

The Great Inheritance

and other sermons

By JOHN WADDEY

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Dedication

To Clifford and Jean Reel: Lovely Christians, faithful and dependable co-workers, children of God whose lights shine brightly and who help to make my work a joy and a delight.

Introduction

Preaching twelve years for one congregation while authoring fourteen books reveals much about a preacher. To accomplish this the preacher must be loved and respected by the congregation. He must be a diligent student, first in the Bible, then in other areas as time allows. This describes John Waddey. He is held in high esteem by the Karns Church of Christ. Though pre-eminently a preacher, I am amazed at the wealth of information which he has on a variety of subjects. He not only collects books (more than 7,000 volumes), he makes use of them. Not a few students at the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions have been inspired by John Waddey to build good libraries and spread the gospel through the printed page.

In *THE GREAT INHERITANCE*, the author has written with clarity on matters which are perpetually relevant, as well as on issues which the church and our nation have not previously confronted. It is a pleasure to commend this book which will inform and strengthen its readers.

M.H. Tucker

April 1, 1979

Author's Preface

Life's greatest privilege is to worship and serve the great Jehovah. To serve the Lord in preaching the word is surely one of the most rewarding avenues of service. The author has now been privileged to serve as a gospel preacher for the last 23 years. The joys have been many and the sorrows few. He has seen no other career or profession that he would exchange for the work of an evangelist.

Among the richest experience in his work has been the opportunity to train other faithful men to be ministers of Christ. This, of course, is related to the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Along with that is the joy of serving the wonderful brethren of the Karns congregation in Knoxville, Tennessee. Now in his twelfth year with that church, the author looks forward to continuing that relationship through the years ahead.

The lessons contained in this volume are sermons and articles prepared and delivered to the home congregation. Most of them have also appeared in various brotherhood journals. It is hoped that in this present form they will have an even wider and more permanent distribution.

The volume goes forth with the prayer that God will so bless the work that only good will result from it. If someone is helped in his heavenward journey, the effort will be well repaid.

About The Author

John Waddey was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1938. He was baptized by George Prosser in 1955. Parker French encouraged him to become a preacher. One year after his conversion, he preached his first sermon at the Blackmon congregation near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He is married to the former Reba Duncan and is the father of four daughters, Lourene, Lesia, Rebecca, and Rachel.

His schooling was received at the College of Evangelists and Itawamba Junior College. Most of his education was gained from his own study and experience. In his twenty-two years of preaching, Brother Waddey has served churches in Mississippi, Colorado and Tennessee. Evangelistic work has carried him into twenty-five other states. He has made nine overseas trips, visiting mission works in nineteen countries. He has done evangelistic work in eleven foreign nations. Over the years he has spoken at a number of special lectureships at Christian colleges, Schools of Preaching and congregations.

Since 1968, John Waddey has worked with the Karns congregation of Knoxville, Tennessee. Annually that church hosts a World Mission workshop. He has planned and directed that program since moving to Karns.

Each year he conducts several revival meetings. He is an officer of the Teenage Christian camp. He has engaged in four public debates and a number of radio and television talk shows where controversial subjects were discussed.

For eleven years Brother Waddey conducted a weekly radio broadcast. For several years he wrote a weekly newspaper column. Through the Rocky Mountain News of Denver,

Colorado, over 50 million copies of his lessons were circulated. His articles are carried in the Firm Foundation, Gospel Advocate, World Evangelist, Words of Truth, Christian Echo, and seven other brotherhood papers. Recently he was named editor of the STAR massmail evangelistic magazine which has a circulation of 400,000. In 1970 he assisted the Karns elders in establishing the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, and continues to serve as a teacher in it.

In addition to his evangelistic duties, Wadley is President of the Tennessee Volunteers for Life, a pro-life group fighting the abortion evil. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the National Right to Life Committee and on the board of the Defenders of Human Life. He writes and speaks extensively on the related issues of abortion, euthanasia and suicide.

John Wadley has authored fourteen books. In addition, he has written chapters for eleven other published volumes and thirteen pamphlets.

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A Statement From The Publisher

What makes a man like John Waddey? Why does he do all that he does? Why does he spend so much time reading, studying, teaching, preaching, and writing? Does he do it for money? Is it because of an enormous ego? What does he get out of all of this? No doubt there are those who have asked these questions and many who would like to have the answers.

Knowing John Waddey as I do I think I can say that it is not for the usual reasons that he so involves himself. That is, it is not as the world might suspect. Rather, he is a humble, sincere man, dedicated to the Lord and his cause. He wants to be used for God and he seeks means and ways that he may be so used. It is just that simple.

John Waddey is a man that you can be comfortable with. He is not a stuck up know it all, without any time for you. Instead, he is a man that you can visit with, enjoy being with, and someone you can talk to.

John Waddey is a family man. He and his lovely wife, Reba, have four daughters. Living in their own house near the Karns meeting house where he preaches, he enjoys among other things, taking care of his place, gardening, and growing a variety of plants and flowers.

The Waddeys have visited with us and we have visited with them. Just this summer we had the pleasure of being with them on two different occasions and we enjoyed our time with them immensely.

This particular book is a compilation of articles and materials that have been primarily written for various religious

papers and journals throughout the brotherhood. They cover a multiplicity of subjects and themes. They are scriptural, informative, inspirational, and will be a blessing to all who may read them.

Once more I am honored to serve as the publisher for yet another volume authored by my friend and brother in Christ, John Waddey. I commend him and his writings to you and I know once you begin to read the things that he has had to say that you will want to read everything he has written.

I consider John and myself as representing a team in the writing and publishing of good Christian literature and I look forward to many more years of the same.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 1130
February 2, 1986

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Are You Going To Church More But Enjoying It Less?

Institutional church membership is declining. People are turning away from the established churches in great numbers. Why?

In many churches, people who went to hear a message from God's word only heard the Bible discredited and ridiculed.

They went to worship God and the preacher told them He was dead.

They went to learn of Christ, to be saved. They heard him dethroned by preachers who denied his virgin birth, his miracles, his resurrection, his divinity.

They went seeking communion with God and food for their souls, but heard a harangue on politics and social problems.

They took their children to learn God's rules for right living. They were given lectures on situation ethics and civil disobedience. Homosexuality and free love were extolled. The forces of law and order were castigated.

They gave their gifts to God to care for the needy and evangelize the world for Christ. The money was given to radical militants; to political lobbies. It provided worldly, sinful entertainment for their young.

They sought to sing praises unto God, but were forced to listen to the blare of a "spiritual jazz concert".

Does some or all of this sound familiar? Are you going to church more but enjoying it less? What would you give to

worship as the first Christians did? You can, you know. There is a group of dedicated Christians near you practicing First Century Christianity. They are a church you can read of in your Bible. They have rejected the corruptions we have referred to. They honor the Bible as God's holy word. It is their only guide.

Who are these people? They are the "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). By following the Scriptures alone; you can learn about the church of the New Testament and how you can worship and serve God as a member of it today. We urge you to take time to consider these thoughts and to investigate the church of Christ near you.

Be Fruitful And Multiply

The first recorded command of God to the human family was not concerning worship, doctrine or a moral prohibition. It was that they “be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” (Gen. 1:28) It is worth noting that the Lord did not create an earth full of people, just one couple, male and female. To them he gave the privilege of participating with him in completing the task of populating this grand abode.

Since that ancient day in Eden, every couple of every generation has shared in the charge to be fruitful and multiply. In our day, however, a new attitude has emerged. Ours has been called the contraceptive age. No longer does conception just happen. Now it is within the reach of every couple to control their reproduction. This power has proven both a blessing and an evil. The advantages are obvious: proper spacing has aided the mother emotionally and physically. Limitation of offspring has helped families achieve and maintain greater financial security. It has helped to stabilize population growth. On the other hand, it has prompted many couples to view sex only from the standpoint of fleshly pleasure. It has emboldened many to engage in premarital sex or even prostitution since the fear of unwanted pregnancy has been removed.

While we do not question the morality of contraception for married couples who wish to plan their family growth, there is an attitude that should be avoided. A young Christian husband was recently heard to say, “We have decided to have no children since it is so hard to raise them today.” The idea is faulty for the following reasons: »

1. It is a refusal to fulfill one of God’s stated purposes for marital sex. (Gen. 1:28)

2. It reflects a willingness to selfishly accept God's gift of sex for personal gratification while refusing a primary purpose of our sexual nature. (I John 2:16)

3. In so doing, a couple deny themselves of one of the greatest joys in life, that of parenthood. (Ps. 127:3—5)

4. To choose to remain childless is to endanger the success of one's marriage. Studies show that 80% of all couples who make such a decision will experience marriage failure. That same selfishness that prompted the choice destroys their love.

5. Your greatest contribution to the welfare of the world will be withheld if you refuse to be a parent. No man can leave the world a greater gift than well-adjusted, well-trained children.

6. Your negative choice will mean that God's kingdom will be denied growth and leadership that comes from the children of Christian homes. The majority of the church's growth is from our children.

7. On the other hand, Satan's cause, i.e., the sinners of the world, will continue to grow more numerous and in so doing gain greater power by sheer numbers. The question should be raised, what if every Christian couple took this course? The kingdom of God would be swamped by a tidal wave of sinners.

It is objected by some that it is too hard to raise children in our degenerate society. But really has it ever been easy to raise them? Every generation of young people has had their temptations. God did not promise us a perfect moral environment to raise our kids in. In reality it is the *quality of the home* that makes the real difference in child-rearing. Noah raised three fine boys in the earth's most wicked generation. (Gen. 6:9—12) What if he had refused his duty to father

children?

A refusal to have children is a cowardly copout. It reflects a lack of faith in God's ability to answer our prayers and help us to raise our children to his honor and glory. (John 14:13; Phil. 4:13)

Paul wrote: "I desire, therefore, that the younger women marry, *bear children*, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling." (I Tim. 5:14) Let all of God's married children gladly accept the wonderful privilege of joining hands with the divine Creator in producing children. Let us then accept the responsibility of training them "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)

We certainly do not advocate the irresponsible propagation of children who cannot be properly cared for and educated. (I Tim. 5:8) We do, however, affirm that if one chooses to enter into marriage, he should not refuse to obey the Creator's admonition to "be fruitful and multiply".

The Bible Must Be Rightly Divided

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15 KJV).

Bible study can be the richest experience of one’s life, or it can prove to be extremely frustrating. One reason some have difficulty in understanding God’s message is that they fail to make the proper distinctions in Scripture. The following thoughts will help the sincere Bible student attain the knowledge he desires.

1. The Bible is a library of 66 books, written by some 40 men over a period of 1600 years. While each book must be read and studied for its own unique message, we must never neglect to note the interrelations of the books with each other. Moses wrote the first five books of our Old Testament. Genesis tells the origin of the Hebrew nation and how they got into Egypt. Exodus tells how they became enslaved and then were delivered. Leviticus tells how their national religion came to exist. Numbers relates how they spent 40 years wandering toward Canaan, their new homeland. Deuteronomy rehearses the exodus from Egypt and the 40 years of wilderness wandering. The historical background for the various psalms can be found in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Paul’s epistles must be studied in light of the history of the Acts of the Apostles.

2. Within the Scriptures are words of both inspired and uninspired men. Care must be taken to ascertain who is speaking and if he is directed by the Holy Spirit or not. For example in Genesis, chapter 3:4—5, we read the words of Satan as he tempted Eve. Surely one would not treat these as he would the

words of God or an inspired prophet. Inspiration guarantees that we have a true record of what was said. It does not guarantee that every person quoted was telling the whole truth.

3. The Bible is written in various literary styles. Books like Genesis and Joshua are history. Their message is expressed in simple prose. Psalms and Proverbs are poetic in nature and abound in figurative language. For example, David writes: "My heart is like wax; it is melted within me" (Psalms 22:14). Surely no one could view these words as literal. So it is with thousands of other expressions. A good rule to remember is "All words of Scripture are to be understood in the normal, literal sense unless the context (the setting in which they are found) forbids such." Then we look for a figurative meaning. This lesson is extremely valuable when you study the prophets such as Ezekiel or Revelation.

Another case in point is history and prophecy. Is the writer relating events past or present (history) or is he predicting things yet to come? Jeremiah relates the historical facts of Jerusalem's capture by Babylon (Jer. 52:1—30). But he also predicted the overthrow and destruction of Babylon in 50:21—28 which occurred 50 years later.

4. The Bible consists of an old and new covenant. In Hebrews 8:7 the apostle speaks of "the first covenant" and then the "second covenant." The first covenant was the Old Testament law that God made with the Hebrew nation when he brought them out of Egypt (Hebrews 8:9). The new covenant was made by Jesus (Heb. 8:6—8). The first covenant is now old and no longer binding upon men's souls (Heb. 8:13). All men today are subject to the new covenant of Jesus (Matthew 28:18—19, John 12:48). Thus you do not need to build an ark, even though Noah was commanded to do so (Genesis 6:14). You need not offer a lamb for a sacrifice even though the ancient Hebrews were so obligated (Leviticus 1:10). You must, however, obey Jesus in all that his new covenant teaches if you

would please God. Christ asked, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Do you ask of what value then is the Old Testament? Much in every way. It is the history of God’s scheme of redemption. It tells us our origin and how things came to be as they are. It is of immeasurable value as a background for our New Testament study. Paul writes that things “written aforetime were written for our learning ...” (Romans 15:4). What great lessons we learn from its study. But if we wish to learn what to do to be saved, you must look to Jesus and his New Testament (Matt. 17:3—5). The same is true for instruction about the church or worship today.

What is the practical application of all this? This concept of the two covenants properly understood will keep you from serious religious error. We do not observe the seventh day sabbath (Exodus 20:8) because it is an Old Testament ordinance given to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 5:12—15). We worship on the first day (Sunday) because it is the day of Christ’s resurrection (John 20:1—9); the day the Holy Spirit came to begin this ministry (Acts 2:1—4, compare Leviticus 23:15—21); the day the church began (Acts 2:1—47), and the day early Christians worshipped on (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1—2).

The thief on the cross could be saved by Christ without baptism because he was yet under the old covenant which lasted till Christ died (Heb. 9:16—17; Colossians 2:14—16). Under Christ’s covenant we must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:15—16; Acts 10:48).

May each of us study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

The Indestructible Bible

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away ..." (Matthew 24:35). Among the many aspects of the Bible that declare its supernatural origin and nature is its indestructibility. No other book has endured the wide range of determined attacks as the Bible has.

The very fact that the Scriptures have survived through the ages speaks of their heavenly origin. Moses' Law is now 3500 years old. The New Testament is nearing 2000 years. Many books do not survive their generation, most do not last a century. Yet the word of God has not only survived, it is perennially a best seller and is produced in more languages than any other volume ever written. Many ancient books have lost all their usefulness as man's knowledge of his world advanced, but God's word is as relevant for 20th Century man as it was for those of the past.

Jehoiakim, a degenerate king of Judah burned an original draft of Jeremiah's writings (Jeremiah 36:4—6, 20—24). Few people in America would know of Jehoiakim today, but most would recognize the name of Jeremiah.

Under the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes (175—163 B.C.) "every copy of the law (of God) was to be surrendered to the authorities and be destroyed ..." Alfred Edersheim, **History of the Jewish Nation**, p. 11. This was part of a planned drive to exterminate the religion of Jehovah and the Jewish culture. Antiochus is a lost name in the dusty pages of some ancient history books. The Bible flourishes.

In 303 A.D., Diocletian, emperor of Rome, ordered all copies of the sacred writings destroyed. This, too, was but part

of a massive attack against the whole of God's church. The haughty emperor had a metal engraved saying, "The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored." Ask your children if they have heard of Diocletian. Other Roman emperors such as Decius threw the entire weight of their powerful empire against the infant church and her sacred book. Rome crumbled, the church and the Bible are yet with us. Neander's **History of the Christian Religion**, Vol. 1 p. 48.

Julian the Apostate became a Roman emperor in 351. He renounced Christianity and openly championed heathenism. Julian wrote **A Refutation of the Christian Religion**, attacking the New Testament. He died June 25, 363 saying, "O Galilean thou hast conquered."

Chapters could be written of the fury of the Mohammedans vented against believers in Jesus and the Bible as they conquered Asia Minor and North Africa in the 7th and 8th Centuries.

Isaac Taylor wrote, "The deathless book has survived three great dangers: the negligence of its friends; the false systems built upon it; the warfare of those who have hated it." Sadly the most systematic attempt to destroy the Scriptures was perpetrated by devotees of the apostate church of Rome. In 1199 Pope Innocent had French Bibles burned at Metz and forbade the people to have more. The Council of Tarragona, in Spain, under Pope Gregory IX (1234 A.D.) ordered the people to surrender their Bibles for burning, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain forbade their people to have Bibles (1474—1516). In 1383 John Wyclif of England was condemned as a heretic by the Synod of Oxford for translating the Bible.

William Tyndale was murdered for his work in translating Scripture. A thousand of his Bibles were burned at St. Paul's Cross in London by order of Bishop Tonsal. Emperor Ferdinand II ordered 10,000 Bibles burned at Graze in Steiermark in 1600.

Jesuits boasted of burning 60,000 Bibles in Bohemia in 1637. (George Dehoff, **Why We Believe the Bible**, p. 115, 116). The names of these evil men and every one of their deeds have largely been forgotten, but God's word thrives and prospers.

Infidelity has had its match with God's word and lost. The French infidel Voltaire understood that "If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man's belief in the Bible." He boldly predicted that his attacks against the Bible would make it extinct in a hundred years. Soon after his death in 1778, the British and Foreign Bible Society used his writing room for Bible storage and the very presses that printed his anti-Biblical tirades were used to print Scripture.

Thomas Paine, the American infidel, viciously attacked the Bible in his **Age of Reason** and predicted that "Fifty years hence, the Bible will be obsolete and forgotten." Poor Paine, his books are long forgotten but the book he despised abounds more and more.

Among those who claim to be its friends, but who in reality are its enemies are the "higher critics," i.e., skeptical theological literary critics, who fancy themselves to be wise enough to put the Bible to test and decide which of its verses are truly genuine. In reality many of these scholars are but infidels drawing salaries from churches and church related schools. Thousands of young students have left their classrooms with their faith in God's word shattered. Strangely, the latest edition of the Bible still contains all those verses they would have excised, but the critics' names and books are largely forgotten.

The most current enemy of God's Book is Communism and those governments under its influence. Arguing that "religion is the opiate of the people" they have sought to discredit the Bible and gradually smother it out of existence by not allowing it to be printed or imported into their domain. Yet no place in the world today is there more hungering and thirsting after God's

word than in Eastern Europe. Each year thousands of Bibles are smuggled across the forbidding borders. Radio waves take the word of God into millions of homes. Hand-copied Bibles are reverently studied. God's word lives!

Why have men fought against God's word with such zeal? "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them." Satan knows full well that Scripture is the chain by which he is bound (Rev. 20:1—2; Matt. 4:10—11). Therefore, he has commissioned his servants to use every scheme to destroy those words which are God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

*Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor:
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you had?", said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with a twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."*

*"And so, I thought, "the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon,
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."*

Anonymous

The Manifold Value Of The Bible

What price could we put on the Bible? Just how could we measure its value? David wrote that God's word was "more precious than fine gold" (Psalms 19:10). In communist nations disciples are willing to pay a month's wages for a Bible and risk government harassment in so doing. This may seem strange to some Americans who have never taken time to read one of the numerous Bibles in their home. There are many values that flow from God's holy book, each of which provides an incentive to study it diligently. Consider some of these values:

Practical value: "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying." John Flavel. "The Bible is the one book to which any thoughtful man may go with any honest question of life or destiny and find the answer of God by honest searching." John Ruskin.

Personal value: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). Other books were written for our information, but the Bible was given for our transformation.

Educational value: "I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without a Bible." William Lyon Phelps. "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalms 119:130).

Literary value: Again we quote from Dr. William L. Phelps, former President of Yale University, "From even a literary point of view (the Bible is) the greatest book in the world." The famous English author Charles Dickens, wrote, "The New Testament is the best book the world has ever known or will

know." Our American patriot, Patrick Henry, said, "There is a book worth all other books which were ever printed."

Social and Civic Value: "For more than a thousand years the Bible collectively taken has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always supporting and often leading the way." Samuel T. Coleridge. The brilliant Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I have always said ... that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands."

Political Value: "The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed." Thomas H. Huxley. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible reading people." Horace Greeley.

Religious Value: "The Bible is the only source of all Christian truth, the only rule for the Christian life—the only book that unfolds to us the realities of eternity." Sir M. Hale. Peter expressed it thusly. "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). "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 (II Timothy 3:16—17).

Eternal Value: "Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you are dying? Very well; that is the book you want to study when you are living. There is only one such book in the world." Joseph Cook. It is amazing how few infidels are found in the death-bed. All men instinctively reach out for the hope set forth in the Holy Bible. Jesus warned, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). In the apostle John's vision of the judgment he saw all the race of man before the judge of

the universe with “the books opened” and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books ...” (Revelation 20:11—12).

With Immanuel Kant we affirm, “The Bible is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced.” The question is what use are we making of this marvelous book? Why not begin your course of Bible study today.

Challenges To The Church

When we think of challenges to the church we are usually thinking of outside forces which attack the Lord's cause or evil doctrines or practices being promoted by false brethren. This type of challenge is real and prevalent. But the challenges I have in mind at this time are of a different kind. They are subtle, hard to identify challenges that are found in the heart of every Christian leader. They are the roots of many of our more visible problems such as conflicts and divisions. The problems I contemplate are not often thought about or written about, but they should be. The solutions are not easy to come by and I am confident that I have not solved all of them satisfactorily. Perhaps our discussing them will help all of us some ... at least by making us aware that they exist.

I. It is a challenge to maintain the unity of the Spirit and avoid sectarianism (Eph. 4:1—3). Our message on Christian unity has been correct in content and consistent in delivery. Yet our ability to demonstrate to the world unity of the spirit and the bond of peace has been one of failure. Our brotherhood has repeatedly suffered major splits and most of our congregations have had at least one internal "blow up." Some I know have had three or four that resulted in broken unity. It appears that part of the problem has been an inability to distinguish between things essential, and non-essential. We talk of respecting a man's right to a private opinion but usually clobber him if it differs from ours. We have a problem with personalities and organizations being the casual factor in our conflicts more often than doctrine. One real problem is that many brethren are suspicious of and militant toward any brother who even talks about our failures here and the need to improve. May God help us solve this pressing problem. Let us all pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5) to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

II. It is difficult to distinguish between our local customs, mores and traditions and the real essence of Christianity. As long as all our Christian associations are from our own racial, social, financial, regional, and religious background we get along pretty good. But in an age of worldwide Christianity, easy mobility and a heterogeneous society we have serious problems caused by conflicts that have to do with “the way we have always done a thing.” This was the major cause in the controversy over multiple communion cups and classes. It makes tension between rural and city congregations. It is sometimes a major problem in mission fields as the missionary from Middle Tennessee insists that people in India function just like they did back home. This plays a large role in conflicts over changing styles of dress, hair styles, the design and decor of meeting houses, and scores of other issues. The tragedy is that most often those involved in the contention are not even aware that the issue is not one of scripture but human custom. One example will illustrate my point. We are to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs unto God. (Eph. 5:17—20). Nothing is said of song leaders, song books, shaped notes, publishing companies, book compilers, song writers, pitch pipes, tuning forks, amplifiers, which song book to buy, how many verses, how many songs to sing, singings, singing schools, singing groups, opening hymns, prayer songs, closing songs, invitation hymns, the dress of the song leader, his training and skills, the number of song leaders, paying song leaders, the type of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We have never disputed over the command to sing, but the problems over the other matters have been myriad. Every Christian leader should sit down and draw up a list of things commonly used/practiced among us that are not Biblical essentials but merely American ways (East Tennessee) ways of doing things. Then share these with your people. With a proper understanding of these matters much grief could be avoided.

III. We are challenged to avoid the stagnation of institutionalism. The church that Jesus built (Matt. 16:18) was

his community of saved people on the earth (Eph. 2:15—22). That is still the church today. We have chided and scolded the denominational world for their hallowing of buildings and building of cathedrals as shrines unto God. We have taught truth on the nature of the church. However, in practice we have fallen into the same trap. Our buildings dominate our budgets crowding out missions and benevolence in many instances. Unnumbered battles have been fought over “church buildings.” We fight over what we can do in our church buildings such as wedding showers, parties, eating of fellowship meals. The apex of many congregation’s goals is a commodious building. That achieved, they settle into a satisfied state of inertia. The major business of our elders and deacons is maintenance of our properties and acquisition of yet more. Programs take the place of evangelism. Often the church dies or moves away and the building stands empty, a monument to our failure to meet the challenge.

IV. There is a constant challenge to keep the fires of evangelism burning bright in our congregations. What was once a prairie fire growth has settled into smoldering embers. So many of our members and churches are like those in Ephesus. They have left their “first love” (Rev. 2:4). The Ephesians still went to worship every Lord’s day but the fire was gone. We buy personal evangelism books and magazines, we have giant soul-winning workshops, we have specialists in, we exhort, we threaten and we stagnate. It always seems easier to hire a “personal worker” or to put a radio broadcast on the local station. We invite a group of college students to come knock the doors of our community, but our people are not able to help. The most basic, simple and easiest to be obeyed command seems to be hardest to implement. Go teach all nations! (Matt. 28:19).

V. We are challenged to maintain a separate, holy moral? life as we live in the sinful world. Jesus said we are not to be of the world” (John 17:16). We are not to be “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). We are to be “separate” saith the Lord, (II

Cor. 6:17). But the sins of the world constantly beat upon the sides of the ship of Zion. Inevitably the waves and spray slosh over the walls to taint and defile. Pressure is constantly upon the church to accept the world's standards of conduct in her members. We see this when some of our sisters began wearing their immodest mini skirts; some of our brethren light their cigarettes; others take their social drink. The world's low esteem of marriage and the promiscuous practice of divorce and remarriage has created a clamor among brethren to change our position on these matters. The challenge is not being met.

VI. It is difficult to be militant against sin and yet not be calloused toward sinners. There is no dispute that we must fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12). We are to hate iniquity (Heb. 1:9). The problem is that we get so engrossed in fighting the evil that we leave the distinct impression that we are hating the sinner. While this may be inadvertent, the results are destructive. The average sinner is not sure he has a friend in such a warrior-type. Even worse is when brethren are disagreed over a doctrine or practice. It commonly happens that the lofty intention of a discussion of issues degenerates into a hostile battle between persons. There must be a way to contend for the faith (Jude 3) and not be contentious with brethren (Tit. 3:9). We must learn to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

As indicated at the beginning, this scribe does not profess to know the answers to these complex problems. Maybe someone does. If so, he would bless us all if he would share them with us. It is not so much the facts of faith that we have trouble with, rather it is in the acts wherein we stumble. May God grant us wisdom to recognize our flaws and failures, the determination to change for good; the ability to succeed; and patient longsuffering for our brethren who like we fall short of perfection.

Children, Heaven's Gift To Homes

Of all the gifts God could give, what greater gift could he bestow upon a home than children? Even when he gave the lost world a savior, he sent him in the form of a baby.

David sang, "Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah; and the fruit of the womb is his reward ... Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalms 127:3—5).

When the loving Creator saw the first man alone in the garden, he said, "It is not good that the man should be alone ..." (Genesis 2:18). He proceeded to make a helper suitable for him, a wife. But he did not stop there. He endowed that first couple with the remarkable ability to reproduce themselves. From their most intimate relationship of love they could conceive and bring forth a little one that was truly bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh. When the first child was born, Eve said, "I have gotten a man by the help of Jehovah" (Gen 4:1).

In a day of selfish materialism, when the god of pleasure has replaced the God of Creation in many hearts, children are not always viewed as heaven's blessing. There even exists a society of non-parents whose purpose and goal includes convincing others to have no children. "What a melancholy world this would be without children." Coleridge. Mary Hewitt wrote, "God sends children for another purpose than merely to keep up the race— (he sends them) to enlarge our hearts; and to make us unselfish and full of kindly sympathies and affections; to give our souls higher aims; to call out all our faculties to extended enterprize and exertion; and to bring round our fireside bright faces, happy souls, and loving, tender hearts." Those lives are surely deprived that have never known the joy of little children in their midst.

Children and the Population Bomb

God did not say that we should have only two children. A few years back the prediction of a population explosion began to be promulgated. Without a critical evaluation of that speculation, most everyone bought the idea that we were overpopulated and on the verge of a vast starvation disaster. Education, government and media frantically began to propagandize us to have no more than two children or better even, less. Today, most couples have bought the package. Few seem to take note of the fact that our nation is experiencing a negative replacement of population. We are now declining except for immigration. As this is written I am flying over the vast hinterland of America. It is sparsely populated. In fact, ours is one of the more sparsely populated nations of the world for its size. You ask what does this have to do with our subject: Just this, God's richest gift to a couple is children. Couples who want several children and can afford them should not hesitate to do so, nor feel guilty in so doing. David said, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. 127:5). (For more light and information of the population scare read **Handbook on Population** by Dr. Robert Sassone, A Report to the California Legislature.)

In the wake of the population scare came the wholesale legalization of abortion upon demand in 1973. Surely this represents the largest mass crime against humanity in earth's history. Already over 7 million innocent unborn babies have been destroyed by their mothers. The slaughter continues at the appalling rate of 1½ million per year. It was not the Christian view of individual worth, and the sanctity of home and family that promoted this moral atrocity. It is the direct result of atheistic humanism which views man only as a highly evolved animal. We control the population of our animals by selective killing, and if man is of no higher origin, why not him as well? As to the moral-ethical problems, "If God is not, nothing is morally wrong." Dostoyevsky. We affirm that God is the creator

and giver of life, including that in the womb (Acts 17:25). Human life being of divine origin and made in God's image, is sacred and must be respected and protected (Gen. 9:6). Those who place violent hands upon the child in the womb shed innocent blood and will have to answer to the Moral Judge of the universe for their deed (Prov. 6:16—17).

The Blessings Children Bring

How could we possibly list all the joys and blessings children bring into a home. The privilege of having pure innocence in our homes comes only with little children. Is there any love more pure and unselfish than the love of little children? Does anything so mellow us and make us want to do the right thing as a little child clinging about our neck? No matter how strong a couple's love, a baby will make it stronger. Children in our midst make most of us work harder and endure more patiently to ensure the success and stability of our home. For many whose career, marriage or health was not all that could be desired, the children was the reason for living, for hanging on. It usually happens that by the time the kids are grown, other problems have been resolved enough to carry on without them. This joy flows from parents to brothers and sisters, grandparents and more. Thank God for little "angels". A poet has said, "A new child born is God's vote for the continuation of the human race."

Parental Duties

When God gives his gifts he expects a proper stewardship from the recipients. This is no less true for parents. "... it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). Parents should view their children as the property of God placed in their hands for care and training, to be returned to him in adulthood as faithful Christians. Paul tells us that if any provideth not for his own, and especially for his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an

unbeliever” (I Timothy 5:8). Of course this means to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter. Certainly it includes medical care, educational care, educational and social opportunities. But equally so, it speaks of moral and spiritual training. How many thousands of children in our land are well provided in these first areas, but woefully deprived in the moral and spiritual realm? What of your own children?

Every child needs a father to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Every youngster needs a mother who will teach him the holy scriptures from infancy and so plant the faith of Jesus within him (II Tim. 1:5; 3:15). All children should be able to look to their elders who will “show” them the correct way (Deuteronomy 32:7). Happy are the children whose fathers walk before them with integrity (Prov. 20:7). Jesus himself teaches us to bring the children unto him (Matthew 19:14). Every little one has the divine right to be taken to Bible School and the worship assembly; to be taught to pray and to love the Scriptures. As a parent this is my spiritual duty and I will answer to God for my stewardship. Each child has a right to be loved (Titus 2:4). That love includes adequate discipline to help him learn right and wrong conduct (Prov. 13:24).

Thank God for the beautiful gift of children. May we who are parents be worthy recipients.

Why You Should Be A Christian

Man being a rational creature, seeks for reasons when he is challenged to do something. May I suggest eleven good reasons why all responsible people should want to become Christians.

1. To please your Creator. This is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13). All normal people feel a responsibility to those that they love, to those who have been their benefactors. God has given us our very lives and daily sustains us (Acts 17:25). He has blessed us with our family, our health and a good earth. As a child seeks approval of his beloved parents, so would we seek to please our God.

2. To express your appreciation to Jesus for what he did for you. He died for you (Romans 5:8). He will save you (Luke 19:10), if you love him and keep his commandments (John 14:15). Ingratitude is the most heinous of all man's sins (Luke 17:12—19). No good man who truly understands the price Jesus paid for us will refuse to obey him.

3. To lay hold on the abundant life *now* (John 10:10). Christ gives *us peace* (Philippians 4:7); *joy unspeakable* (I Peter 1:8); *security* (Matthew 6:33). Ours is a world of miserable, unhappy people. Sin has tainted and spoiled every life it has touched. Jesus the great physician can cure our malady and give us a new life that is truly worth living.

4. To prepare your life for eternity. "Lay hold on the life which is life indeed" (I Timothy 6:19). From ancient times men have pondered "If a man die will he live again?" (Job 14:14). Christ drew back the curtain to show us life and immortality (II Tim. 1:10). He invites all men to be his guest in

eternity (Matt. 11:28 — 30). You must decide to accept or reject his invitation.

5. To escape the judgment of hell (Matt. 23:33). “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40). Just as you would exert every effort to save yourself from a burning house, so you surely should want to save your undying soul from torment (Luke 16:19—31).

6. To strengthen your home against the ravages of disruption caused by sin (Psalms 127:1). Never has the home been under such heavy attack as in our generation. To save our family, to raise our children successfully, we need God’s help. “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31).

7. Because you love your mate and want to be the best marriage partner possible. No finer gift could be offered than a Christian life. Solomon says of a righteous woman, “Her husband also ... praiseth her” (Proverbs 31:28). Husbands must love their wives even as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25).

8. Because you love your children and want them to have the best home possible ... because you want them to have the best example to follow (Prove 20:7; Eph. 6:4). Your children can have the best of food, clothing and shelter, medical care and education and yet be neglected and deprived if you do not give them a Christian home environment.

9. So that you might be in a better position to help preserve our country and maintain our freedom. “Righteousness exalts a nation (Prov. 14:34). Our nation is deteriorating morally at a frightening pace. But a nation is only the sum of its people. A better world begins with you, with me. Christians are the salt of the earth that will not only flavor a society for good, but also preserve it from moral decay (Matt. 5:13).

10. To stop being just a spectator and to become a participant in the greatest cause in the world. All that is needed for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

11. For the personal satisfaction of knowing you have done the right thing, the noble thing, the best that you could do. You can then walk in your integrity with a good conscience (Job. 27:5).

The Church And The Bible

The psalmist wrote, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right" (Psalms 119:128). The first Christians were guided by the "apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). They were taught to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus ..." (Acts 20:35). The Lord's church has always thus honored and been guided by the Sacred Word. However, this has not been the attitude of all churches.

Someone has said that the scriptures are like the sun and the church is like a clock. A clock is commonly found to be fast or slow. It may even stop, be clogged with foreign matter or broken. The Scriptures have come from God. The church, being composed of human beings, is earthly and fallible. As the sun moves with mathematical precision and never needs to be reset or adjusted, so the Scriptures are always that sure standard. The human leadership of churches is often found to be out of harmony with God's Word. When this happens, the church always needs to reset itself according to the Bible. Never should man even think of altering the message of Divine Revelation to match the changing church.

There are two common trends in current religious thought that this lesson is applicable to:

1. The papal concept of the infallibility of the church. Repeatedly the teaching of God's word has suffered as the sun was adjusted to match the clock. Yet in spite of all the efforts, the clock is still incorrect in its time.

2. The theology of many Protestant churches often rejects basic principles of the Biblical message. God's message is emasculated in order to fit their existential humanistic

philosophy. This is often styled liberalism or modernism. Such theologians deny the supernatural element of the Bible so they try to interpret it so as to excise the miraculous content.

No intelligent person would ever think of trying to adjust the sun to agree with an inaccurate clock. If there is a discrepancy, the clock must be changed to match the sun. Only a fool would contemplate the former. Really the same is true of those who try to recast the supernatural message of God's Word to fit their church doctrine.

The word which Jesus spake shall judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Churches of Christ are content to let the Word of God speak and then do their best to obey its every precept. Do you share our view? Won't you join hands with us in thus following Jesus?

What Is The Church

There is much confusion in the minds of men as to the nature of God's church. God chose several descriptive terms to help us clearly perceive the true nature of his church.

1. The word *church* is from the Greek *Ekklesia*, (the called out people). Hence, the Lord's church is those people called out of a life of sin into fellowship with Jesus (Matthew 11:28 — 30). Thus Christ purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28). Those in his church must keep themselves unspotted from the word (James 1:27). In Bible terminology, the church is never the building, rather it is the saved people.

2. The church is also called the *kingdom* of God, heaven and Christ. These terms describe the type of government the church has. Christ is King (I Timothy 6:15). He has *all authority* (Matt. 28:18). He also makes the laws or rules of his kingdom. The church is no democracy, it is a monarchy. No man can justly claim to be head of the church, nor can any council, synod or assembly make rules for it.

3. The church is Christ's body (Ephesians 1:22). The analogy of a human body is used to describe our relation to and total dependence upon Jesus. Christ is the *head* of the *body* (Colossians 1:18). A body separate from its head is dead. A body that does not respond to the will of its head is diseased. So the church must be totally submissive to Jesus and ever cling to him, the head. Also the mind of man expresses itself through the various members of the body. So Christ works through the members of his body, the church, to accomplish his will today (I Corinthians 12:12—27).

4. The church is the *bride of Christ* (Eph. 5:22—32). This

reflects the intimate love and association Christ has with his church. It also reminds us of our relationship to Jesus. It must be one of love, honor, respect and submission. He will likewise love us, provide for and protect us. Finally he will take us home to live with him in heaven (Revelation 21:2).

The church is all the saved people in the world. If you are truly saved, you are a member of the church of Christ. Christ also is head of the church, being himself the savior of the body'' (Eph. 5:23). Are you saved? Are you in his church? If not, obey Jesus now, Let him add you to his church (Acts 2:47).

What Kind Of Critter Are You?

In revealing his will to man, God made use of the common things of nature to teach us valuable lessons. An oft used example is that of various creatures and their peculiar traits. It is beneficial for us to consider these critters from time to time and then examine ourselves to see if we share their traits—good or bad.

I. “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee” (Ps. 32:9). Domestic animals render *forced service* because of bridle, bit and halter. God wants us to give ourselves unto him cheerfully and voluntarily (II Cor. 9:7). The horse *serves* his master for his *belly's sake*. Men who practice religion for their bellies' sake are soundly condemned (Rom. 16:18). Such animals are really *self-willed* and stubborn, this we can never be (Gal. 2:20). Brute beasts have no higher understanding such as man who is made in God's image has. God expects us to study and learn to do his will (II Tim. 2:15; II Pet. 3:18).

II. “Go to the ant thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise” (Prov. 6:6—8). This little creature is a positive example that God wants us to imitate. Ants are *industrious*. Each one is a “*self-starter*.” You never have seen a supervisor having to prompt his fellow ants. Ants are *orderly* workers. Notice how they travel in single file. They have no traffic jams nor stampedes. They are *cooperative* workers. If one ant has too heavy a load, another will help him. A strong ant will aid an injured comrade. Ants *respect* and *gratefully serve their queen*. They will fiercely defend her kingdom. Solomon notes, too, the ant's ability to *look ahead and plan* for hard times. All of these attributes are commanded to the child of God. Could anyone of

them be faulted in the Christian life?

III. Don't be like the slug. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing" (Prov. 13:4). A sluggard is a person given to idling or procrastination, one who is slothful or sluggish. His example from the insect world is the slug. Probably you have seen this slow-moving shell-less snail who has such a difficult time getting where he is going. Every morning many of them perish because the morning sun catches them on a sidewalk and scorches them before they can escape to the cool shade. One of their weakness is *failure to plan ahead*. God has little sympathy for the lazy. We surely don't want to be as the slug, not only is he terribly slow, he is obnoxious. Just ask your wife.

IV. The locust manifests certain traits that we should have. "The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands" (Prov. 30:27). Locusts are *undefeatable*. Especially was this true in ancient times before the day of modern pesticides and crop duster planes. Although tiny and harmless when alone, united in a task they are devastating. Then too, they are *aggressive* critters. When they set their sights on a field—nothing discourages or deters them. You can kill them by the thousands but they keep on coming. Just think what God's people would accomplish if ever we could forget self and work as one (John 17:20—23).

V. Christians should not be as the dog. In eternity those who are like dogs are pictured as kept outside the gates of heaven (Rev. 22:14—15). Under Moses' law, dogs were unclean animals (Lev. 11:27). Even to touch one rendered God's priest unclean (Lev. 11:27—28). But there are several other characteristics of dogs that a Christian will avoid in his life. They are *noisy and clamorous*, they love to fight. Paul exhorts us to work in "quietness" and eat our own bread (II Thess. 3:12). We are blest of God if we are peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). Dogs are *promiscuous and immoral* but a follower of Jesus is

pure in heart (Matt. 5:8) and abstains from fornication (I Thess. 4:3).

VI. Jesus exhorts us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). Some ladies might find it hard to see anything commendable in a snake. Actually the serpent family has suffered from bad public relations over the years. Four of their attributes are worthy of imitation. They are *quiet*. Peter urges Christian women to adorn themselves in a “meek and quiet spirit” (I Pet. 3:4). Serpents are *shrewd* creatures. They have had to be shrewd to survive in a world of hostile, prejudiced people. This wisdom or shrewdness is the point Jesus commended (Matt. 10:16). They are *determined* in their life’s work. How else could the lowly serpent with no legs capture a rabbit for lunch who could easily travel twenty times faster than he. Most commendable of all, the snake *minds his business*. They will not bother you unless you bother them.

Doves are beautiful and harmless and greatly admired by all. So Peter urges us to have our “behavior seemly among Gentiles” so they may by our “good works ... glorify God...” (I Pet. 2:12). The word translated *seemly* means winsome or lovely. Doves are known for their *loyalty to their mate*. Surely Christians will want to follow this virtue. “Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church ...” (Eph. 5:25).

VII. Isaiah commends the ox and the ass for our consideration (Isaiah 1:3). These domestic creatures are hard workers. They work in *gratitude* for the care and provision their master gives them. They recognize their true master and *submit* to him in *obedience*. So we who wear Jesus’ name should honor and serve our Lord (Rom. 10:9)

VIII. Jesus said, “Behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves” (Lk. 10:3). Lambs are *pure and innocent*. Christians must put all malice out of their hearts (Eph. 4:31). Purity is the hallmark of the disciple’s life (Tit. 2:11—12).

Lambs are *trusting*, willing to follow their leader. This illustrates the faith we should have in our Lord (Matt. 16:24). Lambs were offered to God as *sacrifices* upon the altar, so should we be living sacrifices for Jehovah (Rom. 12:1—2).

Space fails to consider all the examples God has used from the realm of nature. These, however, should suffice to remind us both positively and negatively of our duty to the Lord who made us and redeemed us. May we who bear his image stamped upon us show his likeness in our daily life in the world.

Why The Church Is Not Growing?

Twelve years ago the Lord's church was the fastest growing church in America. Today we are twelfth in growth rate. The purpose of our lesson is to discuss why this unfortunate situation has developed.

The Social, Philosophical, Religious Environment

A growing affluence continues to take its toll as the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word of God out of thousands of lives. (Matt. 13:22.) Along with this wealth and its accompanying leisure time has come the sports craze and dominating media entertainment that aggressively compete for people's time, interest, and loyalty. In days past the average family had few options as to where they would spend their non-working hours. Church was at once the social, community, fraternal, and spiritual gathering place of all decent folks. Limited transportation kept people closer to home and families close together. That has all changed with the multiplication of vehicles. Time formerly spent in worship and Bible study is now consumed in travel, social visits or entertainment. Also, by scattering the family, religious training and participation has suffered.

The accumulative effects of secularistic, humanistic education is a growing problem. As older teachers who held traditional "Christian values" retire from the scene, younger teachers educated in the a-Christian, or even anti-Christian colleges and universities take their place. The battle for the minds of the nation's youth increasingly tips in favor of unbelief. Our youngsters are necessarily affected to some degree.

Many congregations have lost the bulk of their young and few are attracting any significant percent of the children in their community. Many brethren seem oblivious to their failure to reach and keep the younger generation. Two extremes are often seen: 1) An attempt to interest youth with social entertainment and little spiritual training and 2) A heavy emphasis in Bible teaching with vitually no social fellowship. Both will fall together. A successful work with young Christians will include a strong Bible training program, a meaningful social fellowship and active Christian service and soul-winning.

The growing moral degradation of television and bookstands is eating away spiritual values and turning minds away from spiritual things.

The current revival of interest in religion in America has been accompanied by a correlative rise in experiential religion, the occult and eastern mysticism. Thus the turning of the people to religion has been diluted by the anti-Christian cults. The exodus of people from the mainline Protestant churches and Catholic Church is not just to *us* but thousands are being swept into Pentecostalism. All of these false religions actively compete for the hearts of religiously inclined people. Where they win, we lose a soul.

Problems Within the Church Have Hindered Growth

In many quarters there is an unwillingness to engage the enemy openly. Somewhere in the last 20 years our people (the majority of our congregations, preachers and elders) decided it was not best to debate false teachers, to deal specifically with false religions by name, or even to deal openly with false doctrines. False doctrine just doesn't seem to be too bad to these brethren. (II Tim. 2:16—17)

Most of our leadership even seems hesitant to publicly combat moral wickedness. (Jas. 4:7) Sin is only vaguely

referred to in opaque terms. Sinners are knowingly tolerated in numerous congregations. (I Cor. 5:2) Discipline is sadly neglected in the average church. This situation has led to the confusion in the public mind toward the church (both of Christians and the world). They do not see the uniqueness of the Lord's church. They see no urgency in becoming members of it.

We see most of God's people standing by helplessly wringing their hands while our nation crumbles from the dry rot of moral corruption. Drug abuse, drunkenness, pornography, sexual immorality, homosexuality, killing of the young by abortion are tolerated by our unwillingness to take up the sword and go to battle. Some brethren seem embarrassed and uncomfortable about those brethren who do enter actively into the battle against these vices. Sin is rationalized to be harmless or innocuous.

We see an obsession to be pleasing and acceptable to society about us. There is a general unwillingness to be the off scouring of the earth. (I Cor. 4:12—13) A chief reason for our slump is that the salt has lost its saltiness and our lamp is flickering and hid under the bushel basket. (Matt. 5:13—16)

We are failing in our responsibility to evangelize. It appears that there is a basic misconception about the nature and purpose of the church. Our reason for existing is to evangelize. (Matt. 28:18) Yet buildings are allowed to dominate and control the church budget and the activities of the church. Most congregations cannot afford to send out a missionary. Most cannot afford even to help one. The church is seen as a worshipping society, or an organization to meet the social needs of men, but not as an aggressive soul-winning body.

We are actually witnessing a retrenchment from world mission efforts. Numerous congregations have decided to get out of overseas evangelism. Churches are multiplying their own staff of professionals rather than planting new congregations.

Even interest in radio and TV evangelism has declined. This is not only because of internal problems but because of limited response. Gospel meetings are fewer and shorter. All these disheartening signs spell surrender on the part of God's people.

Infighting has hurt our growth. Fratricidal conflicts always distract from our primary goal of evangelism and consume energies and resources. (Gal 5:15.) Brethren are discouraged, spiritual babes and prospects are turned away. Evangelistic outreach is often paralyzed by the fear of making a mistake or of being attacked by brotherhood watchdogs. Concern that one's soundness will be questioned causes many to slow to a snail's pace.

We see a failure to get down to the basic *form* of evangelism that will make the church grow, i.e. personal evangelism. We seem to have developed the Gospel Blimp mentality. We are willing to spend any amount, try any gimmick, engage every effort and energy to find some other way to evangelize than the simple sharing of faith from the saved heart to the unsaved. (John 1:40—42.) We have failed to take brethren by the hand and show them how to teach and win the lost. Preachers and elders have not led the way in aggressive evangelism. (I Tim 4:12)

Worst of all is a willingness to accept and tolerate this shameful situation. We often see a tendency to justify our failure and rationalize away our responsibility rather than to repent and get to the work Christ appointed.

What Shall We Do?

We must recognize that churches can grow old, tired or diseased, and die. Churches must evangelize or fossilize.

We may find ourselves in the same predicament as the Episcopalian, Methodist and Presbyterian churches that have

rapidly declined in numbers in the last decade.

We must recapture the evangelist aggressiveness of the first century church. Priorities must be reshuffled to place evangelism in the primal place it deserves. (I Cor. 9:22)

Like the apostles we must boldly proclaim the truth and oppose error and evil. (Rom. 1:16; Phil. 1:16; II Tim. 4:2) Bulletin articles and sermons alone will not suffice. We must reach beyond our building into the world where sin and sinners are.

There must be the kind of daring faith that is willing to endure the shame of the cross and the gainsaying of the heathen. (Heb. 12:2—3)

There must be a willingness to be creative in finding new, workable and scriptural ways to reach the lost.

May each of us live and serve in such a way that Zion's walls will be strengthened and her population increased.

Deluded Cultists Choose Death

On Monday, November 20, 1978 the news reported that some 400 members of the People's Temple cult in Jonestown, Guyana, South America, had committed mass suicide after being questioned by U.S. Officials and newsmen. One stands amazed and astounded at the insane slaughter of these religious cultists. Reason fails to comprehend their self-destruction. This is but a continuation of man's irrational behavior in the pursuit of religion.

1. It demonstrates that some people can be led to do anything in the name of religion.

2. It shows the devilish power that some men can have over their followers.

3. It points out man's desperate need for religious truth and guidance from a higher source than other men. Jeremiah the prophet of Jehovah wrote, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). The Bible is the truth that makes us free (John 8:32; 17:17) but "lack of knowledge" of that truth will destroy men (Hosea 4:6). The true Christianity of the Bible would never have led to such a foolhardy action. In fact, the teaching of Christ would have certainly blocked any such suggestion. Jesus came to give us abundant life, not death (John 10:10).

4. Satan is murderer from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44) Promising his deceived followers life, he delivers death. When men receive not the love of the truth and have pleasure in unrighteousness, they are deluded, they believe a lie and are judged (II Thess. 2:10—12).

It is hoped that people would put their trust in Jehovah and his son Jesus rather than men (Psalms 118:8); that they would study the Bible as a light to guide their footsteps (Ps. 119:105); that they would be satisfied with the simple, pure Christianity revealed therein. They would be happy; they would avoid the extremes of cultic fanaticism and the world would be blessed by their presence.

Does It Make Any Difference?

What does it matter that preachers are teaching things that are not just like the Bible teaches? Is accuracy in one's religious beliefs and practice so important? The average person seems convinced that sincerity and faith in God are the only things necessary in religion. This is reflected in the theory that "one church is as good as another" or "it's not what you believe it's what you feel" or "we are all heading for the same place, just traveling different roads."

It is only in religion that men would make such a ridiculous statement. In what other field is it true "that it doesn't make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere?" Should your doctor prescribe a medicine for you, would you tolerate a druggist who filled prescriptions on the principle that it doesn't make any difference what ingredients one uses as long as he is sincere?

What if a carpenter built your house on this theory? Does it really matter how one measures the pieces, fits the joints or levels the floor, just as long as he is sincere? Believe it who will.

What space scientist would argue that one need not be concerned about details? What astronaut would risk his life under the supervision of such a thinker?

The illustrations could be multiplied a thousand times. IT DOES MATTER that we be absolutely right in our religion.

Do we have a choice? Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:4—5 that there are a number of things in Christianity about which there can be no difference of opinion. He says that there is:

1. **ONE BODY** which is the **ONE church**. (Eph. 1:22) It is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), for he built it (Matt. 16:18), and purchased it with his blood (Acts 20:28). You have no more choice of which church to be a member of than of which God to believe in.

2. **ONE SPIRIT** that dwells in the heart of every saved person. (Rom. 8:9)

3. There is **ONE HOPE**. The same hope is held before all men. It is heaven and eternal life therein. (John 14:1—3.) Do we really have a choice? There is only one way to heaven. (John 14:6.) Our only choice is to accept Christ and obey his commands, or refuse him, thus, choosing hell.

4. **ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST**: he only can save you.

5. **ONE FAITH** or system of doctrine that must be accepted, believed and followed. This faith is the Word of God which is able to save our souls. (Jas. 1:21) There is but one source of the **ONE FAITH**, the Bible. (Rom. 10:17) Hence there can not be different creeds and beliefs to choose between. We must accept the scripture as the only authority in Christianity.

6. **ONE BAPTISM** which is a burial in water (Rom. 6:3—4, John 3:23), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). There being only **ONE baptism**, then we cannot choose concerning sprinkling or pouring or Holy Ghost baptism.

7. **ONE GOD**: you must believe in Him exclusively.

It does make a difference what we believe and practice in religion. If not why would the Lord warn us so often against error in religion? Galatians 1:8—9, “Though we or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema ...”

Be sure of your faith. Demand Bible book, chapter and verse for that which you are asked to accept and practice! It does make a difference. For your being right with God now, will determine where you will spend eternity.

For The Beauty Of The Earth

Few things are more beautiful than the unspoiled earth in springtime. To view such a lovely scene is a “moving experience that stirs one’s soul within.” David said, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Again he sang, “The world is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 50:12). We often worship our God with great hymns such as **“For the Beauty of the Earth”** and **“Let Them Praises Give Jehovah.”** In such we praise God for the wondrous creation and thank him for so providing for us. Jesus taught us that many important lessons about life and faith and our religion can be learned from nature (Matt. 6:25-31).

God has made mankind steward over His earth (I Pet. 4:10). He gave us dominion “over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). We are only here for a little season and generations yet to come must occupy my parcel of ground and draw their sustenance from it. Therefore, I have a moral and spiritual obligation to leave the earth for the next generation in as good condition as I found it or even better than that. The golden rule demands as much (Matt. 7:12). In a day when sinners have finally realized their duty to the earth which God lets them live on, we who are Christians should be shining examples of good earth stewardship.

I. We should never defile and pollute God’s earth with litter. To do so reveals attributes about ourselves of which we would not be proud. It is an insult to God to take his kindly given blessings and then show our appreciation (or lack thereof) by tossing our trash back upon his footstool (Acts 7:49). To fully grasp the seriousness of this matter, just imagine your child

taking your gifts and throwing the wrappings on your floor for you to dispose of. Scripture says. "Be ye thankful" (Col. 3:16). Littering is a resolute act of selfishness. After enjoying the beauties of the land we spoil it so that others cannot have the experience. This lack of consideration cannot be harmonized with Christian duty. Philippians 2:4 teaches us to not look to our interest but to the interests of others. Because some inconsiderate person threw out his drink bottle some child may suffer a slashed foot from the broken glass. A refuse dump along the roadside is more than an eyesore, it is a haven for rats and pests. Our careless pollution of the water may cause sickness to some other innocent person. To leave our trash following our outing suggests we are too lazy to put it in a proper container, or so boorish that we cannot see the need. Lazy sluggards have never ranked high in God's book (Prov, 6:6, 9-10).

I would challenge the Christian to do more than just not litter. Be a friend to God's earth and our fellow inhabitants. Let's help clean up the damage done by others. Is it too much that when we camp, fish or hike that we clean up the litter on the ground and properly dispose of it? Bury it or take it to a trash collection can. This is the principle of going the second mile which Jesus speaks of (Matt. 5:41).

II. No generation of earthlings have the right to rape and rob the earth for selfish gain and to leave it ravaged and dying to the next generation. Christian business people in the mining and forestry industries should reflect on this, farmers and city dwellers as well. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (I Tim. 6:10). The scarred face of our planet tells us the sad story.

III. We must not use up earth's resources thoughtlessly and recklessly. All of us need to rethink our attitudes here. The natural resources of this planet are not unlimited. Many of them are not renewable. We have no way of knowing how many gen-

erations will yet be born. Especially we Americans have become gluttonous in our consumption. Trees, minerals and fuels are consumed with little thought of how next century's citizens will fare. Gluttony is condemned by the Creator (Prov. 23:20-21). Discipline and selfcontrol are cardinal virtues (II Pet. 1:6). Today most of North Africa is a vast parched desert. In the first century it was the grain bin of Europe and Asia Minor. Its wooded hills were stripped and the land was used without mercy. Closer to home, one might visit Copper Hill, Tennessee and see similar results. Today it is virtually dead. Mankind has no right to so treat God's handiwork.

IV. We must be careful with fire. Each year thousands of acres of beautiful countryside are ravaged by forest fires. Not only does it rob us of valuable timber resources, but it destroys wild life and their habitat. Similarly we should be extremely careful in our use of deadly chemicals and pesticides. If some are discovered to be destructive to the ecosystem, the Christian should gladly forbear using them. How tragic if our grandchildren never saw an eagle or heard a robin sing. I owe them consideration in protecting these creatures of God.

V. Christians must be considerate of the other creatures which God made to share planet earth with us. Solomon wrote, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast ..." (Prov. 12:10). God gave man dominion over the creatures of the earth (Gen. 1:26). But this was not a privilege to abuse or annihilate them. The law of the Sabbath even included rest for the domestic beasts (Ex. 20:10). A mother bird could not be killed when nesting her young (Deut. 22:6). We should be concerned to protect the creatures. We must let them live in their proper sphere. Of course, we could not allow a rattlesnake to share our house. If you hunt or fish, take only what you can use. Never kill one of God's creatures and then toss it away. Someone would be glad to have it.

Especially should we be concerned about endangered

species. Only man has the power to destroy a whole species of life. We should think how much we, the human family, lose when one family of God's creatures are forever gone.

Parents must educate their children to love, appreciate and care for God's earth. To have a generation of people who will take proper care of the earth, we must train them up in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). The same is true of our friends, fellow workers and neighbors. A friendly reminder, a good example, will help others to deal kindly with the land and its speechless citizens.

God's people should be benefactors for tomorrow's generation. Plant trees, correct erosion, provide protection and habitat for wild life. Because we have lived on the earth, may the world be a better place for those who follow us. Surely this is our reasonable service.

Elected Unto Salvation

Many profound doctrines are revealed to us in God's Word. These are described as strong meat (Heb. 5:14) and things hard to be understood (II Pet. 3:16). One of these, difficult but beautiful and encouraging, is the doctrine of *election*. Paul wrote that God "chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him ... having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ ..." (Eph. 1:4—5).

The word *elect* means to be chosen or selected, *ekletos*. Election is the divine selection of human objects so as to bring them into a special or a saving relationship with God.

Three Kinds of Election

We read in Scripture of the election of individuals to perform some particular service for God which has no necessary connection with their salvation. Cyrus, king of Persia, was chosen to restore captive Israel to her homeland (Is. 45:1—4). Jesus chose the apostles to carry his message to all the world (John 15:16), yet he said, "Did not I choose you the twelve and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Paul was separated from his mother's womb to be an apostle to the Gentiles, yet many years were first spent fighting against God (Gal. 1:15—16).

God calls communities or bodies of people to special privileges in order to bless yet another people. God chose Israel to be his covenant people, that he might bless all mankind. Through Amos he said, "You only have I known of all families of the earth" (3:2). With them alone he shared his covenant. Moses taught Israel, "Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples of the earth ...

not ... because ye were more in number ... but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he sware unto your fathers ...” (Deut. 7:6—8). If we look to the original giving of that oath, God chose Abraham’s seed that in them all nations of the earth would be blest (Gen 12:1—3). This election did not secure personal salvation to any one of them automatically. Each had to obey God in faith, himself, to be saved (Rom. 9:6—8).

The church of Christ is an elect race ... “that (we) may show forth the excellencies of him who called (us) out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Pet. 2:9). This election of the church does not guarantee the salvation of every individual member of it. Only those who are faithful will be blest eternally (Rev. 2:10).

There is the personal election of individuals to be children of God. Jesus said, “I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). Peter addressed his first letter “to the *elect* ... according to the foreknowledge of God ... in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus ...” (1:1—2).

Characteristics of our Election Unto Salvation

Election is Christ-centered. Isaiah described the coming Messiah as God’s “chosen” (Is. 42:1—4). Christ is the *source* or the *foundation* of our election (Eph. 1:4). Also, he is the *instrument or cause* of our election. It was done “through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). He gave “his life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45).

Election is realized within the Lord’s church or family of obedient children. He chose *us* (Eph. 1:4): that is, Christians as a body. Election unto salvation is in the kingdom and the individual enjoys the blessing only as he is identified and associated with the elect body of Christ. The church was a vital

part of the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:8—11). The Colossian brethren were elect (3:12) in the Son's kingdom (1:12—13). Unbelievers can be grafted into the body of the elect when in faith they obey Christ (Rom. 11:5, 20, 24).

God has definite purposes in electing us. 1) "That we should be holy and without blemish before him in love ..." (Eph. 1:4). 2) We are saved "unto good works" which we should do in his name (Eph. 2:10). 3) That we should live righteously, teach others God's will, obey Jesus, and praise God's name (Col. 3:12—17). 4) That we "may show forth (his) excellencies (I Pet. 2:9).

Election is *available to all men*. God does not wish "that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God "would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 2:3—4). Such passages could be multiplied. Here Calvinism obviously contradicts God by arguing that only a portion are given opportunity to be saved.

Election is *conditional*. God has ordained that a certain class or kind of people can be saved, i.e., those who believe on and obey his Son. Paul writes that "God chose you ... unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*" (II Thess. 2:13). Peter tells us that we are elect ... "unto *obedience* and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus ..." (I Pet. 1:1—2). In Christ God did all that needs to be done, and that could be done to reconcile men (save them), except what men themselves must do. That is, "Be ye reconciled unto God" (II Cor. 5:20). This occurs when we believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16). We are saved by God's grace, but grace must be accepted or received (John 1:12; Rom. 5:17—18). An elected saint must give all diligence to make his calling and election sure or he will surely fall (II Pet. 1:10—11).

Election is *never based upon our personal merit*. Paul eloquently showed the Jewish brethren, "Even so then at this

present time also there is remnant according to the election of grace'' (Rom. 11:5). Moses taught ancient Israel the same lesson which they subsequently forgot (Deut. 7:6—8).

Election was *done in eternity*. "He chose us in (Jesus) before the foundation of the world ..." (Eph. 1:4). Paul wrote Timothy that God "*called us ... before times eternal*" (II Tim. 1:9). Remember this calling was not for particular individuals but of a certain type or kind, i.e., those who would submit to Christ as Lord.

Many Blessings Are Inherent in Election

From Romans 8:28—30 we notice just a few of these rich blessings of God's elect. 1) All things work together for their good (vs. 28); 2) Justification (to be treated just as though you had never sinned) because of Christ (vs. 30); 3) Glorification in heaven one day (vs. 30); 4) God's divine help and assistance (vs. 31); 5) All spiritual blessings (vs. 32); 6) Christ's intercession (vs. 34); 7) Ultimate victory (vs. 37—40).

With Paul we sing "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15). Brethren, let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10).

Escapism

In Psalms 55:6—7, David wrote “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness.” These plaintive words of the Psalmist are seen in millions of hearts today, not only do they wish, they follow through with an attempt to escape reality.

To understand any theme, we must have a clear definition of terms. Dr. Clyde M. Narramore defines the thought in these words: “Escape from Reality—an attitude looking toward flight or avoidance which an individual may assume with respect to certain situations. When the real world becomes too unpleasant, most people will seek some means of escape ... However, when a person denies the *reality* of a situation and substitutes his own *fantasy* in its place, he needs professional help.” **The Psychology of Counseling**, P. 281. Escapism is not in itself a condition of mental sickness, but a subconscious mechanism to escape reality. It is a mode of behavior adopted to evade unpleasant facts and realities. For some it is to escape the responsibilities of life.

Avenues of Escapism

Man has not changed so much over the years. Each generation’s problems are basically the same with only the outer garments of culture changed. The great escape from an unpleasant world or situation is seen in the following categories:

A. *Socially respectable* areas of escape for moderns. In this category we would include those who escape an unhappy, meaningless world by addicting themselves to television and movies where they share a dream world and avoid their own. Some busy themselves in a business, career or job to escape

painful relationships at home. We call them *workaholics*. There are *educational freaks*, people who would rather stay in the cocoon of the classroom than face the real world. Others are not enrolled in a school but are no less lost in a dream world of mystery stories and romantic novels. Millions have devoted themselves to the pursuit of spectator sports whether in the bleachers or before the tube. Every leisure moment is spent in a vicarious world of excitement and conquest. For many it is the endless round of partying, not in itself evil, but they are running from real life, looking for a rainbow. Of these escape routes, no one speaks evil. They are not sinful in and of themselves. When, however, the Christian pursues such a course and thus fails to meet his responsibility to his God, his family and his fellowman, they quickly become wrong.

B. Another area of escape is *generally frowned upon* by society. This category includes such routes as alcohol, hedonism, sexual abandonment, and drug abuse. While millions avidly walk these roads to oblivion, the majority recognize the folly of them.

C. This third category we will label *Exotic Religion*. This has been a frequent topic in our news in recent years. Millions have fled from the normal pursuits of life into strange, bizarre cults and foreign religions. Especially have Americans rushed into the fad of the Eastern mystic cults such as Zen, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, and Hinduism. Another paper will discuss this problem area.

D. The fourth area of escape is altogether different from the others. It is man's only reasonable and proper avenue by which to escape the problems of this life. That route is, of course, Jesus Christ. He is *the way* the truth and the life and only by him may sinners get to the Father (John 14:6). This is not, however, an escape from the reality and problems of life. It is a source of strength by which one is able to face and victoriously overcome life's hardships. It is God's ordained

escape route from the guilt and condemnation of sin (John 8:31; Rom. 6:17).

I. Observation suggests that the rush to escapism is prompted by several factors relating to Christianity.

A. Men are trying to escape the consequence and guilt of their personal sin. Rather than repent and confess their failure they seek to deny the reality of sin (I John 1:8—9).

B. In close connection, they seek to avoid and escape the God of justice. In much of modern escapism we witness a determined denial of God's existence. Impenitent sinners still refuse to have God in their hearts (Rom. 1:28). Of course such an attempt is impossible since God is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7—12).

C. Alienated from God and haunted by guilt, fear and their own helplessness, they seek to escape a world of despair. Hear this typical lament, "Nature has let us down, God seems to have left the receiver off the hook, and time is running out." Arthur Koestler.

D. Man under the curse of sin, without the advantage of the Christian focus, sees a world filled with sordid, unpleasant reality — sinners like himself growing worse and worse (II Tim. 3:13). From such a dreary, hopeless world he would escape.

II. Cultural factors that encourage escapism:

A. Disillusionment with America. Our generation "saw hypocrisy in their government's politics; they saw hypocrisy in their parents' playing with religion; they saw hypocrisy in advertising, in business, in the suburban rat race. Every place they looked they seemed to hear people saying one thing and doing another." William Petersen, **The Curious New Cults**, p. 13.

B. Dehumanization by science. At first Science was proclaimed to be the savior of humanity and worshipped. After a while folks realized that Science and her sister

Technology were reckless, selfish and destructive in the hands of sinners. Hydrogen bombs and genetic engineering soured in the stomachs of many.

C. Future fright. "We have plunged down a cataract of progress which sweeps us on into the future with ever wilder violence, the further it takes us from our roots." Carl Jung. "We create an environment so ephemeral, unfamiliar and complex as to threaten millions with adaptive breakdown. This breakdown is future shock." A. Toffler, **Future Shock**, p.285.

D. Breakdown of the family. The trauma of a broken home with its unsettling effect on young lives, the disappointments and disillusionments it brings, force many to flee into a world of dreams. Often children of such homes do not receive the kind of love and moral, spiritual training they need to develop healthy attitudes and personalities. "A child left to himself causeth shame" (Prov. 29:15). Because of the breakdown and loss of their natural family, many young people are seeking surrogate families and the cult family meets that need.

E. Failure of churches to meet spiritual needs. Most modern churches have failed in their mission to understand and teach the Christian concept of the meaning and purpose of life, salvation and the church. Some were turned away from their church by sheer boredom, or perhaps hypocrisy. According to Os Guinness, "Modern Christianity is crucially weak at three vital points. The first is its compromised, deficient understanding of revelation. Without Biblical historicity and veracity behind the word of God, theology can only grow closer to Hinduism. Second, the modern Christian is drastically weak in an unmeditated, personal experiential knowledge of God. Often what passes for religious experience is a communal emotion felt in church service, in meetings, in singing or contrived fellowship. Few Christians would know God on their own. Third, the modern church is often pathetically feeble in the expression of its focal principle of community. It has

become the local social club, preaching shop or minister dominated group." **The Dust of Death**, p.209.

Most of the major Protestant churches have espoused rational liberalism and existentialism. Preaching based on such errant philosophies not only has no saving power but so perverts and destroys the faith of the Bible that people are driven away in despair, convinced that there are no solid believable answers — no help beyond man. Much of the preaching even in "believing churches" is unbiblical and contradictory. We ourselves have often preached without knowing the needs and problems of the modern world. As one young collegiate said, "Man, you not only don't know the answers, you don't even know the questions that are being asked." We should be concerned about churches, preachers and parents whose teaching and practice inspire young people to boredom and despair.

F. The influence of the drug culture. Indulgence in illicit drugs stems from several causes. For some it was mere curiosity, for others an act of rebellion against the forbidden. Some sought escape in pills as in alcohol. For many however, the prophets and priests such as Dr. Timothy Leary of the "drug culture" sold them on the idea. A fast, cheap trip to "reality"; God in an injection, a pill, a drink, or a puff. Whatever the motivation, when tried, they in fact did find momentary escape from the real and problems. The word spread — the problem has grown like a plague. Even many adults have become unable to bear the day without a pill.

G. The "Youth Culture" with its music, poetry and entertainment. Through their movies and magazines the heroes of youth have promoted and set forth an example of despair and escapism.

H. Modern society's acceptance of the occult has suggested to the masses that may be there is something to it after all. Entertainment heroes and heroines tell about their astrology charts. Others join the mystic cults such as T.M. and the Bahai Faith. Even psychologists and others in

the learned fields are publicly expressing their interest the occult as a possible solution to man's needs. Scientists such as Edgar Mitchell (Apollo astronaut) are engaged in research of psychic phenomena. If such great ones openly dabble in these things, the masses are inclined to try them too. For many it is the first step into an escape route.

I. Boredom with an impersonal, meaningless life has driven many to seek escape. Even families are commonly cold, unloving, non-communicative. T.V. has destroyed much of our home communication and fellowship. Our mobility has robbed us of our roots and friendships. Luxury and affluence have taken the struggle out of life. Rather than compete in a real world, kids have been conditioned to be spectators. Standards have been repeatedly been lowered in school, in church, in society, in self.

J. Despair of impending doom. Our generation has constantly been bombarded with all sorts of dire predictions: the population crisis, nuclear war, the pollution crisis, the disintegration of the family, of society, the threat of communism, the crime wave, inflation and economic crisis — threatened depression, oil crisis, Middle East crisis. The list of grave catastrophes that threaten to engulf us is terrifying.

K. Failure of public education to meet the basic intellectual needs of students. Saturated with false philosophies such as rationalism and humanism, evolution, and existentialism, they have failed to instill a valid, workable sense of values. Youth has been given the illusion of education without learning how to reason correctly and solve life's problems. Many areas of higher education have generally denied the existence of absolutes and reality thus supplanting objective reason by subjectivism.

A poet has taught us to sing:

*"Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He arose and the soul felt its worth"*

Jesus is the the light of the world that came to dispel the night guilt, fear and despair (John 8:12). He bids all men to come unto him (Matthew 11:28—30) that they might be delivered from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). Our challenge today is to proclaim to every creature the good news that *hope* is found in Christ. (Matthew 28:19—20).

Ethics

Ethics is the science of right and wrong in human relationships. Since God made man a social being, it is to be expected that he would provide him with a code of conduct to govern his conduct toward his fellow man. Six of the ten commandments were ethical in nature (see Deut. 5:16—21). A vast portion of the books of Exodus-Deuteronomy are devoted to this theme. The Proverbs deal almost exclusively with man's social relations. For example, "A false balance is an abomination to Jehovah but a just weight in his delight" (Prov. 11:1). The Prophets had as one of their major tasks, reminding the Hebrews of their social duties. Micah wrote,

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to *do justly*, and to *love kindness*, and to walk humbly with thy God? (6:8).

He notes that without this proper ethical conduct, all of their religious efforts, no matter how humble, were in vain (6:6—8).

The greatest ethical teacher of all was Jesus, the Son of God. Never has a greater, more noble rule of conduct been set forth than his golden rule. "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you even so do ye also unto them" (Matt. 6:12). Again, he taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves ((Matt. 22:39). In vain have men sought a more equitable code. Society is poorer because so few will practice this standard.

Recently while visiting my physician I spied the following message displayed upon his wall. It was obviously written in the old days before the advent of the professional abortion doctors

and that new breed of practitioners whose god is mammon and whose code is self. While we do not endorse every line and conclusion, on the whole it is a beautiful, wholesome statement of honor for a physician or any other citizen of planet Earth.

“Near two thousand years ago a famous Teacher and Great Physician formulated this code of ethics: “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Centuries later another great teacher ... expressed the same thought in these words: “This, above all to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

“Ethics is duty! Ethics is moral conduct! Ethics is the force which smoothes the rough places of life; it is the oil of gladness; the perfume of social intercourse. Ethics is harmony. By ethics is the universe upheld, and sun and stars guided in their course. Ethics is power and honor, justice, goodness and truth. Ethics is the mailed hand that rights every wrong, that brings order out of disorder, that conquers chaos. Ethics is the voice of the Lord God Omnipotent calling the wayward sons and daughters of earth back to the Father’s house. Ethics, properly applied, is Paradise regained. Ethics is peace, good-will to men. Ethics is God incarnate, saying to the waves of trouble and sorrow that threaten to engulf helpless humanity, “Peace be still!” Without ethics life would be a burden, and the question—“Is life worth living?” would indeed be pertinent.

“Therefore, O ye sons of Hippocrates, would you be ethical, be good, be pure, be kind and gentle, be honest and fearless, and it must follow as the day the night; as sure as right is better than wrong; as sure as strength is better than weakness; as sure as health is better than sickness; as sure as joy is better than sorrow; so sure will you be successful and happy ...” **J.M. Kennedy, M.D.**

Let every child of the King learn the ethical code of Jesus

Euthanasia

It is a fact of life that all humans must die (Heb. 9:27). It is likewise a fact that no man has the right to encourage or hasten another's death (Ex. 20:13; Rom. 13:9). For some 2,000 years the Judaeo-Christian ethic of the value of all human life has prevailed in Western civilization. We live in the generation that is seeing that ethic challenged. In the September 1970 issue of the *Journal* of the California State Medical Association, these words were written:

“The reverence of each and every human life has been a keystone of western medicine, and is the ethic which has caused physicians to try to preserve, protect, repair, prolong, and enhance every human life. ... The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as anything but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices. It is suggested that this schizophrenic sort of subterfuge is necessary because, while a new ethic is being accepted, the old one has not yet been rejected.”

Rich and powerful voices are now declaring that all life is not worth living; that some would be better off dead than alive; that society cannot afford to let some folks keep on living; that the world is threatened by too many people and thus hard decisions must be made.

Euthanasia defined: To the ancient Greeks it meant “a good death” but today that word has been prostituted to mean the right to administer death (kill) to those whose lives do not measure up to the standard others have set.

The following quotes should chill the heart of every God-fearing American.

Dr. Winston Duke says, "With regard to the specific question of humanity in homo sapiens infants, much is already known. There is little evidence that termination of an infant's life in the first few months following extraction from the womb could be looked upon as murder ... It would seem ... to be more 'inhuman' to kill an adult chimpanzee than a new born baby, since the chimpanzee has greater mental awareness. Murder cannot logically apply to a life form with less mental awareness than a primate." "The New Biology," **Reason**, August, 1972.

George Paulson writes, "How long shall life be preserved when there in no redeeming social value? If life has no apparent purpose, perhaps it is to the benefit of others that such lives not be salvaged." "Who Should Live?," **Geriatrics**, 28, March 1973, pp. 126—183.

Dr. Robert Williams of Washington State Medical School has an even broader vision. "There are various levels at which one can consider the indication for euthanasia: a) a group of individuals who will soon be encountering death; b) a group with such severe mental damage as to be unable to express proper judgment with respect to termination of life; and c) a group with varying degrees of cognizance, but with disabilities so incapacitating and so common as to produce great hardship on society" "Our Role in the Generation, Modification and Termination of Life," **J.A.M.A.**, 208, August 11, 1960, pp. 914—917.

What should be the Christians' response of these diabolic attitudes? The answer is seen in *information and involvement*. We must go to God's book to learn our duty and responsibility towards life and death, toward the strong and the weak. We

must inform ourselves as to the current threat of the anti-life forces. Then we must involve ourselves in helping those whose burdens of life are so severe that they are threatened by the so called mercy-killers. Finally, we must involve ourselves in active opposition to these evil forces.

The Christian ethic of life and death is simple. God made man in his image (Gen. 1:27). He warned that whoever sheds the blood of an innocent man should pay with his life (Gen. 9:6). God has always hated hands that shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:16—17). God's people are expected to protect the weak and helpless who are threatened (Prov. 24:11—12).

To inform ourselves of the machinations of the death peddlers we need to read such books as "**Death Without Dignity**" by Dr. Paul Marx. (Order from Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Min., \$1.50). Also subscribe to the **National Right to Life News** (a 20 page monthly, **National Right to Life Committee**, Suite 341, National Press Building, 529—14th Street, Washington, D.C. 20045, \$6.50 per year).

Involvement in the care of the disabled, the handicapped, the sick and dying should be a natural area of service of Christians. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). To visit the sick is essential to our right standing with God (Matt. 25:36). Caring for our aged parents and relations is a vital aspect of true Christianity (1 Tim. 6:4, 7—8). Honoring father and mother includes providing for their needs (Matt. 15:4—5). We must plead the cause of the poor and oppressed (Is. 1:11, 23). We must bear the burdens of those who are struggling through life if we would fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are to do good to all men, especially fellow Christians (Gal. 6:10). This cannot by any stretch of the mind mean to encourage their early demise. Surely the golden rule demands positive, caring help for all those who are facing great hardships in life for we would want the same consideration ourselves (Matt. 7:12).

We can become involved in opposing these evil forces by writing letters to all our elected officials (state and national) expressing our opposition to euthanasia and encouraging them to stand up for all people's right to life. Learn how they vote on these life issues and remember it when you enter the voting booth on election day. Write letters to the editor of your newspaper and magazines. Join the Right of Life group in your community. There is strength in numbers (for information write me at Rt. 22 Weaver Road, Knoxville, Tennessee 37921). Be willing to invest some of your time, talent and money to defeat these evil souls.

While we totally reject euthanasia, we do not affirm that doctors or families are obligated to keep the obviously terminal patient alive just because we have the technology to do so. It has always been held that the patient, family and his physician had the right to refuse extraordinary treatment when it offered no real hope of meaningful help.

May all God's people oppose any and all efforts by the proponents of euthanasia and may we support every effort that will help men live and die with true dignity.

Factions

The church at Corinth suffered greatly because of the problem of factions. Paul wrote, "I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse ... when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you ... For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:17). Earlier the apostle had pointed out that factions end in divisions (I Cor. 1:11—13). Also he reminded them that factions feed carnality: "... for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal ...? (3:1—5).

I. Factions defined: The dictionary defines faction as "a party, combination or clique within a state; generally with the suggestion of contentiousness, self-seeking, or recklessness of a common good." A factious person is described as one "given to faction, raising dissensions or seditious."

Observation teaches us that *factiousness is an attitude* toward brethren, toward the church and toward truth. It is an attitude that works against brotherly love, unity and true fellowship by promoting and encouraging separations and/or a divisive spirit. A factious person may be correct in doctrine and the point he is contending for, and yet stand condemned for his bad attitude. When Paul condemned the factions at Corinth he included those who said they were "of Christ" as well as those who claimed to be of Cephas and Apollos (1:12).

II. Several examples of factions have been recorded in Scripture for our observation. Miriam and Aaron were factious toward Moses' authority. God punished Miriam by smiting her with leprosy (Num. 12:1—11). Korah, Dathan and Abiram assembled a faction against Moses and Aaron's priestly

leadership. They were devoured by an earth fissure and fire (Num. 16:1—25). In the New Testament, John wrote of a brother Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence and who spoke against John and sought to cast some brethren out of the church (III John 9—11). John threatened to personally come and deal with him. Salome the mother of James and John nearly caused a factious situation among the apostolic band by asking special positions for her sons (Matt. 20:20—24).

III. Factions come in many varieties. Sometimes they erupt because of personal discord between two individuals. Such is seen in the sharp contention that led to the separation of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36—40).

It is common to see congregational factions such as Corinth had. These may arise over doctrinal matters such as false teaching (Acts 20:29—30). Sometimes they are related to moral issues. A factious woman named Jezebel tried to teach brethren in Thyatira that it was alright to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:20). Even in congregations, personal conflicts can sometimes create a faction. Jesus was careful to teach us how to avoid such (Matt. 18:15—18). Personal conflicts in a church may be of two kinds. Some are of innocent motive. They can however be malicious, deliberate attempts to hurt a brother, a preacher or eldership. We have all seen both kinds or problems. Either can be disastrous for a congregation. No words can adequately describe the evil of a malicious factionist.

IV. There are different kinds of people who become involved in factions. There are those who promote and lead factious activities for personal ambition. Diotrephes is such an example. Then there are those who knowingly encourage factious people. The backers of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were of this kind. Notice they suffered the same fate as the leaders. Some folks allow themselves to be manipulated and used for factious purposes. Aaron was so used by Miriam. Paul warned of factious teachers who would deceive the hearts of the

innocent (Rom. 16:17—18). Sadly, many factions are the fruit of a preacher's unscriptural conduct. Paul noted that some men preach Christ of envy and strife (Phil. 1:5). Truth should be preached in love (Eph. 4:5) but some preach truth in a vicious, devisive way.

V. Some causes of factious conduct. Factions often occur when brethren *rebel* rather than accept correction from their preacher or elders. *Jealousy* is a root cause of some factions. A brother may be resentful of another who has more influence or respect than he, or a better position. This is common among preachers. These unholy feelings lead them to promote self to the point of conflict. Like Diotrefes, some who *desire power* or *position* will create strife to gain their ends. We have seen this in men who wanted to be elders, but were by-passed by the congregation. Factions have resulted from a *desire to protect one's practice, belief or position*. If a carnal minded brother feels threatened in the above areas, he often will go to work to stir up a faction against those who threaten him. It is seen most often in preachers who find themselves at odds with their elders. Determined to stay on their own terms, they solicit the sympathy of a group and a faction is born.

VI. What should be our attitude toward factious brethren? Remember always that God hates those who sow discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16—19). Paul categorizes factions as a work of the flesh along with fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness (Gal. 5:19). They who do such things cannot go to heaven. The same apostle warned Titus that a factious man should be rejected after the first and second admonition (Tit. 3:10). He instructed the Roman brethren to mark them that cause divisions and turn away from them, since they serve not God but their own selfish interests (Rom. 16:17—18).

Conclusion: Let every heir of heaven give "diligence to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). May we never be guilty of the awful crime of faction. May we likewise never be guilty of encouraging those who are.

Feeding The Mind

The Creator designed the mind so that we learn by experience and observation, instruction and reading. How could we ever begin to thank the Lord for the marvelous gift of a written language that makes it possible for us to not only communicate but to learn the wisdom of the ages as well? It is God's will that his children feed their minds and grow by using the gift of reading.

Paul charged Timothy, "Give heed to reading" (I Tim. 4:13). We are grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18). Like Jesus, every child needs to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man (Lk. 2:52). To grow intellectually we must fill our minds with the accumulated wisdom which is available. Paul wrote the Ephesians, "When ye read ye may understand ..." (Eph.3:4). This is true not only of the Scriptures but all topics as well. Jesus said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy ..." (Rev. 1:3). The same principle is true of any worth while reading, it transmits its own blessing.

The Literature Illiterates

It is the shame of America that so few people read and possess good books. Of those who do read, much of their material is worthless drivel that likely does more harm than good. We cannot begin to assess the damage television has done to our youngsters who have been so dominated by the tube that they have had no time to read. Our public schools have too often failed to impart basic reading skills. Few nations have as easy access to free education as we. But few are as negligent in reading. Henry W. Beecher said, "Let us pity those poor rich men who live barrenly in great bookless houses."

We must learn to appreciate the value of good books. Consider the following statements: "A great library contains the diary of the human race." G. Dawson. "No possession can surpass, or even equal, a good library." Langford. "Books are the legacies that genius leaves to mankind, to be delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to those that as yet to unborn." Addison. "Next to acquiring good friends, the best acquisition is that of good books." Colton. Thomas Carlyle wrote that "The true university of these days is a collection of books."

We owe a tremendous debt to the great authors who wrote their wisdom in books for us. "Blessed be the memory of those who have left their blood, their spirits, their lives, in these precious books, and have willingly wasted themselves into these during monuments to give light unto others." Hall. "A library may be regarded as the solemn chamber in which a man may take counsel with all who have been wise, and great, and good, and glorious among the men that have gone before him." G. Dawson. Concerning good books it is appropriate to say, "Thanks be to God ..." (II Cor. 9:15).

Books are of little value unless they are used. Well over 300,000,000 books have been written by men. None of these will benefit me until I make use of them. Tryon Edwards observed, "My books are my tools, and the greater their variety and perfection the greater they help my literary work." Some preachers collect books to grace and adorn their shelves, but seldom read from them. Such is valuable only for pride's sake. Stale lifeless sermons could be filled with power and excitement with a few additional hours of reading. Dwarfed and sickly spiritual lives could be healed and made strong by proper devotional reading. Not all good books, however, are of the same quality. "Some books are to be tasted, others swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Bacon.

Christians should be discriminating in their choice of

reading materials "We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions" wrote Fielding. "Bad books are like intoxicating drink; they furnish neither nourishment nor medicine ... But ruin, one the intellect; the other the health; and together the soul." Tryon Edwards. Solomon warns us to "Keep (our) heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Since everything we read is funneled into our heart (mind), it cannot help but influence our life for weal or woe. Some literature is worthless, other is absolutely harmful. In reading as in other activities we should prove all things, hold fast that which is good and abstain from every form of evil." (I Thess. 5:21—22). In choosing religious materials to read, the novice would do well to ask for recommendations from a well-read preacher or elder. H.W. Grant says, "In good books is one of the best safe-guards from evil." This is true only in the case of the reader.

Especially is it critical that Christians make use of good religious materials, This has not been our strong point. Daniel Webster wrote: "If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in the country, I do not know what is to become of us as a nation: and the thought is one to cause solemn reflection on the part of every patriot and Christian. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and his word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the gospel is not felt through the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end."

To fully develop our minds for optimum use we must learn to read widely. A preacher needs to read far more than his Bible or even religious print. Everyone should be an avid reader of his daily newspaper. Jesus chided the Hebrews for inability to read "the signs of the times" (Matt. 16:3). Of course, one can go to heaven without a newspaper. He can do the same without

modern housing, electricity or automobiles. But to be able to communicate the gospel with the sinners of the world, we must know something of the world in which we live. This author recommends that a preacher subscribe to **Reader's Digest** and **National Geographic** to stay informed and in touch with the real world. Too many ministers live in an unreal world and are thus largely ineffective in their evangelistic outreach.

Every Christian family should subscribe to one or more brotherhood journals. There are numerous papers designed to appeal to various interests. Ask your elders or preacher to recommend some of these to you. A preacher especially should be receiving several of these papers so he can be informed of the progress of the kingdom and our internal problems. From them he can get many good ideas for local programs. Most importantly of all they contain valuable teaching materials.

We need to promote the reading of good religious books, especially those written by our own brethren. Our faith will be strengthened when we read biographies of great Christians of the past. Our usefulness as a teacher will improve as we read rich books of doctrinal instruction. Our Bible knowledge will grow as we read good commentaries. Our soul-winning skills will be enhanced by reading books on evangelism. Our knowledge and appreciation of the church and her past joys and sorrows will be strengthened by reading church history books. Again, ask your Christian leaders for their recommendations. Use your church library. Write or visit our Christian bookstores and select your own copies of these wonderful books.

The great reformation scholar Erasmus wrote: "When I get a little money, I buy books and if any is left, I buy food and clothes." Horace Mann observed, "No man has a right to bring up his children without surrounding them with books, if he has means to buy them. It is a wrong to his family." All Christian parents should ponder this wise man's words and check the family bookshelf. May all of God's children give heed to reading (I Tim. 4:13).

He Cannot Sin

Two verses in First John, chapter 3, demand our special attention. Verse 6: "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ..." Verse 9: "whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God."

These words are used by the Baptists to prove that once a man is saved, he can never be lost. They argue that since he cannot sin, per I John 3:9, how could he possibly be lost?

Many Christians who fully understand that a saved person can become unfaithful and lose his salvation are stumped by these passages and do not know how to explain them.

The problem is one of translation. Both the King James and the American Standard translation leave the distinct impression that the Calvinist is correct in his "once saved always saved" doctrine. The Greek text, however, leaves no such impression. The problem lies in the translation of the Greek tenses.

Two modern translations make the true meaning of these texts abundantly clear. They are the **New Testament** by Charles Williams and the **Amplified Bible**. Charles B. Williams is a Baptist, former Dean of Southwestern Baptist Seminary and professor of Greek and Ethics at Union University. His translation is acclaimed to be one of the finest. Especially does he excel in his knowledge and translation of the Greek tenses. Dr. J.R. Mantey, Greek Scholar of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago writes, "Dr. Williams has succeeded in surpassing all other translators of the New Testament in bringing out the tense significance of the Greek verbs. ... also he has indicated the true sense of the Greek present tense

wherever it is vital to clear understanding, e.g., I John 3:8, 9. ... we conclude that it is the best translation of the New Testament in the English language.”

Billy Graham, the world’s most prominent Baptist, endorses and highly recommends the Amplified Bible.

The renderings of these two translations make it abundantly clear that the verses under consideration in no way teach that it is impossible for a Christian to commit an act of sin.

Williams: “No one who continues to live in union with Him *practices* sin.” (3:6)

Amplified: “No one who abides in Him — who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him (deliberately and knowingly) habitually commits (practices) sin.” (3:6)

Williams: “No one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning, because the God-given life principle continues to live in him, and so he cannot practice sinning, because he is born of God.” (3:9)

Amplified: “No one born (begotten) of God (deliberately and knowingly) habitually practices sin, for God’s nature abides in him — His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him — and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God.” (3:9)

Even without these modern translations we would know that the passages do not teach impossibility of apostasy by noting what John said in Chapters 1 and 2.

If we (Christians) say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” 1:10

“My little children, these things write I unto you that ye

may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father ...” (2:1).

The truth of the matter is that while the Christian can commit a sin, he cannot habitually continue to practice sin if he wants to remain faithful. If he keeps on walking in the heavenly light (I John 1:7) and the divine seed is abiding in him (I John 3:9), his faithfulness will always cause him to quickly realize his sin. His conscience will prompt him to repent of it and make appropriate confession. (I John 1:9)

The disciple who becomes unfaithful will soon be sinning wilfully and there be no sacrifice available for his deliberate sin. (Heb. 10:26)

The Advantages Of Hell

Early in life we learn that even the worst situation usually has some points of merit in it. For example, a man was injured in a car wreck but while in the hospital he found a nurse to be his wife.

It has recently come to my attention that there are some advantages to be found even in *hell*. I realize that this is contrary to popular opinion, but I think I can sustain my allegation if you will but carefully listen.

There will be no *preaching* in hell. For some this will be advantageous. Such folks seem to hate preachers and preaching. To them preaching preachers are spoil-sports and meddlers. All who feel this way will have endured their last sermon when they enter the realms of Diabolos. We should mention, however, that although there will be no preaching there will be plenty of preachers in hell. John tells us that false prophets will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). This is the case because all teachers who do not abide within the teaching of Christ have not God (II John 9—10).

In hell there will be no *praying*. To many people praying is a foolish waste of time. Those boring prayer meetings are usually not well attended. Modern man has too many important things to do in his day, so he cannot afford the time to pray. For some, praying is actually embarrassing, especially in public. Don't worry; in hell there will be no more praying. Weeping; wailing and gnashing of teeth, yes, but no more prayer (Matt. 13:42).

There will be no *paying* in hell. By that I mean no collection for the Lord, the poor, for missionaries and good works. It seems that giving especially galls some people. Your last

request for an offering or contribution will be heard when you depart this realm. Such commands as “Lay by in store on the first day of the week” will be long forgotten in hell (I Cor. 16:1—2).

Neither will there be *programs* or *projects* of good works in hell. Churches seem to always be having some kind of class, or evangelistic outreach. There are workshops, lectureships and jobs to do. Preachers keep telling us to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ...” (I Cor. 15:58). In hell none of these things will be bothering you and demanding your time and energy.

In hell there will be no *pious people*. Godly Christians really turn off some folks. They are so goody that they don’t like a good risqué joke. They won’t even take a drink at a party. They make everyone feel uncomfortable. They are so clean they squeak. They stand so straight they lean backwards. These “saints” would actually put their religion before friends, family or work (John 15:18—20). In hell you will be forever rid of all such misfits for they will be separated from you and kept behind heaven’s walls (Rev. 22:15).

There will be no more *prohibitions* or laws to put up with in hell. There is a class of people who dispise the “thou shalt and thou shalt nots” of religion. They resent the silly rules (as they view them) that cramp their style and then make them feel guilty when broken. All such regulations will be done away in that distant land. Christ will have delivered up his reign to the Father (I Cor. 15:24), and those in hell will be separated from him (II Thes. 1:9).

Only a few problems can we foresee for those who choose hell rather than heaven. All liars will be there (Rev. 21:8). All the hypocrites will have a place reserved also (Matt. 23:33). There won’t be just a few of these pretenders as most churches have. There will be no recreation, leisure time or rest periods

in hell. “They have no rest day or night ...” (Rev. 14:11). Unfortunately there will be no weekend passes, leaves of absence, graduations or retirement. It is “eternal” in duration (Matt. 25:46).

Of course, we realize that the supposed advantages do not begin to equal the disadvantages of hell. Surely no sane person would want to go there. God doesn’t want anyone to perish in hell (II Pet. 3:9). In fact, hell was never intended for humankind. It was prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Christ suffered and died so not one of us would have to go there (John. 3:16).

Today there stands before us two gates, two ways, two destinations (Matt. 7:13—14). It is your prerogative to choose the way to everlasting pardon or eternal punishment. “Choose life that ye may live” (Deut. 30:19).

The Doctrine Of The Holy Spirit

Great confusion prevails about the Holy Spirit of God and His work. Only the Bible can tell us the truth about this important subject and correct our thinking about it.

I. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit.

The world is misled by the word “ghost”. It conjures up strange and exciting concepts of spooks and souls of dead men, for that is the connotation we give the word today. In 1611 A.D. when our King James translation was published the word “ghost” had quite a different meaning. It was a synonym for the word *guest*. Since the Christian’s body is said to be “a temple of God’s Spirit,” they reasoned that when he came into the saved person’s life he was a Holy Guest or Holy Ghost (I Cor. 6:19). The translators used the terms “Ghost” and “Spirit” interchangeably in Acts 2:4: “... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

II. The Holy Spirit is a Person.

Masculine pronouns are used to refer to the Spirit. “He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). The Spirit functions as a person. “He shall teach you” (John 15:26). “The Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:7). These and numerous other similar examples are all suggestive of an intelligent personality with volition.

III. The Spirit is a member of the Godhead along with the Father and the Son.

The well known baptismal charge says, “Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Paul closed his Corinthian correspondence with this beautiful benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus

Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (II Cor. 13:14). Peter used the term “God” to refer to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:3—4. We hurriedly emphasize that the Spirit is not the Father nor the Son. Rather, he is a separate divine personality who shares Godhood with them. We commonly use the term “trinity” to describe these sacred three.

IV. There Have Been Four Measures of the Spirit.

The power and gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given in four distinct measures. John tells us that Jesus received the Spirit *without measure* (John 3:34). Thus the Lord had an unlimited degree of the Spirit’s power at His disposal. We hear him claiming “all power” in Matt. 28:18. No individual ever did all the miracles Christ did, nor has any had such authority to speak and act.

The apostles had the *baptismal measure*. Jesus promised them they would “be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence,” following his ascension (Acts 1:5). He further said that they would receive power or authority when the Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). This would prepare them to lead and guide the infant church. They could work notable miracles such as healing the lame (Acts 3:6—7) and raising the dead (Acts 9:40). They could preach the gospel in “tongues” or languages they had never studied (Acts 2:4, 6, 11). They could pass these miraculous gifts on to others by the laying on of their hands (Acts 8:14—17). They were inspired to write the scriptures to guide the churches (John 16:13).

There are only two recorded instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded. The apostles received it (Acts 1:5; 2:1—4). The family of Cornelius, the first Gentiles, likewise were baptized in the Spirit (Acts 10:44; 11:15—17). It empowered the apostles for their strategic mission of establishing the fledgling church and revealing the New Covenant. Holy Spirit baptism

was a promise, not a command (Acts 1:5). It was administered by Christ (Matt. 3:11). Christ commands his disciples to administer water baptism (Matt. 28:19—20; Acts 10:47—48). Today there is but one baptism (Eph. 4:4—5) and that is immersion in water (Col. 2:12). If we had both Holy Spirit and water baptism there would obviously be two baptisms and Paul's declaration would be wrong!

There was a "*laying on of hands*" measure of the Holy Spirit as illustrated by the events in Samaria recorded in Acts 8:14—17. The apostles had laid their hands on Philip, a deacon and evangelist (Acts 6:5—6). This enabled Philip to perform miraculous signs to confirm the message he preached (Acts 8:6—7). However, Philip could not transfer his miraculous power to those he taught and baptized in water (Acts 8:14—16). It was necessary that an apostle lay his hands upon a man before he could receive the supernatural gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:17). Since no apostle lives today, no one can receive miraculous gifts today.

There is an ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit whereby the Spirit dwells in the Christian in a *non-miraculous way*. Peter promised two things to those Jews who would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus: 1) remission of sins and 2) the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). He again said that the Spirit is given to all that obey God (Acts 5:32). Paul reminds us that "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts ..." (C-1 4:6). Our bodies are said to be "the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you" (I Cor. 6:19). Some eighteen times the inspired writers speak of the Spirit indwelling the Christian. Many, however, have a difficult time accepting this teaching. If God had wanted to convey to Christians that his Holy Spirit would actually dwell within them, how might He have made it clearer than he has?

What are the benefits of God's Spirit dwelling in our lives if there are no miraculous gifts? There are many blessings which

flow to the Christian from the gift. We are “strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man” (Eph. 3:16). The Spirit helps us to mortify or to put to death the deeds of the sinful flesh (Rom. 8:13). He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). According to John 14:16 the Spirit comforts the saints. Paul argues in Romans 8:26 that the Spirit helps our infirmities and makes intercession of weak Christians. Through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to bear the fruit of the Spirit in our Christian life (Gal. 5:22). In all of these wonderful blessings received by the child of God there is no promise of any miraculous gift like “tongues” or healing. Rather, these are spiritual blessings of non-miraculous nature.

Let all of God’s children love, worship and adore the Triune God. May we learn of and appreciate the many good things which God the Holy Spirit does for us. Let us fill our hearts with the truth of God which will keep us from all the extremes and errors of Pentecostalism and other false teachings about the Holy Spirit. Let us educate our brethren as to the blessings made available to us in Christ and let the truth of the matter overwhelm every false doctrine.

The Home That God Built

The home is the most important institution in the world. It is more important than government and the nation for a nation is but the sum of its families. No nation can be strong whose families are disintegrating. There is a sense in which the home is more important than the local congregation of the church. If the home fails there will be no one to fill the assemblies. The children will be lost to the world. Give us a generation of home failure and the church will vanish.

Mankind needs more than instruction in what to do. We need an example to follow. Knowing this, God has provided a model for the ideal home. That model is the first family in Eden. There we see God's blueprint for all homes in succeeding ages.

There was *a man and a woman* (Gen. 1:28). Heterosexual marriage is the basis for a proper home. God has always declared homosexual relationships to be sinful abominations (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26—27; 32).

Only one mate was provided for life. God gave Adam, Eve, and Eve, Adam. He could not trade her in for a new one after a while. Disagreements had to be worked out. The only option was to live alone. Polygamy or polyandry were not even contemplated. Jesus reaffirmed that ancient code in Matthew 19:5. "For this cause shall a man ... cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This provides a strong reason for young people to wait a few years beyond high school for marriage. Teenagers are not usually sufficiently mature to make a life long decision. Eight of ten teenage marriages fail, where only 20% of these contracted at 24 will not survive.

Each married couple were to form *a separate home unit* apart from their parents. God taught Adam this premise: "A

man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife ..." (Gen. 2:24). No person is ready for marriage until they are prepared to "leave and cleave." Too many young people rush into marriage unprepared financially and emotionally to establish their own domicile. They tend to think that mom and dad will take care of that. Tragedy often follows in the wake of such a decision. It is difficult enough to break the parental ties even in your own separate home — and all the more complicated when under the same roof.

The man and his wife were literally "*one flesh*" for she was made of his rib (Gen 2:21—23). Jesus taught that in marriage couples are to become one flesh. Also through their love they grow to be one in life. Paul writes: "Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it ..." (Eph. 5:28—29).

In the adjustments of marriage each partner learns to give up things that provoke his mate and accept things that please the other. After a while there is a beautiful oneness visible to all. Without true love this is impossible.

Adam and Eve's *home had God at its heart and center*. God had made their home (Gen 1:27). He had blest their home (Gen. 1:28). God spoke his will to them (ibid). All their needs were provided by their heavenly Father (Gen. 2:8—9). Only those homes built around God will stand the stress of this modern world. "Except Jehovah build the house they labor in vain that built it" (Ps. 127:1). Many families remind themselves and their guests of this with the wall plaque, "God is an unseen guest at every meal."

In the Edenic home there was *work and responsibility*. Adam was to dress and keep the garden (Gen. 2:5). Later, following the fall, he was reminded that in toil he would eat of the ground all his days (Gen. 3:17). So today a happy home will

provide work and responsibilities for all. The man must provide for his family (I Tim. 5:8). Women must keep the home (Tit. 2:4—5). Our children desperately need to be trained for life's work while at home. Nothing is more pitiful than a child raised with no responsibilities or duties to prepare him/her for adulthood. The ancient Hebrews had a proverb which says, "He that does not teach his son a trade, trains him to be a thief."

Children blest the home of the first couple. This God commanded (Gen. 1:28). "Their children were born with the help of Jehovah" (Gen. 4:1). The psalmist puts it beautifully, "Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah; and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. 127:3). All couples should plan to bring children into their home. Children bring joys unspeakable, but even more, Christian children bless the world and carry the faith to the next generation.

The *man was the head* of that first family (Gen. 3:16). Under Christ that same home structure is expected. "The husband is the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23). Surely this is America's greatest need today. The women's liberation movement will wreck and destroy the home and family if it is allowed to succeed. They have declared war on the father-led home — the "patriarchy" they call it.

There were *rules and standards* in that original home. God forbade certain things (Gen 2:16). Our children need to be taught to "hear the instruction of (their) father and forsake not the law of their mother" (Prov. 1:8). Even wives are to obey their husbands as did Sarah (I Pet. 3:1—6). All of the family must obey the laws of the land (I Pet. 2:13). And keep the commandments of God (Eccle. 12:13). No home can long survive without this respect for authority and obedience to law.

May all of us pray daily for God's blessings on our homes and may we diligently work to have a Christian home that will glorify God and bless the world.

I Am Ashamed

The Christian has every right to be proud of his associations in the kingdom of God. The ideals of Christ make for the most blessed of friendships and social and business relations. The child of God should never be made ashamed of his faith in Christ or the family of God of which he is a member.

Things of Which I am Not Ashamed

Like Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

I am not ashamed of my salvation for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he will keep that which I have committed unto him unto eternity (II Tim. 1:12).

I am not ashamed of the church of Christ, planned by the God of heaven (Eph. 3:9—11); purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28); and indwelt by the Spirit of God (I Cor. 3:16—17). It is holy, without spot or blemish (Eph. 5:27) and perfect as designed by the Architect of Eternity.

I am not ashamed of the Scriptures, inspired of the Holy, Spirit (II Tim. 3:16—17) and guaranteed to be fully authoritative and complete.

I am not ashamed of the promised heaven which awaits the righteous (Phil. 3:20—21). As surely as Christ is Lord, we can believe his promise of eternal mansions (John 14:2).

I am not ashamed of God's promises to guide, provide for and protect me in this life (Rom. 8:14; Matt. 6:33; I Cor. 10:13). He has never failed nor forsaken even one of his children (Heb.

13:5—6). While men have reneged, never has my Lord.

I Am Ashamed, However

In spite of all these marvelous blessings, I am ashamed of a number of things which I continually encounter in my Christian walk.

I am ashamed of my sins (Rom. 6:21). So often I fall short of what my Lord expects of me. I am ashamed of my inability to seek first the kingdom of God in every venture of life every day of the year (Matt. 6:33). Crucifying the old man is an ongoing process (Gal. 2:20).

I am ashamed of fellow Christians who live in such a worldly fashion that they cast shame and reproach upon our Father and our spiritual family. When I see a Christian immodestly attired in public, or imbibing in sinful worldly habits such as indulging in the use of liquor, profanity, or tobacco, I hang my head (Tit. 2:12).

I am ashamed of brethren who are wilfully ignorant of God's word and pitifully negligent of their study of the living oracles. How can they treat the precious word so lightly? (Acts 17:11).

I am ashamed of preaching brethren who mishandle the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). I have in mind men who do sloppy work in their teaching and preaching; who neglect the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:4), while gladly accepting the financial support of such work (Gal. 6:6). Those preachers who leave the safe secure doctrine of Christ to venture out into the swirling currents of speculation and human opinions, make me ashamed (II John 9:10). Then there are those that presume to make rules and regulations for God, binding them on the hearts of brethren. The strife and divisions this always engenders embarrasses me. To see our enemies laugh with scorn at the

bruised and broken body of Christ, torn asunder by his own disciples is depressing indeed.

I am ashamed of brethren that abuse and mistreat God's servants who give their lives to proclaiming the world. How shameful when God's own people become the tools of Satan in opposing and persecuting the very men who could help save their souls (I Thess. 5:12—13).

Especially am I embarrassed by preaching brethren who do not pay their bills. Recently a Christian business man who deals mainly with preachers told me how many scores of bad accounts he had from men who weekly stand in pulpits of God's church. Some of these are insignificant men, known only to a few. Others however, are widely known. Many of these poor accounts have been billed repeatedly, some have been personally contacted by phone. Not only do some of them refuse to honor their debts, they lie by promising that they will take care of it right away and then do nothing. Have these men not read Paul's warning that thieves and liars will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor 6:9—10; Eph. 5:25).

Will it not be strange in that day when Christ judges us to see hundreds of people enter heaven's gates while the preacher who taught and baptized them is sent into damnation because he would not pay his bills for the books purchased from which to prepare his sermons?

May all who read these lines look into their hearts and examine themselves to see if they are still in the faith (II Cor. 13:5). May we not only labor to save others but our souls as well (I Tim. 4:16).

The Great Inheritance

The idea of an inheritance is as old as the human race. God chose this familiar concept to describe the saints' spiritual reward. The child of God has "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, ... that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven ..." (I Pet. 1:4). Nothing in earth's realm can compare in importance and value with our inheritance. We should want to know all that we can of this blessing.

It's Characteristics

Paul prayed that the Ephesian brethren would know "the riches of the glory of their inheritance: ..." (1:18). Thus it is glorious. Nothing is comparable with our home with God (Rev. 21:1—22:5). According to Peter our inheritance is "undefiled" (I Pet. 1:4). It is "incorruptible" for God will preserve and protect his children and their home. It will not fade away because it is the everlasting reward of the eternal God. It will not grow old with age nor crumble with the sands of time like earthly homes. It is "reserved in heaven for you" and the honor and integrity of Jesus guarantees the certainty of this marvelous inheritance (John 14:2). In Hebrews 9:15 the apostle speaks of the "eternal inheritance." Thus it is age lasting and unending in nature.

The Contents of Our Inheritance

Among the many blessings of our inheritance is salvation. Paul wrote that Christians shall "inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:15). While our salvation is certainly a present experience, there is a dimension of salvation to be enjoyed only in heaven. Now we have forgiveness of our sins, then we will be freed from sin's temptation. Now we have to live in a sin cursed world, then will be in total righteousness. The Galatians were told that Christ

“gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world” (1:4).

To inherit heaven means to be part of the eternal kingdom (Jas. 2:5). The redeemed will reign with God in the eternal realms (Rev. 2:26—27). To inherit the kingdom suggests that we will be there *with the king* of the kingdom, i.e., the Lord Jesus (I Tim. 6:15). There we will receive all the promises made by God to the faithful. Paul urges us to be diligent that through faith and patience we may inherit life (Tit. 3:7). The ever present enemy of all men’s joys and happiness is death (Heb. 2:15). In heaven death will be no more (Rev. 21:4). There will be life abundant (John 10:10) in a land where we will never grow old. In Rev. 21:1—7, John sketches a bold and beautiful picture of the saints’ everlasting inheritance. Most beautiful of all is the fact that the “tabernacle of God is with men,” i.e., the redeemed children of God will live in the Father’s house.

A Sketch of the Heirs

They may be poor as to the world, but they are “rich in faith” (Jas. 2:5). They have turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance ...” (Acts 26:18). Having been baptized (immersed into Christ, they are heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:28—29). Being God’s children by faith, they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16—17). All of the heirs have been “sanctified,” that is, set apart to God’s service (Acts 20:32). Because they look forward to their inheritance, they are willing to suffer with Christ so that they may be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17). By following Jesus their Lord and imitating his holy example, they have learned patience as they wait to receive the promised inheritance (Heb. 6:12).

The Parties of the Inheritance

When there is an inheritance there must be at least two

parties to it. There is the one who has the wealth and possessions to be bestowed and, of course, the person who will receive these blessings by the fact of kinship or gracious bestowal. In the earthly realm an inheritance suggests a death of the original possessor of the riches. Here the analogy breaks down, for it is we that die, not God. He is the living, eternal God (Heb. 10:31). We are the mortal men that are appointed to die (Heb. 9:27). Even so, the Creator and possessor of the universe and all that is therein wills to give to his dying children the riches of heaven. In order that this gift be not in vain, he has promised to raise them from the dead and give them an eternal life with him in glory (I Thess. 4:13—18). So we are an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Race or nationality is no longer a factor for “Jews and Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and the fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

Dear reader, you too can be an heir of God’s eternal riches if you are willing to become his obedient child through faith and baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:26—28).

*The author is indebted to David Fernyhough for the idea of this lesson.

Innocent Blood

Time and again God's word speaks of innocent blood. Each time it refers to the violent destruction of innocent human lives. There is a divine principle in this matter that is plainly applicable to us today. The day you read this article 4,000 innocent unborn human babies will be killed by abortionist doctors in America. Before the year ends 1½ million babies will so perish. Since January 22, 1973 over seven million have been destroyed. In America it is no crime to kill the babe, so long as he resides in the mother's womb. Dr. Bernard Nathanson quit the business after aborting 60,000 victims. (Good Housekeeping, March, 1976.) Virtually every city in America has one or more abortion clinics whose single purpose is death for profit. All branches of the federal government have given their approval to this blood-letting.

God's Law

The law of God on shedding human blood is first stated in Genesis 9:6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Because man was made by God in his image and likeness, a wall of protection was erected about him. The manslayer was not to be tolerated. The penalty for homicide was *death!* God ordained capital punishment.

God's Attitude

God's attitude toward the violent is reflected in Proverbs 6:16—17: "There are six things which *Jehovah hateth*: yea, seven which are an *abomination unto him*: (among them are) ... hands that shed innocent blood." To be godly we must love the things he loves and hate the things he hates.

God's Expectation of a Society

You shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it polluteth the land ..." (Num. 35:33). To the king of Judah in Jeremiah's day God said, "This saith Jehovah: execute ye justice and righteousness ... *neither shed innocent blood* in this place. For if ye do this thing (protect the innocent) then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting on the throne of David (the dynasty would be preserved, J.W.) ... But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith Jehovah, that this house shall become a desolation" (Jer. 22:3—5). The purpose of civil government is to protect the innocent, the weak and helpless from the violent aggressors. Failing to meet this basic obligation, a government forfeits its right to continue on God's earth! The Lord had earlier warned the Hebrews to make provision "that innocent blood be not shed in the midst of (their) land ... and so blood (guiltiness, J.W.) be upon" them (Deut. 19:10).

When A Nation Tolerates Shedding Innocent Blood

Israel ignored God and shed innocent blood without shame or justice. King "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another ... doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah" (II Kings 21:16). The masses "... sacrificed their sons and daughters unto demons and shed innocent blood ... and the land was polluted with blood" (Psams 106:37—38).

God was not mocked, they reaped what they had sown (Gal. 6:7). Ezekiel announced their judgment in three terse decrees, "... righteous men ... shall judge them with the judgment of adulteresses and blood is in their hands. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will bring up a company against them, and will give them to be tossed to and fro ..." (Ezek. 23:45—47). "I will prepare thee unto blood, and the blood shall pursue thee" (Ezek. 35:6).

“Whereupon I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood which they had poured out upon the land” (Ezek. 36:18). Like heathen Egypt and Edom, Israel became a desolate wilderness “Because they (had) shed innocent blood in their land” (Joel 3:19). God raised up the powerful juggernaut of Babylon which cruelly conquered and deported the whole nation for 70 years of slavery. Justice had to be satisfied. Like Abel’s, the blood of their innocents cried out from the earth for vengeance (Gen. 4:10).

Innocent Blood in our Land

At her worst Israel never came close to shedding the vast volume of innocent blood that now flows freely in our nation. They sacrificed their infants to the idol gods of Canaan. Our women sacrifice theirs to gods of lust, pleasure and convenience. Then pagan priests burnt their victims; today white frocked doctors do the ghoulish service. The results are the same, 7 million innocents have died. How long will God’s patience withhold the judgment due? Every person who has stained his hands with the blood of these babes will one day cry out with apostate Judas ... “I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood’ (Matt. 27:4).

May God’s people awake from their lethargy and rise up to put a stop to this fiendish practice. Bad laws can be changed if the people care enough to do so! And may this ancient prayer be on our lips and in our hearts:

Forgive, O Jehovah, thy people ... suffer not innocent blood to remain in the midst of thy people ... and the blood shall be forgiven them (Deut. 21:8).

Jesus, Lord And Master

“Jesus Christ is Lord” is the heart song of every child of God. Confession of his Lordship is essential to a sinner’s salvation (Rom. 10:9).

The Lordship of Christ is the central theme of the entire New Testament. John wrote his gospel to establish this fact (John. 20:30—31). John carefully recorded those activities of Christ which demonstrated his Lordship over every realm of life and death. He changed water into the best wine, he was master of quality (John 2:1—12). He healed the son of a nobleman at Capernaum while at Cana (John 4:46—54). He had mastery over distance. He healed the impotent man at Bethesda on a sabbath day (John 5:1—8). He was lord of the Sabbath and had power over disease. He fed five thousand with a boy’s sack lunch and had twelve times more left than he started with (John 6:4—14). He was master of quantity. He healed the man blind from birth (John 9:1—34). He was master of time. Lazarus he raised from the dead on the fourth day, after the body was decaying (John 11:1—44). He was Lord over death. The last and greatest of his miracles was his own resurrection on the third day (John 20:1—9). In these and other miracles Jesus established himself as supreme over every realm and relationship of life.

Lordship means to have dominion, rule and authority over others. It is used of Jesus as of the Father. His Lordship implies our servanthood. Paul often spoke of himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1). As servants we obey Christ in all things (Heb. 5:8—9).

The extent of His Lordship

Because Christ was willing to humble himself even unto

death on the cross, God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name that every knee should bow to him in earth, heaven and hades and confess him as sovereign lord (Phil. 2:5—11). His lordship extends over all earthly rulers and judges (I Tim. 6:15). His authority and power are unlimited (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22).

He Is Eminently Qualified

Of all men, he alone was God in the flesh (Matt. 1:23). He is deity, i.e., God in his nature (John 1:1—3, 14). He alone was without sin (I Pet. 2:22). No man has equaled the extent of his wisdom (John 2:24:25). His power was and is unlimited. His administration is one of justice and righteousness (Is. 9:6—7).

Christ is Lord of all because he created all (Col. 1:16). He is Lord because he sustains the entire cosmos in its existence (Col. 1:16). He is Lord by reason of his prior existence and his station of priority over all things (Col. 1:17). He rules over all by divine appointment. The Father hath given all judgment into Christ's hands (John 5:22). He hath highly exalted him, above all created things (Phil. 2:9—10).

Consequences of His Lordship

Because he is now Lord of all, God has given him power to raise the dead (John. 5:21). He will one day raise both the righteous and wicked with a command from his mouth (John 5:28). Having raised them he will then judge them one and all (John 5:27). As Lord he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw nigh unto him (Heb. 7:25). He also has the power and authority to punish the wicked in eternal torment (Matt. 25:40—41).

To Honor The Lord

Since he is Lord and we the bondservants, we must be

obedient to his will. Jesus asked certain Jews, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46). We can only know Christ’s will by looking into his New Testament. Jesus said, “The words that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Paul reminds us that the words he wrote down by inspiration were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). He saves those that honor him by faithful obedience (Heb. 5:8—9). Among the commands of Christ are the following:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved ...”
(Acts 16:31).

“He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30).

“He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus” (Acts 10:48).

If you have confessed Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9) you will gladly comply with these simple ordinances.

The duration of Christ’s dominion is revealed in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. “For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet ... and when all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him ...” (I Cor. 15:25—28).

Is Christ your Lord? Have you fully obeyed him?

God And The Jews

One of the marvels of the world is the Jewish race. Greater nations of the past have vanished but they continue to survive; hated, despised and persecuted. They stand as prominent evidence of the existence of God, the moral ruler of the universe, and the inspiration of the Bible which predicted their fate.

It is tragic how little most Christians know about the Jews and their history. Christ, the founder of our faith, was a Jew. The apostles were all Jews. The first generation of Christian disciples were from the ranks of the Jews. The church began in the Jewish capitol of Jerusalem on the Jewish holy-day, Pentecost. All Christians from then to now have studied and loved the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament) in addition to their own New Testament.

They Were God's Chosen People

God's relationship to the Hebrews is seen in Isaiah 41:8—9, "... Israel, my chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend ... Thou art my servant, *I have chosen thee* and not cast thee away." It all began with Abraham when God called him from Ur of the Chaldees in 1981 B.C. (?) (Gen. 12:1—4). God promised to make him a great nation and that through him all the families of the earth would be blest. From that one man and his son Isaac has flowed this fateful nation.

Why They Were Chosen?

They were chosen that all the world might be blest by the Messiah which would spring from their line: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

They were to be a righteous stock from which the Christ could spring. As Malachi wrote, "He sought a godly seed" (2:15). For Messiah to enter the world as a helpless babe, he needed a godly family to nurture and care for him. To establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, he needed a receptive soil. Thus he came unto his own ... some of which received him and became that nucleus (John. 1:11).

The nation was chosen and blest to fulfill an ancient promise and oath "which he sware unto (their) fathers" (Deut. 7:7—8).

They were not chosen because they were great in number (Deut. 7:7), nor were they selected because of their own righteousness or strength (Deut. 9:6). God chose them to demonstrate his righteousness and grace to "all the peoples of the earth" (Deut. 28:9—10). Thus their mission was to be a living memorial and witness of the one true God and light to a world in heathen darkness.

Another purpose for their calling was to demonstrate man's inability to save himself from sin by "law-keeping." There have always been two distinct attitudes toward salvation. There are those who feel they are smart enough to devise their own solution to the problem of sin and thus escape the consequences. God allowed the Gentiles 2,000 years to pursue this vain dream. He blest them with some of the wisest minds to wrestle the problem, such as Plato and Aristotle. Paul notes that "The world through its wisdom knew not God ..." (I Cor. 1:21). Then there are those who feel they are strong enough that if given a perfect set of rules, they can keep the law and thus save themselves. This was the folly of the Jews. God set them as his pilot project for all ages to demonstrate once and for all that "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20).

Their Names

They are called the "seed of Abraham" because they were

his posterity (Ps. 105:6). From Jacob their ancestor, they inherited the name *Israel*. He received the name following this experience with the angel of Jehovah at Peniel. It means "he who hath striven with God" (Gen. 32:28, see footnote). Later it came to mean "the people of God." The last syllable *el* signifies God. They are called Hebrews (Gen. 14:13). This term may denote their national origin from beyond the Euphrates River (it means beyond the river). It might spring from the name Eber, a son of Shem (Gen. 10:21). Others have suggested it might relate to Hebron where Abraham lived for a while (Gen. 13:18). They are known as *Jews* from the days of Isaiah (II Kings 16:6). Jew is derived from Jehudi, one belonging to the tribe of Judah. They are *Semites* since they are descended from Shem, the son of Noah (Gen. 10:21). Thus anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews because of their race.

Their Peculiar Blessings

A. The Israelites were blest "above all peoples" of the earth in the material realm (Deut. 7:14—15).

B. They alone had the written word of God (Rom. 3:1—2). In Romans 9:3—5 Paul catalogues their spiritual blessings.

C. They shared the *adoption as God's children* (Deut. 14:1).

D. Theirs was the *glory*. He spoke not of personal or national glory but of the Lord (the *Shekinah*) that was manifest above the mercy seat in the holy of holies (Ex. 29:43).

E. They had the several *covenants* of God (Gen. 17:7—10; Deut. 5:1—21, etc.)

F. To them God had given the *Law of Moses* (Deut. 4:8). Such a righteous code no other nation was privileged to have.

G. They were blest with the *service of God.*, i.e., the

tabernacle and temple with their holy ordinances to keep them close to God. Only they knew how to worship the living God correctly.

H. To them were given *the promises* of God which showered them with rich blessings. The most significant promises were those of the coming Savior and his Kingdom.

I. They had the *fathers* such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. What a great tradition they inherited. They were the children of the giants of the faith.

J. *Christ* was born of their race and in their nation. The whole world desperately desired and anxiously awaited the Messiah. They were privileged to have him in their midst.

K. God gave them the land of Palestine and made it flow with milk and honey (Gen. 13:14—15; 18—20).

L. He gave them the Levitical priesthood to teach and guide them in life and worship (Lev. 10:8—11).

M. Added to the priesthood, God gave them the holy prophets to correct their erring steps, to forewarn them and to further reveal the will of Heaven. Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others blest their lives.

N. They were blest with David's dynasty. God had promised David that his descendants would reign after him (II Sam. 7:10—16). Although some of their kings were wicked, great men like Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah blest the nation.

What other nation of earth ever enjoyed such abundant blessings as those Hebrews?

The Jews and Jesus

The Christ was born of the tribe of Judah of the family of

David (Matt. 1:1). How foolish that some have sought to deny his Jewishness. He grew up in a Jewish home in the Jewish community of Nazareth (Matt. 2:23). He attended a Jewish synagogue in his home town (Lk. 4:16) and worshiped in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Lk. 2:46). A Jewish prophet (John the Baptizer) baptized him along with thousands of other Jews (Matt. 3:5—6, 13). The three and one half years of his public ministry were spent among his own people, offering them salvation and a place in his kingdom (John 1:11—12). He openly affirmed that he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). While many individuals received him, as a nation they refused him.

On two occasions the people sought to make Jesus a king. Of course, they had in mind a different sort of king, i.e. a temporal king for a temporal kingdom. After feeding the 5,000 Jesus perceived that they were about to come and make him king. He quickly departed from them. They wanted a “bread king” who would give them free bread. For that he later rebuked them (John 6:15, 25—26). Shortly before his arrest, a mob of street people in Jerusalem thronged about him shouting “Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” (John 12:13—14). The carnal minded crowd were ready to launch a rebellion against Rome immediately. Hosanna meant “save us now”! They could not comprehend why he chose the lowly ass to ride upon. In those days a king on a mission of war rode a warhorse. A man on an ass or mule was on a mission of peace. Again, Jesus rejected their offer. He plainly told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John. 18:36).

The religious leaders of Judah decided and ordered his death. They feared most of all that they would lose their position of power with the people (John 11:49—53). At their instigation the street mob screamed for his blood. “All the people answered (Pilate) and said His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). The apostles laid the responsibility for

Christ's murder at their feet (Acts 13:27—28).

Following the resurrection, the Lord sent his apostles to the Jews first (Acts 1:8). Paul always made it his point to first seek out the Jews with his gospel message (Rom. 1:16). The first generation of the church was composed of Jewish disciples (Acts 2:5, 14, 41). Even a great company of the priests were converts (Acts 6:7). John foresaw the remnant of Abraham's children who had followed the Christ, in the heavenly realms (Rev. 14:4). When as a people they rejected God's offer of salvation and became fierce enemies and persecutors of the church, Paul brokenheartedly turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:45—46; Rom. 9:1—3).

The Jews Relation to God Today

Having rejected the Son and the kingdom, God has rejected them as a favored nation. "By their unbelief they were broken off" from God's covenant (Rom. 11:20). Jesus had warned them, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," i.e., the Gentiles (Matt. 21:43—44). Their rejection, however, does not exclude any Jew who will believe in Jesus as Lord (Rom. 11:1—5, 23, 26). Paul shows us that in reality God never saved a Hebrew because of his race, rather it was always by faith even as today (Rom. 4:1-16). Of course, this was and is an obedient faith that saves (Rom. 1:5). Today there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10:12). All who reject Jesus are lost, all who obey him are saved.

The Jews are no longer a holy people for they rejected God's Messiah and his new covenant. They are no longer a chosen nation. The church is God's chosen people (I Pet. 2:9). Christians are now the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:15—16). No longer are Jews a favored people. They prosper because of their diligence in business. They survive in the new state of Israel because of U.S. money and arms and a courageous survival

instinct to avoid extermination at the hands of their enemies.

There is no Biblical promise of a national restoration of the Jews to Palestine. The land promises made to Abraham were fulfilled in the conquest under Joshua. "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it ... There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel ..." (Jos. 21:43—45). God has not promised to rebuild their temple in the Christian age. All those prophecies of rebuilding the temple referred to Ezra's so doing following the Babylonian captivity. There is no promise of national salvation to the Jews. Contrary to popular opinion, this is not the intent of Paul's teaching in Romans Chapter 11. The oft-quoted words of verse 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved" do not promise a general salvation; rather, the adverb "so" indicates the "manner" of saving. Verse 23 clarifies the issue, "and they also (Jews) if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

Ancient Prophecies About the Jews

Deuteronomy 28:47—53: "Because thou servest not Jehovah ... with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies that Jehovah shall send against thee ... Jehovah will bring a nation against thee from the end of the earth ... of fierce countenance that shall not regard the person of the old or show favor to the young ..." Time and again the Hebrews felt the judgment of this prophecy applied: Assyria, Babylon, Syria, and Rome crushed them.

Deuteronomy 28:62: "And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou didst not harken to the voice of Jehovah ..."

Deuteronomy 28:64—66: "And Jehovah will scatter thee

among all peoples from the one end of the earth even unto the other ... and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot: but Jehovah will give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes and pining of soul; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day, and have not assurance of thy life.” This is a word portrait of the situation in Europe forty years ago.

Deuteronomy 28:25: “... and thou shalt be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth.”

Deuteronomy 28:37: “And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb and byword among all the people whither Jehovah shall lead thee away.”

Jeremiah 30:11: “... for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished.”

Jeremiah 31:37: “Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I cast off *all* the seed of Israel for all that they have done ...”

Mathew 24:2: Jesus said, “See ye not all these things” (the city of Jerusalem and its temple) verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

“For then shalt be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until, now, no, nor ever shall be ...” (vs. 21).

“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished.” The Romans under General Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with the loss of

over one million Jewish lives and the dismembering and scattering of the nation that survived.

We and the Jews

Since God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 10:12—13) the Hebrews are subject to the same gospel as we Gentiles. God cleanses their hearts as well as ours by faith, without distinction (Acts 15:8—9). They have a God-given right to hear the gospel (Mk. 16:15). Many Jews who followed the Messiah in this life will share the bliss of Heaven (Rev. 7:4). Sadly this race which enjoys such an illustrious history is the most neglected race on earth so far as our evangelistic work is concerned. Multitudes of Jews have demonstrated an eagerness to follow Jesus. Note the thousands of young Jews in the Messianic Jewish Movement.

God's children must never allow themselves to be guilty of anti-Semitism. It is remarkable that the most vicious persecutions of the Jews have come from those who professed to follow the Savior. Jews suffered unmercifully at the hands of the Catholic Crusaders. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "... the Jews ... do great evil in the land. If they could kill us all, they would gladly do so, aye, and often do it, especially those who profess to be physicians ... they can give poison to a man of which he will die in an hour ... I say to you lastly, as a countryman, if the Jews refuse to be convicted, we ought not to suffer them or bear with them any longer." Graetz, **History of the Jews**, Vol. 4, p. 551.

What a remarkable contrast we see in Paul. "I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2—3).

May all of us who are Abraham's spiritual heirs never forget our obligation to his fleshly children and may we kindly treat those who have so great a judgment on them already.

Let Us Go Forward

(A New Year's Lesson)

“And Jehovah said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward (Ex. 14:15). Our work for 1979 is soon to be history. While we have not accomplished everything we would like to have, we are greatly encouraged by the things that have been accomplished for the Lord. We cannot go back and redo the old year, but we can build upon that which we did last year. We can go forward and excel over what we did in the past.

A new year is a time to review the past, scan the future, and seriously scrutinize the present with the view of forsaking the baser levels of life, lifting our ideals and improving our conduct and character.

At the close of a year, we contemplate what our successes and failures were. How shall we measure life's successes? Being citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we must measure our accomplishments by a different standard than our worldly friends.

Happiness and success are not measured by *fleshly gratification*. Jesus taught us that “the life (is) more than the raiment ...” (Matt. 6:25). While worldlings compute success by increase in net income and social status achieved, our life is concerned with the progress of the spirit rather than of the flesh. “For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit (mind) the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace...” (Rom. 8:5—6). Happiness does not consist in simply getting what we want, rather it comes from knowing and doing God's will. Jesus said, “If ye know these

things, blessed are ye if ye do them.” (John 13:17).

Life’s value is not determined by sorrows or misfortunes. Some tend to forget all their blessings from God by thinking too much of their pains and sorrows. Christians can have contentment in spite of the adversities of life. From the misery of his lonely prison house Paul wrote, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content ... in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want” (Phil. 4:11—12). Paul tells us that God had taught him the key to seeing life in focus. “And he hath said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness ... Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in distresses, for Christ’s sake, for when I am weak then am I strong” (II Cor. 12:9—10).

Success is not measured by money made. One can conceivably gain the whole world and still lose his most precious possession and thus be eternally miserable (Mark 8:36—37). Paul reminds us that “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Tim. 6:6). He then adds, “But having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts ... For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (6:8—10).

Rudyard Kipling warns us against overconcern for money, position and glory for “Someday you will meet a man who cares for none of these things and then you will know how poor you are.” Really, brethren, it is treasures laid up in heaven that truly count!

Let us measure our progress for the ending year by our spiritual development. Did we “grow in the grace and

knowledge of Christ" (II Pet. 3:18)? Are we more knowledgeable of his Word? Have we grown in our prayer life? Is heaven more central in our thoughts? Have we made progress in good done to our fellowmen? We are expected to do good unto all men especially Christians (Gal. 6:10). What about the jobs we began for God? Looking back over the year, how many of them have we completed? The brethren at Sardis were rebuked because Christ found none of their works completed (Rev. 3:2). It is not dreams dreamed, nor plans made, neither projects begun that God honors. Only those which we carried to completion are of any ultimate value. Then how many souls did you win for God in the last 365 days? They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3) How many fellow Christians have you aided with their life's burdens? By so doing we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Surely one of the best standards of life's success is the blessings received from our Father above. "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." All of these could be summed up in this final question, Have we made progress in our preparation for the eternal realms? May we never forget the Lord's directive: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also" (Matt. 6:19—20).

How Then Shall We Face the Unknown New Year?

We should face it with absolute faith and trust in God. "We walk by faith ..." (II Cor. 5:7). All that he commands us to do is both practical and possible. "His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). When we do our best he will do the rest. As Jehovah opened the sea before ancient Israel, so will he make a path for our feet in the unknown year ahead (Ex. 14:15). But even with the mighty miracle of a roadbed through the swirling waters, they had to venture out on faith, run the risk of losing their all, believing that God would see them through.

Israel could have perished on the banks of the sea, had they not been willing to take God at his promise.

We must rid ourselves of every sinful thing that would hinder us if we would run the race successfully (Heb. 12:1).

We must accept the fresh start which our Lord offers us. Believe that in Christ you are "a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). The failures of yesterday need only be repented of, tomorrow offers every opportunity to enjoy the abundant life for which we long. Paul's philosophy was to forget the past and press on unto the things which are before (Phil. 3:13). May we have his spirit this year. Perhaps you have seen this little thought from a poet's pen:

A New Leaf

*He came to my desk with quivering lip —
The lesson was done.
"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said,
I have spoiled this one.
I took the old leaf, stained and blotted,
And gave him a new one all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled,
Do better, now, my child.
I went to the throne with a quivering soul —
The old year was done.
"Dear Father, hast Thou a new leaf for me?"
I have spoiled this one."
He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled,
"Do better, now, my child."*

We should face 1980 as though it were the last year of our life. It may well be. We know not the day or hour when our Lord

will come or when time for us shall cease.

Let us live the purest, do the most good, bless the greatest number, serve God more faithfully and make our very best efforts to be ready for the holy home beyond. The words of this verse should be remembered daily:

Life's Clock

*The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.*

*To lose one's wealth is sad, indeed,
To lose one's health is more;
To lose one's soul is such a loss,
And no man can restore.*

*The present only is our own,
Live, love, toil with a will,
Place no faith in "Tomorrow"
For the clock may then be still.*

Set your spiritual goals high. Let Jesus be your standard for life's conduct. May we save at least one precious soul for Christ this year. Make your home a holy sanctuary all 365 days of the new year. Be more active and involved in the Lord's kingdom, more dependable and useful. Aim to be more hospitable, more generous, more kind and sympathetic. And should it be that we never see another New Year's day, may our epitaph be like that of the Alpine guide — "He died climbing."

Love, The Most Excellent Way

While the Corinthian brethren were striving over supernatural gifts and oratorical powers, Paul wrote to them of a greater gift which he called the “most excellent way” (I Cor. 12:31). The next 13 verses then describe in beautiful detail the way of love which Christ expects of us (I Cor. 13:1—13).

John affirms that the test of one’s conversion is the measure of his love (I John 4:7—8). Jesus himself made love the badge of true discipleship (John 13:35). It was his teaching on love and demands concerning love that lifted Christ’s religion above all others and gave it a truly universal appeal.

Our homes must be schools that teach Christian love to the children in our families. They must be laboratories that daily demonstrate and practice the love of the Savior.

I. What is Christian Love? Those whose mother tongue is English have a problem in comprehending this love which Jesus taught. We have only one word in our language to express all kinds of love. The Greek in which our new covenant was written had four different terms for various kinds of love.

Eros refers to sexual love.

Storge describe family affection, the love of parents for their children.

Philia means affectionate regard, to cherish either family or friends.

Agape is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will.

It is this last type of love that Jesus demands of all who follow him. Inspired writers use agape and it related cognates some 250 times. In choosing agape as the foundation of all

Christian relationships, Christ demands love not only to dear friends and kindred, but even to our neighbors and the entire race including our enemies (Matt 5:44).

Agape love has more to do with the mind than the emotions. It is a guiding principle by which we live. It has to do fundamentally with the will. It is a conquest and an achievement for no one ever naturally loved his enemies. This love must over-ride all our natural, human inclinations and emotions. But with agape we find the power to love the unlovely even to love people that we do not *like*.

Christ does not ask us to love our enemies and strangers of the world the same way we love our family and our best friends. But he does teach us to have agape love for these people even as God loves them. The Father makes "his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). No matter who the person is or what he is like, God seeks nothing but his highest good. This then is our challenge, there must be the attitude of heart and mind that follows the deliberate policy of life of practicing active good will toward all men at all times.

II. Learning to Love With Agape:

This love which Christ asks of us is unnatural for sinful people. Sinners are basically selfish and unforgiving. The Scriptures show us that agape love is a product of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's life. "The fruit of the spirit is love ..." (Gal. 5:22). The indwelling Spirit strengthens us with power in the inner man (Eph. 3:16), thus helping us to accomplish this difficult goal. The unsaved man finds it well nigh impossible to love his enemy, but mature Christians have been so doing for two millenia. Agape love is learned and one grows unto it upon becoming a Christian. We grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ in all things including love (II Pet. 3:18).

Christ's love is not a weak sentimental love without

backbone or discipline. Since we are always to seek a person's highest good, that would include proper punishment and corrective discipline when he does wrong. God loves us (agape) yet he chastens us for our benefit (Heb. 12:5). We thus learn to deal with people as does God our loving Father (Matt. 5:43—48). While Christian love would discipline, it would prohibit a vindictive and vengeful spirit in punishment.

III. The Dimensions of Christian Love.

Agape love begins in the family circle. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church ..." (Eph. 5:25). "... women (must) love their husbands and ... love their children (Tit. 2:4). We must love our fellow Christians, one and all (I Pet. 2:17). The heathen of the apostolic age wrote with amazement, "See how the Christians love one another." This love must be shared with every neighbor who travels with us on spaceship earth (Matt. 22:39). More people have been won to Christ by seeing the kindness of genuine Christian love than by all the debates and rough-shod preaching ever done. Conversely more souls have been driven from the church by the harshness and ugliness of so-called Christians than by all the infidels who ever lived.

Our love must go out even to those who do us evil. This is surely Jesus' most difficult commandment. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you" (Lk. 6:27—28). It is true that we cannot love them as we love our mates or our parents. We can, however, demonstrate unconquerable benevolence and invincible good will even in the face of their hateful deeds. No matter what any man does to him, the child of God will never cease to seek his highest good. This is illustrated by Stephen's dying prayer. As they stoned him, he "cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not his sin to their charge" (Acts 7:59—60). Even when we are insulted, injured, wronged or slandered, we must never allow hate nor bitterness to enter our hearts.

Agape love must be the very atmosphere of our relationships with fellow Christians. We must "walk (live) in love, even as Christ also loved" us (Eph. 5:2). We are to be tenderly affectionate one toward another (Rom. 12:10). Paul exhorts, "Let all that ye do be done in love" (I Cor. 16:14). A church without this love cannot be Christ's church. No matter how Biblical we may be in doctrine, worship and morals, we cannot be his disciples in truth without this lofty love. Love is that ingredient by which the church is built up. By speaking the truth in love we make for "the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Love is the food which nourishes the body, making it grow strong and healthy. It is the balm which heals all its wounds. It is the veritable cement which holds all things together.

Love must be the driving motive of every Christian leader. Paul commended the faithful minister Timothy for his "... long suffering, love (and) patience" (II Tim. 3:10). Every servant of God must be "an example to them that believe in word, in manner of life, in love ..." (I Tim. 4:12). Because of his great love for the wayward Corinthian saints, Paul experienced much affliction and anguish of heart" (II Cor. 2:4). There is no place in Christian leadership for pride, ambition, lust for money or power; only for sacrificial love.

But the attitude of Christians toward their leaders must be one of love also. We are "to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 4:13). This wholesome attitude toward preachers and elders should be evident in the life and home of every child of God. Too often the attitude towards spiritual leaders is one of criticism and resentment.

A congregation of loving brothers and sisters is destined to accomplish great things for God and man. Where this vital element is absent, strife and every vile thing will soon prevail.

President Abraham Lincoln was accused of treating his

opponents with too much courtesy and kindness. His advisors argued that they should destroy their enemies. The wise president replied, "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" The Christian's only method of destroying his enemies is to love them into being his friends.

May all we who wear the Savior's name learn to love as he loved and then teach this diligently to our family in our home. May the beauty of agape love so shine in our lives that men will glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Materialism

Jesus taught us that “care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22). One of man’s greatest challenges is to be a master of his material things, to use them to God’s glory rather than to allow them to master his life and then turn him away from God. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). All who have tried, know that you cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Possessions Are Not Inherently Evil

Material possessions are innocent in and of themselves. It is only when they usurp God’s place in our lives that they become sinful. God reminds us that “the cattle on a thousand hills” are his (Ps. 50:10—12). Surely it is not sinful for us to own such. It is God that sends us every good and perfect gift. (Jas. 1:17). It is not the money but the inordinate desire (love) for it that is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10).

THE LOVE OF MONEY IS DESTRUCTIVE

We need to be reminded what the obsessive love of material things can do to our souls. Paul warns that it will lead us astray from God and pierce us through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:8—10). Furthermore, he adds, that it is a root of all kinds of evil. In Matthew 13:22 Jesus warned that materialism chokes the word of God out of our lives, leaving us unfruitful to God. The love of this world made Demas forsake the Lord (II Tim. 4:10). The same thing had led Israel to forsake Jehovah once they had settled in Palestine (Deut. 32:15). Materialistic Christians in Laodicea were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked in the Lord’s eyes (Rev. 3:17). Their trust in material

possessions made them feel self-sufficient, and gendered a false security in their hearts. It was materialism that caused Balaam the prophet to sell his soul to Balak, king of Moab (Num. 22:6; 12—20). The Hebrew pilgrims just recently escaped from Egyptian slavery were willing to give up their freedom and return to captivity for material comforts (Num. 11:4—6).

Some Sins of Materialism

There are many sins that flow directly from the well of materialism. There are *sins against God*. When men pursue riches and earthly pleasure they often neglect the study of God's word and prayer. This in itself further weakens them spiritually. Working more and longer hours for gain, they begin to neglect the church, its services and activities (Heb. 10:25—26). Ere long this neglect of God and his kingdom inevitably leads them to desert God altogether. All of us have seen this deadly pattern at work.

Materialism makes one *sin against his family*. Some couples are so busy making money with which to acquire things that they do not have time or energy to devote to their mates. In some cases wives work days, husband work nights and hired help raises the kids. How tragic. Many dads are too busy making money to enjoy their kids much less train them in God's ways (Eph. 6:4). Youngsters from such homes are often maladjusted, or unruly. Some are resentful and rebellious. Even at the best they are deprived and suffer. What is a man profited if he brings in \$600 per week but loses his wife or children? What would he give in exchange for his family?

One of the more obvious examples of materialistic *sins against aged parents*. Their children are too busy enjoying the good life which money buys to open their homes to mom or dad. There just isn't time to visit the folks after they have gone boating on the weekend. Only when death has solved the problem does the guilt set in.

In addition there are those who shame their family, their Christian brethren and Christ by dishonesty in their mad search for wealth.

Then there are *sins against self* caused by materialism. Many a man has ruined his health while grasping for wealth. The Creator plainly tells us that all need a weekly day of rest from labor (Deut. 5:12—15). How tragic to see a man drive himself till he is rich enough to eat steak but by then his stomach is so shot with ulcers so that he cannot stand to eat it. We sin against self when we violate God's code of honesty and truthfulness thus robbing ourselves of peace with God and eternal life (I Cor. 6:9—10).

The materialist *sins against his fellow man* if he is driven to cheat his customers, employers or employees in his quest for money. Some have even been known to be dishonest with relatives and friends for money's sake. May God have mercy on such souls.

Suggestions for Overcoming Materialism

To deal with any problem we must understand the true nature of it. Materialism is not being a hard worker. This God commands, and commends (II Thess. 3:10—12). It is not having a conscientious attitude toward our job or career. We are instructed to work "as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23). Making money, even lots of it, is not materialism. Paul urges us to work so we can have abundance enough to help others (Eph. 4:28). It is not wrong to own property and have nice possessions. Job and Abraham were wealthy propertied men, yet well pleasing to God.

What then is the sin of materialism? It is a sinful *attitude* toward the things of this world that God condemns. It is the attitude of getting wealth and things at any cost. It is selfishness rather than sharing of the wealth we have. It is indulging self in

material things and pleasures while neglecting more important spiritual matters. Materialism is allowing Mammon, the god of riches, to usurp God's place in our lives (Matt. 6:24). It means trusting wealth to solve life's problems and make us secure, rather than God.

We must recognize the danger and folly of materialism. Material wealth and possessions can never satisfy the deeper inner needs of man. Solomon learned this in a painful way (Eccle. 2:4—11). We should learn by his experience.

We must learn to view all material things as a stewardship from God. Christians use their material things to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31). We should generously support his kingdom, the church (I Cor. 16:1—2). We must be anxious to contribute to the spread of the gospel in mission fields (Phil.1:5). We will want to help the poor (Jas. 1:27). To sum it up we should always be ready unto every good work (Tit. 3:14). It is said that the late Brother A.M. Burton, founder of the Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Tennessee, gave away 90% of his earnings and kept 10% for himself. Let us daily pray that God will help us to possess our possessions.

Matthew, Chapter Six, An Exposition

One of the church's greatest needs is more meat from God's Word. It is not preaching that we are short on, it is expository preaching that is scarce in our day. It is my prayer that these expositions on the great chapters of God's Book will help supply this need.

Of the Sermon on the Mount, Albert Barnes said, "In all languages there is not a discourse to be found that can be compared with the purity, and truth, and beauty, and dignity of it. Were there no other evidence of the divine mission of Christ, this alone would be sufficient to prove that he was sent from God. Were these doctrines obeyed and loved, how pure and peaceful would be the world."¹

Men have chosen various ways to describe this sermon of Jesus:

Some call it the Manifesto of the King

Others, the Moral Code of the Kingdom

Still others, The Magna Charta of the Kingdom

Some style it the Compedium of the Doctrine of Christ.

Yet others have described it as the Ordination Charge of the Apostles.

However we choose to label it, the Sermon on the Mount is the core, the essence of the teaching of Christ as he delivered it to his chosen helpers.

From Luke 6:13—22 we learn that the Sermon was given immediately after the selection of the twelve. Thus, the Sermon is Christ's presentation to equip his coworkers for their work in

his prospective kingdom. The contents are, therefore, prospective and contemplative of the new covenant and the new age which Christ had foretold in the simple words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). We would add here that likely the Sermon as we have it is a compilation or distillation of Jesus' teachings from many occasions. Luke's account seems to verify this conclusion.

The Sermon's Role in Christianity

Matthew tells us in 4:23 that Jesus "went about in all Galilee, teaching ... and preaching the gospel of the kingdom ..." He then gives us the Sermon. At the conclusion he writes that "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching (doctrine KJV) for he taught them as one having authority ..." (7:28—29). We would conclude, therefore, that the Sermon on the Mount is an integral and vital part of our Lord's gospel and doctrine.

One of the great attributes of Jesus' teaching was that he dealt with ordinary problems of daily life. He spoke of earning a living, of our relationship to money and property and our fellow man. The many lessons of this Sermon present a practical method for developing the spirit and shaping our lives after God's heavenly pattern. As a moral code, none can be found which approaches the Sermon on the Mount in its depth or completeness. It is "to the other moral codes as the pure to the mixed or partially corrupt."²

The Chapter Analyzed

There are two grand divisions in the contents of the Sixth Chapter.

- I. That which relates to spiritual activities. vs. 1—18.
- II. That which relates to the temporal, financial and

material activities of life, vs. 19—34.

Another way to divide the contents is as follows:

- I. Correct attitudes toward Spiritual Exercises, 6:1—18.
- II. Correct attitudes toward Material Possessions, 6:19—24.
- III. Correct attitudes toward Financial Security, 6:25—34.

Right and Wrong Ways to Worship

Jesus not only commands us to worship God, he likewise tells us how to worship acceptably. If anyone is qualified to tell men how to worship acceptably it is Jesus the Son of God. He is divine (John 20:28) and has all authority (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22—23).

The thesis of the first 18 verses is laid in verse one "... do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." He then proceeds to give three illustrations applying his principle. One of man's besetting sins is the desire for praise from men. Such desire kept many Pharisees from confessing the Lord (John 12:42—43). Paul warned that pleasing men was incompatible with pleasing God (Gal. 1:10). This vain desire is rooted in man's false pride and is lethal to his spiritual health (I John 2:16). Few things are more destructive to true and acceptable worship than the desire for accolades and attention of men.

A. His first illustration concerns our giving. "Alms" means "something given freely for the poor." Webster. Here it stands by metonymy for all our charitable deeds of whatever kind.

"When ... thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men" (6:2). The rabbis declared

alms-giving to be the most sacred of all religious duties. A rabbinic saying went, "Greater is he that giveth alms than he who offers gifts and sacrifices." Christ put no less emphasis on it (Matt. 25:31—46). The problem is some folks are charitable for wrong reasons. Some are benevolent, not so much to help the recipient, but to demonstrate their own generosity and thus to bask in the adulation and praise it brings to them. Such would probably not give if there were no one to see it. Others might give from a sense of duty. It is not that they wish to help, but because they cannot escape the responsibility. They may give money, but not themselves. Faithful Christians give for the sheer love of doing good. They view it as one of the privileges of being a child of God. They have no thought of what they can get back from it except the blessing of God.

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (6:3). It would be a mistake to interpret this literally for no man can keep one hand from knowing the other's action. Rather, it is set in antitheses to giving to be seen of man. Our only motive in giving is to please our Father. Jesus is our perfect pattern for giving. "... though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." (II Cor. 8:9).

B. His second example is: "When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men" (6:5). It is very easy for prayer to become formal, meaningless ritual. Men can pray for different reasons. Some pray only because it is a duty expected of them. But prayer is a marvelous privilege for God's children. Prayer should be as natural and spontaneous as breathing. Others pray to be seen and heard of men. The Pharisees commonly prayed standing with hands outstretched, palms upward and heads bowed. Public prayers were offered at 9:00 A.M., 12:00 Noon and 3:00 P.M. Wherever one was, he stopped and said his prayer. It seemed easy for some men to always be at a busy intersection or

public place at these times. Such prayers were addressed to men, not God. They were also given to vain repetitions in prayer. They attempted to pile up every possible title and adjective in addressing God. Often they chanted the same phrase or verse repeatedly. They especially delighted in long prayers. A Rabbi Levi wrote, "Whoever is long in prayer is heard." When a man begins to think more of how he prays than of what he prays his prayer becomes vain.

When praying, always remember: All prayers must be made to God alone. True worship may be offered to God anywhere, anytime (John 4:20—24). We should always be in contact with and on speaking terms with God (1 Thess. 5:22). God cannot be flattered, bribed or cajoled with long, wordy repetitious prayers. He freely gives his gifts to his children (Matt. 7:7—11).

C. His third example is: "... when ye fast, be not as the hypocrite of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast ..." (6:11). Only one fast was specifically appointed by God for the Hebrews: the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:19—31). In Jesus' day, devout Jews fasted twice weekly, on Monday and Thursday (Lk. 18:11—12). There were ideals behind fasting. It was to draw the attention of God to the supplicant's need. It was to prove that one's penitence was genuine. It was intended to move God to bless the nation in its distress.

There were some dangers, however, in fasting. One might fast to demonstrate his superior godliness. He could show his neighbors how devoted and disciplined he was. A Pharisee would not comb his hair or wash his face while fasting. Some even powdered their faces to look haggard and pale, and wore soiled garments. They wanted everyone to note how devoted they were. Such pretending was a deliberate act of spiritual pride and deceit. There was no value in fasting undertaken for its own sake or to impress others.

The failures of ostentatious religion are many and obvious.

1) It is worthless, for God rejects all such. Even the folks one hopes to impress will despise such showmanship when they discover it. 2) It is pure wickedness because a) it is false, pretending to be what it is not; b) it is selfish. True worship surrenders self unto God, but this is all for *self*. c) It is worldly since it is done for the reward of the present world. 3) It is insulting to God to take a high and holy thing like prayer and prostitute it for self-glorification.

The Model Prayer (6:9—15)

In contrast to the vain prayers of the Pharisees our Lord gave us what is conceded by all to be the most beautiful and effectual prayer known.

“*Our Father.*” This is a prayer for the children of God (Rom. 8:14—15). *Father* implies love, tender care, wisdom, and power. In us it suggests affection, trust, obedience, and unswerving faith. He is *our* Father. We may not have God selfishly as a spoiled only child. We always approach God as a member of a family of children, all with equal access. One has no special entree with God because of race, nationality or social status.

“*Which art in heaven.*” We must hush our hearts in solemn reverence when we approach God in prayer. Solomon warns, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few” (Eccle. 5:2).

“*Hallowed be thy name.*” In prayer we should adore the Father before asking for self. True prayer will lift us out of self and selfish thoughts into communion with God. Like the seraphim in heaven we should cry “holy, holy, holy” is our God (Is. 6:3). We must never take God’s name in vain (Ex. 20:7)

even in our prayers. May his name be hallowed not only in our prayers but in our lives as well.

“*Thy Kingdom come.*” The word *basileia* from which we get “Kingdom” denotes “sovereignty, royal power, dominion.”³ “The Kingdom of God means primarily the rule of God ...”⁴ The word kingdom is used in at least 3 ways in the New Testament.

1) The kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18—19). There we see both words used interchangeably. Kingdom describes the church from its governmental point of view. Christ is King over his Kingdom (I Tim. 6:15).

2) The kingdom is also *God’s reign in men’s hearts*. Jesus said in Luke 17:20—21, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, ‘lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.’” The church as a body of saved people can be seen, but the rule of God is in the heart. In Matthew 12:28 Jesus said, “But if I by the spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.” The church had not yet been established, but the kingdom or rule of God was come upon them, evidence by Christ’s miraculous power over demons.

3) The word kingdom may refer to the heavenly kingdom. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the *kingdom of God*...” (I Cor. 15:50). Flesh and blood people can be members of the church, but they cannot go to heaven unless they receive a spiritual body suited for the eternal realms. Peter urges us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure that we may enter “the eternal kingdom” (II Pet. 1:11).

We do not pray that for the church-kingdom to be established, that was accomplished long ago. We can pray that God may reign in the hearts and lives of us and our fellow men. We may pray that the church may spread through all the world

and that the heavenly kingdom will soon be ours.

“Thy will be done.” This simple phrase makes this prayer difficult for most folks to sincerely pray. It is easy to pray for his will to be done in other’s lives. It is easy to pray that his will be done when things go our way. But it is hard to say “thy will be done” when pain and suffering, death or loss is our lot. Jesus only asks of us that which he did himself (Matt. 26:42). God’s will is always better than our will for he knows better than we what is good for us. To pray these words we must have first been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

“In earth as it is in heaven.” How is God’s will done in heaven? There the holy angels ever do God’s will perfectly, cheerfully, unquestionably, zealously. Since our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20); since our treasures are laid up there (Matt. 6:21); and since we look for a heavenly city for our eternal home (Heb. 11:14—16); we must try to live on earth as we would in heaven.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” This is the first mention of our personal wants in this model prayer. It reflects faith, trust and contentment in the Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38). Bread stands as a synecdoche for all our physical needs. Again we note that it is *our* bread we pray for. We pray not just for own personal needs but for others also. Remembering the poor is an essential part of our faith (Gal. 2:10). We are reminded that man does not live by bread alone (Matt. 4:4). We need the life-giving bread which came down from heaven (John 6:41) and the words which he gave us.

“Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.” Each of us owes an immense sin debt to God which we could never pay (Matt. 18:23—25). As we have been forgiven so must we forgive others. Unwillingness to forgive is proof of our own condemnation. We must learn to forgive like Christ did on the cross (Lk. 23:24). This is the only part of the prayer to which

Jesus gave a special added emphasis (Matt. 6:15).

“Lead us not into temptation.” The term “temptation” must be defined lest it confuses us. God *tempts* no man to do evil (Jas. 1:13). Satan does that. God does test and try us to prove, strengthen and confirm our faith (Gen. 22:1). So we are praying that God will not test us more than we are able to bear, even as he has promised (I Cor. 10:13). Having prayed this prayer, we should never expose ourselves to temptation unnecessarily. We defeat our own prayer if we run in danger’s way.

“Deliver us from the evil one.” Satan is like a roaring lion, stalking us daily (I Pet. 5:8). The whole world lieth under his control (I John 5:19). In his craftiness he seeks to corrupt us from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ (II Cor. 11:3). Martin Luther wrote of Satan:

“His craft and power are great
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.”

Surely every child of heaven needs daily divine help in resisting and overcoming the ancient enemy of all righteousness.

Could there be a more complete or perfect prayer than that which fell from the lips of God’s own Son? May God give us the grace to pray it as Christ intended.

Developing Right Attitudes Toward Material Possessions (6:19—24)

The central thought of this section is vs. 19—20. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also.” Is there

any passage in all of God's book that speaks more directly to Americans than this? Affluence and the mad rush for material goods and pleasure are the hallmarks of our age. One can understand blinded sinners so doing, but it is inexplicable that so many Christians have joined the gold-rush craze. Since we are children of eternity, rather than time, it is the height of folly to devote our strength to gathering treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the heavenly land.

Verses 22—23 are obscure and pose a problem for most students. The context, however, helps us to grasp the meaning. *The Amplified Bible* has it, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your entire body will be full of light; but if your eye is unsound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the very light in you (your conscience) is darkened, how dense is that darkness."⁵ *The Expositor's Greek Testament* offers this explanation. "The eye is the lamp of the body: when it is healthy we see to do our daily work, when diseased we are in darkness. So with the eye of the soul, the heart, the seat of desires. When it is free from covetousness, not anxious to hoard, all goes well with our spiritual functions; we choose and act wisely. When sordid passions possess it there is darkness within, deeper than that which afflicts the blind man. We mistake the relative value of things, choose the worse, neglect the better, or flatter ourselves that we can have both."⁶ He sums up the point of this section with the proverb, "No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else will hold one, and despise the other." His application is obvious: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon, (the common Aramaic word for material riches). The reasons are many. 1) Earthly treasures are ephemeral, while heavenly treasures are eternal. 2) They steal the heart and dwarf the personality, while heavenly treasures help us be more God-like. 3) They blind our vision while heavenly treasures help to keep our moral and spiritual vision healthy. 4) They lead men to forget the value of human beings while heavenly treasures help us to love and do good to all. How sad to see people investing

their all into temporal, material things which can be snatched away by fire, theft or financial disaster. Even if they keep every penny, in judgment they will stand before God whom they neglected, with nought but their naked soul.

Attitudes Toward Financial Security — Faith, not Fear
(6:25—34)

This last section is epitomized in these words: “Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... (vs. 25). “But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (vs. 33). One of our most common problems is worry and anxiety. Millions fret, fuss and fume their lives away, robbing themselves of the joys God intended. Many make themselves sick with worry and paralyze their lives.

Just what does Jesus forbid? “Take no thought for the morrow” of the King James Version is somewhat misleading. Christ does not advocate a shiftless, thriftless, thoughtless, reckless attitude about life and the future. “Be not anxious” of the American Standard is much clearer. The word *merimnan* means to worry anxiously. So he forbids a care-worn and worried fear that takes all the joy out of life. Jesus posits five reasons why Christians should not worry.

A. “Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment” (vs. 25). If God has given us the greater gift of life, surely he will supply the lesser necessities to sustain the life. The creator of the marvelous body of man would not overlook food and clothing for his creation. Therefore, we should not worry about these things.

B. “Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not neither do they reap ... and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they? (vs. 26). If God provides for these tiny creatures surely he will supply one made

in his image. If the creatures that were made for my use are nourished without worry, how much more ought I who am made to serve the Creator to be nourished.

C. Worry is totally useless! “Which of you being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?” (vs. 27). A lifetime of fretting and worry will not extend your life even 18 inches. It may very well shorten it by inducing such serious disorders as hypertension, ulcers, coronary attacks, depression, or suicide.

D. “Why are you anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith? (vs. 28—30).

The scarlet poppies and anemones he spoke of had a life span of but one day. Dried grass, including wild flowers therein, was used to start fires in their cooking ovens. If God adorned them more beautifully than Israel’s grandest king, would he not provide covering for his own children? But of course!

E. Worry is characteristic of a heathen but not of a child of God. “Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink?, or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (vs. 31—32). Gentile pagans had only gods of wood and stone. These could not provide or help in any way at all. It was proper that the poor pagans worry about their needs. We are children of the living God. He is creator of all things (Col. 1:17—18). “He giveth to all life, and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). As Paul put it, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered

him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things'' (Rom. 8:32).

He closes his great lesson with two recommendations for defeating worry. First: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (vs. 33). We must get our priorities in order. First things must come first. The things of God are of far greater importance than material things. Second. Learn to live one day at a time. "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow ... Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (vs. 34). Each day will have enough problems to wrestle with without taking on the unknown fears of tomorrow.

Strangely, many of those future things we worry about have a way of resolving themselves so that our worry was needless and in vain. Think how many folks have died since 1945, who ruined their lives worrying about a nuclear war. They are gone, it never happened. If it does happen at some future date they will not be affected. O, the futility of needless anxiety!

Conclusion: The fundamental difference between the children of God and others is that our goal and ambition is altered. What we seek in life is different. We practice our faith to please God, not for the praise of men. We are laying up our treasures in heaven. Rather than worry and fret about the material needs of life we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and our great God provides our daily needs.

FOOTNOTES

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⁶Nicholl, A. Robertson. Expositor's Greek Testament. Hodden & Stoughton, New York, no date, p. 24.

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The Value Of Memorizing God's Word

In addition to possessing the book of God in our homes, we need to deposit it in our hearts. American prisoners of war in Vietnam kept their faith, their sanity and their hope alive by sharing the Scriptures, prayers and sacred songs they had long ago stored up in their hearts. And thus even though they were deprived of the printed Word, the Word was yet able to sustain them. Memorization takes effort and time, but the rewards are worth it all.

There was a time when it was common for youngsters to memorize vast amounts of scripture at school, in home devotions and in Bible School. Preachers quoted most of their verses. Some memorized whole chapters, even entire books of Holy Writ. Some with special talents of memory could recite vast portions, if not all of the New Testament. We need to continue to emphasize this important method of learning God's Word for numerous reasons. Some of those reasons we now share.

God taught Israel to memorize his message. "... these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. 6:6—7). How blest is that family where this admonition is followed. How many sins will be driven away before they can take root. How much spiritual strength will be generated. How better could we make certain our heavenly calling.

Spiritual growth depends upon our knowing God's Word. "... as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may *grow* thereby unto salvation" (1 Pet.

2:2). Food must be taken into the system and digested before it benefits the body, so must the scriptures to strengthen the soul.

Memorization makes possible the uninterrupted communion of the soul with God. David wrote: “I will bless Jehovah who hath given me counsel; yea my heart instructeth me in the night seasons. I have set Jehovah always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Ps. 16:7—8). Whether at work or traveling, in school or at some social event, the memorized word is there to keep us pure and to guide us aright. No night is so dark as to rob the mind of truth thus committed.

Scripture in the heart contributes to an effectual prayer life. Jesus tells us: “If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). Perhaps this explains why so many modern disciples have barren prayer lives, for the absence of His Word in our hearts will have the opposite effect. Since prayers must be according to the Divine will one can easily see how a heart filled with Scripture would be more able to pray acceptably (Matt. 26:39).

The Word of God stored in the mind provides powerful assistance in soul-winning. From infancy Timothy had “known the sacred scriptures which (were) able to make (him) wise unto salvation” (II Tim. 3:15). When memorized, the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation is instantly available for every need (Rom. 1:16). Whether you meet the prospect on a plane, in the coffeeshop or at work, you can teach him.

To enjoy the full benefits of the indwelling Spirit of God, we must be full of the inspired word. In Eph. 5:18 Paul exhorts us to “be filled with the Spirit” and in a paralled passage in Col. 3:16 he says, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly ...” The blessings of God’s Holy Spirit are received in conjunction with the Scriptures. Let us fill our hearts and minds with the memorized word.

The example of Jesus encourages us to memorize Scripture. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, the Master successfully defended himself by the Word of Divine truth stored up in his heart (Matt. 4:1—11). The same will strengthen us as we “resist the Devil” (Jas. 4:7). Can any of us afford to neglect this powerful preventive to sin? To be a Christian means to follow his example (I Pet. 2:21).

Memorization makes possible continued meditation upon the Word of God at all times. The psalmist wrote, “Oh how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97). Again we read, “Blessed is the man ... (whose) delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps. 1:1—2).

Scripture laid up in the heart provides comfort and strength in times of trouble. “Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me” (Ps. 119:92—93).

The word in the memory will satisfy our spiritual appetite. Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart.” The soul that hungers and thirsts for God’s righteousness will cherish the words of truth securely stored in the depths of his being. “Man shall not (cannot, JHW) live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Hear the patriarch Job, “I have treasured up the words of his mouth more that my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

Victory over sin is achieved through the memorized word. “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word ... Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:9, 11).

Scripture is a vital part of the “whole armor of God” that

prepares us for spiritual combat (Eph. 6:11—17). Notice that none of these items of spiritual armor can be separated from God's word. Since so much of the Christian's life is spent in combat, fighting the "good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), we cannot afford to be without ready access to the truth.

Quietness and contentment accompany the word of God when preserved in the heart. Listen to the Spirit's Word, "Great peace have they that love the law; and they shall have no occasion of stumbling" (Ps. 119:165).

A bountiful harvest always follows when the seed of God's word is diligently planted in the human heart. God's word shall not return unto him void, but it will accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it (Is. 55:11). One will never be disappointed at the results when he takes the time to memorize the precious words of life. The rewards will be manifold, the consequences will be realized even beyond the grave.

Let all of God's children daily feed upon God's word and store it in the memory banks of our minds that it might guide us in all earthly pursuits and protect our travel unto eternity.

Men, Their Hair And Covering

One of the most controversial sections of scripture is that found in First Corinthians 11, verses 2—16. Some refuse to study it at all. Others get into heated, angry discussions as to its significance today. This is altogether unnatural and unreasonable for a people who are dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity and who are committed to understanding and doing all things which the Lord has left for us to do.

Why We Should Study Such a Theme.

1. It is God's word as surely as Acts Chapter 2 is.
2. It is a little studied portion of the Bible.
3. We who love God want to know and understand all truth including this.
4. Regardless of the interpretation we arrive at, we want to be familiar with and correctly comprehend the teaching.
5. We are anxious to please God and obey his every wish in all things.
6. Never would we want to hide from anything in God's word.

To begin our study I would urge you to read the passage from either the Revised Standard Version or the Charles B. Williams translation. The lesson of Chapter 11 and the entire book was addressed "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place ..." (1:2). Thus the instruction appears to be universal in intent.

The Basis on Which the Discussion Rests

After compliments and courtesies, Paul says, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and that the

head of the woman is the man: and the head of Christ is God” (11:3). Upon this foundation of headship or authority he then proceeds to build his case. The chain of authority in the church descends from the Father to the Son to men and then women.

Consequences of this Chain of Authority

“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head” (i.e., Christ) (11:4). Why do male Christians remove their hats when worshipping? Does this practice have any connection with this passage? Would a brother sin who worshipped with his hat on? Would it be wrong if he did not preach or lead in public prayer but only sang and worshipped as others led? Would we ask a brother to remove his hat if he proceeded to worship with his head covered? That men should worship uncovered is a universal belief and practice of our brethren. From what source do they derive this belief and practice? Are they right or wrong in so believing? Does the expression “head covered” include a common hat or cap? Would it be alright for a man to worship covered, so long as he did not wear a veil that hung down? Is a man’s hair his covering?

The author is impressed that over the years all the attention given to this discussion has been on “Women, their hair and their covering” and yet the passage just as certainly is talking about men’s hair and covering as well. It is impressive that Paul even discussed the men’s side first. Why have we overlooked this so long? Have we been guilty of picking on the women while letting the men get by scot free?

Verse 5 offers this antithesis: “But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head.” This poses quite a problem for us as it is no longer the *social* custom of American society for non-Catholic women to worship with their head covered. In fact, there is quite an aversion to such “old fashioned” ideas in most areas. It does

seem a bit inconsistent, however, to hear some boldly declare that this has no meaning for ladies today while the previous verse does apply to men. Doesn't it? Some say, "If a woman must worship covered it must be with a veil that hangs down." But does a man have to have "a veil that hangs down" before he violates verse 4? Could a man worship with his head covered if he only wore a little hat? Whatever it is that man must put off in worship, a woman should put on according to these instructions. Let us not pick on just the women when we study this question. Remember it governs the conduct of men in worship too!

Reasons Why Men Should Not Worship With Covered Heads

1. To do so would dishonor their spiritual head (11:4).
2. Because men are made in the image and glory of God (11:7).
3. Man was not made "of a woman" originally (11:8).
4. Man was not created "for the woman" (11:9).
5. A man should not have "a sign of authority on his head because of the angels" (11:10).
6. It is unseemly for a man to worship God covered (11:13).

Reasons Why Women Should Worship With Their Heads Covered

1. To not do so would dishonor their spiritual head which is man (11:5).
2. For women to worship uncovered is the same as having their heads shaved, which is a shameful thing. Therefore they should worship with covered heads (11:5—6).

It is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven (11:6).

But to worship uncovered is the same as to be shorn or shaven (11:5).

Therefore it is a shame for a woman to worship uncovered.

3. Women should worship covered because they are “the glory of the man” (11:8).

4. Because she was created “for the man” as a helper suitable for him, she should be covered (11:9).

5. The woman ought “to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels” (11:10). While there is a great deal of opinion as to the exact meaning of this statement, it is obvious that it is a reason why she should not worship uncovered. It seems to mean that her artificial covering shows her respect for the authority of men over her in worship.

6. Having proven his point by sacred principles, Paul then appeals to their common sense of *propriety*. “Judge ye in yourselves, is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled?” He does not ask this question for information’s sake. Rather, it is a rhetorical question which is really an affirmation that it is unseemly for a woman to pray uncovered. Paul frequently uses this method (see Rom. 6:1, 15; 7:7).

Even Length of Hair is Important to Men

A. “Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him” (11:14). I am impressed that so many brethren recognize the importance of this passage to teach and correct young men who wish to clip and groom their hair in longer fashion like a woman. Surely anybody should know that long hair is unbecoming to a male, and especially a Christian. It is not just a matter of style, custom or fad that makes it wrong. The word of God so declares it! Paul’s writings are the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37).

B. “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her” (11:15). I am somewhat confused as to why the first half of this verse is so applicable today but this last part seems not to be. Perhaps someone can help me. Since we who are New Testament Christians are committed to preaching the whole counsel of God, surely we would never select just those portions of scripture that meet our needs while conveniently ignoring

others. Would we? I heard one well known brother who had preached over fifty years say that he did not believe this passage applied to modern men any more than it applied to modern women. Can you imagine that?

Suffice it to say that God has always insisted that men and women so adorn themselves that a clear distinction is evident between the sexes (Deut. 22:5). Unisex styles or hair styles are clearly not for the Christian. Remember it does not say that a woman's hair is her glory. Only a certain type of hair is such. Nor is a man's hair shameful, only a certain type is!

Some Objections Considered

A. Since her "hair is given her for a covering" (11:15) she need not wear an artificial covering in worship. But note, please, that Paul did not say that her hair was *the* covering. Rather, it is *a* covering. *A* is an indefinite article indicating one of two or more. Really she has two coverings: a natural covering (her hair) which she wears always, and an artificial covering which she can put on or take off when worshipping (11:5). If her hair were the only covering then she would have to shear or shave her head to worship uncovered. But all men worship uncovered and yet do not shave their heads. If the hair is the covering all men would be obliged to shave their heads to worship acceptably (11:4).

B. Some feel it was a local problem of social custom at Corinth, hence it does not apply to us today. But remember he addresses the entire letter not only to the Corinthians, but to all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place ..." (1:2). Remember, too, that he began his discussion by laying a foundation upon the spiritual chain of authority, i.e., God, Christ, man and woman (11:3). While this may conceivably be classed as merely a local cultural problem, one will have to get his proof from a source other than Paul's letter to establish it. If you do prove this, then men wearing short hair

and worshipping uncovered is just a social custom and could change with the styles of the day.

C. It is affirmed by some that to be veiled would demand a large cloth that would hang down and cover the head and face. Therefore a typical lady's hat is not enough to qualify as a covering. Then men could worship with their hats on so long as they did not wear a veil that covered their face per this interpretation. If a hat is sufficient to cover his head, would not a similar hat serve to cover hers? We should notice that verse 15 says that women's long hair is "a covering" and yet most conscientious women do not cover their face with their hair. Is the hair still a covering when it is styled up on top of her head or pulled back in a bun? How should we handle this?

D. It is said that prophesying refers only to spiritual gifts, hence these words are not applicable to us in this post-miraculous age. Therefore, a man can pray and prophesy with his head covered as long as it is not a miraculous act. Right? But is praying a miraculous deed? Need one to pray audibly before an assembly? Or could he participate in prayer by listening to another? Paul's definition of prophecy is in I Cor. 14:3; "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, exhortation and consolation." Granted this may be done by inspiration of the Spirit, but it can also be done with natural abilities today. Even Christian singing is said to be "teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16).

E. Some say all of this instruction about women wearing a covering and long hair is only a *custom* and Paul said, "We have no such custom" (11:16). Just forget the verses about men not wearing hats in worship and short hair since that too must be a custom which we don't have. Could it be that the hippies were all right with their pony-tails after all? But Paul's argument was based not on customs but spiritual principles such as authority and creation and angels. Perhaps another translation may help to clarify the verse. Charles Williams

renders it: "I prescribe no other practice than this, neither the churches of God! (11:16). Thus the final authority which he offers is the universal practice of other churches of God, and his own teaching. He had just set forth his views on men worshipping covered and wearing long hair (and the opposite for women) and those who tended to disagree were reminded that Paul had never recognized long haired men who worshipped with their hats on as scriptural, not had any other faithful congregation!

Really, is a reflection on Paul and inspiration to suggest that he would write 15 verses on a subject and then say, "If you don't want to accept this, we don't believe or practice it either." How much other scripture might be of this same low value?

Conclusion:

This scribe certainly does not want to appear dogmatic about a man and his covering and the length of his hair. He does not claim to be a Greek scholar, nor is he an expert in the cultural anthropology of the ancient Corinthians. Every man should study these passages carefully and decide for himself if he should or should not worship God covered. The same is true for his hair length. No preacher has the right to be dogmatic about such obscure and difficult passages about which there is such wide disagreement. To push this hat issue for men could well split the church and make us a laughing stock to the world. Then we must face the fact that most men just aren't about to conform to this ancient custom just because some preacher or their own wives say so. Probably it would be better if the discussion were just dropped and everyone were allowed to make his own decision in the matter. Surely something as simple as a man's hat or his hair cannot be serious enough to make any difference to his eternal welfare. If it is mentioned too much, some of the men would end up getting angry and wanting to get rid of the preacher. And then finally, some people would laugh at a man who was dressing himself and

styling his hair so different these days. Ladies, would you expect your husband to be the only one in the congregation to go to such extremes?

Marks Of A Good Minister

While Scripture plainly sets forth the qualifications of elders, no such list is given for preachers. Paul in I Timothy 4:6—16 provides a concise summary of the preacher's life and work. The preacher who conforms to these instructions will be a *good minister* of Christ Jesus.

I. A good minister is first of all a servant for that is the very meaning of the term *diakonos*. In his work he serves God, the church and his fellow man. Jesus taught that "whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 20:26—27). He who seeks glory, honor and special treatment should not be in the pulpit.

II. He will put his brethren in mind of God's truth (4:6a). The Greek suggests, not to issue orders, but to *counsel and advise*. Paul recommends the opposite of the drill sergeant who barks his orders in a pugnacious way.

III. He finds his own spiritual nourishment in the gospel which he always follows (4:6b). No teacher can effectively give out without first taking in. A good minister is an habitual student, feeding and strengthening his soul day by day. *Nourished* is a present participle and suggests continuing activity. The day a preacher ceases to study he begins to atrophy and die.

IV. He refuses the profitless theories of false teachers (4:7a). He has no time for myths and speculations. Human traditions are vain (Matthew 15:9). Human philosophy is deceitful (Colossians 2:8). Such have no vital relationship to salvation.

V. He exercises himself unto godliness (4:7b). As an athlete trains his body so the preacher trains his soul. Even Paul had to discipline himself to keep his body in subjection lest he be rejected (I Corinthians 9:27). Spiritual growth never just happens, it must be conscientiously developed.

VI. His hope is set on the living God (4:10). A preacher whose hope is set on a higher salary, a larger congregation or brotherhood recognition needs to revise his values. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and so is our hope. The deluded sectarians who proclaimed that their God was dead could never be good ministers with hope set on the *living* God.

VII. He *labors and strives* in his ministry (4:10a). The word *labor* suggests to work energetically to the point of weariness. A lazy man has no business in the ministry. Truly Paul said it is "the work of an evangelist" (II Timothy 4:5) The public delivery of the sermons and classes is but the culmination of a week of study and preparation. Add to this visiting, the evangelizing, the problem solving, the exhorting, consoling and counseling and one begins to appreciate the work of a good minister.

VIII. He commands respect by his exemplary conduct (4:12). Some might despise his youth if he is young, but his mature Christian conduct will command respect. Plato responded to false accusations by sayings, "well, we must live in such a way that all men will see that the charge is false." Most attacks are best answered this way. A good minister is an example in *word*. His speech will always be with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). His *manner of life* will "be worthy of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). Toward all men he will reflect *agape* love, i.e., an unconquerable benevolence that seeks the good of others, regardless of how they treat him. He will exhibit a *faithful* loyalty to the Christ. His moral life will exhibit *purity* and allegiance to Jesus' standards. The Roman governors Pliny wrote to emperor Trajan of His Christian subjects, "they are accustomed to bind themselves by an oath to

commit neither theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, never to break their word, never to deny a pledge that had been made when summoned to answer for it." The world will have little use for Christianity until it produces the best people in society. A good minister will be the best citizen in his community.

IX. He gives heed to *reading, exhorting* and *teaching* (4:13). While his private reading is indispensable, it seems that here he refers to the public teaching of the church. Scripture should be *publicly read* as in the synagogue. Men should be exhorted to obey its precepts, and doctrines should be taught and explained. A good minister will never scrimp on the amount of scripture used in his lessons. Good sermons don't just happen, rather they are the result of giving much heed.

X. He does not neglect his gifts (4:14). In those days there were two kinds of gifts (charisma); natural and supernatural. Today a good minister neglects not his *common gifts* from God such as "Ministry", "teaching" and exhorting" (Rom. 12:6—8). Talents taken for granted wither and die.

XI. He earnestly and diligently gives himself wholly to his work (4:15). A good minister has one grand aim in living — preaching the gospel! Any less commitment results in mediocrity. In I Kings 20:35—40 we read of a "servant who was busy here and there" and allowed his prisoner to escape. So have many preachers failed in their responsibility to God because they were too busy here and there with a hundred trivial jobs. Good preachers cannot be the errand boy and maintenance man of the congregation.

XII. He takes heed to himself and his teaching (4:16). Self examination and approval are essential to faithful service (II Cor. 13:5).

XIII. His progress is evident to all (4:15). Preachers must grow or fossilize. A congregation will outgrow a static preacher.

If however a preacher is to continually grow in his knowledge and ability, the flock must be willing to cooperate by helping him to do so.

XIV. He saves souls for the Lord (4:16). All else looks to this one chief end. Are souls being brought to salvation? Without this nothing else matters. Oratorical power, knowledge of Bible languages and extensive scholarship are but a sounding brass and clanging symbols if in the end no sinners are brought to repentance.

“God, help every preacher to be a good minister in your sight, and help every Christian to encourage him to the end.” In Jesus name.

For Mothers To Be

How thoughtful the Creator was that in planning the populating of earth he decided to let man and woman be his co-workers in generating new life. He could as easily have made each of us from the dust by a spoken word as he did Adam (Gen. 2:7).

While it is a great privilege for a man to father a child and be able to raise it to adulthood; nothing equals the experience of motherhood. To carry in one's innermost being a budding, growing human life; to feel the quickening in the womb and to get a child "with the help of Jehovah" is one of life's ultimate joys. The psalmist sang, "Children are a heritage of Jehovah, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (127:3).

Nothing is more lovely than a godly woman, happily married, glowing with the joy of motherhood. It is tragic that an elitist minority of anti-family people have succeeded casting a shadow of embarrassment and shame over motherhood. Christians must not buy the humanistic, Darwinian package of the Zero Population Growth cult.

I recently discovered the following prayer on a faded card in an old book. Being struck by the beauty of it, I want to share it with my readers.

A Woman's Prayer For The Child To Come

O God, I am going down to find a little soul, a thing that shall be mine as no other thing in the world has been mine.

Keep me for my child's life. Bring me through my hour strong and well for the sake of my baby.

Prepare me for real motherhood. Preserve my mind from doubts, and worries and all fearsome misgiving, that I may not stain my thoughts with cowardice for my child's sake.

Drive all angers and impurities, all low and unworthy feelings from me, that the little mind that is forming may become a brave, clean wrestler in this world of dangers.

And, God, when the child lies in my arms, and draws his life from me, and when his eyes look up to mine to learn what this new world is like, I pledge Thee the child shall find reverence in me, and no fear, truth and no shame, love strong as life and death, and no hates or petulancies.

God, make my baby love me. I ask no endowments for excellencies for my child, but only that the place of motherhood once given me it may never be taken from me. As long as the soul lives that I shall bring forth, let there be in it one secret shrine that shall always be mother's.

Give the child a right, a clean mind, and a warm, free soul.

And I promise Thee that I shall study the child, and seek to find what gifts and graces Thou hast implanted, and to develop them. I shall respect the child's personality.

I am but Thy little one, O Father. I fold my hands and put them between Thy hands, and say give me a normal baby, and make me a normal mother. Amen. *Frank Crane.*

If God's people choose to remain childless, how poor the next generation will be. You can give the world no finer gift than a well trained Christian son or daughter to carry the faith onward when you are gone.

Remember the apostle's words: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house ..." (I Tim. 5:14, KJV).

God's Message To The Mormons

On June 10, 1978, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints made a momentous decision. They decided to admit black folks to the "lay priesthood." This was a long and difficult decision for the Mormon hierarchy concerning those of African descent.

Beginning with their allegedly "inspired" prophet, Joseph Smith, they were told that the blacks were not worthy of the gospel. For years no efforts were made to evangelize them at all. In his book **The Way to Perfection**, Elder Joseph Felding Smith, one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, gives us a good summary of their doctrine:

"Cain became the father of an inferior race. A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his lineage and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel" p. 101. "What evidence do we have that negro of the present day is the descendant of Cain ... There is no definite information on this question in the Bible, and profane history is not able to solve it. From the **Pearl of Great Price** and the teaching of Joseph Smith and the early elders of the Church who were associated with him, we do obtain some definite instruction ..." p. 103.

Mormon president Brigham Young is quoted as saying, "Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the Priesthood ..." p. 107. (Smith, Elder Joseph F., **The Way to Perfection**, 3rd edition, Genealogical Society of Utah, 1940.)

Only when Mormon George Romney began campaigning for the presidency of the nation did the Negro begin to rise in Mormon estimation. The precipitating factor was that blacks were furious at the thought of a possible Mormon president who would not even consider them of equal human worth. At that point the presiding council of the Utah Sect claimed a Revelation from God to “let the blacks” in as members only. Now some 15 years later they claim God gave the poor blacks another goodie — admittance to the *lay* priesthood. No word on the higher priesthood and offices as yet.

This earth-shaking, newsmaking event prompts a few questions.

1. Since both Joe Smith and president Spender Kimball are said to have received their contradictory messages from God, which one are we to believe?

a. If the all-wise, unchanging God changes his mind about such important issues how can we be sure about any other Mormon doctrine? Will he change them too?

b. Would changing social-political pressures to accept blacks as equals have anything to do with a change of doctrine?

c. Do Mormons pray for God to change his will on other unpopular doctrines?

d. Now that “God’s will” allows blacks to be priests, does that mean that Joseph Smith’s teaching was in error?

e. Will the holy books of Mormonism now be revised to teach the new doctrine? (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price.)

Is this really a blessing to the negroes of the world? Now

they will be subjected to the proselyting attempts of yet another false religious cult. Some will actually fall for this dry morsel tossed out by the Mormon leadership, viewing it as a chance to move across former forbidden boundaries.

How grateful every child of God should be that we have a "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Our creed (the new covenant of Jesus) needs no revision. The Lord's church gladly accepts that ancient faith as its complete and final authority in all matters moral and religious (II Tim. 3:16—17). Never are we embarrassed by a foolish or contradictory teaching such as Mormonism's "black doctrine." This is a good example of the defectiveness and deficiency of human doctrines and alleged revelations. They are obviously inferior to the Holy Bible in quality and character.

It is of interest that Joseph Smith, Jr., founder of the Mormon Church, found a nucleus of early followers among a group of unstable members of the Lord's church in Ohio. Sydney Rigdon, an apostate preacher of the church who had already wandered into Pentecostalism became one of Smith's chief supporters and confidants. A valuable lesson of warning can be drawn from this experience.

Last, if a religious group with such bizarre and changing doctrines can attract the members it does and grow, surely the pure gospel of Christ preached by the Lord's people will make his church grow even faster. The reason for their growth is obvious, i.e., the sending out of their young men by twos for a missionary tour. We need to utilize this great source of evangelistic power in our youth. We must be as wise as the sons of this world (Lk. 16:8).

The Crowded Road To Mysticism

Modern man, disillusioned and driven to despair, desperately reaches out for something to cling to. One of this options in his escape from the real world is in mysticism. While everyone has heard the word, few could precisely define the term.

“Mysticism according to the strict meaning of the word signifies a special knowledge and understanding of the mysteries from which the uninitiated are excluded.” **McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature**, Vol. 6, p.794

“Mysticism despairs of the regular process of science, it believes that we may attain directly without the aid of the sense or reason, and by an immediate intuition, to the real and absolute principle of all truth, God.” *Ibid*, Vol 6, p. 794.

Mysticism is “the setting up of personal thoughts and feelings as the standard of truth or as the rule of action ... Men ascribe this inward standard of truth and rule to the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 795.

Mysticism presses beyond the external forms of religion to an attempted direct knowledge of God, more especially in prayer and meditation. **Baker Dict. of Theology**. “It is therefore the faith in an inward light; the neglect of the written revelation; continence and contemplation.” **McClintock and Strong**, Vol. 6, p.794.

It is obvious then that, “In mysticism we have an expression of human religion rather than a true response to divine revelation.” **Baker’s Dict. of Theology**.

Mysticism — A symptom of Decaying Religion

“Mysticism has been the most usual form in which the expiring flame of religion has flickered up from its embers.” **McClintock and Strong**, Vol 6 p. 795. “... mysticism has always been most flourishing in times of general religious formalism — a striking illustration of the tendency of any extreme to generate its opposite.” **Ibid**, p. 804.

Eastern and Christian Mysticism

When discussing mysticism the student must make a distinction between Christian mysticism which has sprung up repeatedly over the centuries and Eastern mystic cults which reflect Hindoo or Buddhistic philosophy. In this lesson we will be discussing the Eastern variety.

G. R. Lewis observes that Eastern mysticism involves “a belief that God is totally different than anything the human mind can think and must be approached by a mind without content. In mystical experience a person loses his sense of personal identity, there are no dualities; time-stops and words lose all meaning. Mystical assumes that divine revelation is non-cognitive, faith does not involve assent to true assertions, religious language is not informative but merely expressive or directive and all words about God are interpreted symbolically.” **Transcendental Meditation**, p. 87.

The Challenge of Mysticism to Christianity

What Francis Schaeffer said about the church and its conflict with rationalism and existentialism is also true of the problem of mysticism. “The tragedy of our situation today is that men and women are being fundamentally affected by the new way of looking at truth and yet they have never even analyzed the drift which has taken place.” **The God Who Is There**, p. 13. “The flood-waters of secular thought and the new

theology overwhelmed the church because the leaders did not understand the importance of combating a false set of presuppositions." Schaeffer, *Ibid*, p. 15. Os Guinness describes the threat of mysticism thusly: "The subtlety of Eastern religion is that it enters like an odourless poison gas, seeping under the door, through the keyhole, in through open windows, so that the man in the room is overcome without his ever realizing there was any danger at all." **The Dust of Death**, p. 229—230. Nels Ferre wrote, "The main fight, make no mistake, is between the Christian faith in its inner, classical meaning and new Oriental versions whether they come via Neo-platonism or in modern forms ... The supernatural, personalistic, classical Christian faith is now being undermined by an ultimately non-dualistic, impersonal or transpersonal faith. The winds are blowing gale strong out of the Orient." From the forward in **Christology and Personality**.

Surely God's people must inform themselves of this invading error and be prepared to meet its adherents and their subtle claims. Souls precious to Jesus are at stake. Christians aware of modern religious trends are shocked at the rapid rise of the mystic cults in society. To analyse any phenomena we instinctively ask "Why?" The following observations may help us understand what is occurring and why.

1. G.K. Chesterton once remarked that "when people cease to believe in God, they do not believe in nothing, they believe in anything. Man is incurably religious. He cannot survive on bread alone (Matt. 4:4). "With his memories of Eden, man is never at rest east of Eden, and he repeatedly throws himself on the flaming, drawn sword of the angel." Os Guinness.

2. Mysticism is no foreigner to the Western mind and culture. Eastern mysticism was early translated to the West by Neoplatonism. The high point of Christian mysticism came in the middle ages with Bernard of Clairvaux.

3. America's 19th century, "Transcendentalism, in part set the stage for the influx of gurus, swamis and other spiritual teachers from the East. It must not be forgotten, however, that Trancendentalism is a child of eastern mysticism. The transcendentalists devotedly read the Upanishads and other Eastern scriptures." Jerry Yamamoto, S.C.P. newsletter, 10, 1978, Vol. 14, # 6.

4. Our society has long been conditioned for the mystical escape. C.S. Lewis wrote: "This underlying theme is being promoted in a way that subtly conditions people at every level of the culture to accept a definition of reality which ultimately denies the personal God of the Bible, asserts the autonomy, power and inherent divinity of man, condemns as obsolete any absolute statement of moral values," **Miracles**, MacMillan, 1947, pp. 84—85.

5. Mysticism = Pantheism. "Mysticism normally inclines to pantheism." **McClintock and Strong**, Vol. 6, pp. 777. C.S. Lewis notes that "Pantheism is in fact the permanent natural bent of the human mind; the permanent ordinary level below which man sometimes sinks, but above which his own unaided efforts can never raise him for very long." **Ibid**. Pantheism is "the teaching that everything that exists constitutes a unity and that this all-including unity is divine. Pantheism denies the personality of God and equates God with the forces and laws of the universe." G.R. Lewis, **Transcendental Meditation**, p. 88 All Oriental mystical cults espouse Pantheism. The Hindus speak of "That." "That" is a term used for the abstract being which is beyond human language, but is allegedly in all things and persons. The basic teaching of the Hindu Vedas and T.M. is "I am That, Thou art That and all is That." G.R. Lewis. p. 80.

6. Os Guinness believes that "the basic appeal (of Eastern philosophy) is the force of contrast with what people have experienced in the West. The East stresses experience not theory and thus is a welcome relief from the sterile memory of

preachers and pulpits, six feet above contradiction and life. For the East, verification is via participation.” **Dust of Death**, p. 210. He further observes that “To the Christian, talk of God is rather like the great bulk of an iceberg, whereas his experience of God is only the tiny tip of the iceberg; but for the Easterner the experience of God is the bulk of the iceberg, whereas this talk about God is only the tip.” **Ibid.**

Western answers no longer seem to fit the questions. With Christian culture disintegrating and humanism failing to provide an alternative, many are searching the ancient East.” **Ibid.**, p. 195. “Intellectually both East and post-Christian West have arrived at the silence of atheism or mysticism.” **Ibid.** p. 206.

Why Some Choose the Exotic Cults

The rush into cultism is demonstrated before our eyes. To help the victims escape and to help others stay free, we must seek the motives that prompt such conduct.

1. They have rejected traditional forms of ‘Christianity’ but being incurably religious they must have some spiritual diversion. God has planted eternity in the heart of mankind (Eccle. 3:11).

2. Man in rebellion would rather recreate God in his own image than himself be recreated in God’s image (Rom. 1:21—23).

3. Appalling ignorance of the Scriptures and of true non-sectarian Christianity leaves man defenseless before the beguiling errors of these cults (Hos. 4:6). The utter moral and spiritual bankruptcy of Catholicism and liberal Protestantism has left thousands of souls totally disillusioned and vulnerable.

4. Intellectual pride: Most mystics think they have found

what others have not, i.e., the hidden-higher gnosis, or spiritual knowledge which is reserved for the spiritual elite (I John 2:16).

5. A thirst for the bizarre, the new, the different, and the rejection of the familiar and commonplace. This reflects a spectrum of problems: for example rebellion against established authority and tradition, curiosity, dare-devilness, the search of a new thrill. Like the Athenians some are always searching for some new thing (Acts 17:21). They find it in the strange exotic cults.

6. The failure of Western society as a whole. Government, industry, the scientific community, education and philosophy have failed in their basic moral responsibility. Disillusioned with this spectacle of the whole of life, many desperately look for a way out that works. In mysticism they think they have found it.

7. Collapse of the home and family and depersonalization of human relationships. Dr. Lee Rangell of Los Angeles, past president of the American Psychoanalyst Association, believes many "are tense, anxious, alienated, disappointed in themselves or their parents, and desperately hungry and groping for love, approval and guidance. The leaders of these cults are in many cases parent-substitutes who provide their followers with goals, rewards and a form of acceptance they cannot find outside the cult." "Parental failure seems to be a major reason why young people turn to the charismatic and frequently paranoid authority figures who head these cults." **Parade**, 2/11/79. Man has an insatiable need for community, fellowship and family. They find it in the cult. All cults stress love and affection for each member. The Moonies use "Love-bombing" as a recruiting device.

8. Escapism from all of today's tensions and problems. Why try to cope when you can cop-out. Aldous Huxley claimed

that "the urge to escape from selfhood and the environment is in almost everyone, almost all the time." **The Doom of Perception**, p. 50. It takes a certain degree of grit and tenacity to wrestle with and be victorious in today's world. If one's training and education do not prepare him for the struggle, if his character tends to be weak or timid, he looks for a hole to crawl into. The cults are just waiting for such.

9. In most cults man is robbed of his individuality and therefore his responsibility. Yun-men, a Zen master, wrote, "If you want to get to the plain truth, be not concerned with right and wrong. Conflict between right and wrong is the sickness of the mind." Duty to one's fellow man or society is not a strong point in the mystic cults. Most of one's energy is expended on self in seeking self-realization. Alan Watts says it well: "In Buddhism there is no place for effort. Just be ordinary and nothing special. Eat your food, move your bowels, pass water, and when you're tired go lie down." From his book **Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen**. Eastern mysticism is made to order for copping-out.

10. Despair of finding meaning, purpose and happiness in the traditional framework of Western Civilization. Allen Ginsberg, patriarch of America's Eastern mystics, wrote, "I feel as if I am at a dead end and so I am finished ... I never escape the feeling of being closed in and the sordidness of self, the futility of all that I have seen and done and said." William J. Peterson, **Those Curious New Cults**, p. 270. Buddagosa writes, "I am a nowhere, a somewhatness for anyone." Guinness, p. 216. Albert Camus puts it plainly: "I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my own proclamation, and I am compelled to believe, at least in my own protest." **The Rebel**, Penguin Books, p. 16. Pessimism and despair are the natural fruits of Rationalism, Humanism and Existentialism.

11. Satan's lie. Today, as in Eden, man's greatest

weakness is the desire to be his own god (Gen 3:4—6). He consistently falls for that lie when it is subtly presented. The following four pillars of Eastern mysticism reflect this weakness:

A. "All is one." There is only one reality in existence, therefore all apparent separations and oppositions (including the opposition of good and evil) are unreal or a secondary manifestation of the single divine Reality.

B. Man is a Divine Being. "All forms of occult philosophy are united around the central belief that the inner or "real" self of man is God.

C. The purpose and fulfillment of life is to become aware of our divine nature. The way to discover one's Godness is by way of gnosis or enlightenment and illumination. They always look to the personal subjective and experiential as the source and certification of meaning, while rejecting Revelation and Faith.

D. Self-realization leads to the mastery of spiritual technology and the attainment of psycho-spiritual power. Thus he, the God-man becomes the master and creator of his own reality." Brooks Alexander, **Occult Philosophy and Mystical Experience**.

12. Modern man's recent love affair with nature opens the door to mysticism. "Elemental ecology leads straight to elemental Buddhism." Aldous Huxley. What man loves, he tends to worship, what he worships he deifies. The back to the earth, protect the earth, movement has evolved into pantheism.

What the Eastern Mystical Cults Offer Their Devotees

They offer no hope, only deeper despair! Of Zen Buddhism, Dr. D.T. Suzuki says, "Zen has no God to worship,

no ceremonial rites to observe, no future abode to which the dead are destined, and last of all Zen has no soul whose welfare is to be looked after by somebody else and whose immortality is a matter of intense concern with some people." William Peterson, p. 180.

One pessimistic parable from the Upanishads describes a man as dangling head-down in a pit; snakes threaten him from below, elephants from above, he is kept alive only by the creeper on which he is hanging, and this is being slowly gnawed by a black rat and a white rat, symbolizing the shortening of his life throughout both day and night." Guinness, p. 217.

"In occultism there seems to be neither freedom nor meaning nor light at the beginning of the way. Man must proceed in the dark, climb an endless darkened stairway on which no merciful ray of light falls. Occult knowledge, is somehow not an-active process of giving meaning to something but only a second-sight description, a passive acceptance of things in oneself." Nicolas Berdyaev, **The Meaning of the Creative Act**, N.Y. Collier Books, 1962.p.287-289.

The Church's Responsibility

We are spectators in a world dying from lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). We have the truth that will make them free from the entangling web of mysticism and cultism (John 8:32). Either we will arm ourselves with the sword of the spirit and fight the good fight of faith, or we will be classed and judged with the myriads of other guilty by-standers.

"... the Christian must resist the spirit of the world in the form it takes in his own generation. If he does not do this he is not resisting the spirit of the world at all." Francis Schaeffer, **The God Who Is There**, p. 18. Our problem is that most elders and preachers are not aware that there is such a problem in our society. They vaguely sense that something is awry, but have

not searched out the cause or the meaning. Especially helpful in understanding the intellectual climate of our days are the works of Francis Schaeffer, specifically, **The God Who Is There; Escape From Reason;** and **How Then Shall We Live? The Dust of Death** by Os Guinness is invaluable. Another useful source of material is the Spritual Counterfeit Projects, Newsletter and Tracts (P.O. Box, Berkeley, CA 94704). Brethren are encouraged to acquaint themselves with these challenging and relevant materials.

As in every generation we need to preach the word (II Tim. 4:2) and reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11—12). Nineteenth century books of sermons do not always meet the special needs of twentieth century men. Martin Luther said, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved and to be steady on all battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

May the church of our day meet this challenge. May we preachers not be content to stand in the gap to defend the cause, but may we boldly carry the battle into Satan's domain and win in Jesus's name.

How Your NOW Neighbors View You

Those who read and view the news knows that the leading voice of the feminist movement is the National Organization of Women. The NOW crew can best be described as a tax exempt Bella Abzug. Their goal is political dominance: their tactics are borrowed from Jimmy Hoffa and John L. Lewis. Their methodology is shock and crudeness.

Probably you have heard of NOW's radical policies which include:

1. Abortion upon request for any female.
2. Destruction of the Biblical concept of marriage and implementation by law of a new kind of marriage: "An equal partnership with shared economic and household responsibility and shared care of the children."
3. Revision of all public education to promote the NOW concept of sex and family including provision of sex education with contraceptive and abortion counselling.
4. Federal and state child care centers for children of all ages. "NOW endorses a program of developmental care based on the child's needs ... crucial to a development program are nutritional, medical, physical, emotional and educational components."
5. "Repeal of all laws restricting ... sexual activity between consenting adults in private." "That a woman's right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to choose her own lifestyle." This is from their resolution on Lesbianism.

6. "... to oppose religious teaching and laws which impose such discrimination" (as they define the term) on the basis of sex. "Challenge and assist church bodies to rethink and restate theological concepts which contribute to a false view of women." Here they would overthrow such ancient concepts as women not being allowed to serve as ministers or elders. (The above points are taken from **Revolution Tomorrow is Now**, a summary of NOW's existing resolutions and policies.)

That most Christians are not too concerned about this radical movement is obvious by our lack of action. While most preachers know something about the problem, the majority have busied themselves with other important things. Many elders have ignored the matter or nervously concluded that we must not get involved in these "political matters." The results are that each year the feminists grow louder and more demanding. Each year the traditional values based on the the Scriptures further erode and weaken. Inroads are occasionally being seen among our own young ladies as they are influenced by this devilish philosophy. Today the inevitable battle is one step nearer to our door.

The Height of Insult Toward the Church, Christians and God

The following quote is from the National Organization of Women's Knoxville bulletin, March 1979. It is distributed throughout East Tennessee. "**A Proclamation.** by Sue Vaughn.

"Hear ye! Hear ye! Knoxville NOW hereby proclaims that ye shall encourage throughout the land that all "Pollock" jokes be changed to "Right to Lifer" jokes. For example: how does a right to lifer rake leaves? First he has to climb the tree. *How can you tell who is the bride at a church of Christ wedding? She's the one who is barefoot and pregnant.* How many right to lifers does it take to change a lightbulb? First, John Waddey, Henry Hyde, Mildred Jefferson, and The Willke's lift the Pope on their shoulders, and they **** us all."

If this attack shocks and offends your Christian conscience why not **DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?** President and Mrs. Carter have openly, repeatedly endorsed and promoted the goals of NOW. Let them hear how you feel. Your governor and state and national Representatives and Senators are under constant pressure by NOW to adopt their policies. Let them hear from that silent majority. The news media continually features and glorifies these radical women. Write the media. Let the world know where you stand. Be *watchful* of your children's schools and scout troops as the NOW crew have targeted these groups for penetration and propaganda.

Elders: have some capable Christian woman come and inform your ladies on the great issues involved. Preachers, cry aloud and spare not (Is. 58:1).

A war is raging! We are authorized to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7); to fight the good fight of the faith (I Tim. 6:12). Why do God's people stand dismayed and greatly afraid when the Philistines defy the armies of Israel (I Sam. 17:11)? David asked, "Is there not a cause?" (I Sam. 17:29). God's warrior won with a sling and a stone because God was on his side and so will we, but only when we, like David, go out to meet them in the name of Jehovah!

Obstacles To Eternal Life

Jesus tells us that the road to heaven is a straitened and narrow way (Matt. 7:14). The word straitened suggests something that is hedged in and filled with obstacles. To successfully reach the soul's reward, we must strive diligently to do those things that will encourage and help us and avoid every thing that might hinder our journey. Paul urges us to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

He exhorted Philippians to stretch "forward to those things which are before" and to "press on towards the goal of the high calling of God ..." (Phil. 3:13—14).

In the 17th Century an English teacher named Richard Baxter wrote a book entitled **The Saint's Everlasting Rest**. In it he discussed several obstacles on heaven's road. We will consider some of these obstacles in the following lines.

I. Living in any known sin is a major impediment. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, these remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment ..." (Heb. 10:26). Willful sin is presumptuous. We could plead for mercy and hope for grace if we sinned through ignorance, but to knowingly continue in sin is to invite disaster. The Christian must put to death those earthly vices such as "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness." We once "lived in these things" but now that we follow Jesus they must be driven out (Col. 3:5—7).

II. An earthly mind hinders our progress and must be avoided. "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). We are taught by John to "love not the world, neither the things of the world."

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” he says. (I John 2:15). Of course this includes all those sinful things of this earth such as “the lust of the flesh,” “the lust of the eye” and “the pride of life.” In addition it warns us not to be inordinately attached to even those innocent things of this life. Since “we brought nothing into the world” and since we can carry nothing out, we must learn to be content with food and covering (I Tim.6:7—8). “But they that are minded to be rich, fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition” (vs. 9). The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word of God in our lives so that we become unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), therefore we must concentrate our interests and energies on that immortal home. We are reminded to set our affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:2). Excessive concern with the here and now will adversely affect our heavenward progress.

III. Intimate fellowship with the ungodly will rob one of the soul's reward. Observation as well as revelation tells us that “evil companions corrupt good morals” (I Cor. 15:33). That man is blest and happy who does not walk in the “counsel of the wicked” or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers (Ps. 1:1). Of course we cannot escape all associations with people of the world. To attempt to do so would necessitate our leaving the world of people (I Cor. 5:9—11). We can, however, choose our intimate friends and companions from God's children and those whose moral and spiritual interests are wholesome. A friend who would interfere with our pursuit of immortality is one we can well do without. We must do good unto all men including the sinful (Gal. 6:10) and surely we must teach them the gospel (Mk. 16:15). While never slackening in our duties here, we must be concerned to preserve our souls in other areas already mentioned.

IV. We should avoid quarrelling and disputes about

matters of little consequence. The apostle warns us against “doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising and wrangling ...” (I Tim. 6:4:5). Again he says, “foolish and ignorant questionings refuse, knowing that they gender strifes” (II Tim. 2:23). He urges Titus to “shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and fighting about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain” (Tit. 3:9). There is something inimical to and destructive of spiritual attitudes in bitter quarrels. We cannot afford to jeopardize our faith with such.

When one’s religion is primarily opinions he will most often be promoting opinions, whereas he whose religion is firmly founded on the promises of God will delight to talk about the Lord and heaven and be concerned to save a soul. It is interesting that those least acquainted with the great principle of Christianity are usually the most vocal and vociferous in disputes about its details.

V. We must take heed of a haughty spirit for such is a serious obstacle to salvation. We are instructed to “gird ourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble” (I Pet. 5:5). False pride is a barrier between man and his God. It annuls all his efforts at holiness. Solomon actually says that *God hates* “HAUGHTY EYES” (Prov. 6:16—17). The proud Pharisee’s worship was disgusting to God, but the humble publican went down to his house justified (Lk. 18:9—14). Jesus laid down the rule that “whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4). Let us daily pray for divine assistance to drive the destructive pride from our hearts and learn the humility of the little child.

VI. A slothful attitude will hinder our heavenly trip. The road to heaven is up hill all the way. Jesus pointed out that we must *work* for the food which abideth unto eternal life (John

6:27). Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:26). The man who is lazy about life in general will find it difficult to be zealous about religion. Jesus died to redeem a people “zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14).

VII. Satisfaction with the first principles of Christianity and corresponding neglect of the solid food of advanced spiritual living and service is a dangerous delusion. We can never be content with being a child in the faith. Our goal must be to become a fullgrown men capable of teaching others (Heb. 5:12—14). In view of this the Hebrew author charges us, “Wherefore leaving the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection ...” (6:1). Studyng maps and reading about a far land is not to be compared with actually going there. We must daily “grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ” (II Pet. 3:18), that we may grow thereby unto salvation (I Pet. 2:2).

Nothing is more important than saving our soul in eternity. To achieve this grand goal, every sacrifice must be made and every obstacle avoided. May all of us set our eyes on that lovely abode where Jesus waits and run with patience the race before us. Nothing of whatever value is of sufficient worth to turn our hearts aside for even a fleeting moment.

Paradise Lost And Found

Paradise Lost and **Paradise Regained** are epic poems written in blank verse by the blind Puritan poet, John Milton. They were published in 1667 and 1671. The poet relates the story of the tragic fall of Adam and Eve into sin and the loss of their paradisaical home. The second volume tells how Christ, the second Adam, successfully met the tempter and recovered paradise for mankind. Of course, Milton's poems are based upon the Scripture record. Not only do few read Milton's classics, few truly comprehend the Biblical record of Paradise Lost and Found.

The Paradise That Was Lost

Moses presents for us the story of a garden planted by the Creator in Eden in which he placed the first of our kind (Gen. 2:7—10). It was a perfect earth in which they dwelt. Their garden home was a paradise. Every tree which was "pleasant to the sight and good for food" was there. The tree of life also grew there, which sustained their immortality. Sparkling rivers provided them water of life. Sufficient work was assigned to save from boredom (2:15). No disease, suffering or death was known in that Edenic home. Death was only known as a vague penalty threatened for disobedience (2:17). Genesis 9:3 seems to suggest that man did not even eat the flesh of animals in that glorious domicile. Child-birth was not the painful experience it is today (Gen. 3:16). There were no thorns nor thistles to plague man then (Gen. 3:18). Before the ground was cursed, man's toils were rewarded with a more bountiful return (Gen. 3:17). But the grandest feature of all was their intimate fellowship and communion with God. Before the fall he walked and talked with them as a Father would his children (3:8). The man and his wife knew no sin or shame (2:25).

How Their Paradise Was Lost

According to Gen. 2:16—17 only one thing was forbidden in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was necessary to test their faithfulness. It provided an opportunity to use their will power and the freedom of choice which distinguished them from the lower creatures.

The temptation and fall is recorded in the first eight verses of Genesis three. Satan, the arch enemy of God and men, chose the lowly serpent through which he schemed to destroy the precious children of the Creator. His method of tempting was simple. He lied to the innocent pair. He contradicted the Lord's ruling, blatantly saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (3:4). Jesus described Satan as a liar from the beginning, the father of lies (John 8:44). Having shaken their confidence in the word of their Lord, he then voiced the ultimate absurdity, "Ye shall be gods" (3:5 the Hebrew expresses this). Seeing Eve's resistance weakening, he appealed to the lust of her flesh, the lust of her eyes and the pride of her heart (3:6). Her defences shattered, she took the forbidden fruit and ate. This technique has been used successfully on every soul born to this day (I John 2:15—16). Poor Eve was beguiled by the Master Seducer (II Cor. 11:3), but Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, fully aware of the consequences. Thus God laid the burden of responsibility upon him. In Romans 5:12 Paul writes, "Through one man sin entered the world and death through sin." In this seemingly simple deed they had transgressed God's law, they had sinned (I John 3:4).

The Awful Consequences of the Deed

Little did they know how awesome would be the results of their disobedience. Immediately guilt, shame and fear swept over them. They hid themselves from their loving benefactor. They tried to fashion coverings of leaves to conceal their nakedness. Death was let loose in their world. In its train came

disease, suffering and sorrow. The woman was further subjected to man and her childbearing was made a painful experience (Gen. 3:16). Adam now was forced to toil and sweat in earning his bread (Gen. 3:18—19). Even the earth itself was blighted under the curse which sin brought (Gen. 3:17). Wreck and ruin spread themselves across the once fair abode of man and the whole creation groaned, longing to be delivered from the curse of man's folly.

The guilty, cowering couple were driven in shame from the once lovely home lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever in their pitiful state (Gen. 3:12—13). This separation from God meant spiritual death (Is. 55:1—2), a condition far worse than the physical dying already mentioned. Surely that was the saddest day in human history. All the sorrows of the ages were born that gloomy day. To this day the blighting effects of their folly are shared by one and all of creation.

Paradise Regained

In the glorious scenes of heaven depicted in the Revelation, John saw "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God ... On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life ... and there shall be no curse any more, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face ... and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 22:1—5). Thus in the eternal ages God will restore to mankind, the Paradise long ago lost in Eden. Throughout John's marvelous volume are found glimpses of that future paradise that reminds us of the first paradise.

In Genesis we saw the material earth created, in Revelation it is seen passing away and a new earth being given (21:1)

In Genesis the sun and moon were created, in Revelation there is no more need for them. Jesus will provide adequate light (22:5; 21:23).

Genesis tells of the marriage of the first Adam, in Revelation we see the marriage of the second Adam, Christ (19:7—9).

Genesis portrays the first appearance of man's great enemy Satan. In Revelation we see Satan destroyed in the lake of fire (20:10).

In Genesis we saw sin's entrance, in Revelation sin is destroyed. God promises, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:27).

Genesis tells of the beginning of sorrow, suffering and death, but in heaven all these are done away (Rev. 21:4).

Genesis reveals the curse which settles on the earth because of sin. In eternity the curse is removed (Rev. 22:3).

In Genesis man had personal communion and fellowship with God which he forfeited. In the heavenly paradise, both are restored. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with man, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them ..." (Rev. 21:3).

In Eden, man had the tree of life and water of life but lost them. In the coming paradise both shall be restored (Rev. 22:1—2).

In the beginning there was immortality which sin destroyed. But in the eternal realms, immortality will once more be bestowed upon man. "Death shall be no more ..." (Rev. 21:4). There will be realized that thrilling promise of the Savior, "He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life ..." (John 5:24).

How Was Our Paradise Regained?

As our first parents stood trembling before their offended Maker they heard the following words which shed a gleam of light over that dreary day. "I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15). Likely they did not comprehend nor fathom the hope which these words foretold. Only when the events of Calvary had been fully revealed did their children grasp the significance of those glorious words. Christ "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). Paul explained to the Roman saints, "For if by trespass of one (Adam) the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Rom. 5:15b). Christ has restored to us that which was lost in Eden. "So then as through one trespass the judgment came all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the gift came unto all men justification of life. For as through one man's disobedience the many were sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18—19).

Thank God my brethren that through the life and suffering of our Lord, victory over Satan, sin and death was won for all of the children of sorrow. Today the cherub with the flaming sword has been removed. Now twelve gates stand ever open (Rev. 21:12;25) with heavenly angels waiting to welcome the ransomed and to drive every enemy away. The Lord God invites all men and women to come live with him in Paradise restored (Rev. 22:17). The privilege is extended to all who are Adam's children. The decision to accept or reject is yours to make, even as it was the first couple's in Eden's garden.

Paul's Epistles To The Thessalonians

These are doctrinal books. Practically every major doctrine in the catalog of faith is represented in the these two epistles, In general, these letters reflect the problems of Gentile converts rather than Jewish believers.

Facts About Thessalonica

This thriving city was founded in ancient times and known succeedingly as Emathia, Halia and Therma (because of its renowned hot springs). In 421 B.C. it was occupied by the Athenians during the Peloponnesian War. Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals who succeeded him, rebuilt it in 315 B.C. He named the new city Thessalonica after his wife who was a half-sister to Alexander. The Romans captured the city in 168 B.C. and made it capital of the region called Macedonia Secunda. Mark Antony and Augustus declared her a "free city" in 42 B.C. Her greatest honor came, however, when Paul established a church of Christ there in 50/51 A.D.

Thessalonica was situated halfway between the Adriatic Sea and the Hellespont at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. She was the natural trading and commercial center of Macedonia and its largest, most important city. In apostolic days she was still capital of the province. The great Roman highway to the east, the Via Egnatia, passed through the heart of the city. In Roman times she was known for her fine harbor and docks and attendant ship-building industry.

Her population was cosmopolitan with a large colony of Jews who maintained a flourishing synagogue. She was a wealthy, immoral and licentious city. At one point the population numbered 200,000. She was governed by rulers

called *politarchs* (Acts 17:6—8). Women enjoyed a much higher status there than in most first century societies. Meletius wrote, “So long as nature does not change, Thessalonica will remain wealthy and fortunate.” Today the city survives and is called Salonika. It is the third largest city of Greece.

Facts About The Church In Thessalonica

The story of the planting of the congregation is recorded in Acts 17:10. It was established in the year 50/51, through the missionary efforts of Paul, Silas and Timothy. It was a part of the fruit of Paul’s vision of the Macedonian call (Acts 16:9—10). Following their release from jail in Philippi, the missionary band travelled the 100 miles to Thessalonica. For three sabbaths Paul taught in the Jewish synagogue proclaiming Jesus as Messiah (Acts 17:1—4). His first converts were some Jews, a great number of Gentile God-fearers and several prominent women (Acts 17:4). The apostle supported himself by manual labor while preaching there (I Thess. 2:9). The church at Philippi sent some assistance (Phil. 4:16).

Unbelieving Jews stirred up certain vile men of the rabble to foment a riot against Paul and his friends (Acts 17:5). A brother named Jason and others were charged with harboring men who turned the world upside down, and placed under bond (Acts 17:6—9). Paul and Silas left for Berea by night. Paul’s work there had lasted only a short while, perhaps as little as a month (Acts 17:1—4), yet the church grew strong. Some gospel workers came from their ranks: including Demas (II Tim. 4:10); Secundus (Acts 20:4); Aristarchus (Acts 27:2); and Gaius (Acts 19:29). It is likely that the Thessalonians participated in the benevolent fund for the poor in Judea (II Cor. 8:1—5).

First Thessalonians: The Christian And Christ’s Second Coming

Author: According to Chapter 1:1 and 2:18 Paul the apostle authored this book. His authorship has never been disputed

among conservative Bible believing scholars. Some liberal scholars have challenged his authorship only to be driven in shame from their untenable position. Paul's words and thoughts permeate every line.

Date: Internal evidence suggests that the letter was written shortly after Paul's hurried departure (2:17). Thus it would date from 50 or 51 A.D. Many scholars believe this to be the earliest of the epistles to become a part of the New Testament canon. A comparison of Acts 18:1—3 with I Thess. 3:1, 6 suggests Corinth as the place of its origin.

Authenticity: First Thessalonians is listed in the fragment of the Muratorian canon and was accepted by Marcion in 140 A.D. Irenaeus quoted it in 180 A.D. as did several church fathers.

Occasion: The letter seems to have been prompted by a report brought by Timothy. Many thought that Christ must immediately return. Some, therefore, had given up their jobs and were living in a disorderly fashion (2:9; 4:11; 5:14). Others among them grieved over the death of loved ones, fearing they would be deprived since they had departed before Christ's return (4:13—18). Timothy also reported that persecutions were still raging. Gentiles and especially Jews were harassing the disciples (2:13—17; 3:1—4). He further reported that the brethren were yet loyal to the truth and anxious for Paul's return (3:6). There was also word of opposition to Paul from outside influences. This prompted Paul's lengthy defence of his personal conduct (see Chapter 2). It appears that some were misusing their spiritual gifts (5:19—20). Some of them were tempted to return to their heathen lifestyle, especially sexual impurity (4:1—8).

Purpose: The situation which had developed in the Thessalonian church prompted to a large degree the contents of this letter. He wanted them to know how thankful he was for them (1:2). He was anxious that they know of his tender concern

for them (2:17ff). He wrote to encourage them in the face of continuing persecution (2:14—16). He provided them with fuller information about doctrinal matters, especially the facts relating to Christ's return (4:13—18). They were urged to grow in Christian faith and living and to avoid immorality (4:3—12). Paul felt the need to defend his own integrity and conduct while among them (2:1—10).

Characteristic: First Thessalonians is one of Paul's most personal letters. In it his personality is clearly visible with all its Christian graces. Of all of the apostle's letters, this one is the gentlest and sweetest in tone.

Paul emphasizes the Lordship of Christ. Twenty-five times the word "Lord" is used in its five short chapters. Not a single direct quote from the Old Testament is found in its 89 verses.

This book shares a basic style of arrangement with all of Paul's letters: Greeting; Thanksgiving; Doctrinal Section; Practical Section; Personal Message; and Closing Salutation.

First Thessalonians and Christ's Coming

The overriding theme of the book is Christ's return and attendant events. It is mentioned in twenty different verses in the two epistles to the Thessalonian saints. Virtually every chapter of each letter has some reference to the last days. Compare I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:17; 5:23 and II Thess. 1:7—10; 2:1, 8; 3:5. It is of interest that Christ's coming is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament.

Important Concepts In First Thessalonians

Coming (2:19). From the Greek *parousia*, which commonly is used for the second advent of Christ. It means presence, arrival, or coming. Especially does it refer to the arrival of a king.

Rapture (4:17). While the word itself is not used, the idea is found. It literally means "to be caught up." The resurrected dead and the transformed living will all be caught up to meet the Lord at his coming for judgment.

Eschatology. From the Greek *eschatos* which means "a study of last things and refers to those Biblical doctrines which relate to the end of the world and the coming of Christ.

Keys To Understanding The Book

The Key Verse is 5:23. "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, and without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Key Thought: There is great consolation in the hope of Christ's second coming.

The Key Words: "Coming of Christ," from *parousia* which is used four times (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23); "Gospel of God" (2:2; 8, 9, 13); "Affliction" (1:6).

A Simple analysis

Salutation, 1:1.

I The Condition of the church (1:2 — 10).

II. Paul's relationship with the church (2:1 — 3:13).

III. Problems facing the church (4:1 — 5:11).

IV. Exhortations and closing (5:12 — 28).

A Summary Of First Thessalonians

I. Paul commences his letter with his usual blessing of grace and peace, thus combining the traditional greetings of both Jews and Greeks. He then offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their working faith, laboring love and steadfast hope

(1:2—4). He reminisces about their initial response to the gospel. The gospel message had been demonstrated to be the power of God unto salvation by the divine, miraculous confirmation of the Holy Spirit. This had convinced them to follow the apostle and his Lord (1:5—6a). He commends their loyalty and service to God noting that they were sounding forth the gospel and that their faithfulness was known far and wide (1:7—9). It was obvious to all that they were waiting for the returning Christ who would deliver them from the wrath of judgment (1:10).

II. In this chapter the apostle reminds them of his evangelistic work among them. He apparently does this to vindicate himself from accusations made by his enemies. His motives had been above reproach. Both they and God knew this (2:1—6a). He had asked no monetary support from them, rather he had toiled with his own hands to provide his needs (2:6b—9). His conduct had been unimpeachable (2:10—12). He had taught them only the Word of God (2:13). His faithful preaching had brought persecution on both himself and them (2:16).

III. In 2:17—3:13, Paul writes of his personal relationship with the Thessalonian saints. He tells them of his intense desire to see them and how he delights in their faithfulness (2:17—20). Timothy's recent mission to them is then explained (3:1—5). He tells them how happy Timothy's good report made him (3:6—8). He then expresses his satisfaction with their progress in the faith and prays for their divine protection (3:11—13). All of this is in view of the coming of Christ and our appearance before God's throne of judgement.

IV. Chapter 4:1—12 consists of instructions in Christian living. He had taught them how to live the Christian life from the beginning (4:1—2). They must abstain from the fornication which was so common among their Gentile neighbors (4:3—8). This was not simply Paul's eccentric opinion, it was the will of

God! Brotherly love was to be cultivated and nourished even as they had been doing (4:9—10). Every Christian must learn to mind his own business and work to supply his own needs (4:11—12).

V. In 4:13—5:11, Paul corrects some misconceptions about the Lord's return and the status of the departed saints. They need not grieve for their departed brethren because they would not be denied any privileges of that great day when Christ returns. Like Christ was resurrected so will they be. Those who are living at the second advent will have no advantages over the deceased. When Christ comes he will raise the dead first, then we who are alive will be instantly transformed and together we will rise up to meet the Lord in the clouds (4:13—18). As to the time of the Lord's return, Paul affirms that it is unknown to mortal men. Rather as the thief comes when we least expect him, and unannounced, so our Lord will come (5:1—3). His chief recommendation is, "Be ready at all times" lest you be caught unprepared" (5:4—8). God wants us to be saved. Let us help each other be faithful (5:9—11).

VI. In this section Paul reviews some basic fundamental duties of all Christians (5:12—22). We are taught to love and respect our spiritual leaders who teach us God's will and help us to serve faithfully (5:12—13a). Then there are duties which we owe to all men, but especially to our fellow Christians. We must admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak and be long-suffering towards all. We must practice that which is good and never render evil for evil (5:13a—15). There are also important duties to oneself: always be happy; be constant in prayer; be thankful for every blessing; do not quench God's Holy Spirit; never despise prophesying; and learn to be discriminating in all things so as to choose the good and reject every form of evil (5:16—22).

He draws this marvelous message to a fitting close with a beautiful benediction. "And the God of peace himself sanctify

you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, and without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:23).

Second Thessalonians; The Second Coming Correctly Viewed

Date: This letter seems to have been written shortly after the previous one to the new converts at Thessalonica. This would date it sometime in 50/51 A.D. It appears that false teachers who claimed inspiration had created great confusion among the brethren. They had even produced fictitious letters in Paul's name (2:1—2). This situation prompted Paul to write these lines.

Second Thessalonians is Paul's briefest letter to a congregation. Like its sister epistle it has no direct quote from the Old Testament. Its three short chapters contain four prayers for the readers (1:11—12; 2:16—17; 3:5; 3:16). Their problem was an excessive and excited preoccupation with the Lord's return, therefore the contents are devoted almost exclusively to problems relating to the second coming.

Author: We accept without question the Pauline authorship of this letter. Following close upon the heels of the first letter we would conclude that it also originated in Corinth.

Purposes: Paul writes to express his gratitude for their steadfastness in the gospel even in the face of heavy opposition. He also wished to confirm and encourage them to continue loyal to the teachings they received. He endeavored to correct certain misconceptions pertaining to the coming of the Lord. Disorderly members among them were admonished and the faithful brethren were instructed how to deal with such troublesome brethren. He needed to guard against forced instructions being circulated by false teachers which he did by giving them his

official signature which authenticated all of his correspondence (3:17).

Authenticity: This little book is referred to by Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus. Both the canon of Marcion and the Muratorian Fragment mention it.

The Two Thessalonian Letters Compared: The first describes how they received God's message, the second mentions their progress in faith, love and patience. In the first he taught that Christ's coming would be sudden, in the second he emphasizes that it would not be immediate. In the earlier letter he showed that saints who died would still share in the coming of the Lord and the gathering to him. In the last he shows that saints who are alive at the coming will not be overtaken by the judgments of the day of the Lord. The first deals with a spirit of disorder just emerging; while the second rebukes the problem sharply as it had developed in serious proportions. In the first he gave them commands to obey. The second exhorts them to obey that earlier teaching.

Important Concepts In Second Thessalonians

Traditions (3:6). From the Greek *paradosis*, which means "a giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing ... so of Paul's teaching ..." Thayer.

Man of sin. The one in whom sin is personified who will precede Christ's coming. Augustine wrote of the man of sin: "I confess that I am entirely ignorant of what the apostle meant." Malvenda wrote eleven books on the anti-Christ in 1604.

Son of perdition. One whose sin necessarily leads to perdition. One like Judas. This refers to the coming man of sin whoever he might be. Paul wrote so the Thessalonians could

understand ... but it was obscure to any informer who might come to their assembly F. Farrar.

Mystery of Lawlessness. The unknown spirit of lawlessness which would precede the rise of the man of sin.

The manifestation of his coming: From the Greek *epiphany*, i.e., the brightness or appearance of Christ's second coming.

Keys to Understanding The Book

Key verses, 1:7—8. "... and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

2:1—2, "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, not yet be troubled either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand."

The key word is coming (parousia), 2:1, 8.

The key thought is patient and quiet waiting for the day of the Lord.

A Simple Analysis

- I. Comfort from the hope of Christ's return, Chapter 1.
- II. Caution as to the time of Christ's return, Chapter 2.
- III. Commands in the light of Christ's return, Chapter 3.

Summary of Second Thessalonians

Paul sends his greeting to them with grace and peace from

the Father and Son (1:1—2).

I. In Chapter 1:3—12 he encourages them as they face the persecutions of their unbelieving neighbors. He first of all expresses his thankfulness for their growing faith and abounding love (1:3). He tells of his pride in their loyalty in the face of fierce persecutions which he argues is but proof of their citizenship in God's kingdom (1:4—5). Then he affirms that the righteous God would properly reward both them and their enemies when Christ comes again. They would find rest and comfort, but their adversaries would suffer just punishment which would consist of eternal separation from the glorious Father (1:6—10). The chapter closes with a prayer that God would count them worthy disciples and bless their every Christian work with power that Jesus might be glorified.

II. The first twelve verses of Chapter Two are devoted to correcting some misconceptions regarding the Lord's return. False teachers and forged letters had led them to think that the Lord had already or was just about to return. He urged them to "keep their heads" and not be alarmed by these peddlers of error (2:1—2). Then he proceeded to explain that Christ's second coming would not occur until the man of sin had been revealed (2:3—12). Paul then described this mysterious man of sin and the events surrounding his career in greater detail (2:3—5). His coming will be part of a general apostasy from truth. He is destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every sacred thing, even God himself, and will place himself in God's temple, the church, and claim godhood. This evil departure was already developing among the churches even in Paul's day. An unnamed power was presently restraining the full exposure of this man of sin. But that restraint would someday be removed. (It seems that the saints fully understood these opaque concepts because of previous instruction by Paul (2:5—6). Once this evil man of sin is released only the power of the Lord's return can destroy him (2:8). Satan will be the active force behind the man of sin. He

will utilize every form of wicked deceit including pretended signs and miracles (2:9). The lost sinners will eagerly swallow his deceptions because they do not love the truth. And since they have pleasure in wickedness and do not want the truth, God will allow them to be completely deluded by this destructive error. This of course will result in their damnation (2:10—12)!

III. The final section discusses Christian conduct in light of the second coming (2:13—3:18). Once more Paul gives thanks for them and for their salvation. He recalls how God had called them unto salvation through the gospel. He exhorts them to stand fast and hold on to the gospel truths he had taught them. The prayer closes with a beautiful benediction commending them to God for comfort and strength for every good work (2:13—19).

Paul then requests their prayers in his behalf that God would grant him success in his mission efforts. He earnestly desired to see a rapid spread of the gospel. He needed God's help to deliver him from evil men who sought to hinder his efforts (3:1—2). In 3:3—5 he expresses his confidence in their spiritual progress.

The church is then charged to discipline her disorderly members (3:6—12). Some brethren had ceased working and were sponging off of others. They justified their idleness by saying the day of Christ was just at hand. Paul used himself as an example of the diligence all should show (3:7—9). Their laziness was intolerable. If they would not work, they must go hungry (3:10—12)! He explains to the faithful saints how to treat such disorderly members. Do not associate with them, yet count them not as enemies but exhort them as brethren (3:13—15).

He concludes by calling upon God to grant them peace in every circumstance, and authenticates the epistle with his own signature (3:16—18).

The Thessalonian Epistles And Premillennialism

Every doctrine originating in the mind of uninspired man is sooner or later found to be in conflict with divine revelation.

The false doctrine of premillennialism is at odds with I Thess. 2:12 which says that God “is calling you” (Jerusalem Bible) into his kingdom. If the kingdom has not yet come, how could God call them (present tense) into it in Paul’s day?

Chapter 4:16—18 refutes the false doctrine of the rapture and two resurrections. This verse clearly declares that when Christ returns the righteous dead will be raised and the living saints will be “*caught up*” (raptured) together with them to meet the Lord in the air and “ever be with the Lord.” There is no indication here or elsewhere of a return to earth of 1,000 years, of a second resurrection of the wicked or any other of the vagaries of the millennial speculations.

Those who dare to predict a specific time for Christ’s return must do so in the face of I Thess. 5:1—3. “For yourselves know *perfectly* that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” It will be a “sudden destruction” that will be totally unannounced. There will be no signs or forewarnings of the Lord’s return.

The idea of separate resurrections for the righteous and the wicked falls before II Thess. 1:6—10. When Jesus is revealed he will render *rest* to the saints and fiery vengeance to sinners. This being one act of judgment with consequences suited to each category of men, where is there room for a millennial reign between?

Second Thess. 2:1—3 contains exhortations sorely needed by modern folks in view of the massive bombardment of millennial speculation deluging our generation. “Now we beseech you, brethren touching the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind (don't lose your head, J.H.W.) nor yet be troubled, either by spirit (alleged revelation, J.H.W.) or by word, or by epistle as from us that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise ..." We should pity the thousands of Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Armstrongites and others whose lives have been unsettled by false predictions of Christ's return. However, they should have known better than to believe any such prognostications in the face of plain Biblical warnings.

A heavenly explanation is given as to why the masses of people are so gullible to the absurd speculations of the millennial mania in II Thess. 2:10—12: "... because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved ... God sendeth them a working of error (strong delusion, KJV) that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." No system of doctrine is more patently false. No scheme is more difficult to comprehend. No teaching is more at odds with the basic fundamentals of the gospel of Christ. No religious system has bewildered and disappointed more people in the 2,000 years. Yet it certainly is the most popular approach to religion in our day. Surely its adherents have received the strong delusion because they did not love God's truth.

As citizens of the kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us "walk worthily of God" (I Thess. 2:12) and "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:10).

Paul's Mission To The Gentiles

Introduction

And the Lord said to Saul, "I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:16—18). Paul later affirmed, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:19—20).

How different our lives would be if Paul had not lived, or if he had refused to obey that heavenly commission to evangelize our Gentile forebears. Our Anglo, German and French ancestors were rude, uncivilized barbarians when Christ assigned Paul our case. Idolatry lay like an iron yoke upon their hearts and souls. They were "separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Many were given over to a reprobate mind and vile passions (Rom. 1:26, 28).

The Makeup of Paul

This was no ordinary Jew which God picked to send us the everlasting gospel. He was a Hebrew born of Hebrews, yet a Jew of the dispersion (one who lived outside of Palestine). He was a true son of Abraham, yet a citizen of the mighty Roman Empire. He was reared in the university city of Tarsus which

ranked with such centers of learning as Athens and Alexandria. There he would have been influenced by the many heterogeneous currents of thought in a frontier city where the culture of Greece and Rome met the Orient. He was a man of great and varied learning and a lively and sensitive intellect. He exhibited a natural sympathy with all sorts of men. Above all there was a consuming loyalty and love for Jesus. Christ was the Hebrew Messiah, but he was also savior of all men who would believe. Such was God's chosen man to make the church truly a universal, multi-racial, spiritual kingdom.

Obstacles Paul Faced

Paul had to overcome great hurdles to accomplish his God-given task. Being a Jew was no asset in planting a new religion among Gentiles. It was a distinct disadvantage. The Roman orator Cicero called the Jewish religion "a barbarous superstition." Tacitus called them "the vilest of all people." Rumors had it that Jewish religious ceremonies began with an annual sacrifice of a Gentile (Josephus, *Against Apion*). Others charged that the Jews "refused all fellowship and intercourse with other nations and supposed all men to be enemies." He thus was in continual conflict with Gentiles who trusted no Jew and the Jewish community who would consider him a traitor.

On the road to Damascus, Paul learned what even the other apostles were slow to learn, i.e., "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). He clearly perceived that in Christ there "can be neither Jew nor Greek ... for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus!" (Gal. 3:28). He had risen above the prevailing Jewish narrowness toward Gentiles. The worst of Jewish anti-Gentile feelings went like this: "The Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell." "The best of the serpents crush, the best of the Gentiles kill."² Such expressions of superiority are never seen in Paul. Although he was an alien to their Graeco-Roman culture, he sought to understand and

accept all that was right in their life style. he wrote to the Corinthians ... "I have a stewardship entrusted to meTo the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews ... to them that are without law, as without law ... that I might gain them that are without law ... I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:17—22).

Paul's Attitude Toward Gentile Sinners

Paul believed that the Gentiles were lost without the gospel of Jesus (II Thess. 1:7—9). He felt himself a debtor to Greeks and Barbarians and was determined to share the word of grace with them (Rom. 1:14—15). However, he proposed no special gospel for their peculiar race and culture. There was but "one faith" for all (Eph. 4:5). The old middle wall of partition had been torn down. All men of all races were now called to be one in Christ (Eph. 2:14—17). Paul did not seek to establish a separate church or fellowship for Gentile Christians. His training at Antioch made an indelible imprint on his heart. Jews and Gentiles could work together in one church (Acts 11:19—29).

Paul was not intimidated by the enormity of his task to evangelize the Gentile world. With resolute determination he gathered around him a small cadre of helpers and launched out. None of the hostilities of the day detered him. Neither the mutual hatred of Jews and Gentiles nor the hazards of travel discouraged our subject. "From Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum" and Rome, he "fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). He was quite willing to spend and be spent for their sakes in order to save their souls (II Cor. 12:15). Repeatedly he endured great hardships to himself and even violence and attempts on his life to tell them Jesus' good news (II Cor. 11:23—28).

Everywhere he went, Paul challenged their false philosophies and religions. This is vividly illustrated in his work in

Athens. He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews, in the market place every day and even addressed the court of the philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17:17—18). He warned them lest anyone should make spoil of them through his philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men (Col. 2:8). He did not hesitate to brand their pagan worship as unto “dumb idols” (I Cor. 12:2). Because of his persistent efforts, thousands turned to God from their idols of wood, metal and stone (I Thess. 1:9). Unlike many modern liberal missionaries, he saw no room for compromise with the world religions! Rather his message was, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for ... what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? ... wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (II Cor. 6:14—17).

He taught them to renounce their sins and was firm and unyielding in leading them to the new life in Christ. They learned from him how they “ought to walk and to please God.” That meant to “abstain from fornication” (I Thess. 4:1, 3). They were taught to “put off the old man with his doings” and put on the new man, that is, being renewed after the image of him that created him (Col. 3:9—10). Time and again he catalogued the heathen sins so common among them, warning them to forsake them all (Gal. 5:19—21). There were no vague generalities in Paul’s preaching. He likened their attitude toward their old life as a crucifixion of the old man (Rom. 6:6). His message was that God expected one and all to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly and righteously and godly (Tit. 2:11—12).

Paul and the Gentile Christians

Paul’s work was only just begun when he buried the Gentile converts with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3—4). Like a nurse cherisheth her own children, he cared for their spiritual needs (I Thess. 2:7—8). He provided them a holy, righteous and unblamable example to follow (I Thess. 2:10). He exhorted, encouraged and taught them to walk worthily of God (I Thess

2:11—12). He daily prayed for their spiritual and physical welfare (I Thess. 1:2—3). Although he could stay with them for a long time, he periodically returned to confirm the souls of his converts (Acts 14:22).

He was careful to teach them everything that was profitable, teaching both publicly and from house to house, the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). His goal in ministering the gospel of God to them was “that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16).

Paul soon led his new converts to develop and appoint their own local elders to guide their churches (Acts 14:23). He did not fall into the typical pattern of holding on to control for years.

The apostle coveted love from his converts, but not their worship (Acts 14:11—15). This lesson needs to be repeated for every preacher on a regular basis. He was grateful for and appreciative of their support which they gave towards his mission efforts in new fields (Phil. 1:5, 4:17—20).

Paul the Apologist for Gentile Rights

We have noted that Paul recognized the claim of the Gentiles on the Gospel. The God-fearers or proselytes of the gates were no longer to be left standing at the door of the meeting house as under Judaism. Paul brought them into the Christian assembly and baptized them into Christ (Gal. 3:26—27). To Paul the old lines of racial separation were dead. But not only did he practice non-discrimination, he willingly defended the rights of his Gentile brethren against hostile Jewish brethren. When these Hebrew Christians came to Antioch and taught “Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1), Paul along with Barnabas hotly disputed with them. They then traveled to Jerusalem on behalf of their Gentile brethren to consult with

the apostles and leaders there to resolve the matter once and for all. Paul viewed such attempts to impose the Jewish culture on Gentiles as the work of "false brethren." Interpreting their actions as an attempt to "spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus," Paul resisted them stoutly and did not give way for even a moment (Gal. 2:4—5). He flatly refused to allow his Gentile brother Titus to be pressured into circumcision. Paul's most decisive deed in behalf of Gentile rights was when he publicly rebuked Peter, the apostle, for his hypocrisy in allowing Jewish zealots to intimidate his conduct toward the Gentile brethren at Antioch (Gal. 2:11—14).

While being unyielding in his dealing with the fundamental principle of Gentiles and the rites of the Mosaic system, Paul was realistic and willing to compromise in an area of judgment. He agreed for Timothy to be circumcised before he began his apprenticeship with Paul (Acts 16:1—3). The modifying factor was that Timothy was half Jewish. Lest he be a stumbling block to Jewish souls, Paul conceded.

In the heat of all of this controversy, Paul taught the Gentile saints to love and assist the Jewish brethren who had shown such an ugly attitude toward them. His vehicle to accomplish this was the benevolent fund for the needy saints in Judea (Rom. 15:25—27). He argued that since Gentiles had been made partakers of the spiritual things of the Jewish brethren (the gospel) then they owed to them to minister unto them in carnal things. This, of course, had a healing effect on both sides of the controversy. It is hard to hate and mistreat a man who is being kind to you (Rom. 12:21—22).

While he fought tenaciously for "*their rights*" as Christians, Paul was willing to sacrifice *his rights* and liberties rather than offend Gentile saints. He hesitated not to say, "Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (I Cor. 8:13). The entire 14th and much of the 15th chapters of

Romans is devoted to applying this sacrificial principle. Such basic lessons as this would have forestalled or avoided many of the heartbreaking conflicts and schisms which have wrecked our churches at home and abroad.

Paul gave God all the glory for what he had been able to accomplish among the Gentiles. At Jerusalem he rehearsed "all things that God had done with them" (Acts 15:4). Again, "For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles" (Rom. 15:18).

The Debt We Owe to Paul

It is hard to conceive what our plight would be today had it not been for the works of this dedicated apostle of Christ. He braved the hostile environment of his day and built the bridges necessary to give us the gospel, but also to give us an equal standing with the Hebrews in Christ.

Had he been killed before he accomplished his mission, or had he been a weaker man willing to compromise, the church might have degenerated into a narrow Jewish sect. We Gentiles might yet be second class citizens in the kingdom. It is entirely possible that the gospel may never have come to Europe. Or in a diluted Jewish form, it might have failed to win our ancestors from Paganism and to civilize and elevate them as Paul's work did. Thank God for this humble man who dared to dream the impossible dream.

He fought the unbeatable foe and won
He bore with unbearable sorrow
He ran where the brave dare not go
He sought to right the unrightable wrongs
He fought for the right without question or pause
He was willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause.

And the world was better for this,
That one man scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To reach the unreachable star.

Lessons to Learn from Paul's Work with the Gentiles

1. The power and influence one man can have in changing the world for good when his life is controlled by God.
2. God uses *prepared* people for the tasks he has to be done.
3. To accomplish anything worthwhile in life we must overcome the obstacles Satan sets before us.
4. The great challenge to the church in every age is to rise above the sinful barriers of racism and respect of persons.
5. Only when we, like Paul, see the people of the world as *lost* in sin without Christ will we be motivated to take them the gospel.
6. When Christians today are willing to spend and be spent for men's souls as was Paul, then the church will grow as under Paul's ministry.
7. May we with courage and capability challenge the false religions and philosophies of our day as did Paul.
8. Let us pray that God will give us wisdom to distinguish between the law of the gospel and the cultural practices of our homeland.
9. May we respect the right of every saint in every nation to practice New Testament Christianity within the confines of his culture.
10. While it is right to covet our converts' love, may we always refuse to accept their worship. I speak, of course, of what we commonly call preacheritis.
11. Let us strive to be good to brethren who are not so good to us and thus overcome their evil with our good.
12. Like Paul, we should always be willing to sacrifice "our personal rights" if in so doing we can salvage a soul that might otherwise be offended and lost.

13. Always give God the glory of what is done through your efforts.
14. Be thankful that Paul did not grow weary in well-doing until he had finished his course and the middle wall of partition had been demolished once and for all.

Footnotes

¹Barclay, William. *The Mind of St. Paul*, London, Fontana Books, 1958, p. 9—10.

²*Ibid*, p. 9—10.

The Peace Which Jesus Gives

On his final night, Jesus told his apostles, "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

A world torn by centuries of war and strife yearns for and desperately searches for peace. The person whose mind has been embroiled in strife, conflict or fear likewise desires peace. Men form organizations such as the United Nations and spend vast sums of money to attain and maintain peace. All of these efforts ultimately fail. People go to doctors, psychiatrists and counsellors seeking peace. In their desperate search for tranquility they often go to quacks such as palm-readers, spiritual mediums and astrologers. They rush after every new brand of religion or mind control. Witness the vast following of Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, and Zen Buddhism. They gulp down tranquilizers hoping for instant and easy peace. (Sadly this itself may rob them of the very thing they ardently seek by addicting them and making them dependent.)

In Christ we have peace that passes understanding which guards our hearts and thoughts (Phil. 4:7).

What is peace? Webster defines peace as "a state of tranquility or quiet; harmony in personal relations; mutual concord; freedom from fears, agitating passions and moral conflicts." There are two sides to peace. Negatively, peace is the absence of fear and trouble, concern and strife. Positively, peace is the presence of contentment, calmness of soul, inward happiness with oneself.

I. Jesus gives us peace that is different than the peace of

the world (John 14:27). The world gives *temporary* peace, Christ's peace is *permanent*. Since recorded history the world has never known a generation that was totally free from war. Personally the situation is similar. Today's peace can be wrecked overnight by any number of circumstances.

The peace of the world is often *deceptive* while Christ's peace is always *real*. Many a person thought they had a happy, peaceful home, not realizing their mate was at that very moment planning to break the marriage.

Freedom from outer strife describes the world's peace. Jesus gives freedom from inner strife. A man can live in what appears to be an ideal situation in life and yet be so unhappy within that he cannot endure to live, thus destroying himself. In Christ one can be so content within that he can survive the most hostile kind of environment.

The world can give one peace for the *here and now*, yet leaving the recipient in danger of eternal torment. Christ blesses us with peace for *now and eternity*.

The world's peace is often *induced by pills or the hypnotist* and is as uncertain and transitory as them. Christ endows us with peace as a free gift from the everlasting God in heaven.

In the world, peace results from the *possessions of certain physical things*. In Christ it is a condition of the soul based on its *new relationship* to the God of the universe.

II. "Peace that passes understanding." These words from Paul to the Philippians beautifully describe what we have in Christ (Phil. 4:7). Paul himself had found this marvelous peace. He was *content* even when in prison (Phil. 4:11). He had learned the secret of being happy and at peace under all circumstances, even the most adverse (Phil. 4:12). His secret was expressed thusly: "I can do all things in him (Christ) that

strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). While under house arrest in Rome, separated from home and loved ones and in the absence of material comforts he wrote, “I have all things, and abound; I am filled ...” (Phil. 4:18). We asked, “How could this be?” Such seems impossible to the worldly minded. But the saint who knows Christ and his divine peace quickly identifies with the apostle’s “strange” response to his difficulties. The good news of it all is that inspired apostle confidently assures us, “My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

The Christian enjoys a peace remarkably different from the world. We have the Father who created us and daily sustains our lives (Matt. 6:32a). The poor sinner doesn’t know the source of peace. Our heavenly Father knows us and our needs (Matt. 6:32a). Since he adequately provides the needs of the tiniest of His creatures, surely he will supply the same for us who alone are made in His image and endowed with an immortal soul (Matt. 6:25—26).

We trust a trustworthy Lord. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you ...” (John 14:1—3). Note that he assures us that we may confidently believe in him. He is “the way, the *truth* and the life” (John 14:6). David praised our God saying, “Thou hast redeemed O Jehovah, thou God of truth” (Ps. 31:5). Our Bible, His holy word, is solemnly declared to be *truth* (John 17:17).

III. The source of our peace. This peace we speak of originates with “the God of peace” (Rom. 15:33). It is a gift bestowed (John 14:27). It is given by the grace of God (Tit. 2:11—13). It is not for sale. No man can earn or deserve it (Tit. 3:4—7). Thank God this is so. If it were for sale only those with great wealth could afford such a costly thing. As it is, all men of whatever station in life are equally able to enjoy the rich blessings of God’s peace. Be thankful it is not earned or

deserved, for who among us could ever be good enough to merit anything from the righteous God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Our peace comes as a part of the package when we are saved from our sins. In salvation we receive *forgiveness* which removes the peace-robbing guilt from our hearts. Thus we can be at peace with ourselves. When saved we are *reconciled* to God restoring that broken relationship so essential to peace. A *renewed heart* which always comes with salvation will make it possible for us to live peaceably with our fellow-man. Thus with three dimensional peace; (inward, vertical and horizontal) we can be happy and free from the turmoils of life.

The peace which man himself makes, another man can take away, but the peace which Jesus offers will be as sure and lasting as the Giver himself.

The Peculiar Church

It is human nature to desire to be like one's neighbor. We tend to shun the distinctive and individualistic, whether in dress, conduct or habits. Most religious organizations hurry to conform to the culture and customs of their society. God demands, however, that his church be different from other religions. In fact, her distinction from human organizations is what entitles the church to exist. It is the key to her success.

The Hebrews were chosen to be God's peculiar people. "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself ..." (Deut. 14:2 KJV). Their desire to "Be like all the nations" around them was sinful (I Sam. 8:19—20). The true church today must also be a peculiar people. Peter quotes those very words from Moses in I Pet. 2:9, "But ye are a peculiar people." (KJV).

Peculiar means that "which is characteristic of one only; whether person or class ..." It means to be "exclusive, different from the normal or average." While we hold many things in common with other churches, of necessity we will be peculiar and different in many other areas. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Really it is "our glory" for being Biblically distinctive marks a congregation as part of the Lord's true family. Paul warned the Roman saints, "And be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2, KJV). J. B. Phillips translation renders this, "Do not let the world squeeze you into its own mold."

I. The church of Christ is peculiar in its *names*. Its members are called Christians (I Pet. 4:16). It has no sectarian names such as Lutheran or Baptist, to distinguish its members from others. We are not "Church of Christians." In the collective sense we are called the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) or the Church of

God (I Cor. 1:1—2). As individual followers of Jesus we are disciples (Matt. 28:19), saints (I Cor. 1:2), Christians (Acts 11:26). We reject the human terminology of the religious world and seek to call Bible things by Bible names (I Pet. 4:11).

II. The church is peculiar in its creed and rule of faith. In fact, we have no rule save the new covenant of Jesus. There is but “one faith” or system of doctrine (Eph. 4:5). Since the Bible is a guide that makes us complete and furnishes us completely unto every good work, we have no need for any other creed (II Tim. 3:16—17).

This creed, being divine, never needs revision or correction since it was given once for all times (Jude 3). We reject all human, man-made creeds because they are totally unneeded and they are a chief cause of religious confusion and strife. We are not divided over what the Bible actually says. Rather, it is what *men* have said about the Bible and religion that has created our problems!

III. The organization of Christ’s church is peculiar. Paul the *preacher* wrote a letter to “all the saints in Christ Jesus that are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons ...” (Phil. 1:1). Here we see the ideal makeup of every New Testament church. Bishops who oversee the flock, deacons who serve, preachers who proclaim the gospel, and the saints who follow. Each congregation is self governing with its own local leadership. The bishops are also termed elders (older) and shepherds (pastors) Acts 20:17, 28—29). A congregation’s bishops have authority only in that congregation of which they are members (I Pet. 5:1—2). The members of a local congregation choose their own leadership from among their own group (Acts 6:3). Through their chosen leadership they select their own preacher, supervise the dispersal of their contributions, and settle their disputes. There is no ecclesiasticism or centralization of authority. Christ is the head of *all things* to his church (Eph. 1:22—23). No man or group of men has the right to govern his

kingdom. He has ordained the simple government we have discussed. When godly bishops (elders) follow Christ's inspired instructions (The Bible) and thus lead their congregation it will prosper with Heaven's blessings.

IV. The worship of the Lord's church is distinctive. It is here more than anywhere else that the church's peculiarity is seen. We commune differently. Early Christians took the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). When God told Israel to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8) he did not have to specify every seventh day. All Hebrews understood it to mean each sabbath of every week. Likewise early Christians all broke the bread every Lord's day. So do we. I am impressed that those who feel communion should be observed only monthly or quarterly have no difficulty in understanding I Corinthians 16:1—2 to teach a weekly collection for the church treasury; yet it says, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store ..." Could it be that the preacher's salary and due bills have something to do with the exegesis?

We commune with both bread and fruit of the vine as Jesus ordained (Matt. 26:26—27). The common people receive the wine even as those who administer the Supper. We would not think of substituting water as do our Mormon neighbors. A righteous man dares not to tamper with God's sacred things. We do our very best to "make all things according to the pattern that was showed ..." by the Lord (Heb. 8:5).

We give our free-will offerings weekly as we have been prospered (I Cor. 16:1—2). We have no taxing, or rental of pews. We reject as unworthy those money raising schemes such as raffles, pie sales, car washes and carnivals. We give our gifts as an act of worship to God because we love Him. We teach a man to give "as he hath prospered in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7).

We sing praises to God without accompaniment of musical instruments. God tells us to sing in New Testament worship (Eph. 5:19). Nowhere does he tell us to play musical instruments in worship. Jesus tells to teach disciples to “observe all things whatsoever he commanded ...” (Matt. 28:18). Since he only commanded singing, that is all we can instruct men to do with divine authority. Paul warns us “not to go beyond the things that are written” (I Cor. 4:6). Thus the true church of Christ will abide by the instruction to sing in worship, going no further (Col. 3:16—17). Although our acapella singing does distinguish us today, there was a day in the past when such religious leaders as John Wesley, founder of Methodism, John Calvin, father of the Prebysterian churches, Charles Spurgeon, greatest of 19th Century Baptist preachers, openly condemned instrumental music in worship. The first instrument introduced into any known church was in 670 AD by Pope Vitalian. Its presence caused such a stir that it was withdrawn and another 500 years passed before instrumental music was widely accepted among the Catholic churches.

V. The church that Jesus built is unique in its doctrine in that it rejects the doctrines and commandments of men as vain, useless and dangerous (Matt. 15:9). We hold and teach only those things that are the doctrine of Christ (II John 9—11). The apostle John warns that any who transgress and abide not within Christ’s teaching have not the Father’s blessing (Ibid). Furthermore we recognize that only the New Testament of Jesus is binding on men today. As disciples of Christ we are “dead to the law” of Moses (Rom. 7:4). The Old Testament law was taken away when nailed to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14—17). Every Christian and every congregation looks to the New Testament of Jesus as the sole authority for faith and conduct. We recognize no man’s right to make laws or to discount what is already given. Christ is Lord (Rom. 10:9—10), his word is our creed by which we will be judged in the last day (John 12:48).

VI. The church of the Lord is peculiar in its plea for unity. We seriously plead for all believers to be "one body" in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27—28). We recognize the fact that denominational division is sinful and wrong (I Cor. 3:1—5). Christ's will is that we all be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:20—21). There should be no divisions among us. Rather we should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment (I Cor. 1:10). Men must all build their religious faith upon Christ the one foundation (I Cor. 3:11). All teaching must be in complete harmony with the revealed will of Christ (II John 9—11). Teaching that varies from the Scriptures must be rejected as heresy and dangerous (Gal. 1:8—9). While we call all men to join hands in restoring the original simplicity and purity of Christianity, we reject those human plans and schemes such as the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement which are based on compromise rather than Scripture.

VII. The church of Christ is different in its teaching on salvation. We reject both the Protestant tradition of salvation by faith only and the Catholic concept of salvation by works of human effort. James tells us, "Ye see then how that by faith a man is justified and *not by faith only*" (2:24 KJV). He further adds that "faith without works is dead ..." (2:26). The doctrine that men are saved by faith apart from obedience then is obviously in error.

Just as clearly, Scripture teaches us that man cannot merit or earn his salvation. Paul says it is "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Salvation then is a free gift of God's grace that is received when man obeys the instructions of God concerning it. By simply reading the book of Acts of the Apostles, we can soon learn how people were saved under their ministry. They

preached the gospel to lost sinners (Acts 2:14—36). Those with good and honest hearts heard and believed the good news (Acts 2:37). The inspired preacher commanded all who believed and desired to be saved to “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Those who did so were forgiven, received the gift of God’s Holy Spirit and were added to the church (Acts 2:38, 47). This is salvation “by grace through faith” (Eph.2:8—9). This unique message of good news we preach to every creature (Mk. 16:15—16).

Being different from the other religious groups is no shame. Let all of God’s children gladly pay the price to be His peculiar people. May all of you who read these lines join hands with us in serving the Lord as “The Church of God ... even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus ...” (I Cor. 1:2).

Great Preaching

Preaching in America is as common as apple pie. In every city numerous churches dot the landscape. In every church a preacher holds forth. The 17,500 churches of Christ have their share of preachers. Anyone who has spent much time in church has had opportunity to hear many men in the pulpit. Inevitably we compare those we hear. The standard of measurement ranges from “great” to “sorry.” Leaving the “sorry” for someone else to describe, we will note some Biblical principles that are indicative of “great” preaching.

Great preachers preach *the truth of God on all subjects*. Some may wonder why this point is necessary. Isn't it a foregone conclusion? Sadly of the multiplied thousands of preachers in our world, relatively few are content to preach God's word without the traditions and precepts of men. Peter wrote, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11 KJV). Jesus commands us to teach men “all things whatsoever (he) commanded” (Matt. 28:20). John warns that those who go beyond the teaching of Christ have not God, only those who abide within the Scriptural boundaries enjoy God's blessings (II John 9—10). Since God's Word is truth (John 17:17) those who are satisfied to teach it alone, teach truth. Such cannot be uniformly said of man's doctrine.

Great preaching is distinguished by its *manner of presentation*. God wants his truth preached “in love” (Eph. 4:15). Some capable pulpit orators are reckless and destructive in their dealing with the souls of men. Some men sound in faith have driven multitudes away from God. Good churches have been wrecked by preachers who used truth as a Roman scourge. God's Word is capable of being preached fearlessly, uncompromisingly and fully, yet in a spirit of loving

compassion. A hateful, belligerent preacher is not a great preacher.

Great preaching is always *lived out in the preacher's daily life*. If no one else heeds the lesson, he will. Paul not only taught the Ephesian saints publicly and from house to house, he gave them *an example* in all things (Acts 20:20; 35). What is more disgusting than the "do as I say, not as I do preacher?"

A great preacher will be *genuine and sincere*. His message must be more than hollow, empty words. If a man does not believe his doctrine it will soon be evident to all. The professional who merely echos the words that he is expected to say is of no more value than a tape recording. In fact, he may be of less value because the brother who recorded the taped message was most likely sincere. Like Paul, we must know whom we believe in and be persuaded that he is truly Lord before we can achieve any excellence in our work (II Tim. 1:12). Without this depth of conviction a preacher will not pay the price and run the risks necessary to be a "great man of God." Convenience, security and public opinion are often inimical to great preaching.

To be great, preaching must be *balanced*. Paul preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). He held back nothing that was profitable for the brethren (Acts 20:20). One-sided preaching, no matter how noble the theme is still one-sided. Great preaching will include a happy mix of positive and negative teaching. There will be both strong meat and fundamentals. Both Old and New Testaments will be dealt with. Lessons will speak to young and old alike. (Explosive lessons rushed into without thought or planning are the opposite of this balance.) Hasty preaching usually ends in disaster, (Prov. 14:29). Herein lies one of the most obvious needs, yet one that multitudes of preachers fail in.

Preaching that is great is *coupled with service and diligent work* outside the pulpit. Like faith without works, preaching without service is dead in itself (Jas. 2:26). Some men view preaching only in terms of the study and the pulpit. God's man will be a servant of his fellow man (Matt. 20:26—28). He will be busy teaching men privately (Acts 20:20), counseling and encouraging those with problems (II Tim. 2:24—26). He will be a comfort to the bereaved and broken hearted, a friend to young and old alike. He will lead God's people seven days each week in the pulpit and out.

A great preacher will *exalt Christ and give God all the glory*. Paul abased himself (II Cor. 11:7) and freely gave the Lord all credit for his achievements. He gloried in the Lord (I Cor. 1:27—31). Herein Satan finds his greatest success among preachers. Human pride makes man crave attention, recognition and praise. But the moment the preacher begins to reach for these he is led astray from his true purpose in life and pierced through with many sorrows. God usually bestows sufficient reward upon His faithful servants to satisfy all legitimate needs of the psyche. But even when He does not, we must patiently wait rather than to seek after it (Prov. 27:2).

Great preachers are *more interested in pleasing God than*

men. Paul says, "If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). Space fails to record all the evil done by men—pleasing preachers. Suffice it to say that such have dishonored the preaching profession down through the years to this day.

Great preaching is *world-wide in scope.* All gospel preaching must be in the light of Jesus' great commission (Mk. 16:15). Christ's pulpit demands far more than a narrow message promoting one's own race or provincial interest. The church is the world-wide family of God. It knows no racial, national or cultural boundaries. There is no Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female, all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

Preaching that is great *will save souls and build strong churches.* Some brilliant scholars never get around to evangelizing. Some powerful speakers seem to spend all their energies in other areas. God's preachers are first of all seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). With Paul they are prepared to become all things to all men if they can save them (I Cor. 9:22). Really what is a man profited if he can speak with the tongue of an angel or sit in the scholar's seat and yet takes no souls to eternity? It is they that turn many to righteousness that shall shine as the stars forever (Dan. 12:3). Such a soul-winning preacher may not master the homiletic style of the classroom, but they will populate heaven with the fruit of their labors.

The crying need of this generation is for great men of God who will faithfully proclaim the everlasting gospel. May all of God's men who occupy the pulpit, daily examine themselves to see if they are what God wants them to be (II Cor. 13:5).

Repentance Means To Forsake Your Sins

Sin is a universal experience for man. "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin is a life-wrecking, heart breaking, damning power. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Because of the disastrous consequences of sin, the wise person will strive to immediately forsake any and all sin that he is aware of in his life. James exhorts us: "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you. Cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye doubleminded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall exalt you" (Jas 4:8—10). Here we see a call to repentance that all thinking people will heed. There are numerous significant reasons why we should forsake our sins. The thoughts that follow will explore some of them.

I. Because sin in any form ruins the soul. Solomon observed that "His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22). Like cords that bind the prisoner, so sin shackles our life. Isaiah plainly declares that "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (59:2). Sin drives a wedge between man and God thus destroying man's relationship with the source of every blessing.

II. Because one sin not repented of inevitably leads to another until we are ultimately destroyed. We see this vividly illustrated in the episode of David and Bathsheba in II Samuel, chapter 11. First David lusted after another man's wife. He then invited her into his home. They committed adultery. To escape

detection and shame, David sought to deceive Uriah her husband into thinking the child was his. Unable to accomplish this he “got Uriah drunk.” But even this failed. Finally he ordered Uriah to be “set up” for death in battle. Only when David repented and forsook his sin did this malignant growth stop. Remember that every unforgiven sin is another link in the chain which binds the sinner. Sin never gets better by being left alone. “Evil men and imposters wax (grow) worse and worse” (II Tim. 3:13).

III. Because even *one* sin is sufficient to enslave and damn one’s life, the Hebrew author warns us to be rid of “the sin” (singular) that so easily besets us (Héb. 12:1). In his first epistle, John tells us that “there is *a sin* unto death.” That is an unrepented sin. It cannot and will not be forgiven so long as it is clung to. It is useless even to pray for the man who clings to his sin unto death (I John 5:16). Now we can understand more clearly James’ warning, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all” (James 2:10). The one sin which we refuse to forsake can neutralize all the other good we may do. Mankind has not generally realized that sin is so potent a poison that even one can rob a man of heaven’s reward.

IV. Because the very sin you are clinging to may bring down the wrath of God upon you. Sin deserves punishment (Rom. 6:23). God has thus far been gracious to you in spite of your transgressions. But the time comes when justice demands that the penalty be inflicted. God told Abraham that the Amorites had not yet filled the cup of iniquity therefore his descendants would have to wait to receive the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:16). In Moses' day the Amorites reached that breaking point and God ordered their destruction (Lev. 18:24—25). Luke tells us of the death of Herod Agrippa in Caesarea. Because this wicked man allowed men to acclaim him as a god, he was smitten by an angel of the Lord and perished (Acts. 12:21—23). Both nations and individuals can reach the point where judgment is inevitable and unescapable. Forsake your sins this day, lest you tempt God too far.

V. Because my sin was responsible for Christ's death. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Isaiah predicted that he would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and that the chastisement of our peace would be upon him (Is. 53:4—6). Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). How grieved we would be if because of our carelessness we caused a traffic fatality. How much more should we grieve that our sins made it necessary for Christ to die. Realizing this awful fact should prompt us to abandon whatever sin is in our life.

VI. Because God hates sin. He loves righteousness but he hates iniquity (Heb. 1:9). In Proverbs we are told that there are six things which Jehovah hateth: yea, seven which are an abomination to him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood ..." This is only a partial listing. Other scriptures catalogue other sins of mankind. But note please that God even hates such sins as pride and lying. The soul that loves God would do nothing to grieve his Lord. And since sin pains the heart of God, we gladly forsake it once and for all.

VII. Because sin in all its forms and degrees is hateful and despicable. The word iniquity is frequently used synonymously for sin and means warped, twisted or perverted. Sin destroys, it corrupts, it defiles every life into which it comes. Yesterday's beautiful, chaste little girl can be tomorrow's brazen prostitute by the influence of sin. Today's loving son can be tomorrow's fiendish murderer if sin is allowed full sway in his life. Even the sin of false teaching is likened into gangrene in II Timothy 2:17. Nothing is more repulsive than dying flesh yet that is what sin is like. Jehovah told the nation of Judah she would bear her shame because of all she had done (Ezekiel 16:54).

VIII. Because the consequences of sin are so far-reaching, I must realize that my sins will seldom affect me alone. Isaiah wrote, "The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws ... therefore hath the curse devoured the earth ... and few men (are) left" (Is. 24:5—6). Even the good people who are innocent often suffer because of the sins of others. Moses warned that the consequences of the father's sin are visited upon the children and grandchildren (Exodus 34:6—7). A parent's promiscuity may cause a child complications of venereal disease. A liquor drinking mother can damage her babe in the womb. A gambling father may leave his wife and children in poverty.

One's sins may haunt him for a lifetime. After his adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, David wrote, "My sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). Years after Stephen's death, Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15). Unforgiven, these same sins will curse us for eternity. "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment (i.e., they are forgiven, J.H.W.) and some men also they follow after." They follow them to judgment condemning them (I Tim. 5:24). Jesus reminds us that sinners who do not seek his pardon in this life will hear him say on judgment day, "depart from me ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

XI. Because sin must be renounced outwardly as well as inwardly before one can have forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins ..." (I John 1:8—9). Peter thus called upon Simon of Samaria to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). It is not enough to be sorry for your sins. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation" (II Cor. 7:10).

Repentance is a change of heart which results in a change of life. But even repentance must be accompanied by a confession of the wrong done (Jas. 5:16). This confession should be as public as the sin which was committed (Matt. 18:15—18).

You can cut down a tree but chances are it will sprout again with many more shoots. To be rid of it, you must dig out the roots. So it is with sin. It is not enough to quit committing a foul deed, the heart must be changed from which the sinful acts arise (Matt. 15:18). This God calls repentance and you must repent, said Jesus, or you will surely perish (Lk. 13:3).

Revelation 20, An Exposition

The twentieth chapter of the Revelation has been a battle ground for ages. It is the *only possible* foothold that premillennialists can find in the Bible. If it can be established that the events of this chapter are not to be interpreted literally, then their wild speculative system falls to the ground.

Revelation is a Book of Figures and Symbols

This is undisputable fact. Notice a few examples. In 1:1 John tells us the book was “signified” unto him. The root of this word is *sign*. In 1:13—18 John saw Jesus but used numerous metaphors to describe him. “His eyes were as flame of fire” “His feet were like unto burnished brass” “Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.” None would take these descriptive terms literally. In chapter 1:20 John saw seven stars and golden candlesticks which he explains are seven churches and their angels. In 12:3 and 9 he saw a great red dragon which was said to be symbolic of Satan. He saw a harlot which he identifies as the great city that ruled over all the world, obviously Rome.

Chapter 20 is also filled with symbols. We see an angel, a chain, a serpent, and abyss with a lid, 1,000 years and evil forces name Gog and Mogog. Even the premillennialists understand all of this as symbolic save the 1,000 years. But I argue that it is unreasonable and inconsistent to explain all these as figurative and then single out the 1,000 years as literal.

The Symbols Identified

Who is the angel of Chapter 20? First, we ask *what* is an angel? The word simply means a messenger, it may be a

heavenly, a diabolical or a human one. The angel of this passage is likely Jesus. He alone has the power to do what the angel does. He has the keys of death and Hades. (Rev. 1:18). All judgment and authority are his. (John 5:22—27). He came to bind the strong man Satan, that he might rescue those held in Satan's domain (Matt. 12:28—29). Christ is "the angel of the Lord" of the Old Testament. Compare Ex. 23:20 and I Cor. 10:4, to see the evidence of this. For a fine discussion of this question the reader is referred to the book, **The Divinity of Our Lord**, by Canon H. P. Liddon. When we say Christ is the angel or messenger of Jehovah, we in no way deny his deity. Nor do we argue that he is in nature an angel, i.e., a created being. The word is used for its definition, i.e., messenger.

Who is the dragon? John answer this for is in 20:2 by saying it is the Devil and Satan. Like the fierce dragons of ancient myth, Satan threatens all of humanity.

What is the chain that bound Satan? That chain is the gospel. When Satan tempted Christ, the Savior successfully resisted his every attempt with the aid of the Word of God. Compare Matt. 4:1—11. That which is the power of God to salvation is also his power to restrain Satan.

When was Satan bound? If we can determine this from the Scripture, we will know for sure when the 1,000 years began. The Bible shows that by his coming, his death and resurrection, Christ bound Satan. Notice again Matt. 12:24—29, Christ argues, "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." The facts that Jesus cast out demons; that he now saves men from sin, are proof that he has bound the strong man, Satan, who is god of this world. (II Cor. 4:4). As Jesus contemplated his forthcoming death he said, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31). In Colossians 2:14—15, Paul reasons

that when Christ was nailed to the cross he “despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” The expression principalities and powers has reference to the evil spiritual powers, i.e., he stripped them of their power and authority. Again, Paul says that Christ “brought to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” (Heb. 2:14). John says that Christ was manifested to the end that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Some cannot believe that Satan is presently bound since so much sin and wickedness yet abounds in the world. The verse says, “Satan is bound that he should deceive the nations no more.” (Rev. 20:3) With respect to the nations and sinners, Satan is bound in a relative sense. He cannot stop the spread of the Kingdom. He cannot destroy the gospel (Matt. 24:35). We say that Satan’s binding is relative or partial as concerns the world, even as reflected in Jude 6. Angels that fell from their sinless state, God has “Kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Yet Satan and his fallen helpers are allowed some degree of freedom to tempt mankind even while under this heaven-imposed restraint.

With respect to the saints of God, Satan is absolutely bound. He cannot trick the Christian so long as he is faithful. In John 10:28, Jesus said of his disciples, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand” So long as the disciple is faithful, Satan is incapable of separating him from God. With the whole armor of God we can stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11—12). The man begotten of God, who does not make a practice of sinning, keepeth himself and the evil one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). We can illustrate this by likening Satan to a vicious dog bound to a chain of 10 feet. If we stay outside the circumference of the chain the dog cannot touch us. But if we wander within his bounds, he can devour us. The chain is God’s word. Keep that word between you and Satan and you are safe.

Ignore the word at your own peril. Satan was bound at Calvary when the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head. (Compare Gen. 3:15). He will continue bound until the little season just prior to Christ's second advent.

In Rev. 20:4, John saw the souls of martyred saints reigning-with Christ. Here is a vision of men *from* the earth, not of men *on* the earth. This is the pre-resurrection state of martyrs for Christ. Notice that these martyred saints were *presently* reigning with Christ. Early in Revelation, Jesus had promised persecuted disciples that if they would be "faithful unto death" he would give them a crown of life. (2:10). In 3:21 he said, "He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I overcome, and sat down with my Father in His throne." Faithful saints who die for the Lord reign with him now. Nothing is said of a *future* reign on earth!

Where Do They Reign

John says that these triumphant saints reign with Christ (20:4). But Christ's throne is in heaven, not on the earth. We notice in Revelation 3:21 that he promised that the overcoming saint will sit down with him in His throne even as he sat down with the Father upon his throne. In Acts 2:32—36 Peter argues that the resurrected Jesus *ascended* into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. Again, Paul argued that he, must depart this earth to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23). Therefore, the knowledgeable Bible student does not look for an earthly reign of Christ.

What Is The First Resurrection?

Premillennialists argue for two bodily resurrections, one of the righteous at the time of Christ's alleged return to earth, the second for the wicked at the end of that reign. They seem to forget that the term "resurrection" can have a spiritual import. For example, in Rom. 6:4—5 our salvation and baptism are

likened to a death, burial and resurrection. The same illustration is used in Ephesians 2:1, 4—6 and Colossians 2:12—13 and 3:1—4. These cases prove that we need not interpret the word literally. In John 5:24—29, Jesus speaks of salvation as a resurrection and then mentions the literal resurrection of the body in the same context. “He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” i.e., the saved man had experienced one resurrection (a spiritual one) and at the last day he will be raised to the resurrection of life. Thus the first resurrection is the result of salvation. For those who have experienced that first resurrection there is no fear of the second death because their sins are forgiven and they will be raised to eternal life. (See Rev. 20:6, 14—15).

What Is The Thousand Years

Already we have shown that both the Book of Revelation and its twentieth chapter are highly figurative. Throughout the Bible, *numbers* especially are given figurative or spiritual meanings. The number seven is the most commonly used symbolic number, usually it means completeness or perfection. Also, the numbers twelve and forty often have meanings beyond their numerical value. “The word ‘thousand’ is used more than twenty times in the Book of Revelation. Not once, we believe, is it to be taken literally.” R.B. Jones, **The Latter Days**, p. 152. The expression “thousand years” means a long period of time in contrast to the “little season” of 20:3. “The figure of one thousand represents a definite period of time, measured by and known to God.” G.L. Murry, **Millennial Studies**, p. 184. It is the period of time extending from the Lord’s first advent and victory over Satan until the little season which will occur just prior to his second coming. It is the time when Satan is bound. (Rev. 20:2) But we have already shown that Satan is bound now. It is the time of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5). But the first resurrection is our experience in salvation which occurs now. It is the time of the martyr’s reign with Christ (20:4). But those

who overcome Satan reign with Christ now. (Rev. 3:21) Therefore we conclude that the thousand years is the period of the Christian age while Christ sits at his Father's right hand in heaven, reigning on David's throne (Acts. 2:32—36).

What Is The Little Season?

There are a number of points we can glean about this matter. It is a brief period of time just prior to the coming of the Lord in final judgment. It will take place after a long period of time in which the departed saints have reigned with Christ. It will be a relatively brief period of unusual Satanic activity (Rev. 20:7—9). Other passages also speak of extremely wicked and anti-Christian conditions which will prevail before the Lord comes. (See II Pet. 3:3—4; II Tim. 3:1—5). It appears that the little season will involve a world-wide persecution of the Lord's true church. It will be Satan's last attempt to crush the cause of Christ. The little season of persecution will end with the Lord's second coming whereupon he will save the saints and judge the wicked.

Who are Gog and Magog?

The nations which Satan will deceive are called Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8). We also find Gog mentioned in Ezekiel, chapter 38 and 39, but there are numerous distinctions in the two records. In Revelation Gog is a nation, in Ezekiel he is prince. Ezekiel's Gog comes from the north, in Revelation he comes from the four corners of the earth. John speaks of two persons, Gog and Magog, while Ezekiel speaks of Gog out of the land of Magog. Gog and Magog represent future enemies of the church whose true identity are as yet unknown. There is no evidence at all that would justify us applying these references to Russia.

What is the Camp of the Saints?

In Rev. 20:9 the church is likened to a military camp under fierce attack, completely surrounded by its enemies. The situation seems hopeless by human standards. But God intervenes to save her. The figure is probably borrowed from the time of the Exodus when the nation of Israel was organized as a military camp in the wilderness with hostile forces on every hand.

John also styles the church as “the beloved city” which could only refer to Jerusalem. But this would not be the old material Jerusalem which had perished some 26 years before. It would be the new, spiritual Jerusalem as mentioned in Hebrews 12:22. We see a picture of the church under persecution by worldly forces far greater and more powerful than herself. The case looks fatal to human eyes.

What is the Fire that fell from Heaven?

Just when it appears that the forces of Satan will overwhelm the Lord’s cause, fire will come from heaven to destroy the enemy. It reminds us of God’s judgment upon Sodom (Gen. 19:24). God promised Ezekiel that he would send fire upon Magog (39:6). This surely refers to the Lord’s coming in fiery judgment upon the wicked as described vividly by Paul in II Thessalonians 1:7—9.

What is the Great White Throne Judgment?

In this section (Rev. 20:11—12), John describes a *universal* judgment, for all the dead were summoned to stand before the throne. It will be a personal judgment in which each individual will give account of his conduct. This judgment will be righteous in nature for the Lord will be the judge and the individual’s own personal record will be measured by God’s book. The whiteness

of the throne suggest the purity of the judgment to be meted out. It will be final judgment, for the punishment of the wicked will be the final punishment of the lake of fire. Christ will be the judge upon the great white throne. (Matt. 25:31—32).

What Revelation 20 Does Not Say

Through the years our brethren have refuted premillennial speculations on this passage of scripture by noting the many things not mentioned therein that are essential if the premillennial theory is to be established. The careful reader will note the silence of the chapter on the second coming of Christ; the bodily resurrection; an earthly reign; the Throne of David on earth; Jerusalem or Palestine; living, earth-bound Christians, or the final resurrection. We do read, however, of curses pronounced upon those who dare to add anything to the words of this book. (Rev. 22:18:19).

Rather than Revelation 20 teaching the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, it teaches the present reign of Jesus in heaven with his saints and second coming which will bring judgment upon the wicked.

The Bible's Message Of Salvation

The Bible is God's message to man. In it he reveals his will for us. Hundreds of times the inspired prophets began their message with "Thus saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 38:17). The Hebrew letter opens with the them "God hath spoken to us" (1:1—2). The Bible is a collection of 66 smaller books, each of which has its own unique theme which makes vital contribution to the whole. The word Bible is from the greek **Biblos** which simply means book. Thus we have God's will written in a book.

To Whom Does It speak?

The Bible speaks to all men of all nations. It is the one truly universal book. Jesus commissioned his apostles to take his gospel to every creature of every nation (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19—20). As would be expected from a book from God, all men great and small, rude or cultured, are attracted to its message and satisfied there with.

What Is Its Theme?

The theme of the Bible is one and it is found in every book. That glorious theme is that God in his great mercy is willing and anxious to save all men who will trust him and obey his will. This grace is manifest in the giving of Jesus his Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). God promised this in Eden (Genesis 3:15). Prophets foretold it in vivid detail (Isaiah 52:13—53: 12). Poets sang of the glorious day (Psalms 2:1—2). Men anxiously awaited the coming of Messiah (Luke 2:25). The New Testament relates to fulfillment of all those ancient promises in Christ's coming, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension.

What Message Does It Bring?

1. Salvation is in Jesus Christ (II Timothy 2:10). In no other name can we hope to be saved (Acts 4:12).

2. Salvation is possible because Christ died in our place (I Corinthians 15:3). Being sinners, each of us deserve the wages of sin which is death (Romans 6:23). However, God allowed his Son to be “wounded for our transgressions ... bruised for our iniquities ... and with his stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5). When God saw “the travail of his soul” on Calvary, justice was satisfied and we could be pardoned (Is 53:11). In his infinite wisdom, God has decreed that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission of sin” (Heb. 9:22). But it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4). Therefore “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:13). The Bible proclaims that “it is the blood of Jesus his Son (that) cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

3. Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace (Rom. 6:23). Grace means a favor that is unearned or unmerited. Paul writes, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Man’s hardest lesson to learn is that he is totally unable to save himself from the consequences of sin. Money is of no value. Good works can not avail (Titus 3:5). Righteous conduct can not clean up past mistakes (Is. 64:6). Mortification of the body is valueless (Colossians 2:20—23). A hymn writer correctly captured the lesson: “In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” Thank God that in his mercy he extends salvation to all men as a gracious, free gift.

4. Salvation is available to all who believe in Jesus (John 3:16) “Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God ...” (Heb. 11:6). It is an undisputed fact that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). I stress that salvation is available

to *all* who believe in Christ because many have been led to believe that only a special few will God accept. Peter assures us that God is not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance (I Pet. 3:9) Paul affirms that God “is the Savior of all *men*, especially of them that believe.” Our Lord invites *all* that labor and are heavy laden to come to him for rest (Matt. 11:28).

5. Salvation is given to those who have *obedient faith*. “Faith apart from works is dead” (Jas. 2:26) Jesus defines saving faith in John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life: but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life ...” Another time Jesus said, “This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). Paul wrote to the Roman Christians about the “obedience of faith” (Rom 1:6). Always remember that in Christ the only thing that avails is “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).

6. Specific conditions are attached to salvation. Having believed we must *repent*. God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of heart that results in a change of life. (See this illustrated in Matthew 21:28—29). Either we repent or we perish (Lk. 13:3) To be saved one must be willing to *confess his faith* in Christ (Rom. 10:9—10). If we refuse to confess him, he will refuse to confess us (Matt. 10:32—33). All are commanded to be *baptized* for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 10:48). This baptism is an immersion in water (Rom. 6:3—5). It is in the act of baptism that the blood of Jesus washes away our sins (Acts 22:16).

What a marvelous message God’s Book brings to us. Surely every man and woman desires this good news of the gospel. Dear reader, what will you do with the offer God has extended? It is our prayer that you will respond to the Savior’s invitation today so he can cleanse your heart and make you his own.

The Saving Power Of A Good Life

Preaching the gospel alone has never saved every lost soul. The man who will not stop to hear the gospel cannot be reached by the proclamation of the Word. For difficult cases such as these, God has provided a corollary to assist in winning them to His cause.

To consider another angle, people of the world who want to follow the Lord must distinguish between true Christianity and the dozens of counterfeits that clamor for their attention. They must decide if we are in fact the church of the New Testament as we claim. They must be convinced that we deserve their consideration and eventually their participation. Their problem is that most of them know precious little of the Scriptures. All that most of them know is what they see in us. There are a number of aspects of the Christian's life that are especially valuable in demonstrating our faith.

I. Our *good works* proclaim our allegiance to Jehovah. Jesus charges us to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the Father (Matt. 5:16). There is an element of Christianity that must be seen. The key is that men *glorify God* in what they see. To accomplish this our works must be positive, honorable, pure, and good. In addition, we must do good not to attract attention to ourselves but to point men toward the source of all good, i.e., Jehovah. Never be hesitant to let your Christian principles be seen at work in your daily life.

II. *Good citizenship* is a powerful expression of one's faith. Peter instructs us to "be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the King as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him ... For so is the will of God that by

well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (I Pet. 2:13—15). Two immediate benefits of good citizenship are seen. 1) We are able to silence those hostile critics who slander our Lord's cause by demonstrating the falsity of their accusations. 2) We are able to enjoy a peaceful tranquil life since ruling powers see our harmless lives (I Tim. 2:2). 3) Even those prominent leaders in high places will take favourable notice of their Christian citizens whose exemplary conduct is a valuable asset to their domain.

III. *Chaste moral conduct* is an important aspect of this "good-life evangelism." The Christian wife whose husband will not obey the instructions of the Word of God "may be gained by the behavior of their wives beholding (their) *chaste behavior* coupled with fear" (I Pet. 3:1—2). Paul writes about women adorning themselves in modest apparel ... which becometh women professing godliness (I Tim. 2:9—10). There is a way of dress which is not becoming. The sexually provocative dress of the world is easily distinguished, so is the modest attire of the saints.

Paul urged the saints in Philippi "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you, or be absent, I may hear of your state that ye stand fast in one spirit ... striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). Even as the apostle would hear about their godly manner of life, so would their neighbors of the world. There is a manner of speaking worthy of the gospel, a manner of conduct in business, a manner of recreation that is the same. Let us be ever striving to live a life that is worthy of our Lord. Souls will be saved because of it. Let it never be said that our speech or conduct was unworthy (Eph. 5:3—4).

IV. *Kindness* to our fellow man is an impressive sermon to our neighbors. James argues that claiming to have faith is not enough. True faith can easily be seen in action. For example, if a brother and a sister be hungry or naked and you speak kind

words but do not help, your faith is dead. He then concludes, "I by my works will show thee my faith" (Jas. 2:14—18). John uses the same illustration in his first epistle (3:17—18). Perhaps this helps us to appreciate better the second charge to "bear one another burdens" (Gal. 6:2) and to do good unto *all men* and especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). Not only the poor see our good works. The entire community is favourably impressed by the helping, serving disciples of Jesus.

V. *Unity among brethren* is one of our most important non-verbal lessons. Our Lord prayed for all of us who believe on him that we "may all be one" even as he and the Father are one, "that the world may believe" that God did send him (John 17:21). The scandal of Christianity is division. Never be guilty of causing such. Some would never actively participate in a church split but yet allow Satan to use them by displaying an ugly divisive attitude toward brethren. They will not stand guiltless.

VI. *Brotherly love* displayed toward fellow saints is a beautiful testimony for the Lord before an unbelieving world. The Master told his disciples the night of his betrayal, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you ... by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples ..." (John 13:34—35). A pagan writer observed of those early saints, "Behold how they love one another." This beautiful agapé love should extend to all men, even those who are our enemies (Matt. 5:43—48). By doing our adversaries good we "heap coals of fire upon (their) heads" and overcome their evil with our good (Rom. 12:17—21).

Conclusion: Every Christian including preachers, elders, deacons and teachers needs to conscientiously work at practicing this evangelism of the good life. We must be an example to those whom we would lead (I Tim. 4:12). Man would always rather see a sermon than hear one. People will follow more readily than will they be driven. If we will follow our Lord and allow his light to be seen in our lives, our enemies will

have no evil thing to say to us. Rather they will glorify our Father and surrender their lives to His glorious Son.

* The author is indebted to Alonzo Welch for the basic outline of this lesson.

Social Concerns Of The Christian — Abortion

In the last half of the 8th Century B.C., Israel was in a moral crisis. Isaiah described her with searing words: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly! They have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel ... the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ..." (Is. 1:4—6). A news columnist recently painted his concept of our society: "... the America of the 1970's is in a class by itself. Never before has so large a share of the population indulged in an orgy of self pampering, overdosing, loafing, sponging, splurging, cheating, shoplifting, looting, philandering, even murdering. That's what the statistics show." Jack Anderson, *What Is Happening to the American Dream?* *Parade*, March 19, 1978. One need not be a seer to conclude that we too are enmeshed in a moral crisis.

Who Is Responsible?

It is common for the blame for such a social crisis to be passed on to politicians, educators, the media or some other public group. Could it be that people like us have contributed to our pitiful plight? No, we do not indulge ourselves in the world's vices, we have bribed no politician, but we have contributed to the problem by our indifference. God has granted us a system unique in all the world. We the people are privileged to choose our own leaders by the election process. We can choose the good candidate over the bad one. We can actively promote the decent candidate's cause and oppose the reprobate. To refuse to participate, however, is not to be neutral. It is to abdicate our role in selecting our rulers and thus forfeit the contest to the evil

ones who care nothing for righteousness.

How many of us who follow Christ have thus treated God's rich blessing of self-government with contempt ... despising our birthright (Heb. 12:17). Can we not see that the Ruler of all the nations has granted us a stewardship which we must exercise if we would continue to enjoy it (Gen. 1:28; I Cor. 4:2).

Christians should be greatly concerned about the welfare of our nation and our society. We can read of God's judgments on wicked nations of the past (Amos 1:3; 2:16). You are urged to join hands with others in encouraging good people of high character to seek public office. Men of proven integrity must be returned for additional terms.

You are exhorted to register for coming elections. Get acquainted with those who run for election. Let them know the things you are concerned about. Actively support the good so it will prevail over the evil. On election day cast your ballot, not for the party name but for a man or woman who will help preserve the Christian values of our nation. Remember we are the salt of the earth that will flavor, heal and preserve our society (Matt. 5:13).

If the millions of God-fearing, Bible-believing Americans would speak with a clear and certain voice at election time, much of the corruption would be rooted out and others would tremble with fear. Remember that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34.) We freely grant that righteous people do not need laws or law enforcers to make them do good and abstain from evil. But there is a type of citizen that will be civil, social and lawful only if the law insists that he do so (I Tim. 1:9).

Example: This year 1½ million unborn babies will perish in American abortion chambers. Evil people have manipulated the law to make this great crime legal. We could bring this blood

bath to a halt in a few months if all the good people who oppose abortion would join hands in demanding its end. All human life is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). God hates hands that shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:16—17). Surely it is right for us to oppose this grizzly work of darkness (Eph. 5:11—12) and to demand that law-makers deal with it.

Might a part of the blame lay upon the preachers of America? Tragically most denominational pulpits have been muted on the moral challenges, and many have actually capitulated to Satan's side in the conflict. Thus we see such paradoxes as preachers calling for abortion rights and opposing restrictions on pornography and homosexuality. Of course, these are a minority. But it cannot be denied that the majority are failing to provide strong moral leadership, in the public teaching of Christian ethics and in leading the battle against these vices.

Sadly many preachers in the Lord's church are in this last category. It is my personal experience that our people are looking for strong moral leadership in the pulpit. Most will warmly encourage and help a man who launches out in a *responsible* way. Even the denominational world will follow our leadership in this area. Across the land there is a stirring feeling of responsibility in the hearts of religious people. They know something needs to be done. They feel that they and their church leaders should do something, but the leadership is just not there. They will gladly fall in behind us when we lead out. (If today they follow our moral leadership, tomorrow they will likely follow our spiritual leadership.)

A Challenge to Preachers

Consider these words from Dr. Karl Menninger: "We know that the principle leadership in the morality realm should be the clergy's, but they seem to minimize their great traditional and historical opportunity to preach, to prophesy, to

speak out. ... some clergymen prefer pastoral counseling of individuals to the pulpit function. But the latter is a greater opportunity to both heal *and prevent*. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, indeed, and there is much prevention to be done for large numbers of people who hunger and thirst after direction toward righteousness. Clergymen have a golden opportunity to prevent some of the accumulated misapprehensions, guilt, aggressive action, and other roots of later mental suffering and mental disease. "How? Preach! Tell it like it is. Say it from the pulpit. Cry it from the housetops." "What shall we cry?" "Cry comfort, cry repentance, cry hope. Because recognition of our part in the world transgression is the only remaining hope." *Whatever Became of Sin?* New York, Hawthorne Books Inc., 1974 (used by permission). This is no preacher or elder, it is a world famous psychiatrist, who sees the need for strong fearless moral leadership in the pulpit.

Prophetic Preaching

For our pulpit models we need to study the ancient Hebrew prophets of Jehovah. Preaching like theirs would revolutionize our diseased society and the church. God is still looking for men who will "stand in the gap" of the broken besieged walls of Zion, men who will build up those damaged moral and spiritual walls (Ezek. 22:30). They were scarce in Ezekiel's day, as in ours. We, however, can be the volunteers who stand up bravely and volunteer, Lord "here am I, send me" (Is. 6:8). Whether we win or lose in this great moral battle for the hearts and minds of men, at least they will know "that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezek. 2:5). Always remember God's charge to Ezekiel: "thou son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words ... nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear ..." (Ezek. 2:6—7).

May God make us useful tools in his hands to declare his

Take Heed What Ye Say

Paul exhorts all saints to “let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.” (Col. 4:6.) It is reasonable to conclude that preachers should heed this admonition. A man who stands before a congregation to instruct them in God’s righteousness bears a heavy burden of responsibility. (Jas. 3:1.) Also, he will be held accountable for the way he does his sacred work.

Sometimes in our zeal to inspire our brethren to new heights or to reprove them for their sin, we preachers resort to some strong tactics to get the job. I ask my preaching brethren to think on this matter for a few moments. Is it an act of wisdom and sound judgment to stand before a mixed congregation of aliens, new converts, young people, and mature Christians and make the following types of charges:?

1. That many Christians throughout the brotherhood are immoral, liars, crooks, etc.
2. That numerous preachers and elders are lazy, compromising, and no good.
3. That some denominational churches, preachers, people, and schools are so much more dedicated and moral than we.

When the young, the weak and the immature hear such charges solemnly pronounced by the respected brother in the pulpit, who is supposed to know the truth and be filled with wisdom, might they not conclude:

1. If we are so bad and they are so good, why should I stay with this rotten, corrupt church?
2. If the denomination is so much better, would I not be better off there than here?
3. Or, maybe they would conclude: If so many Christians, elders and preachers are worldly and carnal, why should I try to live a

strict moral life? Why not join the rest of the brethren in sin?

4. Or, If the church is so corrupt and ungodly, what advantage did I gain in leaving the sinful world? Why not go back to it?

Lest I be misunderstood, I want to emphasize that I am not discouraging strong, Biblical preaching. We suffer from a lack of it. The thing I warn against is that reckless, irresponsible use of words that damage rather than edify. Paul reminds us that all things should be done unto edifying. (I Cor. 14:26.) I certainly do not oppose preaching against sin and reproof brethren who choose a life of sin. Such is Biblical. (II Tim. 4:2—3.) I do believe that there is a way of doing so that adequately condemns the sin and the sinner without at the same time harming others. If a doctor prescribes a medication for one condition that causes a fatal reaction in another part of the body, we would expect him to change his procedure. We who minister to souls should do no less.

Test Tube Babies

A Moral Question

A recent Gallup Report noted that Americans backed “Test Tube Baby Procedure by 2—1 Margin.” As with numerous scientific public opinion polls, a conclusion was drawn from John Q. Public without providing him complete information. Often Christians accept such media reports without questions. In moral-ethical matters as in spiritual ones, we should “prove all things; hold fast that which is good (and) abstain from every form of evil” (I Thess. 5:21—22). In reading the news as in hearing preachers, we should “believe not every spirit” but prove them (I John 4:1). Drs. Steptoe and Edwards who engineered the first test tube birth, took not one but a number of eggs from the mother’s body. All were fertilized with the father’s sperm thus generating several new human lives. Out of that group the doctors selected the one they supposed the healthiest and implanted it in the mother’s womb. The other incipient human lives were then destroyed.

Now ask the Christian public: Do you oppose or approve of “pick of the litter” child selection? Do you have positive or negative emotions about the destroying of many beginning lives to allow a childless couple to give birth?

It is important to recall the significant biological fact that once the sperm joins the mother’s egg, nothing new is added but food and oxygen until a baby is born. It is all there in that tiny but awesomely complex single new cell of life. We all once were a fertilized ovum.

If the doctors can wash the left-over new-lives down the laboratory drain what else could they do with them? Sell them to

other childless women? Do genetic research and experimentation such as gene splicing? Whose property are these nascent lives? Since a new life can be generated in the lab, could a surrogate mother be hired to carry the baby through gestation? Theoretically this would aid the professional woman who is too busy to bother with pregnancy, yet wants a baby. If all of this seems morally repugnant, ask yourself why?

We can now keep the child alive in the glassware for one week. Prematurely born babies are being kept alive as early as 18 weeks in gestational age. That only leaves 17 weeks that make live human mothers really necessary. If technology could do it, would the public approve total laboratory gestation of human babies? Sperm and eggs could be harvested even as transplant organs now are. Whose child would such be? Could such be sold to adoptive customers? What rights would the lab-kiddie have? What responsibilities would be incumbent upon the scientist?

Babes conceived in a dish reveal their sex immediately. Should parents be free to select their child by sex? What happens when too many people choose boys? Is the sex-balance of a population important?

Dr. Steptoe revealed that he made extra money to finance his in-vitro fertilization project by doing legal abortions. Does the average American approve of the destruction of healthy, normally conceived babes to finance a clinical conception for a barren couple? Would adoption have been more humane; more moral?

A final question: Since barren women who are wealthy can afford test tube fertilization, will we hear demands that the government provide it for poor women via Medicaid? This has been argued on the abortion issue.

Human life is sacred because it is created by God in his own

image (Gen. 1:27). As creator, provider and possessor of all life, God has always denied men the right to wilfully destroy innocent human life (Gen. 9:6). The height of human arrogance is when fallen man attempts to usurp God's role in the ending of human life. Destroyers of life made in God's image stand condemned by God's righteous law (Rom. 1:29—32).

While all should be sympathetic to childless couples who want children, we must not blindly accept any and everything science is capable of doing, lest we sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind. Paul spoke to this question when he asked "Shall we do evil, that good may come?" (Rom. 3:8). He promptly repudiated the very idea and so should we.

Remember the issue is not, is it right and good to help a childless couple conceive? Rather the issue is, is it morally right and good to play God with human life? Science without God and without moral restraint is a frightening monster turned loose in our midst. While pretending to bless us — it could well destroy us.

Things That God Hates

All have heard numerous sermons on the love of God. Surely there is no grander more thrilling theme. But have you ever heard a lesson on the hatred of God? Contrary to popular notion, God does have such negative emotions. Of course, the hatred of God is on a far different plane than the hatred of men. Men hate each other, but God loves all men, even his enemies (Rom. 5:6—10). Men hate because of selfishness. When someone or something threatens their cherished position or possession, they experience the emotions of envy, jealousy and hate. Often sinners hate the good man for the good he is doing, as they did Jesus (John 7:7). God's hatred never affects his love for man. He loves all including the lost (John 3:16). To fully know and appreciate the personality of God we should note some of those things he hates.

I. God loves righteousness but *hates iniquity* (Heb. 1:9). Righteousness is right doing. Iniquity is sin, or the perversion of right. Iniquity toward God's plans and purposes for man. It ruins the soul made in the image of God. It robs God's children of heaven's reward (Matt. 7:21—23). God loves sinners but he hates their iniquitous ways.

II God *hates false religion*. "Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate (Rev. 2:6). Truth makes men free (John 8:32). Error and falsehood enslave and bring men to hell (Hos. 4:6; Prov. 16:25). Like God, we should hate and abhor the false systems that lead men away from God. When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14). Some folks view the world religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and praise their beauty. But how can that which is deadly and destructive be truly beautiful? Denominationalism is not just a harmless variety of true Christianity. It is a plant which the

Father hath not planted, which he will root up (Matt. 15:13). Those who pursue God through the medium of human traditions do so in vain (Matt. 15:9). Like David, we too should hate every false way (Ps. 119:104).

III. Solomon gives a divine catalogue of things which God hates in Proverbs 6:16—17.

A. *Haughty eyes.* This suggests the proud, arrogant soul whose eyes reflect contempt for his fellow man and God's righteous law. The "pride of life" is not of the father but of the world (I John 2:15—16). Christians must put away pride and arrogance.

B. *A lying tongue.* All liars will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). We are tempted to excuse the "little" or "harmless" lies so long as we abstain from vicious diabolic lies. Remember *all* liars will pay the price. It is incumbent upon us to "Put away falsehood" and speak truth if we would please the Master (Eph. 4:25).

C. *Hands that shed innocent blood.* He speaks not of chickens or pigs. God gave man dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:28). God hates the shedding of innocent human blood. He ordained that "whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). Thus, God ordered capital punishment for the murderer. God surely hates the astounding amount of brutal violence on America's streets. He hates the violence of the Communist governments which have exterminated millions of dissenters. But he also hates the practice of abortion which has snuffed out over 7 million lives in America since 1973.

D. *A heart that deviseth wicked purposes.* God will give up those who have a "reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:28). There is a type of heart that is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Such

individuals are dedicated to wickedness. They scheme, plot and plan to do mischievous deeds toward others. sometimes they hides their meanness behind a cloak of pretended righteousness. The pure in heart will be blest of God in this life and see him in eternity (Matt. 5:8). Not so the wicked minded.

E. *Feet swift in running to mischief.* There is a marked difference between accidentally falling into sin and deliberately running into it. Willful sin is especially hateful to God (Heb. 10:26—27). In fact the willfull sinner can expect a fiery judgment. Because God so views deliberate sin, his children daily pray “lead us not into temptation” Matt. 6:13).

F. *False witnesses.* Such are a special variety of liars. They are malicious and deadly. We have no way of computing the damage done to homes, to society and the church because of false witnesses. Under Moses’ law the false witness who testified against his neighbor was to be punished as “he had thought to do unto his brother” (Deut. 19:19). God’s children will always speak the truth and lie not (I Tim. 2:7).

G. *He that soweth discord among brethren.* If the factious could perceive how God hates division and strife he would surely repent of his contentiousness. We see just how bad such attitudes and conduct are when we consider the works of the flesh of Galatians 5:19—21. Strife, factions, divisions, and parties (cliques) he lists along with fornication, idolatry and drunkenness. He concludes that no one can go to heaven while practicing such things. The road to eternity is strewn with lost souls who were destroyed by discord in the church. Only the peacemakers are called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

H. In Malachi 2:16 we are told that God hates *the breaking*

up of homes by divorce. Some argue that Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19 is too severe. "Modern man cannot be expected to have but one marriage for life!" They feel that divorce and remarriage only in the case of fornication is too limited. Such brethren obviously have never realized how God views the sacredness of the home. God hates putting away and so should we!

IV. Holy hatred being an attribute of God, then it is fitting that they who would be godly share that emotion toward the things God hates. "The fear of Jehovah is to *hate evil* ..." (Prov. 8:13). With David we "hate and *abhor* falsehood" (Ps. 119:163). Paul exhorts us to "abhor that which is evil ..." (Rom. 12:9). The Ephesian saints were commended for *hating* "the work of the Nicolaitians" i.e., false teachers (Rev. 2:6). Jude admonishes us, "some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; *hating* even the garment spotted by the flesh" (vs. 23).

While we should hate evil with God, may we never be found hating God or his holy law. Moses warns, "He (God) will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandment ..." (Deut. 7:10—11).

*The author is indebted to Gobel Music for the main idea of this lesson.

Timely Warnings

Every generation has produced its challenges to God's church. The first century had not passed before major internal problems arose. The aged apostle John was responding to these matters in I John 2:18—28. Problems are still with us, John's warnings are yet timely.

The writer's stated purposes are two: 1) To warn against false teachers who were seeking to lead them astray (2:26); 2) To exhort them to remain faithful to the truth they had originally learned (2:24).

“Last Hour”

The apostle described the situation as a “last hour” (the Greek has no article). This is significant in determining the meaning. “By use of this noun and modifier without the article, John emphasizes that he is speaking in a qualitative or categorical way and not of a definite last hour ... He means this is a last hour kind of situation or time.” J. W. Roberts. Thus John was not mistaken in his teaching about Christ's return. Rather, he was describing a time of stress or danger, a period of critical change in the history of salvation. Today is no less a last hour of critical stress and challenge for the Lord's kingdom.

Antichrists

John's readers had previously heard of an antichrist that was to come. Perhaps they had heard it from Paul when he had preached in Ephesus and its environs. (See II Thess. 2:3—4). The apostle wants them to know that numerous antichrists are already present and at work.

The meaning: Antichrist may mean *against* Christ or *instead of*. Thus it can describe a substitute Christ, a lying pretender. Jesus warned that false Christs would come (Matt. 24:24). From John we learn that antichrist is not so much one individual enemy as a principle which is hostile to and actively opposed to God's son. This evil principle manifests itself to every generation in sinful men who openly set themselves against Christ and his cause. "As all that makes for the kingdom of God and the salvation of his people is personified in Christ, so all the powers of ungodliness are united in ... antichrist."

John makes clear the error these antichrists taught. 1. They denied that Jesus came in the flesh. (See II John 7; I John 4:1—3). 2. They denied that Jesus was the Christ (I John 2:22). 3. They denied that he was the son of God (I John 4:15). In history these false teachers were known as *Gnostics*. They held that Jesus and Christ were two different people. Also they argued that Christ only appeared to have flesh, but not really. They concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was not of divine origin. John thus describes these proponents of error as "liars" (I John 2:22); "Deceivers" (II John 7); "false prophets" (I John 4:1); and "deniers" (I John 2:23). One Cerinthus was a chief Gnostic heretic.

The consequence of denying Christ was awesome. "Whosoever denieth the son, the same hath not the Father ..." (I John 2:23). To deny Christ's sonship destroys the deniers' own sonship, for to be a child of God requires "faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

It is noteworthy that these antichrists arose within the church. "They went out from us," John wrote (2:19). Satan has two avenues to attack the church, from within and without. The brutal attacks by the Jews and Romans failed to stem the church's rapid growth, but the disruptions of these false teachers were devastating. This teaches us that membership in

the church is no guarantee that a man belongs to Christ and not to antichrist” (C.H. Dodd). Even today this same battle rages as liberal theologians openly deny the deity of our Lord.

The great battleground of God’s Holy Spirit and the spirit of antichrist is the mind of man. Nothing is more potent for evil than an evil doctrine planted in the minds of a multitude of people.

The Divine Preventative Against Heresy

Four things would guard them against these pernicious antichrists.

- A. They must know who these false teachers were. They were apostate brethren (2:19).
- B. They must remember the truth they had originally learned from God’s inspired teachers. “Let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning (2:24).
- C. The anointing which God had given them would protect them if heeded (2:20; 27).

Paul helps us to understand this anointing by writing that God established us, anointed us, “sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (II Cor. 1:21—22). In 3:24, John wrote, “Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.” The anointing of God’s Holy Spirit taught them all things, thus they needed no new “gnostic truth” (2:27). Jesus had promised his apostles that when the Spirit came he would guide them into all the truth (John 16:13). The anointing of God taught them only truth, not error like the antichrists taught (2:27b).

While all Christians receive the Holy Spirit upon obedience to the gospel (Acts 5:32) the anointing John refers to was the

miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit available to that first generation of Christians. Without a completed New Testament they needed special guidance to keep them in the path of truth. If a man presented himself as a spokesman of God, how could they know if he were genuine? To meet this need God gave some of them the miraculous gift of discerning of spirits or prophets (I Cor. 12:7—11). Thus they were to prove the spirits (teachers) whether they were from God, for many false prophets had gone out into the world (I John 4:1). It was not, however, enough that some brother had this gift in a congregation; the divine instruction had to be heeded.

Today we have no miraculous gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 13:8—11). We do, however, have the new covenant which that original anointing of the early church provided us. We have “all the truth” (John 16:13). We search the scriptures to see if a man’s teaching is from God (Acts 17:11).

D. They must be “abide in” Christ (2:28). The antichrists had gone out from the Lord and his church (2:19). In so doing they had forfeited their fellowship with the Father and the Son. John exhorts his brethren to “stick with the Lord.” To abide in Christ is simply to be loyal to him and his gospel (John 15:7). The result of abiding in Christ are twofold:

1. We will have boldness when he returns, and not be afraid.
2. We will not be made ashamed at his presence as will the antichrists and their disciples (2:28).

May these timely warnings help us to ever be faithful to our Lord and abide in his teaching and may we never be led away by the false doctrines of men.

What About Translations and Versions?

John Waddey

Introduction

“And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? ... we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:8, 11). In those early days of the faith no translation was needed, for the Holy Spirit enabled the inspired men to deliver the message in the language of the hearers. However, when the divine word was codified in a book in the Koine Greek language and the miraculous age passed, then it was necessary that the Living Oracles be translated into other languages so men could know the words of life.

Few topics have so absorbed the interest of some brethren in recent years as that of Bible translations. This speaker is impressed that many of our people are woefully uninformed as to the nature of translations and their relationship to the original autographs of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments. I am reminded of an old timer in a rural congregation in northern Mississippi who after complaining about the young preacher’s use of the American Standard Version of 1901, snorted, “I’ll stick with the King James Version, the one of the apostle (sic) Paul used.”

II. Subject Defined

What is the inspired, inerrant Word of God? Technically we are referring to the original handwritten autographs or first editions of the 66 books. For beginning with the first copy made,

the human element came into play. Uninspired copyists did their work with varying degrees of dedication and skill, but in each and every case the fallibility of human hands left its mark upon their work. Only those God-chosen *authors* of scripture were “inspired of God” (II Tim. 3:16) and “moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21). There is no indication at all that God ever inspired anyone to either copy or translate Scripture.

What is a translation? The word *translate*, is defined: 1. “To bear or change from one place, condition, etc. to another; to transfer.” 2. “To turn into one’s own or another language ...”¹ We could define a Bible translation as an act whereby one or more scholars, proficient in the related languages, take the message of the Greek or Hebrew Scriptures and transfer them into a different target language. The quality of a given translation depends on several factors:

- a. The ability of the translator in both the original and target language.
- b. His understanding of the mechanics of translation and his literary talents.
- c. His loyalty to scripture as God’s message and his determination to “handle aright the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). Freedom from theological bias or skepticism (Deut. 4:2).
- d. The tools with which he has to work, i.e., access to the needed Greek and Hebrew texts and other lexical aids.
- e. A suitable atmosphere or climate in which to work, i.e., free from harassment and distractions.

Why are there different versions? Version is a synonym for a translation of the Bible. It is my opinion that men are always wanting to improve on the existing. This is true of gadgets, machines and Bible translations. To translate scripture is for fallible man to seek to reproduce in another language the infallibly perfect Word of God. This no man or group of men ever can do flawlessly. So even the translators themselves often

revise their own translations when they discover their failures or when they make significant progress in their studies. I would in charity assume that their motives are honorable unless their product convinces me otherwise. Then, too, language is a constantly changing thing. This of necessity demands that our English Bible be revised ever so often. To appreciate this one should consult an unedited version of Wycliffe's or Tyndale's Bible. In fact, our present day King James text has been revised several times for spelling of words. I have a KJV which has included a glossary of 500 words and phrases which are archaic and obsolete and therefore difficult to understand.

Is the availability of many different translations a curse or a blessing? The answer you receive will depend on who you ask. George Campbell spoke to this last century:

“It has been said, that the introduction of different translations tends to unsettle men in their principles, particularly with regard to the authority of sacred writ, which, say they, is made to speak so variously in these productions. For my part, I have not discovered that this is, in any degree, the effect. The agreement of all translations, as to the meaning, in every thing of principal consequence, makes their differences, when properly considered, appear as nothing ... They rather confirm men's faith in scripture, as they show, in the strongest light, that all the various ways which men of discordant sentiments have devised, of rendering its words, have made no material alteration, either on the narrative itself, or on the divine instructions contained in it.”²

But how did the King James translators view other existing versions of the Bible? In their preface they wrote:

“We do not deny, nay, wee affirme and avowe, that the verie meanest translation of the Bible in English, set fourth by men of our profession ... containeth the worde of

God, nay, is the worde of God ... The translation of the *Seventy* dissenteth from the original in many places, neyther doeth it come neere it, for perspecuite, gravitie, majestie; yet which of the Apostles did condemne it? Nay, they used it ... which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the church, if it had been unworthy the appellation and name of the Word of God ...”³

Wisely used, different versions can be of help and assistance to the English reading Bible student. If he is unable to consult the Greek text to resolve the meaning of some verse; by comparing various renderings he can often ascertain the meaning. In this way they are used very much as a commentary.

Some Preliminary Questions

1. If you had lived in England prior to 1611, what translation would you have used?
2. If you were a missionary in a primitive society with no Bible yet available in their tongue, what would you do? Would they have to have a KJV or would a new translation, even a one-man production, be welcomed?
3. If the KJV alone can be termed “the Bible,” where was the Bible before 1611?
4. Are translations inspired?
5. Is there a perfect, flawless translation?
6. Can sectarians be trusted to translate the Scriptures for us?
7. Why do we develop such strong feelings of loyalty to a given translation?
8. Can we divide a brotherhood over translations? Should we?
9. Are we authorized to pass a law on which translation to use?
10. If elders can legislate use of the KJV could they also legislate use of some other translation they like better?
11. Should we have an imposed “brotherhood translation”?
12. Do liberty and freedom in Christ have any consideration in this matter of translations?

IV. Our Problem

There exists among some brethren today a hostile attitude toward any translation other than the King James and American Standard. It is not just that they are determined to stick with the old translations, but they seemed determined to forbid other brethren from using a different one. Those who do not heed their warnings are commonly labeled as liberal or at least compromising in the faith. The debate has been noticeably one-sided in that few have ventured to argue the case against the objectors. The rising heat and aggressive tone of the speeches and articles suggests that a division might well occur in the future over this very issue. Thus we might see a King James Version Church of Christ and Any Other Version Church of Christ. This I pray will never be.

V. Background Study Of Translation

To help us deal with the problem in clear perspective, we must briefly look at the history of Bible translations. The first translation we have record of is the famous Septuagint (LXX) of the 3rd Century B.C. Alexandrine Jews translated the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek tongue. This translation became the primary Bible of Judaism and then of the early Church. The majority of the 500 Old Testament quotes in the New Testament are from the Septuagint. Even though our Lord used the LXX it is a serious mistake to conclude it was therefore inspired. Consider this quote:

“... the inspiration of the Greek Old Testament — the LXX — the Septuagint is affirmed in the New Testament by Jesus Christ and his inspired apostles, in the several hundred quotations from it in which they attribute its words to the Holy Spirit.”⁴

This proves much too much. First, the “Septuagint in addition to the Hebrew canonical books includes all the books of

the English Apocrypha except 2 Esdras. Second, there is considerable variation in the Hebrew and Greek text, in several books, especially in Jeremiah.”⁵

Very early in the second century the Christians began to translate their scripture into the languages of the world. Among the oldest of them is the Syriac Peshitta. “The translation of the New Testament is careful, faithful and literal, and the simplicity, directness and transparency of the style are admired by Syriac scholars ...”⁶ It is styled the “Queen of the Versions.” Yet it seems, however, that in its earliest form the Peshitta did not include the General Epistles and Revelation.⁷

In the fourth century the great scholar Jerome gave us his Latin Vulgate. “Toward the end of the fourth century, the inconvenience from which the Western Church suffered because there was no single authorized Latin version (caused) Damascus bishop of Rome (to) commission Jerome to prepare an authoritative revision ... At first Jerome’s work was not well received, especially because he had dared to part with the Septuagint, which even Augustine believed to be equally inspired with the original Hebrew. ... Jerome’s former friend Rufinus wrote expressly against this new work. Jerome’s reply was this: “So great is the force of established usage, that even acknowledged corruptions (of text) please the greater part, for they prefer to have their copies pretty rather than correct!”⁸

The Council of Trent convoked in 1545, after 18 years of deliberation, decreed Jerome’s Latin Vulgate to be authentic and commanded that it alone should be read and used in all sermons, expositions and discussions. They made it equal with the originals and thus it became lawful among their Romish brethren to correct the originals by the Vulgate. Other translations were then made from the Vulgate rather than from the Hebrew and Greek, including Wycliffe’s.

Of course, it is no secret that the Roman hierarchy

diligently sought to block translation of the Scripture into the vernacular tongues for hundreds of years. In 1408 Archbishop Arundel of Oxford decreed “that no one thereafter should translate any text of Holy Scripture into English by way of a book or tract; and that no book of this kind should be read ...”⁹

John Wycliffe gave the people of England the first complete Bible in their native tongue in 1382 (?). It was translated from the Latin. Wycliffe’s version later edited by John Purvey, was the English Bible through the sixteenth century. In the early 16th Century, William Tyndale set out to translate Erasmus’ Greek text of the New Testament into English. For his noble efforts he paid with his life. Because of his work, Tyndale is styled the father of the English Bible. Following Tyndale came Coverdale’s version. John Rogers gave us Matthew’s Bible. In 1539 came Taverner’s Bible. Soon Henry VIII authorized Coverdale to publish the Great Bible. In 1560 the Geneva Bible was issued with accompanying Calvinist footnotes. In 1568 the Anglican clergy published their Bishops’ Bible.

In 1604 young King James commissioned the work which produced the version which yet bears his name. Some 48 Greek and Hebrew scholars were chosen to do the work. *They were not to make a new translation*, but to revise the Bishop’s Bible of 1602. “After a careful comparison, it has been estimated that nine-tenths of the First Epistle of John and five-sixths of the Epistle to the Ephesians of the Authorized Version have been retained from Tyndale. In their preface the translators wrote that they “did not think to make a new translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one ... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one ...”¹⁰ In 1611 this monumental work reached the public.

Early Reaction To The King James Version

“When the King James’ Bible first appeared, there was no

special demand for it. More than a generation passed before it won its way into public favor. But as soon as it became established there arose a demand for a revised edition."¹¹ "Dr. Robert Gell attacked it from the pulpit in a series of discourses in which he criticized the translation and charged the translators with *taking undue liberty with the text* (emphasize mine, J.H.W.), especially when they made the translation to serve their private opinions."¹²

Hugh Broughton (ranked first among the foremost Hebrew and Greek scholars of his time), was profoundly grieved, and his censures upon it were bitter and extravagant. "It is so ill-done that I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation, by my consent, should be urged on poor churches."¹³

Richard Bancroft, who is probably that one referred to in the preface as chief overseer of the work, was publicly charged at the time with having altered the version on his own sole authority in fourteen places; the rendering of I Peter 2:13 to the King as Supreme being instanced as one of them. "Whatever James I might tolerate he would not allow any weakening of the doctrine of the supremacy of kings. And no other version of the English Bible betrayed such definite leanings toward the tenet as the one made under his direction."¹⁴ "It is quite likely, therefore, that James who exulted in what he called 'kingcraft,' was shrewd enough to see that by a new version of the Scriptures, royalty sanctioned and patronized, he might better control the troublesome elements opposed to perpetuating the same ..." ¹⁵ Another criticism of the KJV was that "the apocryphal books were actually translated and bound up with the rest of the edition of 1611."¹⁶

"The scholarship of the revisers of King James' Bible cannot be called in question, and yet an examination, not over critical of their work, reveals incorrect renderings of tenses and

of prepositions, also neglect of the Greek article.”¹⁷

If as some say Providence guided the translators in giving us a perfect translation in the KJV, what of the typesetters and printers? “While special care was taken by the publishers of English Bibles to prevent errors, and they were so careful in reprinting that typographical errors descended from edition to edition, yet for half a century or more the text of the Authorized Version suffered at the hands of the printers. The typographical errors of the first edition (1611) were neither few nor unimportant.”¹⁸ “In 1629 a praiseworthy effort was made towards a needful revision of the Authorised Version, and many corrections were made ...”¹⁹ Only in 1806 did Eyre and Strahan publish a KJV that was regarded “as approaching as near as possible to what bibliographers term an immaculate text.”²⁰

“So general was the opposition to the King James Bible that it was slow in gaining public favor. In 1649 King James’ Bible was printed with the Genevan (Calvinistic, J.H.W.) annotations, by way of pushing it into public favor. About this period it prevailed, and took the place it has ever since occupied.”²¹

Was it “Appointed to be Read in Churches?” “By common consent no canon, proclamation, or act of Parliament can be shown enforcing the use of it. The name, therefore of ‘Authorized Version’ has no real foundation and carried with it a false impression, and can be justified only by its long use and lack of something better.”²²

Even our distinguished brother Roy Deaver has written, “But there are many problems with the King James Version. I would not for a moment try to defend the word ‘Easter’ :Acts 12:4) or ‘hell’ (Acts 2:47) and many other places where the Greek demands ‘hades’, or ‘Bishoprick’ (Acts 1:20) or ‘be

converted' (Acts 3:19). There is no justification for translating an active voice verb as of it were a passive voice. It is a known and well established fact that the Calvinist scholars — Theodore Beza in particular — had a tremendous influence upon the King James translators. ... the King James Version was based upon an inferior Greek text since the Codex Beza was the only important uncial MS available."²³

In his preface to his Living Oracles translation and his addresses to the American Bible Union, Alexander Campbell repeatedly called for a revision of the KJV and offered numerous criticisms of it and those who opposed translation. His case for revision was thus: "The common version was gotten up some two and half centuries since, under prelatical, hierarchial and royal patronage and restrictions. The vernacular of that day, spoken and written was, in orthography, punctuation, and in much of its common wording, quite different from that of the present day. The knowledge of the original tongues then possessed, was proportionally more than two centuries behind that of the present day ..."²⁴

He challenges those who insisted on exalting the KJV: "But if the authority of King James and his hierarchial counsellors be still paramount authority in the conscience of such men then they should repudiate all the improvements already made, and restore the identical version of King James, letter and point ..."²⁵

In 1881 English scholars gave us the English Revised Version based upon the textual research of Westcott and Hort. In 1901 an American Committee further edited and revised that work and gave us the American Standard Version. Concerning it, Bro. Roy Deaver has said it "is the most literally exact translation in the English language, and I encourage you to read it, to study it, to memorize it ..."²⁶ This, of course, has

been the attitude of most of our knowledgeable brethren over the years. When the 1881 Revision was issued, Bro. J.W. McGarvey wrote, "The Canterbury revision of the New Testament should now totally supplant the King James Version, not only because it is a great improvement as a version, but because it is the only representative in English of the corrected Greek text. A man is not safe in venturing upon the exegesis of a single passage by the aid of the old version until he shall compared it with the new: and rather than be continually making these comparisons, it is better to at once adopt the new into exclusive use."²⁷

But even this great translation did not escape criticism. C.H. Spurgeon wrote of the English Revised, "Strong in Greek, weak in English." Serious charges of liberalism were made by scholars such as J.W. Burgon in his book **The Revision Revised** and H.C. Hoskier in his **Codex B and Its Allies**. In fact, there is a revival of that criticism in the series of books by David Otis Fuller; "**Which Bible?**" and "**True or False?**"

Every attempt by anyone to improve the quality of translations in the English tongue has met hostility and criticism. Bryan Walton published the Polyglot Bible in (1654—57) which proved to be the occasion of an extended and bitter controversy. Likewise when Mill in 1707, and Bengel in 1734 published their Greek texts of the New Testament, they were misunderstood and their motives impugned.²⁸

Let it forever be kept in mind that the translator is not inspired of God. He receives no miraculous assistances from God, he does not do his work under the miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit.²⁹ Bro. Foy Wallace agrees with this premise on page xxxvi of his **Review of the Versions**. All translations have their pros and cons. It must always be remembered that every translation is a human product and therefore susceptible to error.³⁰ Bro. Wallace also agrees that there are some problems

associated with the KJV text, but notes that “they do not unsettle a single article of the Christian faith or precept of Christian duty. They will hardly be observed by the majority of readers. Very few affect the sense materially”³¹

One problem has been that some folks would make the KJV itself rather than the Greek and Hebrew text the standard of authority. From a Baptist paper I recently gleaned this note: “The King James Version of the Bible is God’s inspired and preserved word. All other English speaking versions are translations based on corrupt New Testament Greek texts.”³² I wonder how long it will be before some of our brethren reach this same conclusion?

Modern Translations

The issue grows warmer when we contemplate the modern translations. Criticism is especially heavy towards the Revised Standard Version. “There are serious problems with the Revised Standard Version ... I would not defend its problems and errors any more than I would defend the problems and errors of any other translation. But in my opinion, there is great value to be had in using the Revised Standard Version as a study tool ... Especially in the Old Testament this work is tremendously helpful. I recently recommended to our men in the Brown Trail Preacher Training School that they make special use of this book in the study of the Psalms.”³³

Some Objections to Modern Translations Considered

1. They are copyrighted. But so was the American Standard Version.
2. They are not literal word for word translations. Nor are the KJV and ASV in every case.
3. They show theological bias. The same charge was leveled at the KJV and ASV.

4. They are not accepted by everyone. Nor was the KJV or ASV.
5. It is confusing to have more than one Bible. What then of Wycliffe's or Tyndale's, the Bishop's Bible, and the Geneva Bible? The same problem exists with the KJV and ASV.
6. Some new versions are done by only one man. So were Wycliffe's and Tyndale's Bibles. Remember that Tyndale's is the basis for our KJV.
7. They just do not sound like the old familiar Bible. But neither did the KJV or ASV at first.
8. Unbelievers and liberals helped to translate some new versions. The same criticism was brought against the English Revised and the ASV.
9. They are done by sectarians. Who do you think did our KJV and ASV?

So what does all this prove? Do we approve all translations? Not at all. Do we recommend all? Never. It reminds us, however, that not all of our preaching and writing is soundly based on true scholarship and clear thinking.

VI. Some Affirmations

1. "Every man has the God-given right of hearing the Sacred Message in his own language. It is this fact which makes it necessary for there to be translations of the Word of God."³⁴

2. "It is therefore the sin of the church, if there be one of Adam's sons who has never heard in his own tongue the wonderful works of God."³⁵

3. Campbell believed "that it is the paramount duty of the Christian Church (in any century) to give to the present age, in our own vernacular, a perspicuous, exact and faithful version of the living oracles of God, as we find them in the Hebrew and Greek originals of the inspired prophets and evangelists."³⁶

4. Men have the right to translate the Bible into any language of the world, including English. They are obligated,

however, to "handle aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15) and not to tamper with the original message.

5. I do not say all translations are good, several obviously are not. But if we object let us make sure our objections are valid, consistent and well founded. Hearsay and assumption are of little value.

6. "Obviously the best translation is that which puts the reader in closest possible contact with the significance of the original regardless of who made it, and when it was made."³⁷

7. Human nature being what it is in religion, could any translation by anyone be found universally acceptable among our people?

8. A translation is not automatically wrong because it is new, nor is one automatically good because it is old!

9. If we deny all modern translations as do some brethren, to be consistent they will have to also abandon the American Standard Version of 1901 for similar arguments are made against it and its textual basis by men like David Otis Fuller.

10. When we read the criticisms of the newer translations let us remember that similar serious charges were leveled at the American Standard and King James Versions.

11. I am impressed that some of our textual critics who solemnly inveigh against the versions are without working skills in the original languages. Questions of this kind are not resolved by comparing the New International Version with KJV. What saith the Greek text? That is the question!

12. Using the RSV or other new translations does not necessarily prove a man to be a modernist any more than his using a KJV proves him to be sound and faithful. Remember every Independent Baptist preacher uses the KJV. What does that prove?

13. Campbell said, "I have never seen any English version, Romanist or Protestant, orthodox or heterodox, however imperfect, from which a man of sense and industry might not learn the way to heaven."³⁸

14. Christian charity and liberty demand that we grant each other the freedom to use the translation he would choose.

15. It is a mystery that here we fight and do battle over which version of many to use, but most of the world has either no version or a terribly inferior version. Could not our energies be better spent in giving them Scripture?

VII. What Then Shall We Conclude?

I believe the Holy Scripture to be plenary, verbally inspired of God, inerrant, and totally authoratative. Yet in that faith I do not defend:

1. The black leather back and gilded edges;
2. The red letter edition of Christ's words;
3. The frontice page, translator's forward and the dedica-tion to King James;
4. The apocrypha of the early editions of the KJV;
5. The printer's embellishments such as headings, center references and Usher's chronology in some editions;
6. The printer's mistakes;
7. Interpolations into the text such as that of I John 5:7, etc.;
8. The Elizabethan spelling and literary style;
9. The obsolete and archaic words that are confusing to us.

I defend the revelation made by God through his inspired penmen guided by the Holy Spirit. Those words were first written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Although those original autographs have since perished, their contents have been preserved for us in some 4,500 hand copied Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, lexionaries and writings of the ancient fathers. We add to this vast findings of archaeologists and antiquarians of papyri, shards, clay tablets, and the inscrip-tions.

To arrive at a refined and purified reconstruction of the original inspired text, men skilled in the science of textual criticism have invested thousands of hours of exhaustive research. Comparing, weighing, measuring this hoard of

ancient Bible treasures, they forge out of them a replica of that original God-breathed text. So well documented and verified is it that fewer than one word per thousand is in question and none of them affect a single doctrine of the faith.

“If comparative trivialities, such as changes of order, the insertion or omission of the article with proper names, and the like, are set aside, words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament.”³⁹

I lay before you, my brethren, the challenge that God’s church move into the arena of Bible translation for all the world. Further, that each of us take the time to carefully study this emotional issue so that we may speak as men of wisdom. And last, let us grant unto each other that liberty which Christ has given (Gal. 5:1).

Footnotes

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4. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions* (Fort Worth, Texas: Wallace Publications, no date) p. 3.

5. James Orr, Editor, **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, Vol. 4 (Chicago: Howard Severance Co., 1915) p. 2728.

6. Ibid., p.2884, Vol. 5.

7. Ibid., p.2884, Vol. 5.

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 31. Wallace, op. cit., p.xxiv.
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 33. Deaver, op. cit., p.276.
 34. Ibid, p.263.
 35. Alexander Campbell, op. cit., p.606.
 36. Ibid., p.566.
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38. Alexander Campbell, *op. cit.*, p.582.

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Worldliness In The Church

Scripture teaches us to “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” The reason being, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). While all agree that worldliness is a major problem of the church today, not all are agreed as to just what “worldliness” is. To help us properly deal with the matter we must understand what is involved in worldliness.

Webster offers the following. “World” concerns of this life, life as distinguished from those of the life to come, hence secular affairs or interests. Under *worldly* he says, “Of or belonging to this world ... not heavenly or spiritual.” Paul speaks of two kinds of minds in Romans 12:2. One that is “fashioned (or conformed) according to this world”; another that is transformed and renewed according to the will of God.

Both Scripture and observation tell us that there are two levels of worldliness to contend with. There is that *carnal wickedness* such as drunkenness, fornication, homosexuality, and pornography. Among our brethren we usually include dancing, gambling, and patently immodest dress. These sins most everyone condemns. But there is also a *worldly mindedness*. Paul addresses the Corinthian brethren as “carnal” minded because they were thinking and acting as immature babes (I Cor. 3:1—3). It is interesting to note that in cataloging sins, both types were lumped together. “The works of the flesh are ... fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings ...” (Gal 5:19—20). Thus sins of the spirit are evidently no less evil than those of one’s conduct.

A Closer Look

There are *worldly habits* such as smoking, use of alcoholic beverages or drug abuse. While sinners might indulge in these, the saint respects his body as the temple of God's Spirit and refuses to defile it (I Cor. 6:18—20).

There is *worldly speech* such as cursing, taking God's name in vain, suggestive, sensual talk and vulgar jokes. A carnal mind might use such corrupt speech, but the spiritual man will use words reflecting a pure heart (Eph. 4:29).

There is a *worldly style of dress* that is extravagant or sexually provocative. People of the world think little of this but God's children adorn themselves in modest apparel (I Tim. 2:9).

There is a *worldly type of recreation*. This includes such as risqué movies or television, gambling or dancing. Because it appeals to unwholesome fleshly appetites, Christians refrain from such (I John 2:15).

There are *worldly professions or careers*. Disciples of Christ have no desire to pursue a career that would involve them in sinful activities or commitments, or encourage others to sin. Most careers in the entertainment world would fail here, as would selling alcoholic beverages, etc. (I Cor. 8:11—12).

The Worldly Mind Examined

It is worldliness to put secular interests before the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). This could be your home, your business, or your career. It means to be more interested in the possessions of the world than the spiritual things of Christianity. Here we see folks with no time to improve their spiritual skills or knowledge, but plenty of time to develop the same for needs of this life. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of the riches always choke out the spiritual interests (Matt. 13:22). Such a Christian

is more interested in the here and now than in eternity. The spiritual minded see themselves as but pilgrims here, on their way to a heavenly land (Heb. 11:12—16).

A worldly soul is more concerned about the physical man, his needs and wants than he is with the spiritual man. "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). This type is more concerned about adorning the outer man than the adornment of the heart (I Pet. 3:3—5).

Worldliness is preferring the friendship and company of worldly, non-Christians over that of God's children. Spiritual souls prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). A carnal brother is more concerned about how the world views his conduct than how God and his fellow Christians do. The devout soul pleases God above any and all men (Gal. 1:10). Because of this attitude the worldling is afraid to identify himself as a Christian around worldly people (Mk. 8:38). The godly man gladly confesses his Lord (Matt. 10:32).

Worldliness is seen when we desire to be served rather than to serve our fellow man (Matt. 20:25—28). To consume our blessings on ourselves selfishly rather than sharing with others is worldliness (Jas. 4:3—4; Eph. 4:28).

We are worldly if we allow our career or profession to crowd the church and spiritual interests out of our lives (Matt. 13:22). The same is true when our business and financial interests keep us from talking to a man about his soul. Mark 8:36 applies to our business contacts as well as ourselves. If we allow even harmless recreation to keep us from Christian duty we are worldly. It would take pages to tell of souls who have allowed golf, football and other sports to interfere with Christian service.

One is like the world if he accepts or rejects a man on the

basis of his race, wealth or social standing rather than his moral and spiritual character (James 2:1—9). The same is true if we are envious of the success of others and find it hard to rejoice with them (Rom. 12:15).

Christians are worldly when gaining the knowledge of the world is allowed to interfere with securing knowledge of God's word (I Cor. 1:20—21). It is worldliness to accept public opinion over Biblical authority in matters of dispute (Matt. 15:6). When we choose the methods of the world over God's revealed way of doing his work and worship we are worldly (Is. 55:8—9). Worldly brethren love compromising preachers who tickle their itching ears and justify their carnality (II Tim. 4:3). Those who seek positions of prominence and power in the church, even as do sinners of the world in their realm, are carnal-minded (III John 9, 11).

We could sum up all of these under the one general heading: Worldliness is a failure to crucify self and enthrone Christ as the Lord of one's life (Gal. 2:20).

Strangely, in some congregations it is easier to deal with smoking, drinking and gambling than with envy, pride and materialism. We have many folks who are proud of their "lack of vices" yet become very sensitive when these inward, worldly attitudes are touched upon. Legalism would classify sins as to degree and then carefully avoid the bad ones while tolerating or even indulging in the more respectable ones (Matt. 23:24).

The church today is seriously compromised because the spirit of the world prevails in so many hearts. She desperately needs faithful prophets who will cry aloud and spare not, lifting up their voice like trumpets to declare unto God's people their transgressions (Is. 58:1).

Some Inadequate Approaches to the Problem

Some preach as though they never knew there was such a problem while others become so obsessed with preaching against worldliness that they neglect to deal with other important matters (Acts 20:20).

Some pound away on the "great public sins" like drunkenness and adultery (which few in the assembly engage in) while never dealing with the more common worldly attitudes.

Some are tough on the kids' worldly problems such as dancing and petting while strangely silent on the adult vices which are a little more respectable.

Some attack the problems in such a way that worldly disciples are driven away rather than reformed. They leave the impression of hating not only the sin but the sinner as well.

Some react and preach explosive lessons after the problem has already occurred and the damage is done.

Some seek to enforce an outward righteous conformity without real spiritual conviction. All of these are patently inadequate to solve the problem of worldliness.

What Is Needed

We need an on-going program of education and teaching about holy living and Christian attitudes. Folks must grow in the grace and knowledge of godliness (II Pet. 3:18).

We need an accurate presentation of *facts* about these matters rather than an emotional, bombastic, declamation which discredits itself.

We need current information and documentation, not

obsolete figures from yesteryear's sermon books and tracts.

We need compassionate teaching of the truth of God in love (Eph. 4:15) to transform hearts into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 12:2).

We need plain Bible preaching that teaches brethren the correct way to determine right and wrong (Lev. 10:10).

We need positive Christian activities to teach and demonstrate spiritual attitudes and actions.

We need appropriate corrective exhorting and discipline by spiritual leaders for those who are in love with this present evil world (Gal. 6:1)

Are you willing to stand up against all worldliness in the church? May God use us to strengthen the brethren (Lk. 22:32).

Man, The Worshipping Creature

Of the several characteristic and traits that distinguish man from the other creatures, worship is one of the most pronounced. In every culture in every age, most men worship something. In their ignorance, the proud Athenians worshipped the unknown God. (Acts 17:23). Even the atheistic humanist Auguste Comte proposed a Religion of Humanity complete with his own suggestion for sacraments, saints and rituals ... "Another unbeliever wrote "Religion of some sort is probably necessary ... Instead of worshipping supernatural rulers, it will sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature in art and love ..." (Julian Huxley ed. *The Humanist Faith*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1961, p. 44). A few years ago I read of a government newspaper editorial in Russia exhorting the masses not to adore the statues of Lenin.

Why is man incurably religious? Solomon writes that God "hath set eternity in their hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11a). The Creator made man to worship and serve him. Although most men are living in rebellion to Jehovah, they cannot escape their need to adore something or someone greater and more powerful than themselves.

Revealed Worship

The God who made man as he is did not leave his need for worship unfulfilled. He revealed himself to the human family. In Eden he came down and talked with them (Genesis 3:8—21). The created universe helps man to perceive God's power and divinity (Romans 1:20). While nature can inspire us to worship it can never tell us how to worship. God revealed his will for worship through divinely guided prophets who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21). The ancient

Hebrews were taught to worship by the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4, 13). The details of acceptable worship were spelled out for them in the Old Testament. Christians are under the New Testament of Jesus (John 12:47). Their worship is based on the commands of Christ and his apostles (Matthew 28:18—20). The reader should note that Christian worship is not the same as the Hebrew's worship. In both cases worshippers were warned against adding to or taking from God's directions (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18—19).

Our worship is not optional. Jesus commands that we *must* worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). If we would please God and hope to live in eternal bliss we will be worshipping as he directs.

The Meaning of Worship

While most everyone has worshipped at some time, not all have thought out a definition of the term. Our English word "worship" means worthship and suggests the worthiness of the person who receives special honor (Baker's Dictionary of Theology p. 560). In the Hebrew and Greek tongues in which the Scriptures were first written, two thoughts are reflected in worship: 1) to serve, to render religious service; 2) to adore, to show reverence to. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words p. 235—236). Under the old law, worship consisted of elaborate rituals, ties to a magnificent temple and a professional priesthood. Such a system made its primary appeal to the physical senses.

Under Christ our worship is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Christian worship is simple and unpretentious and may be offered to God anywhere. Its entire appeal is to the heart. Paul the apostle argues that the old system was taken away at the cross and we Christians should not feel bound to follow it (Colossians 2:14—18). In our public worship we are to adore the Father and his Holy Son in our songs, prayers, gifts and

communion. In our daily life we serve him joyfully.

Different Kinds of Worship

All worship is not acceptable to the great Jehovah. He speaks of vain worship (Matt. 15:9) *Vain* suggests, emptiness, worthlessness. Some worship in ignorance (Acts 17:23). Such are exhorted to know and serve the true God through Jesus. There is an acceptable worship that is offered "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). God actively seeks for men to worship in this fashion (John 4:23). Christ put it plainly in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter in the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Surely this is true of our worship. Good intentions, a heavenly feeling and general approval of one's fellows is not enough. Worship must be scriptural, i.e., according to scripture to be acceptable.

The Church and Worship

The church is God's family of saved people upon the earth. Her primary reason for existence is to worship the Lord. In public assemblies she adores God. In her daily activities she serves. We reflect true discipleship and true worship when we "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); when we remember the fatherless and the widows in their affliction (James 1:27); and when we work to strengthen our fellow Christian (Ephesians 4:12).

The God who made man planted deep within him many powerful urges or drives such as the need for food, shelter, sex, companionship and worship. In any of these cases there is a right and wrong way to fulfill them. May all who love the Lord seek his will for worship on the pages of the New Covenant of Jesus and may we be true worshippers who adore and serve him in spirit and in truth.

Worshipping God By Faith

Like Paul, faithful Christians “Walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7). To “walk by faith” has a unique meaning to God’s children. The apostle wrote in Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” To do a religious thing by faith simply means that you have been authorized to do so by Holy Scripture. Later Paul reminds us that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

Our question is, can God’s church worship him today with instrumental music and so do *by faith*? To do so, one would have to find the practice authorized in the New Testament. Such authorization would be in one of three forms: a) An approved apostolic example, b) a direct command, c) a necessary inference. In fact none of these modes of authorization can be discovered.

Jesus Does Not Authorize Instrumental Music

Upon his ascension and coronation God made Jesus to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). Jesus publicly claimed this absolute power of authority as he departed this earth (Matt. 28:18). In view of this we who would please him can do nothing unless Jesus authorizes it. Thus Paul teaches us: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of (i.e., by the authority of) the Lord Jesus Christ ...” (Col. 3:17). The New Testament of Jesus plainly teaches us to speak “one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with (our) hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). But nowhere does the new covenant give authority for instrumental music.

If one is determined to have instrumental accompaniment

with his song worship he must do so without divine authority. Paul warns us not to go beyond what is written in scripture (I Cor. 4:6). John declares that to go onward and abide not in the teaching of Christ leaves one without the approval of God and his Son (II John 9).

Objection: Instrumental music was authorized under the Old Testament, why not now? We agree that it was acceptable then, but remind you that we are not under the old covenant. On the Mount of Transfiguration God rejected Peter's bid to equally honor the Old Testament law-giver and prophet with Christ. He spoke verbally from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son ... hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). That old system was taken out of the way and nailed to Jesus' cross (Col. 2:14—15), therefore, we are no longer judged by its precepts. Really this argument is discredited because it proves too much. That same Old Testament that approved instrumental music likewise approved polygamy, animal sacrifice and scores of other items not now allowed by Christ. One could not consistently select one and reject the other.

Objection: Instrumental music will be played in heaven, therefore, it is approved for us today. But does the Bible actually say that literal instruments will be used in heaven? Revelation 14:2—3 is a favourite proof text. Let us analyze it. John heard a voice. The voice was *as many waters*; i.e., rhythmic. It was like a *great thunder*, i.e., immensely loud. The voice was as *harpers harping*, i.e., beautiful, sweet and melodic. They *sang a new song*. The *simile* "as" shows that John heard singing, not actual instrumental music. The parallelism of these passages indicate that it was the singing which impressed him. But even if there were literal harps in heaven, that would not authorize instrumental music in Christian worship here on earth. No doubt many things will be done differently in heaven than on earth. For example, in heaven "they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30).

Objection: The Bible does not forbid or condemn the use of instrumental music. Those thus objecting, fail to understand how God authorized things. We can teach and practice everything which Christ and his inspired representatives have authorized. "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I command you," said Jesus (Matt. 28:20). We are obliged to first find where Christ approved a given thing before it is lawful. A thing may be authorized specifically or generally. In ordaining the communion, Jesus *specified bread and fruit of the vine*" (Matt. 26:26—28). Nothing else can be added. In ordaining praise in worship he specified "singing" (Eph. 5:19). Had he only said, "Make music unto God," we could have been free to sing or play or do both under that general authority. Of course, this he did not do. Actually this argument proves too much for its exponent. The Bible does not forbid buttermilk for baptism or coke and hot dogs for communion, but it does specify certain particular elements. Granted, it does not say "thou shalt not play a piano," but it does specifically call for vocal, acapella singing.

God authorized Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). He was given generic authority to use whatever tools needed to aid him in obeying God, but he was not authorized to use pine wood for his ship. Noah could use a ruler to make the ark 300 cubits long as God had commanded but he could not make it 305 cubits with God's approval. So all our worship to God today is governed by his authoritative word.

May we never forget why we worship as we do. It is not custom, culture or personal preference, it is because we are New Testament Christians, seeking to be no more or less than the original disciples. Everything unique about us is so because of our respect for God's word. Always remember that music in Christian worship is for teaching our fellow-worshippers and praising God, not for human entertainment. With simple acapella songs we walk by faith, not by sight. With human additions we do the opposite.

Why Don't You Write?

The gift of communication is truly one of God's greatest gifts to mankind. Second to oral communication is the ability to write our thoughts one to another. Historians credit the ancient Sumerians with first developing a system of word writing prior to 3,000 B.C. From that date multiplied billions of sheets of communication have been written in virtually every language of the human family. Although the telephone has greatly increased our ability to communicate quickly, still billions of pieces of mail are processed by our postal system yearly. With this marvelous gift at our fingertips, and the postal service to deliver our messages speedily, it is shameful how few of us use this tool to its fullest potential. How often have you been asked, "Why don't you write?"

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly" said Paul (I Tim. 3:15). Much of our New Testament is in the nature of letters written by the apostles to congregations and co-workers. John was commissioned to write letters to seven churches (Rev. 2:1).

There are letters that every Christian needs to write. Consider these suggestions and then take up the pen.

1. Why not write your parents. Whether you are a student away at college or an executive, you owe it to your parents to let them hear from you once in a while. Tell them you love them. Paul's admonition to honor our father and mother would include being considerate of them in this way (Eph. 6:1).

2. Parents, write your kids that are away in college or in the service. Let them know you are concerned for them. Tell them of your prayers for them. Your letter might be the encouragement

that will help keep them on the right road. In this way we can extend our “nurturing them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4.) A brother related to me how the reminder of his parents’ prayers each night for him helped keep him from many evils during his years in the navy.

3. Write a missionary and his wife. No one knows how lonely it is in a strange land, thousands of miles from home. When no mail arrives for days or weeks it is doubly oppressive. Money could not equal the value of a personal letter from folks back home. Even if you have never met the family, your kinship in Christ will make it a beautiful gift. In this way we help to hold up the hands of those noble trailblazers (Phil. 4:14).

4. Write a note to thank gospel preachers, elders, and other brethren and sisters who have blest your life. We owe so much to those who taught us the gospel, who helped us grow up in Christ. Without them we might have perished. Nothing would be more cherished by an aged teacher than a note from his student who is now a stalwart in the faith (II John 4).

5. Write a sympathy note to someone who has lost a loved one. Such a little thing as this can mean so much in an hour of sorrow. It says you care. Your light is shining for the Lord (Matt. 5:16). You are truly helping to bear another’s burden (Gal. 6:2). These need not be sent only to personal acquaintances. Some Christians check the obituary column and send cards to all sorrowing families.

6. Send a get well card to someone sick or shut in. Your life will be more meaningful as you brighten someone else’s day. We all look forward to such remembrances when we are sick. The golden rule tells us we should thus encourage our friends and brethren (Matt. 7:12).

7. Surprise an aged brother and sister in the church or a neighbor in the community. Send them a birthday card. Put a

little personal note within it. Just a little pinch of salt will flavor their whole day good (Matt.5:13).

8. Write a sinner a letter about his need for the Savior. You might win him in this way. You can polish and smooth a letter. You can ever rewrite it to make sure it says just the right thing. Perhaps he or she will write back and you can teach him just as surely as if you were face to face. Enclose an appropriate tract. Seal it with a prayer for heaven's help in your mission. Paul wrote urging men to be reconciled unto God (II Cor. 5:20). So can you.

9. Write for a World Bible School student from overseas who wants a partner for a Bible correspondence course. Write to the Webb Chapel Church of Christ, 13427 Webb Chapel, Dallas, Texas, 75234. In so doing you will help to evangelize the world for Jesus. (Mk. 16:15).

10. Write a fellow Christian who has wandered away from God. We who are spiritual must seek to restore these lost sheep (Gal. 6:1). Sometimes a letter will enter where a personal visit might be spurned.

11. Write a letter to your newspaper editor. Affirm your faith in those good and wholesome things that need to be promoted. Defend truth against error. Reprove the sin and error of our day. You can have one-page double spaced letter printed in nearly any paper if it is timely and well done. You will "Preach the Word" to thousands in this way (II Tim. 4:1—2).

12. Write your TV stations and the program sponsors. Commend the good broadcasts they offer, protest the obscene and immoral. You can make things change for good. "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgressions ..." (Is. 58:1).

13. Write your elected officials. Let them know what you

expect of them. Encourage them in the right and “chasten them” when they endorse and vote for evil. Most politicians want to be reelected to office. To do so they need votes. You are important to them. Many will count their constituent mail before a crucial vote. This is how righteousness can be preserved and maintained in the land.

Thank God for his manifold gifts, especially the gift of written communication. Let’s use it to his glory.