. This fellowship was to be had by those who believed and lived according to the pattern laid down for the church, insisting that it "behooves you also... as 'a peculiar people, and a holy nation,' to perform all things with harmony

in Christ" (Ignatius, **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 1, 81).

To these Christians the Lord's Supper was a time of thanksgiving (**Teaching of the Twelve Apostles**, vol. 7, 379-80) and the bread and wine were "the representation of the royal body of Christ" (**Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**, Vol. 7, 464). They insisted that as there is only one faith and one kind of preaching, there is also only one Lord's Supper, meaning that as faith and preaching are to be focused only upon Christ, so is the Lord's Supper.

An interesting view taken by some of the early Christians was that the Lord's Supper helped to "safeguard" and "arm" the Christian for his warfare "against the adversary...For how do we teach or provoke them to shed their blood in confession of His name, if we deny to those who are about to enter on the warfare the blood of Christ" (Cyprian, **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 5, 337)? In a time of persecution against Christianity an obvious fear arose for the safety of the faithful. In their minds the fellowship and contact with the blood of Christ, symbolized through the Lord's Supper, offered to them the protection needed to face their adversaries without fear.

Out of this respect for the Lord's Supper there arose an outcry against the use of water instead of wine for the emblem of the Lord's blood. Since wine was used during the communion service, water was added to dilute its strength. A group of Judaizing Christians, the Ebionites, came to use only water, causing intense condemnation of such practices by many of these writers.

Irenaeus lamented their rejection of "the heavenly wine... not receiving God so as to have union with Him" (Irenaeus, **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. 1, 527). The early Christians came to view the mixture of the water and wine, at first merely to dilute its strength, as symbolic of the union of man and Spirit. Clement wrote, "Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man.

And the one, the mixture of wine and water, nourishes to faith; while the other, the Spirit, conducts to immortality" (Clement, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, 242).

Their error in symbolism notwithstanding, this illustrates the profound respect given to the Lord's Supper by these early Christians. They saw the commemoration as more than merely a commandment, but a fellowship in the cause and effect of the church of the New Testament.

It would be misleading to leave the impression that the information within the Ante-Nicene writings is not without error. For example, at first the term "Eucharist" (transliterated from *eucharistao*, "to give thanks" — a word used by Jesus in Matthew 26:27) merely symbolized the thankfulness of their memorial to Christ, but later became an official title for the Lord's Supper.

There is also evidence of a developing hierarchy. The emergence of "bishop" above the "presbyters," a greater elder over the lesser elders, if you will, is revealed in many of the descriptions of their worship services. Ignatius insisted that the Lord's Supper was to be administered only by the bishop or one he designates, while Justin Martyr and Tertullian use the term "president" as the one who presides.

With the ranking of the elders came, also, a ranking of the membership. In the **Constitutions of the Holy Apostles** the bishop is told to partake of the Lord's Supper first, to be followed by the presbyters, deacons and subdeacons, the readers, the singers, and the ascetics. Once these men have partaken, the women are to follow: deaconesses, virgins, and widows. The last in order are the children (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, 490).

Possibly one of the more prominent of changes made as the centuries progressed is the emergence and increase of ritual in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Carefully orchestrated ceremonies became more and more the norm. Deacons, who distributed the Lord's Supper, were to make specific statements, offer special prayers, and follow a pre-designed course of action to properly, in their eyes, observe the Eucharist. All of this was carefully recorded for the learning and practice of the church: "These constitutions concerning this mystical worship, we, the apostles, do ordain for you, the bishops, presbyters, and deacons" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, 491). Of course, these were not apostolic commandments, but the opinions of some who believed themselves ordained to orchestrate the procedures of New Testament worship.

Regardless, however, of the documentation we find on the various changes and innovations of the church after the first century, the Ante-Nicene writings establish quite clearly the practice of the observance of the Lord's Supper in keeping with the pattern given us in the New Testament, and not according to later error.

What we see is a profound respect for the memorial of Christ's body and blood, illustrated in part by the insistence that the memorial be observed, upon the first day of the week, by faithful Christians. There is a sense of the fellowship these Christians cherished in a world that, at the time of these writings, did not welcome such faith.

[Brother Curry preaches for the Duncan Church of Christ, P.O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.]

The Lord's Supper:

Why Every Sunday?

by Mike Winkler

The question is often raised as to how frequently the Lord's Supper should be eaten. This inquiry itself inherently involves the question of Bible authority. Accordingly,

the question could be rendered, "Is there any specific Bible teaching regarding the frequency of eating the Lord's Supper?" It is our objective, in this brief study together,

to determine the Bible's guidelines as to when and how often the Lord's Supper should be eaten.

Question: When should the Lord's Supper be eaten?"

On the night Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, He taught that the supper would be eaten on the first day of the week. Consolidating Jesus' statements in the upper room, we have this affirmation clearly expressed by Him. He said, "And I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." "Truly, I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." "For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.... For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16-18 NASV). It is imperative to notice in these texts the emphasis Christ placed on not eating the supper with his disciples any more "until that day" (Mark 14:25) or "until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18). Accordingly, Jesus very clearly, and yet emphatically, affirms that the day in which the kingdom "shall come" is the day which the Lord's Supper would be eaten again.

Earlier, Jesus very simply, and yet boldly, declares that the kingdom would "come with power" and would do so during the lifetime of some of His disciples (Mark 9:1). Elsewhere, we are taught that the power would come when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostle (Acts 1:6-8). Too, Luke records for us that the coming of the Holy Spirit would take place in the city of Jerusalem (Luke 24:48-49). Accordingly, the divine historian records for us in Acts 2:1-4 that the Holy Spirit came on the apostles in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ. It is important to note that prior to the events recorded in Acts 2, the kingdom was still spoken of as a future event (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9-11; and Acts 1:6). However, on Pentecost in A.D. 33 the kingdom came with power — *via* the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). After this

historical event, the kingdom is always spoken of as being in existence and the disciples as being in it (Col. 1:13). This being the case, the kingdom is no longer considered a future event, but a present possession and blessing (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; and Rom. 1:9).

Question: "What day of the week was Pentecost on?"

Moses instructed in Leviticus 23:15-16 and Numbers 28:16-31 that the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost was to be the next day after seven Sabbaths from the Passover. The next day after any Sabbath would be the first day of the week, or Sunday, because the Sabbath was the seventh day, or the last day of the week (Ex. 20:10). Being the next day after the seventh Sabbath or fifty days after the Passover, Pentecost was on the first day of the week. Therefore, we can conclude unequivocally that Pentecost was on the day now called Sunday, which is "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10).

Question: "Did the disciples eat the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week — Pentecost — to fulfill the Lord's promise in Luke 22:16-18?"

Realizing the kingdom of God came on Pentecost and that it was then in existence, it was now time for Jesus' disciples to partake of the Lord's Supper on "that day." Accordingly, inspiration tells us that after 3,000 people were baptized on the birth date of the church (Acts 2:37-38 and 41), they worshiped God according to the guidelines he had laid out for His kingdom which included partaking of the Lord's Supper. "And they continued stedfastly... in [the, Greek] breaking of [the, Greek] bread..." (Acts 2:42).

Question: "How often did the early church come together to eat or partake of the Lord's Supper and how often should we today eat or partake of the Lord's Supper?"

The Bible plainly tells us that the early church observed the Lord's Supper when they came together (1 Cor. 11:20, 33). Too, we are informed by inspiration that the early church came together on the first day of

every week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). It is important to notice also that in the 1 Corinthians 16 text this practice of coming together every week was not limited to the church in Corinth, but was also instructed to be practiced by the "churches in Galatia." Therefore, we can conclude without reservation that this weekly meeting of the church to partake of the Lord's Supper was not simply a local and unauthorized practice. Elsewhere we are taught that the church in Troas met on the first day of the week, and the objective of this gathering was for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:6-7).

One way of verifying our conclusions concerning the frequency of partaking of the Lord's Supper is to turn to what is called "post New Testament Christian history." If our conclusions today about New Testament practices are accurate, they should and will receive some confirmation from the testimony of church history. Accordingly, we find in the **Didache** (a second-century document) a reference to the church assembling on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper. It reads, "They come together each Lord's Day of the Lord, break bread, and give thanks" (**Didache** 14:1). It is important to notice in this brief text that there is: (1) a weekly assembly; (2) the assembly is on the day called the Lord's Day; and (3) it is characterized by the breaking of bread. Elsewhere, Justin Martyr (a second century martyr) tells us that "on the day called Sunday, there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or rural district...when we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine mixed with water. The president of the brethren in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgiving according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent saying the 'Amen.' A distribution and participation of the elements for which thanks have been given are made to each person.... We all make our assembly in common on the day of the sun, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day" (**Apology** 1, 67).

It is imperative to note that these texts from early Christian literature stress that

Christians observed the first day of the week and that they observed it with an assembly in which they took the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the apostolic practice of taking the Lord's Supper was a weekly communion on the first day of the week; and we are justified and correct in our practice of it.

Objections

Objection No. 1: "Doesn't a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper destroy the solemnity and sacredness of the Supper? It becomes too common place and, therefore, meaningless."

With this line of reasoning, one would also do well to contend that he should pray only quarterly, or sing annually, so as not to lose the solemnity of these sacred items of worship. However, in reality those who pray, sing, and partake of the Lord's Supper weekly receive the most edification possible out of these God-ordained activities that build us up in the most holy faith. Surely, no one can or will contend that the weekly discerning of the Lord's suffering and death will harden his heart! (1 Cor. 11:23-24).

Objection No. 2 — "There is no regular or set time for the observance of the Lord's Supper; for after all, didn't Paul say, 'as often as you eat and drink...' (1 Cor. 11:26)?"

The phrase "as often" was not used to indicate the frequency of observance, but the **manner** of observance. Too, if the phrase "as often" leaves the frequency of partaking the Lord's Supper up to the discretion of man, then once a lifetime would be sufficient. If not, then why not? Today, our responsibility is to observe the totality of the Bible teaching on any given topic. Accordingly, if nothing more had been said about the Lord's Supper, we might have been at liberty to determine the frequency. However, as we study **all** that the Bible has to say concerning the Lord's Supper, we conclude that a weekly observance is commanded and exemplified (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:2).

Objection No. 3 — "The Bible does not literally say to partake 'every first day of the week.'"

This statement, of course, is true. However, as we study the Bible, we quickly realize that the New Testament Christians had a regular meeting which they were exhorted not to forsake, or purposely absent themselves (Heb. 10:25). Too, these regular assemblies were for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11:20). In 1 Corinthians 11, the context clearly indicates that the real purpose of their coming together should have been to eat the Lord's Supper; but Paul (by inspiration) shows that they had perverted that intended purpose.

1 Corinthians 16:2 again teaches that there was a weekly meeting on "the first day of the week." In this specified meeting, they were instructed to make a financial contribution. Accordingly, we conclude that a contribution was collected as well as the eating of the Lord's Supper as part of the first day of the week meetings.

It is helpful to also notice that God required the Jews in the Old Testament to "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). The question quickly comes to mind, "Which Sabbath was the Jew to observe?" Of course, it goes without saying that the faithful Jew understood that he was to observe every Sabbath! In like manner, the Christian is instructed to partake of the

Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. Like the conscientious Jew of the Old Testament, the sincere and conscientious Christian will understand that he is to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

Conclusion

The question of eating the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week involves the question of Bible authority. That is, "Is there a specific Bible teaching identifying the frequency of partaking the Lord's Supper?" In this brief study together, we have learned that there is specific Bible authority concerning the frequency of the Lord's Supper by virtue of:

(1) Background commands — Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18 all teach that we are to observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

(2) Biblical examples of its observance on Pentecost and subsequent first days of the week — Acts 2:41-42, Acts 20:7, and 1 Corinthians 11:20.

As children of God, may each of us strive to conform to what God teaches and expects in our lives and our worship.

[Mike preaches for the St. Andrews Rd. Church of Christ, 425 St. Andrews Road, Columbia, SC 29210.]

Table Meditations:

"Worthy Is the Lamb"

by Paul L. Watson

"And I behold, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain..." (Rev. 5:6).

In this year's Academy Award-winning film, "The Silence of The Lambs," the mad criminal, Hannibal Lector, presses the young FBI agent to tell why she ran away from her foster home in Montana at age ten. She explains how she awoke before dawn one morning to the screaming of spring lambs being slaughtered. She went out and opened their pen for them to escape, but they wouldn't run away. She even tried to pick one up and carry it away, but it was too heavy. "What happened to the lamb?" asks Lector. "He killed it," she says. And, in mocking satis-

faction, Lector asks, "Did you think that your saving one lamb could have made them stop — that you wouldn't ever wake up again to that awful screaming of the lambs?"

That is the cynical conclusion of Hell itself: That might makes right. That violence and brutality rule. That no amount of compassion or love shall ever overcome human perversity.

But God has said otherwise: Love shall triumph over hate. Self-sacrifice shall defeat self-indulgence. The helpless lambs of this world you and I — shall be delivered by the innocent, crucified Lamb of God! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

"This is the Day That the Lord Has Made"

by Mark Swindall

"The resurrection is relevant to the human need for faith and assurance. Though it occurred nineteen centuries ago, its inherent nature of continuing life and its constant applicability to recurring problems make it timeless. The event is fixed in history; the dynamic is potent for eternity" (Tenney, 19).

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation upon which the Christian religion is built. It is just this simple — if Christ was not raised from the dead, Christianity is a hoax! This is Paul's very point in 1 Corinthians 15 — "and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain" (1 Cor. 15:14, NASB). The term vain (**kenos**) means "empty." Again, the apostle says: "and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; (**mataios** — without results) you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor. 15:17-18). And so, our faith stands or falls on whether or not the resurrection of Jesus actually occurred!

There is factual and logical evidence that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead early Sunday morning. First, we have a positive statement as to the time of the resurrection: "Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons" (Mark 16:9). The Phillips translation makes it a little plainer, "When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week." There are two words in this statement which claim our attention.

One is the word "day." Does it include 24 hours, or is it to be taken as the period of light as contrasted with the period of darkness? In John 11:9, Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Jesus said there are twelve hours in the day, meaning the period of light when men do not have to walk in darkness.

Sunday is the Lord's Day, the day of each week in which worship should be every Christian's priority. This priority is not a mere priority of duty, it should be a priority of the heart. Our anticipation of assembling with other saints, our joy in the fellowship of worship, our satisfaction in learning and being exhorted — these ought to be natural feelings of regenerated hearts.

In Mark 9:2, we read that the women came to the tomb "very early on the first day of the week...when the sun was risen." This shows that Mark's statement, "early on the first day of the week," is to be taken to mean about sunrise. If the statement in Mark 16:9, "early on the first day of the week," when used of the resurrection, is to be taken to mean a little after Saturday 6 p.m., we must take the statement of Mark 16:2, "very early on the first day of the week," concerning the time of the coming of the women, to mean Saturday 6 p.m. But we cannot take the statement in Mark 16:2 to mean 6 p.m., because the time is made certain by the phrase "when the sun was risen." If it had been Saturday 6 p.m., this statement would have to be "when the sun was set."

Another reason why we know the women came in the early morning, at the beginning of the day, is the statement of the other evangelists. John says the women came "on the first day of the week...while it was yet dark." The word "yet" is the translation of a Greek word which implies "addition" or "duration" (Vine, 4:245). It is used in such statements as "While we were yet weak" (Rom. 5:6); and "While we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8). "While it was yet dark" means that it had been dark for some time and was even yet dark. Such a statement could not be made with reference to a time near 6 p.m. Saturday.

Luke says the women came "on the first

day of the week, at early dawn" (Luke 24:1). The words "early dawn" are interesting. The **Expositor's Greek New Testament** says, "at deep dawn — very early" (Nicoll, 1:643). Thayer says "at early dawn, Luke 24:1." He also says the Greek word used here is derived from another word which means "the time of deep sleep" (93). This proves conclusively that the women came to the tomb about sunup Sunday morning. But since Mark uses the same expression, "early on the first day of the week," to point out the time of both the coming of the women and the resurrection of Jesus, we must conclude that Jesus rose from the grave "deep in the morning — in the first morning twilight" on the first day of the week, Sunday.

The following are some of the occurrences of the first day, which distinguish it above all other days of the week and make it specially appropriate to call it the Lord's day: (1) Christ arose on Sunday, the first day (Mark 16:9). (2) Christ appeared to His disciples repeatedly on this day (Mark 16:9-14; Luke 24:13-36, etc.). (3) The resurrection was first declared on Sunday, the first day of the week (Luke 24:34). (4) The day of Pentecost occurred on Sunday, the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9). (5) Remission of sins in the name of Christ was first preached on Sunday, the first day of the week (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 2:38). (6) The regular meeting of the disciples was on Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Jesus commanded the Lord's Supper be observed in memory of Him. The Lord's Supper is a memorial which preaches Christ's death, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper is a witness of the greatest sacrifice of all time. Whenever it is observed it will present to the minds of Christians in a forceful way that Jesus died for them. The same verse reminds us that the Lord's Supper is a kind of memorandum: the Lord is coming again! Thus, 1 Corinthians 11:26 points backward to His death and forward to His coming. We need the Lord's Supper to remind us that we must be ready when Jesus returns.

A good question to ask concerning the Lord's Supper is: "Why observe the Lord's

death annually, quarterly or monthly, but observe his resurrection weekly? Almost everyone agrees that the first day of the week is observed because it is the day the Lord came forth from the tomb. Now will the annual, semiannual, quarterly and monthly observers of the Lord's death — for the Lord's Supper shows his death — tell us why they observe the Lord's resurrection every week but observe his death only annually, semi-annually, quarterly or monthly?

One final point to consider is, the church at Corinth ate the Lord's Supper when they assembled, which was the first day of the week. To the church at Corinth, which had corrupted the Lord's Supper through hunger and drunkenness, Paul said, "Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own Supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Cor. 11:20-21). It is evident that it was their practice to attempt to eat the Lord's Supper when they assembled. Now if there was any regularity about their meeting together, there was also regularity about their eating the Lord's Supper. Here is the regularity about their meeting together: "On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). "Does this mean every Sunday, every first day of every week?" If not, why do you pass the collection plates every Sunday, every first day of the week? Absolutely it means every Sunday, every first day of the week. So, in Corinth it was their practice to eat the Lord's Supper when they met together (1 Cor. 11:20). It was their practice to meet together upon the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2). Therefore, it was their practice to eat the Lord's Supper upon the first day of every week.

In summary, the resurrection proved that the cross of Christ was no failure. It was a triumph for ruined humanity. Jesus was not martyred at Calvary.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan

and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:22-24).

What God did at the cross was preplanned; the resurrection was preplanned and so was the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:15-20). Truly, Sunday, the first day of the week "is the day that the Lord has made" (Psalm 118:24).

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[Mark preaches for the Essex Village Church of Christ, 2721 Cordwainer Court, Charleston, SC 29414.]

Table Meditations:

Let Us Not Betray Him

by Jim Denison

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread" (1 Cor. 11:23, NASV). The Lord's Supper was given in the shadow of betrayal. Betrayal comes not from one's enemies but from one's friends. Our Lord's betrayal came from a disciple. It came from someone who reclined at table with Him; for whom Jesus dipped the morsel giving it to him. It was a betrayal hidden so deeply and so cleverly in the recesses of Judas' heart that the other disciples had no clue it was there. But Jesus knew. Still the betrayer was permitted to remain in the room while Jesus broke the bread and gave the cup. The betrayer ate of the bread and he drank of the cup. And we think to ourselves, "What a travesty!"

The Scripture says, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27). Today we have gathered as friends and disciples of Christ. Today we are privileged to recline at and to partake of His table. As we prepare to eat the bread and drink the cup, let us examine ourselves to see if there is any hint of betrayal in our hearts. Jesus knows our hearts. So do we. Today let the eating and drinking of this memorial feast serve to remind us of Jesus' great sacrifice for our sakes and may it serve also as a clear statement of our unwavering loyalty to our Redeemer.

[P.O. Box 5667, Hilton Head Island, SC 19938.]

Table Meditations:

In Retrospect and Prospect

by C. W. Fetters

When we come to the Lord's Table, to partake of the Lord's Supper, it seems appropriate to make pertinent comments relative to the purpose of doing so. Since com-

munion is a beautiful memorial, this indicates that it points to memory; thus, it is a mind function. Therefore, those who lead the worshipers could enhance the observance

of the communion by leading the worshipers' minds with appropriate remarks. For example:

As we observe this memorial it should cause us to remember the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:24-25); thus, causing the mind to look back in **retrospect**.

As we observe this memorial it causes the mind to look forward with anticipation and hope (1 Cor. 11:26); thus, looking forward in **prospect**.

As we observe the memorial it causes us to reflect upon the present and the spiritual vigor that can be gained from this memorial (1 Cor. 11:29-30).

Since the Lord's Supper is a memorial,

in "remembrance" of Christ, it should cause the observer to take a fresh new look at his commitment to the very one being memorialized. We cannot seriously dwell on the agony of death suffered by our Lord, and the reason for the Lord instituted Supper without resolving anew to live for him.

This memorial should cause us to remember that Jesus loved us and died for us!

Those leading the communion service should provoke the minds of the worshipers to focus on Christ and his death, and to put away all worldly thoughts that hinder such remembrance.

[Route 1, Box 2042, Lexington, NC 27292.]

Table Meditations:

Until He Comes

by Mike Mays

Several years ago **Reader's Digest** included a story about a dog in a small Montana town that faithfully met his master at the railway station when he arrived from work. Without fail the little dog would be at the station to walk the two miles home with his master. Then one day, while at work, the man died of a heart attack.

That night the little dog met the train as usual only to find that his master wasn't on it. After a long wait the dog returned home. But the next night at the scheduled time he was at the station, and the next night, and the next. The weeks turned into months and the months into years. For nine years through hot summers and the blizzards of winter the loyal dog met the evening train, looking for the return of his master. The little dog's faithfulness was living proof that his dead master had lived.

In the same way loyal Christians meet

every Sunday, week after week, month after month, to remember the Christ of the cross, the cross of Christ, the empty tomb, and the love that made it all possible (Acts 2:42; 20:7). These weekly times to remember the Lord's death for our sins through our participation in the Lord's Supper cause us to renew our commitment to Jesus. Because of our love for Jesus and our gratitude for our blood-bought salvation, we resolve to live for Him who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:14,15). By our observance of the Lord's Supper and by our life, we are living proof that Jesus died, that He rose from the grave, and that He lives to intercede for us as our Savior at the right hand of God. Because of our faithfulness to our Master, we will continue to proclaim His death by meeting weekly around the Lord's Table until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

[Rt. 3, Box 432-A, Asheboro, NC.]

Table Meditation:

In Remembrance, As Requested

by Bob MacDonald

At the communion table, we remember Jesus with **sorrow** because He went to the

cross for us. We remember Him with sorrow because He suffered pain, humiliation,

abandonment and mortal death.

Yet, we remember more, or should, because Jesus asked us to remember **Him**, not just His death. "Do this in remembrance of me," He said. We place these words on the table. So, after our remembrance with sorrow, we remember Him with **adoration** because of His love for us — a love so great that He allowed vicious men to seize Him and place Him on the cross. Yet, His entire action was because of His love for us. He knew what His action would accomplish. Our hearts are lifted — we smile! — with adoration for His love.

In addition to sorrow and adoration, we also remember Jesus, or should, with **gratitude** because His willing action accomplished forgiveness of our sins. We know that we could never achieve forgiveness of our sins. Yet, Jesus did so. We remember Him with thankful hearts. We do not frown when our remembrance is with gratitude. We

smile, or at least we should.

One more remembrance emotion should be (must be) fulfilled at the communion table. In John 16:20b, Jesus said, "...Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy." Why would Jesus say our sorrow shall be turned to joy? He said it because He knew that His willingly going to the cross would result in His mortal death and resurrection and ascension back to God's throne. In **joy**, we know that He stands ready to save all of us who come to God through Him — our Savior.

Yes, we remember Jesus with more than sorrow. We progress at the table through sorrow, adoration, gratitude, and joy. We enjoy a full remembrance. We remember Jesus in the way He requested. Our "sorrow shall be turned to joy." We are in remembrance of **Him!**

[606 Carolina Village Rd. #31, Hendersonville, NC 28792-2882.]

Table Meditations:

Community In Communion

by Jim Denison

The apostle Paul wrote, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16,17, NASV).

This passage tells us that the Lord's Supper serves to remind us of two important truths. First, it reminds us of the shed blood of Christ and of His body broken on our behalf. We share in the blood of Christ that brings great blessing to our lives. We share in the body of Christ that was bruised for our iniquities. The bread and the fruit of the vine speak of those blessed realities with

which every believer wishes to commune.

Secondly, the communion serves to remind us that we are a special community of people. Yes, what we eat represents Christ but it also represents the body of Christ — the church. As we partake we are also expressing our unity, our togetherness with one another made possible by Christ's sacrifice of Himself.

As we prepare our minds to eat and drink, let us remember what the Lord's Supper represents — the unity we enjoy with Christ and the unity we have with each other because of Him.

[P.O. Box 5667, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938.]

Table Meditations:

Minds On the Cross

by Dennis A. Lively

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burden-

some" (1 John 5:3 NIV). Never is this more true than when we follow Jesus' commands

concerning the Lord's Supper. Simple, but yet misunderstood, are the parts that make up this communion with our God.

When we think about the bread and the cup, we must remember Christ our Savior went to the cross so we might have eternal salvation. In Mark's account of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, we find where our Savior was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (14:34). Jesus had to be anxious about the manner in which He was to die. The very thought of being nailed to the cross must have brought a greater stress on Jesus than we could ever imagine. Yet He realized the will of God in that by giving His life, mankind would have a chance at redemption. Indeed, we are not worthy

of this great sacrifice He made for us.

When we eat the bread from the Lord's supper, we need to remember His words: "This is my body" (Mark 14:22). When we drink the cup, the fruit of the vine, Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). When we do this "in remembrance" (Luke 22:19) of Jesus, we are celebrating His death, burial and resurrection until He comes again.

As we observe the Lord's Supper, our minds should be centered on the cross. We should realize as Christians we are manifesting our love for Him.

[10735 Spruce Knob Lane, Charlotte, NC 28214.]

Table Meditations:

"So We Never Forget"

by David Thompson

Symbols are an integral part of our daily lives. Our communities abound with flags, business logos and the like. Each one points to a truth, idea or reality beyond itself. The real power of our national symbols (i.e., the flag, pledge of allegiance, and national anthem) to inspire us, rests in the principles of freedom of conscience, human equality, and individual expression - precepts which serve as the cornerstone of our republic.

Religion is not without its own symbols. The Passover ceremony commemorated Israel's historical redemption from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:1-14). The meal itself served as an object lesson of sorts designed to recall their deliverance from captivity. It was observed by all Jews and became part of their spiritual legacy.

The Lord's Supper is uniquely Christian. The context of worship adds meaning and significance of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. In fact, apart from the death and resurrection of Christ the elements have lit-

tle substantive value (Matt. 26:26-29). It is when we gather around the table we catch a glimpse of Christ: His life, His work, His death, and His resurrection. This momentary view gives direction to our lives. The Lord's Supper is more than a mere ceremony. It is a gift from God to inspire hope, enrich our faith, and engender solidarity among fellow Christians (1 Cor. 11:26-33).

Several years ago Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of England, attended a wreath laying ceremony at one of the infamous Nazi concentration camps. In her remarks, she pointed to the necessity of preserving such memorials as a witness to past crimes so that, in her words; "We never, never forget...."

The Lord's Supper is an enduring memorial to the life and work of Christ so that: "We never, never forget..." what He has done for us.

[P.O. Box 654, Aiken, SC 29801.]

Brotherhood News

by Dennis Conner

The sisters of the CHARLOTTE AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Rock Hill, S.C., will host their sixth annual Ladies Day on August 8. The theme is "Count Your Many Blessings" and the speakers will be Jone Purvis and Karen Pharr, both of Knoxville, Tenn. . . . STANLEY CREWS, who formerly preached for the Northview Church of Christ in Statesville, N.C., for about eleven years, is returning to the Carolinas. Brother Crews will be the new preacher for the church in Williamston, S.C. He comes to Williamston from Donalsonville, Georgia. . . . The GREER CHURCH OF CHRIST is planning to host an annual Palmetto Biblical Studies Program. The first program will be conducted October 25-29, 1992. For more information you may call (803) 877-8951. . . . On August 9 the MARION CHURCH OF CHRIST in Marion, N.C., will be celebrating its 50th anniversary.

A full day of activities are planned for the celebration and all former members and preachers are invited to share the special day. The preacher is Will Winchester. If you want to know more, call (704) 652-3605. . . . The ST. ANDREWS ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST in Columbia, S.C., dedicated its new auditorium last June 28. The dedication also marked the 25th anniversary of the church's move to its St. Andrews Rd. location. The preacher for this growing church is Mike Winkler. . . . The PROVIDENCE RD. church in Charlotte, N.C. will celebrate Homecoming '92 on October 11. . . . The Mid Atlantic Deaf Workshop will be hosted by the FAIRFAX CHURCH OF CHRIST, Fairfax, VA, October 9-11 . . . The WALKUP AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Monroe, N.C., will conduct a gospel meeting September 13-16. The guest preacher will be Jim Pharr.

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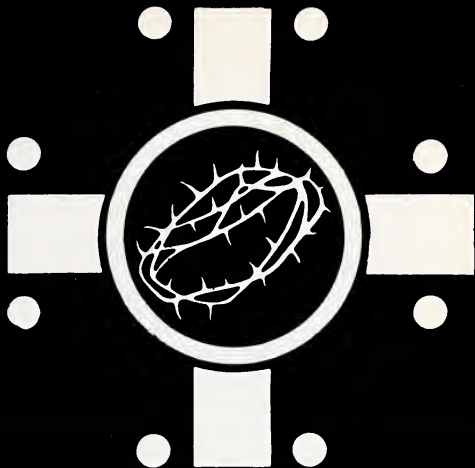
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St. Andrews Rd. Church of Christ
Columbia, SC
(See Page 10)



editorial

By David Pharr

That the human shortcomings of the church need to be criticized is certain. We always need to improve, and constructive criticism is necessary and helpful.

What is not helpful, however, are those critics who misrepresent and exaggerate. Whether intentional or not, this seems to be the case with those who charge that we have ignored the life and teaching of Jesus in our preaching, that we never teach on grace, and that we have emphasized doctrine to the exclusion of spirituality. Some instances of such failures may be found, but these are unfair indictments so far as the majority of the brotherhood is concerned.

There are some very vocal critics among us today.

Some critics are to the extreme right, seeing liberalism and digression everywhere. These may have a solid doctrinal foundation, but their methods come across as uncharitable and abusive. It is tragic when, in the name of upholding the truth, the statements of others are taken out of context and misrepresented. The cause of Christ is never served by slander, unfairness, and innuendo. To compound the tragedy, misrepresentations are often picked up by others and passed on to yet others. The longer I live, the more I realize the necessity of seeking to examine original sources before I believe the charges I hear against any brethren. The fact that someone is in error on certain points does not make his reputation fair game on every other point that can be imagined. Fairness and charity are essentials of Christian character, even in controversy.

Other critics of the church have an obvious agenda for change. They want to cut away the doctrinal foundations which make the church distinctive (and scriptural). These are often very articulate. They speak "smooth things" and with "good words and fair speeches" confuse those who are not well grounded in the truth.

One of the astonishing phenomena as regards current issues is that some seem to

think the critics should never be criticized! Said critics speak against truths we believe, they imply that we have been a mean and sectarian church, they ridicule much of what we have done and stood for, they speak these things over the country and write books and journals which undermine the church; but when someone dares to reply to them he is branded as negative and unloving. Apparently the left-leaning critics are too scholarly, too holy, too revered to ever be corrected by common folk. It would be much more pleasant to have a brotherhood that is free of controversy (Psa. 133:1). There comes a time, however, when like Jeremiah we are

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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"weary with forbearing." How long must we sit by quietly when books which advocate compromise with error are being circulated among us? When preachers assert that instrumental music is just a matter of opinion, should not their opinion be refuted? When magazines have staff writers who openly espouse error, should not the brethren be warned?

Doubtless my remarks have already irritated some, but let's be fair. If it is all right to use, and promote these people and publications, why is it not all right to call attention to their errors? I am perplexed by the kind of logic that says it's unfair to reply to criticism. It seems mighty one-sided to me that critics are supposed to be protected from criticism. They may work to undermine the truth, but when someone dares to answer, he must be (in the minds of some) unloving, ill-informed, and generally a bad sport!

Winds of Change

We have heard and read of the need for change in the church. A new magazine is being published with the stated purpose of changing the church. We are told that there are welcomed "fresh breezes" blowing among us.

Somebody got up the idea that we have to change to attract the "baby boomers," and so "baby boomers" has become the hackneyed justification for the bandwagon of revisionism. Demographically the baby boomers are the large population in their 30's and 40's. It is assumed that most of these have the same mind set and that almost nothing in the church as it is now suits them. We have no problem with adjusting things which are in the realm of expediency in order to meet the legitimate spiritual needs of baby boomers or any other part of the population. What needs to be recognized, however, is that all baby boomers don't want the same things, and that many, if not most, will never be attracted to the Lord's church, no matter what we change.

Many in the baby boomer population favor abortion, have loose attitudes toward sex and marriage, use alcohol and other drugs, etc. Many have tastes in music and other entertainment which favor that which is

sensual. How can we change the church to attract such people? Are we to create a "supermarket" church, an "omni church," that will satisfy everybody's whims? Yes, there is legitimacy in changing methodology, but what ever happened to the idea that people ought to change their own mind sets, attitudes, and practices to please God? Like Paul (1 Cor. 9:19-22) we need to be as flexible as the law of Christ allows; but this old fogey — I'm past fifty — believes that baby boomers need to be shown that they either change their attitudes, wants, and practices to be conformed to God's word or else they have no place in the church of God (Rom. 12:2).

But we are told that the changes are only to be in cultural things. This sounds innocuous enough, but what does it mean? What does it include? Does it mean changing the time we assemble on Sunday? Does it mean changing the communion from the beginning of the worship to the end? Does it mean not wearing a coat and tie? Does it mean using more visual aids? If these are the kinds of changes being urged, it is much ado about nothing. There may be a few who would hold such matters sacred, but surely such is not what is keeping the baby boomers out of the church.

The reality is, however, that the changes some envision are in things they are not ready openly to admit. A few, however, have been bold enough to let their views be known. They would like to remove the barrier against instrumental music. They want to give women a more public role in the assembly. They want to have more fellowship with denominations. They want a "new hermeneutic" which no longer respects the essentiality of command, precedent, and inference as the bases for scriptural authority. They want to give wholesale credence to denominational baptism. They are calling for worship which is more "spiritual" — their euphemism for having things which are more entertaining and emotional.

Now, it would certainly be unfair to charge that all who are calling for change are in favor of all of the changes just cited. Each of the things named, however, can be readily documented. Larry James and Bill Sweatmon, for example, tried to defend their opinion that instrumental music is only a matter

of opinion, in a forum at Freed-Hardeman University. Jim Woodroof, in his book, **The Church in Transition**, favors minimizing the importance of doctrinal distinctions. He classifies our opposition to instrumental music as an "external" issue comparable to the Pharisees' opposition to eating with unwashed hands. **Image** magazine has urged that preachers from the Christian church be used on our college lectureships.

Of course, some will consider me unkind to mention these things. But what have I charged beyond what the ones named have already claimed for themselves? If a man takes a public position, why is it unkind for me to tell others what that position is? If other brethren want to endorse these men, why should they object to their brethren knowing the facts?

The cliché about "fresh breezes" which is being bantered about may sound refreshing to some, but in reality what is happening is that the church is being "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

Woodroof's Book

James Woodroof is a personable brother and I am not questioning his sincerity. There is much concern, however, among brethren over his book, **The Church in Transition**. We agree with brother Woodroof's desire for bridging differences between divided brethren. We also agree with the concern for having a greater impact for unity in the religious world in general. The book goes beyond the Scriptures, however, in its willingness to compromise on vital doctrinal points.

In recent months I have been asked about Woodroof and his book in a number of places in the Carolinas and elsewhere. Brethren are disturbed. We have no desire to malign brother Woodroof, but his book criticizes things we hold dear, things we believe to be established in Scriptures. It is no more than fair to criticize the critic! His concept of the church in transition goes beyond adjusting to mere cultural expediencies. It favors overlooking divisive errors for the sake of peace.

Wineskins

A new journal, **Wineskins**, was introduced in May. The co-editors are Mike Cope and Rubel Shelly. It is a slick publication with an attractive format. Its purpose statement says it will promote change in the church. It also says in the purpose statement that "The gospel never changes." What is puzzling, however, is why men like Larry James are on the staff, and why the very first issue features an article by Max Lucado. As noted above, James is openly in favor of abandoning our opposition to instrumental music. Max Lucado, both in his statements and practices, favors fellowship with denominations. The **Wineskins'** editors say they are focusing on "true church renewal." But how do men such as James and Lucado who have repudiated the truth on vital issues fit into the plan for true renewal? The editors state that they plan to use writers with whom they may differ, even writers who are not of "our own heritage." Will they reply to articles which are scripturally objectionable, we wonder? Will they indicate that writers (such as Larry James) are not to be trusted on certain significant issues? These are fair questions in view of the dangerous winds blowing in the brotherhood today.

The Core Curriculum

In the first issue of **Wineskins** there is an excellent article on "The Core Curriculum," which sets forth the cross of Christ as the core of the message to be preached. No student of the Scriptures should fail to see that the heart of the gospel message is "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Because this is the core, the same apostle wrote to the Corinthians: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This must be the purpose of every gospel preacher.

While the aforementioned article did not indicate such, we have been hearing of a contention from some sources which says that we should just emphasize the "core" teaching of the gospel and not press other doctrinal matters. The point seems to be that

there are just a few essentials and that we ought to ignore differences on other issues. Again, I want to make it clear that this was not stated in the **Wineskins'** article, it is something we are hearing from other sources.

What is missed by the "core"-only contingency is that it was the same apostle Paul that contended regarding all the other issues in the Corinthian epistles. That the cross was the "core" of his preaching did not in the least mitigate against his emphasizing the importance of the other things he discussed. The lesson ought to be obvious. Preaching the cross, making it central to the message, does not mean neglecting any truth in the doctrine of Christ (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 John 9).

Women's Role

A leading issue for some who are advocating change is how to involve women more in public leadership activities of worship. We are hearing of people "restudying the role of women." It is always good to restudy any subject, but I fear what some mean by this is that they have always known what the Bible says about it, but now they want to find a way to get around it.

Here is where culture and concern for the baby boomers plays a big part. We are told that bright young professional women are being driven away by our practice (biblical practice, that is) of male only leadership. It is suggested that these wonderful ladies will go to denominations where they can have the same positions as men if we don't change. Isn't it ironic that even as this argument is being made, the denominations that are "ordaining" women are the ones that are losing members the fastest? Isn't it tragic that some would decide the practice of the church by what people want, rather than by what the Bible teaches?

The argument that we need to change on the issue of women's role because of cultural changes hardly deserves the dignity of being called an argument. What will be next? Will some progressive brother warn us that we are going to lose many of our bright young singles if we keep on refusing to make them elders? Is someone going to be concerned that we might drive away the "pro-choice"

crowd if we teach against abortion? Maybe someone will urge us to give some token leadership roles to some homosexuals, so we can attract the gays.

Having so far been unable to find scriptural justification for letting women preach, a few congregations have become so anxious to appease that they have tossed some tokens to the ladies. For example, they let them pass the communion trays. Question: If not being allowed to preach is sexual discrimination, then is not letting women pass the trays nothing more than tokenism? It will not take the bright baby boomer professional women long to figure this out.

Down in Texas (and maybe elsewhere) a congregation uses four song leaders at the same time — two men to lead the male parts and two women to lead the female parts. These things are actually only thinly disguised stepping stones toward getting women into public leadership roles.

But do we not realize that society sees male only leadership as discriminatory? Of course, we realize it. But has it not occurred to our progressive brethren that society, especially the feminists, would consider that even Jesus discriminated against women when He appointed only male apostles? We can't appease people who reject the Bible by attempting to change the Bible.

It is my candid prediction that some among us will not stop until they have worked out a fancy interpretation which will provide for women to do everything in the church that men do. Some are already laboring hard to bring forth and we probably will have a new theological baby very soon. Of course many will marvel at its scholarly cooing and will rejoice that now we can make another change in the church so that the world will more readily accept us.



Poll Theology

A group broke away from a congregation in middle Tennessee. They wanted a more liberal approach to religion. A while back they passed out a survey form to the members for the purpose of determining the direction of the congregation. There is nothing wrong with a survey to help determine directions in regard to issues of expediency. There is nothing wrong with a survey to determine where people stand. What is wrong is the idea that the doctrinal stances of a church should be decided by questionnaires. Such ignores the doctrine of Christ (see 2 John 9) and establishes "poll theology" in its place.

The questions reveal the kinds of changes many are seeking: Is it necessary to be a baptized believer to participate in the worship? Should there be fellowship with denominations? Should women have a more

active role in public worship? Should instrumental music be used in worship — all the time? sometime? never? Why must people be asked for their opinions on such matters? Does not the Bible settle such issues?

This kind of survey reflects the serious digression that is threatening our brotherhood. We have always, since the time of the apostles, had controversies among us. In the past most of these were concerned with what does the Lord teach, what does He authorize? A generation is among us now that gives far less credence to Bible authority. Mike Cope writes in the first issue of *Wineskins* that "true church renewal . . . means a fresh awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit." Here is something that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith . . ." (1 Tim. 4:1).

How Can You Speak Where the Bible Speaks Unless You Know What the Bible Says?

By Ernest Taylor

The Barna Research Group, Ltd., provides quality state-of-the-art marketing research on the present and possible future state of Christianity. From the book, *What Americans Believe* by George Barna, some of the research findings are:

The religious behavior and thinking of Americans continues to develop along lines that demonstrate confusion of purpose and perspective.

Religion is important to religious people in America, but it is not central.

Church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, worship, involvement are becoming more optional than important.

Traditional Christian beliefs are eroding.

One out of four Christians does not have a strong desire to be part of a church.

Most Americans have no idea as to just what is in the pages of Scripture.

For most Christians, worship is a series of activities instead of a state of the heart.

The book contains many statistics. Just these few show a modern day trend that should be of concern to all Christians.

How do these few statistics compare with the membership of the church you attend?

How do these statistics compare with your own Bible knowledge and commitment?

Are you concerned?

An Exciting Gospel Meeting

By David Pharr, Editor

I am privileged to preach in several gospel meetings each year. Recently I was in a week long series with the Highland Acres church in Statesville, North Carolina. These observations about this meeting do not mean that meetings at other places and with preachers other than myself are not equally exciting. But the Highland Acres meeting was exciting and shows that such efforts can do much good.

There were four restorations and three baptisms. Those baptized were adults. I mention this, not because the baptism of our own youth is not important, but because the obedience of these adults indicated a significant outreach into the community. There were other visitors at every service, and it is probable that more conversions will follow. It was the consensus of the congregation that the meeting was a significant event in the congregation's history.

What were some of the factors that made it an exciting and successful gospel meeting?

First, the church was prepared for it. The good elders had led the congregation in getting ready for a significant event. They had, of course, done the usual things by way of advertising, but the more meaningful preparation was seen in the fact that the members anticipated that it would be a good week. They were confident that preaching would be done which would uphold the truth and change lives. They did not wait until the week was half gone to invite others to come. They expected that the truth would be preached, and they worked in advance to get their neighbors to come.

The singing was powerful. No one could have felt that the singing was simply a necessary ritual. The song leaders were enthusiastic and the congregation put their hearts and voices into every song. The Lord expects singing to teach and to admonish (Col. 3:16). Dull singing is as harmful as dull preaching. Enthusiastic singing and enthusiastic preaching complement each other.

Singing ought to stir the soul. Singing is an important factor in evangelism.

The sermons were basic and biblical. That I was the speaker is not the point. Instead the point is that the sermons provided a loving, but firm and distinctive message. A majority of the audience had Bibles in hand. They expected to hear the Scriptures cited and they followed the texts in their own Bibles.

The congregation wanted preaching that was distinctive. They spoke of the need for "old fashioned" messages, the kind that readily show the difference between truth and error. We determined to be kind in the way we presented the truth, but denominational folk who attended knew they were hearing something different.

This meeting demonstrated the partnership between the pulpit and personal evangelism. Home studies with non-members were being conducted before the meeting began. The meeting was a special opportunity to get them into the assembly. They had already been taught much, but the pulpit is often more effective than a private study in motivating people to obey.

The Bible shows us the value of both public preaching and private teaching. It is a serious mistake to neglect either. One-on-one teaching is the best way to address personal concerns, to answer questions, and for Christians to show their love for the lost. But the pulpit, rightly used, is a remarkably powerful force in evangelism. One only needs to read Acts 2 to see that this is the case.

Visitors who came to the meeting, especially those with whom there had already been studies, saw that the preaching was based on the Book. Several opportunities were arranged for me to talk privately with some of these. They seemed to already have developed confidence in me because of the preaching they had heard and they were ready to listen to what I said to them in their homes. In each of the cases of the three baptized, we met in late afternoon before

night services to reinforce what had been said in the sermons and to answer questions. Each one then determined to be baptized that night.

In one home a lady had been so disturbed by what she had seen and heard at the church of Christ that she set up a meeting between me and her "pastor." Apparently she had in mind that he would have the answers. He didn't! It was a cordial discussion, but as we repeatedly cited book, chapter, and verse, his arguments failed and he gave up trying. It was obvious that the lady was disappointed in her "pastor." We pray she will be disturbed enough to come to the truth.

The local preacher at Highland Acres is Barry Robinson. Though working a full-time secular job and only part-time with the church, he was cooperative and willing, giving his full support to the effort. He saw the value of letting the visiting preacher be used. Some plant and some water, but it is God that gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6) Credit needs to be given to some of the sisters in the church that were so active in teaching in homes and in inviting people to attend. One

lady had study appointments set up for almost every day of the meeting. Both men and women happily called my attention to the fact that they had been able to bring visitors.

Hospitality was an important factor. There was enthusiastic visiting before and after each service. Few seemed in a hurry to leave. On Sunday a noon meal was prepared for everyone. This is always a good way to strengthen ties with members and to develop relationships with visitors. I was impressed with how completely this was organized and how wonderfully hospitable everyone was.

There was an intangible factor in the meeting that was probably the most significant thing contributing to its success. Members showed by their enthusiasm that religion is their life and that the gospel meeting was the most urgent thing going on throughout the week. I did not get the impression that the evening service was just a necessary interruption in their usual routine. Instead we had the feeling that they were fully committed to the effort. Attendance was not a mere necessity, it was a joyful privilege.

Save Yourselves

By Bill Heinselman

When everything has been said and done, when all the sermons have been preached, all the lectures have been delivered, and all the articles and books have been written, the fact will still remain that man does, indeed, have a responsibility in his own salvation! This is not to say that a man can earn, merit, or deserve salvation. In more than fifty years of listening to gospel preaching (forty-four of them preaching to the best of my ability) I have never heard one gospel preacher declare that if one obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ he shall have earned his salvation. Yet, much that is being said and written on this subject today is either (1) striking out at the idea that gospel preachers believe that we merit our salvation by obeying the gospel, or, (2) that mankind cannot

do "one whit" to affect his salvation — in other words — there is nothing we can do to be saved.

If what is being written in many publications and stated in several lectures on the matter of salvation by grace, is to condemn the idea that we earn our salvation by obeying certain commands it is much "ado about nothing" for no one in the church that I know about believes this! And if there is someone, he is so isolated that it would hardly be worth all that is being said and written about it.

On the other hand, if what is being said is to the effect that obedience is not a factor in our salvation, then, we certainly disagree!

It certainly is true that man cannot save himself. Solomon wrote: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end

thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Jeremiah said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Jesus Christ was speaking of salvation when He said, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). Paul wrote to the Ephesians that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9), and in Titus he wrote, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Tit. 3:5). We have all quoted Christ's statement in Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

On the other hand, the Bible most clearly sets forth man's responsibility in his own salvation. All of our sermons on man's responsibility have contained scriptures such as: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). We have rightly quoted Peter's sermon on Pentecost. When he was asked what to do, he replied: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Some of us have even asked the rhetorical question of our audience, "If there were nothing for man to do — why didn't Peter say so?"

Did not Peter suggest man's responsibility when, in verse 40, he said: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation"? Paul

told the Romans that they had been made "free from sin" when they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17-18). The Hebrew writer declared that Christ became the author of eternal salvation to "all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

Brethren, are we going to do as others have done and pit one set of Scriptures against another? Are we so weak and immature that we have need that one teach us again the first principles of the gospel of Christ? Are we going to deal in semantics when the lost world about needs the clear and unmistakable sounds of gospel preaching?

If any man thinks we can merit salvation he is wrong! (See Titus 3:5.) If any man thinks that we do not in any way affect our salvation by what we do — he is wrong! (See Hebrews 5:8-9.) If any man is trying to muddy the water — shame on him!

[117 Heidinger Dr., Cary, NC 27511]

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St. Andrews Road Church of Christ

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

1992 brings two milestones for the St. Andrews Road Church of Christ. It marks the twenty-fifth anniversary at this location; and on June 28 we celebrated the dedication of a new 600-seat auditorium.

The congregation is under the leadership of four elders: Tom Bailey, Ed Brown, Dudley Oliver and R. W. "Doc" Senn. Our minister, Mike Winkler from Fort Worth, Texas, began his work with the congregation in September, 1990. He is married to the former Pam Jordan of Fort Worth; and they have three children: Kristina, Zachry and Kaci.

The St. Andrews Road congregation has enjoyed a tradition of growth since its inception nearly sixty years ago. The early 1930's saw the first gospel meeting in Columbia. As the number of Christians began to grow, members first met on Main Street and shortly thereafter on Hampton Street. By March of 1935, the congregation had purchased its first building — a house on Bull Street.

In 1939, the congregation, with its own hands, built a building on Pope Street. By 1958, we had again outgrown our facility and in 1959 moved into a newly constructed building on Park Street.

In the mid-1960's, as Columbia's population began to shift toward the suburbs, the congregation realized the need to relocate. Accordingly, they sold the Park Street property and in October of 1967 occupied the current building at 425 St. Andrews Road.

By early 1990, due to the rapid growth of our congregation, the need of expanding the current facility became evident. Beginning on Sunday, February 3, 1991, the elders found it necessary to have two morning worship services to accommodate the large Sunday morning attendances.

Average Attendance	Average Contribution
1989-248	1989-\$3,507.00
1990-288	1990-\$3,891.00
1991-305	1991-\$4,181.00
1992-323	1992-\$4,596.00

Carolina Christian



We are indebted to our elders for their leadership and vision in prayerfully making this major decision. Our members accepted the challenge and successfully pooled their resources in a sacrificial effort to raise half of the funds needed for the construction of our new auditorium. It was imperative that neither our present work nor our commitment to our mission congregations be impeded, nor that our members be burdened by a large mortgage.

On Sunday, June 2, 1991, we were privileged to witness the ground breaking for our new auditorium. After a year, on June 28, 1992, we had a large number come share with us the dedication of our new facility. We are truly blessed with a beautiful, spacious auditorium in which our church family can all assemble together in comfort to worship God. Our old auditorium is to be remodeled and converted to a large fellowship hall.

The new auditorium, adjacent to our present facility (providing an additional 10,000 square feet) has a seating capacity of 600 with a spacious wrap-around lobby to accommodate our friendly congregation, who have a wonderful propensity for remaining long after services are over, enjoying sweet fellowship with one another and our numerous visitors.

Our earnest prayer is that this facility — the largest church of Christ facility in the Midlands of South Carolina — will serve as a tool we can use to be an even brighter light and a stronger influence on our community and Columbia. We consider this milestone a great opportunity to reach out with renewed zeal and effort to do everything we can to evangelize our community and our city. We pray it won't be long until all 600 seats are filled at every service.

We treasure the efforts of the ministers and the Christian men and women who over the last sixty years have worked so hard and given of themselves in every way for the advancement of the Lord's church in the Columbia area and our congregation in particular. Too, we are so appreciative of our present membership who continue to give so generously of their time, efforts and finances to further the gospel of Christ in Columbia and South Carolina.

We look forward to this new phase of our history. God has truly blessed us. To Him be the glory!

Change, Transition, and Baby Boomers

By David R. Powell

Lately the words "change," "transition," and "baby boomers" are being echoed among our great brotherhood. We hear the urgent appeal, "We need to change!" Yet no one is telling us what it is we are to change. Are those advocating change wanting us to change the time of our services on Sunday? Do they want to change the color of the carpet in the auditorium? What exactly are we to change? When listening and reading the material of those who would have us to change, it becomes apparent that what many really want us to change is doctrine.

The church in many localities is experiencing little numerical growth. Some are asking, "What are we doing wrong?" In their frustration many are willing to compromise doctrine for the numbers. The history of our brotherhood reveals that we have been, at time, slow to change in the area of expediency. Now, unfortunately, the mistake is being made of going to the opposite extreme by changing where we should not doctrinally change.

Leading this arrogant mentality which compels the church to change is the book **The Church in Transition**. It becomes obvious to the careful reader that James S. Woodroof, the author of the book, makes light of those who desire to remain committed to truth. To see where Woodroof is going with his book, one would do well to read the poem in the back of the book and then begin reading from the front. The poem which is quoted by Woodroof was written by a Calvinist named John Carroll Brown. Brown's poem, "A Dream of Judgment," is full of rank error.

Those who have studied hermeneutics, the art and science of interpreting the Scriptures, have learned to respect the silence of the Scriptures. God has taught us to respect biblical silence (Lev. 10:1, 2; Heb. 7:14). The church is correct when it upholds the

restoration principle: "Where the Bible speaks we speak, and where the Bible is silent we are silent." When the Lord instituted the Supper He instructed that "bread" and "fruit of the vine" be used as the emblems. Because the Lord has specified "bread" and "fruit of the vine" all other elements are forbidden. When the Lord specified "singing" as the melody to be made in worship, we understand that all other means of melodies are forbidden. Brown's poem, which Woodroof has included in his book, completely denies that we are to respect the silence of the Scriptures. Brown writes:

Why put you words into My mouth
In places where I did not bid?
For silence neither gives consent
Nor yet does silence e'er forbid (page

187).

The poem goes on to insult faithful brethren who uphold the New Testament pattern of Christianity by calling them "foolish." The poem reads:

"Oh foolish child!" Said Christ to me,
Do you not understand nor see
That what was done by church or man
Serves not as pattern for My plan (page

191)?

In teaching God's plan of salvation we have gone to the book of Acts and studied the examples of conversions. Now we are told that we are "foolish" for doing so. As New Testament Christians we observe the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week because of the example the early church set for us (Acts 20:7), now we are called "foolish" for doing such.

Along with the words "change" and "transition," is the phrase "baby boomers." Baby boomers are those between the ages of 37 and 46. The mentality of our changing brethren is this: "The church is not rapidly growing, therefore we are doing something wrong, therefore we must change." A delib-

erate appeal is being made by some of our congregations to "change" so they will be appealing to the "baby boomers." Baby boomers are the children of those who survived World War II and the Depression. They were raised, unlike their parents, in prosperity and are therefore used to getting their own way. They even expect the church to make concessions for them. In an article which appeared in the April 12, 1992 *Salisbury Post*, Linda Castrone wrote of the boomers:

"They will feel the urge to align them-

selves with the same institutions they turned their backs on in the '60's — the church, the government, the community.

But when they return, they'll redefine the institutions to their own liking."

In the midst of the echoes of "change," "transition," and an appeal to reach the "baby boomers," we as members of the Lord's church must not compromise with the times. The church of our Lord cannot change to meet the terms of man, man must repent/change to meet the terms of God.

[P. O. Box 321, Mocksville, NC 27028.]

The Yearning Principle

By Paul R. Mobley

Thomas Edison developed products that used electricity, Steinmetz gave us alternating current, and Einstein widened our understanding of physics. Each of these men went beyond typical efforts, often enduring ridicule. Why? Such people believe in their subject, and long to excel in knowledge, and the useful applications from their efforts.

Simply put, they had a yearning. Webster defines yearning as "a desire, a longing" that often involves love for it. The long hours these men put in, and their endurance of ridicule, surely characterizes them as having a yearning.

This is a characteristic common to all of us. We get the idea that we need two cars, soon it becomes a longing, and rather quickly there will be two cars in our driveway. We had a yearning that was soon converted to fact. It is seen in the desire for the latest clothes fashions, for a new piece of furniture, or a new house. We convert the desire to fact. If necessary, we borrow the money needed to buy them, spend long hours shopping — we do whatever we need to do to satisfy our longing.

Similar thinking and actions come into play when we see a new job we want. We may concentrate on the quality of performance in our present job, we may study long hours preparing for the new job, and put in

extra hours getting ready for the job that has captured our longing. Then, when we get the new job, we work like mules to perfect our performance. We have a yearning.

Yearning is a common facet of our lives, and it is common for us to convert such yearnings into fact. Once we decide to have something, and begin longing for it, few things will prevent us from having satisfaction. We will apply effort, study, and money, with hardly a second thought. We do it!

However, desires, longings, yearnings, need to be examined as to their useful benefits, then direction and control must be applied. For some, desires and longings can be harmful, wasteful; for others, they can be truly beneficial. Sorting out the difference is necessary.

But what happens when it comes to our religious practices. Oh, we believe in the Bible, Christ and His church. We also believe in and desire to spend eternity in heaven. Those benefits are not problems for us. But often it happens that we feel that we cannot teach others, or lead in public prayer, or speak to others of God's will, or even to participate in class discussions.

Surely most are not like this, but it can happen to all of us to some degree in one area or another. Why does it occur? One reason may be that we do not see immediate results.

We do not see a person converted that we have worked with, or we fail to link our trouble-free life to Jesus and His care. Maybe we forget the promise Jesus made to help us (Matt. 6:24-34) and we may forget that we need to prepare and to practice at every opportunity — just as we would for a new job. Our yearning may have slipped a little.

We do need to study (Acts 17:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:16) to prepare ourselves in knowledge. And we need to put that knowledge into practice (Jas. 1:22-23), becoming doers as well as learners. It is no different from preparing for a secular job. One must learn and do, and keep doing, for only then will there come improvement and

satisfaction in doing. Let yearning have its way — do not stifle that first love — let it draw and pull you into accomplishing what it longs for.

Jesus, Paul, Peter, the other apostles, Timothy, Luke, and many Christians of the first century had a yearning to please God and they allowed it to work its wonders.

We all experience yearning. It is a good principle, especially when directed toward the best goals, and allowed to urge us, pull us, and drive us into gaining those goals. And there is no better yearning than to serve Christ.

[Rt. 3, Box 410, Cynthiana, KY 41031]

The Difference Between Hospitality and Entertaining

By Paul E. Jarrett

It is not uncommon to hear people bemoan the lack of hospitality exhibited by Christians. If you have ever asked for volunteers to provide lodging for a visiting minister, or attempted to provide lodging for a large group of outside visitors, you know this is a problem. It is obvious that even when it comes to members visiting in one another's home that hospitality is at a premium in the church.

Several things may contribute to this dearth of hospitality. The church has definitely been impacted by the influence of changes in society. We have gone from a "front-porch" society to a "fenced-in-backyard-patio" society. Where our grandparents sat on the front porch and spoke to those passing by, even inviting them to "stop and visit a spell," we sit on our enclosed patios walled off from next door neighbors, whose names we don't even know.

The thought of practicing true hospitality which literally refers to "love of strangers" is a frightening thought to a people who are afraid to get involved. Where our forefathers lived in a rural environment which

left them longing for association with neighbors who were sometimes miles away, we live in condos, apartments, and housing developments where the press of people leaves us longing for our own space. We feel threatened by the press of humanity to the point that we crave isolation as strongly as our forefathers craved companionship.

Adding to the changes in the make-up of society which have made us leery of extending hospitality has been a change in terms. Even when it comes to those whom we know, we are not inclined to be hospitable because hospitality has given way to "entertaining." Where hospitality consists of a spontaneous sharing of our blessings with others, entertaining is far more complex.

In order to entertain we must schedule an appointment to do so. This can be extremely difficult when you look at our hectic over-scheduled lifestyles. When an appointment is made, entertaining is a time-consuming activity. It requires cleaning the house, planning a menu, setting the table, and deciding what kind of games, or other activities, to be engaged in.

When you consider how involved entertaining can become, it is little wonder that people are hesitant to extend an invitation to someone to visit in their homes. In fact, this also explains why people are reluctant to accept invitations because if they do, they will, no doubt, be expected to reciprocate. With that in mind it's just easier not to get involved in "entertaining."

I would like to suggest that we quit

entertaining one another. Instead, let's make a determined commitment to practice hospitality. Let's learn to open our homes and our hearts to each other without fretting about how the house looks, or if the meal is perfect, or if we have planned activities. If our houses are good enough for us and our food is good enough for us, why can't we practice hospitality and just "visit a spell"?

[1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210]

I Am a Haitian

By Tim Mastenbrook

Like ninety percent of my countrymen, I am illiterate, so a missionary doctor is writing this for me. I am 35 years old, but he said my body was 60. My life expectancy is 49 years, one of the lowest in the world.

Like most Haitians, I live on less than \$90 a year. Unemployment here is 74%. When and if I work, I get \$3 a day. Like three-fourths of my countrymen, I live in what the World Bank refers to as "absolute poverty" — unable to afford life's most basic needs, like food, water, and shelter. I live in a stick-and-mud hut with 18 of my relatives. We sleep in shifts. I don't know who owns the land.

I love my family, but my eyes are full of water for them. Our baby just died. Infant mortality here is 15%, among the highest in the world. My other children are sickly, because we have no uncontaminated water for drinking, cooking, or bathing. Like 60% of my country's children, they are malnourished because their daily calorie intake is dangerously below minimum levels. They have red hair and swollen bellies. I cannot clothe the youngest.

Americans hear about our military coups, the embargoes, and deadly refugee boats. But there is a brighter side for which we forever thank God. Since 1986, churches of Christ in the Carolinas have led efforts in behalf of the brethren and lost of Haiti. Northern Haiti has approximately 2,500 Christians in twenty congregations. Providence Road of Charlotte, Charlotte Avenue

of Rock Hill, South Fork of Winston-Salem, and Pine Valley of Wilmington have provided mission schools, preacher and teaching support, orphan support, medical missions, and food relief missions. This September, they are conducting the first annual Lectureship and Evangelism Campaign.

Let me close with my heart open — please help us help ourselves. My people are hungry for the gospel. Whole denominational congregations have been converted. Your pioneers have opened many doors. Their efforts have contributed to over 400 baptisms in the last two and a half years alone. Please don't forget us now. Contact any of these congregations to see how you can help.

[The author, Tim Mastenbrook, is not Haitian, but has compiled this article from trips, Haitian letters, and facts he has collected over the years. Tim is an elder at the Providence Road Church of Christ and can be contacted there for further information: 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226; Phone 704-364-0748.]

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Hoyt Abney

On Tuesday morning, June 23, the chariot of the Lord came to pick up our friend and brother in Christ, Hoyt Abney, and carry him off to eternity, privileged to be with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, Paul, and a host of other faithful servants who have gone to be with the Lord. His smile, wit, and Godly influence will remain vividly in our minds for many years to come. As King David said of Abner in 2 Samuel 3:38, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day?" Brother Abney was truly a prince and a great servant for our Lord. No doubt the angels of the Lord came and ministered unto him as they did to Lazarus as recorded in Luke 16.

Concerning the deeds of King David, it is recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:29, "Now the acts of David the King, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel, the book of Nathan and the book of Gad." The acts of Hoyt, the Christian, the husband, the father, the grandfather, the friend, is written

on the walls of our hearts . . . but more importantly, as Revelation 20:12 reminds us, his acts of love and sensitivity are written on the pages of God's Book of Life.

Just a note about Glenna: She has stood by his side as a worthy companion and helper all their years together. I know of no other Christian lady more noble than she. I am reminded of Proverbs 31, Solomon's tribute to a worthy woman: "Her price is far above rubies; the heart of her husband doth safely trust her; she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (vv. 10-12). Glenna can truly be classed with the great women of the Bible such as Ruth, Elizabeth, Dorcas, Lois and Eunice who exercised an influence for good, and who remained so faithful to their companions and to God, as she has.

[This tribute was written by Jim Hunter, who preaches for the Biltmore church, Asheville, where brother Abney was a member.]

Presented at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Marion Church of Christ

A History of the Church of Christ in McDowell County

The beginning of the church of Christ in McDowell County is unusual. This is not the story of missionaries moving to an area to plant a new church but rather the story begins with two women and their families, who searched their Bibles for the truth and recognized it when they heard it taught.

The story begins in 1942 with Dona Curd and her family. "Mama" Curd was a very religious person and listened to many broadcasts to hear any teachings she could. . . she told of listening to G. Ted Armstrong and

realizing that he did not harmonize with the Scriptures as she could read them! She had also been listening to radio sermons by Eugene S. Smith from the church of Christ in Sherman, Texas, when she became aware of a couple of Christians stationed at the "conscientious objectors camp" above Lake Tahoe. Milton Stovall and Ted Banner came and talked with Dona and her son, Bruce.

Early in 1942 a long winding trip was made up Highway 70 to Asheville so that Dona Curd could be baptized by Kenneth Tucker. In May, Milton baptized Bruce and shortly after that Milton baptized Bruce's brother-in-law, Fred Smith.

At the same time, Macie Wilson was listening to the radio sermons of Elmer L. Smith and J. Ed Nolan. She told her family "these men are preaching what I read in the Bible." She had tried meeting with established churches in the area but didn't find one that "taught Bible." Macie had even tried to get a local Baptist preacher to baptize her "the Bible way," but he refused.

Macie learned through her brother Fred Smith about the small group meeting at the Curd home in "Stumptown," a section of Marion. Fred was married to Luther and Dona Curd's daughter, Glatha. Soon, Macie and her young family joined them in their search for the truth, at that point there were "about a half dozen members."

Milton Stovall would ride his bike 13 miles one way down the mountain every Sunday to the Curd home to be with this new church. Pearl Davis Curd, one of the first members, tells that Milton "didn't stand and preach but he sat and taught and that's okay because the Bible says Jesus sat and taught."

"There wasn't a baptistery available to the young church in Marion, so many of the early baptisms took place in the 'Y' swimming pool (officially known as 'Carroll Baldwin Hall') and in cold Buck Creek." Vernon Crawley remembers baptizing Mrs. Isaacs and Mrs. Bailey when snow was on the ground and ice in the creek. Sometimes a long winding trip by bus up Highway 70 to Asheville or east to Statesville was made.

The Curd and Smith families became the nucleus for this young congregation. Nine of the eleven Curd children were eventually baptized and "maybe 30" members of the Smith family, including Macie's parents, Will and Elizabeth.

The church continued to meet in the Curds' and other member's homes for about a year. The 12th Avenue church in Nashville became active in the work in Marion by sending Chester Smelser to be their first fulltime preacher. The Smelsers rented a house at 24 High (later Highland) Street in Marion, and worship services were held in the large living room every week.

In 1945 when the property came up for sale, the elders from the 12th Avenue church came and looked at the property and together with the men at Marion decided it would be

wise to purchase it. The following year the lot next door was also available and they purchased it, too.

DYSARTSVILLE

1948 saw the church branch out into the "suburbs." Again, the Smith family played an important part. Vernon Crawley (married to Edna Smith) had graduated from Lees-McRea College in Banner Elk with the intention of being a Presbyterian minister, but after marrying Edna, who was attending the Baptist church, he decided that their family should be united and he would go with her. Vernon became a deacon in the Baptist church and Edna was active teaching classes. Both Vernon and Edna studied their Bibles and were aware that what these denominations taught was not what the Bible was teaching, but they didn't know of any group that was teaching or doing any better. In 1946, Fred Smith invited them to attend services in Marion and on July 9, 1947, the morning after a J. W. Brents camp meeting, Chester Smelser baptized them in Buck Creek. Once again, the study of God's word converted souls.

Vernon knew one of the elders of the Druscilla Presbyterian church in Dysartsville, Roy Suttles. Roy had been telling him that their preacher was old and had been sick and hadn't been there in 18 months. Vernon introduced Roy to Chester Smelser. So Mr. Suttles and Chester Smelser agreed to start a Saturday night Bible study at the Druscilla Presbyterian church building. One night near the end of October, Burrell Prince, from the Abilene church of Christ in Statesville, came and held class. Mr. Suttles was so impressed by what was being taught that he invited Mr. Prince to hold a revival meeting the week beginning November 16, 1947.

It could be said that this meeting was a success for by the last night of the meeting they had baptized all but 3 of the members of the Druscilla Presbyterian church. Word, however, "was noised abroad." The Concord Presbytery sent Lawyer Robert Turner from Morganton to stop the meeting. He came in that Friday night and took a seat on the back row. Mr. Prince was quoting "and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this

the judgment" when Robert Turner stood and announced that there would be none of that kind of preaching done in this building. "Presbyterians don't teach that baptism is for salvation." "After much discussion Robert Turner forbade any members of the Marion church of Christ or any other congregation of the church of Christ from meeting at Druscilla and leading in worship." The windows were shut and the doors were locked on the Druscilla church house.

Vernon's mother was a member at Druscilla. She told the lawyer she had no idea that Presbyterians taught such. Mrs. Crawley thought that the church had been treated "so rude." "Ivey C. and Edna B. Crawley (Vernon's parents) stated that night that they would donate land to build a church of Christ on."

The Dysartsville church is often referred to as the "church out in the country." It might only take 20 minutes to drive from Marion to Dysartsville now, but back then the road was nothing but a dirt washboard and cars didn't travel as fast as they do now. (The speed limit on Main Street was 10 mph in 1947.) Chester Smelser felt that the county could support two congregations very well and he suggested that they start a new congregation for the group that lived in the Dysartsville area. They began by meeting on November 23, 1947 in the Crawley home and when they outgrew that facility, Vernon bought a vacant house for them to use while they were building. Chester Smelser is remembered for his labor in teaching and in helping to build the "church house." They moved into their cinder block building on July 11, 1948, even though it was not yet complete.

Chester Smelser came down on Saturday nights for about a year for Bible study with the group and then on Sunday they would have their own services. M. E. Burns of Valdese came on Saturday night for about a year after Chester. Since that time, Vernon has faithfully served the church in Dysartsville as the preacher, choosing not to be paid so that money could be used elsewhere and Roy E. Smith (Macie's brother) has taught Bible class, served as treasurer from the beginning, and as their "first and only song leader."

The Dysartsville church is self-supporting, having paid off their building loan in 1955. They have received help in the past from other congregations, of special memory is the time the Madison congregation in Nashville sent \$500 at one time. (That was a lot of money then.)

Among those men who have held meetings for them have been: Bill Wallace, Foy E. Wallace, Robert Sorrels, Robert Plunket, Cletus Pritchard, M. F. Norwood, Rudy Senn, Will Morrow, Will Winchester.

The charter members were: Will E. and Elizabeth D. Smith, Grady Smith, Roy Smith, Galen and Jesse Isaacs, Roy and Dottie Suttles, Ida Gentry, Zona Martin, Eulis Upton, Evie Isaacs, Alice Smith, Vernon and Edna Crawley.

MARION

The congregation in Marion sold the High Street property in 1950 and bought property at 91 (later 1101) State Street and labored themselves to build a "church house." They originally built a cinder block building with no classrooms and no restrooms!

They also bought the 4-room house on the adjoining property facing Ann Street to be used for a preacher's home.

John Lewis returned to his native McDowell Co. in January of 1952, bringing with him wife, Mollie and children. Mollie had been raised in a Christian home in Alabama where her father was an elder in the church. Mollie "knew little of the vast mission field just to the northeast of her home." She immediately became a source of strength and courage for this young congregation. Mollie was instrumental in getting the M. F. Norwoods to join the work in Marion in the late 50's, writing to them at a time of great need. She wrote, "Point out the over-abundance of gospel preachers in North Alabama and the fact that they were 'just running over one another.'" The Norwoods "could not deny her plea."

Also in the 50's, another "pillar" for the church arrived in the form of Ben Duncan, a local man. Ben met Fred Smith at the barber shop where he worked. Fred invited Ben to services and soon Ben and his five daughters

were regularly attending services. Shortly after Ben was baptized, Fred moved away and Ben took an active roll in the work. He taught Bible classes, was treasurer and worked hard for the church in Marion. He was a great help in getting things done when it came to "elbow grease." His daughter, Janet Clark, says that he was never afraid to "do what he could."

The early years saw financial and spiritual support coming from those outside McDowell County. Over 40 congregations have lent support to the church through the years. Of special note are the 12th Avenue, Rosebank, and Central churches in Nashville and the Hobbs Street and Bethel churches in Alabama.

Men would come from Nashville (J. W. Brents, A. R. Holten, Earl West) and Texas (Gus Dunn, Foy Wallace) and other parts of North Carolina (Burrell Prince of Statesville, M. E. Burns of Hickory and Paul Burns) to hold meetings to help strengthen the church and to teach "the way." "Jack" Fogarty of Texarkana would come with his semi-truck and 5,000 seat tent and set up for 3-week tent meetings. G. F. Gibbs came and showed his slides of the Holy Lands and lectured on the tabernacle setting up a miniature model of the tabernacle.

Men had to find outside support for their families in order to preach for the little congregation. Sometimes they even had to take outside employment. It was not an easy life for these men and their families. After Smelser, Fred Smith, M. F. Norwood, Rudy Senn, Gilbert Tripp, Stanley Baker, Dorsey Strothers and Harold Smith filled the pulpit at various times. Today Will T. Winchester is the minister. He has labored with the church since 1975.

Since 1979, the group has been financially self-supporting and is returning the blessings that it received by contributing to the Lord's work in other areas of the country and abroad. The original building has been remodeled, classrooms finished and restrooms were added in the early 60's. The preacher's home, after a fire, was remodeled and enlarged. They have recently purchased additional property on State Street with the view toward more growth.

The church has grown from two mem-

bers to over 60. Among the early members were Home and Nell Washburn, Arrah Davis, J. C. and Viola Davis, the Seagles, Bill Autrey, Cooper and Rose Elliot, the W. M. Henlines, Jim and Elsie Burnette, and Avery and Gertrude Elliott. Many more souls have come and gone through the years each one leaving its own special influence on the church.

Those who have been a part of the church in Marion have looked back and realized, that for most, the happiest memories have been those of seeing loved ones attend services and being baptized. They are of the fellowship between members, the times of "dinner on the grounds," camping trips, ball games and being in each other's homes. The congregation has also looked forward and the vision for the future could be summed up in the words of Mrs. M. F. Norwood, "As with the church in Jerusalem, may she continue 'daily with one accord in the temple, and break bread from house to house, eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved' (Acts 2:46-47). In this I see unity and harmony among themselves and close communion with the Father. There will be close fellowship, socially and spiritually one with another, and they will be happily engaged in bearing personal and each other's burdens, giving honor to the Father. Not only so, they will be well regarded in the community and thus increased in number. Only as we glorify God in our daily lives and in our interchange, one with another, will this be possible. The Lord will give the increase!"

In 1992 the church will be able to celebrate 50 continuous years in McDowell County and although it has grown to include many families, they can also celebrate seeing a third generation Curd preach the Word and a fifth generation of Smiths learning about God because two women and those who came after them studied their Bibles.

**This history is a compilation of the memories of the members, county records, newspaper articles and church records.*

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It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

— Theodore Roosevelt



editorial

By David Pharr

We have received encouragement from several sources regarding last month's editorial. J. B. Whitaker, who will be remembered by many for his work in the Carolinas in years past, wrote: "This note is to express my deep appreciation for the editorial in the latest issue of **Carolina Christian**. I believe what you said was needed....I appreciate David Powell's article. I pray that brethren in the Carolinas will read and beware."

We want to write what is needed and helpful. One never knows how his remarks will be received. This is especially the case when problem issues are being discussed. It has been most uplifting, therefore to hear words of support even from unexpected places. Apparently more brethren are alert and alarmed over the dangers confronting the church than we might have imagined.

A few weeks ago I was privileged to participate in the Cane Ridge Restoration Lecture-ship at Lexington, Kentucky. In addition to the excellent speeches, there was time for visiting with good men from various parts of the country. Included were men of above average educational background, men respected for their scholarship, men not known to be extreme or radical. The conversations brought out some sad conditions within our brotherhood. Their observations indicate that the church in many places is moving swiftly into apostasy.

Mainline denominations are declining in membership. The principal cause is that they no longer really advocate absolute positions. Yes, they have their programs, many of which are worthwhile. But the programs do not hold the people. The only thing that will keep people involved in religion is conviction. When compromise replaces conviction religion loses its significance. When religious matters no longer really matter, why does it matter whether one is religious? Compromises that had the intentions of bringing more people in have only succeeded in turning more people away.

The devil has introduced a deceptive and deadly weapon when he convinces us that the church can be more successful when we are less rigid. His argument sounds plausible: "We can have bigger churches, and have more people and money to do good works. After all, people are turned off by a religion that is too strict. The

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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only sensible (and loving) thing to do is to avoid positions and issues that might offend." But when the church of Christ is no longer a distinctive voice for truth, what excuse is there for its continued existence? When we are no longer different, what difference will we make?

We who are preachers ought to be balanced in our preaching of the whole counsel of God. One urgent responsibility of elders is to see that what comes from the pulpit is not only truth but the particular truth that is needed. It is not fair to hear just one sermon and judge that the preacher would fit comfortably in most denominations. What is distressing is how that practically all of some preachers's sermons would be welcomed at a denomination. More and more faithful Christians are complaining that they find it hard to determine where a preacher stands on vital issues. Of course people should ask him in plain language and expect an equally plain answer. The shepherds of the flock need to be continually examining the food the flock is being fed. This actually happened: Certain elders were frustrated that the preacher never seemed to take a solid stand on important issues. They were concerned that many people, who were getting most of their instruction from the pulpit, were simply not hearing what they needed to hear. Eventually the elders asked the

preacher to give a lesson on instrumental music in hopes that he would take a firm stand. One of the elders told later that after said sermon, people were still unsure whether the preacher thought instruments in worship were wrong or not. Those elders had the courage to dismiss the preacher. The pulpit is no place for one to air the uncertainties of his own convictions. We fear that some elders are going to have to answer for letting the congregation be starved for lack of Bible teaching or else poisoned by the opinions of men.

Some of our faithful older brothers and sisters might profitably recall some of the preaching of bygone years. Of course styles and manners of speech change, but what about the subjects and contents of sermons? Would the kind of preaching that led you to the truth be allowed where you attend today? How long has it been since you heard plain points on doctrinal issues backed up by a generous use of Scriptures? How long has it been since you heard a sermon on the necessity of baptism, on the oneness and identity of the true church, or on why denominations and denominational doctrines and practices are wrong? Are you seeing people converted to the truth or simply brought into the program?

Raleigh Homecoming

The Brooks Avenue Church of Christ, 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, North Carolina, announces its forty-fifth anniversary and homecoming to be held Sunday, November 22, 1992. All former members and friends are invited to come "home" and help us celebrate.

Much of the history and growth of the Brooks Avenue church is intertwined with North Carolina State University, where we have had a number of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students as members of the church. Many, while students, put on Christ in baptism at Brooks Avenue. N. C. State University will hold its Homecoming on Saturday, November 21, and will host the old rival Wake Forest University football team. Former students who

would like to attend the football game should contact the university for tickets.

We would like to hear from all former members and hope that they will make every effort to be with us and help us celebrate our 45th Anniversary and Homecoming!

For additional information, please call the church office (919) 821-2400 or write to the church at 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607.



The Shifting Current

By Reuel Lemmons (April 17, 1962)

The current of human opinion shifts constantly. Things brethren steadfastly believed a few years ago are often discarded for a new position. While God's almighty Word remains forever the same, men's attitudes toward it, and consequently their opinions of what it teaches, change like shifting sands.

When differences of attitude and opinion begin to show up, and one group begins to shift slightly to the right, another group shifts proportionately to the left. The further to the right the right goes, the further to the left the left goes. Finally they are poles apart. Where the split started, and who is responsible is of little import; the awful thing is that it exists.

A few years ago we were having no trouble to speak of with liberalism and modernism among us. The great body of believers were, for all practical purposes, of one faith. Very recently an almost simultaneous cry is arising through the length and breadth of the brotherhood. This cry has a strange sound! It is a rebellion against "legalism." It is more than that; it is a definite leaning toward, and in many instances an embracing of, liberalism and modernism.

The liberalist will probably deny it, as the legalist will deny his radical right position. Radicalism is not limited to the right. There is a lot of it to the left. And no radical is so dangerous, nor so aggressive, as the radical left. As one group leans one way, the other leans the other way. And they get further and further apart. The battle with the extreme right probably triggered the drift to the extreme left, but is no justification for it. Some good brethren who, two or three short years ago, were shouting "There is no middle of the road," are finding out that there is--and that the middle of the road is the only safe position. There has been a terrible battle with the radical right. No attention has been paid to the radical left. Because no attention has been paid to it, it is running wild in places.

It is our prediction that the coming battle will be with the liberal left. In many respects it will be a far more terrible struggle, and the wounds and scars will show it. We are neither

a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but the above two sentences are worthy of remembrance years hence.

It is an admitted fact that one of the leading areas of possible apostasies is our schools. This is true because that's where most of our young preachers are trained. They, in turn, teach the church, and like preacher like people. Regardless of the merits or demerits of this system, such is the present case. Our schools, as schools must, place emphasis upon education. All are developing highly educated faculties, which is as it should be. Bible faculties pursue their graduate studies in denominational atmospheres where every professor is an avowed modernist, or at least a liberalist. Regardless of resistance, some of this attitude soaks in. This is not an indictment, nor even criticism, of the Bible faculty of any school; they would not be human if these men did not absorb something from their professors.

Teachers strive to maintain an open mind themselves, and strive to maintain an open mind in every student. This is as it should be. Any man should be ready and willing to receive any new truth he may find. But students are immature. They come to a professor's class not only to explore possibilities; they come to be told something by someone who knows. Bible teachers in our colleges should know what they believe, and should be able to tell their students. The newly developed trend to make the classroom only an exploration expedition, leaving the student to find and form his own conclusions is, in the final analysis, the very setting that produced all liberalism and modernism. It is a dethronement of God and Inspiration, and an enthronement of man and his existentialism.

It produces, and is producing, a generation of young preachers who are saying, "Well, what if there were a second Isaiah?" They are saying, "This old idea of 'apostolic example' is old fashioned." They are saying, "It would be all right to partake of the Lord's supper on Thursday night." They are saying, "The letter of the law was never intended for us." They are saying, "Fellowship should embrace all who have the new birth." They are saying, "There are Chris-

tians in all churches." They are saying, "I used to preach 'faith in a plan'; now I preach 'faith in a Person--not faith in a plan.'" They are saying dozens of other things that preachers a generation ago would not have dared say. We circulate a good deal among young preachers and we hear these things and have received them written in articles that come to this office. We have seen smirks on the faces of some good men when the old battle cries of the Restoration are repeated, and have seen them glance knowingly at each other when some liberal or modernistic statement crept into someone's speech.

Brethren, pray tell us how one can be saved through faith in a person; not faith in a plan? We have never been conscious of any brother in all the history of the church who did not believe it took faith in a man (Jesus) to save us. But how, in the name of reason and common sense, can one have faith in a Person without having faith in his plan? Let us ask these men this question: "Can a man be saved through faith in a Person, and without faith in a plan?" Of course the plan would be useless without the Person, but salvation would be just as impossible without the plan. It hurts to see gospel preachers showing contempt for a plan.

Minds in the church today are in a turmoil. They are like a swarm of bees that has been stirred up and which hasn't decided yet to settle. Cross currents are blowing and many do not know what to think. That there is a dangerous flood-tide of drift to the left very few would deny. Modernism and liberalism have wrecked the protestant world, and it can well wreck us.

There is a great need for preachers, teachers, and brethren in general to keep their heads and to stay on their feet. If we are swept off our feet, and lose our heads, we surely will be in a predicament! We must not forget that the changing current will constantly be pulling at us. Our hope is that, in spite of the fact that a few will undoubtedly go off to the right, and that a few will--without doubt--go off to the left, that the great body of the Lord's army will stay in the middle of the road.

[Editor's Note: This editorial appeared in the Firm Foundation thirty years ago. Brother Lemmons died in 1989. Regardless of disagreements many brethren had with brother Lemmons on various points, his concerns expressed in this article over thirty years ago are even more timely now. The things he feared have become reality, the seeds he saw being planted have come to harvest.]

G.C. Brewer Can Defend Himself

By Bill Heinselmann

In my younger years, it was my privilege to hear brother G. C. Brewer preach, lecture and debate. He had few equals in any of these areas and even fewer now. Those who have come upon the scene in the last twenty years or so, missed out on this great blessing. But, fortunately, brother Brewer was not only a great preacher, lecturer and debater, he was also a great writer, and, by the power of the pen, "he being dead, yet speaketh."

Recently, some who are more liberal-minded have suggested that were brother Brewer alive today, he would take his stand with them in an endeavor to "change the church!" We disagree!

In 1955, brother Brewer wrote a series of articles for the **Gospel Advocate**, entitled, "Grace and Law: Legalism and Liberalism." The following quotation is taken from article No. 4 in this series:

"It has been shown in former articles that those who are today pleading for neo-orthodoxy profess to accept the Bible as the inspired word of God and as our standard of faith and morals, and yet when it comes to applying the word of God to any particular teaching, they again resort to the same argument of the modernists. They do not believe in a literal interpretation of the Scriptures; they think we should not make a rigid application of the word of God, especially to minor matters. To do this is legalism. So,

after all, neo-orthodoxy is not orthodoxy at all and it is no better than modernism in actual application of principles to our lives. It leaves us without a standard. If the Bible is still the standard, how is one to change from the announced policy of following accurately the teaching of the Bible? Would not such a change mean either the repudiation of the standard or else a decision that it is no longer necessary to following the teaching of the standard? And that would be within itself repudiation. These neo-orthodox men, however, profess to follow the Bible, but they have an ability to see a deeper meaning than anybody else can see. They can, because of their spiritual superiority, interpret the Scriptures, whereas, the average man is not able to interpret the Scriptures properly. This, however, is the same claim that the modernists make. They have superior enlightenment and, they, because of their advanced knowledge, must go forward and not look back to the claims that were made by people who lived a hundred years ago.

"...Also, they are desiring to avoid the accusation of drawing a circle and leaving somebody out, therefore, of being narrow and legalistic and sectarian in their behavior. All of us fall under this condemnation, and yet many of us have clearly seen that the accusation was unjust and we have been able to remain true to the Lord without trying to assume the position of the Lord and of doing that which the Lord alone can do.

"Years ago John B. Cowden, in an exchange of articles with me, charged that I and the *Gospel Advocate* and the brethren in general have made laws of fellowship and have made them narrow and exclusive. He thinks we should not exclude instrumental music from our worship, that we should not disfellowship those who use such music and in his charge against us, he quoted these lines:

*'He drew a circle and left me out,
Heretic, rebel, and thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle and took him in.'*

"In answer to this quadrant, I wrote the following lines:

'We draw no circles or religious rings

*To exclude men and include things,
But earnestly try with hearts that are pure
To make our calling and election sure,
By doing the things our Lord commands
And leave circle-drawing to other hands.'*

"It seems strange that other men cannot find satisfaction and joy in doing simply what the Lord teaches and in seeing men under their preaching turn from darkness to light, from sin to the Savior and of finding with such children of God peace and joy in simple, soulful New Testament worship.

"...The old principle preached by the pioneers and one that I have myself preached for a half century is to me still an unanswerable argument. It is this: 'Why accept that which may be right or may be wrong when you can do that which we **know** is right and can't be wrong?'

"I have been fortunate in knowing men of unfaltering faith, of deep and abounding peace and joy, men of confident hope and serene souls. How Christianity could do more for anyone than it did for these men, I would be unable to see. Among these men I always name James A. Harding, David Lipscomb, E. G. Sewell and T. B. Larimore."

Of course, we have only quoted some of brother Brewer's words. Lest anyone think I have somehow taken them out of context, may I suggest that I have nothing to fear from a complete and careful reading of these articles. In fact, if the *Gospel Advocate* would repeat these articles in full, or, if some other brethren would print them in booklet form, they would be doing the church today a great favor, in my opinion.

Whatever is the case, it is my view that it is an insult to this great gospel preacher to suggest that he would be among those today who are trying to "restructure" the church -- no matter who makes the assertion!

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Living Up To Our Capabilities

By David Vaughn

What are your capabilities? Are you living up to your capabilities? An old proverb says that "Behind an able man there are always other able men." Christian people often quote Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." We also go to Ephesians 3:20: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us." Notice, it is Christ who strengthens us; it is God who is able. The Word of God performs its work in those who believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

Does God expect us to live according to our capabilities? Do we have the strength to live according to our capabilities? The apostle Paul wrote that the ultimate goal of all the gifts in the first-century church was to build up the body [church] (Eph. 4:11-16). The preaching and teaching was to equip or furnish believers with what was needed to live up to their capabilities. The Holy Spirit said, through Paul, that believers were capable of becoming mature [full-grown] in Christ. This maturity meant:

1. They worked toward the oneness of the faith that was mentioned in verse 5; they had come to a full knowledge of Christ (vs. 13).

2. They were firm in what they believed to the point they were not "tossed here and there" by false teachers (vs. 14).

3. And, they functioned according to their capabilities for the good of the entire body (vs. 16).

The beautiful inspiring life of Daniel was an example of one who lived up to his capabilities. His life was such that his co-workers could find "no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him" (Dan. 6:4). When the jealousy of his peers and his righteousness clashed, it was because he was living up to his capabilities. When threatened with persecution he continued to live according to faith. When one does not live by faith, that one is not living up to capabilities.

Consider the life of Joseph and how he suffered accusations and persecution. Under adverse conditions he demonstrated that he was

capable of constant faithfulness and living up to his capabilities. He was used by God to provide food for his father's household and he was also used by God to provide an opportunity for Israel's growth into a nation in Egypt.

Barnabas lived up to his capabilities as an encourager of the brethren. He shared his possessions with needy Christians (Acts 4:36, 37). When the Jerusalem disciples were afraid of Paul, Barnabas was capable of helping and he interceded in behalf of Paul (Acts 11:26, 27). Barnabas did what he was capable of doing and God blessed his efforts.

Dorcas was a woman "abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did" (Acts 9:36). All Christians are capable of such activities and we are told, "do not neglect doing good and sharing" (Heb. 13:16). God's blessings are upon those who do what they are capable of doing.

It is a great tragedy that many people do not even begin to live up to their capabilities. We know from Matthew 25 that people are blessed differently. We also know, from this chapter, that the Lord expects us to live according to our blessings. We spend time and energy on things of small value and ignore the important issues of life. How many churches are handicapped by members who fail to live up to their capabilities? Brethren, by the grace of God, we are capable of doing all that God has commanded us to do. Let us be men and women of faith and live accordingly.

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Be Like Christ?

By Gary G. Payne

The disciples were very frightened. Jesus was walking with determination. He had purpose in his step. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. He was talking about dying.

Now the disciples knew He was the Christ. And, they thought that Christ would rule the world. But there was something missing. There was no army! "How in the world does He expect to fight the Romans and the temple police without an army? Does He expect us twelve to fight them off? Oh, I know Jesus has done some pretty amazing things. But this time I think He is going a little too far."

But Jesus' resolve kept blazing like an uncontrollable fire. So, you have heard the saying, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em"? James and John thought, "If we are going to go through with this, we might as well make it worth our while. If we are going to die, at least let's get a good place in heaven." "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. They replied 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory'" (Mark 10:35-37).

This was not a matter of arguing who was the greatest as before (Mark 9:33-34). This time it was a matter of being self-serving. But they didn't know what they were asking. Jesus' glory was not in heaven. At least not yet. Jesus' glory was the cross. The suffering was the cup He was going to drink. His baptism was the pain, shame, and rejection in which He would be immersed. It was going to be unbearable.

They did not understand the kind of glory Jesus was looking toward. The glory was not some kind of self-serving binge. It was doing the Father's will. It was His love reaching out to make the ultimate sacrifice and act of service. "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-45).

Can you imagine that?--the Man who was equal to God, left heaven and came to this broken planet to become the slave of all! What a Savior!

As it turned out, James and John did not get what they were asking. Not yet anyway. The ones at the right and the left in Jesus' glory--two criminals--the ones who died with Him. But James and John did get their chance. All the apostles did. Tradition tells us that everyone of them were executed for their faith in Jesus Christ. All except John. As an elderly man, John was banished to the island of Patmos--a small, rocky, and barren island used as a prison. Some there might rather have been dead. They drank the cup. They were baptized with Jesus' baptism. They had learned what it meant to become the slave of all.

If you look deep within yourself, you will find that you too can have that commitment to Jesus. Oh, you may not die **because of** your faith. But you can die **in your faith**. These disciples gave it their all because they finally learned what Jesus stood for. They saw how much they owed. They saw their sin. And, they saw their forgiveness. So like them, you too will give it all you have. Giving your best for the Master. Becoming a slave for others. No rights--except the right to help others.

Dr. Peckham, speaking at a Bible college during the closing years of World War II, explained what it means to follow Jesus:

"We want to be like Christ, we say. We want to have His heart...to be courageous, serene in the face of adversity, powerful in soul-winning, steady and unmovable in faith, free from the tyranny of self, flesh crucified, all in our places, with shiny faces.

"But friends, it may not be that way. If you ask for the heart of Christ, yours may be broken. If you ask for the eyes of Christ, you may be horrified at what you see. If you try to embrace all mankind, as Christ did, you may be consumed by that love. Touching broken lives means to be touched back by the world's misery. The healer risks infection. The diseases are fear, loneliness, even insanity. If we fight injustice, we are identified with the condemned. We will bear about in our bodies the paradoxes of mankind, the yeas and the nays.

"To be a Christian in the truest sense may mean to live on the edge of a cliff, shocked and

dismayed at our own weakness, failure and evil. We go there as pilgrims and pioneers, and only God can keep us safe on that wild frontier."

Do you want to be like Christ? It is a challenge. But ironically, it the only life that fulfills. Are you giving or taking?

[1583 Freeway Dr., Reidsville, NC 27320.]

Communicate Or Terminate

By Gary D. Durham

Communication is the life blood of any given relationship. If communication does not take place, then the ultimate result will be a termination of the relationship. For example, how many marriages have gone on the rocks because there was a failure to communicate?

Christians must recognize the vital role communication plays in our relationship with God, the world, and our church family. Communicate or terminate! The choice is ours.

God has always communicated with man in one fashion or another. He chose to speak directly with Abraham (Gen. 12:1), while He used dreams with Joseph (Gen. 37:5). God continues to convey His will to us today through the inspired word. We do not have to be confused regarding what God wants us to know. The message is available to all who are interested enough to read it (2 Pet. 2:1).

God has definitely done His part to communicate with us. Communication, however, is a two-way street. We must acknowledge our obligation to keep the lines of communication open to God. This is where prayer comes into play in our relationship with God. God reaches down to us with the Word as we reach up to God in prayer. We can take a lesson from David who certainly understood the importance of talking to God. "Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee" (Psa. 141:1).

After we have cemented our relationship with God, then we are better prepared to communicate with the world. The gospel message of hope must be clear and meaningful if we are to shed any light in a world shrouded in the darkness of sin. Let us warn those who are lost whenever the occasion presents itself.

Paul instructed Timothy regarding the necessity of alerting people to the danger of living

contrary to God's will. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul and Timothy were both in the communication business as we should be by now.

When we talk to others and attempt to lead them to Christ there needs to be an awareness of the words we use in our speech. Unnecessary barriers have been thrown up between us and the ones in need of salvation simply because some have been careless with words. Words are powerful! We must handle them with extreme caution lest we turn people away from the truth.

Wisdom dictates that all words be tasted before they ever cross the lips. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). We are never to compromise the truth in our speech but neither should we taint it with foolish or unkind words. People need to be led to salvation, not away from it by a failure to properly communicate with them.

Very few of my fellow Christians will deny the need to keep the lines of communication opened at all times to God and to the ones in the world. What about communicating with one another within the church? How many congregations have been sacrificed upon the altar of misinformation?

Untold damage has been inflicted upon the body of Christ because we have failed to communicate with our brothers and sisters. It appears that some spend more time speculating than they do investigating the facts of a given situation. Such activities tend to deteriorate into talebearing which has a very negative influence on the family of God. This type of corrupt communication can be a source of grief in any congregation and should be avoided at all cost.

The truthfulness revealed in Proverbs 26:21 is still with us today: "Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

The affairs of the church run more smoothly if they are not impeded by a lack of communication. It is every member's obligation to see that information flows freely within the family. Let honesty be the guidepost which directs our hearts to a higher level of love and

unity. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17).

Our relationship with God, the world, and the Church family must be nurtured in an atmosphere of unhindered communication. The only alternative is termination of these most precious relationships. Communicate or terminate!

[P. O. Box 1789, High Point, NC 27261.]

Jesus Christ: Our Pattern For Living

By Richard T. McWilliams

Some years ago, a novelist wrote the book, **In His Steps**, to try to give some idea of what might happen if folks really tried to follow in the steps of Jesus on a daily basis. There is also a song that we sometimes sing which begins:

*Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Trying to follow our Savior and King;
Shaping our lives by His blessed example,
Happy, how happy, the songs that we bring.*

Both of these are based upon words in 1 Peter 2:21, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (NASV). Surely this is the highest ideal and ambition that anyone can have. Yet in the daily routine and cares of life, this goal may get lost from our view. Therefore, it can be of great value to meditate from time to time upon the example of Christ and how we must follow His pattern in our lives.

It does not require great study to see that the overriding principle which guided Jesus' life is loving obedience to His father. In John 5:30 Jesus said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." He also claimed to always do the things that were pleasing to His Father (John 8:29). Lest we miss the reason why He so lived, He revealed the governing principle behind His obedient life as love for the Father (John 14:31). Therefore, Jesus is our perfect pattern of loving obedience to God.

Furthermore, Jesus taught His hearers to live by the same principle. He pointed out that

the first and great commandment is to truly love God (Matt. 22:37). Such love for the Father or Son is revealed in obedience (John 14:15, 23-24). It is in obedience that love is perfected (i.e., made complete) rather than in mere words (1 John 2:3-6; 3:18; Matt. 7:21).

But Jesus also gave in His life the pattern for loving one's neighbor (Matt. 22:39). The standard is found in His love for His followers. This love is like His Father's love for Him (John 15:9-12). When Jesus said "...love one another, just as I have loved you," He included that expression of love seen in His dying on the cross (1 John 3:16, 4:9-11). This then is the pattern for our love for one another. And while our love is usually called on to take action in less extreme ways, it must nonetheless be there and act for us to truly be God's children (1 John 3:15-18).

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Jesus likewise set a pattern of holiness in His life. Even the demons recognized Him as "the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). Peter reasoned that we Christians should be holy in all our behavior like the Holy one who called us (1 Pet. 1:13-21). To be holy means to be separate from the world and united with God in our behavior (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). One whose life is sanctified is useful to the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Tim. 2:21).

Mercy and forgiveness must not be overlooked in the example Jesus left us. He not only spoke sins forgiven (Mark 2:1-2), but He also prayed for the forgiveness of His executioners (Luke 23:34). He taught His followers to love and pray for their enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), and told a lengthy parable to warn of the dire consequences of unforgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35). Paul put it this way, "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Perhaps as difficult as being merciful and forgiving, is following the pattern of humbly trusting God in difficult circumstances. The verse which calls on us to follow in His steps is in a setting directing citizens to submit to government officials, slaves to masters, and wives to husbands (1 Pet. 2:13-3:6). Special consideration is given to the suffering that comes just because one is a Christian. The solution is found in the very things Jesus did (1 Pet. 2:23).

"Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Pet. 4:19).

Though several other aspects of the example of Jesus could be studied, we will make His life of sacrificial service our last consideration. Jesus demanded that anyone who would be His disciple deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him (Matt. 16:21-27). Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Matt. 20:28). He gave an unusual example of service by washing the apostles' feet to impress on them the need to be a servant (John 13:1-17). Sacrificial service is to be carried out in our lives as we offer ourselves a living sacrifice to God and as we serve one another (Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Phil. 2:1-8).

But what is the outcome of following the pattern Jesus left for us? Paul wrote that if we suffer with Him we will also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17). The obedient Christ humbled Himself even to death on the cross. God therefore raised Him up and highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:8-9). If we will walk in His steps, God will also give us the victory and take us home to be with Him eternally. Let us ever strive to walk in His steps, following faithfully the pattern He left for us.

[6337 Rivers Ave., N. Charleston, SC 29418.]

More Than A Hangnail

By Mark Swindall

Abortion is an emotional issue with little rationale. It is a very serious subject. It never struck me how serious until I heard of a man who was being considered for the eldership who encouraged his unmarried daughter to get an abortion (he was not ordained but it split the church).

Abortion involves morals. Like it or not-abortion is a moral issue. It is right or wrong-period! Soap boxes abound. In the name of life people save the whales, dolphin, spotted owls and trees...it is tragic when people decide it is all right to take the life of an unborn child! Life is the forgotten issue. Even the worst promoter

of abortion has to admit there are far too many abortions. Abortion as birth control is a terrible solution! Can anyone defend open, unlimited abortion?

The promoters of abortion are not interested in morals. They are only interested in their rights. All you hear is rights, rights, rights. Rarely do you hear a discussion about morals. One famous feminist compared abortion to a hangnail. Abortion involves life! Life involves morals. Morals involve right and wrong. Abortion is wrong...and it is much more than a hangnail!

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The Useless Gospel Sermon

By Robert Curry

If the eternal word of God, which is able to make the hearer complete (2 Tim. 3:16,17), is preached, why are not more people converted? The apostle Paul stated that Esaias was "very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:20,21).

These passages of Paul identify an ongoing problem within the New Testament church. Too many do not care to hear the truth proclaimed, making what is intended to save something that is ignored. Therefore, the gospel sermon is made useless, for the hearer does not accept what is said. It is gospel and it is preaching, but

it is useless to those who are apathetic to it and skeptical of its power.

Too Many Pay No Heed

One way gospel sermons are made useless is when the hearer is unconvinced to give heed to the message. Unlike those at Pentecost, they have not been pricked in the heart by the urgency of obedience (Acts 3:37). They pay no heed for all their concern lies within this present world. Jesus said, "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the son of man be" (Matt.

19:38,39). These hearers see no reason to accept gospel preaching for all they think they need is offered in our modern world.

Others pay no heed because they recognize no reason to serve God. Peter wrote, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). As Robert Frost said, "I turned to speak to God about the world's despair; But to make bad matters worse, I found God wasn't there." If one does not believe God will be there, he will not turn to Him for help. Therefore, there is no need to hear preaching that encourages what is useless to a disillusioned heart.

The Gospel is Ridiculed

Gospel sermons are made useless when the truth is ridiculed. This occurs when traditions are accepted over truth. Paul faced this on Mars Hill "when certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection... And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts 17:18,32). Paul warned the church in Rome that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18), adding that they profess themselves to be wise, but are really fools (v. 22).

Man chooses his own wisdom, allowing academics to overshadow God's word. Just like the foolish Galatians who had been bewitched into not obeying the truth (Gal. 3:1), mankind chooses to build upon its weak and feeble attempts at knowledge, ignoring the eternal wisdom of an eternal God. Therefore, God is not praised, and His dominion over all things is not acknowledged (1 Pet. 4:11).

The Hearer Will Not Listen to Sound Doctrine

The gospel sermon is made useless because too many do not hear what they want to hear. Consider the story of the rich young man

who came to Jesus asking, "What good shall I do, that I may have eternal life" (Matt. 19:16)? When Jesus instructed him to sell all he had and give it to the poor, that was not what the man wished to hear. When Naaman sought out Elisha to cure his leprosy he was told to wash seven times in the river Jordan (2 Kings 5:10). However, this was not what Naaman wanted Elisha to say. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage" (v. 12).

Maybe some refuse to accept a gospel sermon because what they hear violates family traditions, contradicting what mother and father have always said. Maybe they are looking for a custom-fitted Christianity, something that is non-restrictive and progressive, allowing them to find validation for what the Bible condemns. Maybe they are caught up in peer-pressure practices, refusing to examine the Bible closely to see whether their actions are condemnable or commendable. Their only criteria is what is socially acceptable.

Many Will Turn Away

The irony is that even though the gospel sermon is designed to bring people to Christ, too often these lessons turn many away. They will not accept what is said and will look elsewhere, hoping to find commendation for their foolishness. Paul said this very thing to Timothy: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3,4).

We must realize that the responsibility is with the hearer, for the truth is to remain unchanged, regardless of time, society, or traditions. Therefore, it is the hearer who must adapt and change, allowing the truth to choose the correct path and design for life. It is the hearer who must allow the truth to decide what is truth.

Conclusion

Too many faithful preachers present "useless" gospel sermons. Are they to be ashamed? No, not if their lessons are truly gospel. The

shame lies with the hearers who will not accept the gospel of Christ because they either do not care, they do not recognize a need for God, or are not hearing what they wish to hear. For them

gospel sermons are useless. The lessons are gospel, but they go unheeded and unaccepted.

[P. O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.]

"Is It Nothing To You?"

By David Pharr, Editor

It was a cross made of rough hewn lumber standing in front of a church building across from a busy shopping center. On it was a sign with these words from Lamentations 1:12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" The text was, of course, appropriated; but O how appropriate the words are. As busy humanity rushes by, is the cross nothing? To the ancient Greeks the preaching of the cross was foolishness and to the Jews it was a stumblingblock (1 Cor. 1:23). But what is the cross to the people of our day. Sadly, for many the cross is nothing. Generally there is indifference toward the cross of Christ.

The Roman soldiers at Calvary showed their indifference. While Jesus was hanging above them they cast lots for His clothing "and sitting down they watched him there" (Matt. 27:35-36). No, they did not participate in the cruel taunting thrown at Jesus by others. To them it was just a day's work, a routine duty.

*The Roman soldiers shook the dice
As for the stake they vied,
Quite unaware that on the cross
The world's Redeemer died.*

But the soldiers's indifference was hardly less than the unconcern of so many now. The poet continues:

*But in the circus of our day,
We, thoughtless, act the clown,
While God is speeding up his work
To ring time's curtain down.*

*The Roman soldiers shook the dice
As for the stake they vied;
Are we as unconcerned as they*

That Christ for us has died?

--Nathaniel Krum

Who are the indifferent? Surely the moral reprobate, we say. But what of the upstanding citizen who has no time for religion? or the fun loving youth? or even the active church member who has never cried in sorrow over sin nor in joy for forgiveness?

Can we be indifferent when we consider the agony of the cross? "With what anguish and loss, Jesus went to the cross...." "O how much He was willing to bear."

Can we be indifferent when we realize that it was our sins that put Him there? "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Yes, indeed. It was my sins that made Him suffer. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Can we be indifferent to the love that made Him die? Calvary is the ultimate demonstration of Divine love. This is a personal love for each of us. I read of a mother who went into a burning house to save her little boy. In saving him from the flames her own face and body were grotesquely scarred. When the child was grown he was ashamed of the way his mother looked, ashamed of the very scars that had saved his life. But Jesus did so much more. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Surely,

*Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Jeremiah's lament was over the ruin that had come to the city. How could people pass by unconcerned? We ask the same question to the

world, to the church. How can we be indifferent to the crucified Savior?

G. A. Studdert-Kennedy powerfully portrays the meaning of indifference toward the cross in the following poem. It is not, of course, to be taken as literal in detail, but it is very literal in its points.

*When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him
on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet,
and made a Calvary;
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red
were His wounds, and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, then hu-
man flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to our fair town, they simply
passed Him by,
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him
die;*

*For men have grown more tender, and they
would not give Him pain,
They only passed down the street, and left Him
in the rain.*

*Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know
not what they do,"
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched
Him through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets with-
out a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for
Calvary.*

Prerequisite for Growth

By Tim Sensing

"You became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:6-7 NIV).

As we endeavor to restore New Testament Christianity, Paul's praise to the Thessalonians needs to become an honorable goal for our congregations; however, we often allow congregational problems to interfere with the ongoing process of returning to New Testament ideals and practices which affect our growth and unity. We apply man-made solutions instead of following the examples given in Scripture. Acts is an excellent case study of a church which grew in numbers and unity while facing many of the same tribulations we face today.

Luke emphasizes throughout Acts his interest in growth and unity as Christianity moved from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:6, 19:20). The connection between growth and unity is clearly seen during the periods of tribulation. In each case the church applied God-approved solutions leading to God-pleasing results. A prerequisite for growth today will depend on our willingness to apply the same

problem solving attitudes of these early disciples. These problems can be categorized under two headings: First, there were external problems of persecution. The warning of the Sanhedrin to Peter and John with the eventual arrest of all the Apostles commenced a great assault against the church. Saul continued this bombardment not only in Jerusalem but also abroad. Herod, too, brought the hand of government against the Saints. These furious and unrelenting trials threatened the very foundation of God's Kingdom.

The response of the faithful, however, resulted not only in survival but also growth. They responded with courage, boldness, prayer, perseverance, co-operation and continued obedience. These biblical solutions were applied without reservation; therefore, God blessed them without reservation. In each of these narratives, Luke shares the God-pleasing results of their faithfulness (Acts 4:32-37, 4:41-42, 6:1, 9:1-18, 11:29-30, 12:20-25). THE PATTERN: EXTERNAL PROBLEMS + BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS = PEACE, UNITY AND GROWTH.

Secondly, internal problems threatened the survival of the church. As Luke records these

events, an *alternating pattern* between external problems and internal problems develops. (This alternating pattern between external problems and internal problems is a key to understanding Luke's rhetorical structure. Question: How does this alternating pattern contribute to Luke's purpose?) The problems of persecution may seem more real and life threatening; however, the evidence of history supports the idea that more churches are destroyed by the subtle nature of internal problems. The infection, no matter how small, must be cleansed so that gangrene will not rot the healthy from within.

Moral problems as seen in the selfishness and deception of Ananias and Sapphira contaminated the church. Confrontation, accountability and growth by subtraction (church discipline) were solutions applied by both God and the Apostles. Today, such problems as greed, selfishness, even falsehood are not perceived as damaging pollutants to a congregation. This is completely uncharacteristic of the biblical model.

Next, the oversight of the needy widows (which may or may not have been caused by prejudice against the Grecians) affected the church. Through delegation of duties, prayer, and development of servants, this problem was conquered. How we accept one another in our day to day relationships clearly displays our unity which will increase growth. Neglect of felt needs and lack of sensitivity and compassion can easily devastate a congregation's influence and future.

When the gospel was taken by Philip to Samaria and by Peter to Cornelius, problems arose concerning missions. Again, solutions by the Apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit resulted in growth. Note too, the careful attention given by the Apostles to clearly communicate the nature of the problem and the solutions to all involved.

Although it was not the last internal problem in Acts, the doctrinal problem concerning Gentiles raised its ugly head. Under the direction of elders and Apostles, the Jerusalem congregation was respectful, honest and open in its discussion. With clear and precise language, they communicated that solution to all others affected.

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The Early Christians had problems with morals, relationships, missions and false doctrines. Biblical solutions brought God's blessings (Acts 5:12-16, 6:7, 11:19-26, 15:30-35). THE PATTERN: INTERNAL PROBLEMS + BIBLICAL SOLUTION = PEACE, UNITY AND GROWTH.

Some today apply man-made solutions resulting in failure or compromise. Others ignore problems hoping they will vanish like a bubble. Still others move away or divide, taking their problems with them. No where in Acts is this the pattern for Christian imitation.

Other Scriptures support Luke's pattern. For example, the seven churches of Asia, while plagued with many external and internal prob-

lems, were not once admonished to ignore, divide or compromise. The Lord required continued obedience and repentance on the part of these congregations. The promise of victory was extended to all who faithfully persevered.

Luke gives us an example that teaches congregations how to grow through trials. Let us reassess our practices of problem solving in our quest to continue the unending restoration process. When we imitate this model we will become Christ's Church and see growth in our generation.

[Tim Sensing, Mebane Street Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861]

Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

It is the end of an era for the BROOKS AVE. CHURCH OF CHRIST in Raleigh, N.C. AL BERGERON has announced that he will be moving to Ocala, Florida, to work with a church there as its preacher. On October 4 Al will conclude an extremely productive ministry of 24 years at Brooks Ave., one of the longest tenures in the Carolinas. He has served as the pulpit minister for Brooks Ave. in its years of growth and in recent years as a full-time elder. He leaves with the cause of Christ in North Carolina a legacy of growth and leadership....THE LEXINGTON CHURCH OF CHRIST in Lexington, N.C., ordained new elders last July. Now serving the church in this leadership role are GARY HARPER, L.H. ORMAN and TOMMY MONK....The new preacher for the LENOIR CHURCH OF CHRIST in Lenoir, N.C., is JOHN MAYO. He comes to Lenoir from Huntington, West Virginia. John is a 1991 graduate of the East Tennessee School of Preaching....DAN BLAZER, a deacon at the Brooks Ave. church in Raleigh, was recently appointed Dean of the Medical School at Duke University. Dan is an internationally recognized psychologist, specializing in the field of geriatric psychology, and is the author of the book **Life Is Worth Living**....Last

July 17-19 the JERICHO CHURCH OF CHRIST in Mocksville, N.C., celebrated its 120th anniversary. Jericho is the oldest non-instrumental Church of Christ in North Carolina....DAVID CLINARD, who worships with the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, N.C., has announced the opening of Clinard Counseling and Professional Services. He offers counseling services for individuals, couples, families and children. He also offers workshops for congregations on Marriage, Communication Skills, and other family topics. For more information call (919) 854-2701....The TWIN CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST in Batesburg, S.C., held a ground-breaking for its new building last July 19. The building is expected to be completed in early fall. Mike Hinrichs is the preacher....The HILTON HEAD ISLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST, Hilton Head Island, S.C., will be dedicating its new building on October 4 at 3:00 p.m...."Senior Sharing Time" is a special two day event for senior citizens to be hosted by the DELAWARE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Delaware, Ohio. The keynote speaker will be noted teacher and author Willard Tate of Abilene, Texas. The preacher for the Delaware church is MARK HUDSON, who preached for the church in Morganton, N.C., prior to his move to Ohio.

For more information about this event you can call 1-800-686-4140....The NEWBERRY CHURCH OF CHRIST in Newberry, S.C., is in great need of additional financial support if it is to survive, according to its preacher, KEN WYATT. The church is in need of \$300 per week

immediately. Interested individuals or churches should contact either Virgil Miller (P.O. Box 515, Newberry, S.C., 29108) or the elders of the St. Andrews Rd. church in Columbia, S.C. The Newberry church currently has 12 members.

A Book Review

By Michael Mobley

Biblical Backgrounds of the Troubled Middle East, Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Co., P.O. Box 150, Nashville, TN 37202, 90 pages, paper.

Without bogging down in details, the author gives a concise and clear understanding of the historical relationship between the Jewish and Arab people and how it has developed to its present state of affairs. With its roots in the workings of God in the historical Old Testament, this book explains the origins and paths taken by the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael and God's working with their father Abraham.

The question the world is asking is why are they willing to die for such a small strip of land. By explaining Abraham's place in history, the

author is able from a biblical and historical perspective to explain why both Arab and Jew are fighting doggedly with one another. He deals with the conquest of Canaan, the period between the testaments, the rise of the Jewish state. The reader will also enjoy his brief but clear explanation of the false doctrines of Armageddon and Premillennialism as they are applied to the current events in the Middle East.

We recommend this study for anyone who is interested in understanding what is going on in the Middle East today or anyone who is interested in understanding the adventure that is the story of the Old Testament. This study will help us to appreciate the truth that has a real place in the world's history.

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**CAROLINA
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Special Issue

***A Study
of 2 John***



editorial

By David Pharr

There is no substitute for serious, regular personal study of the Bible itself. Perhaps a kind of study that has been too often neglected is the careful examination of individual Bible books. By this we mean selecting a particular book and giving it the kind of close attention that will show us its purpose in the canon and the thrust(s) of its message.

In February 1990, Johnny Melton edited a special issue of **Carolina Christian** on the book of Hebrews. Of course, Hebrews is too long to give much attention to the many facets of the epistle in a small magazine. In spite of this limitation, however, the lessons on Hebrews were useful and those who made good use of the articles were enriched by the studies.

Aware of our space limitations, we plan to provide at random over the next few months, issues of the magazine which will feature the **one-chapter books** of the New Testament - **2 John, 3 John, Philemon, and Jude**. These will serve as explanatory and practical commentaries on these short but significant books. They are epistles which are too often neglected, but which can contribute much to our understanding and faith.

2 John

This month we are looking at 2 John. The text we are printing with the articles is from the King James Version, but we strongly recommend that other translations be read for comparison. The writers of the articles have called attention to some of the variations in translations. A serious Bible student may want to read the entire thirteen verses of the epistle several times to become familiar with its contents and then study each article by our writers on specific verses and topics.

The Writers

We have asked different brethren to write on specific topics from 2 John. There is, of course, variation of style and some variation in interpretation. Each has, however, contributed material worthy of consideration. As we pro-

vide future issues on the other one-chapter books, we will be using some other writers, most of whom will be Carolina preachers. We think the variety will be stimulating.

As editor I may not agree with every point made by every writer. I mention this to remind our readers that neither this publication, other magazines, nor commentaries are to be accepted without the reader's own careful evaluation and study. With the numerous cross references in the articles there is enough material to keep one profitably occupied for many hours.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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The Elect Lady

By Al Simmons

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth (v. 1a).

Interpreting the Bible generally requires asking and answering questions like, "Who is the author?", "To whom was it written?", and "What is the design or characteristics of the writing?". The answers to these questions will aid one in properly understanding and applying the principles of God's word in his life. The study of the second epistle of John is no exception. The questions above are vital to a mature understanding of what John intended for his readers.

The problem with asking these questions regarding 2 John is that there might not be a clear answer to the question: "To whom is it written?" He ascribed the epistle "unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth..." (v. 1). Scholars have submitted two possibilities as to the type of recipients: (1) An elected (among the saved) lady named "Eclecte" or "Cyria" and her children or (2) a local congregation with John using the term "elect lady" figuratively. This study is designed to explore the evidence supporting each possibility.

A Specific Lady

John's choice of words could indicate that he was simply writing to a specific lady. The "elect lady" (*eklekte kuria*) could have been a specific name. In his book entitled *The Letters of John* which is a part of *The Living Word Commentary* series, J. W. Roberts said, "Kuria could be a personal name, with 'elect' or 'chosen' as a descriptive modifier: 'to the elect Cyria.'"¹ Roy H. Lanier, Jr. stated that the word *kuria* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except 2 John; and 1 Peter 5:13....² Thus, it is possible that John was writing to someone named Cyria (sometimes spelled Kyria). It is also possible that he was writing to *Eklekte*. Roberts said, "*Eklekte* could be a proper name with *kuria*, 'lady,' an appositive: 'to the lady Eclecte.'"³ Clement of Alexandria regarded it as having been written to a certain *Electa*, according to John Stott.⁴ "J. Rendel Harris in the *Expositor* (March 1901) argued from papyri

parallels that *kyria* was a term of endearment, and that 2 John was virtually a love letter written to a certain *Electa* who was far from being what he called 'a prehistoric Countess of Huntingdon!'"⁵

Lanier concludes that the evidence supports a literal meaning of the term rather than a figurative one. He lists the following reasons for such:

"(1) If the salutation had been to a congregation, it would have been specified, as the practice seems to be the uniform mode of the New Testament. (2) It is highly unlikely John would depart from the literal mode of writing First John and Third John to enter into a long figure of speech for an entire letter. (3) It is highly improbable John would have personified a local congregation as a woman, since this type of mystical figure of speech was used only in poetry, prophecy, or some composition where figurative language abounds. (4) The mentions made of 'children,' (vv. 1, 4 and 13) [her sister's children also] are not those that would be used in addressing a local church. (5) It accords best with apostolic usage that the person's name to whom the letter is designated would be addressed directly. (6) The simplicity and tenderness of the epistle stamp it as personal. (7) The use of the plural pronouns (*humin* and *humas*) seems to fit a woman and her children better than a church and its members.... (9) The sustaining of an allegory of this kind, as supposed if it refers to a church, would be highly unlikely in so slight a letter. (10) If it were an allegory, it would destroy any distinction between the lady and her children, as the church (or 'lady') is composed of believers ('children'), and the two are identical. Such redundancy would make little sense. (11) There is really no need to prefer a mystical meaning to the epistle."⁶

Stott adds that if the recipient is an individual, she is no doubt an anonymous one. The absence of a definite article confirms such. Roberts stated that if a Christian lady is preferred, "There is no possibility of identifying her."⁷

This evidence points strongly toward this "elect lady" being an individual person. One who cannot be identified by today's reader. One whose name was either *Cyria* or *Eclecta* (v. 1).

Apparently she was a good Christian mother and had a sister who likewise was a mother (vv. 1-4). John had a great appreciation for this lady and her devotion to God.

A Local Congregation

It is possible, however, that John's usage of the words "elect lady" was understood by his original readers to mean a local congregation. This would mean that John is referring to the church as if it were a lady. It is not that uncommon for the church to be so designated. It is designated as the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9, 22:17, Eph. 5:22f; 2 Cor. 11:2). Roberts adds, "There is precedent for this in the Old Testament in the figure of Israel as a daughter (Isa. 52:2), a bride (Jer. 2:2), a mother (Isa. 54:1ff)."⁸ Lanier lists the following reasons for such a conclusion:

"(1) The plural personal pronoun for 'you' (**humas, humin**) in verses 6 and 8 indicate this **eklekte kurai** is not a single person. (2) The use of the plural verbs in the same verse strengthens this claim. (3) This type of personification of a local congregation or the universal church is common throughout the New Testament. (4) Early church literature, e.g., the **Shepherd of Hermas**, used this personification. (5) A local church would be more apt to need warnings against false teachers. (6) The command to love one another would fit a congregation better than an individual."⁹

Roberts also stated, "Arguments, such as the delicacy of John's declaring his love for the lady, are too subjective to be taken seriously as offering any proof in determining the lady's identity."¹⁰ Stott said, "The elder could hardly refer to his personal love for a lady and her children as a 'command' which 'we have had from the beginning' (See v. 5)."¹¹

This evidence strongly supports the possibility that John was writing to a local congregation of God's people using "elect lady" figuratively. This congregation consisted of both faithful members and unfaithful members. It was a congregation who likely knew John and would have welcomed a visit from him.

The Context

The substance of the epistle often causes some to accept one claim or the other. The letter

is concerned with the proper handling of traveling missionaries. After his salutation (vv. 1-3), he defined "walking in truth" to include "love" and this must be according to "truth" (vv. 4-6). Then he issued a warning against false teachers (vv. 7-8). He forbids showing hospitality toward the false teachers (vv. 9-11). He closes by expressing his desire to visit and sends greetings.

The context reveals that this elect lady could have been either a person or a congregation. For what is encouragement for a part is encouragement for the whole and what is encouragement for the whole is also encouragement for a part.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence above, this writer has concluded that we may never be certain whether this "elect lady" was a specific lady or figuratively a local congregation. The evidence supports both possibilities. It is possible that inspiration intended for this epistle to be addressed in such a fashion that it might not be concluded to whom it was written. It is certain that the epistle is inspired of God. It is certain that the epistle has modern day application: which are beneficial both to individuals and local congregations all over the world.

Endnotes

¹Roberts, J.W., *The Living Word Commentary*, Vol. 18 *The Letters of John*. (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian Press 1984), p. 149.

²Lanier, Jr., Roy H. *Epistles of John* (Abilene, Tex. Quality Publications, 1992) p. 220.

³Roberts, *The Letters of John*, p. 149.

⁴Stott, John R. W. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. vol. 19, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 203.

⁵Stott, p. 203.

⁶Lanier, pp. 219-220.

⁷Roberts, pp. 149-150.

⁸Roberts, p. 150.

⁹Lanier

¹⁰Roberts, p. 150.

¹¹Stott, p. 204

[*Brother Simmons is a native of North Carolina. He worked in the past with congregations in High Point and Charleston. He is now an instructor at East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.*]

For the Truth's Sake

By Rob Albright

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father (vv. 1-4).

It is a source of encouragement for Christians to know of others who are standing for the truth of God's Word. When John wrote to "the elect lady and her children" (2 John 1) it surely brought him great joy to know they were steadfast in their devotion to the truth.

God's word is truth (John 17:17). Everyone who comes to a knowledge of the truth must make a choice. God's word must be accepted or rejected. When one accepts the truth by lining up his life with it, we all rejoice. As the years go by and we find out that this same individual is still "walking in the light" (1 John 1:7) by following God's written word, even greater joy comes to us. Abiding in truth shows devotion to the Christian way of life. Knowing the truth and walking in truth are imperative if we want to please God.

People are searching for the truth. They get conflicting information. As Christians, it is our responsibility to show others the way of truth. We must teach God's word without addition or subtraction. In this way we teach sound doctrine, that is, doctrine which is healthy and wholesome. The power of God's truth is lost if it is distorted with human traditions and false information. Truth cannot be mixed with falsehood and still be truth.

Yes, in teaching others, the truth is sometimes ignored. But our responsibility is to please God by teaching and practicing His word. Proverbs 23:23 states, "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

God's word can be known. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Some do not want to know the truth. Others know it but refuse to accept it. But those who learn the truth and

accept God's truth are made free. Free from the yoke of slavery to sin and free to serve the Son of God and the way of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

May we be like the Psalmist who said, "I have chosen the way of truth" (Psa. 119:30). Only God's word can set us free and place us on the proper course.

We, like John, can rejoice with others who are "walking in truth" (2 John 4). But it brings sadness to know of some who turn away from truth. Paul wrote to Timothy and said that some would "not endure sound doctrine" and they would "turn away their ears from the truth" and "be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It can happen. It does happen. Some are deceived by fables and unrighteous ways and no longer have a love for the truth (2 Thess. 2:10). What a terrible situation it is to no longer have a love for the truth and actually to have "pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12).

Standing for the truth of God's word shows a love for Jesus. He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Jesus also said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

To believe in God and His word is to believe in Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Jesus taught and showed us the truth. To follow Him is to follow the way of righteousness and be brought into a right relationship with God. Abiding in Jesus and following the truth brings confidence and hope. May the truth dwell in us and be with us forever (2 John 2). May we be willing to share it with others and rejoice with all who live "for the truth's sake." [612 Lakeview Drive, Thomasville, NC 27360.]



Commanded From The Beginning

By Clancy P. Etienne

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it (vv. 4-6).

It is remarkable the unique approach John uses in getting his message across to the elect lady. His style demonstrates balance between truth and love.

The writer expresses love and concern for his recipient, thus, seeking to channel the message to his audience without turning anyone away.

It is worthy of interest to note that the purpose of John's one-page letter was to caution against falsehood (v. 7). The development of Gnosticism was well on its way, and those who were walking in the truth had to be warned against this anti-christ movement. It is understood that the difficulty in dealing with Gnosticism at said time was that it was not a homogenous system of either religion or philosophy. However, it embraced many diversified sects holding opinions from a great variety of sources.

The apostle introduces his purpose for writing with a known fact. He was on common ground with his recipient. This is a great way to gain others's attention.

"Not...A New Commandment"

It is not certain which beginning John refers to, the dawn of time, or time relative to the thing mentioned. The beginning to which the author refers, however, is irrelevant. What is important here is that to love and to be loved was something known to humanity.

Since Cain and Abel, love has not been a new commandment. Mankind has been taught to love since the dawn of time (Gen. 4:8-11). God also taught love through the Mosaic system (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 10:19). This was emphasized

during the Lord's ministry (Mat. 22:37-39). The apostle Paul contributed to this matter where he wrote, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth one another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8 KJV). Do the above references contradict Jesus' statement in John 13:34-35? No, they do not. When the Savior made mention of the "new commandment," He had reference to the new dimensions: given to the commandment by His coming, and dying for humanity. The commandment was new in the sense that He gave His followers: (1) a new motivation for love (1 John. 3:16; 4:11-19), (2) a new model after which to pattern their love. This included loving: (a) unselfishly (Phil 2:5-8), (b) understandingly (Heb. 4:15), (c) forgivingly (Col. 3:13-14), (d) sacrificially (John 15:13), and (3) a new significance for love (John. 14:15, 23).

The commandment is not new. It has always been known to the Lord's followers. Most significantly, it had been practiced by both the writer and his recipient. They could not have practiced something which did not exist prior to his writing. Both John and the elect lady had a mutual understanding to the existence of the command. John writes, "...but that which we had from the beginning" (v. 5). John also emphasizes the fact that since the commandment has been around all these years, and they have been practicing it up to this time, the practice should not be discontinued.

The commandment to love is really from the beginning because everything pertaining to Christianity hangs on it (Rom. 13:9). All other commandments in God's book, when broken violate the command to love. Why is it that a Christian man would not run off with his brother's wife? It is because he loves his brother and knows it is wrong to hate his brother by taking what belongs to him. In the above illustration, the governing principle is love. This writer believes this is the reason for Jesus claiming ownership to the commandment (John. 15:12). Keeping all that is comprehended by it in mind, we may say that the Lord only has one commandment. It is the commandment to love. If a man loves, he will not kill, steal, lie

fornicate, etc. This commandment truly has been with Christendom for ages. A more consistently frequent application of it will bring the Lord's disciples closer to him.

"Brotherly Love and Obedience"

In Christianity, love and obedience are inseparable. The two go hand in hand. However, many have failed to find a balance. When balance between truth and love is unequally weighed in the Lord's church, it can cause serious problems. God's people must wake up to the idea that, "truth grows hard (abrasive, ridged) if not softened by love, and love grows soft if not strengthened by truth." A simpler way of putting it is, "Some congregations can be so **truthful**, they are unloving; others, so **loving**, they are untruthful."

John is writing for the sake of truth (v. 2), but the way he gets that across is unique. He seems to be saying, "Lady, it is not that I wish to suggest you no longer practice love. No, not at all. You cannot stop loving others because it is something Christians have been commanded from the beginning. However, in your zeal to be hospitable, be careful that no false teachers are welcomed into your home, and that your loyalty to truth is forgotten." In order to maintain this balance, the question which must be asked is, "What good is love if its practice is not to encourage adherence to the pattern?"

The embankments against the river of love are knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9). Without these restraints, love can be destructive. Opening the heart's door to every wind of doc-

trine, is like opening the floodgates of spiritual destruction. The apostle was aware of the wolf-in-sheep's clothing situation and thus warns his recipient to practice discernment in welcoming strangers into her home. John realized it was not good to practice what would be called love if the truth was not being followed. To follow unsound teaching is a failure to love because love is following truth (vv. 5-6).

Very often in the brotherhood, many good-hearted Christians fall victims to false teaching because they love a brother who has developed a new theory. No one should follow a theory because of good-heartedness. If any teaching is followed, it should be for the sake of truth.

Although man is able to express love in many ways, John teaches true love for God can only be expressed by obedience to His commands (John. 14:15). It must also be added that obedience out of fear of consequences does not demonstrate love towards God. Truth must be obeyed on the basis of love and blessings (v. 9). The life of a Christian should be a long continual walk with his Master (Col. 2:6). One cannot walk in falsehood and love at the same time.

Conclusion

The commandment to love has been with mankind for ages and will be for ages to come. Christians must always be filled with love. However, that love must be truthful. God's people must always walk circumspectly because a failure to do so will cause an imbalance in the love practiced and the truth followed.
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A Deceiver And An Antichrist

By Steven K. Guy

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (v. 7).

I. Howard Marshall states, "Anybody, therefore, who wishes to hear the word of God is invited to read the epistles of John. They form an excellent starting place for the student who wants an introduction to the theology of the New Testament. In the New English Bible, the first epistle is given the heading 'Recall to Fundamentals.' It is an apt title, for this epistle, and indeed all three are concerned with the very fundamentals of Christian belief and life. The reader who grasps the message of these letters will have a sound base in Christian doctrine, ready to be filled out by further study elsewhere in the New Testament."¹ He further advocates that 2 and 3 John serve as excellent introductions to the epistle of 1 John, making, in his opinion, 2 John the first New Testament book to be read. If this were the case, a sincere searcher of Scripture, having read 2 John 1 and finding a certain word repeated, would ask the question of Pilate, "What is truth?" (2 John 1; John 18:38).

Ironically, the embodiment of truth stood before Pilate (John 14:6) and when John wrote his epistle, he advocated that anyone who would follow the truth must believe and confess that Jesus Christ "has come in the flesh" (literally: "the one coming in flesh"). J. W. Roberts says that John used the present tense emphasizing Christ's incarnation as a "sort of timeless event, the results of which were continuing...manifesting itself in the proclamation of the church and the joys of its benefits."² The apostle John affirmed in his gospel that "the Word (God the Son) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Thus, the Bible teaches for one to relate to Bible truth in everyday life, he or she must accept the story of the birth, life, death, resurrection, and church of Jesus Christ as well. Then, they must apply Jesus' teaching and life-style in order to find and know the truth (John 14:6; 17:17; 8:32).

The fact that Jesus is Deity (son of the Father) as stated in 2 John 3 is well established in Scripture (see John 10:24-36). The realization that the truth is something one can know and follow (as stated in 2 John 4, "walking in truth") is a biblical principle (see 1 John 2:3-6). In addition, the adherence to the truth, necessitating one walking in love (2 John 5,6), is a cardinal principle of Scripture (see 1 John 2:4). The rest of the letter of 2 John warns against losing this truth, consequently not having the Father and the Son nor eternal reward. This tragedy upon a Christian is brought about through being deceived by false teachers (2 John 7-11). These teachers were not content to abide in the doctrine of Christ, but were going beyond even to the degree of denying the incarnation of Christ, thus were labeled by John as antichrists (2 John 7; see also 1 John 2:22; 4:1-3). Why would anyone do such a thing?

Gnosticism

Scholars believe from what has been said in John's epistles that a form of Gnosticism was the heresy John was addressing. The term Gnosticism (from the greek word "gnosis"--knowledge) has been given to embrace a variety of pagan religious beliefs and philosophies of men.³ A certain strain of Gnosticism called "Docetism" (from the greek word "dokeo" meaning "to seem" or "to appear") held the view that Christ actually came not in flesh, but that rather He only seemed or appeared to be. The reason for such a doctrine was that the Gnostics had deduced by their "hidden/superior knowledge" that flesh/matter was inherently evil and that a divine being, therefore, could not take on human flesh. A further development of this doctrine called "Cerinthian" (from its main proponent Cerinthus) claimed that Jesus became Christ at His baptism and relinquished it before His crucifixion. Followers of this doctrine reasoned that the spiritual Christ could not experience any of the fleshly sufferings. Therefore, this doctrine denied the virgin birth, the vicarious suffering, and even His involvement in the creation of matter/flesh. Irenaeus records

the following as the position of Cerinthus:

"Cerinthus...taught that the world was not made by the primary God, but by a certain power far separated from him.... He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being" (Irenaeus, "Against Heresies I." 26.1).⁴

Christ in the Flesh

Whether John was primarily addressing Gnosticism in general or Cerinthianism in particular, the fact remains that their teachings are in direct contradiction to the truth of God's word and these propositions are refuted by John in his gospel and epistles (see John 1:1-5; 10:24-36; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 5:5-6; 2 John 3,7). A personal ramification of the Gnostics' doctrine was that since one believed flesh is inherently evil, he could sin and not affect his soul or spirit (1 John 1:5-2:6). In addition, this know-it-all attitude bred indifference to the world and lack of love for the brethren. John taught against such (1 John 2:2, 7-11; 3:10-5:21; 2 John 1:6; 3 John). The truth is that Deity took on human nature in order for mankind to take on a divine nature (2 Peter 2:4; 2 John 8,9), even eternal life (1 John 5:11-15,20).

Therefore, those who embrace the truth that God became flesh, and partake of that event in their lives have both the Father and the Son (2 John 3; 1 John 5:1,4,5). How? (1) By being baptized into the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 2:37-47; Gal. 3:26,27; Rom. 6:1-5; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). (2) By fellowshiping with the saints in corporate worship (remembering the death "body and blood" of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11:20-34). And (3) by dying daily to fleshly lusts and living, in the body, the will of the Spirit (Col. 3 and Rom. 8). Crucial is the understanding that Christ lived in the flesh, because Christianity can only be lived in

the flesh. This truth is not to be kept secret, but in His love, in our flesh, shared and cherished (1 John 1:3-4). For one ever to allow a denial of the incarnation to be entertained would not only separate God as man, but God from man. That is why John would warn his readers not to house or even encourage anyone who would advocate such (2 John 10-11).

An interesting story told of the apostle John and the Gnostic Cerinthus states, "there are also those who heard from him (Polycarp) that John, the divine of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bathhouse without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within.'" Though at first, this story (be it true or not) sounds rather humorous, it nevertheless points out the commitment to truth that John is advocating. For one to deny Jesus "coming in flesh" not only denies the truth of the incarnation of the Savior, but the reality of the lifestyle of those who serve Him. They are deceivers and antichrists.

End Notes

¹I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., pp. 1,2.

²J.W. Roberts, *The Letters of John, The Living Word Commentary*, Abilene, Texas: A.C.U. Press, pp.160-1.

³John Rutherford, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by James Orr, Vol. II, "Gnosticism," Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., pp. 1240-8, has a thorough discussion.

⁴Everett Ferguson, *The Letters of John, The Message of the New Testament, The Way of Life Series*, No. 175, Abilene, Texas: Biblical Research Press, pp. 2-9, has a good discussion; also see Roberts, pp. 4-10 and Marshall, pp. 14-28. Marshall says that Cerinthian is perhaps the most widely accepted view of the heresy, p. 17.

⁵Ibid., "Irenaeus Against Heresies, III," 3.4.

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Look To Yourselves

By Wallace Beasley

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward (v. 8).

The condition that prompted the Holy Spirit to have John write, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward," can be found in the preceding verse. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ." Concisely, John is saying that there are many false teachers that will lead Christians away from the truth and their salvation, by teaching falsehoods about Christ and the truth He taught.

Personal Responsibility

To avoid being led astray, John said that Christians should look to themselves. This was true then as well as now. Certainly, this does not mean to look to our own wisdom, for Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Also, Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." But to look to ourselves does mean that we are to examine everything we hear in the light of the Scriptures. Likewise those early Christians were to evaluate the things they heard from anyone with the truth as taught by those like the apostle John. What they found to be untrue was to be quickly rejected, as is clearly shown in 2 John 9-11.

The text under consideration teaches that Christians for all times are responsible for what they believe. Those early Christians were to look deeply into their hearts and examine whether they were being loyal to the truth they had received. We are no less responsible. To look to ourselves can be difficult if fleshly desires and worldly pressures dominate our thinking. When we look to ourselves there must be the mind of Christ ruling within us. Paul said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The only way Christ can rule our minds will be to put the truth He taught into our minds by diligent Bible study.

Paul explained this well in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." When we look into a mind filled with what this Scripture describes, then we can examine and evaluate with assurance and accuracy all things we hear. There is not one area of life that God's Word does not cover in some way.

Personal responsibility for the welfare of our souls probably needs to be emphasized more than it usually is. Paul leads our minds toward this responsibility with his words in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This is why John taught that Christians need to "look to yourselves." No one can believe for us, or faithfully walk with Christ for us; neither can anyone be judged for us. The only person that can stand with us at the judgment is Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 10:32, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Yet, we wonder how many people really give serious thought to this needed friendship and lordship of Christ at the judgment.

The responsibility for what we do with our faith was never better explained than in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" The world we are now living in has possibly produced more things to challenge the Christian's faith than in many generations. We need to heed the words of John and look to ourselves to protect our faith by having the mind of Christ, and to expect no one to do it for us. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it. And, we need to

know that Christ has told us to believe what we believe through His gospel. We should ever keep in mind that, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). Indeed, let us look to ourselves.

"We" or "Ye"?

We now turn our attention to a debated part of 2 John 8. There are various ideas on how the pronoun *we* is used within the passage. Some feel that the *we* refers to those that had done the work of teaching to those that are addressed in the epistle. This is to say, that the teachers (like John) would not get a full reward at the judgment if the ones that had been taught fell away. Notice how this part of the text reads, "That we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." While such scriptures as, "If any man's work abide which he built thereupon he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:14-15) may be referring to such a situation, it seems that John is more interested in his hearers receiving *their* full reward. Most commentators feel this way. They see John using *we* to include himself in their reward because he is so much a part of them. Still, others think that the "*we*" refers solely to the people to whom John was writing. They argue this by referring to some of the early manuscripts which have "*ye*" instead of "*we*." Whatever one decides as to the interpretation, we know from many scriptures that everyone must be responsible for what he believes; and that only faithful living according to the truth of God will get a person into heaven. All that needs to be said on this point can be seen in Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

But, while we are thinking about the personal responsibility of our faith, and the role others may have had in bringing us to that faith, we should take time and thought to appreciate their labors. Certainly we should desire not to do anything to make their labor of love on us to become in vain. No greater love can anyone bestow upon us than to help us get to heaven. Yet, such labors are sometimes not appreciated.

We even see people become resentful when the truth is spoken to them, even though it was spoken with the deepest love and humility. This is seen both inside and outside of the church. The proper attitude we should have toward those that speak the truth in love is seen in what is said about our responsibility to elders in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Degrees of Reward?

Our last consideration of 2 John 8 is on whether it is teaching degrees of reward. We notice that the last statement in the verse says "that we receive a full reward." Some commentators say that if these early disciples did listen to false teachers, that they still would be saved, but not get as big a reward as they would have if they had not listened to them. This is hardly sensible or scriptural. If believing in Christ is what saves us, how could believing on one (an anti-christ) who does not believe in Christ, possible produce salvation, even a little bit of salvation? Maybe there will be degrees of reward, but one would be hard pressed to prove it on the basis that one can choose false doctrine over truth and still enter into heaven except that his reward in heaven would be less than what others will have. In fact, 2 John 9 completely refutes such an idea when it says, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." If there are degrees of reward in heaven, it would have to be based on the degree of faithfulness and devotion, not because unbelief is allowed. In other words, some will have served more in love, devotion, and sacrifice than others, but all will have served in truth.

It will help to keep in mind that the full reward mentioned in verse 8, may simply mean that our reward will finally be full and complete when we get to heaven. We have many blessings in Christ here on earth, but the full reward will be in heaven. May we look to ourselves through the eyes of God's word, that we may receive the full reward.

[Route 12, Box 108, Statesville, NC 28677.]

What Is The Doctrine Of Christ?

By Bill Heinselman

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (v. 9).

One of the most important and controversial issues facing the churches of Christ in the last half of the twentieth century is that of fellowship. The matter is broached by John in 2 John 9-11. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

About Christ or From Christ?

This passage enters into the controversy because some among us say that the phrase, doctrine of Christ, here means the teaching **about** Christ, while others maintain that the phrase means the teaching which Christ did. Those who say that the writer is speaking only of the teaching **about** Christ also contend that the fellowship of the saints should be extended to those who hold to the fundamental teachings about our Lord and Savior, regardless of other "doctrinal" differences we may have with them. These say that "an objective analysis of this passage...produces a real surprise to partisan defenders who have merely accepted a traditional explanation without study or investigation."¹

We hope in this article to make an "objective analysis" of the passage whether it produces any surprises or not. Certainly representative of the views of those contending that the "doctrine of Christ" in this passage means the teachings about Christ would be W. Carl Ketcherside. He wrote:

"We can determine what 'the doctrine of Christ' is in this sense by the effect of 'going beyond' or 'abiding in it.' One who **advances** has not God; one who 'abides in it' has both the Father and Son. The doctrine of Christ, in this case, does not consist of **the things** Jesus taught, but of **the things** taught **about** Jesus."²

It is obvious to all who have carefully studied the Gospel according to John, that Jesus Christ equated His teaching with that of the Father. To receive Him is to receive the Father. To reject Him is to reject the Father. He also made it clear that receiving Him was dependent upon believing and obeying his teaching! Note the following statements in the Gospel of John:

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do..." (John 5:19).

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

"...ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:38).

"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17).

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50).

We could go on, but these verses are sufficient to show that the same writer who gave us 2 John 9-11, also told us of Jesus' claim of speaking for the Father, and that to receive these words would be to receive the words of the Father, and that to reject Christ's teaching is equal to rejecting the Father. This, my friends, is precisely the teaching of 2 John 9-11!

"Every reputable scholar known to us believes that John was writing to counteract the pernicious effects of Gnosticism."³ A casual reading of the book of 2 John will show this to be true. The strongest argument of those who claim the 9th verse is speaking of the teaching about Christ rather than the teaching Christ did is the argument from the context, in my opinion. Certainly the context is vital to a correct understanding of any passage. But there is more to the context than John's condemnation of the "anti-christ who does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Notice the use of

the word "truth" in verses 1, 2, and 4. Also note the word "commandment" in verses 4, 5, and 6. Surely, no one will say that these words refer only to the teaching about Christ. I am not aware of any "scholar" who would make such a suggestion. "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psa. 119:160, ASV). The sum of anything is the whole of its parts! We believe John meant the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, when he used this word in our text.

One very important point all should consider needs to be brought out at this juncture. The teaching **about** Jesus Christ is important to us only if it includes the consequences of receiving Him or rejecting Him! What difference does it make that Jesus was born of a virgin, if it in no way relates to me? What difference does it make that Christ really came to the earth as the Son of God in the flesh, if this has no bearing on my life or future? Can't we see that the teaching **about** Him must, indeed, include the authority of the teaching Christ **did** and what will happen if we reject it, or else it means nothing at all! If there is no inclusion of the commands Christ gave, then there is nothing in the teaching **about** Christ for one to "abide in," there is only something for him to believe.

The consequences of Christ coming to this earth in the form of man are clearly brought out by the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5-11, and that passage includes a "Wherefore" in verse 9. If the teaching about Christ does not include the commands of Christ for me to obey, how am I to know how to respond to this teaching? In Acts 8:26-40, we have an example that is certainly pertinent to our discussion. Philip began at the Scripture the Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah and "preached unto him Jesus" (v. 35). The next thing we find is that the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized! Why? Surely, I will be accused of being a "traditionalist" if I use the old argument: "There must be something about preaching Jesus that includes baptism." But so be it! I know of no other explanation, do you? So, we conclude that to preach about Jesus does the sinner no good unless you also teach him what Jesus wants him to do.

Scholars

Mention was made earlier of the "scholars" and their comments upon the passage we

are considering. When consulted about the meaning of the phrase, "doctrine of Christ" in 2 John 9, the scholars are very nearly unanimous. Their response is to the effect that this means the teaching Christ did. A.T. Robertson, recognized scholar and grammarian states: "Not the teaching about Christ, but that of Christ which is the standard of Christian teaching as the walk of Christ is the standard for the Christian's walk (1 John 2:6)."⁴ J. H. Thayer says, "the doctrine which has God, Christ, the Lord, for its author and supporter."⁵ M. R. Vincent writes: "The meaning is, whosoever advances beyond the limits of Christian doctrine..."⁶ Now, each of these scholars was aware that John was dealing with the matter of Gnosticism in 2 John, yet, each declared himself to understand the phrase under consideration to mean "the teaching Christ did."

Concerning the grammar of the statement in 2 John 9, perhaps we should consider other references where the grammar (in the Greek) is identical. In Matthew 16:12 we find Jesus referring to the "doctrine of Pharisees and Sadducees." Was Jesus warning against teaching being taught by the Pharisees and Sadducees, or was He warning them of teaching about the Pharisees and Sadducees? In Revelation 2:14, "doctrine of Balaam," does not refer to some who "hold" to the teaching about Balaam. Rather it means the teaching of Balaam taught. The context clearly shows which it was! And in the next verse (15), "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans," which some were holding was the teaching which the Nicolaitans did, not the teaching about the Nicolaitans? When this comparison is made, there can be little doubt as to the meaning of "doctrine of Christ" in 2 John 9.

But all of this evidence notwithstanding, some have recently been converted to the view that this phrase means the teaching about Christ, and that, therefore, we should extend our fellowship to all who hold to the fundamental teaching about Christ, no matter what else they may believe and practice in religion!

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Impact on Fellowship

Suppose we grant for argument's sake that the phrase, "doctrine of Christ" in this verse means "the teaching about Christ" rather than the teaching Christ did. Would this then mean that the conclusion is unavoidable that we are to extend our fellowship to all who hold to the fundamental teachings about Christ - regardless of other considerations? Emphatically, No! There are other passages in the New Testament which also limit our fellowship. Note the following:

(1) In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus teaches that if one among us becomes so stubborn and rebellious that he refuses to make a matter right with a brother whom he has wronged, after due process, "let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican." Are we to understand that we are to continue to fellowship this individual as if nothing happened, or is this an example of a situation in which the church is to exercise discipline and withdraw fellowship from such a person? Surely, it is the latter. Observe carefully that this withdrawal of fellowship was not because he rejected truth about the Lord.

(2) In Romans 16:17, the Apostle Paul implores us to "mark" and "avoid" those who would cause divisions and offenses "contrary to the doctrine which we have learned." Does this language indicate that we are to continue to fellowship a person like this? How could we fellowship him and "avoid" him at the same time?

(3) A brother in the church at Corinth was guilty of flagrant fornication. Paul told them to "deliver" such a one to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5). They were to "purge out" the old leaven (v. 7). They were not to "keep company" with a brother who would do such a thing (v. 11). They were not so much as to eat with him. They were, according to Paul, to "put away from among themselves that wicked person" (v. 13). Is anyone among us ready to suggest that these words mean that they were to continue to fellowship that individual?

(4) "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Have we misunderstood this verse throughout the years? If Paul did not mean to exclude this person from the fellowship of the saints, what

did he mean?

(5). "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. 3:10). Are we to reject this person and fellowship him at the same time? Are we to invite him into our midst to address the congregation and "give us his point of view?" What does Paul mean when he says we are to reject him?

(6) "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). The context describes what Paul is talking about: immoral conduct, covetousness, foolish talking, etc. Could any statement limiting our fellowship be any more clear than this one?

We could, of course, go on because there are more references to be considered. But are these not sufficient to show clearly that the Scriptures teach Christians to limit their fellowship?

The word "hermeneutics" has been used a great deal lately, but if there is any "science of interpretation," certainly one fundamental principle would be that we are not to take any one passage of Scripture to the exclusion of all others dealing with the same subject matter. This has been characteristic of sectarians for years.

The Psalmist declared, "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psa. 119:160, ASV). Surely, we must take all the word of God has to say about the matter of fellowship and not just one verse! Every verse teaches the truth. Second John 9-11 means that if any of us continue to support a false teacher (one who proceeds beyond the teaching of Christ) that one shall receive a false teacher's reward.

Endnotes

¹Ketcherside, Carl W., *Bible Study Textbook Series, Epistles of John*, Joplin, Missouri: College Press, p. 171.

²Ibid, p. 193.

³Ibid, p. 185.

⁴Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1933, Vol. VI, p. 254.

⁵Thayer, J.H., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th Ed., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901, p. 144.

⁶Vincent, Marvin R., *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965, Vol. II, p. 395.

⁷Shelly, Rubel, *I Just Want to be a Christian*, Nashville, 20th Century Christian, p. 90.

[P.O. Box 279, Cary, NC 27512]

Limits Of Fellowship

By Jim Mullican

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: For he that bid-deth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds (vv. 10-11).

What John Wrote

Because the grammar and vocabulary of John's letters are the simplest in the New Testament, students of New Testament Greek generally begin their translation of the New Testament here. Consequently, the following is my own translation and will serve as a basis for the study of 2 John 9-11.

"Anyone who goes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God. He who remains in the teaching, in this way has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you, and he does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into the house and do not give him any greeting. For the one who gives him greeting shares in his wicked works."

What the First Readers Understood

"Anyone" in John's mind refers specifically to the Docetists, the false teachers who were undermining the faith of some concerning Jesus as the unique Son of God who had suffered in the flesh for mankind.

They considered themselves to be progressives, intellectually and spiritually advanced, so that they claimed to know more than was revealed in the written Scripture. They wanted to lead the church into the next century, leaving behind the traditions of the first century. But as Westcott points out, "True progress includes the past."¹ The word John uses for their desire to "go ahead" refers to one who desires to lead, and is used by Matthew and Mark of Jesus leading His disciples (Matt. 26:32, 28:7; Mark 10:32, 14:28, 16:7). The King James Version reads "transgresseth" here, following later and less accurate manuscripts, primarily from the ninth and tenth centuries, which apparently sought to clarify the meaning of "goes ahead."

The "teaching of Christ" can be under-

stood two ways. It could mean the teaching which Christ Himself did, or it could mean teaching about Christ done by others. While these should be the same, in reality they are not always identical. Most commentators (Hobbs,² Bruce,³ Westcott,⁴ Plummer,⁵) take the former view. Marshall⁶ takes the latter, while Vine⁷ subscribes to both. In any case, John is concerned about false teachers who differ with the truth of the gospel.

Such people, despite their claims to the contrary, have rejected God. They reject the authority of Jesus, and as Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6, RSV). Vine points out, "There may be great professions of religion and religious zeal, but to add to, or depart from, the teaching of Christ (as Jude calls it, 'the faith once for all delivered to the saints,' R.V.) must eventually involve that condemnation which He foretold when He said, 'Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity' (or rather, 'lawlessness'; that is, whatever is contrary to the will of God)."⁸ Such a person "does not have God" because he has in fact placed himself in the role of God, setting his own standard of right and wrong.

"He who remains in the teaching" signifies living, lodging, staying, or abiding. This person is not forever chasing the latest theological fad or "wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14, RSV). He realizes that genuine truth does not change from one generation to the next.

Such a person has "both the Father and the Son" as a result of his adherence to the truth and his obedience to it, in contrast to the Docetists, who rejected Jesus' Divinity and thus that of the Father, since Jesus claimed oneness with the Father (John 10:30).

John's use of "if" in verse 10 is part of a Greek expression which does not express doubt as to whether such a thing will happen, but rather means, "Since this will certainly happen."⁹

When such a false teacher "comes to you," he will not come as a mere visitor or worshipper, but will be "coming on a mission as a teacher."¹⁰ His goal will be to spread his heresy.

Westcott sees this "coming" as that of a man claiming special authority, who expects the church to provide him an official welcome and the opportunity to teach.¹¹

It is the responsibility of elders to guard the Christians committed to their care, just as a shepherd would try to prevent his sheep eating poisonous plants (1 Peter 5:2). Before entrusting anyone with the role of teacher or preacher, some investigation needs to be made into his beliefs and his past record, lest the faith of the disciples be undermined by one who "does not bring this teaching," which is the teaching of Jesus as set forward for us in the New Testament.

In warning his readers, "do not receive him into the house," (my translation, J.M.) John is not advocating a refusal of hospitality to anyone who is not a faithful Christian, or with whom one disagrees. At this time, "the house" probably meant the house in which the church worshipped, and refers not to physically barring his entry, but rather to extending to him an opportunity to spread his heresy. If, however, it is understood of simple hospitality in the home, it should also be remembered that traveling preachers in those days were dependent on such hospitality for their meals and housing. To provide anything which would aid him in his work is forbidden.

Nor does John intend that Christians be cold and unfriendly even to one who is a false teacher. John's word for "greeting" means a salute of welcome, and was the usual opening of a letter written between friends in his day.¹² "God speed" of the King James Version is a term of farewell, and in any case obscures the meaning of John's word. His instruction is to not extend any official sanction or endorsement to a false teacher, so as to enhance his influence in the church or community.

Such an endorsement would involve one in sharing responsibility for anyone who is lost to the kingdom as a result of the false teaching. The word means to participate in, to be a partner, or to have fellowship together. Those out of fellowship with God must be out of fellowship with His people.

His "wicked works" include the false teacher's spoken words, his writings, and any sinful deeds. Words frequently accomplish more than deeds,¹³ especially in the mouth of a skilled teacher, and particularly if he is dishon-

est and hides his true nature.

Applications for the Church Today

While much has changed in terms of technology and lifestyle since John's day, basic human nature has changed little, if at all. Pride, greed, lust, false teaching, and all the sins which plagued the first-century world also plague the twentieth century. John's words therefore apply to the modern church; but how do his warnings about the Docetists who denied the reality of Jesus' death on the cross apply to the questions of who is to be regarded as a Christian and to whom should fellowship be extended in the modern church? The attempt to answer those questions will be the final step in this study.

All change is not progress. True improvement and growth means becoming more like Christ, not more like the world. Those who today wish to re-establish fellowship with those who abandoned the New Testament pattern in order to embrace instrumental music a century ago need to remember this. To be reunited would not be a victory but a defeat, unless the digressions which destroyed the basis of fellowship are first abandoned. Those who abandon the teaching of Christ are no longer Christians. The fact that people call themselves Christians, and call Jesus "Lord," does not mean they actually are Christians (Matt. 7:21-23). A rejection of plain gospel teaching is a rejection of Christianity. This is where the line of fellowship must be drawn.

Christians are not to support and endorse the views of false teachers, nor provide them with opportunities to spread their views. They should be welcomed just like any visitor, but the opportunity to undermine faith and destroy years of hard work in building up the church should not be extended to anyone known to teach that which disagrees with the Scriptures.

A reservation concerning the indiscriminate application of this injunction is necessary here. Not all who differ with one another should be regarded as dangerous false teachers. There are areas of opinion where sincere brethren may differ. For example, some hold that a once-married widower may serve as an elder. This writer disagrees with that, but it has never been viewed as grounds for breaking fellowship or disrupting the peace of a congregation. Plummer reminds

the Christian of today that not all divergent views fall into the same category as the Docetic heresy, and points out that Jesus himself ate with "Pharisees, publicans, and sinners."¹⁴ In making decisions regarding such matters, one should ask, "Am I in real danger of being drawn into apostasy? Is the church being exposed to danger?" Such questions will help wise elders determine when to close the pulpit to a given teacher.

A final consideration for those who seek to be faithful to the New Testament pertains to the emissaries of such religious groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who frequently knock at the door. In light of verse 10, some have held it to be a sin even to invite such people into the house to study the Bible and perhaps lead them to the truth. That is not John's teaching, nor is he saying one must not offer them a glass of water on a hot day, a kindness which would be extended to even an atheist.¹⁵ To invite such people to teach their doctrine to the church, or to introduce them to one's neighbors as teachers of God's word is the kind of

thing John forbids, rather than common courtesy and an attempt to reclaim those in error.

Endnotes

¹B.F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1883; reprint ed., 1966) pg. 230.

²Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Epistles of John* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing Co., 1983) p. 157.

³F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970) p. 142.

⁴B.F. Westcott, p. 230.

⁵ Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1886; reprint ed., 1980) p. 139.

⁶I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978) p. 73.

⁷W.E. Vine, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970) p. 118.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ Alfred Plummer, p. 139.

¹¹B.F. Westcott, p. 230.

¹²I. Howard Marshall, p. 74.

¹³ Alfred Plummer, p. 140.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 139-140.

¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, p. 142.

[*RT. 4, Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28786*]

Paper And Ink Or Face To Face

By Jack Simons

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen (vv. 12-13).

John writes in the conclusion of 2 John, his epistle to "the elect lady and her children," "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full" (2 John 12, ASV). From these words we are led to believe John expected to visit the elect lady soon, hence the brevity of the letter.

Having this hope to shortly visit the elect lady, John felt it expedient and necessary to address the most important matters at hand, impressing upon her his continued love and concern for her and hers (vv.1-4), the need to keep walking in truth and to love one another

(vv.5-6), and to be ever alert for false teachers in no way having part or lot with them (vv.7-10). He then concludes saying he prefers to discuss many other things with her "face to face", or literally from the Greek (**stoma pros stoma**) "mouth to mouth," rather than with paper and ink.

His reason for wishing to visit and discuss these many more things was to bring a fulfillment of her joy. This fulfillment of joy refers to the abiding grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (v.3), which can be found only when we continue in His love by keeping His commandments (v.6; cf. John. 14:15). Hence the admonition of verse 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Truly the only way our joy as Christians can ever be full is by a steadfast faith in the Lord (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22; Heb.

12:2; 1 Pet. 1:8; 4:13; Jude 24).

Paper as we know it today was not invented until long after this epistle was written. The "paper" referred to here was papyrus sheets made from the pith of a reed which grew in the lowlands of Palestine and Egypt. These sheets were usually glued together to make scrolls, and were a common writing material of that day. The "ink" was made by mixing carbon (soot or lampblack) or red iron oxide with water thickened with gum arabic. The "pen" was made by pointing the end of a reed and splitting it to make a nib.

Many times it is difficult to convey what we wish to say to others with written words. This does not discount the need and value for conveying thought by the written word, for often such may be the only means available, and without it no communication could be established. Also the written word provides a permanence unattainable when words are only spoken. How often have we wished we could recall something important said by another but could not? Had it been written down, we could refer back to it to bring it to mind again, and find edification in reading it again and again. How refreshing it is to receive a letter from some dear to us who are distant from us.

At present we do our best to comprehend the written word of God as it describes to us what Jesus will look like at His second coming (Rev. 19:11-16), the glory of heaven (Rev. 21-22), and being in the presence of God (Rev. 4-5); however, our present understanding can hardly compare to what it will be like to see and to know face to face (1 John. 3:2).

A face to face experience also brings the joy of personal fellowship (1 Thess. 2:17; 3:10). Hearing inflection of voice as one speaks and seeing one's expressions and gestures as he speaks gives more meaning and better understanding to what is being said.

We do not hear audible words from God, but how wonderful it is that "God hath spoken" by the prophets and in these last days by His Son (Heb. 1:1-3). How important it is that "It is written." (This is a phrase used often by Jesus, recorded no less than nine times in Matthew, six times in Mark, and four times in Luke. See especially Matt. 4:6, 7, 10.)

Let us never underestimate the value of the written word of God! It perfects us before God,

thoroughly furnishing us unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17). It is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16) and to enlighten us converting our souls (Psa. 19:7-8). It is noble to "search the scriptures daily" to ascertain truth (Acts 17:11). We are commanded to study and handle aright the word of truth that we may show ourselves approved of God (2 Tim. 3:15, ASV). We are commanded to "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). How difficult it would be to "Try the spirits whether they, are of God" (1 John. 4:1) if we did not have the written word. We purify our souls and are born again through obeying the truth which is the word of God (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Only this truth can make us free (John. 8:32).

We do not know the nature of the many other things John may have discussed with the elect lady if and when he found the occasion to visit her, but we do have his epistle to her preserved for us in the canon of God's word. Aren't we glad he wrote what we call 2 John? Just think of the importance of verse nine and how often you have heard it quoted warning us against fellowship with falsehood. We don't know what were the many other things he may have discussed with the elect lady in person, but the Lord preserved for us what we need.

Indeed it would, however, let us ever look to the day when we can meet Jesus face to face (1 John. 3:2) with the hope of ever beholding his face in heaven (Rev. 22:4). Truly then we shall understand all in a way impossible for us to do so now, though the written word prepares us for and points us to that time when our joy shall be completely fulfilled in a face to face eternal encounter with Christ (Jude 24-25).

[Brother Simons has worked several years with the Warners Chapel congregation, 8998 Lasater Road, Clemmons, NC 27012.]

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Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

The **BROOKS AVE CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Raleigh, N.C., will be celebrating its forty-fifth anniversary with a homecoming on November 22. All former members and friends are invited to the homecoming. . . **DAN PAYNE**, of Brevard, N.C., is the new preacher for the **ALBEMARLE CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Albemarle, N.C. . . **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST** on Hilton Head Island, S.C., dedicated its new church building on October 4. The speaker for the dedication service was James Vandiver, preacher for the Harpeth Hills church in Brentwood, Tenn. The **GARDEN CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Orangeburg, S.C., has also dedicated its new church building. The dedication service was held September 20. . . **KEITH STOTTS**, President of Ohio Valley College, and **BOB CRUM**, Director of Admissions at OVC, will

be the speakers for a Family Emphasis Weekend hosted by the **THOMASVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Thomasville, N.C., November 13-15. Those interested in more information should call (919) 472-6960. . . **WELLINGTON SMITH**, who preaches for the Walkup Ave. church in Monroe, N.C., will be preaching in a gospel meeting at the **SLATER-MARIETTA CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Slater, S.C., November 1-4. . . We were just recently informed that **HERSCHEL McDONALD**, a preacher with ties to the Carolinas, died on June 19 at the age of 82. Brother McDonald preached for the Broad St. church of Christ in Statesville, N.C., in the early 1970's. He was also actively involved with Carolina Bible Camp each summer during that time.
[Yadkinville, NC]

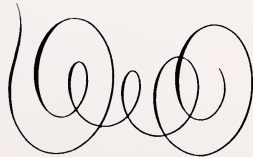
A Book Review

By Michael R. Mobley

Precious Are His Sheep, Lea Fowler. Quality Publications, PO Box 1060, Abilene, TX 79604-1060; paper, 75 pages.

One of the most unique relationships to exist in nature is the relationship between sheep and the shepherd. In both the Old and the New Testaments, God uses this concept to describe the relationship that exists between God and His people through the life giving relationship that is established between Christ and His followers. This study examines how important the believer is to God and how much God loves the believer. It examines how important the believer is to God and how much God loves the believer. It examines such classic passages as Isaiah 53, Psalm 23, John 10, and Luke 15. It also explains the difference between the goats and the sheep. The study contrasts the helplessness of sheep when they are left to themselves and the total dependence of the sheep to believe and follow the love, wisdom, and commitment of the good

and gentle shepherd to lead his flock and to keep it safe in the midst of a dangerous world. The shepherd is faithful with the trusting sheep of his pasture. All through the study, the question is asked, "Who is your lord, savior, and master?" If it is not Jesus, it will fail you forever. This is an excellent study for Bible class or for personal study.



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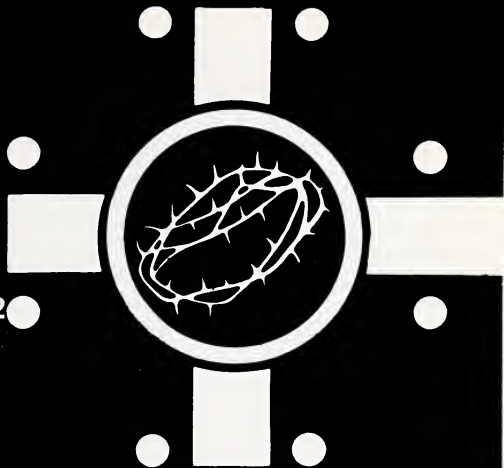
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Condemnation or Compassion

I am constantly searching for statements that communicate. Recently, President Bush stated at the Religious Broadcasters Meeting, "Theirs is the most comfortable variety of religion — Christianity that condemns." POW! He landed one right between the eyes.

This makes policemen of us. Yes, we should condemn sin, but we are to do more than condemn. Some know more about whats wrong than whats right. Some become hyper-critical. Some begin to decide "Who is in and who is out; Who is right and who is wrong." Some even threaten. We become highly competitive. We lose our objectivity. We forego our balance.

This affects the way we hear sermons or participate in Bible class. We are searching for error, not truth. We think we have succeeded when we have found the error. Finding the error fed our pride. Are we helping people discover truth, or are we just wanting to "skin the hide off someone"?

Such makes me feel better. Condemning, fault finding makes me feel superior, self-righteous. The condemning Christian focuses upon others — not self. We try to straighten out the preacher, the elders, the congregation, yes, even the brotherhood, without addressing self adequately.

This can cause great harm. Brethren will come to hear others condemned. We drive miles to hear a preacher "rip the hide off and pour in the salt" on people who are not even present. We brag on the speaker's courage. It requires no courage to skin those not present!

Courage comes in honest self-examination. Courage comes in compassion, servanthood, and forgiveness. When witch hunters move from discovery to conquest, "believing Christians" become an endangered species. Christianity that only condemns, is not Christianity at all.

— Mark Swindall



editorial

By David Pharr

This is being written a few days before the presidential election. By the time it is printed and mailed the votes will be counted and a president will have been elected. There will be for some disappointment, and for others elation. There will be optimism and pessimism. What will actually be in store for the next four years, however, only the Lord knows.

I have no objection to Christians taking a reasonable and honorable interest in the political process. It is even to be expected that good people may often be on opposite sides of political issues. It is a grievous mistake, however, when we build our hopes or focus our fears on the outcome of political elections.

The issues which were most prominent in the recent campaigns reveal much about the mindset of American society. To some extent the candidates try to choose the subjects they want to exploit, but eventually they have to deal with the matters that seem to matter most to the electorate. And most of what we have heard has centered on the economy. In fact, it seems to me that money and things related to money infiltrated the discussions of almost every other issue.

That the economy is a legitimate concern is not disputed. What should concern us, however, is that money is a bigger issue in this country than is morals. When the issue of education, for example, is on how students can be trained to have better careers but not necessarily become better people, something is wrong. When trade agreements are argued only from concern for how they can raise our own standard of living without thought for the poor of other nations, something is wrong. When politicians tell their hopes for the future for our children and grandchildren, telling of the disastrous consequences of the national debt, while saying nothing about the nations faster growing debt of sin, something is wrong. I can't visualize the trillions of dollars of the federal deficit. But how much more staggering would it be if we could visualize the compounding iniquities of a nation that has sold itself to pleasure, that per-

mits and protects sordid perversions, and that murders innumerable infants as a constitutional convenience? Material prosperity came as a blessing from God, it has become the idol that is taking us away from God. The problems of this countrys economy can hardly be compared to the problems in its character.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION STAFF

David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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Where we are going as a nation is not to be learned by reading newspapers. It will only be learned by reading the Bible. The messages of the prophets of old are as applicable today as they were then. It is tragic that even Christians sometimes fail to recognize that the same Divine principles that brought either peace and prosperity or else shame and ruin to the nations of old are still the principles by which God's providence is applied to nations now.

"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:7-10).

Deuteronomy 8:7-18 show some striking parallels between the situation of ancient Israel and modern America. Take the time to read this section and consider how the principles apply to our own trends as a nation. Better still, let us examine how these principles apply to us personally.

Whether we feel good or bad about the outcome of the recent election, as Christians we ought not to feel too strongly about it at all. This is a lesson Isaiah learned, and it is recorded for us in Isaiah 6. King Uzziah had been a popular king and was generally considered a good one. Judah had prospered under his leadership. It was "in the year that king Uzziah died" that Isaiah saw a vision of God on His throne. The fact that it was in the year that this great king died that Isaiah saw the vision is probably more than a historical coincidence. Isaiah no doubt had considered King Uzziah as very important to the welfare of the nation. His death would mean much uncertainty and cause feelings of insecurity. But when Isaiah saw God on His throne it would remind him of this great truth: What matters is not who reigns in Jerusalem, but who reigns from Heaven; and to us, it is not who sits in the White House for four years, but who rules from His eternal throne. A president may change the nation, but only God can save the people.

The next chapter of Isaiah (chapter 7) tells

of how King Ahaz chose a political solution instead of trusting the Lord. The crisis facing Judah at the time was terrifying to Ahaz and the people (see Isa. 7:2) God sent Isaiah with a message for Ahaz that if he would trust God, all would be secure (Isa. 7:3-9, especially 9b). He even offered a miraculous sign to confirm it. But King Ahaz wanted neither God's guidance nor the sign. His mind was set on a political solution. He thought his skill in solving problems would be more successful than would be trusting the plan of God. Of course he was wrong, and his political solutions only resulted in the nation's further ruin. Whether in ancient Judah or in the United States, any political plan that leaves out God can never prosper.

In all of the agitation about the economy, it is easy for us to forget what our real riches are. The prophet Habakkuk wrote to people whose economy was primarily agricultural. He spoke of the loss of crops and livestock in much the same way we might concern ourselves with the loss of jobs and savings. But he never lost sight of the presence and help of God.

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

Two Significant Books

Two new books have recently been published which are important reading for those who are concerned over current brotherhood trends. In August we made brief reference to our concerns over the book by James Woodroof, **The Church in Transition**. In a thorough response to Woodroof's contentions, James D. Bales has written a book entitled, "**The Church in Transition**" TO WHAT?

While many have been disappointed over Bales's teaching on divorce and remarriage, most have recognized him as a capable writer. I consider this new work to be a much needed and effective answer to the problems being created by the Woodroof position.

F. LaGard Smith's new work, **The Cultural Church**, is a study of the cultural influences that appear to be behind the calls for a

“new hermeneutic” and other changes in the church. Brother Smith seeks to be balanced in showing the mistakes of those who hold to ideas and practices merely because of prejudices and traditions, as well as the mistakes of those who are too much influenced by the changes in society. The title, **The Cultural Church**, comes from the author’s concern that we are too much influenced by culture, and that the church ought to be shaped by the word of God.

Written in an easy-to-read style, I highly recommend this work for preachers, elders, and everyone else who has a serious interest in understanding the influences and philosophies that are affecting the church. We may not agree with everything Smith says, but what he says is wor-

thy of consideration.

Ralph Richardson

Elsewhere in the magazine is an obituary regarding Ralph Richardson. Ralph was a close personal friend of mine, a tireless worker, an encourager of God’s people. In reporting brother Richardson’s passing, Jerry Senn wrote: “When I think of what a true servant ought to be, I’ll always think of Ralph.... He never sought attention or wanted personal glory for his efforts. His life will be honored by the Lord he served so well.”

Managing Editor’s Column

Justification By Faith

By Johnny R. Melton

Likely Paul wrote to the Roman church early in A.D. 57. Romans 15:26ff indicates the fund for the needy in Jerusalem had been collected. This was not the case when he wrote 2 Corinthians 8-9, probably in late A.D. 56. Corinth was the likely site from which he wrote, since Paul identified his host as Gaius, a prominent member of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:14). Further evidence for Corinth as the site of composition is the mention of Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2, which suggests she had been entrusted with the task of delivering the letter. Phoebe was from Cenchrea, a town near Corinth.

Paul wrote Romans to encourage the church (1:11-15), to inform them of his plans to visit them en route from Jerusalem to Spain (15:28-29), and to seek their prayers for him as he confronted the “unbelievers in Judea” (15:30-31). The Roman correspondence also arose out of a background of conflict and confrontation with “Judaizing teachers.” Paul constantly fought the effort of certain Jewish Christians to bind the Law of Moses on Gentile Christians as a condition of salvation. This conflict was likely the background out of which he wrote Chapters 1-11.

From a literary perspective, Romans is an epistle. It contains elements of a letter (i.e., a

letter is an informal, occasional document with a limited audience; while an epistle is a more formal, even official, document intended for public distribution). For instance, while Paul never visited Rome, he knew many people there (as chapter 16 demonstrates). Further, he was aware of the threat of false teachers (16:17-18), and he wanted to instruct the church regarding salvation and commitment. These factors are elements of the “letter” nature of the work.

On the other hand, the main body of the work, 1:16-11:36 reads like a well thought out essay. It is the longest section of theological argumentation found in Paul’s writings. This section contains epistolary elements.

The Flow of the Passage

Romans 5:1-11 is a subsection in Paul’s argument regarding justification. The passage began with the conclusion “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith....” This conclusion was based on Paul’s arguments in chapters 1-4. As a result of justification through faith, Paul identified the result of that justification: **peace** with God (5:1), access into the **grace** of God (5:2a), and **hope** of the glory of God (5:2b). Additionally, justification by faith

changed one's perspective on suffering ("we...rejoice in our sufferings" [5:3]).

The means by which those justified by faith were able to deal with suffering and to live in hope was the **love of God** that had been poured out into them by the indwelling Holy Spirit (5:5). The basis for the peace, grace and hope of verses 1-5 was the **death of Jesus** (5:6). The death of Jesus was not an accident, it was the exercise of God's love. It was a substitutionary atonement, which abrogated the appropriate wrath against sin of a just and holy God. Reconciliation of man to God was made possible by the cross (5:8,10). This reconciliation was initiated by God, "while we were still sinners" (5:8), and "when we were sinners" (5:10). God is the one who acted—man was powerless (5:6), and could not act on his own initiative in such a way as to effect reconciliation.

Paul declared that justification was by faith (5:1). This spoke to the human response to divine grace. He asserted that justification was by the blood of Jesus (5:9). This spoke to the divine gift. The "hope of the glory of God" was the cause of rejoicing in verse 2. In verse 11, the rejoicing was "in God through Christ" because of reconciliation.

The Meaning to Its Original Audience

Paul argued that sin broke relationship with God (1:18). He had argued further that Gentiles and Jews alike were sinners and consequently they had no relationship with God (2:7-12; 3:21-23). He explained how God resolved the conflict between His own legitimate wrath against sin on the one hand and His tender mercy on the other. The answer was God gave Himself—He became both just and the justifier (3:21-26). Man's response to this gracious act was faith (3:25-26). Paul presented Abraham in Romans 4 as the believer *par excellence*.

In chapter 5 Paul described both the **fruit** of justification by faith and the **root** of justification by the blood of Jesus. Verses 1-11 revealed to the Romans where they stood with God as a result of the heavy theological argument Paul had made. They were justified. They had access to grace. They had reason to rejoice—even in the face of suffering. They had hope, and a reason to maintain hope: they were loved by God. Indeed, it was the love of God

that was at work all along. The death of Jesus was, at bottom, prompted by the love of God. Whatever else was involved in the crucifixion; whatever else was implied by the fact that it had to be; the fact would remain that those who had been enemies of God because of their sin were no longer enemies, but friends. They had been reconciled; and in that reconciliation there was hope and joy. God loved sinners in spite of their sin.

The universal claim set out in 3:23 was that all had sinned. Indeed, there were "none righteous, no not one" (3:10). That was the bad news. The good news was that God loved sinners in spite of their sin and He acted where they could not.

The Meaning Today

Abraham is an example of faith for all people. That is the point of 4:11,12: Abraham believed prior to his circumcision—so he is an example to both the circumcised (Jew) as well as the uncircumcised (Gentile). Faith is a person's response to the work of God. People are still justified by **means** of faith, because they are still justified on the **basis** of the blood of Jesus. But the **impetus** of justification remains the love of God. God seeks relationship with people. When that relationship is broken by sin, God does not give up. He relentlessly pursues people. When what God did in Christ at the cross, prompted by love, is accepted in faith by a sinner, he is reconciled to God. In becoming God's friend again one has peace, grace, hope, joy, and a new perspective on life.

Conclusion

There is good reason to conclude this article at this point. The emphasis on faith as the means to reconciliation is Paul's emphasis. However, G. C. Brewer, in his book **Contending for the Faith**, recognizing that an emphasis on salvation by faith may be misapprehended by some to imply that obedience is excluded, took space to reassure his readers. Brewer's example of concern for his readers is worthy of imitation. As a matter of fact, Brewer's explanation of the relationship of faith and obedience bears repeating here.

"In the last day when all of the redeemed—

redeemed by faith—stand on the plains of judgment the man at the head of the class will be Abraham. Yes, these men had faith as individuals and conquered. But *'the faith,' that is the salvation that is on the ground of faith*, had not then been revealed. This faith came when Christ came and died and rose again, ascended to heaven, and sent back the Holy Spirit to preach the good news of salvation through his death and suffering. We are now the children of God by *faith*. (Gal. 3:26.) We are justified by *faith*. (Rom. 5:1.) Our hearts are purified by *faith*. (Acts 15:9.) And a contrast is clearly drawn between *the law* and *the faith*, between *the doing* of that which was required by the law and *the accepting by faith* that which is offered by the gospel. Paul says, 'Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them.' (Gal. 3:11,12.) Here are two methods of living described. One man *lives by doing*, the other man *lives by faith*. Surely, then, we will not

preach that man lives by *doing* today. Nothing we do has any merit in it. Our obedience deserves no reward. *Our salvation is on the ground of our faith*.

"Some reader may conclude that this would exclude obedience and make any act of obedience nonessential. This is sometimes done by our denominational friends. They argue that, since we are saved by *faith* and not by *doing*, we do nothing; that we simply reach a certain mental or heart state in reference to Christ and that we are then and thereby saved. This is a mistake, as may be clearly seen from many passages of Scripture. It seems pathetic that people who will put such splendid emphasis on salvation by faith in contrast with works of merit cannot see that the 'obedience of faith' is not works. Our obedience is not something added to faith but it is faith itself: faith manifested, faith actualized, faith made perfect" (Brewer, G. C. *Contending for the Faith*, p. 20-21).

In Memoriam

Ralph Eugene Richardson

By Richard McWilliams

There is an empty place and sadness in the lives and hearts of many Christians because Ralph Richardson passed from this life October 15, 1992. At that time Ralph was taking part in the fall work week at Palmetto Bible Camp. Christian Camping was a great love of his. He wanted young people to have opportunity for wholesome recreation, to be influenced to become Christians, and to grow in their devotion to Christ. So he promoted Palmetto Bible Camp by serving on its Board for many years, by working during camp as much as he could, and by providing transportation to camp for many young people from the low country.

Ralph was born in Waukegan, Illinois, September 17, 1919. His family moved to the Charleston area in 1939. He was converted in July 1955, and began wholeheartedly to serve Christ from that time. He married Helen Smith October 20, 1945. This union was blessed by five children. Ralph was survived by Helen, four of their children, Charles (Chuck), Barbara



Smith, Dee, and Patricia Young and by twelve grandchildren.

Ralph served for many years as an elder of the North Charleston Church of Christ. Ralph's influence as an elder resided in at least three characteristics of his life. He was a devoted servant of God and therefore His church. He genuinely cared about people and their salvation, and he was a devoted student of God's word.

Ralph, supported by his good wife, Helen, practiced hospitality in a way not often seen. Their table always seemed to accommodate one more. They always seemed happy to open their home even to strangers in need. They also provided foster care for children in need of a home. It's no wonder that their home was like home to many through the years.

In addition, Ralph set an example of working diligently not only at his job, but at any task. He devoted time and energy to studying with the lost, to encouraging Christians, and to struggling with the problems that the church faced from time to time. None worried that Ralph would lead the church into practices or teachings not given and authorized in God's word.

Ralph was also a man of integrity. He

worked closely with financial matters of Palmetto Bible Camp and the North Charleston Church of Christ and proved himself utterly trustworthy. And he made every effort to make sure that his behavior was pure in word and deed. He set a good example before the church in conversation and conduct.

Above all, Ralph had a deep interest in the spiritual well-being of his family. It is a reflection of his and Helen's efforts that their children and their spouses are members of the church, as well as most of their grandchildren.

It is for these and many other things about Ralph that we miss him. And yet these same things comfort us as we consider the outcome of a life of faithful service. His influence lives on in the lives of those he taught, led, and helped motivate to follow in steps of the Savior.

Ralph's funeral was held October 18, 1992, at the North Charleston Church of Christ building. Hundreds of friends and loved ones took part in congregational singing and heard words of appreciation for Ralph from Ernest Thigpen, Frank Shepherd, Kenneth Inabinett, and Richard McWilliams.

[6337 Rivers Ave., North Charleston, SC 29418.]

Who Cares?

By David Thompson

Compassion seems to be a short supply these days.

Violence, hate crimes, discrimination, neglect and abuse go largely unabated. The newspapers are riddled with horror stories of man's inhumanity to man. Buried beneath the rubble of human trauma lies sympathy and compassion. Luis Cassels, a syndicated columnist commented: "The hardest moral duty of our time is for men and women to keep caring. We are exposed daily to so much human tragedy. We experience what someone has called 'compassion fatigue' having felt sorry for so many flood victims, earthquake victims, war victims, we simply cannot muster the sympathy we know we ought to have for fresh casualties."

People no longer expect compassion even from those institutions created expressly for

caring. Human service workers become jaded by the constant barrage of victims demanding help. Burnout is high among helping professionals.

The church has not escaped indictment either. At times we have failed to lend minimal support to those coming through our doors begging for help. We turn them away in disappointment.

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Compassion is a divine virtue. Yet it cannot be forced out of us. It must be nurtured in an atmosphere of love and empathy. Compassion is more than a feeling. It prompts us to action by the misery of others. Our response to people's needs is often spontaneous, but should always be indiscriminate. The parable of the good Samaritan illustrates this point. The only character in the story offering help was the Samaritan, of a people who were the arch rivals of Israel. The identity of the victim remains anonymous, which indicates the indiscriminate nature of the Samaritan's generosity.

Are we too selective with our benevo-

lence? Does it disgrace us when "non-Christians" display more God-like compassion than we do? It should. Has religion become so sterile that we've cut the heart right out of it?

The world is unimpressed by our religiosity. Christianity is more than three songs and a prayer. People are languishing from self-inflicted wounds. They are crying, "Does anyone care for my soul?" Isn't it time the church stands up and says, "We do!" Unless we give people a vision of compassion they will continue to waste away from neglect.

[P. O. Box 654, Aiken, SC 29802.]

An Attitude God Hates

By Jerry Senn

A woodpecker was once pecking away on a dead tree when suddenly lightning struck the tree and splintered it right down the middle. The woodpecker flew away unharmed. Looking back to where the dead tree had stood, the proud bird exclaimed, "Look what I did."

That's what an inspired writer once called "a proud look" (Prov. 6:16). In fact, it heads the list of sins that God cannot tolerate. He finds a proud heart disgusting, even as we do!

Aren't we a bit sickened by a "conceited" spirit? Someone has said, "Conceit is the only disease that makes everyone sick but the one who has it." We find highly obnoxious a person who is so stuck on himself that he's always saying, "Look at what I did, what I believe, or what I'm accomplishing." The word "conceit" means a "...flattering opinion of one's self; ...vain; egotistical." Paul pictured one whose ego is "puffed up" (1 Cor. 8:1).

It is erroneous and harmful, however, to believe Christian humility is demeaning to oneself. God's grace exalts man to a position of worth and value (Eph. 2:6). God's word corrects, even criticizes man, but it never sets out to humiliate or degrade him. Paul shows that there's a way to think highly, without thinking "too highly" of self (Rom. 12:3). Much of what we perceive in others as prideful may reflect low

self-esteem, which overcompensates by appearing self-confident, all the while craving self-acceptance. We can't, after all, love others properly without loving ourselves. But this love can become twisted and perverted. That is pride.

C. S. Lewis said: "The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual." He continues, "...there are two things inside me competing with the human self which I must try to overcome; they are the animal self, and the diabolical self; and the diabolical self is the worst of the two. This is why a cold, self-righteous prig, who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, its better to be neither." Man isn't born a sinner, but each of us has an inclination to satisfy the inborn desire for position, just as did our first parents.

"Pride is arrogant self-worship. It is the sin of exalting oneself and placing one's own interests above the interests of others. Pride craves admiration and even adoration, and will not share the limelight. Pride deludes its victims into believing that they have no peers and drives them to try to destroy anyone who takes recognition away from them. The proud are in love with themselves and seek to call attention to their admirable qualities."

Jesus lashed out at the prideful Pharisees (Matt. 23). His story of the religious zealot who

went to prayer but came home no nearer God (Luke 18) is potent and exposes a spiritual disease too common in our own lives. We may say to God in prayer, "Look at me, see how good I am." Attitudes are more important by far than pompous, pretentious orthodoxy. God hates it. That's the reason He struck a couple of seemingly generous church members dead (Acts 5). Their outward display of goodness masked a prideful craving for recognition and human honor.

Anthony Campolo, in *Seven Deadly Sins*, tells about his experience with a professor who required a sermon be prepared and presented to the class. He worked that sermon over and filled it with illustrations and scriptures. He knew it was good when all the students praised the sermon. But Professor Williams wrote one sentence which Campolo said served as a future safeguard against using a sermon as a prideful play for recognition. The professor wrote: "Tony, you can't convince people that you're wonderful and that Jesus is wonderful in the same sermon."

This disease which so often afflicts us must be dealt with every day or it gets out of control. "Conceit is like a man's beard. It must be shaved off every day."

The solution is to constantly reflect on the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:9, 10). As we're moved by His goodness and see ourselves totally underserving, we'll gladly point to Jesus and say, "Look what He did for me."

"Suppose it were possible to assemble the five billion-plus people currently living on earth. And then add to them all of the people who have died since Adam, and then compound that by all of the people who will yet come into being before time comes to an end. And if you were to put all of them in one place and extract from every one of those individuals their very best attributes, and then put all of those attributes into one man...that man would still have to kneel down and pray, 'God, be merciful to me

sinner.' "

Listen to Paul: "But now a righteousness from God apart from law, has been made known.... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-24). The law Paul speaks of was a system which allowed man to feel a sense of pride in what he had accomplished. In contrast, our salvation comes only through the righteousness imputed to us by God because of our faith in Christ. At no point is man able to reflect on his actions in response to God's grace and say, "Look what I did." Even baptism into Christ is an expression of our faith in the power of God (Col. 2:12b). God doesn't respond favorably to our acts of obedience unless pride has been expelled from our hearts. Our faith must be properly placed (Heb. 11:6). It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus... therefore, let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:30,31).

God detests pride because of what it does to man. It prevents gratitude from developing as a primary motive for man's response to God's will. Pride blocks genuine humility, thus precluding salvation from sin. And finally, pride results in man's ultimate fall to eternal ruin. This hurts God deeply.

Mankind exists to bring honor to the Creator. At no point can we look at anything we have learned or accomplished and say, "Look what I did!" Let us rather reflect on Paul's powerful question: "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not" (1 Cor. 4:7)?

God hates the attitude which says, "Look at me!" He loves a spirit of humility which constantly lifts its heart to God and says, "Look at Him."

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Who Will Help These Men?

Three Carolina men want to enroll in East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions for the beginning of the new term in February. These are mature men who are ready to make major changes in their life situations in order to give themselves to preaching the gospel. Two of these men will need financial assistance in order to attend ETSOPM. They are married with children.

Men who enroll in schools of preaching do not receive the various government loans and grants that are available for most who are seeking a secular education. Government help is not provided church operated programs such as East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Tuition is free at ETSOPM, but students must have money for living expenses. This must

come from congregations and individuals. The intensive two-year program does not allow time for them to work.

There are presently twenty-two former students of this school who are preaching in the Carolinas. In addition to these there are a significant number of Carolina preachers who attended other schools of preaching. Without question, graduates of the schools of preaching are a significant part of the progress of the cause of Christ in the Carolinas.

Who will help these men? For specific information about them and their needs, contact East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 6608 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville, TN 37931, (615) 691-7444.

Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

JULE MILLER, creator of the widely-used Visualized Bible Study Series (popularly referred to as the Jule Miller Filmstrips) will be conducting a special workshop on soul-winning at the GOLDSBORO CHURCH in Goldsboro, NC, December 4-34...The SILER CITY CHURCH, Siler City, NC has recently purchased land and a building formerly used by the Assemblies of God. The Siler City brothers and sisters were expecting to occupy the property around the first of November, according to Bob Mason, the preacher...The SUMMERVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST, Summerville, SC, experienced a record Bring Your Neighbor Day attendance of 459 on September 20. Average attendance for the month of September was 363. The church has also given over \$7,000 toward

the Hurricane Andrew relief effort...RALPH RICHARDSON, an elder for the North Charleston church and a dedicated worker for Palmetto Bible Camp, died in his sleep on October 15. The family has requested that memorials be sent to Palmetto Bible Camp, c/o Jim Lamm, 2072 Bishop Dr., Charleston, SC 29407. Brother Richardson's work with PBC over the years has impacted the lives of thousands of young people...The NORTHVIEW CHURCH in Statesville, NC, will be hosting a Prayer Enrichment Seminar with JOE CANNON, December 4-6. Brother Cannon is the Director of the Mission 1000 School for paramissionaries in Memphis, Tennessee.

[Send News Items to Dennis Conner, PO Box 1215, Yadkinville, NC 27055.]

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The Doctrine of Christ

William Woodson

[Editors Note: This article, copied from another publication, has been included because of the significance of the term "doctrine of Christ" in 2 John 9. In the October issue Bill Heinselman presented what I believe to be the correct view. Brother Woodson shows the same thing. We have included it to further confirm the correctness of this position. Some may sincerely differ and may do so without any ulterior motives. It is evident, however, that others argue that "doctrine of Christ" means the doctrine about Christ, not His and the apostles's teachings, because they want to broaden fellowship to include teachers of false doctrines, and they know that unless they can explain away the force of 2 John 9-11 they face a significant obstacle.]

Of interest within its own right and in view of ongoing discussions of importance among our people, is the determination of what is meant by the statement "**the doctrine of Christ**" as given in 2 John 9. As remarkable as it may seem, there is difficulty and uncertainty in the minds of some as to the meaning of this expression. The following is offered as worthy of consideration in determining this meaning.

There is a significant combination of statements about doctrine and Christ which clarify the meaning of this expression. In John 7:16-17 one reads, "Jesus answered them, **My doctrine** is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of **the doctrine....**" Then in 2 John 9 one reads, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in **the doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. He that abideth in the **doctrine of Christ**, he hath both

the Father and the Son."

In John 7:16 there is the statement of "**my doctrine.**" It would not be possible to maintain that this is different from "**the doctrine**" in the very next verse. Surely, then, the reference is broader than the deity of Jesus, though the deity of Jesus is included in what Jesus termed "**the doctrine.**" The "apostles's doctrine" is not the doctrine or teaching about the apostles, but must be the doctrine that they taught. Would anyone maintain that this doctrine was different in content from the "**my doctrine**" and "**the doctrine**" of John 7:16-17? With this in mind, what of the "**doctrine of Christ**"? Is it not clear that "**the doctrine of Christ**" and "**my doctrine**" are one and the same? And, is it not also clear that this is the same as "the apostles's doctrine"?" The fact is, the same body of teaching or doctrine is under consideration in these several verses. What one means, they all mean, and refer to the teaching which Christ gave by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This whole "**doctrine**" includes discussion of the deity of Jesus, to be sure, but it cannot properly be limited to just that important truth. It rather includes the whole content of New Testament teaching. This understanding parallels the conclusion of Westcott, "...the doctrine which Christ brought, and which he brought first in his own person, and then through His followers...and the usage of the New Testament is uniformly in favor of it" (Comments on 2 John 9).

[Brother Woodson teaches at David Lipscomb University.]

2 Timothy 2:2 and Doctrinal Continuity

By David Pharr, Editor

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others

also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

In addition to its obvious emphasis on the training of faithful teachers, this text demon-

strates by implication the Lord's purpose that apostolic truth be perpetuated through the centuries. If the simple plan which Paul herein described had been honored through the years, there would have been no apostasy. The fact that such a plan was given shows the validity of the restoration plea.

The procedure is simple. Paul taught certain things. These things were in harmony with what was taught by all the apostles. Timothy learned these things from Paul. Timothy was to teach the same things to other men. Those other men were to teach the same things to yet others. It was not necessary for Paul to extend his description further. It is evident that it was intended that the process should be perpetuated indefinitely.

Now, for the sake of pressing the point, let us think of the process in terms of generations. Paul represents the first generation, the apostolic generation. As ambassadors of Christ, the apostles set forth the whole truth in regard to God's plan of redemption and His instructions for men. The Scriptures show, and we do not hesitate to affirm, that the apostles received and delivered the perfect and final doctrine of Christ (John 15:13; 2 Cor. 5:20; Matt. 18:18; 28:18-20; etc.).

Timothy, for the purpose of illustrating the point, we will call the second generation. What he was to teach is clearly defined. He was to teach those things which he had learned from Paul. Was he given liberty to make changes in this doctrine? Such clearly was not authorized in the text. The fact is that Timothy was reminded several times that departures from the apostolic pattern were unacceptable. He was told to "Hold fast the form of sound word, which thou hast heard of me" (2 Tim. 1:13). The word "form" is from the Greek *tupos*, meaning "pattern" and is so translated in the ASV, NKJV, RSV, and NIV. In 1 Timothy 1:3, he was told to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." There would be some who would "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1) and the time would come when they would "not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The third generation would be the ones that Timothy instructed. It is possible that these might never have come into personal contact with Paul or any of the apostles. What they would learn about apostolic teaching would be

learned by the instruction of Timothy. If Timothy did as Paul told him to do, they were taught the true apostolic doctrine.

We come then to the fourth generation, the ones taught by the faithful men which had been taught by Timothy. Again, it is very possible that these might never have known any of the apostles. How, then, were they to know what was the true apostolic doctrine? It is easy enough to see that if the Lord's plan which is described in 2 Timothy 2:2 was followed, they were taught the same things that Timothy had learned from Paul. As long, therefore, as the process was properly repeated, there would be no interruption in the transmission of the truth, whether to the fourth generation, the fifth generation, or the hundredth generation, and so on.

To appreciate the practical and crucial significance of this simple lesson, some questions are in order. At which generation would there be liberty to alter the message? Which generation would have the right to rationalize that the apostolic pattern needs to be adjusted to fit changes in culture? At what point should the apostolic trunk line be cut? How far distant from the Lord's apostles would one need to be in order to ignore their directives?

We would think that anyone could see that the text makes no provisions for adjusting God's plan to suit changing generations. Yet we have encountered arguments like the one I heard from a Presbyterian minister in defense of infant baptism. It was admitted that the apostles probably did not practice infant baptism, but they (the apostles) were at the beginning, in the first generation of the church. However, the Presbyterian argued, when in later generations families had a Christian heritage, infant baptism became a fitting practice. The point was that the apostolic norm could be modified as times changed.

The same kind of rationalization is being made in defense of giving women roles in public worship which were not authorized by the apostles. It is said that because our culture now allows women to be in more public positions, the church should alter its stance also. Of course if biblical teaching regarding the role of women can be adjusted to suit changing cultural situations, there could hardly be anything in the apostolic pattern that could not likewise be adjusted. It is more than a little significant that the text for this article comes from the companion

epistle to Timothy in which the apostle explicitly sets limits on women's role in the assembly. Would Timothy have understood Paul to mean in 2 Timothy 2:2 that he could ignore the instructions found in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 whenever he found himself in a different cultural situation? It is folly to imagine such; yet it is just such folly that is now infiltrating the church.

It is the unchangeable character of the New Testament pattern that is the foundation of the restoration plea. Since it was the Lord's purpose (clearly demonstrated in the words of the text) that apostolic teaching be transmitted unchanged from person to person and from generation to generation, and since historically men did not heed this purpose and departed from the faith: we recognize the necessity of looking back beyond the errors of the generations in apostasy to find and to follow the faith and practice of Christ's apostles.

In the benevolent providence of God, apostolic doctrine was preserved in written form. We have the writings of Spirit-guided men which have preserved for us all the essentials of the Christian faith. All that we need to know, what we need to believe and obey, can be found

in the Bible. As we follow the apostolic faith (Heb. 13:7) we will not be "carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9). We can rejoice in the assurance that we are doing the will of God.

There are some, however, who belittle the concept of restoration. They assert that God never expected that first-century Christianity should be practiced in the twentieth century. They say that the New Testament provides no pattern, they reject "pattern authority." There are many ways their error can be refuted, but just consider the implications of the text before us. If the process set forth by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2 had been followed generation after generation until the present time, would we not have today the very same faith and practice as is preserved for us in the Scriptures? It is not enough to try to answer this by saying that such did not happen, because clearly it was God's will that it should have happened, else an inspired apostle would not have outlined a plan that would have provided for the continuity of the same doctrine, the doctrine of the apostles, the doctrine of the New Testament.

Is Doctrine Important?

By David Vaughn

It is through the foolishness of preaching that God chooses to save obedient believers (1 Cor. 1:21). Therefore, it is imperative that what is preached must be what God wants preached. God gave His word to humanity and He relies on faithful men to carry His word to all the world. Jesus told his apostles the Holy Spirit would come and "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26). He further stated the Holy Spirit "will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8). At the time of His ascension Jesus told His apostles to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19, 20). Is there

anyone who would deny the importance of this part of the Holy Spirit's work, or of the command Jesus gave to His apostles? If we agree that the inspired apostles and evangelists preached God's word, then we must agree that what they preached was, and continues to be, important. If we can see that what they preached was, or included, doctrine, then we must agree that doctrine is important. According to the commission Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19, He wanted the apostles to teach people to be baptized, and then to teach those who had been baptized, all things he had commanded the apostles. Is it possible the apostles were to teach the new converts doctrine? Turning from self to God is important, an absolute, but we must also get down to the "nuts and bolts" of living for God.

Paul believed he was guided by God to speak God's message and said, "Now we have

received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:12,13). Who would be so arrogant, or believe themselves to be so wise, as to say God was not capable of speaking to us in a manner that is understandable? Is the problem understanding, or submission? Surely we must believe that God, who created us, is able to "get on our level" and communicate His will to us. If not how can He, through the Spirit, convict us of sin, righteousness, and the judgment? The wisdom of this world may have trouble understanding God's will for our lives because the wisdom of this world does not know God and therefore will never bring a person to the cross of Jesus. There is always the danger of philosophy taking our minds captive, but the promise of Jesus remains: "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17). Did God, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words, reveal anything to Paul about doctrine and the need to teach doctrine?

Christian people are to have an organized system of thought and "be ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15). We must know what we believe in order to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). We are to encourage, equip one another so that we may grow to maturity in Christ and not be as children tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph. 4:14). If this is to be a reality we must know the Christian doctrine. The Scriptures are inspired of God and profitable for teaching [doctrine] and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. John 16:8).

The importance of doctrine can be seen in Paul's letter to Timothy. The spiritual condition of God's people in Ephesus was of great concern to the aged apostle. He had warned the Ephesian elders of the great danger false teachers were to the Ephesian church (Acts 20). Now, the apostle urges Timothy to remain in Ephesus in

order that "he may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines" (1 Tim. 1:3). This statement suggests there was, in place and recognizable, a standard of doctrine to be followed. If not how could there be strange doctrines? Timothy followed the doctrine of Paul (2 Tim. 3:10) and he was to continue to "preach the word" because there will be a time when some will not endure "**sound doctrine**" (2 Tim. 4:2,3). According to the inspired apostle, gospel preaching was sound doctrine. The elders in Ephesus, as in Crete, needed to know God's truth so they would "be able both to exhort in **sound doctrine** and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). If healthy doctrine is not important why would the elders in Crete refer to it when talking to gainsayers?

A good servant of Jesus is "nourished on the words of the faith and of the **sound doctrine**..." (1 Tim. 4:6). A good servant is to "Pay close attention to yourself and to your **doctrine**; persevere in these; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16). The one who "advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the **doctrine** conforming to godliness," are conceited, understanding nothing, and are self-serving (1 Tim. 6:3,4). The Holy Spirit, speaking through the apostle Paul, commanded doctrinal preaching. Brothers and sisters, we need to devote ourselves "to the apostles's doctrine and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

All who believe the Scriptures will have to agree that sound doctrine is necessary for salvation. John warns of deceivers and with an imperative says, "Look out!" He proceeds to say that when one goes onward and abides not in the **doctrine** of Christ, that one does not have God (2 John 9). The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine Christ taught and still teaches through His word. The Spirit communicated God's will for our lives in language we can understand. A familiar phrase of Jesus is clear: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear [i.e., understand]."

Let us abandon practices or teachings that are not according to the doctrine of God. But this is the point of contention—what is the doctrine of God? This must be settled by an honest study of Scripture. Religious division is a sad testimony to the fact that doctrine cannot

be settled in schools of theology. Neither can it be settled by holding to manmade traditions. The promise of Jesus stands: "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I

speak from myself" (John 7:17). Let us be honest with one another, and with God, as we seek to live for Him and encourage others to live accordingly.

[1919 New Hope Rd., Gastonia, NC 28054.]

Genre Confusion

By Stanley N. Helton

The New Testament, some insist, is God's love letter to us. Others counter that the New Testament is a legal brief that regulates Christian faith and practice. Neither position, though, attempts to understand the New Testament; both are simplistic. Nor is the tension resolved by the compromise that the New Testament is a love letter with legal requirements (as in B. J. Clarke, "The Bible: Love Letter, Legal Brief, or Both?" *Carolina Christian* 34 [March 1992]: 17-18).

Oddly, neither position ever states the question to which "love letter" and/or "legal brief" is the answer. Is the question about the type of literature, or genre (pronounced ZHAHN ruh) of the New Testament? Or is the question about the central message or theology of the New Testament? Both questions deserve serious treatment by believers, but when we ask the second question in the language and terms of the first, confusion can only result.

Unambiguously, the first question is "What is the genre of the New Testament?" Genre is a French word meaning "type" or "kind." When applied to literature it refers to whether the literature is prose, poetry, legal formulation, apocalypse, letter, or another literary type. When we look at the New Testament, we find that no single designation covers all twenty-seven works contained therein. The New Testament, from a literary standpoint, is an anthology, a collection of various, but related writings. As we look more closely at the contents of the New Testament, we find the various writings organized according to genre.

First come the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Synoptic comes from two Greek words meaning to "see alike." The first three gospels are so named because they cover much of the same material. After the synoptics comes the gospel of John. Today we remain

uncertain about the exact genre of the gospels: are they biographies, novels, or what? They are not biographies in the sense we use the word, since they tell us little about the life of Jesus. (One genre may contain other genres. For example, a biography can contain poems, visions, prophetic oracles, or even an embedded biography.)

We erroneously identify Acts as a book of history. History is not Luke's primary concern—there is so much he doesn't tell us. Since Acts is the sequel to Luke's gospel, it is probably the same genre as the gospel, whatever that may be. Acts is not primarily a book of conversions either—there are also non-conversions—but a narrative showing the incorporation of Gentiles into Restored Israel, God's people, and the Jewish people's positive and negative reaction to it.

The letters or epistles come next. Though Paul and the other writers express love for the churches and the people they write, the letters are not love letters. Exactly what kind of letters they are remains a disputed question deserving more space than I have here.

Many Christians don't understand the arrangement of the letters. There are two large groupings: Paul's letters and the general (or catholic) letters. Paul's letters further subdivide into letters to churches, followed by letters to individuals. These groups then run from larger to smaller, not chronologically. This opens the possibility, as with 1 and 2 Thessalonians, that a letter the church labeled as "second" is chronologically first. Manuscripts generally place the letter to the Hebrews, a long tract or homily, between the letters to churches and the letters to individuals or after the Pauline Corpus. One manuscript (P⁴⁶) has it between Romans and 1 Corinthians. (For further information, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by Howard Clark

Kee, 17th ed. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 392-394.) After the general epistles is an apocalypse, the Revelation of John. Apocalypse refers to genre, though Revelation also contains letters and prophetic oracles.

This overview shows us that the New Testament is more than just a love letter from God or mere legal briefs, or even a combination of the two. (A good guide to Biblical genres is Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible** [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982].) The distinction between love letter and legal brief is political subterfuge. Its the battleground for two parties in the churches of Christ, commonly, but without definition, called liberal and conservative. (When we speak of liberals and conservatives in the churches of Christ we are still, when seen against Christianity in America, dealing with conservative Christians). Those who claim the New Testament to be a love letter ("the liberals") seek to emphasize that Christ sets one free from law, that justification does not come through law-keeping, and that God's essential nature is love. On the other hand, those who argue that the New Testament is essentially a legal brief ("the conservatives") fear that if we forget the "legal aspects" of the New Testament the church will drift from the strait and narrow. Both sides are guilty of not saying what they mean, becoming exasperated when the "opponents" fail to understand them. Neither is very competent at mind-reading anyway.

Though this deserves more time, I wish to avoid this topic for now to focus on the real question of this debate: "What is the central or unifying theme of the New Testament?" If we would try to answer this question, we would have a common starting point from which to discuss other important concerns.

Theologians have differed on what the central message or theme of the New Testament is. Leon Morris settled on "God" as the center of the New Testament, while George Eldon Ladd found it to be the "Kingdom of God." (Leon Morris, **New Testament Theology** [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 25-38. See also Morris's introduction for a survey of other attempts. George Eldon Ladd, **A Theology of the New Testament** [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974].) Our own Walter Scott found it to be the "Mes-

siahship of Jesus" (Walter Scott, **The Gospel Restored: A Discourse of the True Gospel of Jesus Christ, in which the facts, principles, duties, and privileges [sic] of Christianity are arranged, defined and discussed, and The Gospel in it various parts shewn to be adapted to the nature and necessities of man in his present condition** [Cincinnati: O. H. Donogh, 1836], 129-224), but more recently, the churches of Christ have made the "Church" the central message of the New Testament. (Though the interest in the church has never been lacking in Restoration thought, it found new direction in J. R. Howard's, "The Beginning Corner: Or, The Church of Christ Identified" which originally appeared in Tolbert Fanning's *Christian Review* in 1845. It is reprinted in **Biographical Sketch and Writings of Elder Benjamin Franklin** [Indianapolis: Daniel Sommer, 1906], 206-228. This same concern appears in other literature of the churches of Christ, noticeably in Leroy Brownlow, **Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ** [Fort Worth: Brownlow Publications, 1945].) These approaches suffer from the same plight that identifying the New Testament with any one genre does. The New Testament is an anthology, composed of writings from various people with varying viewpoints. This is no denial of inspiration, but a compliment to the Spirit's leading without suppressing the personalities of the human authors. That each writer says something unique about Jesus and His significance should elicit no surprise.

To call the New Testament a love letter or a legal brief is not to identify its genre (first question). Neither term describes the New Testament fully. Those who use these terms are trying to capture the essence of the New Testament message (second question). Both designations are metaphors that can focus upon only one aspect of the New Testament at a time.

The authors of the synoptic gospels do something similar to Jesus. They don't tell us everything they know, choosing instead to highlight some of His characteristics. Matthew declares that Jesus is King. Mark stresses the crassness of Jesus and the difficulty the disciples had comprehending his true significance. Luke, from yet another angle, sees Jesus as the true Jew, who opens the door for the Gentiles. Although each writer calls attention to the cen-

trality of Jesus, they differ in their theology, yet they tell us about Jesus.

In this sense, the New Testament is neither a love letter nor a legal brief. The very diversity of the New Testament makes casual generalities untenable. Like analogies, metaphors break down if pressed. Considering this we should perhaps heed the rule: "All generalizations are

false, including this," when we favor one metaphor over another. Our choice may tell us more about ourselves than the Book we hold sacred. [Stanley N. Helton is the outreach minister for the church in Chapel Hill, NC. Contact him at PO Box 4023, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.]

I Get Angry

By Gary G. Payne

I tell you what really makes me angry. Prejudice. Racial prejudice and religious prejudice. People putting others down because of the color of their skin or because they believe differently.

I tell you something else that really makes me angry. Unfairness. If I am intolerant of one thing, it is intolerance. If we don't get our way, if someone does not agree with us, we get flustered. And that's really unfair. How can we expect everyone to be just like us?

I tell you something else that really makes me angry. Oppression. People taking advantage of other people. Sexual harassment, widows soaked out of their money....

Jesus got angry. He walked into the temple and his blood boiled. The corruption made him sick. About 600 years earlier Jeremiah dealt with the same kind of thing. Read Jeremiah 7:1-11. This kind of corruption makes God nauseous. He let the Babylonian Empire destroy that very temple, shatter the nation, and carry its people off into slavery. And now Jesus goes into the temple and He sees the same stuff going on. *"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Mark 11:15-17).

I don't think he was bothered so much by the fact that they were changing money. People would come from all over the world to worship

at the temple. They had to get their money exchanged somewhere. The problem is that the religious leaders gave them a low exchange rate. I ran into this when I visited Germany. Whenever I changed my dollars into Deutsche marks I tried to do it at the U.S. military installations; they gave Americans the best rate. But once I got caught having to pay a large taxi fare. The taxi drivers do not give a very good rate. Why? They pocket the difference. This is what the money changers in the temple were doing. Now you go to worship the Lord, you go to a holy place like the temple, you do not expect to be taken advantage of. You expect to be treated fairly. But it didn't happen.

I don't think Jesus was bothered that they were selling animals. The people had to get the animals somewhere. A lamb, a pigeon—they used these animals for their sacrifices just like the law told them. But again, the religious leaders had a racket going. They had animal inspection teams. Unless your animal passed inspection, you could not use it. And guess which ones were passing inspection? The ones being sold in the temple! Oh, you could have gone out in the marketplace and bought one a lot cheaper having nothing wrong with it. But you couldn't get it past the inspectors. You had to pay way too much so the religious leaders could make a big profit. So Jesus walks into the temple and he lets his emotions fly. A holy anger burned deep within him. *"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not*

yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it" (Mark 11:12-14).

You just expect certain things from those who call themselves God's people. Like good fruit. In Palestine most fig trees have figs on them before the leaves come. On some trees the leaves come along with the fruit. So, even though figs were not yet in season, this tree full of leaves was telling everyone that it had figs. And, Jesus was hungry. And, the whole episode became an object lesson. The nation of Israel, God's people, ought to be bearing good fruit. But as a whole, they were not. Then it starts getting uncomfortable. The church, God's people, ought to be bearing good fruit. Are we? We can think we have our doctrines right. We can say that we worship right—doing and saying the right things. But Jesus looks deeper. He asks us: "What does your life produce?" Jesus is looking for things like faith and right attitudes.

"And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (Mark 11:20-21).

How are you showing God you trust him? Do you say your prayers? or, do you live them? How do you get along with others? It's one thing to say you are a Christian. It's another to get rid of grudges. There is a poem that goes something like,

To live in heaven with those we love,
Oh, that will be glory;
To live on earth with those we know,
Well, that's another story.

Jesus is looking for good fruit. You are Jesus' temple. Is there anything in your life that needs to be thrown out? When Jesus goes looking for fruit, what will he find? Lets bear good fruit. Let's **really** be the people of God.

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Sweet Hour of Prayer

By Timothy Sensing

Tim Hausel, in his book **When I Relax I Feel Guilty**, wrote this poem:

*I wasted an hour one morning beside a mountain stream,
I seized a cloud from the sky above and fashioned myself a dream,
In the hush of the early twilight, far from the haunts of men,
I wasted a summer evening and fashioned my dream again.
Wasted? Perhaps. Folks say so who never have walked with God,
When lanes are purple with lilacs or yellow with goldenrod.
But I have found strength for my labors in that one short evening hour.
I have found joy and contentment; I have found peace and power.
My dreaming has left me a treasure, a hope that is strong and true.
From wasted hours I have built my life and found my faith anew.*

In a world that is pressure paced and success is measured by busy activity, wealth and

status—being alone with God is a lost art. All of us need time to be alone with God. We need to see life from His perspective. We need to share our inmost feelings. We need to confess our secret sins. We need to intercede on the behalf of others specifically. We need to adore and praise the One and Only One who sits on the throne most high. Without time alone with our Father, we will drift to the meaningless shores of a land of emptiness.

If Satan wanted to torture most Christians, he could sentence them to spend one hour in silent devotion to God alone. They ask, "What in the world could I find to pray about for a whole hour?" Jesus spent many morning hours, evening hours, and all night hours in prayer. He communicated with His Father. Their relationship ran deep, deeper than Linville Gorge. For Jesus, an hour could not possibly contain the thoughts of His heart. If the mighty Son of God needed a personal, daily prayer life with His Father, how much more so do we?

Have you known the guilt of spending time alone with God? There is always one more visi-

to make, one more phone call to answer, one more article to write, one more errand to run, one more yard to mow, one more meal to cook—and the beat goes on. “Oh how I love to see a busy Preacher.” But I wonder if the busy preacher and the busy Christian are not the ones whose shallowness leads to burn out. Business is not equal to spirituality.

“Oh Father, My God who is in Heaven.

You are Good. I know you are patient beyond reason with my avoidance of You. Teach me to wait. Teach me to stand still and know You. I want to know You! I resolve to make no more excuses to brothers in Christ because there are not enough hours in the day to do the busy work. I resolve to make no more excuses to You because there are not enough hours in the day because of the busy work.”

A New Start

By Rob Albright

Since moving to Thomasville, my family and I have found several new things. We started shopping at a new grocery store. Our children have started new schools. We live in a new house. We have made new friends, and the children have new playmates. It has been a new start for us in many ways.

A new start involves many changes, and difficulties to overcome. To help in these changes we have the love of a new family in Thomasville. The church has been a great encouragement and help in this new start. We are truly blessed.

When a man or woman is baptized, a new start is made. There are some new things to get used to and some difficulties to overcome. Living for Jesus involves a new aim in life. This new aim means a new attitude, direction, friends, responsibilities, and blessings.

This new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) is helped by other family members (church) who have experienced similar problems and feelings. New start problems can be minimized by the mutual responsibility we have with one another. We are encouraged to:

Love one another (John 13:34-35); Not judge one another (Rom. 14:13); Accept each other (Rom. 15:7); Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); Be kind to each other (Eph. 4:32); Comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18); Be hospitable (1 Pet. 4:9).

Being a friend (Prov. 27:17) and being a good example (1 Cor. 11:1) go far in maturing new Christians. With a new start, new Christians need assurances and fellowship. Our worship services, Bible classes and other activities,

should all convey to the one who has made a new start that they are not alone. With time, patience, and love, the new Christian will become a man or woman greatly used by God and ready to help others as they experience a new start.”

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

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(see page 6)



editorial

By David Pharr

Much is being said and written regarding change in the church. We have continued to express our dismay and have cited biblical warnings against changes which would in the slightest move us away from the pattern of true Christianity. As long as God permits it, we intend to keep on "warning every man and teaching every man" (Col. 1:28). Unscriptural winds of change must not be allowed to blow freely through the brotherhood.

The idea of "change," however, covers a wide spectrum, including both things that are legitimate and things that are unlawful. There are innovations that are no more than scriptural expedients and there are innovations that are unscriptural digressions. Some changes are merely adjustments to fit current cultural and circumstantial needs, but there are other changes that are violations of Divine principles. It is essential that we recognize the differences.

There can be no fellowship with that which changes the apostolic order. The warning in 2 John 9 is against going beyond the doctrine of Christ. What in the minds of some is "progress," or "moving ahead," may be actually transgression. If we become so progressive that we leave the doctrine of Christ behind, we are no longer in fellowship with the Lord. We are forbidden to bid "God speed" to any who are of that kind of progressive spirit.

On the other hand, it is equally important that we not oppose as a **doctrinal** issue those changes which are strictly in the realm of human judgment. Notice our emphasis on the error of treating such things as **doctrinal** issues. We might have good reasons for differing as to the wisdom of changing certain things. We might even consider them as so unwise that we could not in good conscience accept them. However, things that are truly only matters of human judgment must neither be advocated nor opposed on doctrinal grounds—that is, when no such doctrinal grounds exist. It is presumption to bind laws which God has not bound. We must be as cautious against sins of presumption as we are against sins of digression (Deut. 18:20; Psa. 19:13).

Confusing the Issues

Some of the changes being promoted today are unquestionably departures from the New Testament norm. And while we want to be careful not to judge motives, it seems evident that there are some efforts to camouflage these departures behind claims that they are only innocent methods and procedures being adapted to present day culture and needs. We have

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David Pharr, Editor; Johnny Melton, Managing Editor; Dennis Conner, News Editor.

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noticed that in much of what is said about the need for change there is very little that is specified. Instead there are generalities about culture, moving into the twenty-first century, and how that the "methods" of the 1950's won't work today. All of this seems harmless enough, but when this song has been played enough, when enough people are sufficiently persuaded of the obsolescence of our "tired old methods," and when the climate is hot for change, some of the changes that slip in may actually be departures from the faith. The point I am making is that all reasonable people recognize that there are legitimate changes that must be made to keep in step with changing circumstances; but at the same time I am concerned that too much fanning of the flames of change can create a wildfire—a conflagration which will blacken and even consume the identity of the church.

The other side of confusion, however, is in irrational opposition to all change. We must not assume that every call for change is a call for unscriptural change. It is overkill to label every change as apostasy, and the thing that gets killed may be the very church we are trying to protect. Commitment to the restoration ideal does not mean insisting on "the way we have always done it," as though our customs are in themselves the biblical standard. We are bound to conform to the Lord's pattern. We are not bound to maintain what admittedly must be no more than customs to which we have become comfortably accustomed. Unless we are so arrogantly foolish to think that we are perfect, we must recognize that there must be ways in which we can improve how we do things. Likewise, and certainly more important, we must always be open to the possibility that there may be changes that are needed to make us more in harmony with God's ideal for the church as it is shown in the Scriptures.

Merely Judgment or Good Judgment?

There are things that the Lord has left to our judgment. This means that we have options as to how certain things may be done. The options must be held within the boundaries set by the word of God, but within those biblical parameters we are at liberty to decide how best to proceed.

For example, the Lord's Supper on the

Lord's Day is a New Testament necessity, but the time of day, the place to assemble, the type of containers, etc. are all left to our judgment. Likewise, it is not optional whether believers are to be baptized, but we do have options as to whether we use a baptism, a lake, or a river. These examples should be obvious and I have not mentioned them because they are generally misunderstood, but to illustrate the principle involved. The same principle applies to many other things and the point being made is that we must be careful to examine whether the issue is really one of scriptural authority or only in the realm of human judgment. We ought to be very careful that we not treat an optional matter as though it were designated by Divine decree.

There is, however, a very important point that needs to be remembered about decisions in the realm of judgment. The fact that the Lord allows us to use our own judgment does not mean that He is pleased with our use of questionable, poor or bad judgment. He expects us to use the best judgment we are capable of determining. Of course no one would admit to deliberately promoting changes that would be bad judgment, and what I might consider a horrendous decision might be thought by others to be very wise. Still, the point is important because those who advocate rapid and radical changes (even in the realm of expediencies) would do well to weigh carefully the cautious reservations expressed by others.

Stepping Stones

There are some things which may not in themselves be wrong, but which may be unwise because they can serve as stepping stones to things that are definitely wrong. No, the mere possibility that new approaches might lead to problems does not by itself mean that they have to be rejected. Some would doubtless see dangers in almost any change. We might have such an irrational fear of anything that is different that we would never improve on anything. The fact is that many expediencies which are almost universally accepted among us now are things which were opposed when they were first introduced, partly because of fear that they might serve as stepping stones to apostasy.

All of this does not, however, negate the fact that there ought to be careful and prayerful

caution exercised before embracing any significant changes. Old ways of doing things are not always the best, but neither should we assume that something new is necessarily better. It is not an absolute rule, but I have often felt there is wisdom in Alexander Pope's advice: "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, Nor yet the

last to lay the old aside." Before holding too tenaciously to our old ways of doing things, we should ask whether a scriptural issue is really involved, or whether we just like things the way they are. On the other hand, before accepting changes we should ask: Is it scriptural? Is it safe? And is it really profitable?

Managing Editor's Column

Church Growth Factors

By Johnny R. Melton

Acts 16:5 is the third of Luke's summary statements that punctuate the story of the spread of Christianity in the early years of the church. (There are six of these summaries: Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31.) "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

Luke indicates that the church enjoyed qualitative growth ("strengthened in the faith") as well as quantitative ("grew daily in numbers") growth. In these days of emphasis on numerical growth, the church would do well to reflect on the need for spiritual as well as numerical growth. And the order in which the two types of growth are stated deserves, at minimum, to be acknowledged.

In the verses that precede this growth summary, Luke mentions two episodes that, if handled differently, might have made it impossible for the church to enjoy any type of growth at all.

The first episode is the strife that developed between Paul and Barnabas over whether or not John Mark should accompany them on their next missionary effort (Acts 15:36-41). The second episode is the circumcision of Timothy. These two situations flesh-out two fundamental principles of church growth.

The church growth principle that is illustrated by the strife between Paul and Barnabas is: Church growth can take place when conflict is managed appropriately.

Notice that the axiom is not "Growth takes place when there is no conflict." Peace is not the absence of conflict—the absence of conflict is death; peace is the appropriate resolution or management of conflict.

Conflict is generally viewed as a bad thing by church leaders. Often church leaders even

refuse to recognize that conflict exists, either among the leaders themselves, or within the ranks of the membership. Conflict is not a negative feature. In fact, conflict is evidence of life; and, in that regard, it is a positive feature. It is positive because it provides an opportunity for growth.

Conflict has a negative impact when it is either not managed at all, or else managed poorly. When conflict is appropriately managed growth can take place. The appropriate management of conflict does not mean that everything works out so that no feelings are hurt and no loss of any kind occurs. Rather, the appropriate management of conflict means that the situation is properly evaluated and necessary steps are implemented which result in a resolution of the conflict so that growth can be realized.

In the case of Paul and Barnabas, conflict was so great that their missionary team could no longer remain intact. However, the conflict was managed so that no loss to the church was realized. Barnabas took John Mark and embarked on a missionary effort. Paul was joined by Silas and proceeded with the missionary plans that had been laid. So the appropriate management of conflict resulted in increased work for the kingdom.

The second episode demonstrates the role of compromise with the prevailing culture for church growth.

Compromise is a word which conjures up negative images in many minds when used in the context of church growth. One definition of compromise is "to make a shameful or disputable concession." That is not the definition intended here. The definition of compromise

which is vital to church growth is "the process or a result of settlement by arbitration or by consent reached by mutual concessions."

Paul had stood firmly against requiring circumcision as a matter of salvation. Paul and Barnabas had engaged in "sharp dispute and debate" with certain men from Judea who had taught the Christians in Antioch "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1,2). This confrontation in Antioch led to a visit to Jerusalem where Paul confronted the leaders of the Jerusalem church over the issue. Paul described the visit in Galatians 2:3-5, "Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

Since Paul used such intense language regarding the issue of circumcision, many are at a loss to explain why he circumcised Timothy shortly following the "Jerusalem Conference."

The answer to the dilemma is that Paul understood that Timothy's circumcision was in no way related to a requirement by the church for salvation. Acts 16:1,2 describe Timothy as a disciple of whom the brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well. That is, prior to his circumcision Timothy had become a Christian and was recognized as a brother in good standing by his brethren. Because his mother was a Jewess married to a Greek, Paul knew that Timothy would be a liability to him in his efforts to reach the Jewish community. Consequently, as a matter of expediency, Paul circumcised Timothy—not for salvation—but "because of the Jews who lived in that area" (Acts 16:3).

Paul's willingness to compromise on the issue of circumcision is commendable. He had won the debate in Jerusalem regarding circumcision. He knew that Timothy's circumcision was not an issue of salvation, so it in no way violated the gospel. Paul was able to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. He knew when to stand firm and when to make concessions.

Lesser men might have thought that since the act of circumcision was the same whether or not it was required for salvation, it must be

refused, especially in a religious context. In other words, even though circumcision could be just a matter of expediency, the possibility of it being misunderstood was so great that it should be avoided. But Paul had nothing to do with that kind of reasoning.

Paul understood that Timothy didn't have to be circumcised. His concern was outreach. He was willing to do whatever was necessary (short of violating clear biblical precepts) to spread the gospel. In his own words, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing" (1 Cor. 9:22b,23).

Recognizing the difference between essentials and non-essentials is fundamental to church growth. In the matter of non-essentials, compromise with the prevailing culture that lowers resistance to the essential message of the gospel is appropriate.

Churches will be strengthened in the faith and grow daily in numbers when conflict is appropriately managed and compromise, in non-essentials, that reduces resistance to the gospel, is made.



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Hilton Head Opens New Building

By Jim Denison

The Church of Christ on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, moved into its new church building on September 6. A special Dedication Program was held October 4. The auditorium was filled to capacity with local members and those from other congregations from as far away as Ohio and Michigan. James Vandiver, minister for the Harpeth Hills Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, delivered the keynote address.

The new building contains approximately 4,000 square feet of usable space which includes several classrooms, an activities hall, nursery, church office, and an auditorium seating 120-160 persons. The property's location at 48 Bow Circle (near the island's south end) is excellent since it abuts a road the State plans to widen into four lanes to accommodate a new expressway. This will greatly enhance the church building's visibility to all who pass by. The contractor was Wayne Smith Construction, Inc. Wayne and his wife, Swanie, are charter members of the congregation.

The building's construction was financed several ways: through the generosity of nearly 200 families, including local members and many Christian individuals who vacation here from over 20 states; through the assistance of 18 sister congregations; and through the sale of \$170,000 in bonds to investors.

The Church of Christ on Hilton Head Island began meeting July 16, 1989, just over three short years ago, with Bible classes and a morning worship assembly. A Sunday evening service was added in November 1989 and Wednesday evening Bible classes in July 1990. This is the first congregation of the Lord's church ever to regularly meet on the island.

The congregation began with only two dedicated families—Wayne and Maranell Busey, Wayne and Swanie Smith, along with their children. Prior to this time anyone wishing to worship or work with an established congregation faced a lengthy one-hour drive to either Beaufort, SC, or Savannah, GA. These two families, the Buseys and the Smiths, faithfully made the drive to Savannah each Sunday for ten and seventeen years, respectively. It was upon

this level of dedication and commitment the Hilton Head church was started.

Since that time the church has grown considerably to a present membership of approximately 45 persons. This is due to new Christian families moving to Hilton Head Island and as a result of people giving their lives to the Lord. Each family represented in the congregation continues to demonstrate a similar zeal and commitment to the work and worship of the church.

Along with the dedication shown by local Christians has been the unwavering support of other Christians who are not full-time residents of Hilton Head Island, but who, nevertheless, have played vital roles in the church's growth and spiritual stability. Several families from the surrounding area came regularly to teach, preach and encourage. Of special note: Chester and Ruby Martin, Wesley and Bernice Coxwell, and Duane and Vicki Hill. Chester and Wesley would rotate each week teaching the Sunday adult Bible class; Duane Hill, who at the time was a Captain stationed at Hunter Army Air Field in Savannah, provided much of the preaching. To these and many others the congregation owes a great debt of gratitude. Jim Denison, a native of Florida, moved to Hilton Head Island from Alabama to become the congregation's full-time minister in March 1991.

The church originally met in rented quarters just across the street from its present location. While the old facilities were ideal for a young church just starting out, all who have worshipped in the old facilities can appreciate the wonderful new facility.

From the beginning the started mission of the congregation has been and continues to be a simple one: To carry out the Lord's will as described in the New Testament. Their priorities have been as follows: (1.) To reach out and share the good news of Jesus Christ with every soul on the island—remembering there are 22,000+ permanent island residents in this the seventh largest city in South Carolina. (2.) To search out and help restore those who have fallen away from fellowship with the Lord and

with the local church; providing a loving and accepting Christian environment into which all those who have lost their way could return and be welcomed. (3.) To provide a place of worship for vacationing Christians visiting the island.

In light of these, the congregation has sought to enact programs of outreach as quickly as possible to meet the challenges of these pri-

orities. In financial matters, their goal is to be fully self-supporting by 1995. They are moving somewhat ahead of schedule in this area. Since the church will have received substantial outside support by 1995, they in turn want to assist in the strengthening of existing congregations and the planting of new churches, especially in the Low Country of South Carolina.

The "Gay Bill of Rights"

By David Pharr, Editor

Efforts are underway in the United States Congress to pass an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which would prohibit discrimination "on the basis of affectional or sexual orientation." According to the bill's own definition this includes "male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality by orientation or practice, by and between consenting adults."

The effect of this bill would be that homosexuals and bisexuals would be given protection as minorities under existing civil rights laws. This means that if the law is passed, Congress will have given legal recognition of gay and lesbian lifestyles. It will mean that the federal government will have nullified any state laws which seek to maintain any moral distinctions

in these issues. It will mean that many private businesses and private citizens will have taken from them their right to determine whether they want homosexuals in their employ or living in their rental housing.

The bill was sponsored in the Senate by Senators Kerry, Kennedy, Moynihan, Inouye, Pell, Chafee, Simon and Akaka. In the House there were 110 cosponsors. The bill was not acted upon before Congress adjourned this year, but it will almost certainly be reintroduced in 1993.

There are powerful forces at work in the news media, in the entertainment industry, and in politics to make perversion appear legitimate. How long will decent people remain silent?

Bible and Spade

By Jim Mullican

Bible and Spade was the name of an archaeology magazine published for several years in the 1970's and 1980's. It was an appropriate name, because the spade of the archaeologist continues to dig up material which confirms the biblical record and sheds additional light on information recorded in the Scriptures.

The current issue of **Biblical Archaeology Review** (September/October 1992) features on its front cover an elaborately decorated limestone ossuary recently unearthed during road construction just south of Jerusalem. An "os-

suary" is a box for storing the bones of the dead. Jewish custom was to place the body in a tomb for a few years, but because burial space around

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Jerusalem was at a premium, after the flesh had decayed, the bones would be gathered, placed in an ossuary, and the tomb reused. This practice was introduced shortly before the birth of Jesus and ended with the Romans destroying Jerusalem in A.D. 70. As a result, we can be pretty certain that any ossuaries around Jerusalem come from the New Testament period.

The road construction crew in November of 1990 scraped off the top of a rock burial cave, in which were twelve ossuaries. One, more intricately carved and decorated than the others, was inscribed in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke) with the name, "Yehosef bar Qafa," or "Joseph, son of Caiaphas." On the other end it is simply marked, "Qafa." Inside were the bones of several people, including a woman, four children, and a man who died at about sixty years of age, apparently the said "Caiaphas."

In the New Testament, Jesus is tried before the high priest, who is identified as "Caiaphas" (Matt. 26:3, 57, et al). Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, also mentions this man, calling him "Joseph who was called Caiaphas." Several Jewish sources indicate that Caiaphas was the family name of a priestly family, so that the priest before whom Jesus was tried would have also been known, in light of Josephus's writing, as "Joseph, son of Caiaphas."

What all this means is that the bones of the man who pronounced Jesus worthy of death have apparently been found. But even more significant, the bones of Jesus never have been, because he rose from the dead and even now reigns in heaven. Let us live in such a way that we may one day live with him there. Never doubt the Bible. It proves true in every detail. [P. O. Box 219, Clyde, NC 28721.]

What's the World Coming To?

[Editor's note: I do not know who is the author of the following fictitious letter, but it is a shocking idea of what may lie ahead for a nation that is already adjusting to the calloused slaughter of countless unborn. The mood is swinging toward acceptance of "mercy killing," and the debate is already on in some circles regarding euthanasia for those who are retarded, mentally ill, or just old or helpless. When a baby can be killed in the womb just because he/she is going to be an inconvenience, how long will it be before an inconvenient kindergartner might likewise be destroyed?]

Dear Mom,

Can you believe it's 2023 already? I'm still writing '22 on everything. Seems like yesterday I was sitting in first grade celebrating the century change.

I know we haven't chatted since Christmas. Sorry. Anyway, I have some difficult news and I really didn't want to call and talk face to face.

Ted's had a promotion, and I should be up for a hefty raise this year if I keep putting in those crazy hours. You know how hard I work. Yes, we're still really struggling with all the bills. Joey's been OK at kindergarten although

he still complains about going. But then he wasn't happy about day care either, so what can we do?

He's become a real problem, Mom. He's a good kid, but quite honestly, he's an unfair burden at this time in our lives. Ted and I have talked this through and finally made a choice. Plenty of other families have made it and are so much better off.

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Our pastor is supportive and says hard decisions sometimes are necessary. The family is a system and the demands of one member shouldn't be allowed to ruin the whole. He told us to be prayerful, consider all the factors, and do what is right to make the family work. He says the decision is ours, and was kind enough to refer us to children's clinic right here in town, so at least I know that part is easy.

I'm not an uncaring mother. I do feel sorry for the little guy. I think he heard Ted and me talking about "it" the other night. I turned around and saw him standing on the bottom step in his pj's with the little bear you gave him under his arm and his eyes sort of wetting up.

Mom, the way he looked at me just broke my heart. But I honestly believe this is the best for all of us. It's not fair to force him to live with a family that can't give him the time and attention he deserves. And please don't give me the kind of grief Grandma gave you over your abortions. It's the same, you know.

We've told him he's just going in for a vaccination. Anyway they say the whole termination procedure is painless.

I guess it's just as well you haven't seen that much of him.

Love to Dad, Jane

The Lord Looks for Holy People—Ezekiel 9:3-6

By Bob Bickle

It was a particularly disturbing time for the nation of Israel. In 597 B.C. King Jehoiachin opened the gates of Jerusalem to the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The king and some 10,000 of his subjects, including Ezekiel, were carried away to Babylon.

Ezekiel received the prophetic call from Jehovah when he was 30 years of age. A number of visions would be given to him by God. Ezekiel found himself doing some incredible things to illustrate God's displeasure of His people.

A particularly compelling vision is recorded in Ezekiel 9:3-6. "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come

not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began with the ancient men which were before the house."

A mark was to be placed upon those who were faithful to God. Their faithfulness was determined by their sensitivity to and sorrow over their nation's sin. Are we sorrowing over the condition of our nation's sinfulness? A Supreme Court's ruling that permits millions of unborn babies to be put to death every year? A nation that is removing the barriers for homosexuals and lesbians to practice their "lifestyle of sin" in an open way? A nation that is challenging spiritual freedoms and removing them one by one? A nation that is promoting pornography and its "right to exist"? A nation that is showing family life as life that consists of two people living together—whether a homosexual or lesbian arrangement, or simply two people living in fornication? The U. S. Census Bureau reported in July, 1992, that only one out of four United States households are married couples with children. These households are most likely to be Asian or Hispanic - groups who cling to traditional values. We live in a nation where in one day in the life of TV there are 376 violent scenes (1 every 3 minutes) on unaffiliated sta-

tions; 321 scenes on WTBS (18 per hour); 257 scenes on HBO (14 per hour); 209 scenes (12 per hour) on USA network, and of the major networks CBS leads with 175 scenes (10 per hour). Is it any wonder that our crime rate is going "out of sight" each year?

In the scene described in our text, God gave a command to begin with His sanctuary. It was the spiritual leaders of Israel who blatantly promoted their idolatrous beliefs and who caused the people to abandon God and to follow them. Spiritual leaders are especially accountable to God because they are entrusted with the task of teaching the truth (James 3:1). When leaders pervert the truth, they can lead countless people away from God and even cause a nation to fall. How sad that in the temple, the one place where surely God's truth should be taught, they were teaching lies!

To God's preacher the Holy Spirit directed

Paul to write, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:12-13; 16).

Apostle Peter reminds God's people, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Ezekiel's message is still ringing true! God is looking for holy people. Will He find them in His church? That's where He will begin His search!

[339 Charlotte Ave., Rock Hill, SC 29730.]

Paper Boy

By Charles R. Lambert

It was just before daybreak as I peddled my bicycle down that white sandy road on the way to the Morris house. I knew Mrs. Morris would be waiting for me with the car all warmed up. The temperature was near freezing, and a white blanket of frost lay on top of cars, houses, and the whole countryside was white. It was cold and I could feel it right to the bone. Arriving at our meeting place, my breath looked as if I were smoking, as I exhaled the warm, moist air into the atmosphere.

I jumped off my bicycle and went directly to her car waiting for me. I said "Good morning," and settled down in the warm seat trying to catch my breath. It was just me and Mrs. Morris driving into town to pick up the newspapers we were going to deliver before 7:00 A.M. Everybody wanted their paper right along with their coffee and breakfast. It was up to me to deliver it to their porches before breakfast.

There was a reason they hired me to deliver the papers; I was fast and only weighed eighty pounds. When we picked up the papers and put them in the car on the seat beside Mrs. Morris, it was time for my act. I peeled that warm coat

off and took five papers with me. Now it was a foot race to keep up with the car as Mrs. Morris drove. I could run just fast enough to stay with her old Dodge. During the week the papers were small, but on Saturday and Sunday they were heavy and I couldn't carry as many, which meant more trips to the car.

I could hold in there, even though she only paid me a quarter a day with Mondays off. A dollar and a half a week was big money for a twelve-year-old boy with only a bicycle to support.

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The sun was just rising and I could tell it would be a beautiful day. I grabbed a few papers, and started running from house to house. One thing I had to watch for was dogs. If you roused one dog in a neighborhood they all went off like an alarm. They barked, they chased, and they bit. This particular morning I was on the sharp lookout for one white bulldog who was a terror. I kept running, watching on both sides of the street, but I never saw him. Maybe he was home sleeping, where I should be, I thought. I turned the corner with the old Dodge right behind me and into a dead end street, which is where the bull dog lived. This was not unusual for me because I faced that dog every day, but I didn't see him. I quit running and began to walk, looking all around. I kept going as I folded a paper for the box on a post about four feet off the ground. This took some nerve for a twelve year old. I put the paper in the box on the post, and I turned around and walked away, only to hear the dog charging the post where the paper lay in the box. He jumped into the air and grabbed that paper; he destroyed it right in front of me. I was hurt, upset, and angry, but there was a ray of hope, because the dog's owner had been waiting for his paper and he saw what

happened. I gave the man another paper and he called the dog. He rolled the paper up and handed it to me. "Swat him once," he said, and I was happy to accommodate him. After that morning the bull dog and I became friends. He never tore up but a few papers and I did not swat him again, and Mrs. Morris didn't complain about a customer getting two newspapers in one day.

Just as I overcame my fear of the bull dog and found peace and security in my daily life, we can apply the same principle to our spiritual lives. We can overcome the fear of Satan and find comfort in the Lord. How do we choose the right path? Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." 1 Timothy 6:11 says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness."

Trying to stay faithful is hard work, although your fellow Christians will help and comfort you. There is still one big weapon against Satan: It is not a rolled up newspaper, it is the truth of God, rolled up in our hearts and lives.

The Church's Children

By Paul Watson

Earlier this year I had the opportunity of interviewing Dr. John Westerhoff, professor of religious education at Duke, for an article on training children in the Christian faith. In the course of that interview, Dr. Westerhoff made this striking observation:

"We have a mixed feeling in the United States about children. We love them and hate them. We want them, but we don't want them around. Until we decide that we really love our children enough to have them with us and put up with whatever that means, then we probably ought not to have them."

Dr. Westerhoff's point—a very valid one, in my judgment—was that while peer-group activities such as Sunday school classes or teen devotionals can be helpful in educating our chil-

dren, such activities are not all-sufficient.

In other words, we cannot simply "shuffle off" the "kids" to a Sunday school teacher or youth minister and think we, as a church, have done our job. Instead, we must have our children with us—in worship, in fellowship, in service and outreach efforts—that they may learn with us and from us in all kinds of life-situations. For, ultimately, persons become Christians and mature as Christians, not solely by being "taught," but especially by being "formed"—shaped, molded by interacting with older, more experienced Christians who themselves are dedicated to having Christ live in them. (Such passages as 1 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 2:3-5 underscore this.)

Logic Flaws

By Paul R. Mobley

While studying at the University of Cincinnati I came across, and read, a book detailing the methods used for misuse and abuse of statistics — lying with statistics. Basically such efforts use selected sources of material, omit disagreeable data, and manipulate the remaining data for support of predetermined desired conclusions. That is, they make the data fit ulterior or mistaken purposes.

Similar applications are being applied to the Bible. The creation, Noah and the Flood, Christ, and so on are claimed to be myths, legends, etc. which have been conjured up by superstitious religious minds. A further claim is made that the Bible is outdated and inapplicable in today's high technology, and better understood world. Thus parts of the Bible can be omitted according to these claims. Which part is to be kept depends on which philosophy one listens to. What is actually done is that agreeable information that suits preselected goals, is selected, and any parts that are kept are subordinated to the "wisdom of men." All of this is intended to discredit the Bible.

This methodology ignores objective secular historians, archeological findings, natural laws, the validity of models for modern everyday living, all of which confirm the validity and veracity of the Bible.

There is also a tendency to blindly accept as factual, proven, and truthful, whatsoever a person with a notation behind his name, or a celebrity, or a person in power, may say. There is also a tendency to accept the ideas and actions of groups, or a majority of society. Any of these can be correct, but they can also be entirely wrong about a specific subject. A degree, a license, celebrity status, or a position of power can only propose that the individual might be an expert in a limited specified area. They may have been proven wrong at times in even their area of expertise. The point is that humans are proven to be flawed in ideas and actions. If this were not true, there would be no need to get a second opinion about surgery, or critical illness; nor would companies spend millions of dollars testing, testing, and testing.

However, the Bible is like mathematics.

Two plus two equals four — which we can accept fully or reject, but we cannot compromise it nor get rid of it. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Whether we accept the Bible or not, whether we even like it or not, the whole Bible we have now will be there in the last day as the standard by which we are judged.

How could Jesus make such a statement? He tells us, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). Further note, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35) and "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (John 3:34).

Again it should be emphasized that regardless of how we treat the Bible, it will be there in fullness, uncompromised, on the day of judgment.

What should Christians and those interested in pleasing God do? First, we should set aside preferences and approach the Bible without compromise (Rev. 22:18-19), then study (2 Tim. 2:15), searching the Bible daily (Acts 17:11) to prove all things, and accept those truths learned by believing and doing accordingly (Acts 17:12).

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Restoring The Church That Jesus Built

Bobby M. Anderson

During the last 450 years or so, there have been numerous attempts to either reform the existing church, or to restore the church that Jesus built. In 1536, John Calvin addressed his "Institutes of Christian Religion" to King Francis I, of France. Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. There were also others that set about to reform the existing church.

All of these attempts to reform the existing church only led to the formation of hundreds, maybe even thousands of denominations. Most of these denominations teach some of the truth of God's word, but fail to go into all truth. They add things as they see fit, and leave others out completely. This is what might be called a **customized** religion.

Now, a customized religion is a religion that is designed to fit the individual's (or group of individuals's) own particular desires, or felt needs. When man designs his own brand of religion, God is left out. The prophet Jeremiah said, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). God, and God only, must tell man how man is to worship Him. God knows what pleases Him, and this has been revealed to

us through His Holy Word, the Bible.

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). When Jesus said to keep His commandments, that eliminated all that man would want to add on his own. If man adds or leaves out obeying any of these commandments, then he is **customizing** a religion for himself.

There is a great difference between **customizing** and **restoring**. A man may buy an old car that has deteriorated and restore it. He will put all parts on the car that the original manufacture put on the car, the paint will be the original color. If he changes anything from the original, then he is customizing. It is therefore no longer the original car. To restore an old car it must be returned to its original style, color, kinds of parts, etc.

Many today start to restore the church as it was in the first century, only to customize it. Could this be the reason for so many denominations in the world today? We do not need any more customized churches, but rather we need the church that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ built (Matt. 16:18), nothing more, nothing less. [1387 County Rd. 100, Riceville, TN 37370.]

A Biblical Standard

By Wellington H. Smith, Jr.

It was my privilege recently to enjoy the company of a young preacher just out of school. One of the topics of our conversation concerned the present condition of the church. He is very concerned about the diversity of doctrines now being taught in many of our congregations. As we discussed this problem we examined a number of possible causes. One that kept coming to the forefront was the matter of pressure to perform.

I believe that every preacher has at one

time or another felt pressure to have more conversions, more Bible studies, to make more visits, etc. Please let me make it perfectly clear that these are an absolute for the Christian, whether one be an evangelist, elder, member, etc. Every Christian, in response to Bible teaching, should be involved in these efforts. However, since most preachers are salaried, there seems to be an **unspoken quota** that must be filled to be acceptable. As long as this quota is measured against the Bible standard then there

is no harm done. When it exceeds that standard then problems often appear.

In his sermon outline, "*Jesus' Attitude Toward Scriptures*," Tom Holland makes the following observation: "Men have standards—values by which they measure things." He goes on to point out three basic values: (1) Their own desires—decide by emotion then rationalize. (2) Crowds—do what everyone else is doing. (3) Friends—do those things that are recognized and approved by those close to you. These values aren't necessarily evil when used to choose a restaurant or shopping mall, but when applied to matters of doctrine these values are sure to fail. In Jeremiah 10:23 the writer puts forth this basic truth: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Every preacher has laughed at the "Preacher Wanted" ad. Wanted: Man must be 35 years old with 25 years's experience; Ph.D.s in counseling and communication; married only once with 2 1/2 children; willing to work for \$6,000 per annum.

We maintain that we are Bible-believing, Bible-living, and Bible-practicing people in the Lord's church. As we consider a man to serve as an elder, we would go to the Bible standard; and so we should. The same is true for the deacons and those wishing to identify with a particular congregation. We wish to adhere to the Bible pattern for all matters of faith and practice and indeed we must. Doesn't it seem strange, then, when we're seeking a pulpit evangelist, our criteria suddenly becomes based on much more worldly things. Suddenly we're asking questions that Jesus never asked His disciples.

We usually determine a man's credibility by hearing one sermon. Does he look right? Does he use good English? Has he been to the right schools? What degrees does he have? Are these Bible standards? People took notice of first-century preachers because of the following standard: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

I am not casting aspersions on those who are better looking, friendlier, more articulate, and better educated. All those things are fine, but is this the standard Jesus used when choos-

ing His preachers? I believe when a faulty standard is used, then often the results are faulty. This includes the measure by which we judge ministerial performance. This brings us to the second point.

In the following verses of Scripture Jesus indicated that there would be comparatively few to enter heaven—Matthew 7:14; 20:16; 22:14. On Pentecost Peter preached to a vast multitude. Some say approximately 1.2 million. If this is true, then the conversion rate was about one in four hundred. (I must ask the question: When was the last time you brought four hundred people to hear your preacher? How about one?)

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If that conversion ratio is accurate, then comparatively few were converted considering the miraculous event recorded there. Let me say that there is no substitute for honest, hard work. Because there will be "few" is not a reason to be lazy. We cannot know who that "few" will be until we teach them the truth. We are to be in the seed-planting business. Anyone who is not about this work needs to repent; and do it quickly. In spite of hard work, right conditions, and the best intentions, we sometimes see very little results. We need to remember this one thing; when every sermon has been preached and evaluated; when every visit has been made; when every class has been taught and analyzed, it is God who gives the increase.

Every Christian man is commanded to provide for his family. This must certainly include those who have chosen the ministry. It must be remembered that we are all subject to pressure to do and keep our work (I say *work* instead of *job* because I believe there is a difference). I believe that preachers are often subjected to a degree of pressure that is unscriptural. Unfortunately, we sometimes do it ourselves. When that happens we start looking for better, quicker ways to get results. We want to look better and

feel better. We want to have security in our work. I've been guilty of that myself. Fortunately, someone cared enough to point out the unscriptural nature of my "little program" before it could hurt anyone.

We should be concerned about doing "the work of an evangelist." We must be focused on seeking and saving the lost and displaying a loving attitude to the congregations we serve. Most of all we must be aware that there is a biblical standard for the work that is set before us.

Let us, as Christians, seek out those men who love Jesus and His people. Those who have demonstrated this by faithful, loving adherence to the Word of God. Let us not use an unscriptural standard to judge our preachers, whether it be for hiring or firing. Let us, rather, love God and show it by following His standard.

You preachers should know this! We're not working for money. We're working for the kingdom and it's King. We should appreciate the support we receive from loving Christians who want the kingdom to grow, but salary is not the goal. The goal is that of saving lost souls.

[Wellington preaches for the church in Monroe, NC. Contact him at PO Box 2106, Monroe, 28110.]

A Book Review

By Michael R. Mobley

Isaiah: God's Prophet of Doom and Deliverance, Wayne Jackson. Quality Publications, P. O. Box 1060, Abilene, Texas 79604-1060; 139 pages, paper.

Isaiah's book has long captured the imagination and the heart of many a Bible reader. Unfortunately, many have carried it away into the fantasy of many a falsehood. To redirect the Bible student into the mind of God as Isaiah reveals it, the author divides the book into fourteen manageable and intelligible sections. The student will especially enjoy the way Jackson draws out the vividness of the Messianic sections of Isaiah's book—the suffering servant and the future glory of God's people.

This study discusses many themes in the Book of Isaiah. Among them are: judgment and mercy, prophecy and salvation, trouble and

hope, and vengeance and love. Isaiah teaches us to believe God and trust His sovereignty, majesty, and power. Finally, this study will impress the student with the glorious purpose and nature of the Lord's church. This book is a worthwhile addition to any library for both personal and class study.

[Contact Mike Mobley at P. O. Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115.]

Give Glory to God

By Tim Sensing

Ephesians 1:2-14 is the longest sentence in the Bible. It is so long and cumbersome that it is difficult to translate into English. Every English translation of this passage has to divide this sentence into several sentences. Why would Paul write such a long sentence so uncharacteristic of his style? This question has been asked by Bible students for centuries. What follows is my own rough translation of Eph. 1:3-14 giving only one sentence. *Blessed be God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, just as He has called us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His presence in love, having predestined us into adoption through Jesus Christ into Him, according to His good pleasure of His will, into the praise of His glory of His grace which He graced us in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He poured out abundantly to us with all wisdom and understanding having made known to you the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, unto the administration of the fullness of time, He summarized all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on the earth in Him, in whom all we were chosen having been predestined according to the purpose of the one who works all things according to the desires of His will, in order for us to be the praise of His glory those of us who were the first to hope in Christ, in whom you also having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the deposit of our inheritance, into the redemption of possession, for the praise of His glory.*

Most commentators have found similar type passages in the Old Testament among some of the hymnic material of Psalms and Jewish worship. This opening passage of Ephesians with its outburst of praise has the form of an extended blessing or *berakah* ("Blessed be God, who has . . ."). This form of blessing is still seen in Jewish prayer books today. The traditional answer has been to say, Paul modi-

fied this Jewish blessing to praise God for what He has done for us.

A second explanation recently proposed also has merit. Many inscriptions written to honor a particular benefactor have been compiled for study by archaeologists. These inscriptions go to some length to praise either some pagan deity or man who is being honored for acts of kindness. These inscriptions are then placed upon a statue or building erected in his honor. Paul's statements of praise resemble these honorific inscriptions exactly. Paul would have been very familiar with this form of writing having seen these type of statues in Athens and other Greek cities. It is interesting to note that Paul's sentence in 1:3-14 is relatively average in length (no longer to be thought of as an abnormally long sentence).

Even though ancient backgrounds and sources are interesting to study, the crucial matter for us is to know why Paul does this. Imagine walking through the temple of Artemis (largest temple of any kind in the ancient world) and being impressed with its splendor. As you read an inscription to Artemis you are impressed with her great deeds. Or imagine walking through our own Washington monument or Lincoln memorial and being inspired about their great accomplishments.

Paul praises God as the ultimate Benefactor worthy of all honor for what He has done on our behalf. When you read the tribute given to God you want to shout "Amen!" No one in heaven or on earth compares to God who surpasses, who exceedingly surpasses, who exceedingly abundantly surpasses, who far exceedingly abundantly surpasses them all. He is the one only true and living God.

It moves you to give God a standing ovation. God is impressive! We are to be ever in AWE and WONDER—"to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

"Therefore, I beseech you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph. 4:1).
[Tim preaches for the Mebane Street Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.]

“Curse God and Die”

By Mark Swindall

Thunderstorms with powerful thunder and impressive lightening tell us something about ourselves. Are you afraid? Good! Never get too strong or arrogant with your righteousness! Peter denied that he would ever deny, and then he did. The rooster told the end of that story.

Life is unpredictable. Illness, disease, tragedy and death occur in everyone's life. Life "comes apart at the seams." What do we do? How do we react? Are we embarrassed or humiliated? Instead of getting closer to God we may pull away. Instead of getting involved with the church we may run, or hide, or blame, or strike back, or say and do ugly things to others. We may isolate ourselves from God and our brethren. Think about this, you can take it to the bank: **People who need God and the church family the most are often the ones who run the fastest from them!**

When the "thunderstorms" of life roll in, keep the character of God clean. God didn't do it. Don't blame God. Run toward God as Job

did. It is lamentable but true: there is some of Job's wife in many of us. "Curse God and die" was her advice to her husband.

When the "thunderstorms" of life roll in, we realize that we didn't pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Possession of a baptismal certificate is not an "automatic" ticket into heaven. Salvation is not a business transaction with our Creator. "God, we did our part, we are so good, we have done so much, attended so regularly, given so generously; now don't ever let anything harmful happen to us!" God doesn't make deals. God committed to the necessities (Matt. 6:33), He never promised life would be a walk in the garden.

When the "thunderstorms" of life roll in, follow the example of Job: And Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord...**Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God**" (Job 1:21-22).

I Am Resolved

By Robert Curry

It is traditional to look back at the end of each year, take stock of our lives and resolve to do better during the next year. Sadly, such resolutions are too often forgotten. We have good intentions, but too little resolve. This is truly unfortunate for resolutions can be good, allowing us to grow as individuals, to achieve worthwhile goals and improve our outlook in life.

Such resolve is good for the Christian. However, as with other resolutions, too often Christians have good intentions, but little of what it takes to carry through. Too much is left undone and unattended. Realizing the problem, what should we do?

Resolve to be Examined

One of the sticking points in making resolutions to better ourselves is that we make them without realizing the responsibility. We do as others do and declare to accomplish this, or cease to do that, without understanding the necessity to carry through with our intentions.

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Therefore, I must resolve myself to be resolved; to be resolved, I must make an examination. As Christians we must welcome the opportunity to make right what is wrong. To do this one must examine himself to discover his strengths and weaknesses. As Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). This is a difficult process, however, for we shrink back from such close scrutiny. We are afraid of what will be found; we feel we have too much to hold on to. If I hide from my faults, I will not need to deal with them. If I do not resolve myself to change, I do not have to change.

Such examination is essential if we will better ourselves as Christians. David insisted, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psa. 26:2). Why would David desire God to do this? He writes, "But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me" (v. 11). He realized that he would be made so much better if God would be given free reign to examine and correct.

I Will Not Forget

Having accomplished the difficult and uncomfortable task of opening ourselves up to close scrutiny, we then face another sticking point: we often forget what we have resolved to do. The desire for betterment might be strong early on, but as time progresses that desire wanes. Whatever danger or defeat caused us to wish for improvement has passed and we no longer feel the need to move in the same direction.

The Christian must realize that he serves a God who anticipates our needs and provides for them. Realizing man's penchant for moral weakness, He offers to the Christian the opportunity for serious self-examination. However, this opportunity does not come at the end of every year, but every first day of the week. Paul instructed, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11:28). Of course the occasion of the Lord's Supper is not the only time when self-examination is needed.

But what a wonderful opportunity, provided by God for His own! As we face the struggles and temptations of living the Christian

life in a hedonistic world, we find every first day of the week the opportunity to reevaluate and reexamine. As the song expresses it: "When my love for Christ grows weak, when for deeper faith I seek; Then in thought I go to thee, Garden of Gethsemene." As I stand in examination at the base of the cross I stand illuminated by the righteousness of the Son of God. His countenance is so bright (Rev. 1:16) nothing in me is hidden from view.

Being able to examine myself in such bright illumination every first day of the week, I do not have the time to forget or lose my resolve.

No Longer Charmed by the World

Another song that we often sing makes the declaration, "I am resolved, no longer to linger, charmed by the world's delight; Things that are higher, things that are nobler, these have allured my sight." Having decided to resolve myself, accepting the necessity of close self-examination, realizing that God has provided for me an opportunity to reexamine myself week after week, I am resolved to live my life in service to Jesus Christ.

I am resolved to live closer to God and His Word. Like Paul, I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). When I am not ashamed of this Word, I can be thrilled by its power. Being thrilled by it I will consider daily Bible reading and study a privilege. Bible preaching will become something to enjoy and not to make excuses to avoid.

I am resolved that I will remember I am a Christian, wearing my new name with spiritual pride, for there "is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). I will not try to stand as openly to the world as possible and still wear this name, for I have a new identity and a new life. I will make this name a mold to fit into, not something that must fit me.

I am resolved that I will chart my future course. In order for me to do so I must realize my destination. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Therefore, I know my destination and no one will keep me from my arrival because I have resolved to make heaven my eternal home with Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

This new year can be the beginning of things spiritually new: singing a new song (Rev. 5:9), looking forward to a new earth, a new heaven, and a new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1,2), where we will wear a new name in eternity (Rev. 2:17).

However, the choice for obedience must be made now, deciding to faithfully serve Jesus Christ. That is why I must resolve to make a serious self-examination and to make right what is wrong. After such examination I must then

resolve to never forget what I have decided to accomplish, realizing that God gives me ample opportunities to give scrutiny to my life every first day of the week. Then, having continually examined myself, I must resolve to put away forever the things of the world and desire things higher and more noble.

Having made such resolutions I will come to the Lord. As the song states, "I will hasten to him, hasten so glad and free; Jesus, greatest, highest, I will come to thee."

[P. O. Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334]

Brotherhood News

By Dennis Conner

The WALKUP AVE. church in Monroe, NC will be hosting its First Annual Men's Day on January 16, 1993. Speakers will include Phil Johnson, Craig Hendrichs, and Bob Bickle. The program will be conducted from 9:15 A.M. to 3:30 P.M....The SUMMERVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST in Summerville, SC has celebrated 30 baptisms this year, through the end of November. That is a new record for the church...Many people have wondered about the response to the One Nation Under God Campaign. According to information provided by the Sycamore Church of Christ in Cookeville, TN at least 600 people have been baptized as a result of Phases I and II. Phase I covered the United States, and Phase II includes a mailing that to date has covered half of Canada....Hipolito Trivenos, an evangelist in Cusco, Peru, was recently accused of being a terrorist and was jailed for 13 days. An anonymous caller phoned local police and identified brother Trivenos and his wife as being connected with a rebel group. After an investigation the authorities released brother and sister Trivenos

and apologized. In describing his experience Trivenos said, "I felt anguished, depressed, and even fearful about the false accusations...There were no beds, no bathrooms, only rats running loose and the stench of death. There were screams, crying, and nights of torture. At midnight we were dunked into cold water with our clothes on. In the difficult moments I really felt close to the apostles and brethren of the first century, who had been treated in the same way." (The Trivenos story was reported in **Christian Chronicle**, December, 1992)...A great deal of optimism and excitement has been expressed about the opportunities for the gospel in the former Soviet Union since the collapse of Communism, and a recent report in **Christian Chronicle** indicates that the optimism is justified. According to the report there are at least 51 churches of Christ in the former Soviet Union, with 2,419 people having been baptized since the Communist fall. In the city of Kiev, Russia alone (where there are three churches), there have been more than 280 baptisms.



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