

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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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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OF HEAVEN OR OF MEN?

The chief priests and elders came to Jesus and asked him about his authority. He responded by asking them the question, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell" (Matt. 21:24-27).

In the present generation these questions asked by Jesus to the chief priests and elders would be interesting to apply to some major problems facing us. The matter of authority and its SOURCE are the points of discussion. Where do we get the authority for doing those things which we do? Is it from God or of men?

The Lord's supper, whence is it, from heaven, or of men? If we say it is of men, and we can prove it, there is no authority from God for its observance. On the other hand, if it came from heaven, it is not of men and we must observe it to please God. Someone inquires, "By what authority do you take the Lord's supper every Lord's day? and who gave you this authority?" I answer, By the authority of the New Testament, and Paul was the agent of the Spirit who gave the authority (I Cor. 11:23-25). In Acts 20:7 the example of the early disciples gives the authority to partake of it on the Lord's day when the church comes together for that purpose. Any other observance, any other day, for any other purpose is without authority from heaven.

Singing in worship, whence is it, from heaven, or of men? If of men we do not have authority from God for doing it. If from heaven, it must be done to obey God. The authority is in the New Testament and from Christ through the apostles (Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12). But let us ask, Is mechanical music in worship from heaven or of men? In the New Testament, the law of liberty under which we now live, there is absolutely no authority from heaven. It must rest upon the authority of men alone. If it is done by the commandments of men, it is vain worship (Matt. 15:9), and turns men from the truth (Titus 1:14).

Baptism for the remission of sins, whence is it, from heaven, or of men? The New Testament clearly establishes the baptism of the great commission as a condition of obedience to Christ in order to obtain the forgiveness of alien sins (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-6, 17,18). But is the act of sprinkling water or pouring water on a person as baptism from God or men? That makes all the difference in the world. If it came from the New Testament, it must be practiced to obey God. Where is the authority? What passage teaches it? Silence is the only answer; there is not one bit of authority from heaven for such practice, yet it is being done as a religious act. The only and highest authority is that of men which will perish with the using (Co. 2:20-22).

We could go on and on with the various doctrines of men, but these establish the fact that if God did not give us the authority for doing a thing, it is of men and sinful to do. When we reach the point to say, "We do not need authority to do some things," we have reached the point of the chief priests and elders who answered, "We cannot tell" by what authority a thing is being done. It is time to cry out against all conduct in the church that has no authority but from men. It is time to return to a "thus saith the Lord" for all that we do or teach in the church today. Unless this is done, we will be divided and many will be lost for rebellion against God and His word.

We might ask the question: By what authority does one think to establish a work through a board or committee to activate the church universal, whether

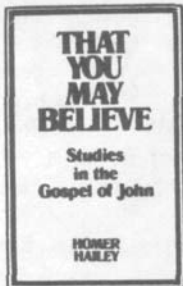
in the field of evangelism or benevolence? Whence is it, from heaven, or of men? The principles here are the same as in instrumental music in worship and sprinkling for baptism. If the authority is from heaven, we must do it to please God. If it is of men, it is vain (Matt. 15:9) and leads away from the truth. (Titus 1:14). The authority can be easily established by citing the verse that teaches it. Of course, many will read passages that do not even touch the subject, just like a Baptist preacher reads verses to prove impossible apostasy that do not even remotely touch the subject and then claims his position is proved.

Some will read verses to prove universal "mission" programs through organizations other than the local church that are perverted and twisted to suit their purposes, but this is not the proof that the practice came from God. If God teaches it, it will be as plain as baptism or the Lord's supper. What we need to establish authority from God is to read it from the "faith once for all delivered." The word of God will furnish us unto every good work, and if the work or the directions for doing the work are not in the living word of God, that is positive proof that the authority is not from God, but of men.

When any practice, individual or collective, is established without the authority of heaven, we must have no part of it. We must oppose it whether in the church or in denominationalism. Let us always inquire whether any practice is from God or men before we undertake to do it.

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Editorial

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SUPPORTING GOSPEL PREACHERS

No subject is more sensitive with both preachers and congregations than that which heads this article. Some resent any teaching on the subject. Preachers have often been accused of preaching "for the money." Fearing that this sentiment prevails, not enough preachers have been willing to address themselves to the problem. Generally, the situation is improved over former days. Yet, in many instances, justice does not prevail. What might have been adequate, or even generous, support five years ago is not enough in these inflationary times.

This is one of the major contributing factors to some men leaving "full time preaching" to support their families at a secular job while preaching only on Sundays, if at all. Honest men want to pay their debts and see the needs of their families met. We have heard brethren criticize preachers for accumulating debts when in reality they might have been forced to it for lack of adequate support. Certainly, gospel preachers ought to pay their debts and try to live within their means.

Any man who is preaching for the money would do the cause of Christ a favor by quitting. Besides, he is not too bright if he has high expectations along that line. All of us should be willing to preach to the limit of our opportunity and ability **WHETHER OR NOT THE CHURCH SUPPORTS US**. With Paul, we should be able to say "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you" (2 Cor. 12:15). It is honorable to "make tents", as Paul did on occasion, in order to build up the work in some needy field. We doubt that it is honorable to "make tents" to keep from fully preaching the gospel simply because one is unwilling to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). It is no worse to preach for money than it is NOT to preach for money. Both are wrong.

Authority For Supporting Preachers

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul defended his right to financial support on the following grounds: (1) his right to "eat and drink" (verse 4); (2) his right to have and support a family (verse 5); (3) his right to "forbear working" (verse 6); (4) the right of a soldier to be paid for his services (verse 7); (5) the right of an husbandman to eat of the fruit of his own labor (verse 7); (6) the right of a shepherd to drink milk from the flock (verse 7); (7) the right of the ox not to be muzzled while he treads out the corn (verses 8-11); (8) the principle of sowing spiritual things while being

supplied physical things (verse 11); (9) comparison with the Old Testament practice regarding the sustenance of those who attended to temple service (verse 13). In verse 14 Paul reached his conclusion that "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Paul accepted "wages" from other churches to furnish "service" in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8). "Wages" does not mean benevolence. We hear brethren saying "We give the preacher so much." No, brethren, that is not how it is. You don't GIVE him anything. Faithful men of God earn every dime they are paid, and some dimes they are not paid. It is not charity, but a wage in exchange for a life devoted fully to kingdom service.

The church at Philippi was concerned for Paul's support as he preached. They had "fellowship in the gospel" with him (Phil. 1:3-5). Their "care" of him flourished (4:10) and "even in Thessalonica" they "sent once and again" to his "necessity" (Phil. 4:15-16). This is the proper basis of support. Arbitrary standards have often been set in this matter. A man ought to be paid what he needs to do the work he is sent forth to do. If the "average wage" of the "average member" is enough to do that work, then let him be paid that amount. If that is not enough to do the work, then let them provide whatever is needed. It is a shame and disgrace for brethren to have to haggle over finances.

"He Makes More Than I Do"

Often, when brethren are "negotiating" with a preacher to move and work with them, or when the question of raising his pay arises, someone is bound to say "Well, I don't make that kind of money. He makes more than I do." It is high time for people ransomed with the blood of Christ to give up lying! Let's take a look at wages in this country. I have before me now the December, 1975 SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS, Vol. 55/12 issued by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. This report gives the latest figures anyone has available to him as to wage averages in this country as of the end of 1975. It gives a break-down of the various industries in terms of average hourly wages, with 25% fringe benefits added on to make up the gross annual income in these categories. All figures are based on a 40-hour work week and do not account for overtime pay. In averages, some make less while others earn more. Here are a few samples:

Private Small Business (non-agriculture) earns an average of \$12,168 a year. That includes 25% fringe benefits which are tax free. In Contract Construction the national average is \$19,604 annually inclusive of fringe benefits. Ordinance Manufacturing earns \$14,066 a year. Stone, Clay and Glass workers earn an average of \$13,378 annually. Primary Metals earns \$16,718. Non-Electrical Machinery earns \$14,378. Transportation earns \$16,250 while Food Products earns \$12,194. Chemicals earn \$14,482 and Petroleum averages \$17,264. In the printing industry the fringe benefits are figured at 27% with income based on a 35-hour week.

I called the personnel offices at both General Electric and Ford here in Louisville and was given a break-down on hourly wages from the lowest paid man to the highest and a list of fringe benefits, which in both industries amount to 25% of the worker's gross pay. When brethren say "he makes more than I do" they are usually comparing their take-home pay with the preacher's gross income. That is not a fair comparison. By the way, do you suppose all members are basing their giving each week on their gross income, or on take-home pay? In both industries cited 1/2 of Social Security is paid for the worker, there is complete hospitalization for the worker and his family, a retirement and pension plan and an annual graduated cost-of-living increase. A worker with one year of service at General Electric gets one week paid vacation graduating to four weeks after 15 years and five weeks after 30 years. We know a number of gospel preachers who have served longer than 30 years who would never even expect to receive such consideration. The hourly worker receives five paid sick or personal days and is paid for ten annual holidays which he does not work. If he does work on these days, he is paid extra. Arrangements are made for time off with pay for family deaths and jury duty. The personnel office at Ford called me back with national averages for Ford-Philco operations throughout the nation. I was told that these figures were a year old and the rate is higher now. The national hourly average for their employees is \$6.61. With fringe benefits added the gross hourly wage is \$9.40. Vacation time ranges from one week after a year of service to a maximum of six weeks. Anyone who wants to argue with these figures should not write to me. Contact the Department of Commerce, and locally the personnel offices at Ford and General Electric. These are THEIR figures, not mine.

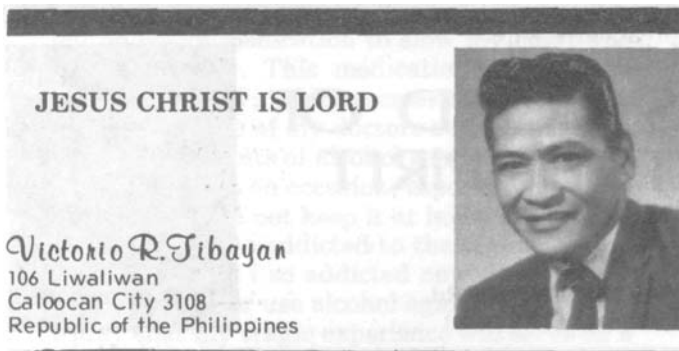
I have known preachers who worked five years or more with congregations in industrial areas without receiving one pay increase. Plant workers received annual raises and every time they did the price of nearly everything went up. With his income remaining the same, he really took a cut in pay in terms of what his income would buy. A special hardship has been worked on men in foreign fields where the rate of inflation is much worse than in this country. "Well, the preacher gets his house supplied and his utilities paid." If so, then that about balances out with the 25% fringe benefits which the rest of you don't have to declare as taxable income. Besides, usually when a house is provided as a part of his wage, the preacher's pay is reduced by the amount of the payment. If he lives and preaches 40 years under such an arrangement, he will have enabled the brethren to purchase and pay for two houses and he will not even have a rent receipt to show. This preacher has had it both ways and much prefers to be paid an adequate amount to live where he chooses, though we are not unappreciative of the other consideration. None of this takes into account the increasingly popular practice of working wives which adds to the family's annual gross income—a practice which is frowned upon by some for the

preacher's wife.

Another area which has not kept pace with the economy is compensation for gospel meetings. A faithful servant of God will go anywhere he is invited for meetings, in keeping with the amount of time he can devote to such work, whether the church inviting him is small or large and able to pay him well or not at all. Personally, we have always booked meetings on a first-come-first-served basis and know of other preachers who do the same. Sometimes it has been necessary to get a salary advance at home, or borrow money to make a long trip, but go we did. However, there are churches which are abundantly able to support their own work which are paying for gospel meetings what they did twenty years ago. A small country congregation paid me more for the first gospel meeting I ever held (1950) than some large congregations provide now. A meeting involves extra work for a man and travel expenses are costly. You can't buy gasoline anymore for 30c a gallon. Food and lodging costs in transit are getting higher and we have not been able to locate any airline which will give away tickets. Some brethren will ask you if you are getting paid at home when it is none of their business and when you are there to work with them that week. Some will say "We want to cover your expenses. How much did you spend for gas and oil?" That does not even start to cover all the travel expenses, not even for the car. The government figures it costs 15c a mile to cover car expense and that does not include food and lodging while traveling. Sometimes brethren look at the gross figure they pay a man for a meeting, do a little quick multiplying in their heads, and decide the fellow is getting rich. Well, this writer has done his share of meeting work and has come out on the short end more often than on the long end of it when everything was taken into account. By the way, what would be wrong with a man earning a little extra sometimes. Meetings involve extra work.

Lest any of our readers decide that this article was inspired by malice or a desire to grind a personal axe, be assured that we have very few complaints as to how we have fared through the years. Brethren have usually been good to us. The Lord has richly blessed us and stood by us through good years and lean ones. If I had to start my life over, I would not even consider doing anything else with my life than preaching the gospel of the Son of God. But there is a problem in this relationship between preachers and congregations. We must admit that there is a problem before we can solve it. Then we must apply a scriptural remedy. Those on both sides of this relationship ought to practice the Golden Rule. The laborer is worthy of his hire. Let him, therefore, give good measure in his service, heaped up and running over. "The harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send laborers into his vineyard."

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH	
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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)	



The term Lord (*kurios*—in the Gr. form) as used in the New Testament has a wide variety of significances. Different translations are made as to mean; "Lord," "Master," "Sir," etc. At times, it is employed to address an Emperor or King, or as a form of respect to a father. At the beginning of Jesus' personal ministry, this title was a common form of address to Him. But in a higher sense, *kurios* (Lord in the English versions) is so regarded by the Septuagint and New Testament translators as representing its Hebrew counterpart, Jehovah. In this latter sense, Jesus assumed the title even during the early part of His ministry. At the healing of the man possessed with demons in the country of the Gadarenes, Mark has this to say as Jesus bade goodbye to the grateful recipient of His curing power, ". . . Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee" (Mark 5:19). Significantly in a parallel passage, we notice that the title "Lord" as assumed by Jesus Himself in this instance is translated God. "Return to thy house, and declare how great things God hath done for thee. . . ." (Luke 8:39). This is noteworthy in that the Deity of Jesus was revealed as a consequence thereof.

This title in its superlative import was so used by the apostles in Jesus' later ministry, in reference to Him after His resurrection. And from then on, it superseded all the other lower significances as applied to Him. One of the twelve, Thomas, was so convinced beyond doubt of the majestic and divine attributes of Jesus through His resurrection, that he burst forth with these awesome words, ". . . My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The apostle Paul confirms this wonderful expression of belief by saying, ". . . who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:4). In contemplation of this glorious position of Jesus, it is no wonder that He made this confession of faith, the Rock (Petra) or spiritual foundation of the New Testament Temple of God, which is the Church. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail

against it" (Matt. 16:16-18). On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, Peter making use of the keys, declared the exalted position of the Son of God. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). (The rest of the apostles were later, after the event at Caesarea Philippi, given these responsibilities, i.e., open the door of the kingdom or declaring the conditions on which men could be forgiven of sins, bind or loose these conditions, and thus enter the church. (See Matt. 18:18; John 20:19-23.)

Again, we see that this highest degree of essentiality ascribed to the Lordship of Jesus is a condition of being righteous in the presence of God. ". . . because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10). This conditional tenet of faith is not a loose opinion gratuitously formed. The apostle Peter proved this fact on that eventful day before the multitude of Jews and Jewish proselytes, who at the beginning of Peter's discourse were all disposed prejudicially against Jesus Christ. Under the inspiration of the third Person of the Godhead, he unequivocally demonstrated the Lordship of Jesus (Acts 2:22-36). First, by the undisputed miracles which they (the multitude) themselves perceived the heard. And secondly, by the resurrection of Jesus; proven by the prophecy of David, the testimony of all the apostles present, and by the phenomena resulting from the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter said, "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (v. 33).

By scrutinizing the account of the establishment of the Lord's church (as a fact) in the second chapter of the Book of Acts, we will realize that a mere expression of assent to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not enough. Beginning from verse 37 up to the last verse, the 47th, we note: 1) Having accepted Peter's inevitable conclusion (v. 36) and being convinced that they have wickedly opposed God, ". . . they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do" (Verse 37)? Then, the next verses (38th and 39th) present the apostle's reply, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." The next verse (v. 40), then states, "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Clearly, these MANY OTHER WORDS OF TESTIMONIES and EXHORTATION to save themselves are further instructions and in addition to the command for them to be baptized IN THE NAME or authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in view

of their faith that He is Lord. The succeeding verses (from v. 41 to v. 47) relate to us how those that believed on the Lordship of Jesus obeyed and submitted themselves under the authority of the Christ. "They then that received his **word were baptized**. . . And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul: . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them (the church—KJV) day by day those that were saved."

Other passages in the New Testament show that a mere utterance of the title "Lord" cannot suffice. Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"(Luke 6:46)? To Him, therefore, such an attitude is incongruous in itself and contrary to the will of God. In other words, for one to be able to call Jesus as Lord IN ALL SINCERITY, he must have really believed in his heart this fundamental fact; and that, this faith must be so over-powering in his heart that he cannot do otherwise, except obey the will of Jesus Christ. This means that a person's heart is so imbued with a knowledge of the Lordship of Jesus to the extent that this becomes the center of his every word and action. "But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart. . . ." (Matt. 15:18). To be sure, the Bible usage of the heart is used figuratively for the hidden man (I Peter 3:4), the hidden springs of the personal life. It (the heart) stands for the entire mental and moral activities of man, both in the rational and emotional aspects. This is why the inspired apostle Paul, said, "Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3). He was saying to the Corinthians that the best and unmistakable proof which marks the impostors who pretend inspiration in that age, is that they speak in derision of Jesus our Lord. For who acknowledges Jesus as Lord speaks by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . . Today, there are no more inspired preachers of the word of God. The miraculous age had ceased at the turn of the second century. But we have the inspired writings; that is, the Bible, written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. One who has not been taught and guided by Holy Writ, in whatever way we look at it, cannot in all honesty say that he believes that Jesus Christ is Lord.


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THEY HAVE STRICKEN ME"

Most of our readers have probably read or heard of the accident that Brother M. Norvel Young was involved in a few months ago. Bro. Young, long-time editor of Twentieth Century Christian and past-President of Pepperdine University (more recently, Chancellor of that school) was arrested for driving while intoxicated after his involvement in a two-car crash. Two women, occupants of the other automobile, died. It is not our purpose in this column to heap scorn or pass judgment. We shall leave the former to those who have no sin and the latter to the courts of the land and to the Lord.

We would make no mention of this incident at all, but we feel that a wider circulation of Brother Young's confession of repentance and remorse may serve nobly as a warning to all of us.

Bro. Young made the following statement before the church of which he is a member in Malibu, California, December 14, 1975:

"I come before you in a spirit of contrite confession of sin. I have sinned against God, against the two whose lives were lost in the accident, against the one who was injured and against their families, against the church, against Pepperdine University and my associates here. I would give my very life to have avoided the loss of life in this accident. I would give all that I possess to undo this tragedy, but this is impossible. I must live with the awful realization that my grief cannot bring back a human life or erase the injury to so many. I confess to you that my use of alcohol was involved in the accident. To say that I am profoundly sorry is such a feeble and inadequate expression of my stricken conscience. I have confessed my sin to God and know that He has forgiven me for Christ's sake. I now confess my sin to you and ask your forgiveness and your prayers. "I want to go further in explanation, but not to make any excuse. There can be no excuse. For 50 years I abstained from alcohol and taught against its use. Although it was necessary for me as President of Pepperdine to attend thousands of civic functions where it was served, I did not partake. But in a mistaken attempt to relieve pressure I began to use alcohol occasionally. In 1969 I developed a

heart condition and two small strokes. I was put on heavy medication to slow my heart and thin my blood. This medication saps me of physical energy, which sometimes results in depression. One of my doctors suggested using moderate amounts of alcohol to relax my heart. I began to do so on occasion, especially in times of stress. I did not keep it at home or serve it. I did not become addicted to the regular use of alcohol, nor am I so addicted now. With God's help, I will never use alcohol again in any form. I pray that my tragic experience will serve as a warning to others.

"I am humbled and grieved, yet even in the midst of suffering, I know God's mercy and comfort in Christ. I want to make as frank and complete a statement of my sin as I can, taking all the responsibility and asking forgiveness, especially of my brethren." A few more paragraphs follow which pertained more specifically to Bro. Young's uncertain plans for the future.

On Jan. 27, 1976, Bro. Young was sentenced to a year in the county jail and four years probation, and fined \$3,000. The judge stayed the jail sentence until July 28 and if certain terms of probation are met, he will not be jailed.

Our heart goes out to this man, as well as to the families of the deceased. There are lessons for us in this tragedy:

1. The power of alcohol is not to be underestimated. Here is a man who abstained for 50 years and warned others against its use. Then "in a mistaken attempt to relieve pressure" he began to use alcohol occasionally. What could be more innocent in the minds of many? Yet look at the aftermath! "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Bro. Young's plight is but another manifestation of the "wounds without cause" that strong drink produces. Nothing good has ever resulted from it.

2. Even its medicinal use should be approached cautiously. Paul advised the use of a little wine for Timothy's health problems (1 Tim. 5:23). Drugs, including alcohol, have their legitimate place in medicine. Even so, if other drugs will as effectively help, it is probably wise, in our society, to use them rather than alcohol. One should not drive while under the influence of any drug (medicinal or not). But the reproach of one, who has doubtless wielded some good influence in his teaching against such things, to be arrested for DWI, make the loss of life even more tragic.

3. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12). Several years ago Bro. Young would have probably looked upon this eventuality as the least likely thing to ever happen to him. What process of thought brought him to the place of taking that first drink after 50 years abstinence? We don't know. Perhaps the same philosophy that has led our brother into fields of unauthorized action in the work and mission of the church would be felt in this area of life also. We think such is likely. But let us all be warned: "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

EXPOSITION: TEXT and CONTEXT

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THE LETTER TO LAODICEA—REV. 3:14-22

In about 250 B.C. Antiochus II of Syria founded the city, Laodicea, and named it after his wife, Laodike. He populated it with Syrians and with Jews who were transplanted from Babylonia to the cities of Phrygia and Lydia (of. I.S.B.E., Vol. 3, p. 1836).

Some suggest that Epaphras established the church at Laodicea by what is stated in Colossians. Paul said of Epaphras, "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis" (Col. 4:13). But this passage only shows Epaphras' zeal for the Laodiceans—not who established the church there. We do not know who established the church at Laodicea.

So far as the epistle to Laodicea goes, the church was not bothered with persecution from without, nor false teachers from within. The church was plagued with problems of lukewarmness and self-deception. Jesus sternly reprimands the church for its loathsome state, and finds no room for any commendation whatsoever.

The Titles of Jesus

As in all the previous letters to the churches of Asia, this one begins with the characteristics of Jesus. The way Jesus describes himself in each letter is relevant to the problems experienced by the church. To Laodicea Jesus is the:

(1) Amen. This word means that which is true. It expresses the notion of affirmation and verity. In this text it is *verity personified*. Jesus is truth. His message is stable and firm. As Summers says, "Here it indicates the stability of Jesus to this weak church" (p. 124).

(2) Faithful and true witness. All that Jesus said of God is true. His life and testimony bore witness concerning God. R.C. Trench said in order for a person to qualify as a witness he must meet three conditions: (a) He must have seen with his eyes what he tells, (b) He must be honest, (c) He must have the ability to tell what he has to say so his witness may make a true impression on those who hear (Barclay, p. 177). Jesus passes the test on all three of these.

(3) Beginning of the creation of God. This does not mean that Jesus was the first thing created of God, but rather the statement means that Jesus is the cause of all creation, the agent, the one who created. Passages, such as Jn. 1:3, Col 1:16, and Heb. 1:2, show that Jesus created all of creation, and Rev. 3:14 expresses the same thought. The New English Bible

renders it, ". . . the prime source of all God's creation." Thus, Jesus as creator of all creatures, the one in whom all things consist (Col. 1:17), speaks to the Laodiceans to bring them back into a saving relationship with him.

City Reflected in the Church

Jesus draws from the commercial background of the city and the geography of the country to show the attitude and spiritual condition of the church.

(1) **"Thou art lukewarm"** (v. 16). Laodicea was dependent on the hot mineral springs of Hierapolis for its water supply. The water was brought underground, six miles across the Lycus Valley, by an aqueduct. By the time the water got to the reservoirs of Laodicea, it was tepid, nauseating to the taste and the smell. It made the person who drank want to be physically sick. The initial reaction was to "spit it out." Jesus said the tepid church affected him that way—"I will spue thee out."

(2) **Thou sayest, "I am rich"** (v. 17). Laodicea was a success story from the very beginning. It was one of the wealthiest cities in the world. The city was so self-reliant and independent that when it was **devastated by an earthquake in 61 A. D. it refused** financial assistance from the Roman government, and the people, out of their own resources, rebuilt the city. When Cicero was traveling in Asia Minor in 61A.D., he cashed his letters of credit in the great banking center of Laodicea. No wonder the church could boast that it had need of nothing. It was so wealthy that it did not even see the need for Christ.

(3) **"Buy of me—white raiment"** (v. 18). Laodicea was well-known for its clothing manufacturing. There was a breed of sheep raised only in the environs of Laodicea which was famous for its soft, glossy-black wool. This wool, superior to any other in the world, was used to make garments, especially the outer-garments, called "trimita." The garments, mass-produced, made them cheap and thus there was a good market for them throughout the Roman world. "Laodicea was so proud of the garments it produced that it never realized that it was naked in the sight of God" (Barclay, p. 174).

(4) **"Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve"** (v. 18). There was a medical center at Laodicea, known especially for its ointment for the eyes and ointment for the ears. Hastings wrote, "Its most famous medicines were ointment made from spice nard, which strengthened the ears, and Phrygian powder, obtained by crushing Phrygian stone, which was used for the eyes" (Dictionary of the Bible, p. 566). The powder was exported in solidified form, tablet form, and then the users crushed the tablet and put it on their eyes for healing. Laodicea had great pride in its skill in the treatment of the eyes, but it was spiritually blind before God.

A lesson that Christians today can learn from the foregoing observations is that we, if not careful, will take on the characteristics and attitudes of the community in which we live. Our life-style will be determined, not by Christ, but by the mores of our neighbors.

A Closer Look

Specifically speaking, there were two things wrong with the church at Laodicea.

(1) **It was lukewarm.** Jesus said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot . . . thou art lukewarm" (vs. 15-16). The word "cold" means "freezing" and the word "hot" denotes "boiling." Jesus says **"I would rather you either be an unbeliever or a devoted Christian than just a tepid, lethargic, indifferent, half-hearted church-member."** He is saying, **"Your skin deep religion is disgusting to me and I am about ready to spew you out."**

Lukewarmness is so widespread among us today. It comes in various forms.

First, there is indifference toward Bible doctrine. "Let's not be too concerned about doctrine, but more concerned about Jesus Christ," we are told. But respect and love for Jesus and truth go together (Lk. 6:46).

Second, there is indifference toward knowledge of Bible truth. Very few have the desire for the word of God. We see a desire for world events, sports, television, etc., but not much desire for knowledge of truth. Cf. I Pet. 2:1-2.

Third, there is indifference toward the world. Many brethren talk like, act like and look like in dress and conduct, the people of the world. They love the same things the world does. Cf. I Jn. 2:15; Rom. 12:2.

Fourth, there is indifference toward devotion, zeal and earnestness. Here is where the Laodiceans were particularly affected. They had become inactive and listless. They liked their religion cold, stereotyped and drab. Jesus told them to "be zealous." Should we not be more serious about the work of the Lord than business places, the military, civic clubs, educational institutions, etc.? God help us to awaken out of our sleep!

(2) It was self-deceived (v. 17). The church had persuaded itself that it was the personification of righteousness and goodness. There was nothing they needed, so they thought. But Jesus had a different evaluation of their spiritual condition.

The church said, "We are rich." Jesus said, "You are poor." The church said, "We are increased with goods." Jesus said, "You are wretched and miserable." The church said, "We have need of nothing." Jesus said, **"You are blind and naked."** The lord exposed their smugness and self-satisfied spirit, and showed them to be beggars, blind and naked, despite their banks, medical center and clothing factories.

Jesus counsels the church to buy gold of him (v. 18). Their trust was in the material things of this world. In these they felt self-sufficient. Jesus says they must humbly find their sufficiency in him. "Turn to me for your spiritual wealth—your enrichment of character." Jesus is saying.

Their robes of arrogance did not cover them before God, so Jesus says, "Come, take of me white raiment to cover your nakedness before God." The white raiment is perhaps righteousness in which they are to

be clothed (of. 19:8). Their eyes are blind to the great spiritual values, but Jesus can open their eyes to the important things of life.

Warning and Promises

Abruptly the letter changes at verse 19 where Jesus says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." The **Lord** had some harsh things to say to his church at Laodicea, but he wanted them to realize that this was **prompted by love for their souls. In telling them to repent, Jesus is warning them to turn from lukewarmness to zeal, from indifference to concern.**

The promises are contained in verses 20 and 21. In verse 20 Jesus is portrayed as being shut out of the hearts of those at Laodicea and he is standing on the outside, seeking re-entrance. If any responded, even one individual, he was ready to come in and have fellowship with him. The word translated "sup" is the Greek word denoting the evening meal, the main meal of the day. This meal permitted a long and unlimited association together. The promise is therefore of lasting, intimate friendship with Jesus.

Offered to those who overcome is the granting to sit with Christ in his throne (v. 21). This is not a future reign with Christ on earth, but rather participation with Jesus in the government of his kingdom. He is now on the throne as verse 21 clearly indicates, and Paul taught that we shall reign with him concurrently while living with him (2 Tim. 2:11-12). As Christians comply with the teaching of Christ and as they are governed by the rule of Christ, they become a part of his government and thereby are said to reign.

In conclusion of this series, what could be more appropriate than to state what Jesus says at the conclusion of every letter, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

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THE RELIGION OF FREEMASONRY — No. 4

With this article I turn the reader's attention to:

VI. Some Doctrines of Masonry

(1) **Masonry teaches Jesus Christ is not divine.** "Divine or human, inspired or only a reforming Essene, it must be agreed that His teachings are far nobler, far purer, far less allayed with error and imperfections, far less of the earth earthly, than those of Socrates, Plato, Seneca, or Mahomet, or any of the great moralists and Reformers of the world" (Albert Pike in **Morals and Dogma**, page 719). A human reformer teaching error and imperfections is the Masonic picture of Jesus.

(2) **Masonry is greater than the Lord's Church.** "No institution was ever established on nobler principles, nor were ever more excellent rules and maxims laid down than are inculcated in the several Masonic Lectures" (Tennessee Craftsman, page 34 and **Kentucky Monitor**, pages 53-54).

(3) **Masonry teaches a new birth.** "Your reception within the lodge is . . . your introduction into the life of Masonry. It is a symbol of the agonies of the first death and of the throes of a **new birth**. There you stood without our portals, on the threshold of this new Masonic life, in darkness, helplessness, and ignorance. Having been wandering amid the errors and covered over with the pollutions of the outer and profane world, you come inquiringly to our doors, seeking the **new birth**. Ceremonial preparations surrounded you, all of a significant character, to indicate to you that some great change was about to take place in your moral and intellectual condition. There was to be not simply a change for the future, but also an extinction of the past: for initiation is, as it were, a death to the world and a resurrection to a **new life**. And hence it was among the old Greeks the same word signified both 'to die' and 'to be initiated'. But death to him who believes in immortality is but a **new birth**. The world is left behind • the chains of error and ignorance which had previously restrained you in moral and intellectual captivity are to be broken — the portal of the Temple of a Future Life has been thrown widely open, and Masonry stands before you in all the glory of its form and beauty, to be fully revealed, however, only when the **new birth** has been completely accomplished" (Kentucky **Monitor**, page 26-27; emphasis mine, T. G. O.)

(4) **Masonry teaches the redeemer is Hiram Abiff**

instead of Jesus Christ. "All antiquity . . . believed in a future life, to be attained by purification and trials; in a state or successive states of reward and punishment; and in a **Mediator** or **Redeemer**, by whom the Evil Principle was to be overcome and the Supreme Deity reconciled to his creatures. The belief was general that **He was to be born of a virgin and suffer a painful death.** The Hindus called him Krishna; the Chinese, Kioun-tse; the Persians, Sosiosch; The Chaldeans, Dhovanai; the Egyptians, Horus; Plato, Love; the Scandinavians, Balder; the Christians, Jesus; **Masons, Hiram**". (**Kentucky Monitor**, pages XIV-SV, emphasis mine, T. G. O.)

(5) **Masonry practices baptism.** In the 26th degree of Masonry, Albert Pike says, "Qu. What are the symbols of the purification necessary to make us perfect Masons? Ans. Lavation with pure water, or baptism; because to cleanse the body is emblematical of purifying the soul; and because it conduces to the bodily health, and virtue is the health of the soul, as sin and vice are its malady and sickness: — unction or anointing with oil; because thereby we are set apart and dedicated to the service and priesthood of the Beautiful, the True, and the Good". (**Morals and Dogma**, pages 538-539).

(6) **Masonry observes a fraternal supper.** In the 26th degree "Qu. What is to us the chief symbol of man's ultimate redemption and regeneration? Ans. The fraternal supper, of bread which nourishes and of wine which refreshes and exhilarates, symbolical of the time to come, when all mankind shall be one great harmonious brotherhood. . . . To our Jewish Brethren this supper is symbolical of the Passover: to the Christian Mason of that eaten by Christ and His Disciples, when, celebrating the Passover". (**Morals and Dogma**, pages 539-540).

(7) **Masonry teaches evolution.** "For countless ages a fragment clings to its sun -- a world in preparation; eventually it is thrown whirling into space to begin a separate existence — the birth of a world; the gases solidify, land and water appear — the period of development" (**Kentucky Monitor**, page 105).

VII The "Doctrine of Christ" in the Bible

In Section VI, "Some Doctrines of Masonry", quotations were given to set forth in the language of Masonic authors their doctrine. Let us now contrast the error taught by Masons with the truth of Jesus Christ taught in the Bible.

(1) Jesus is divine. The Word was in the beginning with God, was God, all things were created by the Word; the Word became flesh and dwelt among man. Christ is divine (John 1:1-17). God said Jesus was God, thus divine (Heb. 1:5-8). Thomas said Jesus was divine (John 20:28). Peter said Christ was divine (Matt. 16:16).

(2) **Christ's church is the greatest institution.** The church was in the mind of God from eternity (Eph. 3:8-11). This is not so of any other institution. Jesus purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). Masonry, nor any other institution has been blood bought.

(3) **The new birth puts one into the kingdom of heaven.** Jesus said one "born again" would see the kingdom of God, not Masonry (John 3:3). One born of water and the Spirit enters the kingdom of God, not the Masonic Lodge (John 3:5). Peter said when one was "born again" he had been "redeemed", had "purified" his souls, had "obeyed the truth" **and** all of this **by** the preaching of the gospel (1 Pet. 1:18-25).

(4) **Christ is our Redeemer.** One has redemption through the blood of Christ, in Christ, by translation into the kingdom (**Col.** 1:13-14). Redemption is "with the precious blood of Christ" "which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:18-25). **Men are reconciled unto God** (2 Cor. 5:17-21) not God reconciled unto men as Masonry teaches. Man, not God, sinned; therefore, man, not God, needs to be reconciled.

(5) **Baptism is into Christ.** Men are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). They are baptized to be saved (Mk. 16:16) and for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This is a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). Upon being raised, one is to walk a new life (Rom. 6:3-7) and not to hear some "secret words" like "**Mah-hah-bone**".

(6) **Christ put the Lord's Supper in the kingdom** (Lk. 22:16). The Lord's Supper is to be observed upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Its purpose is not physical food but "in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25). What "supper" the Masonic Lodge eats is not the "Lord's Supper" instituted by Christ for Christ did not put it in the Lodge.

(7) **The world was created.** "All things were **made** by him" (John 1:3). "God that made the world and all things there-in" (Acts 17:24). God "created all things by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9). "All things were created" by Christ (Col. 1:16). Christ "made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2). God created man (Mt. 19:4; 1 Cor. 11:9); he did not evolve.

Conclusion to Article Four

While Masonry teaches many doctrines, they are in conflict with the teaching of Christ and are therefore wrong. Masonry is not only a human institution but her doctrines are in error.

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ANATOMY OF AN ANTI—A REVIEW OF JOHN WADDY'S ATTACK

When I first came across the above mentioned article, I thought it was ironic because of what had happened just a few weeks before. It was re-printed in a paper here on the west coast called "Standing For The Truth" edited by Dan Campbell and Curtis Allen. (They also have an article in their paper called "The Liberals Say." So what would that make them?). I say I thought it was ironic because just a few weeks previous to receiving their paper with Waddy's article in it, I attended the congregation where both these brethren attend and sat two seats behind them. At the close of the services, both of them stood and watched me, and two of the elders from Studebaker Road, leave the auditorium without so much as speaking to us. Did they know who we were? I assure you they did. Because, just three years ago when I was with the Studebaker Road congregation, where I now work regularly, in a series of gospel meetings, at least one, maybe both of them, attended the meeting two or three nights. I challenge them to say anyone at Studebaker Road (one of brother Waddy's "anti churches") treated them with such contempt—and yet they print such articles as Waddy's telling about what a sorry lot we are and how un-Christian we act.

John Waddy made 14 charges in his article against those he terms antis, and says that "most of these who espouse some anti views" are guilty of these charges. I admit to the fact that a few brethren throughout the country in what he would term "anti" churches are guilty as charged. Will brother Waddy deny that there are those in churches who endorse him who would be guilty of the same charges? However, I do deny that his charges are true with reference to most of us that he refers to as antis.

The charges made against us are as follows: "Alarmists, imagine apostasy, have false pride, always against—never for, lack of love, mote hunters, never admit any traditionalism, allow no liberty in opinions, when discussing a subject the context is always ignored, forbid good works and methods, never view factions as a work of the flesh, not evangelistic, hypocrites, and always binding examples that suit our purpose but not all examples." I want to answer these charges.

Brother Waddy charges us with being alarmists who are always trying to save the church from imagined apostasy. Brother Waddy, were those who

opposed the divisions over instrumental music, missionary societies, Premillennialism, institutionalism, or speaking in tongues, alarmists? When David Lipscomb, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and others warned about brethren deviating from scriptures, were they antis and alarmists? Was it just "false pride" that caused them to take the stand they did and oppose that which they foresaw would result in division?

Brother Waddy ought to read what Jesus said about judging other's motives. I believe that many men, on both sides of every discussion over some problem that divides the body of Christ, are sincere in their beliefs. Also, I know of no one who would deny that one who starts a faction is engaging in a work of the flesh according to Gal. 5. The fact of the matter is, brother Waddy makes a lot of accusations without presenting any facts. Brother Waddy, anybody can make accusation. Where are your facts?

Brother Waddy accuses us of not having an attitude of love—of not being evangelistic, Where is his proof? I only have first-hand information of the places where I have worked, and where I now labor. I can say without hesitation that brother's Waddy's accusations are not true. For example, the church meeting at 3433 Studebaker Road in Long Beach has approximately 200 members. In 1975 the contribution averaged about \$5800 per month. Over \$4000 of that was used to support, either partially or fully, 12 preachers, two of them in the Philippine Islands. Other evangelistic efforts by this congregation included a teaching bulletin that was mailed out to nearly 10,000 people who live in the area near our meeting place. Also, we have a weekly teaching newspaper article that goes into 200,000 homes each week, with an offer of a free Bible correspondence course. Over 200 people were enrolled in the course last year, plus, a number of home studies. These are **facts** concerning one of these do-nothing anti churches that has no love for others and is not evangelistic—according to brother Waddy.

Brother Waddy states in his article that we are willing to "practice deceit" in order to take over a congregation or get control of a meeting house. I think, brother Waddy, that you need to look about you and see who was driven out of their buildings, for the most part, and had to start all over.

No one denies that we do many things because of traditions. Traditions, in and of themselves, are not wrong—unless they are made into law and lines of fellowship are drawn over some tradition. I am as opposed to that as brother Waddy. On that point, we are both anti. And, liberty is not denied over opinions. But we need to be sure that that over which we are demanding liberty is, in fact, an opinion and not a matter of faith. Some folks can't see the difference in a matter of opinion and faith.

Brother Waddy says that we forbid "good works" and methods. I do not deny that I am opposed to the church supporting from its treasury some works that men have termed as "good." Paul said the Scriptures furnish us completely unto "all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If it is a good work God wants done, he tells us of it in his word.

As to methods, many have termed orphan homes as methods the church may use. But a method is an orderly arrangement or procedure in doing a thing. Orphan homes are not methods—they use methods. If the church is responsible for caring for someone, (and it is charged with some, 1 Tim. 5:16), it may use the same methods that are used by an institution to do the work. Brother Waddy and others ought to learn this lesson.

Now brother Waddy "writes us off" for making some New Testament examples binding, and not binding others. A New Testament example is binding unless there is a passage that looses it. To illustrate; the upper room for taking the Lord's Supper is not binding because Jesus "loosed" the place in John 4:23-24. Now, let's ask brother Waddy a question. Are all New Testament commands binding? When he tells you why they are not, he will have the answer to why we cannot bind all New Testament examples.

Conclusion

As is the case in every era when division conies, there is first a trying to defend the indefensible position. Then there is silence. Then comes a ridiculing of one's position with a warning to brethren to "put these antis in quarantine." This is exactly what brother Waddy has done. He can sit **behind a typewriter and show what a fearless defender of the faith he is.** I challenge brother Waddy to draw up a list of all the "good works" and Bible doctrines on which we disagree. Then let us have an exchange debate on these subjects, beginning at Long Beach for as many nights as it takes. Then, when we are finished here, we will go to Knoxville, Tennessee where he preaches and repeat the discussion. That way, he will have ample time and opportunity to "prove", not just assert, his charges. I predict that he does not have enough love for his "anti" brethren to do it—nor enough courage to try. We shall see!

July Special - Morals Under Fire

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"PERSONAL INTERPRETATION" NO. 1

In (Eph. 5:19) Paul said to the Ephesians, "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." This verse teaches us that man is capable of understanding the Bible. Some talk about interpreting the Bible. If by this they mean understanding the Bible; then we may interpret. However, a large percent of people do not mean **understanding** but **wresting**. Peter said, "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16). The word WREST comes from the word (Strebloo) and means to twist or turn. Of course, it is used metaphorically in this text. Some take the scriptures and twist and turn them to suit their fancy. This type of interpretation is forbidden in the scriptures.

Several years ago the late W. Curtis Porter, met Billy Sunday Myers in a written debate. Mr. Myers took the unenviable position that we could not take the Bible as our only creed. On page twenty six of the debate brother Porter asked, "Is it possible for any man to take the Bible as his only creed?" Myers replied, "No, not in a concrete sense, because a man's creed is his personal interpretation of the Bible and not the Bible itself." I would like for you to observe that Mr. Myers freely admits that a man's personal interpretation was not the Bible but his own ideas. Thus in bold print we have a preacher denying that a man can take the Bible as his only creed and guide.

In response to Myers answer Porter said on page forty one, "Is it possible for any man to take the Bible as his only creed? He says it is not possible—that a man's creed must be his personal interpretation of the Bible and not the Bible itself! There you have it. My friend does not even claim to take the Bible for his creed. He says it is impossible for him to do it. That will explain, I suppose, some of the things he teaches. To Moses God said, 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it' (Deut 4:2). But Mr. Myers said it could not be done. Moses would have to add his personal interpretation. Isaiah said, 'To the law and to the testimony: if they shall speak not according to the word, it is because there is no light in them' (Isa. 8:20). But my friend says it can't be done—they would have to speak according to their personal interpretation of the word. Paul said, 'Preach the word' (2 Tim 4:2), but my opponent says that such is impossible—that a man must preach his

personal interpretations of the word instead of the word itself."

It shall be my purpose in the next few articles to point out a striking parallel between the admission of Mr. Myers and my own brethren. This may come as a shock to some but I plan to show that in principle some of my own brethren believe in this personal interpretation business. It is a well known fact that for years the sectarians have espoused this concept of the Bible. However, as strange as it may seem, this like many other errors has made its way into the church.

Any Bible student knows that the church of the Lord has had its share of problems since its inception on the day of Pentecost in Acts Two. Some have argued that since the church at Corinth was divided, this proves that we as brethren cannot see alike and thus division is excused. What they fail to see is what Paul said concerning this division: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). He also said to be carnally minded is death (Rom. 8:6). Thus some of the brethren in Corinth were going to hell for not seeing alike! I read in a church bulletin the other day that Corinth didn't see alike and we will not see alike on many points. This may be true but I want to tell you neighbor that some of us are going to hell over this division! I do not believe in the personal interpretation theory.

It is a well known fact that the church is divided into many groups. We have what is called the classical liberal, liberals, conservatives and then groups who oppose classes, individual cups, invitation songs, Lord's supper at night, Bible department in the college, Christmas trees, cutting women's hair, weddings and funerals in church buildings, giving contribution by check. Then we have the questions of whether an elder must have a wife, how many children and whether his children must be faithful after they leave home, etc. So the story goes on and on.

It is not my purpose to say that I have the answer to all of these questions. I am subject to mistakes and errors as others. However, there is one thing I want to affirm with every atom of my being and it is that the BIBLE settles all the questions plus any others fallible man might concoct. I do not believe we need the personal interpretation of any man to solve the problems. All we need is an UNDERSTANDING of the BIBLE. Furthermore, I believe that when we understand what the Bible says, or doesn't say on any of the above questions we will see alike. Thus the unity in Christ's prayer will be fulfilled (Jno: 17).

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El Bethel Church of Christ
Shelbyville, Tennessee



(EDITOR'S NOTE: Steve Patton was born in Russellville, Alabama, the youngest of three sons born to the Herschel E. Pattons. He is from a preaching family. His father is a well known preacher, his uncle is Marshall E. Patton who writes the ANSWERS FOR OUR HOPE column in this paper, his brother preaches as does a first cousin and his father-in-law is Rufus Meriwether. Steve attended Florida College and Middle Tennessee State University. He began preaching by appointment in the summer of 1969 and began full time work in August, 1972 at El Bethel near Shelbyville, Tennessee where he continues to labor. He is married to the former Pam Meriwether.)

NAPPERS AND DAYDREAMERS

An earnest young minister, eager to improve his sermons, bought a tape recorder and recorded one of his Sunday morning services. After supper that evening he set the recorder, seated himself in an easy chair, and awaited the playback. The opening prayer, scripture reading, and matters of the day all came forth just as he would have wished them. Then came the sermon. — When he awoke some time later, the choir was starting the closing hymn.

—Sunshine

Although this ironic anecdote produces a good chuckle it also reveals a sad truth about many Christians (including many preachers and elders). These people find the public worship of such little interest or importance that they barely take part. Sunday services become "nap-time" or "day-dream time". They do not find any spiritual profit in the service. Instead of being edified, encouraged, or exhorted, they are bored. This lack of spirituality in worship contributes to lackadaisical daily living and soon results in a lost soul. What causes this problem? Who is to blame? Is it the way the service is carried out? Or could it just be the lack of interest on the part of the individual? The blame is usually placed in one of these two areas. I want us to examine both areas to try to find an answer. The Worship

In John 4:24 Jesus taught, "God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth". Our worship then is to be guided by two great principles. It must be according to truth (scriptural) and in the proper spirit (and consequently, meaningful). 1. Scriptural Worship. God demands we worship him as he sees fit and not as we see fit. All we do in worship to Him must be authorized, and thus approved by God. Then we have the assurance in our hearts that what we

do is well-pleasing to Him. In searching the scriptures I have found that I can worship in several ways with my brethren. We can sing praises together (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We can pray together (Acts 4:23-31). We can study and proclaim God's word together (Acts 20:7). And we can lay by in a common treasury of the church to meet needs (1 Cor. 16:1-4). If we practice these things in the worship, then we know the service will be in "in truth". But does that automatically make the service "in spirit"?

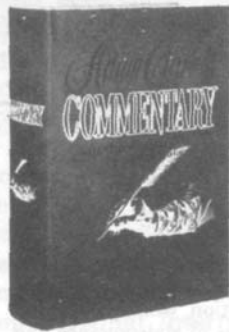
2. Meaningful Worship. Merely performing acts of worship doesn't make them "in spirit" and thus meaningful to us. There should be more to worship than merely acting out forms of worship. I want to suggest two general ways to make our worship more meaningful. These ideas are nothing new but I feel they need to be called to remembrance by many brethren. First, make the worship service understandable to all. Make sure everyone knows what we are doing. That may sound a little elementary but I do not think it is at all. We are often guilty of taking too much for granted in our public worship. In my short life, I have already come to realize that many Christians sit through years of services without understanding the real significance of partaking of the Lord's Supper. Many have sung certain hymns for years without ever understanding the meaning of some of the words. Do you know the meaning of "Night With Ebon Pinion" or the phrase "panoply of God" (Soldiers of Christ, Arise) or "ether plain" (Tis Midnight and on Olive's Brow)? I wonder how many people have heard the Holy Ghost mentioned in practically every service and still think of Him as some eerie, mystical poltergeist that no one knows much about. Besides the lack of knowledge many Christians possess in these areas, there are almost always some non-christians and small children in the assembly who do not understand all parts of the worship. For these reasons, our worship should be simple and easy to be understood. No one can appreciate what he is doing unless he knows why he is doing it. There is simplicity revealed in New Testament worship and that same beautiful and inspiring simplicity should characterize our worship today. Make our worship understandable. When we worship God in the assembly tell the people why we do what we do. Tell them we sing to praise God and to mutually exhort and instruct one another. Tell them we sing because God teaches us to sing and that it lifts our spirits to jointly praise our Creator and to receive encouragement from fellow Christians. Then it will be appreciated more.

A second way of making our worship more meaningful is by meditating upon what we do. Too often, our worship services have turned into a neat one-hour six-part package of 1. announcements, 2. sing, 3. pray, 4. preach, 5. Lord's Supper, 6. give, and go home (4 and 5 may be reversed to fit local custom). Anything past an hour is "above and beyond the call of duty". Where is there time ill our services for the lost art of meditation — time to contemplate what we are doing? For example, when it is time for the Lord's Supper, we sing a verse of a song, say a quick two sentence prayer, and the guy on the fourth row (no one ever sits in the

first three) is partaking of the Lord's Supper before he can put his song book back in the rack. When has he had time to contemplate what he is about to do? Why not slow down a little? Why not sing a whole song (including the third verse) or even two songs about Christ's suffering to help prepare our minds. Maybe someone could say a few brief words about why we are partaking of it and read two or three scriptures on the suffering of Christ and the Lord's Supper. After all, partaking of the Lord's Supper is one of two acts of worship peculiar to the Lord's Day so why not make it the central part of the service? This same idea could be applied to other parts of worship. We could explain the meaning of songs or read scriptures related to the songs. Also by emphasizing to the audience that praying is talking with the God of the universe, we could impress all present with the awesome reverence that should characterize our times of prayer. These and many other things could be done in our worship to give us time to meditate on our worship. Our worship should always be both scriptural and meaningful.

However, I have seen too many "day-dreamers" and "nappers" in scriptural and meaningful worship services to believe that a good service alone will solve the problem. What is their problem? Some of these people are simply ignorant of the meaning of worship and service to God. If they will continue to attend and learn from the worship and from personal teaching, their problem will be solved. However, some people get nothing out of the worship because of "hardening of the heart". Their hearts have become hardened for many different reasons. Some are hardened by bitterness toward others in the church, some by being preoccupied with earthly and material interests, and some are hardened by years of outright spiritual laziness. As long as there are such people in the church, there will always be "nappers and day-dreamers". But if our worship is scriptural and meaningful, then maybe even their hearts will be touched. Do your part to make the public worship more meaningful to yourself and others.

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . ."—Acts 14:27

PHILIPPINE REPORT—BENEVOLENCE NEEDED

WALLACE H. LITTLE, P.O. Box 297, Peru, Indiana 46970 — In the latter part of January and early February, a devastating typhoon hit several areas in the Philippine Islands. It inflicted severe damage, caused many deaths and created wide-spread suffering. Our brethren there endured these things just as did the spiritual Gentiles. Due to badly disrupted communications, it has taken until today (28 February 1976) to get sufficient information to piece together the details into a pattern, and identify specific benevolent needs. Basically, the areas hardest hit were the Island of Palawan, the district of Bical, Infanta (on the east coast of Luzon) and Polillo Island, just off Luzon's east coast. Below is a list of churches where urgent benevolent needs exist, the number of families of Christians in need, and the name and address of the person to contact who will be able to handle the distribution to our suffering brethren. These men will provide an accounting of the distribution, insuring God's money is used for His purpose. To each address below, add: "Republic of the Philippines".

Infanta church—26 families (c/o Noli Villamor, Infanta church of Christ Infanta, Quezon, 3928).

Real church—15 families (c/o Santos Alearaz, Real, Quezon, 3921).

Batikan church—8 families (c/o Noli Villamor, address above).

Polillo church—8 families (c/o Virgilio la Rosa, Polillo, Quezon, 3937).

San Miguel church—18 families (c/o Isabello Hayuhay, 2015-M Luna, Pasay City, 3129).

Plairdil church—21 families (c/o Victorio Tibayan, 106 Liwaliwan, Caloocan City, 3108).

Bical district—20 families from several churches scattered throughout this area (c/o Isabello Hayuhay, address above).

Brooke's Point church—30 families, with three known dead (c/o Teddy Beltran, Salogon, Brooke's Point, Palawan, 2906).

The need in all cases is for money to purchase food, medicine, clothing, seed to replace the lost crop, and other necessities of life. I want to stress, these are Christians and their families, and the need is urgent.

For safe, rapid delivery of benevolence, I suggest either cashier's checks or international money orders be used. These should be registered with receipt requested, and of course, sent by airmail (surface takes up to three months).

I commend this appeal to your earnest consideration. (EDITOR'S NOTE: We have heard from a number of brethren regarding these needs. In the Brooke's Point area on Palawan, three congregations lost their buildings, at least two men who were the heads of families drowned, leaving widows and children, several children died, crops were destroyed and farm animals drowned. We are confident there will be a generous outpouring of help as there has been in the past when such needs around the world have come to light.)

ELMO HAZELWOOD, 229 Frances Dr., N.W., Roanoke, VA 24017 — In December, 1975 I came to work with the Peters Creek Road church. This small congregation of 22 members began three years ago. We meet in a converted dwelling at 1612 Peters Creek Road, a location easily accessible from anywhere in the area. We have removed a partition from one room to allow for expansion. The very next Sunday we had a record 41 present. T. J. Hall and Don Freeman, both business men, did the preaching until I came. They were already mailing 800 bulletins locally. We now have a daily (except Saturday) 15 minute radio program. Two home studies are now in progress. The brethren here are knowledgeable and zealous and there is a bright future for the work. Pray for the work here and for me.

LEONARD G. SMITH, Welchs Creek, Kentucky 42287 — In December, 1975 I completed two years with the Flatwoods church in Butler County. In January we completed four new classrooms, with men of the congregation doing all the work in their spare time. We have 47 young people in these classes, from pre-school to high school age. Attendance continues to increase along with the contribution and the church was able to take on more of my

support. In 1975 we had three gospel meetings and a Bible school. The Bible school was the first conducted here and we had an average of 67 children per day. In 1975 we had 12 baptisms, 13 restorations and 5 placed membership with us. In February, 1976 we had 2 more baptisms and 3 restored. We expect a good year in 1976.

EARL FLY, P.O. Box 3295, Jackson, Tennessee 38301 — I have been preaching full time for the church at Medina, Tenn., since last July. We have had 13 restorations (including 2 new members) the past few months. Bill Cavender will hold our next meeting (June 7-13). My next meeting is in Eden, N.C., May 3-9. We are located one block east of Highway 45-E in Medina. Worship with us when traveling in our area.

KEN WELIEVER, 420 9th Ave. W., Palmetto, Florida 33561 — The Lord's work in Palmetto is progressing very well. During January, 3 were baptized (two of which came out of the Baptist Church) and one lady was restored. During the week of January 19-24, we had a booth at the Manatee County Fair in which we offered a variety of religious tracts, a Bible correspondence course, home Bible studies, our weekly bulletin and other services designed to teach people the gospel. We had almost 200 people fill out a religious survey, many of whom requested some assistance in their Bible study. One family has already attended services as a result and indicated further interest. We are excited about this work at the Fair and would recommend that others try it. When you are visiting in Florida, stop and worship with us.

DON GIVENS, P.O. Box 192, Haney, B.C., Canada — In recent weeks we have had 6 baptisms in the new work in Haney, British Columbia. We started almost from "scratch" last summer and now have from 21-26 on Sundays. Those baptized have come out of various denominations. Some were initially contacted through our weekly display newspaper ad. We had home studies with them all. There is much work to be done (Vancouver area has over one million people) but we feel that progress has been made. We meet in the Centennial Arts Centre in Haney (Maple Ridge district). 90% of the congregation are babes in Christ. Worship with us when you visit this beautiful area of western Canada.

FOREST E. HURST, 3603 Drake Rd., Lebanon, Ohio 45036 — John Gerrard of Hamilton, Ohio will preach in our spring meeting April 5-12. Two have been baptized this month. The ladies Bible class is very encouraging. Attendance here is good. I will be with the Westview church in Hamilton, Ohio April 26-May 2. In May I will be with the Antioch church in Grayson County, Kentucky for a meeting (10-16). Our work here moves along in a very fine way. When in this area worship with us.

CHOICE L. BRYANT, 1508 Geraldine Lane, Arlington, Texas 76010 — The Eastside congregation in Arlington was formed because of sympathies with the "gospel-different-from-doctrine, unity-in-diversity, grace-fellowship" concepts held by the preacher and some who were in the congregation where these members formerly attended. I began work with this church in December, 1975. Since then 8 have placed membership, one has been restored and one baptized. Our membership now is 46 with attendance in the 60's. By the time this item appears we hope to have enlarged facilities at 3201 East Pioneer Parkway in the building complex known as 303 Place. I will preach in a gospel meeting soon after occupying the new quarters.

DEATH

W. A. SMITH of Plant City, Florida died on February 13 after a series of heart attacks. He was an elder of the church in Plant City for over 35 years. He was well known and loved in the community, first as a merchant who helped keep food on many tables during the depression years, then later as the owner of radio station WPLA. It was largely through his firm stand for the truth that the church there was spared during the institutional controversy. Trouble came, but a remnant stood. He lived to see the church rally from those troubled days and become strong and at peace with a will to work. The Mahoney Street church will press on to hopefully greater heights, but be it said as David said of Abner, "A prince and a great man has fallen." Jerry Eubanks, Plant, City, Florida