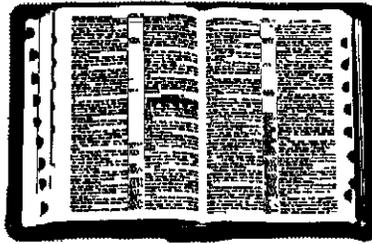


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON
THESE THINGS

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Tampa, Florida 33612



VANGUARD AND TANT'S UNITY PLAN

With this initial article of six, I step out upon the tight-wire of controversial journalism, with only the truth of God to give me balance. At this point in life it is not a delightful chore to challenge the pursuits, goals and methods of a seasoned veteran of religious journalism for over forty years. I have not jumped into this matter hastily, nor without thought. I do so with the prayer that good will result and God will be exalted because His word is honored.

I have read from at least twenty-six editors, staff writers and preachers who have written what they believe ought to be said in regard to Yater Tant's "box-in-the-vestibule" as a means to unity, and his association and endorsement of many phases of the Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida. I did not say much to anyone about my intention and efforts to prepare a response to what brother Tant has written as far back as October, 1981. I spoke to Connie Adams about my plans and he urged me to complete the articles as soon as possible for *Searching The Scriptures*. I began but was dissatisfied with each draft, largely because of additional and differing information that appeared in *Vanguard* and other papers each month. What I knew I had to write was more and more disturbing.

In April I went to Birmingham, Alabama to visit and talk with Brother Tant. We spent one day and a part of another talking about his proposal for a "vestibule box", the Crossroads Church, the problem of unity, and about his Open Letter to Guy N. Woods

and Reuel Lemmons. Our discussion was respectful and brotherly from both of us, but we spoke freely and plainly to the subject. We did not agree when we parted, but I think we understood one another a little better. There is no hostility between us as I write these words.

According to my notes of our meeting, we had discussed the following: the box-in-the-vestibule, the Crossroads Church in Gainesville, Florida, his idea of attaining unity as in his appeal in the Open Letter to Guy N. Woods and Reuel Lemmons, fellowship and when it must be broken between brethren, and how his unity plan compared to the Murch-Witty Unity Plan. We each said what we wanted to say, as far as I understand. I completely disagree with brother Tant in his analysis of the problems and the manner in which he thinks they can be resolved scripturally.

Upon my return from Birmingham I was resolved to write something on these subjects, but I was deliberate to be as true to facts as possible. From many sources came reviews, reports, and further information about Tant's activity, which were new to me since I had talked to him. He also wrote much more about some of the things we discussed. As I continued to rewrite articles to bring them up to date, I decided that it would be impossible to get anything into print and keep updating this material to try to make it as accurate as possible.

My Attitude in These Articles

There is probably no subject more thoroughly pursued by generations of preachers, elders, teachers, writers and editors than the subject of UNITY! I know of no more noble goal, no greater achievement for which one could reach than to endeavor to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Jesus prayed for his disciples "that they all may be one; . . . even as we are one" (John 17:21, 22). "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

The interlock of human intellect and the stubborn will can forge some strange gods that wrest the hearts of multitudes from the solid foundation of truth. When the intermission between spiritual conflicts appears, various white flags go up and the official peace of-

fensive begins. This cycle of history is as ongoing as the seasons, and the often used clichés and slogans signal the compromising schemes by which the forces of truth and error are to "join right hands" and "learn war no more."

I am fully aware that Time, the Penman of History, will not allow one word of this paper to be erased. I shall bear the consequences of what I have written whether I like it or not. With that fact clearly in mind, I have cautiously approached this task with fear and trembling, with the consciousness that I must face God in the judgment, not only with what I have said here, but also with the motive and attitude of heart which prompted every punch of the keys of this typewriter.

I have a strong conviction about the unity of the people of God. It is one thing, however, to DESIRE the oneness of God's people, and quite another to FOLLOW SCRIPTURAL PROCEDURE to attain it. Some schemes have been advanced that create more divisions and problems in the church than can be resolved in a generation. I am sad that this is true. The cry of "Peace, Peace," when there is no peace is not new. I have observed the creeping fungus of false peace for the past twenty-five or thirty years. It is the opiate of the many who want peace at any cost. I do not think there is a single phase of life of a Christian that has not been tarnished by false peace.

Let this be understood: I allow no man to hold a greater desire for peace and unity among brethren in the Lord than do I. I will permit no man to do more than I, within the limits of my ability, to bring about the unity that is taught in the word of God. But I will follow no man into the murky, putrid waters of sectarian unionism, bound by that compromise of truth that produces no better than the unbelief of denominationalism. I stand for unity among all Christians, but *only upon the condition of the New Testament*, As far as I am concerned there is never an exception.

I assure you I do not envision myself a referee of brotherhood problems, I do not consider myself a venerable sage who has all the answers; I am sure I do not know all the questions. I do not speak for any church, paper, school, or segment of brotherhood thinking. I do not expect nor want any glory, power or honor for what is said in this and the following articles. I am simply speaking for myself and pointing out what I believe to be some very dangerous concepts relative to the unity among brethren in the Lord. Furthermore, all I read in papers and books represents only the views of the individual authors. No one can speak for a church or the brotherhood, and he certainly does not speak for me!

The Word of God—The Only Standard

The Bible is complete, an unchangeable book whose author is God. Neither time nor the customs and traditions of men will change one word of it. For those who become unhappy with the word exactly as it is revealed, they will certainly turn to their own law
(Continued on Page 6)

Searching The Scriptures

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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EDITORIAL STEW

This is our annual mixture of unrelated things which we prefer to call "editorial stew." We hope you will find something of interest.

Articles by James R. Cope

We have already carried several items sent by James R. Cope, though we have said nothing about the fact that he has agreed to submit several articles a year for the paper. Brother Cope is not only a preacher of great experience, and an educator, he is, as well, an excellent thinker and writer. He was the first editor of *The Preceptor*. His writings there had a great impact for good. We are pleased to be able to share material from his mature and seasoned background with our readers. We have asked him to submit some articles on things related to the family and he has consented. He has preached on the subject throughout the nation for a number of years. These articles are especially needed in a time when the very foundations of family life are crumbling. We might also mention that brother Cope is available for a little more meeting work now than he has had time for in the past. He would do any congregation good.

Exchange Students and the Church

Several times in the last few years we have been contacted by parents or friends of young people who have decided to enter a student exchange program in some other country. Such opportunities offer a rich educational advantage. The question we are asked concerns the presence of brethren in the country chosen where the student, who is a Christian, may worship during the year of study. Most of the time, the student is going to a place where there is no congregation known to be meeting anywhere near the place of study. We raise this question for you to ponder. Is anything really a good opportunity if it places you in a situation where you cannot assemble with the Lord's people and do with them what God requires of his own? Is it really an advantage at all when spiritual ties will be weakened and spiritual responsibilities ignored? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7).

P.O. Box Change

We have not moved, but our P. O. Box has been changed. In the Post Office at Brooks, Kentucky we have had new boxes installed. In the number sequence

our old box number was a small box, not large enough to hold the volume of mail we receive. So, we are P.O. Box 69 from now on. We have been using that new number for sometime in the paper though nothing specific has been said about it.

About Bobbie

In August it was necessary for my wife, Bobbie, to have a mastectomy to remove a malignancy. She is presently undergoing radiation therapy. She is doing very well and able to carry on many of her normal activities, including her expert help in getting the paper to you each month. We have received cards, letters and phone calls from all over the country and want all who have expressed interest and assured us of their prayers to know how much we appreciate these indications of love and concern.

The Condensed Bible

The Readers Digest has gone too far. For years they have published condensed versions of popular novels. Now that have brought out a condensed version of the Bible. That makes it a perversion and not in reality a version. When God gave the law to Moses to be delivered to Israel, he said "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). The book of God closes with a warning against tampering with what he said. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19). It is the essence of presumption to decide that a part of the word of God may be deleted. The word of God does not need condensation. It needs to be digested all right—ALL of it.

While on the subject, we observe in a few places some of the brethren bringing all sorts of new, modern speech versions, translations or paraphrases. Perhaps more teaching is in order on the difference between a translation and a perversion.

Foreign Preachers In Need of Support

There are three excellent native men in Italy in need of support. One lost \$300 a month recently, another \$400 and another \$650. All of these men are involved in good work which is making great progress in the land of popedom. Each one is preaching on the radio with increasing success and two of them have weekly television programs which are making major breakthroughs. The work in that land has had such an uphill struggle and it is a shame now to see the work curtailed and the efforts of these men stymied at the very time when their patience and faithfulness in work are beginning to bear much fruit.

We continue to hear from preachers whom we personally know and about whose work we have been aware for the past 12 years in the Philippines who have either already lost support or will soon be losing it. I

speak of mature men who have been faithful under trying times and circumstances. They will remain faithful now, but their work is being severely hindered. There are many congregations now on the remote island of Palawan. There are only six fully supported preachers on that island and now three of them are losing their support. Dedicated men on Luzon and Mindanao who have established scores of congregations in the last few years now must divert precious time from the noble work of stabilizing congregations of babes in Christ which they have established to secular work to supply the daily needs of their families. This is a tragedy. Unworthy men should not be supported anywhere in the world. But men who are true to the book, dedicated in personal life, godly in character, and who want to devote their time and energies to the full service of the kingdom, have a right to be supported, the philosophies and sociological opinions of some of the American brethren to the contrary notwithstanding.

Send News Items to Wilson Adams

Although every newsletter report in this paper begins with the name and address of Wilson Adams, who writes this column, some continue to send news items to me. That only delays things. Wilson lives in Maryland while I live in Kentucky. He has a cutoff date for his column to be forwarded to me each month. Anything received after that time has to wait until the next month. We also ask those submitting news items to condense as much as possible. Our space is limited. We do want to share your news with other people. It just helps when you boil it down.

Long Articles

While exceptions need to be made now and then because of the import of some material, we request writers to try and keep your manuscripts within a reasonable length. Three and one half pages double spaced fills one page of type in the paper. Some of our writers have been getting longer and longer with manuscripts. The material is usually excellent but it is not always possible to use long pieces. Please help us in this.

Winter Work

With 23 meetings behind us for 1982, we gladly anticipate three months of class teaching with the Expressway congregation in Louisville. In addition to Sunday appointments in the immediate area, I will present a ten week series on Humanism: Blueprint for Moral and Spiritual Destruction; Congregational Leadership Development; and the book of Revelation. We enjoy these winter studies more each year. Over the last seven years we have seen the interest grow until we had our best attendance of all last winter. The Friday morning class (Revelation) is a two hour study. Who comes? Well, last winter we had 55 to enroll in our Friday morning class on Ezra and Nehemiah. In addition to Expressway members who are free at that time, some come from area congregations, including, last year, 15 preachers. Oh yes, we hope to find some

time to sit by the fire and watch it crackle on cold nights.

Welcome, New Readers

We are receiving a substantial number of new subscriptions each month. We welcome these new readers. We have many friends who have been with us for years, some since the beginning of this paper in 1960. We consider you "family" and thank you for your encouragement over the years.

Religious Supply Center

We continue to enjoy the finest possible relationship with the good folks at Religious Supply Center. We carry paid ads from them in each issue of the paper. Their business helps us stay in business and we are glad to note that their volume of business increases each year. The paper and the book store are two separate businesses. Please do not address paper business to them nor book business to the paper. If you do not have one of their catalogs, they will be glad to send you one. They have an excellent stock of supplies, including class literature, maps, communion supplies, tracts, film strips and projectors, commentaries and books, books, books. Many are now taking advantage of their toll free number for customers outside the state of Kentucky. David Key, Phyllis Key, Mary Catherine (Wimpy) Threlkel and Marie Ricks are always ready to help you.

Books by R. L. Whiteside

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WILL GOD CONTINUE
TO BLESS AMERICA?

Wilson Adams

6434 Auburn Av.
Riverdale, MD 20737



On the evening of July 4th, my family and I sat in a crowd of 400,000 people who, like us, had assembled on the national mall to view the highly acclaimed Independence Day fireworks spectacular. It was impressive. The National Symphony, positioned on the Capitol's west lawn, played such grand patriotic melodies as **America The Beautiful, Stars and Stripes, The Star Spangled Banner, and God Bless America**, while a gala display of colors exploded in rapid succession over the pinnacle of the Washington Monument. I must confess that I felt more than a tinge of national pride. As I viewed the scenes of that evening, scenes which etched a permanent place in my memory, I couldn't help but consider all the great blessings which God has so richly and gratuitously bestowed upon us as a nation. And, as I watched the pageantry of that night reflect itself into the eyes of my little girl, I just had to wonder about her future and I just had to think a little bit about the question—Will God Continue To Bless Us?

Do you realize that we are rich? We in the United States are living the most comfortable lives of any generation in the history of the world. We take for granted possessions which others can only dream about. We throw away more food in one day than some families have in a week. Even our dogs and cats receive better nourishment and medical attention than millions of people in the world. We have been richly gifted and abundantly blessed. And do you know that most of us take it all for granted? We seemingly are in such a constant rush that we can't spare the time to carefully and prayerfully consider God's goodness to us. We have a tendency to forget that God is the provider of all good things and that without His aid we would have nothing.

Preparatory to entrance into the promised land, Moses spake with the congregation of Israel concerning the dangers of affluence and opulence that they would face in Canaan. He warned them of the inclination they might have to forget God as the source of their blessings and he reminded them of the consequences of such forgetfulness and thanklessness (Deut. 8:7-20). We too would do well to take such admonition to heart lest we get so caught up in our own self-sufficiency that we forget our dependence upon God and lose the precious blessings we now enjoy in this our land of promise.

Will God Continue to Bless America?

1. *YES, if we humble ourselves and realize that no nation is indestructible!*

The Proverbial writer affirms that "the Lord will tear down the house of the proud" (15:25), and that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (16:18). While the above principle is true of individuals, it is also true of nations. In Obadiah verses 3-4 we find where the arrogance of Edom was the contributing factor to its destruction. Likewise, in Isa. 13:11; Ezek. 28:2; and 29:2-3 we note that the Old Testament powers of Babylon, Phoenicia and Egypt were brought down due to an over abundance of national self-worth. Even God's own people were removed as a nation because they sought to make alliances with other national powers instead of humbling themselves and expressing dependence upon God.

The Bible teaches, and human history shows it to be correct, that no nation is indestructible. And the thing that makes a nation great is NOT how many atomic bombs it has in its storehouses, or how many I.C.B.M.'s it has in its rapid deployment fleet, or the possession of a balanced budget to stabilize its monetary system, etc. What makes a nation great is when the people of the nation give glory and thanks to God. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

2. *YES, if we return to the moral principles of God!* The

Bible says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Prov. 14:34). If sin disgraces a nation, may I suggest that we are a disgraced and reproached people. Historians inform us that it was internal moral decay which eventually led to the fall of Rome. Perhaps we, like Belshazzar of old, need to see the handwriting on the wall. Things like abortion on demand, pornography, homosexuality, gambling, drunkenness, and promiscuity are reaching epidemic proportions. And is it just I or have you also witnessed the gains that immorality and worldliness are making towards respectability among Christians? Things which used to be considered worldly and evil are now endorsed and defended as good by those making a claim of godliness. As Christians we must constantly fight the tendency of leniency toward the attitudes of the world. We must recognize that the distinctive plea of New Testament discipleship is not only to "speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where it is silent" but to live pure and holy lives before the world. As Paul noted in Ephesians 6, we must wear the breastplate of righteousness next to our girdle of **truth**.

3. *YES, if there is a restoration of the home as God intended!*

The breakdown of the family unit in this country is unbelievable. Thousands live together without the sanctity of marriage and one half of all those married end up in the divorce courts. Edward Gibbons in his book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, gave

as one of the reasons for the fall of Rome the "rapid increase in divorce and the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home." It's no wonder America is in trouble because the home, the very glue that bonds our nation together, is in trouble. And where do we turn to correct the problem? Do we seek solutions by building more day-care facilities where our children are raised by nine to five substitute mothers? Do we turn for help to the humanistic public school system? No, there is only one place to begin the corrective process and that is to start with our own families in our own homes and to start NOW. It's the only hope we have.

4. *YES, if there is a revival of dignity for man as created in the image of God!*

I am sure that you are aware of what Genesis teaches. Folks, either God is, or there is no God! If God is, then man is responsible to God, must abide by God's standard and will be judged by that standard. However, if there is no God, if man is just a product of chance, then the consequences we face are enormous. If there is no God then there can be no absolute moral standard and nothing could be classified as wrong. If there is no God, you are an animal in a chance world, a chaotic world. If there is no God there could be no such thing as love. Do you know why love has meaning? Love has meaning because God is and because God is love and because God made man in His image and gave man the capacity to love and to be loved. But if there is no God, love is reduced to simply a chance arrangement of molecules. And do you know why modern man has concocted this humanistic doctrine called "evolution?" It is because modern man in all of his so-called intelligence, can't imagine that there is any power greater than he. Yes, we must revive respect for man, the offspring of God.

5. *YES, if we realize that the God who created the universe is the God who rules the universe!*

Benjamin Franklin, in his eighty-first year, addressed the Constitutional Convention by saying, "I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: That God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it possible that an empire rise without His aid?" The fate of our country is not determined in the halls of Congress or through Senate legislation or at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington D.C. The fate of this country rests in the hands of God. As long as we realize that, He will continue to bless us. However, when we forget, the Bible teaches, and human history can be called in to testify, that He will withhold His blessings.

6. *YES, if we restore New Testament discipleship! We*

must get the salvation message out of the four walls of the church building and into the hearts and lives of our associates. The early church didn't just meet on Sunday and that was the extent of their religion. They were a dedicated band of disciples who were convicted that Jesus needed to be preached. So they did and so must we!

The United States prides itself on being the strongest nation in the world. We have received the

impression that we are invincible and that we have such a reservoir of military fire power that we are indestructible. Are we? That all depends upon how you measure strength. Is the strength of a nation measured in terms of guns and missiles and armies? No, the strength of a nation is measured by the righteousness that manifests itself in the nation. What can I do, you say? The most loyal, patriotic thing you can do for your country is to be a faithful Christian. And if you do that, and if enough others join you in that, then maybe, just maybe, there will be enough salt, enough leaven, and enough light to preserve this great nation. *God Bless America!* I pray that He will continue to do so!

*A couple of major points are the same as those included in an article by Ken Weliever in the Gospel Guardian, Oct., 1976. I have not seen his article but was informed of it by Ronny Milliner. Credit to whom credit is due.

(Continued From Page 2)

making. The result is separation from those who consider themselves Christians. The question is: How shall UNITY be restored among those who are divided because some held to the word and some left it for their own laws? If we make the word of God our only standard, we must return to it alone for unity. Any other plan will not produce unity!

I have long appreciated those men who have spent years in the labor of preaching the gospel, most of them for little material remuneration for their labors. Many of the uncompromising warriors who bore the battle scars of many conflicts now sleep with their fathers. Some remain whose countenance reflects the deep concern for the compromising problems that a few among them are causing. Young men who have heard and read with interest of these battles for truth of which I speak are chagrined and bewildered at the obvious betrayal of the divine principles of unity among brethren by some whose age and experience ought to give them the knowledge and judgment to oppose every effort at compromise with error.

In the five articles that follow this one I shall try to fairly, honestly and scripturally examine Yater Tant's plan for unity in *Vanguard* and his attitude toward and work with the Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida. I believe he is wrong, gravely wrong, and will do the church of our Lord serious harm now and in the future. If I did not think so I would not write one word about it. This whole affair is a matter of faith with me, not a matter of judgment. That is why I must address myself to these issues now. Please be patient with me. If I am wrong, please show me from the Book and I will repent and turn.

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Insight

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE AND ATONEMENT

The Abundant Life theory, briefly stated, says that when God promised to atone for man he promised to save him from his sins, to cure the physical diseases of his body, and to make financial prosperity a reality in his life. To reach this conclusion, the Pentecostals assume that the "curse of sin" is physical disease, financial distress, as well as spiritual separation.

The Abundant Life theory is the Pentecostal manner of viewing the atonement process. In its early stages the emphasis was on salvation, freedom from sin. By the middle of this century it had taken on an entirely new stress. Instead of showing man what to do to be saved and later to receive the "second blessing" resulting in his "entire sanctification," the Pentecostal preachers began to show the hearers that redemption included not just forgiveness, but the promise of health and wealth as well. "As we go back, to these books—or to the law—we find that the curse, or punishment for breaking God's law is threefold. It is poverty. It is sickness. It is the second death," says one of the popular proponents of the doctrine today. A radio broadcast monitored in December, 1978 from Baton Rouge, Louisiana featured David Nunn, who said, "Your salvation, your healing, your deliverance from financial poverty are all wrapped up in one ball of wax, the atoning death of Christ."² The argument is that since atonement is intended to rid the curse of sin it must have as its function the ridding of poverty, sickness, and the second death.

Atonement is just what the word implies, at-one-ment. "As applied to the redemptive work of Christ, atonement is variously used by theologians in the sense of 'reconciliation' 'expiation' according to the view of its nature."³ The Bible teaches the concept in many places, Matt. 16:21; II Tim. 1:8-10; I Pet. 1:18-19, showing in these verses what it is; and in such passages as II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; I Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:26; Rom. 5:5-8 what it does. It should be carefully noted that atonement is necessary because man becomes separated from God by his sin (Isa. 59:1-2; Ezk. 18:20; Rom. 6:23) and that Christ came into the world to remove that which had estranged men from God. It is not poverty, mind you, that has separated men from God and it is not disease, either. It is sin. Atonement, therefore, is a system for the forgiveness

of sin. Notice that in each of the passages cited there is not one mention of man's poverty, or man's physical disorders. It is sin which is the subject of atonement and Christ came to make possible the forgiveness of sin because it was sin which had caused man to be separated from God.

That the atonement does not insure against health problems is obvious in Scripture. In II Tim. 4:20, Paul says, "Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." In I Tim. 5:23, Paul told Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." And regarding his own "thorn in the flesh," he said "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities . . . "If the atonement included freedom from pain, an insured perennial good health, why these godly men's infirmities (a word which means sickness)?

Likewise, there is ample testimony in Scripture to show that the Bible doctrine of atonement did not promise wealth and prosperity as part of its benefits. In Acts 4:34, we are told, "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles feet and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." In Acts 11:29, following the prediction of a great drought, the narrative says, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea." If the atonement was for financial reasons, why were there poor saints in various places? To the Corinthians Paul says of Jesus, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." But the riches he mentions had nothing at all to do with their being relieved from their financial woes.

One of the passages frequently used by the advocates of the Abundant Life theory is Jno. 10:10-11 which says, "The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The context in which this passage is set shows that the abundant life to which he refers is not physical at all, but eternal life. Later, Jesus (verse 28) makes the point emphatically clear when in the midst of a discussion, using the same figure of the shepherd and the sheep, he says, "But ye do not believe because you are not of my sheep, as I said unto you, My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me: And I give them eternal life . . ." The abundant life he here explains in the very same figure, and with a reference to what he had before said, is eternal life and does not refer to man's physical well-being.

I do not deny that God provides for his own, but I do vehemently deny that the abundant life he provides is one free from disease or devoid of financial distress. The Bible does not teach it.

Another widely used passage among the advocates

of the Abundant Life theory is 1 Tim. 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." The Pentecostal theory puts undue stress on "the life that now is" and gives it a meaning not intended by God. One must not read into it any reference to the provisions for health and wealth. I aver that the promises referred to here concern the godliness which furnishes us here in life whatever is necessary to insure for us those things we need in order to procure the life that is to come (Cf. II Pet. 1:3-4). For instance, God gives the gospel to save (Rom. 1:16-17); the peace of knowing you are right with God (Phil. 4:7); the way of escape from temptation (II Cor. 10:13); the encouragement to help overcome trials (II Cor. 1:7); the avenue of prayer (Heb. 4:16); and the church for our mutual provocation (Heb. 10:24). This sentiment is encapsulated in the Lord's enjoiner in Rev. 2:10. "Be thou faithful (in this life) unto death, and I will give thee a crown of righteousness (the life hereafter)." Besides, look again at the contextual setting of I Tim. 4:8. In verse 9 and 10 he says, "This is a faithful saying and worth of all acceptance. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." Does that sound like he is speaking of the relief of difficulties and the provisions of riches? I think not. He says we labor and suffer reproach, a clear reference to being uncomfortable because of living a life for God.

F. F. Bosworth, one of the early proponents of the Abundant Life theory once said, "Redemption is synonymous with Calvary, therefore we are redeemed from the entire curse, body, soul, and spirit solely through his atonement." But the question is not whether or not we are all to be eventually redeemed, body, soul, and spirit but when it is to occur. In I Cor. 15:42-43, we read, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." Notice that prior to the resurrection the body was in corruption, dishonor, weakness. It is at the resurrection that it becomes incorruptible, glorified, empowered. It is when the body is raised that the ultimate salvation of the body takes place. It is never promised on this side of the resurrection. Further testimony is given in the conclusion of the same context. I Cor. 15:53-56. "For this corruption must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin in the law." When shall be brought to pass the saying? THEN shall it be; at the resurrection. We are redeemed in the body at the same time our eternal reward is realized. Until that time there is no assurance from the Scriptures that we will not be sick, or poor, or both, even though we have been redeemed from sin.

Some final statements are in order to make sure the

case is properly stated:

1. The atonement is that system or process which satisfied divine justice and made possible our reconciliation. In short, it is the death of Christ which in its effect secures for us a peace with God (Rom. 5:1-3). Atonement is the central theme of the Bible, the cardinal doctrine of Christianity (I Tim. 1:15). But the atonement of the Scriptures hardly resembles that being fomented by the proponents of the Abundant Life theory, for it never makes any reference to making provision for any sort of sickness or for the alleviation of any financial distresses which might have occurred or will occur in the future.
2. The abundant life of the Bible is in fact realized only as we, because of our faithfulness during our period of probation, are judged worthy of it in eternity through the grace of God. Paul so affirms in Rom. 6:22, "but now being made free from sin and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The abundant life, even if viewed as it relates to our physical existence, is abundant because we have "all spiritual blessings" because of our connection with Christ. Surely no life could be abundant which is devoid of that connection. But primarily the concept of the abundant life as portrayed in the Scriptures is that of our eternal life.

It needs to be understood that regeneration or salvation is not a miracle at all, but rather the effect of compliance with the stated spiritual truths contained in the word of God. Salvation consists of our trusting in God and obeying the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). That word of God states for us both the ground of our salvation (atonement), and the conditions of it. There is nothing miraculous about forgiveness; it is merely the act in God's mind when, upon man's compliance with His stated conditions, He freely extends forgiveness, remembering man's sins no more. So, the abundant life is finally resolved in the forgiveness of sins and the eternal reward provided for the faithful.

- ¹ REDEEMED, by Kenneth Hagin, Published by Hagin Ministries, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1980, Pg. 19
- ² Radio Broadcast Monitored in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1980. ³ THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Oxford Publishing Co., London, England
- ⁴ CHRIST THE HEALER, by F. F. Bosworth, quoted in MODERN DIVINE HEALING by Waymon D. Miller, published by Miller Publishing Co., Ft. Worth, 1956, Pg. 133.

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BYRON B. CONLEY

BELOVED FLORIDA PREACHER

Born May 30, 1903, Byron B. Conley passed his earthly life July 9, 1982, shortly after entering his eightieth year. By common consent among those who knew him personally and who knew about him, this man probably taught and baptized more people in Florida than any other gospel preacher, living or dead, unless it was W. A. Cameron of St. Petersburg who came to Florida about the turn of this century and died at about age 90, almost 25 years ago. I mention this because I knew both men and was closely associated with Brother Cameron the last few years of his life and drank deeply of his reminiscences of experiences in the Sunshine State many years before I was born.

Byron Conley's Baptist parents were exceedingly religious and morally above reproach. He knew enough Bible to realize that they and close relatives, though sincere, were not following the doctrine taught and practiced by Jesus and His apostles. He could never "get the 'irresistible feeling' " that his family insisted he should have if the Holy Spirit took direct control of his own spirit. Nevertheless, he longed to know the mind of God.

His move to Tampa from Lawrenceville, Illinois, at age 23 in search of employment proved the turning point in young Conley's life. He obtained work at a dairy farm east of Tampa where he met a couple with whom he attended worship at Plant City—Homer Lewis and wife recently moved to the Brandon area.

Tolbert Beshong and wife also contributed much to young Conley's spiritual enlightenment and growth. Though he was giving one dollar out of every ten he earned to promote the gospel inquiring Byron did not obey it for another year. He studied constantly, questioned and learned. Under the protracted meeting preaching of Marshall Keeble in Tampa, Byron Conley became a simple Christian, being baptized December 25, 1927. Shortly thereafter he began making short talks in the Tampa-Plant City area.

Realizing that there was much to learn and much to do for his Lord, Conley felt that intensive schooling was the fastest means to that end, yet resources were limited. Somehow he attended Freed-Hardeman College for one year (1930-31) enrolling in the "Preacher's Course," and benefited greatly from the influence of the great teachers of that school. He often

remarked that both he and the brethren seriously wondered if he would ever succeed as a preacher. He felt keenly that he must make his own place by proving himself. In June 1931, he began work in Lakeland with the Central church. His tenure was about 18 months but he held some very successful meetings at Kathleen, Bradley Junction and two at Auburndale. More than 100 were baptized in the Auburndale effort and a church established in 1932. Other Polk County churches served over the years through Conley's preaching were Winter Haven, Mulberry, two in Bartow, Dundee and Fort Meade, the latter two established as a result of his efforts. In addition, he did much of the physical labor in building meeting houses at the latter two places.

In July, 1931, at Winter Haven, Florida, our brother conducted his first protracted meeting. Though he was not "in the market" for a wife, it was during this meeting the 28-year old Conley met the young lady who was later to become his companion for life and bear him five sons and five daughters. In June, 1934, Mary Lee Matthews wed Byron B. Conley. It is doubtful that there has been a more sympathetic, sacrificing preacher's wife within the last 40 years than Mary Lee Conley. This is not to ignore the hundreds of other faithful, unselfish women who have kept the home fires burning while their husbands sowed kingdom seed but it is to record and pay tribute to the name of one who bore the brunt of the burden in the heat of the day that, as she saw it, her beloved might fulfill his calling. One brother who has known the Conley family for 50 years observed that she "was a patient, longsuffering wife who sacrificed and took care of the family while he was away in the work of the Lord."

Following his Winter Haven meeting Conley was in tent meetings in the general Polk County area for the next four years. In 1935, he conducted a greatly successful meeting for the Nebraska Avenue church in Tampa which inspired Tampa brethren to hold many tent meetings. Nebraska Avenue, Seminole Heights, Howard Avenue and Gary became exceedingly active and used brother Conley repeatedly in such efforts. The old Sulphur Springs church resulted from a tent meeting held in 1935. The preaching continued nightly for nine weeks and resulted in 103 baptisms.

Thomas G. Butler of Lakeland, who knew brother Conley well and heard him many times made this observation about Conley's tent meetings in Central and Northern Florida: "These meetings were numerous. His early method of preaching was filling a blackboard with scriptural references numbering as high as 75 and quoting these scriptures. This method was very successful. He changed his method the latter years of his life and became less effective." Commenting on his strength and power, Brother Butler said, "His general appearance and speech of humility endeared him to most people. The wide use of scripture quoted impressed his hearers. His willingness to do physical labor in helping to build church buildings and

homes of members also brought him favor with the people."

Many and moving were the protracted preachments of this soldier of the cross. In Central, East and North Florida he labored abundantly. Much of this work was made possible by the Riverside church in Jacksonville which began supporting him in 1940. He was regularly in tent work in towns and other communities where the New Testament order was unknown or exceedingly weak. In 1946 he preached at Alma, Georgia. The results were a new church of the Lord in that town, brother Conley's moving his family to Alma, and, laboring with the Alma church, together they built a meeting house.

In 1949 the Conley family moved back to Polk County and built a house at Bartow. The Lake Wire church in Lakeland supported him for many years as he held gospel meetings in that area. During those same years he made numerous trips to Barbados for protracted periods of preaching. He felt that some of his most self-rewarding work was done here because the people were tremendously anxious to learn the truth and worship according to the Biblical plan.

The 1966-1977 period found Conley at Belle Glade for a year; Spring Warrior, near Perry, for three years; back to Fort Meade three years and Center Hill, near Trenton for four years. Failing health resulted in his return to the Main Street church in Bartow where he preached and taught Bible classes until his stroke on May 8, 1982. He was hospitalized for two weeks but, back home, he insisted on worshipping the following Sunday. This continued regularly for a month. He returned for surgery and was recovering nicely when pneumonia took over. His valiant heart gave up its fight and the spirit of this humble soldier left its earthly tabernacle forever in the early hours of July 9. Funeral services were conducted by Ed Britt, Jack Hobby and Thomas G. Butler on July 12 with family members and friends singing some of brother Conley's favorite hymns. An overflowing audience and a large number of floral designs bespoke the love and esteem in which many who knew of his passing held him and his family. Thousands have been blessed by the life of this humble servant of the Lord and many of those will learn of his passing upon reading these lines.

Brother Conley kept no record of meetings held, numbers baptized, miles traveled, cars, tents and tent trailers, attached to his autos, which were worn out by usage in the Lord's service. Nobody knows. Usually, however, when this man arrived in a town to begin a gospel meeting he had all things needful with him—tent, platform, seats, wiring, light bulbs, chalk board and song books. Inside his heart there burned a passion for souls seldom observed in today's world.

Brother Conley held views and some practices which some readers of these lines do not accept, though others accept some of them. Brother Conley believed kneeling to be the only acceptable prayer posture and that women should wear a man-made covering in worship assemblies. Some have thought that he opposed use of human literature comments in Bible

classes. Sister Conley says, "He preferred that teaching be done only from an open Bible, but that he used literature in his study." There are some who say he "gave comfort" to Joe Taylor, a Plant City preacher of more than thirty years ago, who was understood by many preachers and brethren to teach that there was a distinct difference between the church of Christ and the kingdom of Christ. I am one who understood this to have been brother Taylor's views and published an article opposing this position in *The Preceptor* of September, 1952. Upon asking Sister Conley about this allegation regarding brother Conley, she replied, "Byron believed the church and the kingdom were the same, but he also said, 'If one really understood what brother Taylor was teaching on the church and the kingdom he would find that he was not as far off as to some he might seem.'" I never had occasion to hear brother Conley speak publicly or privately on any of these matters.

Two of his longtime friends and greatest admirers—Edwin Britt of Plant City and Jack Hobby of Orlando—have made these observations about brother Conley:

Brother Britt:

"He was the kindest and most humble man I ever met. As he preached the gospel in his own kind way, he had a manner that forced conviction into the hearts of his listeners. He was at home with the hearts of those who heard when he came down from the pulpit into the aisles and there talked as a father to his children. He was never offensive in attitude or word but both were so simple and kind and piercing that you wanted to correct your mistakes. Through his preaching brother Conley brought more people to repentance than any man I have ever known. He, perhaps, has baptized as many people into Christ, helped straighten as many lives, and settled as many differences among brethren as any other person in Florida. When he led in prayer one could not but feel that he was lifted to the very throne and presence of God.

"To me and to others he was what Paul was to Timothy. He loved the truth of God and every lesson had the ring of sincerity and honesty that was unmistakable to all who heard.

"For 32 years, my wife and I knew and loved him and his good wife who made sacrifices for him and the gospel of which many never knew. He held many meetings for us at Cork where I have been preaching since I first heard him in a tent meeting at Plant City. The brethren at Cork, with cheerful hearts, were always willing to respond to his needs and often supported him in "hard places."

"There is an emptiness in my own and my family's life because of his death. We thank God for the opportunities to share so many pleasant hours with him and to learn from him."

Brother Hobby:

"My first memory of brother Conley is in connection with the 1950 Florida College Lecture program. Brother Cope, you did something quite unusual. You asked all preachers present to stand, state their names

and tell where they preached. He and several of his stair-step children sitting beside him arose immediately in front of Ruth and me (I had no idea he was a preacher but well I remember that scene as one of his boys put his arm around his father's waist while the entire row stood beside him). Almost, if not altogether apologetically, brother Conley stated his name and added, 'I guess you might say I preach most anywhere in the sticks of Florida.' When he said that something else unusual happened—brethren applauded! No doubt somebody from those Florida 'sticks' started it but we all joined in. An indelible impression was made upon me by Byron Conley that day. It has never changed but only deepened. Today it is a gorge, a canyon! Humility, dedication to the core, selflessness, godliness, earnestness, sincerity—God first with everything else way back in the pack!

"I am confident that he has planted more churches and made more Christians in Florida than any other person ever has or possibly ever will. Many share this opinion. As you know, he debated the great Baptist debater, Ben M. Bogard. Mr. Bogard would not have debated brother Conley had he not deemed him a powerful and effective force in converting souls to the cause he espoused.

"I have heard him in various meetings, hosted him in two meetings and held four or five meetings where he was the local preacher. That, i.e., those soul-stirring visits, was where my spiritual ship really came in! Let me give you an example.

"It was in the old house known as the Spring Warrior preacher's home. The walls were very thin allowing sound to pass with little interruption. After 'goodnights' had been said each evening I could hear the sound of brother Conley's voice in prayer. I have always imagined him and sister Conley on their knees beside their bed. I did not try to pick up his words but once when their youngest son was in the military in far off Korea and the news was quite upsetting though the international problems supposedly had been settled long since, I heard the tender voice of brother Conley plead, 'Be with our son on foreign soil.'. Do I need tell you that I fell asleep with wet cheeks that night?

"Of all his attributes Brother Conley's humility is the one that repeatedly tops my assessment list. With that quality, however, there was a 100 per cent firm, uncompromising, straight-ahead firmness. To illustrate, I recall the following incident. During a meeting I was holding brother Conley observed that there was a sister that we should visit in an effort to stir her support of the meeting but that she probably would not respond. Nevertheless, duty demanded an honest effort. The woman received us cordially, but momentarily excused herself from the room. As she returned brother Conley observed, obviously for the sister's benefit as well as mine, 'Brother Hobby, years ago sister _____ made a decision to go to heaven when she died but she has changed her mind. And I'm sorry because I need her to help me go.' He was noticeably sincere in every word he said humbly, in

undeniable love for an indifferent soul and, as I felt then, with all the force of a tornado! To myself I thought, 'Cure or kill!' But I was wrong. Neither was the case. Good spiritedly the woman said, 'Yes, I guess that's about right.' A pleasant visit followed but to no avail. She ignored our gospel meeting but held no ill will toward her reprovener. Byron Conley combined humility and hard-hittingness far beyond most persons I've ever known.

"In both private and public teaching, one thing came through loud and clear, viz., that Byron Conley believed and loved the Lord and the word of the Lord which he preached. Whatever his subject and with no recognizable effort on his part, this quality shone through. In every syllable of every word, in every inflection of his voice, this man transmitted how much—how very much—how sincerely and how deeply he believed the Lord and the Word of the Lord which he preached."

As a preacher who began his ministry about seven years after brother Conley began his, I commend to one and all who read these lines the life of this man as worthy of reflection and pursuit in excellence of characteristics. "Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ" was apostle Paul's exhortation. Brother Conley did and would place the same limitation on his own example. For younger preachers especially I would suggest the life of Byron Conley as worthy of careful analysis. "Truly, there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel" (2 Sam. 3:38).

It is my understanding that brother James Yopp, 1 Carolina Ave., Lake City, FL 32055, is writing a detailed biography of brother Conley. I am sure that he would appreciate receiving any bit of information any person might have about Byron Conley regardless of the little value such information may appear to be to its possessor. Often it is the heretofore untold stories which make biographies most meaningful and interesting. I am particularly indebted to Thomas G. Butler, Edwin Britt, Jack Hobby and Mrs. Byron Conley for most of the details of this article.—J. R. C.

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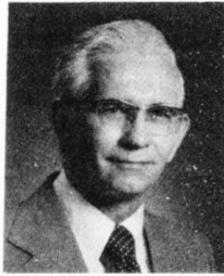
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LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER

Everyone has a different personality. When elders have been appointed you have two or more men not only learning to oversee the flock, but in doing so they must learn to get along with each other. This is absolutely essential.

In an eldership there may be an age span. When the youngest is about 45 years old and the oldest is about 65 or 70, this factor will affect the performance of all of them. These men will be from different generations and all the rest somewhere in between. Thinking will be colored by such a time span as this.

Do not look for perfect men. They cannot be found. Brethren often set a standard higher than the Lord did. The eldership will always be composed of **imperfect men**. Their function will be to oversee and guide a flock of **imperfect people**. Elders are men who, though imperfect, have reached a plateau of spiritual maturity. When combined with the exhibit of their family unit, such men have demonstrated their ability to govern a family with a high degree of success. In an eldership there is a plurality of such men who now must make another adjustment. They must learn to work together as elders in the best interest of the local church. There will be problem areas.

Personality Differences. In a group of elders you will have as many personalities as there are men. One may be a little on the slow side, another blunt and undiplomatic, another somewhat impetuous. Another may have a low flashpoint. One may be a businessman, another a farmer, professional man, factory worker or even a preacher. Varying occupations and background will give a diversity of viewpoints which, properly integrated, can result in wise and sound decisions. Remember that the variety of occupations and backgrounds also exists within the congregation itself. It therefore makes for a balanced structure.

It takes some men longer to reach a decision than others. Some do not know how to hurry. There is no way to get them to hurry. Such efforts would only confuse them and prolong the matter further. Some men have a penchant for fine points. They can drive the others up the wall. Yet this can serve a good purpose in causing the others to be more thorough. Sometimes a man has the unusual ability of seeing the whole picture quickly and makes a decision without too much delay. Others tend to be rash and move too quickly. The plurality of overseers is God's cross-check

at such times.

There will be differences. Since matters of faith have already been determined by the Lord, any differences that arise should surely be in the realm of judgment or opinion. Yet, in any given situation there is the possibility of good judgment or bad judgment being exercised. Personalities can be a strong factor in such matters. An unwillingness to yield in matters of judgment is a poor attitude to say the least and with but a little cultivation can position a man to become a Diotrephes and dominate both the eldership and the church. When tyrannical attitudes come upon the scene, trouble is just around the corner. Elders are not lords (1 Peter 5:3).

Openness Needed. Elders are to function as a unit. They have no right to politic the members or make spot decisions on their own. To do so is to encourage separateness instead of togetherness. When an elder is approached by a member about a church-related matter, he should introduce the matter to the others for consideration. It is natural that members will sometimes consult with one more than another. This is all right just so long as it is understood that it is not a secret and must be presented for consideration to the others. Clandestine efforts of members to have "confidentiality" on matters that are flock-related reflects a party spirit and tends to be divisive. If a matter is important enough to be brought to the elders, they all have a right to know all the details including the name or names of involved members. A member or an elder who is unwilling to do this brings natural suspicion upon themselves as to their motive.

This is not to say that elders cannot counsel and advise members who come to them about personal matters. It is quite proper that this should be the case. In such matters, of a personal nature and not involving the church as such, there can be confidentiality. Indeed, there should be. At times all of the elders may possess **personal information** that the others do not know about. It is a trust to be kept. People will not feel free to come with personal problems if they feel their right to privacy will be disregarded.

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THE "GOOD OLE DAYS"

"Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Eccl. 7:10).

Oh, for the good ole days! Apparently there has always been a tendency to so consider "the former days." I've heard young folks refer nostalgically to the good ole days. One of my children often stated, "I wish it was like it used to be." She was six or seven years of age and looked back on the time when she lived in the country next door to grandparents who bear the responsibility for spoiling her. She had a pony to ride. And she longed for the good ole days.

We often hear the same thing in the church. The former days were better. The church was more militant. "My, how we grew in the 40's and 50's!"

When I lived in Louisville, folks talked about the good ole days before the division at Taylor Blvd. Members were working back in those days. The church was growing back then. Good things were happening back in the good ole days.

Now when I go back some seem to think of the years when I was there with them as good ole days.

I'm not a real good critic of all this. You see, I'm afflicted with the same malady. I catch myself thinking of the good ole days. Back then they built a Ford and a Chevy to last ten years like they should. Music was really music back then. The Bible was read and the pledge of allegiance recited each day in school in those days. And radio had it all over T.V. For one thing, the pictures were better. Yes, in those days, things were a lot better. Tom Mix rode the range. Lash LaRue cracked the whip. Roy, Gene, and Hopalong kept law and order every Saturday at the old Shrine theater. And sometimes you could get in free with a boxtop from Hadacol.

Yet, Solomon advised us to "Say not, what is the cause that the former days were better than these?" So let's raise the question a bit differently and ask: Why do we think the former days were better?

Probably the main reason is that we fail to recall all the circumstances. We remember a few isolated, joyful, incidents, and we forget all the bad parts, as well as all the grumbling we did at the time.

One lesson that stands out in this is that a lot of things don't mean very much to us until we lose them. There are several things like that.

Our Youth

No one appreciates youth except those who have lost it. Isn't it a shame that youth is wasted on the young? Why by the time we really get into a position to appreciate it, it's gone!

Older folks can only shake their heads in dismay when they see young folks with so much potential wasting the precious moments and years, laying no foundation for the future, and paying no heed to older and wiser heads. It's always been that way.

The white head is viewed as old-fogey by youth and older folks have always looked upon youth as frivolous and foolish, expecting of them wisdom which is impossible.

I think of my own former years of youth and I must admit that I don't long for those days. I don't envy teenagers. I wouldn't want to go through those difficult years again. Youth is a time of uncertainty, insecurity, and confusion. Few of us liked ourselves in High School days. The greatest advice to you may be read in this book of Eccl., chapter 12, verses 1-5.

Rather than long for the days of youth, let us be as Paul, "Forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto the things which are before, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We can't turn back. Those who try just make fools of themselves. Let us learn the meaning of the words: "Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation."

Don't spend your years looking wistfully back. "... thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." Use what you have right now.

Our Parents

Both the Old and the New Testaments teach us to honor our father and mother. Most people do not appreciate good parents until they are gone. After losing a parent, we often grieve over things we said or left unsaid. Then we long for the good ole days.

Those whose parents are yet living should realize that they'll not have a second chance to show them honor and respect. Don't wait until they are gone to realize what they mean to you.

But regardless of the memories, it's foolish to live in the past. I'm a parent now, and the laboring oar is in my hand. The best honor I can give to the memory of a good father who is dead and gone is to strive to be a good dad myself. Let us use today and strive to make our families what they ought to be.

Our Brethren

Do we recognize the blessing of Christian friends? Often we do not. We take them for granted. We do not love them as we should. We often fall out with them over trivial differences.

Jesus taught that spiritual relationships are far more wonderful and meaningful than physical ones (Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 10:29, 30). Several such relationships have developed in my life. There have been older couples who have taken my wife and me to their hearts and have been as a father and mother to

us. I think often of brothers and sisters in Christ who mean all the world to me, though the years and miles have wedged us apart.

These are blessings we don't think of until they are gone. Then we speak of the good ole days when we were together with so and so.

It's easy to sit back and dream of close ties of bygone years. But what about today? What am I doing with opportunities for service right now? I have brothers and sisters here now. Am I being a father to others? Am I bearing burdens as I should (Gal. 6:5)? Am I thankful for the fellowship? Or am I more interested in finding fault?

Our Freedoms

In this land there are many blessings and freedoms only dreamed of in much of the world. The freedom to assemble. The freedom to teach publicly and via the printed page. Many of us are concerned about freedoms being chipped away. Such is cause for concern. But what do we do with the freedoms we have?

Some are not as faithful as they ought to be. Relative few are actively proclaiming the good news to others. In a land of Bibles, how do we use such a blessing? Some might as well live where a copy of the Bible is illegal.

If we really love truth, why take it for granted? If we love the Lord, why fail to worship and serve Him?

It is unwise to think of the former days. What about today?

Our Souls

Our greatest possession is our soul. It is the only possession which shall last forever. Yet the vast majority will never appreciate their soul until they have lost it.

Jesus told us of a rich man who died (Luke 16:19-31). His soul did not mean much to him until it was too late. Neither did the souls of others hold any interest until he tragically realized that forever is a long time to be lost.

In Hell, lost souls will long for former days and opportunities they let slip by. But it will be too late. How foolish to put off until tomorrow the salvation of our souls.

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ASK YOUR PREACHER

In our effort to try to rightly divide the word of Truth as Paul instructs that we must do in II Timothy 2 :15, we have noted that after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ, everyone did exactly the same thing becoming Christians (which involved receiving the remission of sins or being saved) as we read from the Acts of the Apostles.

We have already studied the conversion of those on Pentecost (Acts chapter 2). The people heard the first gospel sermon in its entirety (that being the first time the death, burial and resurrection of Christ could be preached), believed what was preached concerning Jesus being made both Lord and Christ and wanted to know what to do regarding their sins (Acts 2:36-37). Having confessed their faith in Christ, they were told to—but before we go any further, **WHY NOT ASK YOUR PREACHER** if he believes these people were saved at this point. For, after all, many in the religious world today teach that when one **hears** the Word, believes the Word, confesses his faith in Christ, he is at **that point saved**. But notice that those who teach such completely **leave out verse 38**. **Ask your preacher** if he thinks those who are desirous of becoming Christians can leave out verse 38? Why according to Peter, the people needed to do those things found in verse 38 **for the remission of sins**. Let's read the passage: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Why were they to **repent and be baptized**? Peter said it was **for the remission of sins**. Oh, some preacher may say, **repentance** is for the remission of sins, but **baptism** is **NOT** for the remission of Sins. Is that what your preacher would say? If so, he is not telling you or others the same thing that Peter and the rest of the apostles told these people. For they placed **both repentance AND baptism BEFORE** remission of sins.

Why not ask your preacher why he doesn't tell people the same thing the apostles told people to do to be saved, **BELIEVE, REPENT, CONFESS AND BE BAPTIZED?**

Please Renew Promptly!

HAROLD F. HOUCHEN: A GREAT MAN
(1895 - 1982)

Robert A. Bolton
10550 Walnut St.
Dallas, TX 75243

Appropriate to the life he lived was the passing, on the Lord's Day, October 3, 1982, of Harold F. Houchen. Born July 6, 1895 in the community of Hess, near Altus, Oklahoma, he lived and died "in the Lord," having been "baptized into Christ" in 1907. While the family lived in Dill City, Oklahoma, Bro. Houchen was a student at Cordell Christian College from 1912 to 1915. On July 16, 1916 he was united in marriage to Laura Theresa Peratt who preceded him in death in 1975, after 58 years together. To this union was born one son, Hoyt H. Houchen, faithful gospel preacher and elder of the Boston Street church in Aurora, Colorado. Bro. Houchen served as a deacon in the congregation in Dill City from 1919 to 1922 when the family moved to Calexico, California. In May, 1923, the Houchens moved to Ontario, California where he resided until his death. He served as a deacon in the Ontario church from 1926 to 1931, and as an elder from 1931 until the death of his beloved wife in February, 1975. Employed by the city of Ontario in 1942, he served as Superintendent of Parks from 1960 to 1965, when he retired. In addition to his son, Hoyt, he is survived by three grandsons: Ron of Ft. Worth, Texas, Dennis of Aurora, Colorado, and Larry of Orange, California; eight great-grandchildren; and a host of loving brethren and friends. Memorial services were conducted in Ontario, California on Friday, October 8, 1982, after which his body was laid to rest beside that of his beloved Laura, in the Bellevue Cemetery, to await the resurrection. At the memorial service, Ford Carpenter of Montclair, California, a friend of the family for 42 years, spoke of the good influence of Harold Houchen, and I set forth reasons for his greatness which had been impressed upon me through 32 years of acquaintance and association with him.

Harold Houchen was a great man, not because of wealth, or fame, or political power, or popularity, but because he was a Christian. He was not only a "great Christian," but he was "great because he was a Christian." As a godly elder of the Ontario church for over 44 years, he left a rich heritage of example, worthy of the emulation of any man who may desire the office. He was a loving husband and a beloved son-in-law, a dutiful and caring father, and such a worthy example to his family that the name "Houchen" is destined to proudly survive ages to come.

As a faithful and responsible employee of the city of Ontario, he left the citizens a heritage of honesty,

integrity, industry, beauty and happiness. He was a great man because of the life that he lived before his neighbors and friends, many of whom he led to "the Lamb of God," and all of whom will cherish, in fond remembrance, his exemplary life.

He was a friend of so many gospel preachers, loving the Word of God and those who faithfully proclaimed it, always ready to encourage them by his presence, his prayers, and his support. Yet, he was just as forthright in his opposition to religious error and those who espoused it.

He was my special friend, a man that I could count on, confide in, and learn from. For nine years, as I preached the gospel in Ontario, he and I walked, talked, worshipped, prayed, studied, worked, played, laughed and cried, together. He was such an inspiration and encouragement to me for so long, in so many ways, that happy are the memories I shall always retain of this great man, my friend.

Harold Houchen loved God, the Lord, the Bible, the church purchased by the blood of Christ, the Ontario congregation especially, his brethren individually and collectively, faithful gospel preachers, his family, his neighbors, his city, his country, his fellowman, his life, and indeed, he loved life itself. He gave so much, for so long, to so many. He gave his life, himself, his all, in service to others as he served the Lord. We take comfort in our pleasant memories of such a beautiful life, in how fortunate we are to have known and loved him, and in our faith and his faith in the Word of God.

I believe that in the sight of both God and men, he was truly a great man, who "being dead yet speaketh." I shall miss him very much, even as shall his family and friends, but paraphrasing the words of a song sung by the congregation at his memorial service, because of him we "Count Our Many Blessings," and look forward to a glad reunion, in that great day, with Harold F. Houchen, a great man.

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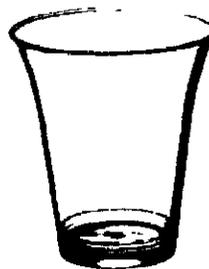
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For a number of centuries, the church of Rome has been gradually developing the worship (cultus) of Mary, the mother of Jesus. By the year 1913, the first use of the word "**Corede[m]p[tr]ix**" was used in a papal encyclical, **Sunt Quos Amo**, wherein the faithful Roman Catholics were instructed to include the name of Mary with that of her Son in their prayers.

In 1891, pope Leo XIII referred to Mary as a "Mediatrix", that is, a female mediator, even though Holy Scripture stipulates "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Perhaps the earliest effort toward elevating Mary to a position of deity, occurred in the early centuries when the Douay-Rheims Version of Genesis 3:15, read: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." (Underscoring mine. L.W.M.) This use of the feminine pronouns, was first introduced by Jerome's Latin Vulgate in the late 4th century. There is NO textual basis whatsoever, for inserting the female pronouns in Gen. 3:15, yet this is exactly what Rome has tried to palm off on the World.

The Masoretic Text of Gen. 3:15, according to the Jewish Publication Society of America, reads "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; they shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise their heel." Notice that the Jews tend to minimize this as being a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Christ, by removing the masculine pronouns, and rendering it is neuter, plural, i.e. they, their.

Bagster's English Translation of the Septuagint Version, reads: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, he shall watch against thy head, and thou shalt watch against his heel." Notice that this is singular and

masculine, i.e., **he, his**.

Kittel's **Biblia Hebraica**, gives no textual variant that would allow the change from "he" to "she" or "his" to "her". Also, from the standpoint of the context, it was a promise to Eve, that her masculine seed (Christ) would conquer and overcome Satan. The first man, by which sin came into the race of man, was Adam, while the "last Adam" was Christ, who brought salvation and eternal life to the race of man.

Let us check several other translations of the passage under study:

King James II Version

". . . . He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

New American Standard

". . . . He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

Ferrar Fenton Translation

". . . . He shall wound your head, and you shall wound His heel."

New American Bible (Catholic)

". . . . He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel." Note: This modern Catholic Version departs from the erroneous Douay-Rheims rendering.

Revised Standard Version

". . . . He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

American Standard Version

". . . . He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Conclusion

The Catholic Council known as Vatican II, embraced all the erroneous terms and expressions that tend to raise Mary to position of Deity. For evidence of this Catholic duplicity, I suggest that you read, "Documents of Vatican II", Edited by Walter Abbott, and published by Geoffrey Chapman, in London, 1967.

WHEN YOU MOVE—Please allow two months for change of address notices. We have a cut-off date for changes each month. *Thanks for your help.*

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

Send all News Items to: Wilson Adams, 6334 Auburn Ace., Riverdale, MD 20737

FIELD REPORTS

ALAN BAILEY, 301 Huntington St., Huntington Beach, CA 92648. My family and I have, after much prayer, decided to move to work with the sound church in St. Joseph, Missouri. This congregation has been searching for a preacher for some time. They

are willing and ready to go to work and are in a situation which promises to be fruitful. The institutional church in St. Joseph has been practically taken over by a very liberal preacher that leans toward Pentecostalism. Because of this, several have withdrawn themselves from that congregation and have placed their mem-

bership with the sound church Perhaps you can see the need for some good sound teaching there At this time the church will only be able to provide me with \$800 per month I will be needing an extra \$1,200 of outside support I ask that you give this some very serious consideration Please feel free to contact the elders where I am presently preaching Ron Stewart at (714) 847 6796, or George Wright at (714) 848-0473 Also feel free to contact Ron Goforth in St Joseph at (816) 279-7552

GARRETH L. CLAIR, 729 E. Harmony Ave , Mesa, AZ 85204 The Southeast church had its beginning January 8th, 1978 at 711 Santa Ana in Mesa, Arizona From the time the congregation began we have been renting quarters in four different locations Now we are meeting in our own facility located at 312 N. Keith in Mesa We have purchased three lots with an adequate structure on the property for the congregation at the present We encourage all who are visiting or who plan to move to the greater Phoenix area to visit us You will always be welcome Also please note my new mailing address as given above Phone (602) 834-7483 Our meeting work this year has seen eight baptisms and one restored to faithfulness

JAMES L FINNEY, 1935 Pima Dr , Colorado Springs CO 80915 We left here for meetings in the south and east, July 25th The first was with the Central church in Charlotte, Tennessee Bro David Holder preaches for them and the average attendance was about 85 Next we went to Fair Lawn, New Jersey and preached there on Sunday, August 8th We had worked with them for over 22 years until moving to Colorado in February of 1981 On Wednesday evening we began in Brooklyn, New York and preached through Sunday (August 11 15) Bro. Sam Turrentine works with this congregation which started about three years ago The average attendance in this meeting was about 21 They are showing growth and may have a chance to purchase the building in which they presently meet From here we went to Vauxhall, New Jersey (August 15-18) to help in a new work where Bro Harry Persaud is now preaching They had three baptisms recently This work was started about three years ago The attendance averaged about 29 here The last meeting was in Cherry Hill, New Jersey (August 19-22) The attendance averaged about 22. Bro. Jon Drobner is preaching here and this is a new work. This looks promising along with the rest of these in the general New York area. It was good to see brethren again with whom we had labored so long.

J. C. MOORE, Rt 1, Box 126, Hermansville, MS 39086. This is to inform the readers of STS that the church no longer meets in Port Gibson, Mississippi. We are now driving to Vicksburg, a distance of 30 miles, to help with a new work. We meet at 3040 Halls Ferry Rd in Vicksburg. We have just bought and converted a residence into a meeting place. Bro Ed Brand is the preacher.

J. T. SMITH, 14250 N. Miami Ave , Miami, FL 33168 Many of you will recall the material I had in STS on the subject of Premillennialism Since it appeared in the paper, I have had it printed (just as it appeared, including the charts) into a 24 page booklet It may be ordered from Religious Supply for \$25 per hundred I believe it is material that can be understood and used by all

WORK IN ARGENTINA

CARLOS CAPELLI, Casilla 83—1665 Jose C Paz, Bs As, Argentina The word is preached and souls are saved in Boulogne¹ Another three precious souls were added to the body of Christ in this city All of them were members of the Pentecostal church, a false church begun in 1890 in the U. S., but now they are Christians This makes five Christians in Boulogne They have rented a small room and have begun to assemble However these brethren are very poor and are in need of chairs, Bibles, song books, tracts, etc Can you help? I have recently lost \$250 per month support and am in need of making this up as soon as possible Please let me hear from you Thank you for your fellowship, love, and confidence in us

FERNANDO VENEGAS, Casilla 3/8 122 C C , 5500 Mendoza, Argentina Recently I was in three meetings in the following places Quilota, Chile (August 2 8), Santiago, Chile (August 11 15), and Quilpue, Chile (August 13 15) I considered all the meetings a

success with many non-Christians in attendance At Quilota we set an attendance record with 65 present each night However, much more important was the conversion of nine precious souls to the Lord Please pray for us as we labor here in South America

NEW CONGREGATION

BRANDON, FL—Due to the tremendous growth in the Brandon area, which is 12 miles east of Tampa, and with the blessings of the Brandon elders, a new congregation began meeting on the first Sunday in March, 1981 The church is identified as the East Brandon church of Christ and is meeting in the Bloomingdale Civic Center, at the corner of Lithia-Pinecrest and Bloomingdale in Brandon

During the past eighteen months the newly formed church has made great strides The first gospel meeting was held by Ken Weliever from Palmetto, Florida. Many non-Christians attended the meeting in which there were crowds over 100 More recently another meeting was conducted with Charles Goodall A few months ago 2 1/2 acres of land was purchased as a possible site for a meeting place At this writing construction of the building is half completed The new building should be ready for services by the first of December The new location will be at the intersection of Miller and Ray Road which is south of Route 60 We have one need in which brethren might be able to assist, and that is church pews which are in good condition If any church has some pews that they need to dispose of, please contact Roy Weliever, at (813) 689-5112, or S. D. Hunt at 689-1157 The future looks bright for this congregation Attendance has grown from 55 to 85 during the past few months Charles Brackett is preaching part time for us Our services are as follows Sunday Bible Study, 9 30 a. m. Worship 10 30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Please worship with us when in the Tampa Bay area

DEBATE

STEVE DIAZ, Rt. 1, Box 1210, Leesburg, FL 32748. There is a debate scheduled for January 10 and 11, 1983 at the Fine Arts auditorium of Lake-Sumter Community College in Leesburg, Florida I will be debating Marlin Kilpatrick on the question of whether or not it is scriptural for churches to support orphan homes (such as the one at Mt Dora) Because of the closeness to the Mt Dora orphan home (20 miles away) and the number of institutional churches in the area, we anticipate a good opportunity to teach the truth on this subject For further information, write the Michigan Ave., church of Christ at P. O. Box 2207, Leesburg, FL 32748. Or phone (904) 728-0715

PREACHER NEEDED

PARIS, KY—The Main St church of Christ in Pans, Kentucky is just slightly over six years old. We are looking for a full time evangelist as of January 1. Partial support can be provided, but some outside support will have to be raised. For further information, contact Don Bishop at (606) 987-1273, or James Sizemore at 234-9432.

PREACHERS AVAILABLE

PHILLIP BROWN, 3775 Parthema Ave , Louisville, KY 40215 I am 30 years old, married but with no children. I have been preaching part time for the past few years and am now working with Gene Frost and the Birchwood Ave church in Louisville. I desire to devote my life to preaching the gospel. Please give me a call at (502) 361-3038

FRANK INGRAM, 5511 Bruns Dr., Louisville, KY 40216 After five years of a most enjoyable work and relationship with both the elders and the congregation at Gardiner Lane in Louisville I am in search of another work If interested, you may write me at the above address or call (502) 448 9458 You may also reach one of the elders Bob Harbison by calling 969 3869 in the evening

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	362
RESTORATIONS	103

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)