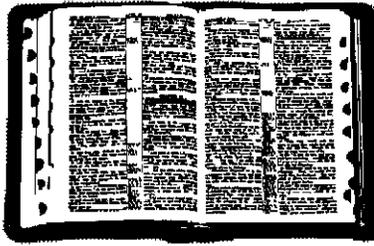


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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 these things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

VOLUME XXIV

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NUMBER 1

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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YATER TANT'S BOX IN THE VESTIBULE

I have profitably read from the pen of Fanning Yater Tant since the middle 1930's. Some articles authored by him over the past twenty five years reflect much of his present thinking, especially with reference to his "box-in-the-vestibule" plan as a means to amalgamate what he now designates for contrast the "pro-institutional" and the "anti-institutional" churches into one body of people, working and worshipping together. He assures us that neither would have to give up anything that violates conscience or conviction.

A Unity Plan In His Open Letter

Tant made a very urgent appeal to Woods and Lemmons in his Open Letter for the three of them to "make a determined effort to 'narrow the gap' that has developed among the Lord's people during these last thirty or forty years."

He searches for a way that brethren (pro and anti institutional) can **"work together in the same congregation**, loving one another as brethren, giving full and enthusiastic support to every 'good work' which any of them desire to help?

"In other words, can brethren love and fellowship one another in the same congregation when some of them are ardent, enthusiastic supporters of orphan homes and Christian Colleges, and others are adamant in their opposition to church support of such institutions."

Tant says, "I THINK SUCH IS POSSIBLE!"

But of his vestibule box a quarter of a century ago,

he explains that "The time was not ripe for such. Controversy was too sharp, feelings were too intense, and 'compromise' was an obscene and malodorous word!" Brother Tant says he hopes we have softened in attitudes to the point that we will accept a solution; preferably his "box" somewhere in the vestibule.

Brother Tant is very persistent in promoting his "box-in-the-vestibule" plan as a vehicle to bring the "anti" and "pro" institutional brethren together into one body to worship and work as one congregation. This plan by which to achieve unity is almost an obsession with him.

Box-In-The-Vestibule: A Catholic "Poor Box"

"YES! That is precisely what I am suggesting." Tant offers what he proposed twenty five years ago: the adoption of the familiar Catholic "Poor Box" which is found in every Catholic Church vestibule. He says everybody knows that all contributions made through this box are "for the poor," and "are NOT used to erect buildings, pay salaries of priests, defray utility costs, etc." Contributions for anything can go into it.

Look at the Catholic "Poor Box" for a moment. If all of us KNOW that the money put into the box is for the POOR, and is NOT used to support the Catholic Church at all, why cannot we use it and save the cost and trouble of putting one in our own vestibule? Certainly, no one would say that it is wrong to help the poor as individuals any time and anywhere. This entire arrangement is based upon the idea that if we can get brethren to do this work as INDIVIDUALS and not as the CHURCH, we would have no problem. Why, then, would it be wrong to contribute to the "Poor Box" in the vestibule of the Catholic Church?

Would brother Tant approve and support INDIVIDUAL contributions to "any other project which he, as a Christian deems worthy of support," if this were done in a "box" in a Catholic Church vestibule? If not, why not? Is it because it is not in a "Church of Christ" building? But if an individual may contribute to the "box" in the vestibule of a Catholic Church building, would he not be supporting some activities that are Catholic sponsored and controlled?

I think I know what brother Tant meant by the

"familiar Catholic 'Poor Box' in his Open Letter, but the comparison of his vestibule box to the Catholic "Poor Box" is more than just a name; it is a denominational union plan that is as workable in bringing about unity as our helping the poor through the Catholic "Poor Box."

The Origin Of The Box-In-The-Vestibule

The first indication I can find that such an idea as a box-in-the-vestibule was to be used as a unity instrument was in the editorial of the Gospel Guardian of May 31, 1956, page 76. Brother Tant offered "A PROPOSED SOLUTION" to "The Present Situation," which he described as a divided sentiment and differing convictions as to the scripturalness of orphan homes and the church support of such. "These brethren cannot conscientiously endorse, countenance, or condone church contribution to homes for the orphaned and the aged such as are now in operation among us." He said that in scores of congregations a majority of the elders had authorized monthly contributions to orphan homes, "knowing that there are people within the congregation whose conscience will be violated by their participation in such a contribution!"

Tant writes, "We want to offer one constructive suggestion which we believe will go a long way toward relieving tensions and working toward a scriptural solution of some of the difficulties now before us."

Now for his "very simple and obvious solution to this problem:"

Let those who feel they must contribute to an orphan home, do so directly to the home, and let NO contributions be made from the church treasury.

Use the church treasury for ONLY that which all accept as scriptural. Those who want to support orphan homes directly, do so without criticism "while the entire question is studied in the light of God's word."

In this editorial Yater Tant did not say one word about a box in the vestibule, but his principle was laid as a foundation for the expression to be used the following week in his editorial.

In his editorial of June 7, 1956 brother Tant wrote under the heading: "THEY ARE DOING IT ALREADY." He pointed to his previous editorial and said he had learned one week that a number of congregations had been following the course he had laid out the week before. He had learned, first: "Some churches are taking up a 'special contribution' on one Sunday each month after their regular contribution had been taken. Second: "Other congregations have placed a box in the vestibule, clearly marked and labeled as 'Contributions To The Orphan Home,' and all who desire to do so may drop their contributions in this box. All the money in the box goes to the orphan home selected, and none of the money from the regular treasury goes."

As far as I can determine, this is the first time the expression, "box in the vestibule," is used in reference to any idea closely resembling its present use. He also

Searching The Scriptures

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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SOWING THE WIND

Neither the voice of Amos nor Hosea could deter the kingdom of Israel from its idolatrous rush to ruin. God said "but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. For they are gone up to Assyria. ..." (Hosea 8:6-9). They sowed the wind when they turned away from the Lord and his way and bowed before the inventions of their own hands patterned after the nations around them. The whirlwind broke upon them in the form of the cruel and cunning warriors of the mighty Assyrian Empire which crushed the nation, brutalizing the people, and carried captive the remainder to scatter them among the Gentiles.

They were not the last to set up idols in their hearts and to live to see the whirlwind of destruction to follow. The heirs of the Abrahamic promises today need to learn the lessons of history as seen in the fate of the nation of Israel. Those who nobly forsook human organizations and dogmas to ask for the old paths and walk therein ultimately came face to face with new image builders who constructed their own human organizations to supplant the church of the living God and bound their own dogmas upon the consciences of many who set out to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent. The tragic whirlwind of division and discord of the last half of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth was the result of such sowing the wind. The ultra-liberal Disciples of Christ are the fruit of such sowing.

A Continuing Malady

The last thirty years have seen heartbreaking divisions among those who built upon the ruins of previous digressions. The simplicity of the ancient order is too dry for the taste of some. The cry for a multiplying of auxiliary organizations to do the work of the church and all laying claim to the treasury of the churches was heard throughout the land. Their cry was answered by other voices who shouted "Where is the scripture?" Journalistic heat intensified, debates followed, separations came and a once unified people found themselves headed in different directions. Those who contended for human organizations as adjuncts to

the church and for the centralizing of power and influence in the hands of the elders of a few large sponsoring churches, find themselves today with greater problems than they know how to handle. How did it happen? How was the wind sown?

1. Brethren were sowing the wind when **they argued from tradition and not truth.** "We have always done it this way" we were told. "Why, as far back as I can remember we did this." But the same thing can be argued by some for infant baptism. It has now been practiced so long that it would be truthful for people to say "we have done that as long as I can remember." The same can be argued for instrumental music. Those now in the Christian Church can say that. While I believe in respecting the ability, study and accomplishments of those in previous generations, the only tradition we should venerate is that established by Holy Spirit guided apostles. If a thing has been done for one thousand years, it is useless unless the New Testament authorizes it. The children of those who are today worshipping with congregations that have built gymnasiums will be able to say later on, "Why as far back as I can remember, we had a gym and our teams played in the church league."

2. Brethren sowed the wind when **they started revering men above truth.** Let none of us scorn scholarship. But let all of us understand that scholars are yet men with blind spots, prejudices and weaknesses. Thirty years ago I heard people say things such as "Old brother So and So baptized me and I have followed his writings for years. He has always been a safe teacher. If he thinks it is right for churches to contribute money to Orphan Homes then that is good enough for me." With Paul and Apollos we need to learn "not to think of men above that which is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). Again, the final issue is "What saith the scriptures?"

3. Brethren sowed the wind when **they argued from emotion and not reason.** An effort was made to pitch the battle over sponsoring churches on the plain of who loved lost souls the most. That never was the issue. The Orphan Home controversy was decided in the hearts of many by teardrops and not by scripture. The tactic to paint those who opposed church support of human organizations as "orphan haters" was effective with many. Those who attended debates heard about "poor little orphans struck down by cars in front of 'anti buildings' whose heartless members would not even call for help." We saw charts about grass seed for the property lawn but not a cent to a starving orphan. I believe I can get more tears out of an audience by depicting the tragedy of institutionalized children than the opposition can. I believe I can work up as much animosity toward those who would so afflict children as the opposition can against those who oppose church funded private organizations. But whether I can do that or not, when the last tear has been shed and the last case of hate has burned out, the question will still have to be settled by the word of God.

4. Brethren sowed the wind when **they argued that the end justifies the means.** "Look how many have

been baptized." "Look how many needy have been cared for." "I like the way we are doing it better than the way you are not doing it." If such approaches do not argue that the end justifies the means, then what is the purpose behind them? It is noble for a man to feed his hungry family but it is wrong for him to steal in order to do that. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). J. B. Briney worked that argument for all it was worth in his debate in 1908 in Louisville with W. W. Otey on missionary societies. Paul said he was falsely accused when charged with saying "let us do evil that good may come."

5. Brethren sowed the wind when **they argued that there is no pattern.** A. C. Pullias, former President of David Lipscomb College, and now a member of the Presbyterian Church, wrote a tract entitled "Where There Is No Pattern." Others expressed this sentiment when they said "We do many things for which we do not have authority." Or, "Where is the passage for the song book, or the meeting house?" The problem here was a failure to understand the kinds of authority in the scriptures and how divine sanction is expressed. But once brethren bought the notion that we don't need Bible authority, the whirlwind was bound to come. If there is no pattern, then there can be no violation of it and every man may do that which is right in his own eyes. This wind has grown into the mighty whirlwind that has brought with it youth choirs, touring song groups, gymnasiums, acrobatic demonstrations in places of worship, bus ministries built around "reward motivation" (complete with pies in the faces of losing teams), church sponsored Halloween parties, greased pig chases, and you name it. When the largest Church of Christ (capital C in tended) in the world has a full sized gymnasium and exercise room with the finest equipment and the second largest one now has one and sponsors (as it did a few years ago) a youth event entitled "My Frog Jumps Higher Than Your Frog", then sensible people need to take cover—it is whirlwind time!

6. Brethren sowed the wind when **they argued that the church must minister to the whole man.** This is the basis of the social gospel. One such devotee in the northeast a few years ago said "It is just as much the mission of the church to unstop toilets as it is to preach the gospel." It is this "whole man" concept that has brought the flood of furniture renovation shops, unwed mothers homes, exercise clubs, GAF clubs (that's God's Answer To Fat clubs, for the uninitiated), youth survival retreats, Cows for Korea and an endless array of projects and activities all gushing from the same fountain.

But there is a balm in Gilead. There is a way that is right and cannot be wrong. It is the way that the word of God authorizes. Does God approve it either in general or specific terms? Is there is a divine precept or command, an approved apostolic example, or a necessary inference from the scripture? Then if so, a practice is right and cannot be wrong. To act without authority is to put man in God's place and to reap the

whirlwind of digression which must inevitably follow. My brethren of today, be careful what you sow.

THOMAS HUGHES

With much sadness we report the death of a dear friend and former writer for this paper. Thomas Hughes was born in Wales, Great Britain, lived most of his life in Berea (Cleveland), Ohio and spent his last eight years in Louisville, Kentucky where he was a member of the Expressway church. He was 60. He battled cancer for several years.

Tom Hughes was unique. Blessed with a keen, analytical mind, he achieved great success in the field of Graphic Arts, serving as President of the Graphic Arts Association until a year ago. He edited one trade paper and contributed numerous articles to others. He authored several books on cost analysis and was a consultant to the printing industry. His services were widely sought throughout the USA and abroad. But he was also an able Bible student and became one of the best teachers this writer has heard. He conducted a number of weekend meetings on teacher training. For a number of years he served as an elder of the church in Berea, Ohio and was a tower of strength when institutionalism invaded that area.

His column "Able To Teach Others Also" which appeared in this paper was read with appreciation by our readers.

Funeral services were conducted in Louisville, Kentucky on December 13 by Paul Woodward and Harold Byers (two of the Expressway elders) and by Jerry Parks and the editor. A large crowd of people who loved him much was present. Our hearts go out to his wife, Bobby and their six children.

Brethren, a generation of noble people is passing from the scene leaving great responsibilities in the hands of younger people. We trust that the younger will not forget the debt owed to those who have gone before. We expect to greet Tom Hughes on the other shore.

—Editor

WAYSIDE
GLEANINGS

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 Temple Terrace, FL 33617



WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR FAMILIES?

The home or family is humanity's oldest social institution and it is God's first nursery, the ultimate foundation for orderly society. If God's will is followed by its principal, it will promote the happiness of mankind.

Design of the Family

One of the unique functions of the family is the honorable procreation of the human species. Marriage according to God's laws stands behind every un-stigmatized birth. Illegitimacy is both sinful and shameful as regards parentage and frequently embarrasses the offspring who is the innocent result of ungoverned progenitors' passion. Such disregard for God's will brings only sorrow to parents and child.

A second function of the family is the introduction of the child to general society. In the Western World this process usually involves 18 to 20 years.

A third function of the family is the fundamental education of the child. This involves training within the family itself and more formal training through state and/or church or other private institutional media. This training necessarily involves various aspects of the child's development—mental, physical, social and moral or religious.

Obviously, from the Biblical viewpoint, since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." and the basic family unit being the husband-wife relationship, each partner in marriage should always seek to know and practice God's will toward each other. This principle is no less true in the parent-child relationship and includes every facet of every relationship of man if he is to find the success and joy which his creator desires for him.

"As goes the home, so goes the nation" is an old adage. This does not refer to the mental, academic, social, and physical aspects of family life but to its morality. Here is the primary point of our immediate study.

Modern Challenges To Modern Family Life

1. Modern man is not unique from his predecessors because he has access to much of the knowledge of the immediately preceding and prior generations but, because this generation has access to whatever knowledge its ancestry only dreamed of having, it is

unique. To illustrate this point, let us suppose that one holds two vessels of equal size in each hand. Into one vessel there is poured all the recorded information to which all mankind had access from the beginning of time up to just ten years ago. Into the second container is poured all recorded information of the past decade. We are told by computer people that there would be as much or even more information about more people and things in the second than in the first vessel. Each succeeding generation has always inherited much from its combined predecessors but none has gained proportionately as much as rapidly as the one now living.

2. Regarding the obtaining of this information there are now more and better media at our fingertips than ever before. The printing press, telephone, telegraph, radio and television have brought all parts of the world into immediate knowledge contact with each other. Modern man does not wait months to learn about events on Earth's other side. Ours is the first generation in which one may sit in his own house and see a realistic blood-and-gut war fought on the other side of the world. TV has made this possible.

3. More and better transportation facilities makes rapid amalgamation of mankind possible. Ox carts and covered wagons are seen only in historical movies. Railroad trains, "eighteen wheelers" and automobiles replaced these long ago. Rapidly moving ocean liners and the airplane have brought races and cultures once known to each other largely through the pens of a few adventures and explorers into a face-to-face reality. Not one of these man-made facilities has any moral implications per se yet practically every American family and many "other world" families are affected by what is conveyed to the human mind and way of life by these creations.

There are awesome effects that these technological changes—particularly radio, television, and the printing press—have had on the moral life and conduct standards of millions. Instantaneously radio and TV bring the outside and distant world into the lap of every modern family. When these media are controlled by commercial interests concerned primarily in the making of material wealth plus the fact that most potential purchasers of their services are citizens of this world only, the battle for moral and spiritual values is intensified. Christians are constantly challenged to resist the evil, disguised as good, as evil bombards both parent and child to yield to its deceptive enticements.

That communication media are effective in the field of moral destruction is evidenced by the sordid activities depicted by pornography in magazines and newspapers and especially television entertainment plus the constant "come-on" of liquor, beer and wine commercials. Evil is glorified! Divorce, fornication, drinking, drugs, homosexuality, prostitution, profanity, vulgarity and every other conceivable appeal to the fleshly appetite of all ages constitute the mental menu. This immoral garbage is dumped into the minds of impressionable youth not merely in

buckets but through open pipelines. Parents, who in few instances truly screen and prohibit the media offerings of filth which is generally acceptable as social speech and conduct, pay for the delivery!

Evidences of a Moral Depression

If there is a difference between a moral recession and a moral depression the facts presented here reflect the latter very vividly. Space forbids arraying comparative figures of yesteryears with those of a more recent period but the following statistics tell the story of the America the present generation is passing to its children. Read the record and weep!

There are some three million unmarried fathers in America. Fifty million sex magazines are read monthly by one third of this nation. There are between 15 and 20 thousand "adult" bookstores in the U.S.A. More than 400 pornographic magazines are read regularly by 30 million men and boys. Three million Americans attend pornographic movies each week. Video tapes of hard-core pornographic films for home viewing are currently outselling popular Hollywood movie tapes 3 to 1. Simple nudity and traditional video sex themes are now boring to many viewers. Today's pornography is about violence, degradations, and humiliations. Sadism, incest, child molestations, rape, and murder are the "stronger stuff" upon which millions are fed to trigger arousal. Much of this is about children. The latest published estimate indicates not less than 264 "Kiddie porn" are on the market. One gets hard-core pornography at adult book stores but soft-core pornography at the local news stand. Recent studies indicate that males are prone and more aggressive toward sexual violence after exposure to violent pornography. Many students of its effects believe pornography is "the single most influential force in shaping sexual attitudes today." (From Family Circle, 2/24/81).

Consider these additional facts and figures. Each year nearly 600,000 babies are born to girls between 10 and 18. One out of five children has sexual intercourse by age 13 or 14. In 1978, 9,000 babies were born to girls 11 or younger. More than half of all illegitimate births in 1980 involved teenagers. A recent study revealed that the most often expressed teen excuse is this: "Every one is doing it. I have to have a baby to prove my femininity and to show I have a boyfriend." Sex, for many, is merely a tool or plaything to enhance popularity or alleviate doubts about masculinity or femininity. Instead of being a communion of life and love that God approves only within marriage, it is a means of "peeping torn" gratification. Modern "dogooders", rather than educating parents and youth in terms of divine law, advocate health clinics and taxpayer agencies making readily available to teenagers birth control information and advice, even without parental knowledge or consent. And everyone knows that this same "super-pusher" crowd insists that abortions for anybody who wants one should be paid for by you and me—Mr. and Mrs. American Taxpayer!

The tragic experience of nationalized, mandated, and government supported sex education programs in Sweden and Denmark should be a warning to all Americans. Sweden's record between its 1956 mandate and 1976 reflected abortions for half of all teen age pregnancies and an alarming 33% of all live births. Furthermore, throughout Sweden the marriage rate decreased between 1963 and 1974, while the divorce rate tripled. In Denmark between 1970 and 1977, venereal disease between ages 16 and 20 increased 250%. In those under 14, it increased 400%, abortions 500%, illegitimate births 200%, the divorce rate 200%, and rape cases increased 300% in the same period.

Any program of sex education which separates itself from moral and ethical values is destined to the same experience as Sweden and Denmark. Chastity, commitment, responsibility, and faithfulness are God-given values. To scorn and ridicule these verities is to reap disaster and despair.

Consider this further potpourri of crime and other immoralities within our land. Offenses of all types rose by 10% in the U.S.A. from 1979 to 1980. Violent crimes jumped by 13%, robbery by 20%, rape by 9%, aggravated assault by 8%, and murders by 7%. Burglary rose by 4% and larceny by 8%. As far back as 1973 Americans drinking over 18, consumed over 157 million barrels of intoxicating beverages, an average of 35 gallons per year for every person over 18. That was three-fourths of a pint per day, 365 days in the year! Drinking drivers are responsible for more than half the serious auto accidents in the U.S.A. Organized crime is the largest industry in America with gross resources from narcotics, prostitution, gambling, pornography, racketeering and other enterprises running more than 150 billion dollars. That's more profit than all the oil companies combined or from the total automobile industry!

Another sweep of the broom reveals another view. There are more barmaids than college girls and three times as many criminals as college students. One million girls are infected with social disease. Over 100,000 become prostitutes annually and thousands of these are taken captive against their will by physical kidnapping, being drugged and brainwashed, and within 24 hours are so completely changed that they freely enter white slavery. A million babies are born illegitimately, a murder is committed every 40 minutes, and a major crime every 40 seconds. The National Institute of Education says that in the American public school systems every month 5,200 junior and senior high school teachers are assaulted by the students and that 282,000 students are attacked.

Other significant factors are: betrayal of trust by government employees from White House to Court House and all facets between, a growing fascination with the occult and astrology, a heeding of the advice given by popular media columnists on marriage, divorce, and remarriage while thumbing noses at God's law. In the same areas of morality, profane and vulgar speech blasting forth on television and radio

makes one wonder if there is anything too sacred for desecration and ridicule by foul-mouthed public figures who flout and glory in their shame.

Our next article will deal with "Parental Contributions Toward Existing Conditions."

(Continued from Page 2)

accepted the alternate of a "special contribution" on one Sunday each month after the regular contribution. The "box-in-the-vestibule" plan did not really originate with Yater Tant, if the chronicle of events is accurately and fully recorded in Yater's writings twenty six and half years ago in the Gospel Guardian. He adopted both the idea for its use and the term to express it from some churches who had "placed a box in the vestibule," of whom he had heard after his editorial of May 31, 1956. After June 7, 1956, all references to the "box-in-the-vestibule" point back to this editorial.

The Church Treasury and The Box

Brother Tant anticipated some problems from the beginning with his proposed vestibule box. One of the charges is that there is no difference between the "box" and the "church treasury" except the "difference between passing the hat to the congregation and passing the congregation by the hat." Tant said then that he believed there was a difference. I see no difference in Bible principle. I do not know how the first century disciples gave their contribution on the first day of the week into the treasury of the church,

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much" (Mark 12:41). Jesus was stationary: he "sat over against the treasury." He sat and watched the people cast their money into the treasury. This does not necessarily prove that the early church followed this practice, but we have no evidence that some form of collection similar to this was not practiced.

Shortly after the church was established in Jerusalem, the disciples were making contributions into a common treasury—the prices of the things sold were laid at the apostles' feet.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a possession "and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 5:2). Ananias and Sapphira both died because they agreed together to lie to God about the amount of their gift. The point is that the disciples were bringing the money to the treasury; the congregation was passing by the hat.

There is no difference between the church going by a "box" and giving their contribution, and the "box" or "basket" going by the people. That which makes the difference is when, where, why and to whom the collection is being made. If the individual is making a contribution to some organization of his choosing, which is lawful for him to do, and it is being made apart from his responsibilities to the church, he needs no "box" in the church building or any where else. Let him put it in an envelope and mail it to the place he

wants it to go. That will cause no one problems, least of all the church.

But if we are closing one eye and pretending the church is not doing it when we make the contribution in the church building, at the time of worship, by encouragement and announcement by the church, we may as well take the funds from the general first day contribution of the church, because in principle there is no difference.

Behaving Oneself in God's House

J. Wiley Adams

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RAPPORT WITH THE FLOCK

Elders need to be well-acquainted with the members of the congregation. Very often there is a considerable distance between the elders and the members. It will be hard work together where such persists. In John 10:1-18 emphasis is given by Christ to a good shepherd knowing the sheep. In verse 3 "he called his own sheep by name." In verse 4 "the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." Verse 14 declares, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

Elders are shepherds over the flock, the local church (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2,3). They are pastors or caretakers (Eph. 4:11). In order to lead a flock they must know each member of the flock. And each member is to know the shepherds. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake..." (I Thess. 5:12,13).

In some congregations we have known elders who do not know all the members. Many times in churches of considerable size, the members may be somewhat uncertain who the elders are and the elders reflect uncertainty as to the identity of some of the members. This is a shame and is contrary to New Testament teaching on the subject. There is to be a very close working relationship in the local church. When this exists many would-be mountains will turn out to be only mole hills because the people and the elders know each other well. As a result there is more tolerance and allowance for personality differences. The proper kind of love makes for more patience and longsuffering in dealing with problems. We are always more patient toward those we truly love. We are prone to show more understanding in a known situation than in an

unknown one.

Some have made the mistake of equating rapport with **politicking**. They are not the same. There is no place in the congregation for political maneuvers. Such smacks of partyism and does not tend to bind people together but rather separates them into clans and cliques. Some elders have been known to politick because they fear the other elders are better received by the people than themselves. They fear they will lose out and they start a campaign around them to assure future allegiance. Such an one is not qualified in attitude to continue in the office. He needs to resign. He loves not the sheep but his efforts are self-serving. To him the eldership is a power structure. He will end up being an overlord and a tyrant if allowed to continue.

It has been said, and properly so, that one man's strength is another man's weakness. Wise elders will so attune themselves to the individual members that they will know their strengths and weaknesses. The church is a family and, as in our own family circles we recognize the differences in our children, we need to exercise the same common sense in the spiritual family, the church. Since no two people are exactly alike, no two people can be dealt with precisely the same way. Elders who serve well will take into account this fact and act accordingly. It is a grave mistake for the overseers to view the local flock as a mass rather than as a group of individuals. Likewise, it is a serious error for the members to look on the eldership in such a way as to disregard the fact that they are individuals also. It works both ways. The mass concept would have disregarded the lost sheep in the parable of the ninety and nine. The lesson there is that each and every sheep is important to the Lord and should be to elders also.

NEXT ISSUE: When The Preacher Is An Elder

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE AND DIVINE HEALING

"On a wet winter night, the neon signs of Crouch Temple glow with a lonely halo in the Los Angeles mist. Central Avenue, not far from the scene of the 1965 Watts riots, is quiet. But inside the temple, a converted theatre, the night is alive. Some 2,000 people—black, white, and brown—are turned toward the stage crying 'Hallelujah,' and 'God be praised.' For more than an hour the tension has been building up: testimonies, gospel songs, pledges, blessings and more songs—a writhing Presleyan, shirt-open gospel rock driven home by an organ, drums and piano combo. Women are swaying in the aisles, men clapping and shouting from their seats."

"Suddenly, bouncing out of his chair, comes the star. Evangelist A. A. Allen is dressed in a conservative style tonight: the usual iridescent lavender suit has given way to a blue blazer and gray slacks. But the crowd knows him as 'God's Man of Faith And Power,' and they also know that something powerful is coming. 'We need six strong men to help bring out this stretcher,' he shouts. Half a dozen volunteers spring into the wings and bring out an ambulance stretcher carrying a groaning black woman. 'This woman was brought into the hospital this morning with third degree burns over her body,' reads an attending nurse. 'She was home, high on dope, when her clothes caught fire in the kitchen.'"

" 'Praise Jesus,' 'This is a sad story,' says Allen in his raspy Ozark baritone. He bends over the victim. 'Do you believe God can raise you up?' Weakly, evincing great pain, she answers, 'Yes, I do believe.' 'Raise your hands toward this woman and pray!' he commands the crowd. Four thousand arms shoot into the air. In the back, a little man caresses his Bible. 'Please sweet Jesus,' he repeats. As the people pray Allen lays his hands on the victim. 'Heal!' he cries. 'Heal her wounds in the name of Jee-uh-zuss!' Already the crowd is murmuring, 'Thank you, Jesus!' The woman sits up. 'Oh, thank God,' she says. The nurse, at Allen's request trundles her off to check the wounds in the ladies room. She is back quickly. 'There is new skin covering where the burns are,' she announces. 'It's a miracle!'"

The service just described is typical of thousands being conducted all over this country and in many

foreign lands each week. Some are in tents, some in converted theaters, some in auditoriums, some in football stadiums. Literally millions of dollars are collected at such meetings. Claims of all sorts of miracles and divine healings come screaming from microphones as "testimonies" to the power of some great evangelist of God, ordained with the special gift to take away pain and misery, to heal the body of its sickness. In most of the meetings there are those who have come in desperation—those who have terminal organic diseases—in one last attempt at finding some hope.

I have no disposition to demean any person's beliefs or to deny any legitimate truth. I do not wish to be unkind. I am not given to controversy, nor do I take any pride in exposing error to the embarrassment of those who espouse it. But I must state kindly, and yet candidly, that modern-day Divine Healing is a fraud; it is neither divine, nor is it healing. I join with Jno. F. McArthur, who says, "On innumerable occasions I have wished I had the gift of healing. I have stood with a mother and father in a hospital room and watched their child die of leukemia. I have prayed with a dear friend as cancer was eating up his insides. I have been in intensive care units; I have seen people crushed by accidents; I have observed them torn by surgery; and through it all, I have wished that I could have healed with a word, with a touch, but I cannot."²

He continues, "Think of how rewarding it would be to have the gift of healing! Think of what it would be like to go into a hospital among the sick and dying and just go up and down the hall touching them, talking to them, and healing them! And wouldn't it be wonderful to gather together groups of those who claim to have the gift of healing and fly them into the great pockets of disease in the world where they could just go through the crowds healing everybody of cancer, yaws, blackfoot, and countless other ailments?"

The Abundant Life theory has as one of its major points the promise of divine healing of the body. Of the roots of today's healing phenomenon, Vinson Synan says, "Carrying the idea of sanctification to its ultimate conclusion, he (a pioneer in the movement) taught that's sanctifying power reaches every part of the body, destroying the root and tendency of the disease."³ Is there a connection between the atonement and the healing of the body from disease and sickness? Is there a connection between disease and one's personal sin?

That the modern-day pentecostal preachers believe divine miraculous healing to be a part of their views of redemption is easily shown by a perusal of their various publications. O. L. Yearly said, "The Fact that salvation and healing went along together in the early church strongly suggests the idea that these divine manifestations for the benefit of men were intended to be a real part of the gospel itself." He further states, "One cannot preach the gospel without preaching divine healing."⁴ Kenneth Hagin, one of the very popular pentecostals today, says, "Healing was in God's plan of redemption. Sin causes the curse to come

upon us. Christ bore the penalty for us." And again, "Sickness and disease rob people of happiness, and health and take away money which is needed for other things. Sickness is not a blessing. It is a curse. A curse of the broken law."⁵ "To receive healing from the Lord, our spiritual condition must first be attended to; for if we are sick, it reveals that we have come short of God's will somewhere."⁶ Notice that in each case divine healing is associated with the redemption of man. Thus, the Abundant Life is to be found in the healing of the body just as with the forgiveness of sins; one will always accompany the other.

The Bible does not teach healing as a part of the atonement. And while Jesus went about healing people as he spoke to them about redemption through him, and while his apostles and others designated by him were given the power of miraculous healing, there is never a time when the healing is held out as a promised part of the atonement.

The miracles done were "signs," or indications of divine power. They caused wonderment, amazement, and the people were astonished at the sight of these supernatural feats (Matt. 12:23; Matt. 15:31; Mk 5:15; Mk. 7:37; etc.). Such signs gave credibility to what was said and authenticated the message as having the approval of God. The Hebrew writer shows such to be the case by saying, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?" Even the miracles of Christ are never said to have any connection to the atonement except as they served to prove his Messiahship. In Acts 2:22, Peter said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which he did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. The passage clearly shows the miracles were performed in order to show the approval of God and not as a part of the promised atonement. No Bible passage ever connects miraculous healing or perennial good health to the atonement.

It should be easy to see that good health is not a part of the plan of redemption by looking at the maladies of the special servants of the Lord. What about Paul's almost intolerable "thorn in the flesh?" If miraculous divine healing is part of the atonement, why did Paul instruct Timothy to take wine to preclude his stomach problems and other chronic sicknesses (I Tim. 5:23)? Epaphroditus became suddenly ill and almost died (Phil. 2:26); Trophimus was left at one location sick (II Tim. 4:20). What about these men? These were men of God; redeemed men; men who were teaching others about the atonement and who were possessed in many instances with the power to heal people from sickness and diseases, and yet they themselves did not enjoy perfect health. Why not? It would seem that if the principle that "the husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits" (II Tim. 2:6) that these

laborers of God would have had the first rights to any provisions of the atonement. Paul says that he constantly carried about in his body the death of Jesus (II Cor. 4:10). Furthermore, it should be noted that three times he sought relief from some malady which was constantly nagging him, but to no avail (II Cor. 12:8). If healing is part of the plan of redemption, surely Paul could have been partaker of it.

Atonement is a universal system intended for the Salvation of all men everywhere. The Great Commission calls for preaching the gospel "to all nations" (Matt. 28:18-20), and to "every creature" (Mk. 16:15-16). Paul says that the gospel of God was "for the obedience of faith among all nations" (Rom. 1:5) and Peter affirms that God "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The gospel, then, can be obeyed by any person who comes under its scope of obligation. Furthermore, any person who obeys it receives the same exact benefits. In Rom. 1:16, Paul says that the gospel is "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Every man receives the same benefits who obeys the gospel.

If freedom from sickness and disease is part of the atonement then all men who receive the benefits of Christ's provision should receive it. Forgiveness of sins is universal, so should be the healing of the body. But it is not so. Why are there so many Christians who are ill? Why are there daily hospital admissions by thousands who claim to have accepted the salvation that is in Christ? Is healing on demand a part of the atonement? Experience alone would seem to deny it.

The modern-day healers do not in fact even resemble the evangelists and prophets who performed those supernatural feats in the first century. And the miracles they perform certainly bear no resemblance to those performed by our Lord during his personal ministry. The lack of such similarity is still another problem for those pseudo-prophets who make claims about the Spirit of God healing folks by their hand.

There never was any doubt when Jesus healed someone. There is not one instance where anyone ever denied one single miracle he performed. There were those who questioned the power by which he performed his miracles, but never was there a denial of the miracle itself. Jesus healed all manner of diseases; none was too difficult, none too extreme. He never failed. He healed instantly and completely, never partially or gradually. He never required any special atmosphere for his healing and time, place, and circumstances never figured in his miracles. The claims of the modern-day divine healers are not even like the claims of the Bible. And the reason is simple. They are not the same miracles. In fact, they are not miracles at all. They are fake, fraudulent claims that cannot be proven. These evangelists do not do the miracles of God because they do not have the power of God. If the Abundant Life theory concerning miraculous healing being part of the atonement were true God would have given men the power to perform such miracles as were

done in the Bible today. He has not. And since he has not, we may be sure that the doctrine fomented by these false miracle workers is not so.

That which determines right or wrong, truth or error, good or evil, does not repose in the hands of men but in the word of God. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). It is sad to see people following doctrines which they have not submitted to a comparison with the word of God. How foolish! The word of God nowhere promises what the Abundant Life theory promises, therefore I take it that it is not a Bible doctrine.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ TIME MAGAZINE, March 7, 1969, "Faith Healers: Getting Back Double From God", Pg. 64-67.
- ² THE CHARISMATICS, A DOCTRINAL PERSPECTIVE, by John F. MacArthur, Jr. Published by Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978, Pg. 134.
- ³ THE HOLINESS PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, by Vinson Synan, published by Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971, Pg. 189.
- ⁴ MODERN DIVINE HEALING quoting O. L. Yearly's work, "The Place Of Divine Healing In The Church," The work is authored by Waymon Miller, published by Miller Publishing Co., Ft. Worth, Texas, 1956, Pg. 37.
- ⁵ REDEEMED, by Kenneth E. Hagin, published by Hagin Ministries, Ft. Worth, Texas 1980, Pg. 19.
- ⁶ Ibid

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MISTAKES IN RESTORING THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH, Part 1

The movement to restore New Testament Christianity in America arose in four significant attempts to affect a reformation within existing denominations. Each of the four originated independently of the others between 1790 and 1810 in different parts of the country. And each soon found it necessary to separate from organized religious institutions in order to continue their reform. The two largest and most successful of these reformations, recognizing a common goal, began uniting in 1832; and the resulting fellowship formed the main stream of those churches that made the restoration of "the ancient order of things" a reality in the early nineteenth century.

The restored churches grew rapidly during the three decades preceding the Civil War, numbering at least 180,000 by 1839. But during the last thirty-five years of the century, divergent interpretations of the movement's aim created a major division. Those churches that clung more closely to the original plea, as it had evolved by 1830, called themselves "the churches of Christ", while the more progressive brethren generally identified themselves as "the Christian Church", or "Disciples of Christ".

Today, several religious communions, some hardly recognizable as "restoration cousins", trace their roots to the reforms associated with Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott. "The churches of Christ" since 1900 have also divided along doctrinal lines. Ruptures in fellowship have arisen over such things as Sunday Schools, Colleges and Orphan Homes, Premillennialism, and, most recently, Institutionalism and Sponsored Cooperation.

The churches with which we stand identified accept Bible schools, as teaching arrangements of local churches under their own elders. They reject educational, benevolent, and missionary organizations that are made adjuncts to the church. And they oppose Premillennialism, sponsoring elderships, and other kindred departures from the apostolic order. While we do not claim perfection of faith and practice, we believe that we stand closer to the original plea of the restorers than our institutional brethren. However, the important thing is not how close we stand to the pioneers, but how close we stand to the New Testament.

The congregational independence of the early

Restoration churches and their fierce emphasis on liberty of conscience, together with the slow and uneven development of the movement, make it possible for one to find almost any view or practice among those churches. It is incorrect to think that Stone, Campbell, and their fellow-reformers set out with a clear view of restoring first-century Christianity. That idea came about gradually over several years, springing from a rejection of human creeds and authoritative bodies in religion, together with a deep desire for the unity of all followers of Christ. It is also incorrect to believe that a complete restoration was uniformly achieved in the churches at the same time, or that once a reasonable resemblance of the apostolic order was affected no further effort toward restoration was needed.

But be that as it may, two things of great importance did emerge by 1830. First, the idea of uniting believers on the Bible alone as the sole authority and of restoring the New Testament church as the practical means of this unity were fully accepted and propagated. Second, thousands of churches striving to achieve unity on this basis were established in most states of the Union. Thus restored Christianity became a reality during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The primary purpose of this particular study is to focus attention on some mistakes that were made by the early restorers. We refer to errors that were not isolated but general, or at least widespread; and such that either had a diverting or retarding influence on the movement, or reveal weaknesses which tend to have been repeated at intervals in subsequent history. Of the several significant mistakes that could be included, we must limit our discussion to a few that seem to be more especially timely for us today.

The Failure To Go All the Way in Restoration

Restoration efforts of considerable importance were led by James O'Kelly in North Carolina and Virginia beginning in 1792 and by Elias Smith and Abner Jones in Vermont and New Hampshire beginning in 1802; but both of these movements proved to be abortive in nature. Their aim was right and they moved in the right direction for several years, taking giant steps toward "the ancient order of things". They took the name Christian to the exclusion of all human names in religion. They favored congregational independence and recognized the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. But they never advanced much beyond these features of apostolic Christianity. They did not recognize the essentiality of baptism and remained a people beset by unstable beliefs, including unitarianism.

Churches associated with these two reform groups united early in the nineteenth century to form the Christian Connection. Although some of their number joined the Christians identified with Stone and the Campbells in the West, the Christian Connection soon drifted back toward denominationalism and eventually united with the Congregationalists to become part of the Congregational Christian Church. Nor did all the

churches and individuals who set out with Stone and Campbell continue in the Restoration ideal. Of the five men who drew up the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery", the document that set forth a search for the ancient order in Kentucky, only Stone remained with the movement. Many of the Baptists who were attracted to the reforms of Campbell returned to the Baptist fold as the Restoration progressed.

The failure of many of those who set their course by the Restoration star to continue the journey to its logical end shows that restoring the apostolic order cannot be partial or become static. Certainly all men fail in some specifics and all fall short of perfection generally, but if one's aim and purpose are less than complete duplication of the New Testament church in all its essential features, his efforts at restoration will retrogress. At whatever point men become satisfied with less than full restoration, they surrender both the commitment and the principle necessary for true restoration.

Furthermore, in accepting less than full restoration, would-be restorers make what is and what is not essential subject to human wisdom rather than the will of Christ. That course inevitably will result in further disregard for divine authority. Unless we are fully determined to direct our faith and practice by a "Thus says the Lord", the claim of restoration becomes mockery. When the Christian Church decided to cast overboard the silence of the Scripture to adopt instrumental music in the worship of God and missionary societies in the work of the church, they began drifting toward denominationalism. That should serve as a warning to us, but many of our number are following the same course. It does not require a prophet to see where this will lead.

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all".

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

Rodney Miller
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NEHEMIAH: LET US RISE UP & RESTORE THE PLACE OF TOTAL COMMITMENT AND SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Part I

So far, in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah we have seen the place of history, prayer and faith in spiritual revival. We have seen how these factors of history, prayer and faith directly mesh into our needs in the Lord's church in the 1980's. Now, as we move into the tenth chapter of Nehemiah, the next subject which should challenge our life style is the NEED FOR TOTAL COMMITMENT. It is a shame that we live in an age when the words, "total commitment" have come under such criticism. It seems that many have finally gotten around to voicing what they have been practicing all along, "we don't need total commitment," but in reality we realize that is not the case.

This movement for "spiritual" renewal began when the wall was erected and the hearts of the people were tender. Therefore, the people assembled to study the Word of God and for prayer. Now, today we think there must be a "special" commitment for the future in order to maintain the zeal, emotion and enthusiasm of the people. They, like so many of us, get all charged up after hearing a great lesson from the Word of God, only to later let the fire cool down and nothing is really done concerning the message. So here in Nehemiah 10 we find the plan of God to capture the spark of the moment and turn it into a generation of people who do have God at the center of their lives.

An overview of Chapter 10 looks like this, since there are two major points in the chapter.

I. The People Of The Covenant, v. 1-27; and II. The Provisions Of The Covenant, v. 28-39. Now, let us take a closer look at these two subdivisions of Chapter 10.

I. THE PEOPLE OF THE COVENANT. In Verses 1-27, there were representatives of three groups who signed the covenant, pledging their faithfulness in future generations: A. The Priests, v. 1-8; B. The Levites, v. 9-13; and C. The Rulers, v. 14-27. Notice one point here that we have made over and over in our studies from the Old Testament prophets. REFORM MUST ALWAYS COME FROM THE TOP! This was the case in the rebuilding of the temple in the book of Haggai. Haggai begins with the mission to get the temple rebuilt after 16 years of neglect, and while all of

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Israel built for themselves houses ceiled with cedar and other sorts of luxuries. Yet, God's house was left with only a foundation because nobody cared about the spiritual aspect of life. So, Haggai goes directly to Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor, both of whom were **leaders** of the people, because he knew that with a burning desire and **commitment from the leadership**, reform was sure and certain. How desperately we need to see this lesson again that comes to us in Nehemiah 10. The leaders were the ones who signed the covenant that spiritual renewal should be on the hearts of these people! How many churches of today are dying because of lack of leadership? How many souls today being lost because of a lack of leadership?

So once we analyze what the problem really is, what should be done to bring about spiritual renewal? Those who are most zealous must be willing to work in Divinely established channels, which is through the elders or the leaders of the church, or division and heartache are sure to ensue. We must spiritually arouse the elders, preachers, Bible-class teachers, and the men who make the decisions in the business meetings, if we are going to bring about spiritual reform. If we try to by-pass the elders and pressure change into effect by a grass roots movement, it will be insurrection instead of resurrection. The elders and all leaders must participate in the spiritual renewal by use of not just their own personal efforts, but with the efforts of the other members of their families as well. How many elder's wives are actively teaching the lost, or are actively teaching a Bible class? Far too few is the norm! Nehemiah steps up first and puts his own name on the line and signs the Covenant of Commitment to demonstrate that he is an active participant in the work of spiritual renewal. How can any good work by the members survive when the elders and the preachers themselves are too busy, so unconcerned, or too limited to participate in the work itself? Those unwilling to grow, or those who just give up, will encourage others to give up or not try to grow, at the cost of their own souls. Once the leadership was sold on the renewal, the "rest of the people" (v. 28), joined in the agreement, thus proving that we are no better than our leaders. It also proves that God will hold the leaders of each congregation today personally responsible for the spiritual growth of not only the believing members as they develop, but also for the unbelievers as they are lead to God. Over and over God condemned Israel for the failure of its shepherds, saying that they had destroyed Israel because they had failed to provide the proper leadership.

II. THE PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT.

This second point is subdivided into two major sections, each one of which is also made up of subdivided points, as well. The provisions of the covenant are: A. THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT, and B. THE HOUSE OF THE COVENANT.

The first of these, The Terms Of The Covenant, is made up of four specific promises of commitment on the part of Israel: (1) Keep the law; (2) Keep the

Commandments; (3) Inter-marriage; (4) Keep the Sabbath.

Any work of renewal must be built on doctrinal soundness. There can be no excuse for a failing to be doctrinally sound. Still, even though that is the foundation, one cannot live in a "house" which consists only of a foundation. It must have walls, windows, doors and a roof. The covenant that the people entered into was one built on a commitment to doctrinal soundness. We must come to God's work in an orderly pace, with the goal being a knowledge of what His will is for us in every aspect of life. Worship must be built on what pleases Him, as revealed in His word only. We see also that they committed themselves to an abstinence of marriages that involved pagans from neighboring nations. There is a long history of Israel's folly of intermarriages with pagans: Exodus 23:32-33; 34:12-16; Deut. 7:3; Joshua 23:12-13; Judges 3:6-8; I Kings 11:4; Ezra 9:2. Just as oil and water do not mix, so also two different value systems in the same household will not mix. The Lord's church is staggering today because we have lost so many through mixed marriages. When spiritual realities have been set aside, moral values deteriorate and homes break up. Strong marriages do not "just happen." They are forged when two people want the same thing in their lives, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not when two people dedicate themselves to two different careers, and to two different purposes or goals. As two people move closer to the Lord, they will move closer to each other. Picture this relationship as a triangle; a triangle with Jesus Christ at the top point, and with husband and wife at the bottom corners. Now, as the husband and wife get closer to Christ, they will move closer to each other. What a shame it is when so many choose to move away from each other and away from the Lord, all at the same time.

Finally, they pledged themselves to the Sabbath and the importance of worship, V. 31. They committed themselves to keep the Sabbath, allow the land to lie fallow each seventh year, and cancelled all debts. By working on the Sabbath, or by doing business with others who worked on the Sabbath, they broke their fellowship with God. Yes, all of us certainly know we need to build into the lives of people their own individual need to worship on the Lord's Day. Far too many make it a day just like all others and neglect the assembling with the saints. Yet, the problem goes far deeper even than all of this. Back then it penetrated the core of the Jewish problems, just the same as it does ours today. The reason they did not worship on the Sabbath and we fail on the Lord's Day is the same: we do not worship God on a daily basis, within the privacy of our own hearts, and commune with Him in quiet devotion. As stated before: **WE DON'T KNOW GOD!** If it becomes our habit to worship God in quiet devotion daily, by reading His word, by honest and sincere prayer, by meditation of our hearts, or by singing or reading songs of a spiritual nature, we will have no problem of a public nature on the Lord's Day.

As stated, II. THE PROVISION OF THE

COVENANT, is also subdivided into a second point, B.—THE HOUSE OF THE COVENANT, V. 32-39. This section shows that the people see the need to give proper place and priority to the Temple of God, for it was the tangible representation of His dwelling place with the Jewish nation. When the temple was neglected, God was neglected, and when the temple was cared for, God was in their hearts. This second point, B.—THE HOUSE OF THE COVENANT, is subdivided into six points: (1) the temple tax, V. 32-33; (2) wood offerings, v. 34; (3) first fruits, V. 35; (4) first born, V. 36; (5) offering for the Levites, v. 37; (6) Levites offering, V. 38. All of this builds to a climax in Verse 39: "THUS WE WILL NOT NEGLECT THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD."

What these people of Israel did was to totally commit themselves to God. Of course, we also learn that later the Covenant was forsaken and Jerusalem once again became a heap of ashes because the commitment did not sustain itself in future generations. Brethren, if that does not frighten us to death, what will? We can definitely see such a failure in commitment right now in this generation! We have become too busy with our hobbies, (hunting, fishing, flying model airplanes, trips to mama's in the country, etc.), as well as with our work, with our friends, and with many other selfish pleasures, and have no time left or set aside to do the Lord's work. The picture is not pretty. Certainly, there are those who have defiled their garments, but they are in the minority and not the majority! Can't we see that what makes the situation even worse is that we are **communicating** what we PRACTICE, and not what we profess? Whether we realize it or not, and what makes the situation even worse, is that we are communicating only such values to others which we feel are important enough in our own lives to sacrifice for or to practice. It is impossible to communicate values that we only speak of or talk about as being important but never put into use.

In the next article we will discuss what "total commitment" is and how we can, if we only will, claim it by faith through prayer, and in so doing can stem the tide and save the cause for another generation.

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WHAT WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

"In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee" (2 Chron. 1:7).

Solomon was a young man, perhaps not yet out of his teens, when the crown of Israel was placed upon his head and the royal sceptre delivered into his hand. The ceremony was now over. The trumpet was silent. The crowd had dispersed. Solomon had returned to the palace. Now in the stillness of the soft Judean night, God addressed the young king.

"Ask what I shall give thee." There was no restriction. He could ask for anything! A blank check had been delivered by the Almighty. He needed only to fill it in. The choice was his.

Could there be a greater test of character and mettle than that? As a matter of fact, our choices, though not as dramatic as Solomon's, reveal more about us than we may like to admit.

Solomon's response should be engraved in the mind of every legislator; every judge on the bench; every administrator. It should characterize every shepherd of God's flock; every proclaimer of God's word; every sojourner of God's Way. Every parent of boys and girls; every teacher in the classroom; every young man and young woman beginning life's work, should incline his ear to these words:

"Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?"

Solomon's choice pleased the Lord and because he did not selfishly ask for riches, honor, the lives of his enemies, nor long life, God not only granted his request, but gave him riches and honor as well.

Solomon made a good choice. Some might opine that it was not the highest choice. That Solomon's father would have likely requested greater faithfulness and zeal for God. Yet, when Solomon later took up the pen of inspiration, he declared: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). If one possesses true wisdom, will devotion to God not follow?

What would you choose if God awakened you at 3:00 A.M. and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Would you choose wealth that you might purchase an expensive automobile and other such things of material worth? Would you choose power or honor that you might excel in the political arena or in the sports

world? Would you choose good health and long years? Travel? Education? The applause of men? The love of women?

Is there one who would say, "Give me wisdom!"

Yes, if you could have your wish, what would it be?

But we might just as well drop the "if" because people generally do obtain what they really set their wills for. The secret of will power is to have a goal which is meaningful enough to motivate us to sacrifice and persist until we reach it. When that happens, desires are fulfilled. Dreams come true.

One thing the Bible does for me is to give me a chance to see how other men have chosen and the results of their choices. Think, for instance, of the contrast between Abraham's choice and Lot's choice. Consider the choice of Moses as he cast his lot with his people rather than the riches and power of Egypt. And what of Joseph's choice in the house of Potiphar; Daniel's choice of the King's vegetables rather than his meats; Paul's choice of Christ and the church; and Jesus' choice when He set his face toward Jerusalem and the cross.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1,2).

On the other hand, Adam's choice cost him Eden; Esau's choice cost him his birthright; Lot's choice ultimately cost him his home and herds; Absalom's choice cost him the throne and his life; Saul's choice cost him the kingdom; Judas' choice cost him his apostleship and his soul; Demas' choice cost him true riches.

In a very real sense, God says to each of us: "Ask what I shall give thee." I suppose our choice is what we secretly wish for. Oh that multitudes would cry, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge!"

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IS GOD THE AUTHOR OF RELIGIOUS CONFUSION?

In an article we asked the question about God being the author of religious confusion and commented that hundreds of religious groups are today claiming that they are receiving revelation from God. Often those of us who try to get people to follow the Bible and it's teaching and reject all the commandments and traditions of men are referred to as bigots or legalists. However, God is not the author of religious division. Man is! One person claims miraculous, divine, revelation and has God telling us to recognize the Pope as the head of the church; another tells us that Joseph Smith is to be recognized as the head of the church. What is truth?

Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). I believe this passage. Again, Jesus said when He was praying to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." I believe this passage. Jesus also said when He was speaking to His apostles whom He had chosen, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13). I believe this passage.

I believe that when the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2, He came to guide and direct these same apostles into all truth. And if He (the Holy Spirit) did what He came to do, He did guide the apostles into **all truth**. "Oh," someone says, "I can't accept the fact that we have all truth." One says, "for Joseph Smith said," or another, "but the Pope says," or still another one says, "but Herbert W. Armstrong said." And so, we see at least a part of our problem. If you asked these same people, "Do you believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God"? I am sure they would say "yes." But how can we say we believe the Bible and at the same time deny what it says. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth. He didn't say all truth plus the Book of Mormon, the Catholic Catechism, etc. He said all truth—PERIOD. I believe it. Do you?

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CATHOLICISM SERIES BY BRITNELL

We expect to begin soon a series on Catholicism written by Eugene Britnell who has been one of our able writers for several years. The need is great with a world traveling Pope garnering millions of dollars in free press coverage. Be watching for this series to begin in the next month or two.

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 Ave., Riverdale, MD20737

THE GOSPEL ADVOCATE'S REVIEW OF THE DEBATE

WARD HOGLAND, Box 15, Booneville, MS 38829. In the October 21st issue of the Gospel Advocate, Robert Taylor Jr. has a page and a half report of my debate with Noel Merideth. The first thing which occurred to me when I read the report is that it is rather novel that the "old reliable" would surrender a page and a half to a "dead issue." This reminded me of a lecture Roy Deaver was giving at Freed-Hardeman College a few years ago. He had announced that he would review the Hogland-Deaver debate which had been conducted in Pensacola, Florida. I drove up to Henderson for his first day and found standing room only! When I saw such a large crowd, I said, "Roy, I thought this was a "dead issue!" Roy was very meek that first day while I was there. I understand he told of his great victory the next day.

In this report of the debate by Robert Taylor, Jr. there were many insinuations, some vilifications and a lot of falsehood! Since I know the general attitude of brother Wood and his paper, I knew it would be useless to send a reply to him. I therefore take this opportunity to reply to some of the assertions. I never expect to win a debate when the opposition does the writing. However, I do feel it should be free from misrepresentation. However, since the Advocate printed them I feel compelled to make corrections the best way possible.

One of his assertions was given on page 630 where he says, "Brother Hogland had a chronological problem with 2 Corinthians." May I say without reservation that the only problem I had with 2 Cor. 9:13 was to get Merideth to answer my arguments! And since Robert Taylor Jr. was in his corner, why didn't he help him? Another charge was that "Hogland set forth a rather novel set of definitions for the church." Well, they might have been "novel" but neither Merideth or Taylor could answer them. What Taylor did not tell is that I presented a half dozen passages where the church is used in the distributive or individual sense. Such passages as Acts 12:5 which says the "church prayed" or Acts 5:11 where the "church feared" or Acts 8:1 where the "church was persecuted." None of these arguments were answered or mentioned. Why didn't Robert Taylor, Jr. tell this in his report? The tapes of the discussion will let any know. Then he demonstrated his ignorance of the English by saying, "He referred to ekklesia, Greek word from which 'church' is derived as a collective noun or the called out. Yet that collective aspect will not fit distributive action." Great shades of Aristotle! I wonder if Taylor has ever read a grammar book? Does he not know that a collective noun may refer to its objects either singly, distributively, or as a group in a collective way? On page 52 of Jonathan Rigdon's grammar he says, "A collective noun may refer to its objects either of two ways (a) singly, separately or (b) collectively as a unit in which the individual is lost sight of." In addition to this I gave a definition from the English professor Walsh who said the same as Rigdon. I even gave an illustration from the Walsh grammar showing that a collective noun may be used in a distributive sense. Walsh gave this sentence—"The band has ordered their new instruments." It was pointed out that band is a collective noun just like church and in this sentence, each individual in a distributive sense ordered their instruments. One does not have to be astute to see that in the above sentence a plural

pronoun is used with its antecedent being the collective noun band. Since this is true Robert Taylor showed he is rather naive and reckless in dealing with a collective noun. It is difficult for me to understand how a man who claims to be a gospel preacher can make such an egregious blunder. The reason Merideth and Taylor did not like the distributive use of the word church is that it got them in all kinds of trouble. This caught them by surprise and they haven't recovered at this late date.

Another misrepresentation on page 630 says, "Hogland's appeal to denominational scholars recoiled on him." Well, the only "recoiling" I recall is when this charge backfired on Merideth. Furthermore, Taylor doesn't have enough respect for David Lipscomb and Moses Lard to call them brethren. I used the scholarship of both these men and he called them "denominational." The truth of the matter is I gave quotations from Lipscomb, Lard, Lenski, Lang, Bernard and Meyer. They all have said that the "ALL" in 2 Cor. 9:13 refers to saints and not sinners! This hurt Merideth so much that he came back and asked me if I would endorse all that these men taught? I answered by saying, "certainly not" but since you have used Thayer to define a word in the Greek, would you endorse all he says? I waited for his answer and asked him a second time, "Would you sir?" He was as mute as a mouse! Now gentle reader, you can figure out what really "recoiled." Taylor forgot to tell this. Yet the tapes will confirm it.

Taylor says, "He could not go to Phil. 4:14-16 for five times Paul uses 'ye' there which, by the Hogland premises, would call for individual-not collective-offerings for Paul." Here again Taylor does not tell what really happened. Merideth did use Phil. 4:15 but in so doing he was caught in his own trap. He argued that since Paul used the pronoun "ye" which is in the 2nd person plural, and that its antecedent is the word "church" that this text would be individual action rather than collective action. What Taylor forgot to tell is that Merideth made a "bust" on his grammar and had his hand called. I pointed out that a pronoun is to agree with its antecedent in person, number and gender. The word church is third person, whereas "ye" is second person and therefore the antecedent of "ye" was "Philippians" and not the word "church." I literally begged Merideth to take my time and come to the platform and get his blunder corrected. He sat like he was glued to his seat. You see, kind friend, Robert Taylor in his report forgot this important fact!

My good friend and moderator, Billy J. James will give a more detailed report of the debate. However, I felt compelled to answer some of the ostentatious pasquinads of Robert Taylor, Jr. Now if you really want to know who had a "chronological problem", or who it was that had a "novel" idea about whether a collective noun can refer to its objects in a distributive or collective sense then get a copy of the debate and listen.

FIELD REPORTS

TROY G. ADAMS, P.O. Box 155, N. Sullivan, ME 04664. November 26th marks a year that my family and I have been back in Ellsworth, Maine and the work is looking encouraging at this point. I have home Bible studies scheduled or in progress with twelve non-Christians at the present time. Our congregation is presently made up of thirty people. In spite of my continuing efforts to raise the support that I need, I have only been able to raise \$850 per month. This is not enough to keep my family of seven going.

Without the "one-time" helps received from a few concerned individuals and a couple of congregations we would not have been able to stay as long as we have. If anyone is able to help with my support, either on a permanent or "one-time" basis, and would like to have further information concerning the work here, contact me at the above address. For a reference feel free to contact the elders at Temple Terrace Church of Christ, 501 Bullard Parkway, Temple Terrace, FL 33617.

BOB BASTON, 712 Shelton Beach Rd., Saraland, AL 36571. After nearly two years with the Northeast church in Clearwater, Florida, I began work with the group of saints which work and worship in Saraland, Alabama on August 1, 1982. I am attempting to fill some big shoes with respect to the work done by Mike Dubose (now with the church in Panama City, Florida). The enthusiasm is high and attendance has increased. We have had one baptism, four restored, and five to make confession of public sin in their lives. I take none of the credit in this, as all here had a part in reaching these people. The church is averaging just over 100 in attendance on Sunday. The men have shown considerable ability to stand for the truth of the Gospel. If you are vacationing or visiting in the area, please come and worship with us. The building has easy access from Hwy. 43 which runs through Saraland and also from I-65, north of Mobile.

H. L. BRUCE, 3301 Sequoia, Amarillo, TX 79107. Since October 10, 1982, I have been preaching for the Lord's church at 5416 Dumas Drive in Amarillo. I had previously preached for five years for the church on Sherrill Drive. During my last week there, in a meeting in which Jim Ward did the preaching, five were baptized. One was baptized and two restored before that. The Lord's work is off to a good start at Dumas Dr. One was baptized last night. I was preceded in the work here by Pete Hicks and J. Paul Lusby. Our meeting-house is located at the St. Francis exit of Hwy. 287, three miles north of downtown Amarillo. When in the area please worship with us.

RICK CHRISTIAN, P. O. Box 184, Shepherdsville, KY 40165. It would be impossible to contact the vast number of congregations and individual Christians who have been so kind and helpful to me and my family during the illness and death of my dear wife Sharon. Words are so inadequate at times like this, when people have been so helpful. We are so grateful for the hundreds of prayers that were offered on Sharon's behalf. At trying time like these we are made to realize how very important our Christian family is to us. Without your prayers and help it would be impossible to go on. Your expressions of concern and sympathy were greatly appreciated. A special thanks to those who sat with us at the hospital, opened their homes to us, prepared food and helped monetarily. Every act of kindness and help meant more than we can express. May God bless each of you and please continue to remember us in your prayers.

JAMES H. SHEWMAKER, 808 Parrish St., Uhrichsville, OH 44683. I am looking to relocate. I am 24 years old and presently preach at Uhrichsville, Ohio. Before locating here. I had preached as opportunities presented themselves, beginning at age 16. For more information, contact me at the above address by phone at (614) 922-5349.

ROBERTO V. SPENCER, Box 452, Odessa, TX 79760-0452. The Spanish work here in Midland (Lamesa and Louisiana Sts.) has continued to grow. In the last report we said that we had eleven members. That was May. During October 20-24 we had a gospel meeting with preaching by Glenn Rogers from McAllen, Texas. We had three baptisms during the meeting. The next Wednesday night another was baptized. From May to October we have had eight baptisms and three restorations. Now the membership stands at 22. There are some others who are attending the services that we hope will obey soon. We have purchased a building at 711 E. Louisiana St. which we were needing badly. We ask your prayers for the work at this place.

NEW CONGREGATIONS

LANCASTER, TEXAS—A new work was started at 601 N. Dallas Avenue in Lancaster, a suburban city of 20,000 which joins the southern city limits of Dallas. Most of the members are former members of the Pleasant Run congregation in Lancaster who left to start this new work because of the Neo-Calvinistic doctrine being taught at Pleasant Run. The first Lord's Day we met together was August 1, 1982, with 43 in attendance. We average about 35 in attendance on Sunday. Various faithful preachers in this area have preached for us to help get the work started. We need a full-time preacher and can provide partial support. Anyone interested in this work should write the church of Christ at 601 N. Dallas Ave., Lancaster, TX 75146.

ROME, NEW YORK—We wish to inform the readers of STS that a new congregation now meets in Rome, NY. Known as the Mohawk Valley Church of Christ, we meet in a home at 6150 Lorena Road (315) 339-0596. Our pattern is the New Testament. Although there is another group in Rome calling itself the Church of Christ, it does not conform to the standard of sound words. Contact Willard P. Allen at Box 166 RFD 2, Taberg, NY 13471 for more information. Or phone (315) 336-5569. Being close to Griffiss AFB and the cities of Utica and Oneida, we hope to persuade many to obey the gospel. We extend to all a sincere welcome. We covet your prayers for the success of this work.

EL TORO, CALIFORNIA—This is to announce that on November 7, 1982 a new work known as the Saddleback Valley Church of Christ began in El Toro in Southern California. This area is rapidly growing (150,000 population) and is in close proximity to Irvine, Lake Forest, Laguna Hills and Mission Viejo'. The congregation now numbers in the thirties after beginning with seven. We had a gospel meeting the week of November 28 with various local preachers speaking. With a bright outlook for growth and enthusiasm among the members, we feel a strong need for a full-time preacher who desires to work with a group from the start. We are not self-supporting yet, however other congregations in the area have expressed an interest in helping a man who wants to come. If interested in this work, please contact Walt Halagarda at (714) 768-8518, or Peter Stratton at 770-5005. When in the area please visit with us. We are located just off the Santa Ana Freeway (1-5) at the Lake Forest exit. Go east to Lambert St. The church meets at 22651 Lambert #107, El Toro, CA 92630. Our services are at 9:30 for Bible Study on Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. for worship. 7:30 Wednesday for Bible Study.

PREACHER NEEDED

PALATINE, ILLINOIS—The church of Christ which meets at Palatine, Illinois is looking for a full-time preacher. Partial support is available. If interested, write to the church at P.O. Box 193, Palatine, IL 60078. Or call Larry Ciokosz at (312) 359-7098, or Harlan Stoa at 382-1207.

AKRON, OHIO—The Southeast church of Christ is looking for a full time preacher to begin working with them February 1, 1983. They are able to furnish a house and full support. Attendance on the Lord's Day is approximately 100. Anyone interested should contact Robert Bills, 798 E. Archwood Ave., Akron, Ohio 44306 or phone 216-724-8041.

WINDSOR, MISSOURI—The church here would like to secure the services of a full time gospel preacher as soon as possible. We would be able to help with some of his support, but most of it would have to come from elsewhere. If interested, please write William H. Sewell, Jr., 2001 E. 6th St., Sedalia, MO 65301 (816-826-0799) or call Dale Borland, Windsor, MO (816-647-3728).

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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