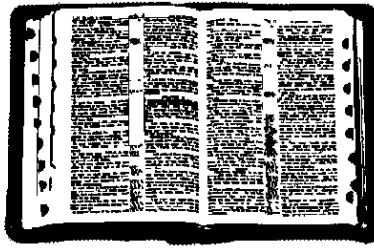


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

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

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON
THESE THINGS

H. E. Phillips

P.O. Box 17244
Tampa, Florida 33612



PRAYING AND SINGING TO JESUS (NO. 1)

In the February, 1981 issue of *Searching The Scriptures*, my friend and brother, Hoyt H. Houchen, penned an article bearing the same title as this one. I do not agree with his position on the subject of praying to Jesus and utilize this space to respond to the errors in his article. I want it clearly understood that I am not casting reflection upon brother Houchen; he is a good and honorable man and I love and respect him. I just do not believe that the Bible teaches that we may pray to Jesus.

At first I thought to respond to his article paragraph by paragraph, but I decided instead to present what I believe to be the truth on the subject and let the reader determine for himself what the Bible teaches.

To me this is not a matter of opinion; it is a matter of faith. I do not recall ever hearing anyone among us publicly pray to Jesus, but if this is a scriptural matter, why do we not hear some believing brother pray to Jesus in the public assembly? I am not naive; I have not been everywhere and I know many things go on that I have not seen nor heard. It may be a common practice in a few places.

Just one thing about the article by brother Houchen before I proceed further. In paragraph two he tries to show the fallacy of opposing praying to Jesus by comparing it to the opposition to Baptist arguments on their doctrine of salvation by faith only. He says, "Well meaning brethren, who attempt to sustain their contention that it is wrong to pray or sing to Jesus, refer to several passages in the New Testament which teach that we are to pray to the Father through the

Son. Their conclusion is that we cannot address our prayers or songs to Jesus."

That is the same argument that the Christian Church uses with the instrument of music in worship. They charge us with citing a number of passages in the New Testament that teach that we are to sing in worship and then say that we conclude that we are not to use the instrument in worship to God. Friends, the arguments are exactly the same in form and fact.

Brother Houchen says that the position opposing praying to Jesus is like the Baptists "who in their attempt to prove that salvation is by faith only, list the many passages that teach that we are saved by faith." Their conclusion, he says, is that salvation is by faith only. "So, while none of us deny that we are taught to address God in prayer or song, the issue is: are we also authorized to pray and sing to Jesus?" I agree with brother Houchen's statement of the issue: The issue is: are we also authorized to pray... to Jesus?

The Nature and Relationship of Deity

I want it to be understood from the first that I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that means that I believe Christ is as DIVINE as the Father or the Holy Spirit. I believe Jesus Christ is God in every sense of the word.

I further believe with all my heart that Christ is to be worshipped as God, just as we worship the Father as God. With me the issue is not, Is Jesus Christ deity; nor is Christ to be worshipped. The issue is, Does the New Testament authorize us to pray to Jesus in this dispensation?

The Godhead

The Godhead or Godhood is that sum of attributes that characterize deity. There are three persons in the Godhead: God the Father (Gal. 1:1), God the Son (Heb. 1:8), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3,4). The evidence of this is so overwhelming in the word of God that to the readers of this paper it is unnecessary for me to argue the point.

The word "Godhead" is used three times in the New Testament:

1. **Theios**, The Godhead, that which is Divine (Acts 17:29).

2. **Theiotes**, Divinity; characteristics of deity (Rom. 1:20).
3. **Theotes**, Deity (Col. 2:9).

Relationship Of Deity

There are four facts regarding the Godhead to which I now call attention:

1. **Perfect Unity**. There is perfect unity in the persons of deity. At no time has any person of the Godhead ever been out of harmony with the other persons of the Godhead about any matter. They are ONE in nature, purpose and work (John 17:21,22; 1 Cor. 8:6; John 10:30; 14:10,11; 16:15).

2. **Distinct Function**. Each person of the Godhead has a distinct function in the entire scheme of redemption. They have separate work that complements the work of each other in all that is revealed to us from creation to the last day when the resurrection and judgment take place. To assign to one person a work that another is said to have done or will do is to misunderstand the revealed function of the three persons of deity. For example, Christ was made flesh that he might die for the sins of the world. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit died for the sins of the world. The second person of the Godhead did what the other two persons did not do.

3. **All Persons Active**. In the eternal purpose of God, which is the entire scheme of redemption, all three persons of the Godhead are active. There is not one thing deity has done for man, or is doing, or will do for mankind that each person of the Godhead is not involved in some way, because of the UNITY of purpose of the three persons of deity.

4. **Different Rank In Relationship**. The persons of the Godhead do not hold the same rank in relationship to each other. They have perfect UNITY; each person has A DISTINCT FUNCTION in the scheme of redemption; each person is ACTIVE in all that deity has to do with mankind. But none of this means that each of these persons holds the same relationship to the others. To understand this is to understand that we have divinely ordained responsibilities to each of them in ways that distinguish between them. We can understand how **humanity** is ONE, and yet there are different persons in humanity with different relationships to each other. That is the way the Godhead is. In humanity the man is the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). As the man is the head of the woman, so Christ is the head of man, and God is the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). Christ said the Father was greater than he, and greater than all (John 14:28; 10:29).

It is important that we understand the relationship of the Father and the Son. Both are Divine, but the Son is always subject to the Father in all things. Jesus said he received from the Father **words** (John 14:10; 3:34; 8:26; 16:13-15), doctrine (John 7:16,17), will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38), and **commandment** (John 10:18; 12:49,50; 15:10). He said he always spoke these words, doctrine, will and commandments of His Father.

The Father will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30,31), but He will do it by Jesus Christ (John 5:22,27,30), and the Son will judge by the word he has

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spoken by the Holy Spirit (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-13).

Are both Praying and Singing to Jesus Authorized?

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

Ephesians 5:18-21 tells us exactly what the difference is between singing to Jesus and praying to Jesus. "... Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **SINGING and MAKING MELODY IN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD ...**" Here is the Bible authority to SING and make melody **TO THE LORD**. But read the rest of the sentence: "Giving **THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER...**" Is that plain enough? "... **IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**. Here is the Bible authority to pray in thanksgiving **ALWAYS for ALL THINGS UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER**, the first person in the Godhead; **IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**, the second person in the Godhead.

It is scriptural to SING praise and adoration to Jesus Christ, but it is unscriptural to PRAY to Jesus instead of the Father because the word of God does not teach it.

Colossians 3:16,17: "Let the WORD OF CHRIST dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD.**" We can scripturally sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—and these are the only songs we are authorized to sing in worship—with grace in our hearts TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! But this is SINGING and not PRAYING. Now read the rest of the passage: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, **DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD AND THE FATHER BY HIM.**" I find no difficulty at all understanding the difference between singing and praying in these scriptures.

One of the main pillars upon which this idea of praying to Jesus rests is that songs we sing—the good old popular and well known songs—are prayers to Jesus. This is not true! There is a difference between praying and singing.

It is true that there are a few songs that teach error, and we cannot scripturally sing them. The songs we sing, all of them, are written by uninspired men, and many of them by denominational people. In years past the words of a number of songs had to be changed because they taught the premillennial doctrine which at one time nearly destroyed many churches. I do not remember faithful brethren suggesting that we hold to Premillennialism because we had sung some songs that taught it. We just changed the words of the songs so we could scripturally sing them.

Because we find some songs that teach us to "have a little talk with Jesus" or "take it to the Lord (Jesus) in prayer" or "tell it to Jesus alone" and other such songs, should we turn to praying to Jesus to conform to the songs we want to keep, or should we do as we did in the past and change the words of such songs to conform to the doctrine of Christ? We have also had to change the words of some songs because they taught Calvinism. Why should we hesitate to change those that teach praying to Jesus?

I affirm that songs of praise, exaltation and adoration to Jesus, to the Father or to the Holy Spirit are scriptural. But I affirm that praying to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit is unscriptural and wrong.

All Three Persons of Deity Involved in Prayer

Brother Houchen said, "But when they refuse to sing or pray to Jesus they only address one third of the deity, God the Father. They can sing or pray to one part of deity but they cannot sing or pray to another part, God the Son." (S.T.S. p. 335).

Now why is it not as wrong to leave out the remaining third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, and to pray to him? Does brother Houchen advocate praying to the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? He is also God as the Father is God. All I have read or

heard from those advocating praying to Jesus is that we who oppose are separating out one person of the Godhead, to whom we pray, and ignoring the other two. Whether two or one of the Godhead is ignored, the principle is the same.

But if we should pray to the Son because he is God as the Father is God, why should we not do all that we do in worship and service to each one of the persons of deity alike? Why not make God the Father high priest through whom we can come to the Saviour Jesus Christ? Or be reconciled unto Jesus Christ by the blood of the Holy Spirit? In the light of Divine truth this is ridiculous, but I use it to illustrate the truth that, although all persons of the Godhead are involved in the redemption of mankind, they do not all have the same function and do not have the same relationship to each other or to humanity.

What About The Lord's Supper?

On each Lord's day I assemble with the saints to eat the unleavened bread and drink the fruit of the vine. When I do this I do NOT remember the "broken body" or the "shed blood" of the Father or the Holy Spirit; ONLY JESUS CHRIST! I could not do otherwise and be scripturally right. Jesus suffered and died on the cross. It was HIS body that took the stripes for my sins. It was HIS blood that was shed on the cross for the remission of my sins. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24) and if I did otherwise I would not obey either the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit. I remember only ONE PERSON in the Godhead when I eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord! Do I sin in remembering only "one third" of deity on each Lord's day when I "break bread" in remembrance of Jesus Christ? I trow not!

It is not because I do not respect all three persons of deity. I do so because the word of God, through His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven which gave utterance to the apostles in spiritual words (Acts 1:3; 2:3,4; 1 Cor. 2:13), told me exactly what to do and why in partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine.

The Father sent the Son into the world to "taste death for every man" and the Holy Spirit gave the words by which the apostles revealed the will of the Father and that will is given through Jesus Christ. All three persons are involved in the redemption of man. It was the eternal purpose of the Father, executed by Christ, and revealed by the Holy Spirit. But the fact is that this expression of worship is directed ONLY to the Son. We remember HIS broken body and HIS shed blood. Think on these things!

Keep this article and read it again before you read the second part to appear next month in *Searching The Scriptures*.

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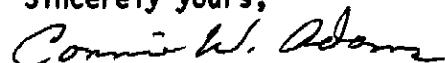
The time has come to put some facts before you and ask for your understanding. In 1973 when I began editing the paper it consisted of 16 pages with an annual subscription rate of \$5. The paper has been enlarged to 24 pages with a current annual rate of \$7.

During the past eight years our monthly printing costs have trifled and the mailing cost on a second-class permit is now four times what it was in 1973. All renewal notices are sent by first-class mail. In 1973 a first-class stamp was 10c. It is now 18c. During this period, office help and necessary supplies have continued to increase in cost.

The current subscription rate has only applied to new subscriptions since that rate became effective two and a half years ago. When I became editor, I told our beloved brother, H. E. Phillips, that I would honor the agreement he had made to the effect that as long as people renewed on time they would continue to receive the paper at the price under which they began, just as long as it was economically possible. I did not make that agreement with the subscribers—that was before my management of the paper. I am glad we have been able to honor this for the past eight years. But it means that a number of readers who have been with us ten years or longer are still getting the paper at \$3, \$4, or \$5 a year even though the paper is eight pages larger than when they began and inflation has run wild since then. Neither brother Phillips nor anyone else could have foreseen the run-away inflation of today. WE CANNOT CONTINUE THIS PRACTICE IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE.

Beginning in September we bill all renewals at the current rate for either clubs or singles. Anyone still receiving the paper for \$3 a year has been with us a long time. Some of these may now be retired and on greatly reduced income. Out of respect for that and in gratitude for having stayed with us through all these years, if any subscriber honestly wants to continue receiving the paper but just cannot afford the increase, if you will write us a note to that effect, we will see that you continue to receive the paper as you always have. We do not wish to work a hardship on any of these. But regarding others, we must face the realities of fiscal responsibility. We are convinced that the paper fills a need and hope you share that feeling. Good men, some with us from the beginning in 1960, have continued to supply excellent material for the reader and all of these have worked with no pay except the satisfaction of helping people search the Scriptures. We stand for the same truths for which the paper has stood throughout its history. Please give us your understanding and help us to continue this work.

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T. G. O'Neal

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**ORIGIN OF OPPOSITION TO
INSTITUTIONALISM**

Quite often today as gospel preachers oppose churches of Christ making contributions to benevolent organizations and to "sponsoring churches" some of our brethren who have a liberal attitude toward the word of God will charge that such opposition did not begin until just recently.

I have in my possession a little booklet, *Cooperation in the Field of Benevolence and Evangelism*, by Guy N. Woods, which contains a sermon he preached in Indianapolis, Indiana, at the Garfield Heights church on May 18, 1957, in which are some quotations to which I want to call your attention. On page 1 he says, "Up until a few years ago there was no opposition in the brotherhood, except in a few isolated places, to cooperative evangelism and benevolence as is practiced by most of the churches of Christ today. I can remember when there was not a preacher in the South known to me who opposed the orphan homes as they today exist." On page 2 he says, "The first opposition that was registered to cooperative evangelism in our day was that which followed the efforts of the Broadway congregation in Lubbock, Texas, to keep Brother Otis Gatewood in Germany. Until that time, nothing was said in opposition thereto;..." This was in about 1948.

From reading these quotations one would get the impression, if he didn't know better, that everybody was supporting these benevolent institutions from the church treasury for many years. This is not the case. Men living today can remember when the very first contribution was made by a church of Christ to a modern day benevolent institution called an "orphan home."

To show you that churches of Christ have not always contributed to what is commonly called orphan homes, let us look at the record and be convinced by the facts. By comparing the charters of all the benevolent organizations among us today the following facts, which are undeniable, are seen. In the year 1940 there were only seven so-called orphan homes in operation among those claiming to belong to the church of Christ. Coming ten years later to the year 1950, there were only three more established, bringing the total to ten in 1950. From the year 1950 until 1960 there were seventeen more homes established, thus bringing the total of so-called orphan homes to twenty-seven in 1960. If you will note carefully, you will see that there

were more benevolent organizations started from 1950 to 1960 than there were started from 1900 to 1950.

Now, because of this fact, there was not as much opposition to these benevolent institution several years ago as there is now. There was opposition to them even from their beginning. Anyone who says otherwise is either uninformed concerning the history of the church of Jesus Christ in this century or does not care how the truth is handled. The opposition grew as the benevolent societies grew. "The opposition grew in proportion to the practice" of building more and more human benevolent societies. Does anyone marvel as to why there is more opposition now, than there was several years ago? The reason should be self evident as there are more so-called orphan homes now than there were several years ago.

But I am prepared to prove with documented evidence that there were "cries long and loud" against these so-called orphan homes years ago! That's right, people who would have you believe that opposition only began against these so-called orphan homes a few short years ago are in error. Opposition began years ago.

The oldest so-called orphan home among those claiming to be the churches of Christ was started in the state of Tennessee in the year 1909. In a quarterly report in the year 1911 there were only 3 1/4% of the Tennessee churches that had made a contribution to such. Looks like somebody was opposed to the thing in 1911.

In 1931 brother A. N. Trice wrote an article in the *Gospel Advocate* entitled, "Law and Expediency" in defense of churches of Christ contributing to these benevolent institutions. Throughout this article, he spoke of those that "object".

He said, "Cries long and loud have been made against... homes, orphanages, etc., as being institutions "unknown to the New Testament," and against "an enterprise" that is "bigger than the work of a local congregation." Somebody must have been doing some effective opposition to churches of Christ contributing to those "homes" and "orphanages" for this brother to write in such strong language as this. Does this quotation sound like opposition to churches contributing to benevolent organization just started a few years ago? Somebody even back then objected and opposed such a practice upon the part of New Testament churches.

In this same article, Brother Trice said, in 1931, "Another dogma held by some is that no church may give from its treasury to the support of any school, Bible school, orphan school or other institution of learning, nor for helping any one to obtain an education." Brethren also opposed churches of Christ contributing to schools and colleges. The opposition was "long and loud" in 1931 to such!

Trice says, "Sometimes the claim is made that no two or more churches may cooperate in any given work, or that "the word of God does not authorize any congregation to "start an enterprise" that is bigger than the work of a local congregation." "Special objection is also urged against the planning by

the churches of a city or community for holding a series of gospel meetings and against the selection of a preacher to do the preaching." In this quotation someone is charged with believing "that no two or more churches may cooperate in any given work ..." I doubt that anyone opposed churches cooperating; but rather opposed unscriptural church cooperation. But these statements by Trice in the *Gospel Advocate* are in many cases direct quotations. If no one were opposed, how could they be quoted as being opposed to these things? The very fact that some one is quoted proves that some one was opposed to this very practice back in 1931.

Brother Trice says, "Finally, Scripture authority has been demanded for... supporting schools from the treasury of the church; for activities other than through the treasury of the local congregation; for maintaining an orphanage or home for the aged;... It is not sufficient to cry, "Unscriptural," while failing to point out the Scriptures violated." Some one has been charged with asking for the Scriptures for churches to contribute to human benevolent societies; and I take it they were in opposition to such. When I and others ask for the same Scripture that was asked for back in 1931, we are charged with being opposed; and I am sure that those who asked for the Scripture back in 1931 were considered to be opposed to the practices of that day.

When we take the time to look at these quotations from the pen of brother A. N. Trice in the *Gospel Advocate* of March 19, 1931, we can plainly see that these quotations are from one who opposed church contributions to these so-called orphan homes; it shows that opposition was "long and loud"; and that someone was asking for the book, chapter, and verse for it. These quotations from the *Gospel Advocate* of 1931 should forever silence those who say that opposition only began to churches contributing to so-called orphan homes a few years ago.

Opposition to the "Herald of Truth" began almost the same year the "Herald of Truth" began, 1951. Nobody opposed the "Herald of Truth" before it began; opposition has been strong to it ever since it began and to date no person has cited the Bible authority for it either.

Men sometimes find their preaching and their practice are not the same. Their preaching will be in harmony with the word of God while their practice will not be. Often their practice will be in harmony with the New Testament and their preaching will not be. Through the years several brethren have preached what the New Testament teaches on this matter, but they have not practiced it. Some have become so involved in their own wisdom that they have changed their preaching to fit their practice, even when their practice was not in harmony with the word of God. Others have seen that their preaching was right, but that their practice was wrong, and they have changed their practice to fit their preaching. When one sees his preaching is right and his practice is wrong, he should change his practice to fit his preaching, not his

preaching to fit his practice.

Peter preached the truth on circumcision in Acts 10, but practiced something else in Gal. 2. When Paul rebuked him to his face, Peter changed his practice to fit his preaching, which was right. This is what every preacher and every faithful Christian will do when it is pointed out to them that their preaching is correct but their practice is incorrect.

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THE BEATITUDES—No. 3

In this final article on the Beatitudes, we will consider the fifth, sixth and seventh beatitudes in their respective order.

Blessed Are the Merciful

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7). Jesus attached great importance to "mercy." Twice he quoted Hosea that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Mt. 9:13; 12:27). He condemned the Pharisees for their lack of mercy (Mt. 23:27).

Many of the Jews were bereft of mercy. They disapproved of Jesus eating with the publicans and sinners (Mt. 9:11) and murmured against Jesus' disciples for doing the same (Lk. 5:30). The Roman world was merciless, especially toward slaves and children. Slaves were treated as chattel property or living tools to be used. A master could, and sometimes did, kill his slave for the slightest provocation. Unwanted children were abandoned in the streets, thrown out like refuse.

In this kind of backdrop Jesus taught mercy. To be merciful is to have the same kind of love, feeling and pity toward all men as God manifests. "To be merciful is to have the same attitude to men as God has, to think of men as God thinks of men, to feel for men as God feels for them, to act towards men as God acts towards them" (Wm. Barclay). Mercy is the opposite of self-centeredness, and antithesis of selfishness. It is concern and self-identification for our fellowman with whom we have daily contact.

Jesus said the merciful shall obtain mercy. Here is a principle laid down by Jesus. Before we can have mercy, we must be merciful. James said: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy (Jas. 2:13). Let us show mercy that we may receive God's rich mercy (Eph. 2:4) by which we are saved (Tit. 3:5) and through which we have hope (1 Pet. 1:3).

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The word, "pure," is a translation of *katharos* which means "free from the admixture or adhesion of anything that soils, adulterates, corrupts." Lenski says it has the idea of "singleness of mind, the

honesty which has no hidden motive, no selfish interest, and is true and open in all things" (St. *Matthew's Gospel*).

The word, "heart," is a translation of *kardia*. Here, it is the "inner man, the understanding, the faculty and seat of intelligence." Hence, Jesus in the text is saying: "Blessed are those whose understanding is clear, whose spiritual vision is single, whose motive is honest, for they shall see God."

Man comes to Jesus by perception and discernment of God's revealed Word, the Bible. Jesus said: "And they shall all be taught of God. Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (Jn. 6:45). Those who know and love the truth, and whose minds are not distorted by the doctrines of men, are the "pure in heart."

The expression, "for they shall see God," means "a spiritual relationship with God in the kingdom." This is made clear in John 3:3: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Seeing the kingdom" in verse 3 is the same as "entering the kingdom" in Jn. 3:5. Therefore, a relationship is the implication of "seeing God." May we keep our hearts pure!

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Mt. 5:9). Jesus was not talking about arbitration in a dispute between people or a settler of disagreements among men. Rather, Jesus was speaking about peace preachers who preach the gospel of peace and show the world the way back to God.

Man caused enmity between himself and God by sin. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (Co. 1:21). The need was a restoration of friendship that had been broken. Here is the function of the peacemaker. He preaches the gospel of peace and thereby reconciles (makes friends again) the alien to God.

Paul wrote of Jesus: "For he is our peace... And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:14-17). Those who propagate the peace that Jesus brought and preached are peacemakers—makers of peace between God and man.

Listen further to the apostle Paul: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" The gospel of peace is what Peter said is the "word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye, know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (Acts 10:36-37). Peter's statement was an allusion to the Great Commission, and those who proclaim it are, indeed, *peacemakers*. In working as

peacemakers, we are honored by being called the "children of God."

Truly, as Foy E. Wallace said, "The beatitudes are the synopsis of the gospel of the kingdom and the epitome of the doctrine of Christ." What wonderful blessings they proclaim!



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UNMASKING MORMONISM (No. 2)

by **Steve Goff**
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Mormon views on the Bible and God

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), known as the Mormons, project an image of a strict moralized, family oriented, clean cut and happy people. However, as we showed in the previous article, this image is only a mask of hypocrisy. Behind the mask, we see a society with problems in drug abuse, alcoholism, mental depression, suicide, fornication, lasciviousness, divorce and unruly children, as in other societies of America. While Mormons are good people, Mormonism paints a deceptive picture of its followers in an attempt to attract others to its number. In this second article, we will examine the Mormon views of the Bible and of God, again penetrating the mask and exposing their true beliefs. We do this to fulfill our obligation to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 Jn. 4:1) and to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). Inasmuch as the Bible is our complete and perfect standard (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and as Jesus said of false prophets, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16), we will compare the fruits of Mormon doctrine with the Bible.

Mormons And The Bible

When a Mormon is asked if the Bible is God's Word, he will quickly answer in the affirmative. In a LDS tract, "What the Mormons think of Christ" on page 2, we read, "Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe the Bible. Indeed, so literally and completely do their beliefs and practices conform to the teachings of the Bible that it is not uncommon to hear informed persons say: 'If all men believed the Bible, all would be Mormons.' Bible doctrine is Mormon doctrine, and Mormon doctrine is Bible doctrine. They are one and the same." But behind this mask is the reality that Mormons do not follow Bible teaching. The Book of Mormon affirms that the Bible has been corrupted and has caused an exceeding great many to stumble (1 Nephi 13:26-29). Are we to believe that Mormons "literally and completely" follow the teachings of a corrupted book which leads men astray? I have never been in a religious discussion with a Mormon where he did not, in the course of the conversation, begin to criticize the Bible and accuse it of containing contradictions. Mormon doctrine is NOT Bible doctrine; they are NOT one and the same.

In another LDS tract, "What of the Mormons?" on page 12, we read of their three additional books of scripture (*The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price*), "The teachings

found in them do not conflict with the teachings of the Bible." One must then wonder why these books are needed. If they teach a different gospel, they stand condemned (Gal. 1:9). If they just echo Bible doctrine, why are they necessary? The truth is that Mormonism rejects much of the Bible, and in fact only accepts those teachings which conform to their preconceived ideas. The Bible claims to be the complete and final word of God to man (Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9), the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25), uncorruptible and imperishable (Mk. 13:31; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). Mormon doctrine rejects this, teaching that the Bible is inaccurate, incomplete, and was corrupted by men. If Mormonism were correct, Jesus would have lied when He said His words would never pass away. Mormons deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible. On page 10 of the LDS tract, "What of the Mormons?" we read, "The Bible is the word of God, written by men. It is basic in Mormon teaching. But the Latter-day Saints recognize that errors have crept into this sacred work because of the manner in which the book has come to us." The Bible claims, however, to be more than merely God's Word written by man (or in man's wisdom). 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." To deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible is to call Paul a liar. Mormons are taught to have a subjective faith, based upon their feelings rather than the written word. Moroni 10:4-5, of the Book of Mormon, teaches its reader to ask God for a confirmation that the book is true. One young "elder" recently told me that his confirmation came in the form of a burning feeling in his heart. The Bible teaches that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). One's faith should be based on scripture, not heartburn. Having a subjective faith, few Mormons will admit that they could possibly be mistaken. Closed minded, and like the Jews of Paul's day, they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

God or Gods?

The first Article of Faith of the Mormon Church states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." To the unsuspecting ear, that sounds great. But WHAT do they believe about God? Mormons believe that God is an exalted man, with a body of flesh and bones, who was born and lived a physical existence in a previous world, but progressed to the position of being a God over His own world, the earth. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, said, "God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves" (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5, pp. 613-614). Smith also said, "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Brigham Young, Smith's successor, said, "He (God) is our Father — the Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an

exalted being" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, p. 333). This doctrine is directly contradictory to the Bible, which teaches that God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24), and that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). But Mormon theology does not stop there. Mormons believe in a spiritual progression in which men can become Gods; or as it is often stated, "as man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Young said, "The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like himself" (Journ. of Disc. Vol. 3, p. 93). The "one" God is not the only God who exists, they teach, but is only the "one" God over this world. Young said, "How many Gods there are, I do not know" (Journ. of Disc. Vol. 7, p. 333). Well, the Bible knows! God said, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6), and "I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isa. 43:10). The Mormon doctrine of polytheism is nothing short of idolatry. They demote the true and living God from His eternal and omnipotent nature into a mere man who pleased his God and therefore reaped a reward, becoming a God himself. Like the Jews of old, Mormons "thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself" (Psa. 50:21). And like the Gentiles described in Romans 1:21-25, the Mormons have "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man," and have "worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator." Latter-day Saints have created a god in the image of man.

Mormon views of the Bible and of God are foreign to what the Bible teaches. While their image projects a Bible-believing, God-fearing people, they in fact reject the nature and inspiration of the Bible, and worship a god of their own imagination. In the next article, we will examine two other doctrines fundamental to Mormon theology: the Priesthood and the restored church of Jesus Christ.

Using the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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What To Do When A Church Problem Arises

So long as time continues there shall be problems in the church. One has but to read casually through the book of Acts and the epistles to ascertain that we today have no monopoly on problems. The early church suffered problems of outside persecution (Acts 3:4) and problems of inward corruption and covetousness (Acts 5). It suffered when false doctrines challenged the truth of the gospel and some were led astray (Acts 15).

Many problems existed in the church at Corinth. The Galatian churches were in danger of apostasy as were the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews. Problems were mounting in Thessalonica because of some misunderstanding on the second coming of Christ. The Lord's letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2,3) reveal many problems within the fellowship of those saints.

Some years ago while I was engaged in a meeting in South Texas, an elder and I were discussing some church problems. There was present at this "after church" get-together a young Mexican man who had only recently become a Christian. The elder seemingly realized quite suddenly that our conversation could be a discouragement to him. So he addressed the young brother and said, "You must be aware that some churches do have problems."

I shall not forget his answer: "Si," he smiled, "I've been reading about them in the New Testament."

How should we conduct ourselves when a problem arises? There are some things in this regard that need to be constantly emphasized.

Do the Scriptural And Right Thing

The scriptural and right thing is not often the easy thing. I'm confident that it was not easy for Peter to confront Ananias and Sapphira and accuse them of lying. But his source was not just reliable, but infallible. It was a lot easier for the disciples to murmur and gossip concerning the neglect of the Grecian widows (Acts 6) than to correct the situation in a scriptural way. It was a lot of trouble for Paul and Barnabas to make a trip to Jerusalem and contend for what was right (Acts 15).

Most members of the church are aware of what they are supposed to do if a brother trespasses against them (Matt. 18:15-17). First, one must "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." That's the scriptural and right thing. The easy thing is to tell everybody but him.

If someone tells a tale on another, the easy thing is to just let it slide. Even if we do not participate in the muckraking, can't we at least choose not to get involved? But consider an apostolic example: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1:11). Please note that Paul not only informed the party of whom such was reported, but he told them who made the report. There was none of this: "Well, I just can't tell you who said it. They made me promise" sort of thing.

About the best way I know to shut the mouths of some people is to let them know in no uncertain terms if they tell something on someone that you will tell it. You will tell it to the one it's being told on and you'll tell who you got it from! Never promise anyone you will keep something that should not have been told in the first place. Tell them rather, "If you want it kept, you keep it. Tell me and I'll tell it! But I'll do it in the scriptural and right way."

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people..." (Lev. 19:16).

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Prov. 18:8). The "tale" may not necessarily be true, but it nevertheless gives one a sickening feeling when slanderous things are reported.

"And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13) or "In fact they become worse than lazy, and degenerate into gossips and busy-bodies with dangerous tongues" (Phillips). Wonder what Paul would have said about the telephone? Isn't it amazing how busy some bodies can be with gossip and tales.

Resolve now, if you have not already done so, to do the scriptural and right thing when problems arise.

Judge Righteous Judgment

"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). This is an unequivocal and absolute command.

But what is involved in judging righteous judgment? Let us suppose you are called upon to judge in a matter in which some accusations have been made against a brother (Matt. 18:16,18; 1 Cor. 6:1-5). What scriptural principles should guide you? Let us note five:

(1) **Don't jump to conclusions.** Get all the facts possible. Even in our human courts this is emphasized to a large extent, but not nearly enough. No germane fact relative to a case should be refused entry on the ground of a technicality. If evidence has been gleaned or introduced in an illegal manner, let those responsible for such be penalized, but let the evidence stand. Even so, in other matters we should reach our conclusions after all pertinent facts are considered. Never condemn someone if you have not heard and considered what he has to say for himself. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame unto him" (Prov. 18:13).

(2) **Consider the witnesses.** First, consider the number of witnesses. It is always possible for one person to get it in for another and make accusations. In such a case we just have one person's word against another's. What is the righteous course? The Old and New Testaments both stress that an accusation is not to be received but in the face of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15; Num. 35:30; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). Jesus even taught that if He were the only witness of His claims, He should forthwith be rejected (John 5:31).

The credibility of witnesses must also be considered. If one has a reputation for truthfulness, we would naturally place more confidence in his testimony than in the words of one who is known to fabricate or fantasize. One of the great evidences of the resurrection of Christ is the credibility of the witnesses. They were not without fault. But they have been found to be truthful on every matter that can be crosschecked and examined by other sources.

(3) **Put personal likes and dislikes aside.** When divisive doctrinal issues arise in a congregation, many will simply stay or leave with their friends. When other

problems erupt, people tend to line up with their friends. The cardinal question: What is the truth? is oft-times relegated to a secondary position, or not even thought of at all. This is not righteous judgment.

(4) **Don't receive a rumor.** "Oh, it must be true," people exclaim. "Otherwise, it would not have been told!" Where there is smoke, there is fire, we're told. But always keep in mind the possibility that the fire just may be on the end of someone's long tongue (James 3:6). I heard of one sister of whom it was said, "Her tongue's so long she could sit in the parlor and lick the skillet in the kitchen!"

An untrue accusation was received against Joseph and he was cast into prison (Gen. 39:7-20). I've often wondered why Potiphar did not have him killed. The main reason, Of course, was that God's providence was at work. But perhaps J. W. McGarvey spoke accurately when he said in his sermon on Joseph: "I think it depended upon the fact that Potiphar knew his wife well and knew Joseph well, and had about as much confidence in Joseph's denial as in her accusation."

David suffered from unfounded rumors and false charges (Psalms 7, 35). As in the cases of most of us, there was enough sin in his past to make it terrible enough. He didn't need the circulation of untrue slanders.

Even the Lord, who was totally without sin, was falsely accused. Let us be sure that we receive not an unproved rumor. Judge righteous judgment.

(5) **Separate the material from the immaterial.** Someone says, "He must be guilty. He has an ulcer!" Oh, are you going to conclude that everyone with an ulcer is guilty of some great wickedness? Move over Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar!

An article has been widely circulated concerning Ken Taylor, author of the Living Bible, a paraphrase of the scriptures. It is observed in this article that Taylor suffered chronic laryngitis for several months after the completion of his work and it is alleged that the symptoms were psychosomatic, having been triggered by his awareness that he was perverting the scriptures.

I'm no friend of the Living Bible paraphrase, but really folks! Isn't that that a little careless? Who could possible know such a thing? That is not righteous judgment.

Keep Faith In The Lord

There will always be problems. But resolve right now that when those problems arise, you'll keep your faith in Christ.

Jesus spoke of the problem of false prophets who would arise in the days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. **"And because iniquity shall abound,"** He continued, "the love of many shall wax cold. But **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved**" (Matt. 24:11-13). The original problem of false prophets would be multiplied by the additional problem of others allowing their faith, zeal, and love to grow cold because of the sad effects of such lawlessness.

God has a purpose even in the rise of church problems: **"For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you"** (1 Cor. 11:19). Such is just part of the culling process.

When a problem arises, be sure to do the scriptural and right thing; be sure to judge righteous judgment; and last but not least, be sure to keep faith in the Lord, not in man.

A CHRISTIAN'S REVIEW OF "CAMPBELLITE QUESTIONS AND BAPTIST ANSWERS" No. 12

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As we continue this study, we quote further from Mr. Taylor's answer to question number 20:

"The only churches that have stood from the promise in Matthew 16:18 to this good hour have been Baptist churches. As Ypeij and Dermout, who were not Baptists, well said: 'Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the apostles, and, as a Christian society, has preserved pure the doctrine of the Gospel through the ages.' I am a Baptist because the New Testament is a Baptist book written by Baptists, for Baptists and to make Baptists; and put in the hands of an open-minded inquirer it will make a Baptist out of him. I am a Baptists because the great commission is a Baptist document. It puts the emphasis or accent where none but Baptists put it, namely, on making men disciples or Christians before baptism. Then it commands all Christians to be baptized as Christ Himself was, namely, by a Baptist preacher. And finally, in contradistinction to modern Unionists and Fundamentalists, it commands all those who love the Lord to obey Him in all things—the non-essentials as well as the essentials."

His first statement is not in harmony with Baptist doctrine. When Jesus said "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) of course the language indicates that it was then future. But most Baptists teach that the church had already been built, and they usually point to Matthew 10—the call of the apostles—as the time and place.

His quote from Ypeij and Dermout is not convincing. When many religious historians referred to "Baptists" they had reference only to those who baptized by immersion, and not necessarily to a sect or denomination by that name. Many Baptist historians have spoken on the origin of the Baptist denomination. May we quote a few:

"It was during the reign of James, that the first regularly organized English Baptist church, of which

we possess any detailed account, was formed in Amsterdam in 1607, by John Smyth, formerly a clergyman of the Church of England." (*Story of the Baptists in All Ages*, Richard B. Cook, page 88.)

"John Smyth founded a church upon the Baptist model, believers' baptism and a regenerate church membership; and, organically speaking, this was the 'beginning' of the present denomination of Baptists, though begun with an unscriptural form of baptism. The principle, however, was right, and the form was corrected in 1640-41." (*English Baptist Reformation*, George A. Lofton, page 254.)

"The history of the Baptist Church cannot be carried, by a scientific method, farther back than the year 1611 when the first Anabaptist church, consisting of Englishmen, was founded in Amsterdam, by John Smyth, the Se-Baptist. This was not, strictly speaking, a Baptist Church, but it was the direct progenitor of churches in England that a few years later became Baptist, and therefore, their history begins there. A history of Baptist churches going farther back than the early years of the 17th century would, therefore, be in the highest degree unscientific. The very attempt to write such a history now would be a confession of crass ignorance, either of the facts as known, or the methods of historical research and the principles of historical criticism, or both." (H. C. Vedder, *Short History of the Baptists*.)

"To affirm that a man is a Baptist proves nothing more than that he rejects infant baptism and holds to believers baptism, by immersion." (David Benedict, *History of All Denominations*, p. 198.)

"The first regularly organized Baptist church of which we possess any account, is dated from 1607, and was formed in London by a Mr. Smyth, who has been a clergyman in the church of England." (David Benedict, *History of the Baptists*, page 304.)

"The attempt to show that any religious body has come down from the Apostles an unchanged people is of itself an assumption of infallibility, and contradicts the facts of history." (Thomas Armitage, *History of the Baptists*, Preface, page 3.)

His statement that the New Testament is a Baptist book, written by, for and to Baptists, is absurd! And we must conclude from his statement that the only open-minded people on earth who have held the New Testament in their hands were or became Baptists. What a claim!

The Catholic Church makes the same claim on the origin of the Bible as Taylor makes for Baptists. I have a book published by the Knights of Columbus entitled "The Bible is a Catholic Book." On page 4 they say, "The plain truth which every sincere person must eventually face is the fact that you can accept the Bible only upon the word of the Catholic Church. The Bible truly is a Catholic book, and it would not be in our possession today but for the Catholic Church." On page 11 they say, "We believe the Bible because God is its author and the Catholic Church is its publisher."

The Baptists and Catholics offer the same proof for

their claims—nothing! One claim is as true as the other, but both are false. The Bible was written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through men who never heard of or thought about the Baptist and Catholic denominations.

Next, he tells us that the great commission is a Baptist document because it puts the emphasis where only Baptists put it, "making disciples or Christians before baptism." I thought he had been contending that the teaching of Christ made Baptists, but now he says Christians. He is wrong in his understanding of the Lord's commission.

He assumes that "disciple" always means Christian, but that is not true. A disciple may be a learner; one who is being taught. In John 6:66 we read that "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." So they became apostates, but most Baptist people teach that such is not possible.

Mark records Jesus as saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). Is that a Baptist commission or Baptist doctrine?

Where does the commission or any other statement in the New Testament command Christians to be baptized? When that commission was put into effect on Pentecost (see Luke 24:46-49), lost, sinful believers were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Were they Christians before baptism? If so, they were Christians before repentance.

We agree that the commission commands those who love the Lord to obey him in all things, but we deny that there are any "non-essentials." This reflects a typical attitude of Baptists and many other people. They seem to think that God has given us a number of commands and then left us free to classify them as essential and non-essential and accept what we like and reject the rest. What kind of God do they believe in? Almighty God never gave to anybody, at any time, or any place, for any purpose a NON-ESSENTIAL command—one that could be rejected with impunity or defied with His acceptance.

Baptists engage in a lot of inconsistent double-talk on loving the Lord, baptism, and keeping his commandments. For example, consider this statement: "Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of 'baptismal regeneration'; but it is essential to obedience, since Christ has commanded it. It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world, and to membership in the church which is his body. And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedience and tokens of affection." (The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, Edward T. Hiscox, pages 20, 21.)

If that statement says anything, it says that obedience to Christ, a public confession, membership in his body, and being a true lover of the Lord are NOT essential to salvation. They are all expressed in baptism, but they say baptism is not essential to

salvation! They want baptism, but they don't want it. They can't have it both ways.

We quote again:

"I am a Baptist because Baptist churches are the only ones that come up to the following tests of the New Testament churches, namely, they were founded by the Lord Jesus Himself; have had an unbroken perpetuity and a wilderness history; Christ the only Law-giver, Head and Lord; doctrinal conformity to the New Testament model; missionary activities; and have been the sect everywhere spoken against for 1,900 years."

I deny every statement in that paragraph! Christ did not build the Baptist Church; it does not have a history back to the Lord; He is not its head, law-giver or Lord; it does not teach His truth; it has not existed for 1900 years. Baptists teach many false doctrines—hereditary total depravity, salvation by faith only, direct operation of the Holy Spirit, impossibility of apostasy, Premillennialism, mechanical instruments of music—to name a few. They are wrong in origin, organization, plan of salvation, work and worship.

He closes with the following:

"With 'meekness and fear,' and yet with cordial good will and sincere regard for all with whom we differ, we have given an answer to the questions asked as to the once delivered faith. If God should use it to bring one honest inquirer to the unity of faith and the fitly joining of such an one to a body of Christ or for establishing in the faith of some who are already in such a body, we shall be greatly rejoiced; for as John said: 'I have no greater joy than to see God's children walking in the truth'."

This is quite impressive, but we do not believe that his answers are according to "the faith once delivered," or will bring the honest inquirer to the body of Christ. His statements will cause people to reject the plain teaching of the Lord, deny the necessity of obeying His commands, and end up in the Baptist denomination which is not the body of Christ. (To be concluded next time.)

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IS THE RETURN OF CHRIST IMMINENT?

Matthew 24 (Part 2)

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Since so much is being made today of the "signs of the times" that are presented in the first section of Matthew 24 (v. 5-34), and how they supposedly apply to our day and time, we need to look at them and notice their fulfillment. Let us begin with verse 5 and notice that there would be many false teachers who would claim to be the Christ. If we look at Acts 8:9 & 10 we can find one such case. That passage reads, "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city use sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." This is one example of the occurrence of just such an event as Matthew 24:5 said would take place. The Hebrew historian, Josephus, tells us that many individuals made a claim like that near the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XX, Chap. 5; Chap. 8)

Verse 6 tells us, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars ...". Not only does history tell us that there were numerous revolts in the Roman Empire in the time prior to 70 A.D., there were wars among the Jews themselves. (*Wars*, Book IV, Chap. 3)

In verse 7 we read of famines, pestilence, and earthquakes. Acts 11:28 tells us of one such event with the words, "And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." In his book, *Wars*, Josephus also tells us of many famines that took place during this period of time. History tells us that during the reign of Nero, (54 - 68 A.D.) numerous and great earthquakes took place.

Verses 9-13 tells us that persecution would be the lot of the church. The book of Acts is filled with accounts of such. Acts 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, give us divinely inspired accounts of just the type of things that our Lord spoke of in Matthew 24. The statement of verse 13, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.", refers not to final judgment, "but to the deliverance of the faithful from the terrible desolation to come upon Jerusalem." (*A Brief Exposition of Matthew 24*, Wayne Chappell)

Still another of the signs is presented in verse 14 where we read, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The Apostle Paul tells of the fulfillment of this prophecy in a book

written approximately 61 or 62 A.D. In Co. 1:23 Paul writes, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." This occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. Those who would deny it must deny the words of Paul.

As we move into the remainder of this section of Matthew 24 we find what it was to be like when the event occurred and the time immediately after it. Verse 15 speaks of the Abomination of Desolation which is a reference to Daniel 9. The parallel passage in Luke 21:10-21 is a little easier to understand. That passage says, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." The Abomination of Desolation refers to the Roman Armies, with their standards and idolatrous symbols, standing in the holy place of the temple. As we continue on and look at verses 16 - 20 of Matthew 24 we find that when the disciples saw the armies of Rome surrounding the city they should flee. If they were on the housetops they were not even to come down to retrieve their goods. If they were in the fields they were not to return for their possessions. For those with nursing children it would be a difficult time for their flight would be made that much harder. If it occurred in the winter time the harshness of the weather would be a hardship and if it occurred on the Sabbath day the gates of the city would be closed making flight from the city most difficult.

Let us stop for a moment and consider these last few verses. If this were referring to the final judgment what difference would it make if there were nursing children or if it were winter time? What difference would it make if it happened on the Sabbath? What good would it do for people to flee to the mountains if this referred to the second coming and final judgment? The answer to these questions is, "none at all." Isn't it obvious that this is not referring to the return of our Lord in final judgment?

Consider now verse 21. There we read, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Josephus tells us what happened in the city of Jerusalem when the siege was taking place. It was truly a period of great tribulation. There was no food, disease ran rampant, parents killed and ate their own children. The Jews were slaughtered in such numbers that their blood ran in the streets. There was great tribulation.

As we look at verse 22 we find that the days "should be shortened", and this refers to the number of days and not the length of the days themselves. The siege was a relatively short one considering the size of the city. It lasted for 134 days (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*) and at one point

it was actually suspended for a time as Vespasian was recalled to Rome, His son, Titus, eventually finished the conquest.

Verses 23 - 26 repeats and embellishes upon what Jesus said in verse 5.

Verses 27 - 28 need careful consideration. They read as follows, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Our Lord Jesus came is judgment upon Jerusalem through the Roman armies. The Romans were the "eagles" and Jerusalem was the "carcass". In this way the destruction of Jerusalem is pictured by the image of a group of hungry birds devouring a carcass. Truly a terrible picture and one that would be swift, "as the lightning cometh out of the east."

As we consider verses 29 and 30 we must keep in mind a few things. Number one is that verse 29 tells us that these events will happen "immediately after the tribulation of those days...". Secondly, verse 34 necessarily includes verses also applied to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Verse 29 is figurative language and is similar to language used in the Old Testament with reference to the fall of nations and rulers. When Ezekiel described the fall of Egypt in Ezekiel 32:7-8 he said, "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God." The similarities in the language used is obvious and as it was used to describe the fall of Egypt, so is it used to describe the fall of Jerusalem and Judaism. The power of the judgment of Jesus, executed through the Romans, shows clearly His exalted position.

In verse 31 the word "angels" is used in its literal sense, meaning simply messengers. With the organized resistance of Judaism removed, the progress of the gospel would be made that much easier.

This section of Matthew 24 closes with the parable of the fig tree and with the exhortation to the apostles to read the signs and know that the end, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, was near.

These truly were signs, things that would precede an actual event and would serve as a warning to the disciples of Christ. But as we have seen, they have been fulfilled and do not apply to the second coming. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Primary Sources

1. *A Brief Exposition of Matthew 24*, Wayne Chappell
2. *God's Prophetic Word*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
3. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
4. *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*
5. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*

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CONVICTION OR CLOSE-MINDEDNESS?

David Holder
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Charlotte, TN 37036

If there is one thing the world needs, and especially the church needs, it is people who have conviction. There is, however, a vast difference between having convictions and being close-minded. Many people claim to have deep convictions about certain things when in reality they are close-minded. The dictionary definition of conviction is, "The state of being convinced or persuaded; a fixed or strong belief" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*). A conviction about a particular matter will lead a person to a continuous search for truth. When the truth is found either the person will change his conviction because he was wrong, or his conviction will be strengthened because it was in harmony with truth. Conversely, a person with a closed mind will not search for truth. His mind is set. He will not entertain the thought that he might be wrong or that there was something he overlooked. This is not conviction—this is close-mindedness.

An example will help to illustrate the distinction between conviction and close-mindedness. There are many people in the religious world who sincerely believe that the use of instrumental music in worship is acceptable to God. If these people have conviction about this matter, they will "prove all things" by the word of God. Their search will lead them to (1) reject instrumental music in worship as unauthorized, or (2) be strengthened in their conviction that this practice is acceptable to God. A person, on the other hand, who is close-minded about instrumental music in worship will not even deal with the fact that he might be wrong. He will not study the matter or attempt to prove his practice by a correct use of scripture. This person will continue to use instrumental music, but he does not have true convictions about it—he has a closed mind.

Members of the Lord's church will be quick to identify the delineation between conviction and close-mindedness in the above example. What is sad is that too many Christians do not identify the problem in their own thinking. These people get something into their minds that they believe is right and good or is wrong and sinful, then they close their minds to the truth. They will never entertain the notion that they might be wrong. What is even worse is that some brethren close their minds in matters of expediency, attempt to bind their judgment on others, and deceive themselves into thinking that they are people of deep convictions. When Stephen made his brilliant defense of the gospel in Acts 7, Luke records that the response of the people was that they "stopped their ears" (7:57). These people did not even want to hear the truth. Their

minds were set and they wanted to hear nothing that might threaten their beliefs. They did not, however, have conviction. They had minds, and as a result ears, that were closed to the truth. Some brethren today have "stopped their ears" to the truth. They say they have conviction, but actually they are only close-minded.

Christians today need to learn the difference between conviction and close-mindedness. A person with conviction will never cease studying to prove himself by the word of God. The close-minded person will not search for truth. Why should he? His mind is already made up as to what he will find. May we always be people of deep convictions. Let us never be people with closed minds.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Bill Fairchild, Jr.
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Deciding to do something is profitless without action. Resolution to do anything is without benefit unless we do it. Someone once wrote that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." There is certainly a great deal of truth to be found in that statement.

Most of us at one time or another have made a determination to perform some act, do some deed, and never get around to doing it. Oh, our intention was to do it, but we did not carry it through. An intention "signifies a course of action that one proposes to follow." It is "a plan of action; a design; an aim that guides action." The word "intention" comes from a Latin word meaning "to stretch out."

We find that in more instances than many of us would care to admit, there have been good intentions, but we just have not "stretched out" far enough to grasp them. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 4 describes the quickening power and the penetrating effects that God's word can produce. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). God knows our every action, thought and word. He knows why we do what we do. This passage acknowledges the existence of intentions and it tells us what we really are as God sees us.

We may have perfectly good intentions of doing some things we know to be right; things we know need to be done. The problem lies in our lack of motivation to carry out those intentions. No doubt, there are several factors which can and often do hinder us from fulfilling these aims, but we should not allow them to come between us and the accomplishing of those intentions.

When a man and a woman enter into the marriage relationship, they intend to make their marriage a

good marriage and one that will last. But with the passing of time, the honeymoon ends and these intentions have a way of fading out. The husband intends to tell his wife today how much he loves her, but somehow forgets. The wife plans on getting her husband just a little something to show her love or to fix him that favorite meal he likes, but other things come up and she just doesn't have the time. In both cases, the intentions were there, and were good. The only problem, they weren't carried out.

Many individuals aware of the truth concerning their lost condition, their need for Jesus Christ and their personal responsibility to obey the gospel, fully intend to do what they know to be right, but in most cases, just never get around to it. They are almost Christians, but not quite. How sad that they must stand before God on the day of judgment, knowing they had opportunity, knowing they could have done what was right; intending one day to do it, but running out of time! Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6:2, "... behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." If you're not a child of God and you know what you must do, what are you waiting for?

There are those within the church, who at one time were faithful to their Savior, but who have, with the passing of time, allowed themselves to become entangled in the world. They know where they are and what they need to do, they intend to come back to the Lord one day because they have said so. Question: If they know—why not come back even now? Some simply run out of time or become so hardened to the truth and so attached to the ways of the world, that truth no longer has any effect upon them. Hebrews 3:12,13 reads, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." There will be many souls who had good intentions of straightening out their lives, but who didn't stretch themselves out enough to fulfill them.

Many Christians, if not most, could be doing a whole lot more in the Lord's work and in many cases have intended to become more active, but they just haven't gotten around to it yet. How many times have we intended to go by and see some weak and erring brother or sister? How many times have we intended to call or go by and visit with one of our number that is

sick, or in a rest home? How many times have we intended to just sit down and talk with a loved one or a friend about their need of Jesus? How many times have we intended after hearing a soul-stirring sermon to act positively and make any needed changes? How many times have we intended to begin studying the word of God more and to become more active in His service? ... But just haven't gotten around to it. I think we all get the message. The question now arises, "What are we going to do about it?"

The reaction of some will be, "I'm going to do better next week"; others will say "I'm going to do better now." Most will actually purpose to do better. All the resolution in the world won't help us if we don't act. Our Lord said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jno. 9:4). We need, right now, to be doing the Lord's will in each of our lives. Let's make our good intentions realities.

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A limited number of reprints, of Volumes 1-4 (Jan., '64 to Feb., '68) of this well-known paper have been bound in hardback binding, complete with scripture and subject indexes, and are now available on a first-come, first-served basis.

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

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NEW CONGREGATION

FORT ERIE, ONTARIO, CANADA — As early as June of this year, a faithful church will begin meeting in Fort Erie, Ontario. This is just over the Peace Bridge from Buffalo, NY, a gateway into Ontario. Brian V. Sullivan, after concluding close to eight years of

work at Bancroft, Ontario will be relocating to work with the brethren at Fort Erie. At present, due to the continued groundwork effort of brethren from Jordan, especially that of Bill Hall and Roy Diestelkamp, there are some 5 Christians there. With the arrival of brother Sullivan that will increase the number to seven. In addition, there will be one other adult and eleven children who will

be assembling together. Others may come as the preparatory work continues. If you are planning a trip to Ontario where fuel cost are less than the U.S. and where your dollar is at a premium, why not plan on dropping in to worship with us. Exact meeting location has not been established at this writing, but if you would write to either Brian Sullivan or Barry Burns, in care of Box 566, Fort Erie, Ontario L2A 9Z9, we will forward the information. A later news release will give notification of the exact times of services and location.

HARRY PERSAUD, 5 Elm Ct. South Orange, NJ 07079 — After four and a half years of work at West End in Louisville, KY, I am moving the first of August to help form a new congregation in the Voxhall, NJ area. This is located about 20 miles from East Orange. Three families will provide the nucleus of this work, two of them coming from the congregation at East Orange where I was in a gospel meeting in May. The church at East Orange is supportive of this work, I have a special interest in the work in this area since I worshipped for four years with the church at Fairlawn, NJ just after obeying the gospel in New York City. At the present I am in need of \$1,200 a month additional support plus about \$1,200 for moving expenses. Those interested in this work may inquire of Paul M. Caldwell, Sr. who preaches at 18 Ridgewood Ave., East Orange, NJ 07017. Phone (201) 743-1778 or 675-3585. Or you may call me at (201) 761-0871.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: I have known Harry Persaud for the last 6 years and have had occasion to observe his work closely. The Expressway church has helped in his support at West End and has much confidence in him and his work. Brother Persaud is Guyanese by nationality and was of the Hindu religion before obeying the gospel. The work in New Jersey is hard but is making much progress. It has been my privilege to conduct a number of meetings in that state over the last 30 years. I know of no man better suited to help the cause in that area than Harry Persaud. It is my prayer that faithful brethren will rally to support this good man in this needy field. CWA)

CHARLES N. RIEBER, JR., Chapel Hill, NC — A new church has been formed in Chapel Hill and they have asked me to preach for them. My plans are to move to NC in early June. At the present time the church is small and will not be able to provide support. I am anticipating that I will need about \$1,200 a month. The church has about ten members. Until recently it has met in a home at 415 Overland Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514. The phone number is (919) 967-5224. It is presently meeting in the meeting room of an apartment complex. Plans are to locate between Chapel Hill and Durham. Duke University is at Durham and the University of North Carolina is at Chapel Hill. This will be the only conservative work in either of these two towns. I am convinced that there is a definite need and that the brethren are willing to work. The fields are "white unto harvest." Can you help me in the work? The following men are acquainted with me and my work: Joe Fitch (713) 846-5936, Roger Hendricks (512) 364-4609, and Harland Huntoon (512) 654-0086.

RICHARD C. SIMS, Rt. 4, Box 37-B, Ruston, LA 71270. In January I began working with the Hwy. 80 church in Ruston. At present the work is going well and I have all of my support. However, one of the churches helping me has asked that I try and find someone or congregation to replace a portion of what they are now providing. They are now sending \$550 monthly toward my support. If another church could take over \$200 or \$300 a month of this amount it would relieve the burden they are under and insure adequate support for me and my family. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in a position to help us. Phone: (318) 255-7024.

ROBERT BOTTORFF, P.O. Box 87 Pirtleville, AZ 85626. In February of 1981 moved to the Douglas AZ area to work with the Westside church. The church here is small with six members and not self-supporting. With a wife and two children I will need \$1,000 a month outside support. I would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in helping in this great work.

MIKE REIDELBACH, Vanduser, MO 63784. At the present time the church here is not self-supporting being able only to contribute \$90 per week toward my support. If you could be of help please contact me at the above address. References are the elders of the MacDill Ave. church in Tampa, FL as well as James Needham who preaches for the Palm River church in Tampa.

BENTON R. GRAVES, Rt. 1, Box 169, Ridgeway, VA 24148. I seldom write a report to the papers but I thought it was time to let

the people know that there is a faithful congregation of God's people in Ridgeway, VA. Ridgeway is just off Hwy. 220 the main route between Roanoke, VA and Greensboro, NC. The church here is one of the older congregations in this area that took a stand against institutionalism. I have labored with this good church for almost twelve years. We are at peace but certainly not dead. We are self-supporting. Attendance averages about 110. We have two or three meetings a year and mail out 2,700 bulletins each month in the community. At present we help support four other men in other areas. If you should be passing through the area please stop and visit with us. Phone (703) 956-3835.

JAMES A. BRUCE, 108 Birdie Hills Rd., St. Peters, MO 63376. It seems that we are getting off to a good start here at St. Peters this year. So far we have had eleven responses. For the first time we are now self-supporting. This year I have had meetings with the faithful brethren at South Haven, MS, and with the fine brethren at Warrenton, MO. During these meetings there were three baptisms. When in the area, come and worship with us at 108 Birdie Hills Rd. in St. Peters. For directions call: 278-2666 or 272-8002.

RAY CORNS, Gibsonburg, OH 43431. I conducted a meeting for the Corning, OH church April 26 — May 3rd. It was a good meeting with many non-Christians present. Bro. Jeffrey Shaner is the part-time preacher. Corning is located in the southeastern edge of Perry County and adjacent to Perry County is Morgan County. Morgan County has two churches that we know were established in 1833 -East Branch and Wolf Creek. East Branch no longer exists but Wolf Creek has some sixty-five members and two elders, Harman Thomas and Donald Sands, Bro. Sands lives in a house that James A. Garfield stayed in while preaching at Wolf Creek.

HARBINGERS FOR SALE

JERRY PARKS, 4437 South Sixth St., Louisville, KY 40214. I am trying to find a buyer for a set of Millennial Harbingers. It is a new set including the index volume. The set is complete and the price is \$300. I can be reached at the above address or phone (502) 368-9173.

PREACHERS NEEDED

DUNEDIN, FL — The brethren in Dunedin, FL are presently seeking a full-time evangelist. Dunedin is a medium sized community generally considered a part of the Tampa — St. Petersburg area. The work is small, but we have a nice building and can accommodate growth. The climate appears to be ready for growth. The brethren are presently providing \$110.00 weekly wages, and additional support would have to be obtained elsewhere. Contact Jack Thomas at (813) 988-1222.

MINERAL SPRINGS, NC — The church here is looking for a full-time preacher. We are located about 10 miles from Monroe, NC on Hwy. 75. We have about 40 in attendance and about 30 members. We are not completely self-supporting and are located in a rural community that has need for much personal work. Contact Michael A. Helms at P.O. Box 263, Mineral Springs, NC 28108. Or phone: (704) 843-3715.

WORK IN ARGENTINA

CARLOS A. CAPELLI, Casilla #83, Jose' C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is autumn here and I give you my greetings! I was in Mendoza in February and March helping Bro. Fernando Venegas in the Lord's work there. We are happy to report that there were 2 baptized there making a total of 6 Christians. At Jose' C. Paz we are happy to report that one precious soul was added to our spiritual family. We continue to do well and have peace and unity. The potential for soul winning in Buenos Aires and the surrounding areas overwhelms me. Argentina is ripe for the gospel. No one knows that better than the preachers working in this great country of 30 million souls. The fields are white, the workers few, but the outlook for the work in Argentina is changing for the better.

INFORMATION ABOUT LYNCHBURG, VA

WILSON ADAMS, 317 Trinkle Ave. N.E., Roanoke, VA 24012. For the past two years a faithful family from Lynchburg has been traveling to Roanoke twice a week to worship with us (a distance of 50 miles one way). Due to rising gasoline costs they can no longer come on Wednesdays. It was thought wise to begin a class in Lynchburg in their home on Thursday evenings and to try and make contact with others in the area with the possibility of starting

a work there later on. Lynchburg has a population of 75,000, is predominately Baptist (Jerry Falwell makes his home there), and is a very morally conservative city. It would seem to me that with the right start a good work could be done there. Do you know of anyone (friends, relatives, associates) who live in the Lynchburg area? Or do you know of a young man who would like to preach and who would be willing to move there and help devote his time to getting a work started? If so, please contact Bro. Larry Powell at 1203 Eastridge Cir., Lynchburg, VA 24502. Or phone (804) 237-3445.

FLORIDA COLLEGE SUMMER COURSES IN KENTUCKY

The Dean's office of Florida College has announced two Bible related courses for which credit will be given.

Danville, Kentucky — Restoration History will be taught by Steve Wolfgang July 20-24 on the campus of Centre College in Danville. The course will consist of 2-3 hours of instruction each morning with afternoons spent in visiting a number of locations in central Kentucky of significance to the Restoration Movement. Steve Wolfgang is eminently qualified in this field. He has completed his coursework for his PhD degree in history from Vanderbilt University and is currently at work on his dissertation, "A Social History of Churches of Christ, 1900-1940."

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Scheme of Redemption will be taught by Homer Hailey on the campus of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green July 27-31. Homer Hailey is well known and loved as a careful student of the Bible. He taught a course in this subject for many years at Florida College where he was Vice-President of the college, teacher and head of the Bible department. Now retired from full-time college work, Hailey resides in Tucson, Arizona, does ex-

tensive gospel meeting work and has just completed a book dealing with the subject of his class at Western. Further information about these courses may be obtained by writing to: Registrar's Office, Florida College, Temple Terrace, FL 33617. Each of these courses may be taken for one semester hour of college credit or as an audit.

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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)

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