

SEARCHING *The* SCRIPTURES

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
—Acts 17:11

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WHO HAS CHANGED — ON WHAT AND WHY?

H. E. Phillips

Apparently a number of liberal brethren think they have found the answer to stop all arguments against their institutional schemes by citing statements made years ago by some preachers which conflict with recent statements by those same preachers. The obvious point is supposed to be that since these preachers have *changed* their views, they are wrong. If that point doesn't follow, I see absolutely no purpose at all in these comparisons. I suppose it has never occurred to some of these fellows that one can change from *error* to *truth* as well as from *truth* to *error*. There is neither virtue nor vice in the *change* itself, but the important point is *what* the change involves and *why* it was made. Aside from the fact that someone has changed, what is to be proven by this sort of argumentation? Surely we are not expected to conclude that everyone who changes his views on a given subject is wrong, because we read in some papers of brethren who have made their "confessions" and admitted their *changes*. These are commended by the institutional brethren for making the change. If the fact of change itself proves one wrong, it proves all wrong, regardless of what the *change* involves.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "CHANGE"?

The English word *change* means to alter or be altered, to undergo variation; to be partially or wholly transformed; to pass from one state to another. It means to turn from one thing to another; from one position to another. Such words as *turn*, *repent* and *convert* express the idea of a change of heart and life. The word *repent* means to change the mind. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). On the island of Melita, Paul was bitten by a serpent and the barbarians of the island thought he was a murderer who was to suffer for his crime, but after a while when he should have been dead, and was unharmed, they "changed their minds, and said that he was a god." (Acts 28:6). These people changed their views about Paul, first holding him to be a murderer and then a god. Of course, their change was from one error to another.

WHAT IS THE "CHANGE" SUPPOSED TO PROVE?

When a brother is charged with "changing his position" on the institutional issue, what is supposed

to be proved by this change? There are at least five possible things that are supposed to follow:

1. *Those who have changed once taught what the accusers now teach.* This may be true in many cases, but does it prove that he taught "truth" then and "error" now? If so, how does the fact that one changes prove that he is now *wrong*? If it be the fact that he has changed, what is to be done with the one who taught against church support of human organizations years ago, but has changed and now supports them? Is he not as wrong in *changing* as the first? One can clearly see that the change itself does not prove who is wrong and who is right. There must be scriptural proof for a position to make it right. We need to dwell upon the "proof" offered then and now for the position, and not simply upon the fact that one has *changed*. Those who charge that others have *changed* on certain issues seem not to realize that the New Testament requires one to change in certain situations.

2. *Those who have changed are inconsistent.* Here again we have the evidence of those who have changed from opposing institutional activity of churches to the liberal view of supporting them. One is as inconsistent as the other if based upon the fact of change itself. Many well known preachers have changed their religious position in life. Alexander Campbell gave up Presbyterianism in an effort to return to New Testament teaching. Was he inconsistent in changing?

In the book *Why I Left*, published by the Caskey-Campbell Publishing Co., Fort Worth, Texas, 1949, several preachers presented reasons why they left denominationalism. Floyd Decker once preached for the Christian Church, but he changed. Horace W. Busby once was in the Presbyterian Church, but he changed. Grover Stevens was once in the Baptist Church, but he changed. Waymond D. Miller was once in the Nazarene Church, but he changed. Joe Malone was once a Catholic, but he changed. Luther Blackmon was in the world, but he changed. Some of these represent the institutional position today and others oppose it. If one is inconsistent just because he changed, all are inconsistent. Homer Hailey once preached for the Christian Church in Arizona. Did he do wrong when he left the Christian Church and became a gospel preacher? Robert Jackson was once a member of the Methodist Church. Was he inconsistent when he changed and became a gospel preacher? To answer these questions is to prove that the fact of changing one's position on religious matters does not prove him inconsistent or wrong. It proves nothing more than that he has changed. The REASON for his change will determine whether

or not he is in error or inconsistent.

3. *They are not reliable teachers — they might change again.* If this charge be true of those who "change" from church support of human institutions to opposing such practice, would it not also be true of those who "change" in the other direction?

Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, and was fervent in the spirit. He came to Ephesus and taught diligently the things of the Lord, but he knew only the baptism of John. (Acts 18:24-26). He would have been considered by many an excellent preacher today, but he was not preaching the truth about the baptism of the commission of Christ because he knew only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly. He changed his preaching on the subject of baptism and was a worker with Paul (1 Cor. 3:5,6; 4:6). Did this change make Apollos unfit to be a teacher? He changed once; he might change again!

4. *The present disturbance in the church is due to THEIR change.* This is assuming what must be proven. It can not be just the fact of change in positions that is wrong; therefore, the view held in the change must determine who is the cause of trouble. In II Timothy 4:4 Paul spoke of some who turned away their ears from the truth, and were turned unto fables. Who caused the trouble in this case: those who "turned" unto fables or those who "opposed" such action? Paul told Titus to warn against Jewish fables, and commandments of men that "turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14). Did Paul cause the trouble? or was it those who turned to the commandments of men?

What about such men as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli in their opposition to Roman Catholicism? What about the Campbells, Stone, Scott, Franklin and Lipscomb? Did not their opposition to departures "cause" division in exactly the same way that opposition to departures today "cause" division? The *change* that causes division is the change away from the word of God, not the change from error to truth.

5. *These changes indicate departures from the orthodox practices.* No change indicates instability and lack of soundness unless it is away from the faith once delivered. It is always right to change when God's word demands it, and it is always sinful to refuse to change when one cannot support his position by the word of God. This "orthodox practice" only means that some brethren have been doing it for about fifty years. I am now speaking of churches contributing to orphanages. If a practice is not determined by the New Testament, who is to decide what an "orthodox" practice is?

We could quote endless statements and paragraphs on nearly all debatable questions by men of the past and present that show a change of views. But what does all this prove about what is scriptural and what is not? Suppose John Doe wrote last year a certain position on a passage from God's word, and this year wrote exactly the opposite view on the same passage, would it follow that he is NOW wrong? It could as well be that he was wrong a year ago and is right now. The fact that a change occurred does not in itself prove which time he was

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right, if at either time. The man who has no scriptural proof for his position, even if he has held it all of his life, would fare better to dwell upon the fact that someone else has changed than to try to prove his position by the Bible.

Much of the time when quotations are made from articles written years ago the context is ignored. Such statements may have been made concerning an entirely different subject. The man could be misquoted, the context of his quotation not given, or he could have changed his position. In the case of the first two he would not be fairly represented, and in the case of the last his reasons for the new position would be more important than the fact of his change.

THE NATURE OF CHANGES

The fact of change does not indicate whether the person is wrong or right. We must know what his position was before the change and what it was after the change. There are three possible positions that result from changing one's views:

1. *The change from one error to another error.* D. M. Canright, once a leader in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, changed from that error and became a member of the Baptist Church. He left one unscriptural position for another unscriptural position. His change corrected some errors formerly held, but he adopted other errors as taught by the Baptist Church. He did not better his relationship to God by his change.

2. *The change from truth to error.* Paul instructs Titus to rebuke sharply those in error that they may be sound in the faith, "not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14). He also wrote to Timothy to preach the word because the time would come when some would not endure "sound doctrine" but would secure teachers of those things they desired to hear, "and they shall turn away their ears from

the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (II Tim. 4:4). Demas was once a servant of God and a fellow-laborer of the apostle Paul (Philem. 24; Col. 4:14), but he changed to the world because he loved it. (II Tim. 4:10). These are Bible examples of changing from truth to error.

I have known gospel preachers who left the church and became members of denominations. Some of them went back to the world. Pat Hardeman was preaching the gospel of Christ a few years ago, but he changed; he denied the very faith he once preached. This change is always wrong, not because it is a change, but because it leaves the truth and turns to error.

3. *The change from error to truth.* The fact of change here is as true as in the foregoing, but the difference is that one changes TO truth FROM error instead of TO error FROM truth. The apostle Paul is a good example of one changing from error to truth, and all men who read the word of God with appreciation admire and strive to imitate the apostle in this kind of changing. He once persecuted the church and made havoc of it (Acts 8:3; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 26:9). He referred to himself as "chief of sinners" because he persecuted the church. But Paul *changed!* Now who will charge Paul with being an apostate because he changed? If not, then the FACT of change does not determine whether or not a man is scripturally wrong. Paul changed to serve Christ (Gal. 2:18-20; Phil. 3:4-14).

The Jews on Pentecost changed. They had been guilty of crucifying the Lord with wicked hands (Acts 2:23), but they repented and were forgiven (Acts 2:37-41). It is right to change from sin to righteousness. The Gentiles changed. Before they were without Christ and had no hope in this world, but they changed and became servants of Christ where they enjoyed every spiritual blessing. (Eph. 2:11-13). Those who place so much emphasis upon the fact that some preacher has changed his position in the last few years need to show from the scriptures that he has changed from TRUTH to ERROR, and not from ERROR to TRUTH. Instead of comparing statements made years ago with statements recently made, they should cite scriptural authority to prove that positions now held are unscriptural and former positions were scriptural. Do not be deceived by long quotations from the pen of some preacher in the past compared with present statements without a single passage from God's word to show that the change is from TRUTH to ERROR.

THE POSITION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT CHANGE

It is supposed to be a sign of righteousness and power to claim that one has not changed through the years. If there is evil in the fact of change itself, then there is righteousness in the fact of remaining unchanged in itself. The Pharisees represent a group of religious people who remained unchanged. They insisted that the law of Moses must be kept and they would not give it up for the gospel of Christ. (Luke 7:30; Acts 15:1). If this argument on changing means anything, it makes the position of the Pharisees right because they did not change at the preaching of the gospel. Read Christ's evaluation of this religious sect in Matthew 23.

CHANGING INVOLVES LAW AND PRACTICE

In order to understand the claims of not changing views with the admission of change in views, we must understand that some change in regard to law, but do not change in regard to practice. Others change in regard to practice, but do not change in matters of law.

1. *Some change the law to fit the practice.* Paul spoke of some who had itching ears and would heap to themselves teachers to speak what they wanted to hear (II Tim. 4:4). Whatever they practiced, they wanted preachers who would make the law agree with their practice. So it is today. When one speaks of having never changed through the years, he may be speaking of his *practice*. He still does those things which he has always done, and when the question of authority arises, he simply wrests the scriptures to try to make them fit his works. In regard to *practice*, he is right when he says he has not changed through the years. In regard law, he has changed. This is exactly the position of the Judaizing teachers who came to Antioch with their doctrine. They professed to be Christians but they insisted that one must "keep the law and be circumcised" to be saved. (Acts 15:1,2). They could cry, "We have not changed our views" and they would be correct with reference to their PRACTICE. They had before insisted upon keeping the law of Moses, and they now insisted upon keeping it. But they changed the LAW of Christ even though they might have denied it.

This is exactly the position of many of the liberal preachers today who insist that they have ALWAYS practiced contributions from the church to orphanages and such human institutions in doing benevolent work. It is true that they have NOT changed their practice; they still do it. But they have changed in regard to divine authority. They once preached that one could not presume to go beyond what is revealed in the New Testament. Their practice may not have been called in question before, but now when divine authority is called for to support this "long time" practice, they change their position on scriptural authority (and deny it), but do not change their *practice* (and brag about it).

2. *Some change the practice to fit the law.* These have always held that the only divine authority for anything was what the New Testament revealed, and at the same time they ignorantly practiced some things that conflicted with this position. When the matter was called to attention, they willingly changed their *practice* to fit the doctrine. When they admit to change, they mean their practice and not their teaching. When they deny changing, they have reference to what they have taught rather than what they have practiced.

An example of this is the Jew and the Gentile with respect to the gospel of Christ. Every apostle from the day of Pentecost to the last word written by divine power always taught that there was no difference between the Jew and the Gentile in the plan of salvation. This doctrine cannot be changed and the person changing it be right. Every one who taught this did not practice it. Peter withdrew himself and others followed him when he went to Antioch. Because his practice was wrong, Paul

rebuked him to the face because he "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel", but Paul did not rebuke Peter for teaching that there was a difference between the Jew and Gentile in the matter of salvation. (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter needed to change his *practice*, but he did not need to change what he had preached on this matter.

When Peter was first sent to the house of a Gentile with the gospel, he exclaimed when he saw the Holy Spirit fall on the house of Cornelius, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34,35). Peter's change involved his practice, not his teaching.

On current issues, many preachers have always preached that human institutions had no place in the work of the church, and they strongly proclaimed that the work of the church did not involve recreational programs and associations with denominations, yet in their practice of some things they violated these very principles without being aware of it until recent years. Instead of changing their *practice* to fit the doctrine they have always preached, they changed the *doctrine* to authorize their practices. When they deny any change, they have reference to their practices. However, in regard to doctrine, they labor to prove that they have divine authority to continue these practices, but they cannot produce it in the written word.

3. *Some change both the doctrine and practice.* Sometimes this is right and sometimes it is wrong. It all depends upon which way the change is made. If one has taught and practiced salvation by faith only, and later learns that neither his doctrine nor his practice is right, he changes, and rightly so. Some in the Christian Church both taught and practiced the use of the Missionary Society in combining the work of many churches, but they learned that they were teaching and practicing something unauthorized in the word of God. They changed both the teaching and practice. Is this not what they should have done? Had they changed the doctrine without changing their practice, they would not have been "doers of the word", but if they had changed their practice and not the doctrine, they would have been preaching one thing and practicing another.

If, on the other hand, one has taught and practiced the doctrine of Christ, and changes both, he departs from God. I know of a preacher who once preached and practiced the gospel of Christ, but he left it and "joined" the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Now he teaches and practices an entirely different doctrine. The Pharisees taught that the law of Moses must be kept, but they did not keep it. They substituted in its place the "tradition of the elders". (Matt. 15:1-6). Jesus said they had made the law of God void by their traditions. They had changed both the doctrine and practice and neither was in keeping with anything God had revealed to them. Even though these Pharisees would have denied any "change", they were substituting the commandments of men for the commandments of God and were binding them upon men.

WHY DOES ONE CHANGE?

Frequently one is asked why he made a certain change in doctrine or practice. The usual answer

is that he learned the truth and changed to it. It is not always a fact that the change was made because of truth, even though it is said to be the reason. Some who believed on Christ would not confess him because they "feared" the Pharisees. Others would not confess him because they "loved" the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:42,43). This is also the reason why some men "change" their positions on some of the current problems involving the church. With some it is no more a matter of conviction than it was with the Pharisees. Their changes are in conformity to the demands of the majority and popular side.

But in many cases the changes, either in doctrine or practice (which ever the truth requires), are based upon convictions arising from a study of the New Testament. They are more interested in doing the will of God than they are in pleasing some individual or in standing on the popular side. If one changes because he has learned the truth, he is always doing right to change and will be ready to give every man an answer for this change. If one changes to receive the applause of men and to receive special consideration for self, he is wrong no matter which way he changes. In simple words, one must change from error to truth, and he must change because of conviction of truth and a desire to do the will of God as the New Testament. Life produces change, but death also produces change. There is a wide difference between life and death. There is also a wide difference between truth and error. One may change either way, but it makes all the difference in the world which way one changes.

Science and Truth

I Tim. 6:20-21

William D. Burgess

When the word evolution is mentioned most people think immediately of Charles Darwin. They either commend or condemn him for his theory, depending upon their own opinions as to the credibility of this theory. Actually, the seeds of this theory were planted by many individuals long before the time of Darwin.

As far as the records reveal, the Greeks were the first to begin thinking along this line. Among the Greeks, Anaximander (611-547 B.C.) visualized all things as having come from a primordial slime to which they ultimately return. This was one of the earliest known theories of spontaneous generation and an early springboard for evolutionary thinking.

In the fifth century B.C., Empedocles (495-435 B.C.) suggested that the four elements were air, earth, fire and water, and that these were acted upon by two forces love and hate, which caused their union and separation. He suggested that plants had arisen first, and animals were later formed from them. The germ of the idea of natural selection was contained in his belief that the parts of animals were formed separately and then united at random by the triumph of love over hate. As a result of this, most of these would be monsters and unviable but a few, he contended, would survive. He and

many others, before him and for many centuries afterward, believed in the possibility of spontaneous generation of life from nonliving materials. This settled the question, in a rather simple fashion, as to the origin of life.

The greatest of the Greek men of science was Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) whose ideas dominated biological thought for well over a thousand years. He was a vitalist, believing that living things were animated by a vital force or a guiding intelligence. To Aristotle his internal force became a perfecting principle, operating constantly to improve or perfect the living world. Growing out of this concept was his ladder of nature ("Scala naturae") in which he arranged living things on a scale of perfection with man, at the top, being the most nearly perfect. Although Aristotle did not interpret this as one evolving from the one below it, it was later used like this in developing the theory of evolution by several individuals, including Charles Darwin.

Even today when the evolutionists reject the Genesis record of creation as illogical and unlikely, they must then go back to their so-called logical steps of life from some primordial slime by spontaneous generation, where a lower form of life gives rise to some higher form in some unobserved and unexplained way. It is strange indeed how men can see either logic or reason in such a theory as this.

COMMENTS TO EDITORS

"I do so appreciate a good publication as Searching The Scriptures. I wish everyone could read it Here is my renewal extension."—Mrs. Maude Fielding, Lakeland, Fla.

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"I appreciate very much the material which is contained in Searching The Scriptures. The soundness of its doctrine was the factor that recommended it to me when, several years ago, brother Ron Mos-by showed me a copy and recommended that I subscribe to it. Please continue to publish material of equal value. It is refreshing indeed to know that there are still publications in the brotherhood, such as yours, which still stand for the old ways and against institutionalism"—Major Wallace H. Little, A.P.O. San Francisco, Calif.

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The theory of evolution has no more difficult problem than the scarcity of human and so called prehuman fossils. Fossil is another word for skeleton, and since it must be admitted that man is the only part of the creation that buries its dead, they should be found by the millions over the earth. This is especially true if the evolutionist is right about the age of the earth. If this runs into millions of years and the evolution process covers much of this period, as they would have us to believe, there should be thousands and hundred of thousands of fossils to support their theory. They should be able to find "missing links" under every hill on the face of the globe. Men have been buried in every climate and under every conceivable condition. Many of them as favorable for the preservation of the skeleton as it was possible for them to be. Yet in the face of this undeniable truth only a hand full of fossils have ever been found that are even used to attempt to prove man's rise from a lower order of life. Just think of the problem for the evolutionist. By his own theory time has run into the millions of years and all that time the process of evolution has been leaving the fossils either in or on the earth and it would be a necessary conclusion that millions of

these would be preserved, and yet he can find but a hand full to argue his case.

THE PILTDOWN MAN

To prove the case in point, we can not help but marvel when the evidence is all in. Take the case of the Piltdown Man. This gentleman was found in 1912 in England by Charles Dawson and Arthur Smith-Woodward. We would suppose that to prove the theory of evolution at least a greater part of the skeleton would be necessary. This was not the case however. The age of this fossil was estimated at from 200,000 to 1,000,000 years. The fragments included only a part of the skull and a canine tooth with a lower jaw and the second and third molars. In addition to all of this it has been demonstrated by the most able men in the field such as Weiner, Oakley and Clark that this was all one of the greatest and carefully prepared hoax of modern times. For example the teeth have been filed down to look like normal wear and some of the bones were those of an animal. Even the lower jaw may have been that of a orangutan.

THE THEORY GOES MARCHING ON

It is true that not all of the fossils have suffered the same fate as the infamous Piltdown Man but I can not help but marvel that the theory goes marching on. Artists continue to draw pictures of a "missing link" and even the text books of the land are filled with his image yet in all of the earth he can not be found. In the millions of graves and in the thousands of caves and in the pits of earth this link between man and beast is not to be had. This alone is enough evidence to prove the theory false and to cause us go to Genesis 1:26,27. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God made man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

PERSON OR PLAN

Turning from evolution to the plan of salvation, I marvel at the lengths men will go to escape doing what God says do. Ever since I can remember some of my brethren have cried long and loud about converting men to a person and not a plan. By this they mean to convert men to Christ and not to faith, repentance and baptism. Of course in the primary statement this is true. We convert men to Jesus and to the saving power of his blood. It is to the person of Christ that men are to turn, but nine times out of ten when this kind of talk is heard someone is trying to lessen the force of God's commandments. The same kind of thinking has a tendency to make fun of such statements as "the steps in salvation". In Romans 4:12 Paul talks of those who walk, "in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham." This is figurative language of course but if we "walk by faith and not by sight", we will be taking steps. We all need to understand that:

Commands require Obedience
 Obedience requires Action
 Action requires Steps

or some other expression of similar kind if it is to be spoken of as Paul uses the term in Romans 2:12. In addition to this all of the objection to the word *plan* is unnecessary. The primary definition of the word *plan* is, "a draft or form". In Romans 6:17 Paul had this to say, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that *form* of doctrine which was delivered you."

**GIVING THE ANSWERS
 FOR OUR HOPE**

Address questions to:
**35 West Par Ave.
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I PETER 3:15

Marshall E. Patton

Question: Is it scriptural for a church to incorporate in order to hold property, secure a loan, or to execute business transactions? Are not such corporations organizations in addition to the local church? Is not the same thing true of a board of trustees whether incorporated or unincorporated ? — J.M.

ANSWER: Whether or not a church may scripturally incorporate depends upon the type of corporation formed. If the corporation is formed by the church and functions at the discretion of the church, then it is nothing more than an expedient of the church. Such would be scriptural upon the same basis that any expedient would be scriptural. (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23,32; Rom. 14:21).

However, not all corporations are like this. If the church were to incorporate so that the control of the church in the accomplishment of its mission was vested in the corporation itself, then such corporation would be unscriptural. It would no longer be church action. The following contrast between an incorporated church and an incorporated institutional home illustrates the difference under consideration :

CHURCH	HOME
1. CHURCH forms the corporation.	1. CORPORATION forms (establishes) the home.
2. CHURCH limits function of the corporation.	2. CORPORATION limits function of the home.
3. Everything done at discretion of the CHURCH.	3. Everything done at discretion of the CORPORATION.
4. Corporation is expedient of CHURCH.	4. Home is expedient of CORPORATION.
5. Still CHURCH action!	5. Not home action!

An incorporated church like the one described in the contrast above is comparable to the church using a contract company for the purpose of building a building. Sometimes a church must use other organizations, in compliance with the law of the land, in carrying out its mission. Sometimes it must obtain some kind of license, in compliance with the law of the land, in order to build. Sometimes it must appoint a board of trustees, in compliance with the law of the land, in order to hold property or to trans-

act other business. Even though such organizations exist separate and apart from the church they are used so as to be only an expedient of the church. I suppose no one objected to this so long as it remains church action and the organization involved is only an expedient of the church. The use of such organizations differ altogether from the church making a contribution to another organization which organization in turn uses the contribution and functions at its own discretion. In such instances the church subsidizes the organization and thereby becomes a subsidiary to it. This is wrong, necessarily so, since the church is all-sufficient. The church as an all-sufficient organization can do everything that God has authorized it to do WITHOUT subsidizing any human institution.

It is unscriptural for the church to contribute to any human organization. It thereby reflects upon the infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power of Him who designed the church from all eternity. It also reflects upon its own all-sufficiency, becomes a subsidiary to that which is human, and fails in its own divine mission. The church of our Lord is not sub to anything — save the authority of Christ.

BIBLICAL WORD STUDIES

By E. V. SRYGLEY, JR.

KOINONIA, "FELLOWSHIP," — No. 5

"PRACTICAL SHARING"

Unquestionably there are several occurrences of *koinonia* in the New Testament where "charitable gift" is denoted. It has been noted several times that this signification is not found in the earliest Greek. Passages that employ the noun in this sense are Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 8:4; II Cor. 9:13; Heb. 13:16; and perhaps Philemon 6.

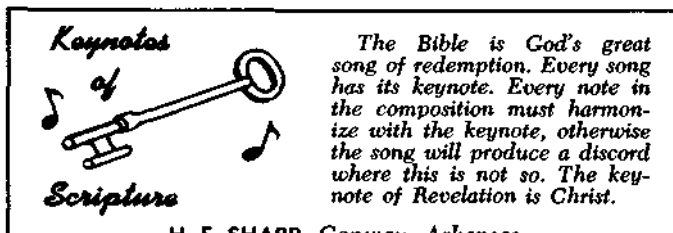
Rom. 15:26, II Cor. 8:4, and II Cor. 9:13 all have to do with the contribution or collection taken up for the "poor saints" in Jerusalem and delivered at the close of Paul's third mission tour. But why is this contribution called a *koinonia*? Is it called a *koinonia* because it was the result of a "common" life? Was it called a *koinonia* because it was the expression of a willingness and desire to share one's goods?

Apparently Thayer views *koinonia* in the passages under study as the expression of a common life or partnership, for he defines the noun in these places, "benefaction jointly contributed." (*Lexicon*, 6. 352.)

The writer chooses to conclude that the contribution was called a *koinonia* because it was an expression of the Christians' willingness and desire to be partners with others in their own goods. It was, then, metaphorically a *koinonia*. Paul constantly stresses the idea of giving and receiving in the contexts of the passages. (For a very fine comment on this see William Sanday, and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958), p. 412.)

It seems evident from the context that *koinonia* in Heb. 13:16 denotes "contribution," or "charitable gift." For, indeed, in the same place the writer refers to this *koinonia* as a "sacrifice." Here again the term is used by metonymy to denote the expression of that willingness to share one's goods. In fact, one version renders the text, "forget not doing good and sharing (*koinonias*)." (A. Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1959), p. 893.)

Some hold that *koinonia* in Philemon 6 is used as it is in Rom. 15:26, etc. (See, for example, M. R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1955), p. 180.) To the writer it appears that the term in Rom. 15:26 is not parallel to its use in Philemon 6. In this latter passage the word is used to denote "partnership of thy faith"; that is, the partnership growing out of faith. Paul is hoping that the faith of Philemon will cause him to recognize Onesimus as a "partner" in the Christian life. Indeed, Paul writes to Philemon in verse 17, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." It is apparent, therefore, that Paul is admonishing Philemon to consider Onesimus, not as a faithless and useless slave, but, rather, as a "partner" in a common life.



H. F. SHARP, Conway, Arkansas

EZRA

The book of Ezra might well be the promises of God fulfilled regarding the coming into the land again and the restoration of the Jewish people to their worship, after they had been cleansed from the sins of worshipping idols. At this time they were in a state of misery and desolation. Of course, all of this came upon them as a result of following their own ways and not hearkening to the words of Jehovah. But God had promised that they would be returned to their land. Here we see the truth that God is not slack concerning his promises as men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward men. It had been some time since the promise had been made regarding their return, but even though man may have forgotten, God did not forget. God stirred up the mind of Cyrus, king of Persia, and the Jews were allowed to return. Under Ezra we are to find the restoration of the altar and the temple plan of rebuilding. The altar, which had been a place for the swallow to build a nest and raise her young because it had not been in use, suddenly is restored to service. The temple plans are made in rebuilding the house for the Lord. When all the plans were carried out and the temple was completed, we are told that the old men wept when they saw the glory of the first was far above that which now existed.

If you will think for just a moment, some of these men and women were very old, and they had been in captivity for 51 years in Babylon. Suppose they were only 20 years of age when they went to Babylon as a captive and stayed for 51 years. Now they are seventy-one, their heads crowned with snow, their forms bent, wrinkles are furrowed deep in their brow. Now see the eyes of these old people moistened with tears. Why, you say! They see the glory of the former passed away. The beautiful temple had been in decay, unused. The altars had been a place for the swallows to build their nests. The worship of God had departed. The songs of praise to God, the altars burning with the sacrifice to God upon it, and the children with their parents are not found there. Where are they? They have gone after other gods and departed from the divine pattern of organization and worship. Decay and sadness are their lots. Look at the church of the Lord today! See that which Christ loved so much bleeding at every pore before the gazing eyes of an unbelieving community. Men who once loved, fellowshiped and labored together do not speak. God in the heavens above sees his children departing from his ways and is made to grieve. If some of our fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers and courageous preaches of yesterday were to come back to life today, would they recognize the church? Men who blazed the trail, met the enemy of truth, used the sword of the spirit so capably, have died and that for which they stood is gone. We need, as Jeremiah of old, to cry for men to return to the old paths and the good ways, walk in them, ask for them and find life in them. All of this for us today is through Christ. (John 14:1-6).

FALSE VIEWS ON THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Jimmy Tuten Jr., St. Louis, Mo.

There are many sectarian abuses of the Holy Scriptures. Literally thousands are led down the road of ultimate confusion and chaos. This is the result of accepting certain perversions that are believed as fact and propagated with a fanatical zeal. There is little or no effort on the part of the masses to prove these doctrines by the Scriptures. This results in a sad picture displaying blind disciples dishonoring the God of Heaven, whom they seek to please. Among the Scriptures perverted by the workings of Satan, are certain passages in the book of Revelation. The "letters to the seven churches" occupy a preeminent position on this list of abuses. In this writing, two false notions relating to these seven letters will be considered.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONALISM

As a defense for the divided conditions in the religious world, many sectarians resort to Revelation, chapters 2-3. They maintain that these seven churches constitute a Biblical recognition of the right of denominationalism to exist in this present world. It is maintained that these churches were different denominations and that the Lord did not deny them

the right to exist, even though he corrected certain disorders among them.

Devotees to this position are either grossly ignorant of the context or they deliberately twist the text. The appearance of the words "seven churches" in no way indicates that the Bible upholds the divided conditions that exists in the religious world today. In fact, the Bible condemns in no uncertain terms the sin of division (Jno. 17:20-23; I Cor. 1:10). Even after one reads into the text of Revelation certain ideas, the position still lacks evidence to uphold it.

Paradoxically speaking, denominationalism is united in at least one respect: the belief that individuals may practice what they choose as long as the belief is sincere and the heart is right. The Lord's inspection of the seven churches certainly does not comply with this type of reasoning. The letter to the church at Ephesus reveals that the individuals making up this collective of God's people were commended for NOT BELIEVING the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Ephesus "hated" this doctrine and the Lord was pleased with her (Rev. 2:6). If this were a denominational church such as those which men seek to justify today, there would have been no need for such a commendation! Why commend someone for accepting that which was simply a matter of choice in the first place? The very nature of this letter shows that the Ephesians were not at liberty to believe as they saw fit, regardless of their sincerity. Then there is the church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17). The pattern or philosophy of denominationalism will not fit here for the simple fact that this church WAS CONDEMNED for following certain doctrines. These people at Pergamos were not free to accept whatever "faith" they saw fit to accept. The very nature of the correcting letters which the Lord sent to the seven churches demonstrates forever that people must accept only that doctrine which the Lord loves and reject that which He hates.

Another reason for rejecting the idea that the seven churches represent "kinds" of denominational churches, lies in the word "churches" (Rev. 1:20). The word "churches" is translated from the plural form of EKKLESIA, which in turn is compounded from EK (out of) and KLESIS (a calling). The "church" is simply the *called out*. It has three applications : it refers to the whole company of believers who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; Matt. 16:18). It also refers to a company of Christians in any given location, such as the church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:1; Rev. 2:1). When used in this local sense, it is the assembly, whether assembled or not (Acts 11:22; 12:1; 15:4, 22). There is also the plural form, EKKLESIAI, referring to churches in a given area such as Syria or Cilicia, or even Asia Minor (Acts 15:41; 16:5-6). The letters under discussion were written to the seven EKKLESIAI (churches) and has reference to congregations or assemblies of God's people. These became God's "called out" or elect by having obeyed their heavenly calling (2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1). This call came through the gospel, designed to lead men from darkness to light (2 Thess. 2:14; Col. 1:13). By obeying the gospel, the Christians making up the churches in Revelation 2-3, accepted the call of God. They were added to the church or the body

of the saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, 47). The conclusion is, the "seven churches" refer not to kinds of churches as men are prone to speak of them, but to assemblies of God's people in various cities of Asia Minor. The letters describe certain conditions in some of the churches of Asia Minor, and these conditions are not peculiar to the churches addressed. Nor are they peculiar to the age in which the letters were written. They represent a perfect picture of conditions which may be found today and could occur over and over in coming generations.

THE SEVEN STAGE THEORY

Most all dispensationalists and possibly some others, take the position that the seven letters represent seven successive stages or epochs in the history of the church from the coming of Christ until the end of time. The Scofield Bible is a good example of a publication taking this position. On pages 1331-1332 of the 1917 edition, the statement is made that "these messages do present an exact foreview of the spiritual history of the church, and in this precise order." Scofield states further, that Ephesus represents the church at the time of John's writing, Smyrna is the period up to the time of Constantine's conversion, Pergamos represents the period following this conversion, etc., etc. On the very surface, one can see that this position is fantastic and speculative! The Bible, nor history will sustain such a position. For example, according to the theory, the Ephesian period would have been the period when the church was in *complete* apostasy. The letter addressed to the church at Ephesus states that Ephesus had left its "first love" (Rev. 2:4). The period prior to 316 A. D. (cf. Scofield Bible, P. 1331) is said to be that represented by Smyrna. Let it be noted that not only was the church at Smyrna persecuted, but it was faithful "to its calling to be a light-bearer." Those who take the seven stage position stress this idea of persecution and call attention to the various Emperors who poured out their wrath upon the church. They completely ignore the fact that in order for the church in Smyrna to fit the theory, the church during the period prior to 316 A. D., would have to be faithful as well as persecuted. This church received no condemnation from the Lord! Historically speaking, this so-called "Smyrna period" was a dark, blackened picture of corruption. This is the early formation period for Catholicism (cf. *Neander's History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, Pp. 68-221). During this time the introduction of certain corrupt practices took place, such as the distinction between bishops and presbyters, observance of certain sacred seasons, corruption of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. The period and the letter that is said to represent this period are not parallel. The church during the time prior to Constantine's conversion was not the faithful church presented in Revelation 2 :8-11.

Let the reader also note that Scofield has two periods existing at the same time. He says on page 1332 of the reference already cited, "Philadelphia is whatever bears clear testimony to the Word and the Name in the time of SELF-SATISFIED PROFESSION BY LAODICEA (Italics mine, jtt). One might ask, "how is it possible to determine that we are now in the last period?" This is supposition and cannot be proven by Divine Authority, nor history.

There are numerous variations in this method of dividing the periods; "variations so wide as at once to undermine our confidence that there is here 'a precise foreview of the spiritual history of the church, and in this precise order:' as Scofield affirms" (Pieters, *Studies in the Revelation of St. John*, P. 98). Hendriksen says, "The notion that these seven churches describe seven successive periods of church-history hardly needs refutation. To say nothing about the almost humorous—if not so deplorable exegesis..." (*More Than Conquerors*, P. 75). In addition to what has already been said, the following brief objections have been suggested:

1. In the wording of these letters there is not the slightest hint of such a division. The context bears out that this was a simultaneous condition among the churches existing in John's day.

2. The theory rests upon the "futuristic" view of Revelation. This position states that all items prophesied from the beginning of chapter four to the end of the book, has not been fulfilled. It will be fulfilled when Christ returns. We have to reject this view "of Revelation and with it, the "seven stage" theory.

3. This position would require an accurate knowledge of the internal affairs and spiritual condition of the church during these periods and such knowledge does not exist!

CONCLUSION

The seven letters to the seven churches describe conditions existing in some of the churches of Asia. These conditions existed simultaneously in John's day. The situation described in Revelation 2-3 is not peculiar to John's day, nor to the age in which it was written. These conditions could be found among various churches in every age and could occur over and over. Let the various collectives of God's people around the globe note the sad conditions which the Lord condemned and seek to be faithful as a light-bearer. Beware lest the Lord remove "thy candlestick out of his place" except "thou repent" (Rev. 2:5).

SALVATION? or SENSATION?

By Conway Skinner, Forest, Miss.

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4. Big party with plenty of fun, fellowship and food at the close of the service."

The above quotation is an example of the sen-

sationalism employed in advertising a recent, so-called CRUSADE FOR CHRIST campaign held in Forest, Miss. This type of religious sensationalism seems to be sweeping America.

The following is a quotation from "Churches Take Up Show Business", an article you may read in the Sept. 22, 1982 issue of *THE SATURDAY EVENING POST*, the article begins with the following remarks,

The curtain rises on a boy and girl interlocked in what polite Victorians used to call an embrace and realistic youngsters now term a "grapple". The dialogue is direct:

Girl: "This can't go on!"

Boy: "Why can't it?"

The girl wriggles loose and breaks into a soliloquy:

"To go or not to go to bed, that is the question.

Should I give up this virgin soil?

Would he then afterwards still want me?

How far should any maiden go, and how far is too far?"

Those lines and many more like them wowed the first-night audience at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and walloped a New York full house with equally electric effect on opening night in the big city.

While the theme is hardly original in American theater, this presentation of it jars its audiences into wide-eyed surprise. For it is a church musicale, *FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE*, with a clergyman as co-producer. It is perhaps the most effective shocker in a growing repertoire of stage plays written or adapted for church presentation to attract young people to religion."

For heaven's sake, indeed; that such filth and trash should be disguised in religious garb; when in reality this is just another sample of religious sensationalism.

In *THE TOP OF THE NEWS*, with Fulton Lewis, Jr. (week of May 1-5, 1961 — Vol. 3, No. 18), a quotation of "The Lord's Prayer — Teenage Version" may be found. This version is supposedly sponsored by the National Council of Methodists youths, and goes like this:

"O daddy, O Who are the most Hurrah for your support My personality integrate All my physique develope My nervous system calm In body as in mind.

Prepare me new tempo Our daily jive, and Release us from our parents And other repressed victims.

Lead me into more self-expression And much less boredom For you are the coolest Gonest, and hepest drive From now on."

Speaking frankly, but still in the "hep-talk" of our teenagers, when I read the above, I truly suffered a "blast-off"! What drive!

It seems that today, we operate under the philosophy of "all is fair in love, war, AND RELIGION;" so, just clothe any practice in religious robes and it becomes acceptable. Already, nearly every kind of enticement possible is being offered — from movies, plays, food and parties, to free airplane rides! — in order to be able to get folks, especially young people, to be willing to take an occasional dose of religion.

Picture in your mind, IF YOU CAN, the Apostle Paul advertising a highly dramatic sermon on "What's In A Holy Kiss", to be followed by free food and entertainment, plus a free donkey ride for all the kiddies and a sailboat ride for all the adults. What foolishness! Instead, Paul said, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech (or dramatic sermons — C.S.), or of wisdom (food and frolic to attract crowds — C.S.), declaring unto you the testimony of God, FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANY THING AMONG YOU, SAVE *JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED*" (I Cor. 2:1-2, emphasis mine—C.S.).

There is no short-cut to salvation, as God's divine plan remains constant; it does not change. The Individual must still believe, to change his heart; repent, to change his sinful habits; and be baptized, to change his state or relationship. Because each penitent believer must be baptized "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27) in order to receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

Brethren, when will WE cease trying to improve upon God's gospel power to save by the use of free food and frolics? Just as we shall never be able successfully to compete with Roman Catholicism in building beautiful cathedrals, neither could we ever successfully compete against Protestant denominationalism in fun, frolics, and foolishness. What is the matter, anyway? Do we no longer believe that God's gospel has saving power? Are we ASHAMED of the gospel? (Rom. 1:16).

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"... THEY REHEARSED ALL THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM..."—Acts 14:27

JUST PREACHING

Jas. P. Miller

The summer slipped away so rapidly that I did not get the report of my meetings in the paper. My apologies to the host of fine preachers and churches with whom I labored. The year of 1962 has been one of the busiest and most profitable in my twenty-seven years of preaching. In 16 meetings, long and short, about 100 souls responded to the call of the gospel. Preachers and brethren from over 150 churches of the Lord came to hear me preach and many friends of old were greeted and new ones made. The late fall found me in four meetings and I will take advantage of the coldest day in the history of Florida to tell you about them here.

On Saturday, October 20th, I flew to Bowling Green, Kentucky to preach for the old Twelfth Street congregation. This is where B. G. Hope has spent the last 13 years doing one of the greatest works a man could do. This great old congregation sparks with new life and, numbering over 500 members, is a tower of strength in all of central Kentucky. The meeting began on Sunday morning the 21st and I preached twice a day through Sunday morning the 28th. Closing the meeting with a Lord's Day morning service, I took the plane to Louisville where brethren from the University Avenue Congregation in Lexington met me and drove me to Lexington where I started that night. Brother Bob Crawley arrived in Lexington to take up the work on Wednesday night of the meeting. The University Avenue church is a strong congregation standing for the truth. They have a collection of about \$500.00 a Sunday and a determination to be true to the old paths. Many preachers came to the meeting at Bowling Green, but I did not make a list of the names. Ferrell Jenkins, now preaching for West End, was present at many of the services. Ross Spears of Tompkinsville came for several services. They almost have the new building completed in Tompkinsville and are looking forward to greater things. Preachers who attended the Lexington meeting came from all over that part of the state. Here are some of the names of these men who preach the gospel in that part of Kentucky and Ohio. KELLY ELLIS, Danville, Ky., HERMON MASON, Harrodsburg, Kentucky; FORREST MORRIS, Willisburg, Kentucky, ROSS SANDERS, Lebanon, Kentucky, HENRY FICKLIN, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, C. W. SCOTT, Louisville, Kentucky, FOREST HURST, Louisville, Kentucky, PAUL K. WILLIAMS, Columbus, Ohio, PAUL WOODWARD, Louisville, Kentucky, CHARLIE BROWN, Sanford, Kentucky, BOB G. NEALY, Winchester, Kentucky, HAROLD YOUNG, Providence, Kentucky, RALPH FOX and JIMMIE ALFORD preachers in the University congregation.

I closed the Lexington meeting on November 4th and flew to Richmond, Virginia for a five day effort with the Forest Hills church. James Jones preaches for the Forest Hills congregation and is loved by them. Old Richmond was the capital of the confederacy and is rich with the history of the War between the States. It was also a strong hold for the restoration and the digressives have about 15 churches in greater Richmond. All of them are examples of the folly of going beyond "that which is written." FRANK JAMERSON preached for West End brethren and they are just completing a new meeting house. It is a beautiful building and will be a credit to the cause in this old and beautiful city. We will have a complete story and picture of this work along with the plans of brother Jones to go to Norway in an early issue of SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

On the night of the 25th of November I began a meeting with the Par Avenue congregation in Orlando, Florida. Marshall Patton, Question and Answer Editor of the paper, works with this fine church. Patton is a man of wonderful ability both as a writer and preacher. In the eight days of this meeting 16 responded to the invitation with five baptized and six restored the last day of the meeting.

All of this is made possible by the brethren at Seminole where I preach in Tampa by their loyalty and by the excellent preaching of brother DON BASSETT who is my fellow-helper in the Lord. Brother Bassett is one of the com-

ing powers in the pulpit in our generation. As the year ends I thank God for His grace and the strength to complete such a schedule. To the many brethren who have showed me so many kindnesses my humble thanks.

Searching The Scriptures congratulates Robert O. Miller upon being chosen "MAN OF THE YEAR" by the Chamber of Commerce in his home town of Murray, Kentucky. Brother Miller is the County Judge of Calloway County, Kentucky and is a member of the 7th and Poplar congregation in Murray.

MOLLIE MILLER PASSES

One of the oldest members of the church in Kentucky passed from this life at the home of her daughter, sister Lubie Thurman this month. "Aunt Mollie" as she was known by hundreds of her friends, was for many years a faithful member of the church at New Providence, Kentucky. She was 92 at the time of her death. The funeral services were conducted at the church at Hazel, Kentucky.

Curtis E. Flatt, Florence, Ala. — I preached in a meeting with the church at Waycross, Georgia where John Swatzell preaches in November. The Collegeview church here in Florence is enjoying the best attendance and the highest contributions his quarter of any.

DARLING SAYS, "DID NOT REPUDIATE WALKER, PUBLICLY"

Paul Brock, Jacksonville, Fla.

In the November issue of this paper, I showed how that brother D. Ellis Walker had no backing in the Jacksonville debate, and that even his own son had to make false reports of the same. In that article it was stated, "His own moderator repudiated him publicly."

Bro. George Darling, Walker's moderator, took exception to that statement saying that he did not repudiate Walker publicly. I asked brother Darling to restate just what he said in his closing remarks that night. Below, I submit *that part of his statement which I construed to be a repudiation.*

"Regarding a debate at Springfield, Brother Brock is hardly qualified to say what the Springfield church will do or will not do, in as much as I personally doubt if he would know three out of the seven elders if he were to see them. Yes, Springfield will endorse a debate, but not to furnish a "popgun" with an audience. The only way that Springfield would be interested would be with two top men, with definite propositions, and this is not a reflection on our disputants."

We believe that Bro. Darling is honorable and will see that arrangements are made for the debate which the Springfield elders authorized him to state they were willing to enter into. We at Lake Shore are just waiting to hear from them on the propositions they will select a man to affirm.

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 Beaumont, Texas

Thursday — "Delusions Concerning Importance of Self" . . . Dennis L. Reed
 Birmingham, Ala.

10 :20 - 11:15 Daily — "Messiah as King — Gospel of Matthew" _ Hubert A. Moss, Jr.
 Columbus, Miss.

11:20 - 12-Noon .. Daily — "Messiah as the Son of God — Gospel of John" __ Homer Hailey
 Tampa, Fla.

1:20-2:15 . Daily — "The Social Gospel" _____ Ed Harrell
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2:20-3:15 Tuesday — "Messiah as Servant — Gospel of Mark" _ Clinton D. Hamilton
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Wednesday — "Messiah as the Saviour — Gospel of Luke" . Bob Owen
 Tampa, Fla.

Thursday — "Messiah in New Testament Preaching" . _ Luther G. Roberts
 Salem, Ore.

3:20-4:15. Daily — Round Table . _____ _ James W. Adams
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Evening Lectures

7:30-8:30 Monday—"Messiah and Ecumenism" . . William E. Wallace
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8:30 - 9:30 " — "Messiah and Labor Problems" . Hoyt Houchen
 Abilene, Texas

7:30-8:30 . Tuesday—"Messiah and Capital Punishment" . _____ William E. Fain
 Seattle, Wash.

8:30-9:30 " —"Messiah and Racial Problems" Franklin T. Puckett
 Dyersburg, Tenn.

8:30 - 9 :30 Wednesday — "Messiah and the Christian's Hope" . __ Eugene Britnell
 Little Rock, Ark.

7:30 - 8:30 __ Thursday — College Program

8:30-9:30 " —"Messiah and Controversy" _____ _ ... - B. G. Hope
 Bowling Green, Ky.

NOTE: — Visitors may obtain meals in cafeteria, student center or at nearby restaurants.