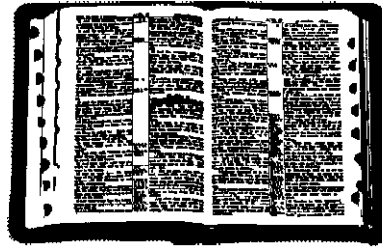


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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"

VOLUME XXIV

MAY 1983

NUMBER 5

THINK ON
THESE THINGS

H. E. Phillips

P.O. Box 1631
Lutz, FL 33549



ALMOST—BUT NOT QUITE

Editor Tant had high hopes of flashing across the front page of Vanguard some startling news in the February, 1982 issue. But instead he had to settle for the "doleful lament" of Greenleaf Whittier: "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest of these: 'It might have been.'"

The startling news was: "the merger of a 'pro' institutional and an 'anti' institutional congregation." But it did not work out. Now the corpse of his Merger Plan lies in the morgue awaiting autopsy to determine what went wrong.

I would not have given attention to this editorial of brother Yater Tant except for the fact that it illustrates the extent to which one will go in an effort to minimize false doctrine and practice, and try to unify both with a local CHURCH.

There were two congregations in the Birmingham, Alabama area where brother Tant lives looking for a meeting house. One was an "anti" institutional church and the other was a "pro" institutional church. Both were doing the same work. They agreed to merge and form one congregation.

So eager is brother Tant to influence a consolidation of "pro" and "anti" institutional groups in a full fellowship, smoothly operating congregation, that he has written reams of paper promoting the plan, and has pledged his time and talent to the project. Hence a nine point plan for the merger was developed and presented to the two groups. Following are the nine points and our review of them:

1. This was to be a merger, not one church joining another. I understand that this means neither congregation gives up anything, but both come together, each holding to its own peculiar characteristics. Only circumstances caused them to be doing the same thing at the time of merger, not conviction. Without question, given time, one of two things will happen: 1) One will yield and become as the other, or 2) There will be a division and each will go the way they were before the merger.

2. A box will be placed in the vestibule to collect all donations to all orphan homes, colleges, centralized cooperative evangelistic work, and all others to which individuals wish to contribute. At regular intervals the box will be emptied and donations will be sent to the various donees as from "Friends," but NOT from the church.

First, I am not convinced that such an arrangement will work at all. The sentiments are too deep and the emotions too strong to allow a vestibule box to get the glory for support rather than the church. Second, it does not heal the cause of the trouble; it does not relieve even temporarily the issues between brethren. The issue is CHURCH SUPPORT of these institutions, not INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT. The vestibule box is asking for a surrender of the principle of CHURCH SUPPORT to these organizations, and returning to INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT. Had this been the course from the beginning there would have been no division. Those who wanted to involve the church, did so to the dividing of the church. Just as the brethren who insisted on instrumental music in worship did so to the dividing of the church.

What will happen if some of the brethren want to take the funds from the box and put them into the CHURCH treasury, and then write checks from the CHURCH treasury to the various institutions whose names and addresses appear on the envelopes? If these few brethren INSIST on doing this because it is "church work," will the "anti" brethren of this merger be obligated to yield, or should they resist to the point of "division"? Do not just wave this off; it is a very real threat. It has happened before, and it will happen again.

But this "box-in-the-vestibule" will not last long enough to get a discussion of differences off the ground. Why? Because these "pro" institutional brethren are

what they are because they INSIST that it is the work of the CHURCH as well as the INDIVIDUAL to care for orphan homes, preach the gospel through centralized cooperative programs, and support the teaching of the Bible in schools and colleges.

3. Preachers from both the "anti" and "pro" institutional churches will be retained and will alternate preaching for the new congregation. In the light of history over the past twenty five years, it would be interesting to see how this works. I can tell you now, there will have to be more rules than the alternating preaching arrangements indicated in point three. There will have to be some "forbidden" area and subjects. I would like to hear one preach on the "Work Of The Church" without preaching something that will irritate the problem between the merged groups.

By the Spirit Paul said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house. . ." (Acts 20:20). It is impossible for a man to do as the apostle said he did and at the same time enter into a covenant with a group of people that will sharply restrict his preaching on certain subjects. If I knew my preaching would alienate them, why should I enter the merger in the first place? If I determined to preserve the merger at the expense of my preaching, how can I hold a good conscience toward God and men?

4. During the first five years after the merger, the preachers invited for meetings would be on an alternating basis: one from the "pro" group, then one from the "anti" group.

The tedious task of selecting preachers for the first five years would require a committee from both sides to be sure that both views were represented in the preachers selected for meetings. No one has respect for a man who does not preach what he believes to be the truth on any subject. This point calls for compromise by its very nature.

Some interesting questions come to mind. What will happen to this arrangement after five years? Does each group expect to convert the other within five years? What if an "anti" preacher who is invited for a meeting should decide to preach what he believes the Bible to teach about unscriptural church contributions to orphan homes, homes for the aged, etc.? If so, will this not amount to compromise on the part of one merging group and the invited preacher? If one is permitted to preach his true convictions on the word of God, how long will this arrangement continue before we see a rerun of the 1950's and 1960's?

5. All contributions for preaching schools or college Bible departments will be sent to support the preacher or teacher (in the school) and not the institution itself.

I conclude that all contributions in number five are from the church treasury, going to some preacher or teacher in the Bible department of a Christian College or Alabama School of Religion. My reasoning is that INDIVIDUALS may contribute to the institutions without question, and since there is some restriction to

(Continued on Page 6)

Searching The Scriptures

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Editorial

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MORAL REVOLUTION

Anyone who thinks moral values in this country have not changed has not been paying attention. The pace of change has accelerated from almost imperceptible variations to the lightning swiftness of the present hour in which quantum leaps are being made away from the standards of a former day. Some have chosen to stick their heads in the sand and pretend that all is well. Others have observed some of what is happening and have misjudged the seriousness of the problem. I am convinced that all too few are aware of the origin, nature and significance of the struggle. I confess to neglect in the past in helping to shore up my part of the battle line. No more! My own research in the field of Secular Humanism over the past year first made me sick. Then it made me angry! I am righteously indignant over the attacks made from this enemy on everything which I believe to be true and right.

The Sources

The principle source of the topsy-turvy moral situation facing us these days is Secular Humanism. Observe the following:

"We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest." ? (Humanist Manifesto II, p. 17.) "In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of expletive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered 'evil.' Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire." (Ibid. p. 18.)

With this concept as the underlying philosophy and with about 300,000 known humanists in strategic places of influence in the new media, government

funded social agencies, not to mention the public schools, it is no wonder we have the situation which today exists. Secular humanists comprise a very small part of the population of this nation. But they have gained access to the necessary instruments to remold the thinking of the past generation. Both the past and present generations have been greatly affected by John Dewey and his philosophy of education. While Christians struggle to teach their children at home and for two or three sessions a week in congregational Bible classes, the humanists have under their control, not a **Sunday** school, but a **Monday through Friday** school in which to teach evolution, values clarification strategies, sex education (with no "moralizing") and to advocate a spirit of rebellion against parent, church and country. Thank God for the good school teachers who will not be party to such subversion! But are there enough of these to prevail?

When homosexuality, lesbianism and even bestiality are presented in sex education courses as simply matters of personal choice, and where sexual expression outside marriage, along with trial marriages, group marriages, and what have you, are presented as "alternative life-styles", it is no wonder we have the mess we have today. When values clarification strategies call for classroom discussion on abortion, euthanasia (mercy killing), suicide and suggest that any of these might be acceptable methods of handling human problems, and these students graduate to become doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, preachers and politicians, then the stage is set for the revolution. And that we have on our hands NOW.

This philosophy has spawned a number of social movements designed to aid and abet the triumph of humanism. Hear Gloria Steinam:

"We must understand that what we are attempting is a revolution, not a public relations movement." (OUR RIGHT TO LOVE: A LESBIAN RESOURCE BOOK.)

"By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God." (Saturday Review of Education, March, 1973.) "With the destruction of the family must come a new way of looking at children. They must be seen as the responsibility of an entire society rather than individual parents." (Declaration of Feminism.) Now hear from Jean O'Leary—who was appointed by former President Carter to serve on the National Commission for observance of the International Women's Year):

"The schools must no longer deny students and faculty the right to acknowledge their lesbian identities openly . . . School counselors should be required to take courses in human sexuality in which a positive view of lesbianism is presented... . Courses in Sex education should be taught by persons who have taken the human sexuality courses already mentioned. Students will thus be encouraged to explore alternate life styles, including lesbianism . . . Schools should set up lesbian studies programs in connection with women's

studies programs . . . School libraries should be supplied with bibliographies of lesbian literature and urged to purchase novels, stories, poetry, and non-fiction books that portray the joy of women loving women." (Struggle to End Bias-Report on Sex Bias in Public Schools.) We shall not here speak of the Children's Rights

Movement parented by the same philosophy.

UNBELIEF is the principle root of this sorry mess. In contrast to the rottenness cited herein, listen to words that make sense from the God so despised by the humanists.

"The fool hath said in his hearts. There is no God. They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord?" (Psa. 14:1-4). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

"O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). This last passage flatly contradicts the humanistic

premise that man alone must decide what is ethical.

"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19).

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22).

The Solution

It is only when people realize that the origin, purpose and destiny of man cannot be determined without divine revelation that they will humble themselves before the God who made us all and "find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jno. 8:32).

Instead of humanism enhancing life and its quality, it starts with nothing but guesses, continues through life jumping from situation to situation, doing what "feels" right at the time, and plunges into eternity with no hope and no preparation to meet the very God denied so vehemently by humanists.

The Christian views life as a creation from God, sees it as sacred, reaches out in compassion to the weak, sick, aged and infirm and lives with purpose, dignity and richness of meaning, and then dies in hope of the resurrection.

Humanism takes from us the true bread of life, robs us of the water of life, reduces life to a meaningless journey through a barren wasteland of dreary existence

and then tells us that when it gets to be too much for us, we can just take our lives and end it all. This is progress? Intellectual advancement? The answer to the hungry yearnings of the human heart? Pshaw!

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APOSTASY

The Bible is a book that is constantly warning against apostasy. From Genesis to Revelation we have the inspired writers warning people against falling from grace. One of the great preachers of the last generation, J. D. Tant, warned God's children against apostasy in these words, "Brethren, we are drifting." The apostle Paul warned the brethren in Corinth against being led away, when he said, in I Cor. 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Living in our wonderful land, we have many fine, honest, sincere, religious people that believe and hold tenaciously to the false doctrine of 'Once in grace, always in grace.' This doctrine would be an excellent doctrine to believe if we could find a "thus saith the Lord" for it. This cannot be found. The Lord said: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt. 7:15). The Lord warns his children that there would be false teachers that would come to them dressed as innocent sheep but they would be ravening wolves. They were to take heed of such teachers.

The Apostle John said in I Jno. 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." We are not to believe every man who comes our way preaching. John said many false prophets have gone out into the world.

There is only one thing that is opposite to error and that is TRUTH. If anything is not true then it is false. If it is TRUTH, it can be found in the word of the Lord, or we must conclude that it is not the truth; it is error and we must not believe such. Error makes men slaves. John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." TRUTH is the only thing that is able to make us free. We, therefore, must seek the TRUTH.

Paul warned the people of God when he wrote the young preacher, Timothy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:1-4). Paul said that some would "depart from the truth." They would give heed to the doctrines of devils. He goes

on to say that they would forbid people to marry and command them to abstain from meats. We know this took place in the great apostasy which resulted in the Roman Church.

Paul charges Timothy: I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Paul told Timothy that there would be members in the church of the Lord that would not endure sound doctrine but would have itching ears and that they would look for teachers that will tickle their ears. This is the way apostasy always takes place. This passage is talking about my brethren, members of the church which Jesus purchased with His blood.

Someone might ask, Paul are you not a little old-fogie in warning the brethren against false teachers? Almost every time you write a letter to someone you are telling them to be careful not to fall from grace. Don't you know that there is nothing that you can do to receive the grace of God? And if you receive it you can't lose it, and if you lose it you never had it to begin with. Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit could see down through the centuries that the least departure from the New Testament pattern would result in apostasy. So, Paul continues to warn the children of God.

The next example is that of the churches of Galatia. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul is still warning people against drifting away. The man who preaches anything other than the gospel and leads men away from the truth has the curse of High Heaven upon him. Men who preach soft sermons will soon lead the church into apostasy. We must be constantly on guard against that man who will dare preach anything other than the gospel of Jesus Christ. When men won't preach the gospel, the only thing that will result is apostasy. The only way to keep from having apostasy is for each man who preaches to preach the truth with all the power that is in his being just as it is written in the word of the Lord. Preaching like Paul, Peter, Philip, and the Master did will keep God's children from going into apostasy. We need powerful, positive preaching today regardless of what man may think.

I would like for you to notice the place that apostasy always occurs. This is true with God's people in the Old Testament. It is true of the first century Christians and true with Christians of every century. When we know

where apostasy will take place we will know where to be constantly on guard. Let us notice where such took place in the Old Testament.

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (I Sam. 8:4-7). In the Old Testament Apostasy took place in the government or in the organization of God's people. This same thing is true today.

Paul said, in warning the elders of the church in Ephesus when they met him at Miletus, that among them men would arise teaching false doctrine: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31). Paul for over three years warned these elders that a great apostasy would take place after he leaves. These elders are warned that grievous wolves will come unto them and will have no regard for the flock of God. But Paul goes on to warn them that "of your own selves" men would arise teaching things that are contrary to the doctrine of Christ and that they would lead men away with them. Paul, where will this take place? In the eldership of the Lord's church. Paul, did you do anything about this? I warned the elders for three years night and day with tears.

The last writer of the New Testament had no longer put aside his pen until we see the very thing about which Paul warned the elders at Ephesus.

It took place in the organization of the Lord's church. The Lord's church has a very simple organization in that it is composed of elders and deacons in every local congregation. The New Testament mentions no other. Everything went along fine as long as man was satisfied with the LORD'S organization but when man became dissatisfied with the Lord's organization and tried to improve upon it, apostasy was certainly the result. In New Testament times each local congregation looked after its OWN affairs. Each congregation was separate and independent of all other congregations. Soon men wanted to improve upon God's way of doing things. The first departure was exalting one man in the eldership to be the chief elder. This taking place in different areas, there had to be the chief elder of the chief elders. About 590 A.D. there were five "elders" who were looked to by the people. One in Rome, Alexander, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Antioch. In 606 A.D. the one in Rome

was crowned Pope Boniface III. The departure that Paul warned the elders in Ephesus against resulted in the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope as its head.

(Continued From Page 1)

the use of these funds, they must come from the CHURCH treasury. This places the "anti" institutional group on the side of the "pro" group before the merger takes place. They must commit themselves to some indirect support of schools from the church treasury.

The church has no business supporting preachers in "Christian Colleges" under any circumstances. No college or school is the church or any part of the church. The church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15, 16). The church supports preachers and teachers in their work in connection with the church. The school has absolutely no claim upon any support or assistance from the church of any kind to any degree! The church cannot "indirectly" give assistance to any school or preaching society by supporting preachers and teachers who render their services there. I do not believe the church and school should be bound together in any way, directly or indirectly. I do not believe the shadow of either should fall across the other.

6. All food and beverages for church meals will be provided by members rather than paid for out of the church treasury. This point assumes that the scriptures teach that the church may have "meals" and the only issue is who will provide the meals. It has always been my understanding of the scriptures that what the church is authorized to do, it may provide. Further more, it has the organization to do it.

It seems we have the food, fun and frolic as congregational activity, but the individuals must provide the food and beverages. The only issue in this point seems to be who will pay for it, the individual or the church treasury? Maybe the "box-in-the-vestibule" would solve this problem also.

7. Until elders are appointed, all affairs will be conducted by male members in monthly meetings. This is usually the manner in which the affairs of a newly formed congregation are conducted until such time as elders are selected and appointed.

8. The attitude toward all congregations in the area will be as if no differences ever existed. Members from other congregations in the area will be used in public worship without discrimination between "pro" or "anti" institutional convictions.

This point is a proviso for involving as many other congregations as will participate. It will likely prove embarrassing to all concerned, because visitors who come and are called upon to participate in prayer and song leading may create problems by pressing their convictions beyond tolerance, or embarrassing the merger by coldly rejecting invitations to participate because they believe it to be a compromise!

9. This arrangement will continue for a six-month trial. If it works, put the arrangement on a permanent basis.


Point nine puts a question mark on the whole arrangement. If the majority in either group decides it unwise to continue, the effort will be terminated.

It Didn't Work

Brother Tant tells us that after a while, "suspicion and distrust began to overcome the spirit of love and good-will." Some "pro" institutional brethren developed the feeling that at some future date they might want to undertake some program or work that the "anti" brethren would oppose and then trouble would follow. And some of the "anti" institutional brethren feared that in the future the "pro" brethren might go beyond the word of God in some of their church projects.

I do not believe it was as much suspicion, mistrust and unwillingness to take the initiative as it was REALISM. Both groups realized that they held different views even though at the time they were doing the same thing. Their attitudes toward authority, toward the nature and work of the church, and their unwillingness at the time to give up their conviction kept them apart.

Brother Tant writes as if the whole matter is just a trivial difference of opinions over methods, expediencies and programs. The issue is the same as the instrument of music in worship and the Missionary Society supported by churches. The Christian Church and the church of Christ could have as easily "merged" on this nine point plan, because submission to divine authority is the issue.



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WHEN WAS CHRIST'S CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

We hear a great deal today about the Lord's church and its establishment. Was it, as the Mormons say, established in 147 B.C., according to Mosiah 18:17 (Book of Mormon)? Or, was it established, as the Baptist claim, during the personal ministry of Christ? It is my understanding of the Scriptures that the Lord's church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ in Acts 2.

The first thing I would like for us to observe about the Lord's church is that the church and kingdom are not separate institutions, for they have the same marks of identity.

Beginning of Kingdom

In Daniel 2:44 we read of Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which he stated that the God of heaven would establish His kingdom during the 3rd kingdom from the Babylonian kingdom, which would mean that The Lord's Kingdom would be established during the days of the Roman kings. This could have meant, as some claim, that Christ's kingdom would be established during his personal ministry, for Christ's personal ministry was during the days of the Roman kings. However, Jesus said in Mark 9:1, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Also, Luke records the fact that Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Luke said of Joseph, "... who also himself waited for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51). Thus it seems obvious to me in both of these instances that the kingdom was not in existence; but was yet future.

The point that Jesus made in Mark 9:1 about the kingdom coming with power is another point that must be considered. In Acts 1:4-8, Jesus, before his ascension, told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem, for they were to receive power. And, according to Acts 2, they did receive the power, by means of the Holy Spirit, to speak in tongues (languages) as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4).

In this same connection, David saw a vision in Daniel 7:13-14 that I believed was fulfilled in Acts 1. In Acts 1:9 Christ was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Daniel said that when he beheld Christ coming with the clouds, "He came to the An-

cient of days." When this took place, "there was given Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. . ." But this is exactly what took place in Acts 2:5. Men out of every nation under heaven were gathered together, and Jesus was preached unto them as having fulfilled the prophecy of David (Ps. 132:11); as now being at the right hand of God exalted. Also, this was the first time that Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), had been carried out.

Beginning of The Church

Not only was Acts 2 the beginning point of the Christ's kingdom, it was also the beginning point for the church. In Isaiah 2:2-3 we read that the Lord's house was to be established in the top of the mountains. In the New Testament the "Lord's house" is identified as "the church of the living God. . ." (1 Tim. 3:15). However, you will observe that, as in the case of the kingdom, that "all nations were to flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2). "The law. . . the word of the Lord, was to go forth from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). But as we have already observed in the section on the kingdom, repentance and remission of sins were first to be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Thus the identifying marks of both the kingdom and church, by Old Testament prophets and Christ, lead us to the conclusion that the kingdom and church are one and the same thing, having their beginning on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ.

More to Follow.

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

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NEHEMIAH: LET US RISE UP & BUILD The Place Of Growth In Spiritual Revival

In Chapters 9 and 10 of Nehemiah we have seen the need for total commitment to the cause as being an absolute necessity for spiritual revival. Nehemiah saw the need for a committed leadership as he addressed the priests, Levites and rulers in Chapter 10. We too need a commitment leadership and a commitment people to follow.

In Chapter 11 of the work of Nehemiah, we see how he continues to revive Jerusalem to the place where the reconstruction ought to be, both in the Lord's sight and in the sight of all nations. For Jerusalem to be

restored, Nehemiah saw that the need of the city could be outlined in 3 words: OCCUPATION, DELEGATION and DEDICATION. Truly, if we today are to restore the New Testament church, we are going to have to seek (1) Occupation, (2) Delegation, (3) Dedication. Let us look at these terms as they apply to Nehemiah and to us today.

OCCUPATION

In Nehemiah 7 we find the census of the people being taken by Nehemiah. The result showed there was a very sparse population of their people in the capitol city of Jerusalem. Of course, this one statistic posed many great problems. First, they could not successfully defend the city because of this lack of man power. Therefore, the city was extremely vulnerable and could easily be overrun by its enemies. Most of the people had chosen to live in the outlying regions of Judea. If the outlying area suffered an enemy attack, the farmers and rural village dwellers would lose their crops and possessions all right, but they could also flee to the mountains and save themselves. Those in Jerusalem would be walled up and left to die. Another great disadvantage to living in the capitol city of Jerusalem was the additional labor that one had to give to live there. The fortifications required constant guarding, both day and night, and this brought on additional responsibilities which the citizens had to bear. Yet, in spite of such disadvantages, Nehemiah heeded men and women to leave the security of their rural environment and come into the city to live. Nehemiah desperately needed population growth to OCCUPY the city of Jerusalem. Without this growth the city and all the work would be doomed because the inhabitants were too few to do the work and to carry on the growth that a thriving, developing, and growing city needed.

Nehemiah had the people cast lots and called for volunteers to live in the city. One out of every ten was called on to move to the city along with all those that willingly volunteered to do so. Then following this procedure, Nehemiah lists the names of those that came to take part in helping the city to have a future.

APPLICATION

It does not take a Solomon to see the parallel between the city of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day and the city of Zion, the church of our day. The need for growth in the kingdom is real! How real? Throughout this country many congregations are disbanding, selling their buildings and spreading to worship with other congregations. In several articles written in the January and February issues of *Searching the Scriptures*, we looked at the negative growth rate of the church in this country. After the shock waves settled, far too many expressed that this was the exact situation where they were worshipping. Even since this time last year, several congregations have closed their doors and sold their buildings because there were "not enough people in ZION." We are not reaching even our own children! Most estimates we read tell us that we are losing 60 to 70 percent of our young people

by the time they are freshmen in college. If they leave home and go to a State supported University, the statistics tell us that 90% of them will not be faithful after their freshman year. We are not baptizing the lost! The typical congregation has had no success with reaching lost souls in the world and to compound the problem, the aged saints are growing older and going to their final reward. The growth rate in the church works just like our check books. We cannot keep on spending money when we never make a deposit. We have lost numbers and numbers of members to the world, we have lost our children to the world, and we have lost our leadership by deaths. Now add to the list our followers, which we are continually losing by deaths. We are witnessing all this and are still not making the needed deposits into the Body so it can grow and develop.

One terrible phenomena that we see in far too many congregations is that the church is becoming a society of women and children. The Godly man is becoming a vanishing breed. Again, statistically we find what our own common sense usually tells us is true if we will but lift up our eyes and see the vision of reality:

1970—1974 there was 10% more women than men in the church. (Keep in mind that women live 5% longer than men, so we are actually doubling the statistical average.)

1975—1979 the percentage of women over men grew from 10% to 12%.

1979 alone (the last year for which we have figures) women increased to a 16% advantage over the men.

In just ten years' time, when the statistical growth rate shows zero or worse, we find the number of men in the church declining. Maybe you have not thought of this as being the case in your particular congregation. If not, consider how many males you have teaching and how many women you have teaching. Consider as well who does the visiting, the personal work, or the teaching of the children, and you will most likely find that it is the women who are doing all the work. Look again at those you have baptized in the last few years. The odds are great that you will have converted far more women than men. Brethren, Nehemiah is not the only one that has had trouble getting individuals to "occupy Jerusalem."

Consider now the consequences of this trend in the church. If we continue to have the same percentage of reduction in the numbers of men in the church, think of the results:

1. Erosion of the leadership base. No army is or can be any better than its generals and its commanders. No company is ever better than its top-level management. **NO CONGREGATION IS ANY BETTER THAN IT'S ELDERS!** If you have 5 talented men in leadership, you have a 5-talent church. What's going to become of some great congregations of today that are carrying the torch of Truth so highly and allowing it to burn so brightly, when their leadership changes from a 5-talent leadership to a 2-

talent one?

Sit down right now with a piece of paper and write down the names of who the elders will be fifteen years from now at the church where you attend. Will you have men of vision and strength or will you just be using the "best we have"? The answer to this question could result in a death knell to any congregation! How many young men have you developed? Whom have you baptized that will within the next 15 years have matured enough to lead the Lord's church? We are facing a leadership crisis in the kingdom! We have so many that have devoted themselves to jobs and positions of status in employment that they have forgotten the need to grow spiritually. We have seen families falling apart, or children going to the Devil and disqualifying others. As urgent as our need is for gospel preachers, our need for Godly leaders is even more so. Too few are willing to try to cross the battle zone of life which is necessary to qualify themselves to fulfill this mission.

2. A reduction in numbers of those who wish to preach the gospel of the Lord. Brother James P. Needham estimated that we have less than 10 American men and their families on foreign soil to preach the gospel of Christ. Yet, consider what is before us:

	1980	By The Year 2000
China	977 million	274 million more
India	672 million	302 million more
USSR	266 million	45 million more
Indonesia	142 million	62 million more

Shouldn't figures such as these cause us to ask why we have only 10 gospel preachers on foreign soil? What if we had 100 gospel preachers on foreign soil? What if we had 1,000 gospel preachers on foreign soil? Brethren, the great commission says "GO"! It is a commission to GO, and not a permission to go. Read the Book of Acts of the Apostles and you will see the New Testament Church was a growing church, which was utterly consumed with love for lost souls. At the conclusion of the Jerusalem section (6:7), they were growing. At the conclusion of the Judean and Samaritan section they were growing (9:31). At the conclusion of the Caesarea and Antioch section they were also growing. At the conclusion of the Galatia section they were being built up and growing (16:5). As the gospel blasted its way into Asia and Europe, the word of God was growing (19:20). Finally, in the concluding section, the Roman section of Acts closes with Paul preaching the gospel and people coming to Him unhindered (28:30-31).

Now, does that sound like the 20th Century American brand of Christianity? Brethren, we must take a searching look at ourselves: Perhaps in some measure we are able to say we are growing at home or across some waters on foreign soil. Yet, we still with unashamedness proclaim ourselves as doing exactly what they were doing in the New Testament. Are we? They faced whips, they faced chains, they faced arenas with wild beasts. They also faced Nero on the throne,

and faced unbelief and slavery. We need to realize, as Pogo might say it, that "we have met the enemy and he is US." On our knees is where we need to go to our Lord, both in public and in private, confessing the sins of our souls and the sins of our people. Daniel, in Daniel 9, went before the Lord, both in public and in private, confessing sins of the soul and sins of the people, and prayed for restitution. Such is our urgent task for today.

ARROWS of
TRUTH for
denominational
error

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FRAGMENTATION

The article below was written by James Boyd, who preaches for the East Main Church of Christ in Tupelo, Mississippi. Brother Boyd is what some would call a "conservative" liberal. He does not consider himself a liberal. I have said many times in the past that the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are relative terms. It depends on who is talking. From where I stand, I consider him as a liberal because he believes in the sponsoring church and making donations from the church treasury to orphan homes. However, I can understand why he thinks others are liberal and his position is the correct one. In other words, I feel he is "liberal" for the same reason he writes about others who are "liberal." I will defend both his right and my right to consider certain brethren in the liberal camp. The reason brother Boyd does not consider himself liberal, is because he thinks the Bible authorizes sponsoring churches and donations to orphan asylums. In his article (which I consider to be very good) he uses the cognomen "liberal" very freely and is somewhat implacable with reference to their doctrine. Here is his article:

"Fragmentation means separation into segments or parts, shattering into numerous fragments. There are those that are guilty of breaking the brotherhood into fragments, causing division, thereby weakening the cause of Christ and giving service to Satan. The attitude and actions of liberal minded brethren seldom reflect fairness and objectivity, even though they are quick to denounce anyone who does not go along with what may be their way. Unless you go along with the programs, lectures, plans, promotions that they instigate, in which they promote their liberalism, you are accused of fragmentizing the brotherhood. Regardless of who is featured and what is said, you are expected to go along. 'Go along' brethren are so numerous that you

either 'go along' or you are the culprit and divider. Unless you jump on whatever wagon the liberals are pulling you are fragmentizing the brotherhood. Unless you support some school, regardless of what is taught there, you are the violator of unity. Unless you endorse the preachers with the liberal bent, again you are the bad guy. If you refuse to cooperate with their liberal efforts, even though they include liberal teaching and teachers, you stand condemned of fragmentation, according to their thinking. Why does it never occur to liberals that their insistence on upholding unsound preachers and practices, defending them, going along anyway, is the real cause of fragmentation? By what standard is anybody obligated to go along with what men, proven to be unreliable, want to promote? Error, when preached and practiced causes fragmentation. Following the truth only separates those that follow truth from those who will not. Many of the big band, big promoters, big names among us are nothing but fragmentation experts, riding on their cloud of self-appointed superiority, so high and mighty that they feel no obligation to give Bible authority for what they say, do and endorse. 'Go alongism' has subverted many leaders, preachers, churches, schools and papers. And if you do not 'go along' anyway, consider yourself guilty of fragmentation, as some would have it. If you run the risk of the loss of friendship to stand for the truth, and had rather stand alone with the right than 'go along' with the wrong, then expect to be branded by some people as something ugly. It seems it is going to take the day of judgment to convince some of our brethren, even big name brethren, that error is not as good as the truth, and faithfulness to Christ demands no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11) and false doctrines (Rom. 16:17)."

Brother Boyd used the word "liberal" at least seven times in this short article. This article tells it like it is. You either go along or you are out! Thirty years ago this article would have been great. We said the same thing about the men who started their big promotions known as the "sponsoring churches", etc. Brother Boyd bemoans the fact that the "liberals" are taking the church down the road of digression. I said the same thing thirty years ago and brother Boyd, they treated me exactly the same way they are treating you. The big name preachers (as you call them) accused me of fragmentation. So I would say the chickens have indeed come home to roost! Brother Boyd, tells us these "big name promoters" with their self appointed superiority ride so high they do not need Bible authority. I said the same thing thirty years ago! We asked for Bible authority for the sponsoring church arrangement and the only answer was "fragmentation." Wouldn't it be great if courageous men like brother Boyd would shake completely free from the shackles of institutionalism and join hands and hearts with us in the spread of the gospel? May God hasten the day when we stand as one man against the encroachments and innovations of our day and demand Bible Authority for all we practice.

WAYSIDE

GLEANINGS

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**PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD
EXISTING MORAL CONDITIONS—
(NO. IV)**

In Ulysses Tennyson said, "I am a part of all that I have met." I do not understand that the great Tennyson meant that because one encounters evil that evil necessarily becomes a part of one's character. Rather, he was saying that a mental impression becomes a part of mercy and takes its place in one's decision making which in turn affects life for weal or woe. There is another sense, however, in which one may become so affected by his environment that his ever-present surroundings tend to enmesh him so gradually that he loses all sense of his moral responsibility. He may not consciously participate directly in an evil yet what he does or fails to do with reference to evil may well affect his own family.

I have often reflected upon the life of Abraham's nephew Lot who is described as "that righteous man" whom God delivered from the destruction of Sodom. In 2 Peter :7, 8, it is said that Lot was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." When one studies Lot's life and that of his family he finds little to indicate that Lot's innate righteousness had much effect on that family. It appears that he had not less than four daughters, two of whom married Sodomites. If these two daughters escaped Sodom's destruction I am unaware of it. We know that when Lot warned their husbands, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city," that Lot "seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (Gen. 19:14). The thought of the impending doom of Sodom was a big joke to them and possibly to Lot's two daughters married to them! Except for this one last minute statement of Lot I find no evidence that Lot exercised any verbal restraint over any of his family. I see Peter's description of Lot as a man who was greatly irritated and, within himself, strongly condemnatory of the evil of other people but who lifted neither voice nor hand to prevent Sodom's wage from moving into his own family. The shameful incestuous scheme and conduct of his two virgin daughters with reference to their own father simply underlines the failure of Lot within his own family (Gen. 19:30-38). Lot was "righteous" in his personal freedom from Sodom's sins but when he

"pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12) something more than a mere residential change occurred. When he moved into Sodom Sodom moved into Lot's family! How sad! How sad!

How many who read these lines are modern Lots? Have you lost your own children? Why? It is certainly not because you manifested before them a clean life characterized by pure speech, clean words and charity toward your fellows. Or is it because, like Eli, whose "sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:13) that they are lost? Certainly parents cannot rightly expect their children to do right when they practice evil before them but from Eli's life we learn that a single reproof is not enough. When Eli was old it was too late for him to correct their fornication "with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation". It was too late for him to ask, "why do ye such things?" It was too late to observe, "Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear"! It was too late to exclaim, "Ye make the Lord's people to transgress!" (1 Sam. 2:22-24).

Is the story of Eli and his sons your story, dear parents? I view conditions in many families where parents are modern Lots and Elis. There are parents who are morally clean, pray regularly and irregularly, read and study the Bible regularly and irregularly, who are present at every worship service of the local church, and are recognized by their brethren as God-fearing, humble and faithful servants of the Lord who love their brethren, are charitable toward the needy sick and poor and are evangelistically minded. These same parents, however, are lax in their handling of their children in various areas of life wherein those same children are most vulnerable to Satan's wiles. It is not that parents are negative toward legitimate social needs—the "good times" period of a child's life—but they simply either do not know or have forgotten the power of "youthful lusts". They therefore keep no vigil on the signs which point up the potentially (if not already) "fallen" daughter or son in the realm of sex, and/or drugs and drink.

"Everybody's doing it" is the excuse of youth and many parents. They assume that their acquaintance with the parents of the girlfriend or boyfriend of their child guarantees an exemplary lifestyle for the children of both sets of parents. In this assumption they are not only unwise; they are simply stupid! No questions are asked as to where they go, what they do, with whom, when, or how! And they get no answers till it is too late to ask questions! No parental check is made to determine the "whereabouts, whatabouts, and whyabouts" of their sons and daughters. They learn too late that daughter is pregnant. Their children are using drugs and are enjoying the freedom granted by unsuspecting parents who by their naivety have taken the bridle off for wild forage by the children they feed, clothe and shelter. How stupid can some parents be?

Specifics

I have no inclination to present a long list or write at length on those I mention but here submit three illustrations of the point before us.

1. **Unlimited automobile use.** It is a widespread practice for parents either to purchase or underwrite a 16-year old's automobile on or as soon after his sixteenth birthday as he or she can obtain a restrictive or regular driver's license. Does a parent think a 16-year old has the mental and emotional maturity—the "common sense"—that the parent has? Does the parent have any responsibility regarding who drives that car, who occupies it, where it goes, when and where and what it carries? Parents who love their son or daughter with the love of God know. They don't assume. They don't guess. They know! It is a God-given responsibility that belongs to the parent who belongs to Christ to know about his child's lifestyle and associates. If Ephesians 6:1-3 does not teach this, how can a professed Christian fulfill his parental duties? A young man once remarked to me that the average parent doesn't have any idea regarding the immoral things that happen in their own automobile when they turn it over to Johnny. He observed, "In many instances they become warehouses on wheels!" In one instance personally known to me, a young Christian loaned another boy his car. The second boy was arrested on a traffic charge. Police searched the car and found marijuana in the glove compartment. The driver denied any knowledge of it. Police charged the car owner with "possession". With great difficulty and embarrassment the innocent car owner was finally cleared while the "liar" was released. Parents have a responsibility toward what they provide for their minor children.

2. **Familiarity between sexes.** The handling and fondling of the body of the opposite sex outside marriage produces sexual sin. Everybody who believes the Bible knows that God condemns sex libertinism outside marriage. Within recent years youngsters have become increasingly "bold with their public displays of familiarity, even to the utter disgust of many persons. In homes where both parents or one of them are Christians it is not unusual to observe familiarities between young people with no reproof whatever. If this performance takes place in parental presence, who is so naive as to think it becomes less away from parental observation? A few months later broken hearted parents call an elder or preacher in inquisitive wonderment and dismay. They are pleading for help. They can't understand how the body of their "innocent little daughter" became the receptacle for an unborn and unwanted baby. Mothers assume erroneously when they think roving hands in the front room are less active in a bedroom, parked car or elsewhere. Mothers and fathers have an obligation to teach both daughters and sons that unbridled passion is not the love that "worketh no ill to its neighbor." This is not love; it is sin! When parents do not think, naturally they do not "understand" why and how such a tragedy could happen to "our little girl"! When parents stand by uncomplainingly when foreplay is public and unchallenged they have none but themselves to blame when fertile ground for seed produces a harvest of unmistakable sin!

3. **Suggestive attire.** When a woman's attire is worn in such scanty arrangement as to draw the stare of a

man from her face to the parts of her body which play a prominent role in her sexual attractiveness or when she is so unattired, bound or draped as to emphasize her physical body for closer emotional inspection by a man, who is improperly, indecently and suggestively dressed or undressed. When a man exposes his genitals through tight bluejeans or pants he is not properly dressed in the presence of women for obvious reason. No professed Christian would want her husband thus publicly exposed and no Christian wants his wife exposed to the lascivious lookings of another man. A Christian does his wife and daughter a loving favor when he keeps them from such exposure even as a dutiful wife and/or mother does the same toward husband or son. When Christians allow the style makers of Paris, London and New York rather than God to determine what they shall wear as regards modesty, they have displayed Jesus Christ as Lord of their hearts and lives and replaced him with Satan. If not, why not?

ANANIAS—AN UNSUNG BIBLE HERO

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A Sermon Outline—

INTRODUCTION: Let us look at the man who helped the most devoted Christian in the New Testament. You may ask, "Why waste a whole sermon on him since he is only mentioned twice?" (Acts 9:10-22; 22:12-21). These verses tell of Saul's conversion. What is said of Ananias is not in the Bible just to take up space for there are some valuable lessons.

There are two other men named Ananias that are probably better known than this one. One is found in Acts 5. He lied to God and was struck dead. The other is in Acts 23,24. He was the high priest before whom Paul later appeared and who ordered Paul to be smitten on the mouth. However, we are concerned about the Ananias of Acts 9 and 22.

Ananias is just another one of those little noticed characters who did a great work in the kingdom. He was just another disciple who was not in the limelight, yet he helped one of the best known men in the Bible. He should be an inspiration to thousands who are called upon to live the Christian life under the ordinary everyday circumstances. The ordinary life is often the most difficult. The day to day struggle of the ordinary is what wears out many Christians. This life is often lived without praise, recognition, or glory. But this is what the Lord wants—people who will be "faithful over a few things that he might make them rulers over many." Beware of belittling the "common place" Christian life. Studying Ananias will be a blessing to all who feel their place of service is small, unnoticed, or unimportant. I. HIS CHARACTER. We are told three in-

teresting things.

- A. *He Was "A Certain Disciple,"* 9:10. He was not an apostle nor are we told he was a Great Preacher. No indication he was any kind of an official, leader, or big evangelist for a large church. We never hear of him before or after Paul's conversion. Here was just an ordinary disciple living for Jesus in Damascus—unknown to many, but God knew all about him (Heb. 4:12, 13). (God's ability to know all about us should not bother the righteous. Rather, it should be a source of comfort. Ponder that for a moment). May God give us thousands more who need not the limelight to serve the Master! Thousands more who see that publicity is not essential either to faithfulness or true success! Thousands more who can be satisfied with realizing "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," even though the world may never know. These have been the kind of people God has used and will use. May each of us be willing to be just "a certain disciple."
- B. *"A Devout Man According To The Law."* He practiced what he preached and lived what he believed. Not merely a disciple "by name," but in reality. What he professed to be matched what he actually was. His life could endure the microscope of the law. Would our testing be that good? Can people tell that you have experienced the new birth? Can they hear your conversation and conclude that you are a believer? When they see you on the job or in school is it obvious that you are a Christian? If they visited your home would they see large sums spent on irrelevant matters but little on Bible study aids, gospel papers, etc.?
- C. *He Had "A Good Report Of All The Jews Which Dwelt There."* Here is another crowning tribute to his profession of Christ. Ananias believed Jesus was the "Lord" of this life, 9:17 (LORD: ruler, governor; one who has the right to command and expect obedience). *The Jews did not believe this at all, yet they still respected him!* He was such an honest, moral and upright man that they just could not ignore his life (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:7). Evidently he had lived a good life for several years, for such a testimony cannot be gained in a few minutes or day. "You can buy ready made clothes, but you can't buy ready made character." It is no small thing to have our character praised by those who differ with us. Obviously, their admiration was not

because he was a compromiser. His assisting Paul was to aid the Gentiles! (9:15).

II. HIS READINESS TO SERVE

- A. *When The Lord Spoke, He Said "Behold, I Am Here,"* (9:10). That is a simple reply but one that shows he was ready and waiting to serve. He was ready as Isaiah who quickly answered, "Here am I; send me." Ready as Samuel who said "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth."
- B. *Many Christians Have Missed Opportunities To Serve God Because They Weren't Ready.* They had "too many irons in the fire," "too many fish to fry," "too many fingers in too many pies," and all those other feeble catch-all excuses. We have a problem with priorities (Mt. 6:33).

III. HE WAS ALSO WILLING

- A. *He Was Sent To The Street Called Straight And He Went.* Before this, he questioned the Lord (9:13-17). This question has several possible meanings. He may have been making sure that this is what the Lord said. That's fine. We should make sure of all things. Maybe he was so astonished at the news concerning Saul that he was simply verifying for his own good. Or maybe he was still looking at it from the human standpoint and asking, "Lord, are we talking about the same man?"
1. Any way you read it, his question was not unusual and we have no reason to view it as a weakness of faith. It was an understandable question and was no easy thing the Lord had requested. Saul had come to Damascus purposely to persecute Christians. Look at his work (9:1, 2; 8:1-3). Ananias' question seems justified. Once the Lord assured him that this was right, he went and did what God told him. Many, like Jonah, would have headed in the other direction!
- B. *In Gethsemane Jesus Illustrated The Attitude Of Ananias In The Expression "Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done."* A place of complete surrender to God's will. Ananias may have been afraid. He had nothing to cling to for protection but God's promise. That was enough. He learned a great lesson—that the *will* of God will never lead us to a place where the *grace* of God cannot protect us if we have enough faith.

IV. HE WAS FAITHFUL

- A. *He Did WHAT God Told Him The WAY*

God Told Him. His faithfulness is shown in a threefold way.

1. In his *love* as a Christian. His attitude toward Saul when he viewed him for the first time was as a kinsman—a brother (9:17). He didn't bring up Saul's wicked past. His attitude was "if God will forgive you and accept you, so will I." That love is needed today. Ananias put his hands on Saul and he received his sight. There is irony here, for Saul had come to lay the hand of violence on Ananias. Ananias laid the gentle hand of a Christian on Saul. He was not angry, but faithful in showing God's love (Jn. 13:35).
2. In his *loyalty* as a Christian—loyalty of the highest kind. There is no record that Ananias even told Saul his name, but his first words after greeting Saul were "The Lord, even Jesus . . . "In essence, who I am is not important, but only who sent me.
3. In his *lowliness*. May God give us men who seek to exalt the name of Jesus instead of their own name. In this we also see an example of our Lord's non-respect of persons. Paul was to be an apostle. He was chosen to write most of the New Testament and more of the Bible than any other man. It is not without deep significance that such a one should be baptized by one who is merely described as "a certain disciple."

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM. Of the few words our Lord saw fit to record from Ananias, he thought it important enough to include the words of Acts 22:16. The conversion of the man chosen to write so much of the Bible ought to overwhelm us with the importance of baptism! If the great apostle could not bypass baptism, what makes anyone today think he can?

CONCLUSION: As I read this account I cannot help but be thankful. I am so thankful that Ananias was faithful to the message God gave him and that he did not shrink back because popular opinion was against him. I wish more men today would be faithful to the Word. We need more "certain disciples."

THE PARABLE OF BASEBALL TEAMS

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"And if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Tim. 2:5).

In ancient times, in various communities, there were many independently organized baseball teams all playing the grand old game by the same rules, as written in the baseball rule book. Teams that had never heard of each other had nine players per team, four bases per field, three strikes for outs, four balls for walks, three outs per inning for each team. Except for occasional arguments, over some judgment call, these teams played the game in harmony and good will—all recognizing the common rules that governed play everywhere.

Behold, things began to change. A few pitchers began to insist that they be given a fifth ball, a few batters wanted a fourth strike and a few coaches insisted on a fourth out in some innings. A great many on the team, not well versed in the rules, could see no harm in such a small matter. Besides, why object and cause trouble over one little strike or ball or an occasional extra out? Then there were the middle of the roaders who were "five-ballers", but not "four-strikers". Others were "three-strikers", but "four-outers".

But there were a few baseball purists who insisted that all abide by the rules just as they were written in the book.

Teams were thrown into disarray. Argument characterized nearly every game. The "four-strike" pitchers and "five-ball" batters insisted that those who objected were hindering the progress of the game and could either see it their way or leave the team. In fact, it was suggested that if they did not go along that pretty soon they would have no place to play. But, there were still those few pitchers and other players that insisted that they could not in good conscience participate in these changes in the game while claiming to be true to the original rule book. But, they still wanted to play the game they loved so much. So, they did the only thing they could do. They left team mates and field they had helped build, rented a field on the other side of the tracks, and continued to play the game in peace according to the rules of the book.

The "four-strikers" and "five-ballers" continued in their course. On many of their fields it is not unusual to see five bases (used only during extra innings, of course), a shuffle board court in the infield, basketball goals in the outfield, etc.—but the signs above the entrances to their playing fields still read "BASEBALL FIELD" and the times for baseball games are still

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posted. Many of the players still insisted that they were the same team and were playing the game just like they did in ancient times.

By and by, some players from both groups; some too young to remember how it had been and not having read the rule book much, some who still think the teams had divided over what color uniforms they were to wear, and others who were having second thoughts; began to wonder why these teams cannot play together again.

One starting pitcher, of the purist camp, who had opposed and been quarantined by the "four-strikers" and had trained younger pitchers to oppose them got a great idea: "Let's get together again".

"Surely there must be some device that can bring us together in love and good will so that we can all play together again", he thought.

Behold, there was! They could alternate their pitchers. One game would be pitched by a "four-striker". The next game would be pitched by a "three-striker". During one game they would lay a towel over the fifth base and take it off for the next. Anyone who wanted to could play shuffle-board or basketball, just as long as they did not get in the way of catching the baseball. How wonderful it would be to play baseball again with fellow-players without confusion that has existed for the past 25 years!

But, a few purists are still insisting on three strikes, four balls, and three outs. They still don't see what place shuffle-board and basketball has on a baseball field, even if they are not paid for out of the main gate receipts. You see, the problem of funding the shuffle-board court and basketball goals has been "solved" by a box-in-the-dugout.

The "three-strikers" and "four-ballers" are perfectly willing to play with the others again if they will go back to three strikes, four balls, three outs; if they will remove the shuffle-board courts and basketball goals out into a more fitting place completely separated from baseball activity—after all this is supposed to be a baseball team. They still love the others, as they always have, but they love the game of baseball more, and have even a greater love and respect for the rules as they were originally written.

"Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2:7—New King James Version).

**SCOPES II
THE GREAT DEBATE**

by

Louisiana State Senator **BILL KEITH**

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"AW SHUCKS!"

**Keith Ward
Rt. 2 Box 790b
Lake Butler, FL 32054**

This old euphemism gained a new meaning for me last fall. I received permission from the owner of a cornfield to glean behind the combine. I learned that the ends of the field where the combine had turned around were rich pickings, and soon I became adept at spotting an ear lying among the weeds or outside the row on a bent stalk. Sometimes though, I would be fooled. I would bend and reach, and the ear would collapse on air, nothing but shucks.

Modern religion is a bit like that. The preacher gets up and talks for thirty minutes, and he barely mentions two scriptures. You wanted food for the soul, you reached, but "aw shucks!"

You read your Bible and notice some things in it are different than the way they do them at your church. Or there is a discrepancy between what you have always been taught and what you now read. You ask your "pastor" and he talks ten minutes and you go away impressed with the fine sounding words. But, later reflection shows that no answer was given. You wanted guidance, but "aw shucks!"

Sorting through religions and churches is like following that combine, a lot more shucks than corn. All denominations are like the shucks, empty of true religion. They have creeds not known in the Bible, fail to preach and teach certain parts of the Bible (Read Acts and First Corinthians), And practice things they cannot • show scriptural authority for. But, they claim to be the "full ear" with good nourishment. A cow will starve to death on shucks, and so will your soul when fed on denominationalism. Why not give them up and practice Christianity the way the New Testament teaches? Feed your soul on the word of God.

The field is the world (Mt 13:38). Shucks are a form of chaff (Mt. 3:12). Some day God's reapers will come to the harvest. When they reach out to you, will they find an ear filled with grace and good works? Or, will you be cast aside with other chaff to be burned, and hear that awful judgment pronounced on the quality and state of your soul, "Aw Shucks."

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2 CORINTHIANS 9:13

**Roger Hillis
R.R. 4
Olney, IL 62450**

"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men."

This verse is a favorite with our pro-institutional brethren who believe it authorizes the church, out of its treasury, to support needy people who are not Christians. But a closer examination of this verse and the surrounding circumstances show that this is not the case.

Let me point out that no one believes that needy non-Christians do not deserve help. Contrary to popular rumor, conservative churches of Christ are neither orphan haters nor against helping the needy. We simply believe that it is not the work of the Lord's church to help non-Christians in their benevolent needs. Read Acts 2:41-47, 4:31-35, 6:1-4, 11:27-30 and others.

There are passages which deal with helping non-Christians. But each of those verses apply to individual responsibility, not church action. For instance, study the contexts surrounding Galatians 6:10 and James 1:27.

There are two important questions that will help to understand the meaning of 2 Corinthians 9:13. Why was the money collected and how was the money used?

Why Was The Money Collected?

Every verse which deals with the collection of these funds specifies that SAINTS (Christians) were those who would receive them.

"Now concerning the COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye" (1 Corinthians 16:1).

"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the SAINTS. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain CONTRIBUTION FOR THE POOR SAINTS which are at Jerusalem" (Romans 15:25-26).

This money (or goods) was collected under the pretense of being for needy Christians. Did Paul misappropriate the funds? Did he collect them for one purpose and use them for another? That brings us to the next question.

How Was The Money Used?

Space will not permit a complete listing of the 8th and 9th chapters of 2 Corinthians. The reader is encouraged to take the time to read the entire text of these two chapters. Notice these selected verses.

8:4 — "Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the SAINTS."

8:14 — "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality."

9:1 — "For as touching the ministering to the SAINTS, it is superfluous for me to write to you."

9:12 — "For your administration of this service not only supplieth the WANT OF THE SAINTS, BUT IS ABUNDANT also by many thanksgivings unto God."

It was in this setting that Paul mentioned this distribution to them and to all. (Notice that the word "men" was added by the translators.) This obviously speaks of Christians in Jerusalem (them) and Christians in other places (all). These Christians in other places were probably those in the region of Judea around Jerusalem, such towns as Joppa, Lydda, Bethany, etc.

2 Corinthians 9:13 does not authorize church benevolence to non-Christians.

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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, MD 20737

FIELD REPORTS

REID BRASWELL, 111 Birchview Dr., Piscataway, NJ 08854. I am happy to report that my wife and I are both settled down here in Piscataway, New Jersey. We feel that this should prove to be a challenging work. At present, attendance runs around 50 on Sunday and 30 on Wednesday nights. The great challenge will be in building up the church itself, so that it will be able to be a shining light in the community. As far as any long range plans that Rosa and I may have, we can only pray that God's will be done. We hope to return some day to either Columbia or Chile to live and preach the gospel. If you are ever passing Piscataway, please come and worship with us. Our address is 285

Highland Avenue, just off I-287, Turn onto River Road and then to Highland Avenue.

STEVE WALLACE, P.O. Box 546, Burkesville, KY 42717. At the beginning of June, 1983, I am planning to move to West Germany to work with some of the churches there. If you know of any Christians presently stationed there who are not attending services, would you kindly send their address to me? As things unfold, I will notify this paper of my over-sea's address.

CHARLES F. HOUSE, P.O. Box 1031, Douglas, AZ 85607. This is to

report that my wife Marvel House passed away on Tuesday after noon, February 22 after a lengthy battle with Lancer She will be greatly missed by all

RODNEY M MILLER, 15 W Par St Orlando, FL 32304 I have not received such a blessing since I was baptized or I have waited 30 years for this, or I have never felt so close to heaven as I have this week.

These are just a few of the comments that were made concerning the work of our brother R. J. Stevens with the Par St , church of Christ None of us remember a week together that was more profitable than this week The need for increasing our spirituality by song is great in the church of our Lord today There are few or no congregations that could not benefit from the work of brother R. J. Stevens He has a unique ability about him He touched the hearts from the smallest children to the most elderly adults with his godly life During the song leader classes the age ran from 7 to 79 He worked carefully, methodically, and diligently for an hour with each of our song leaders Then, for the next hour, he worked with the congregation At the end of the week the church wept openly at the departure of this godly man This church will never be the same Not only his musical ability touched all of us, but the godliness of his manner of life As he left, it was easy to say This man walks with God The impact that he made on this church is rare So many congregations today need to deepen their level of spirituality by concentrated efforts on how to better praise God in song Brother Stevens does not teach music He teaches the human voice how to praise God That is one of the greatest admirable qualities that any individual could possibly have We recommend the work of brother R. J. Stevens to every congregation in America today

FERNANDO VENEGAS, Casilla #122 C C 5500 Mendoza, Argentina, South America The small church here has been meeting in the garage of my home for the last year and a half Now, after a special effort by the congregation we have rented a place that can be solely for the worship services of the church We have an excellent location at 1372 Las Heras St in San Jose of Guaymallen February was a great month for the church here as three were baptized into Christ Also we enjoyed having brother Bill Reeves from Texas with us in a gospel meeting We esteem him very highly and express thanks for his willingness to come and for those who had a part in helping him come

SMITH—MERIDETH DEBATE

The elders of the Van Dorn church in Grenada, Mississippi, have asked J. T. Smith to meet J. Noel Merideth in a four night debate on June 27, 28, 29, 30 of this year This is the second such effort supported by the Van Dorn brethren and the Elliot church of Christ The last effort by these brethren to try to come to a better understanding of each others positions, the ultimate goal of course being an effort to try to arrive at a basis for unity upon what the Bible teaches, was last June in a two night discussion between brethren Ward Hogland and J. Noel Merideth The first two nights of the discussion, brother Meredith will affirm, ' The scriptures teach that a congregation from its treasury, may provide benevolent aid to sinners and to those who are safe J. T. Smith will deny. The last two nights brother Smith will affirm The scriptures teach that a congregation, from its treasury, may not provide benevolent aid to sinners and to those who are safe J. Noel Merideth will deny. The High School Auditorium in Grenada, which will seat approximately 1,000 people has already been secured for the discussion with the sessions beginning promptly at 7 00 each evening Grenada is located about 100 miles south of Memphis and about 100 miles north of Jackson on I 55 For further information contact Billy James at 175 Van Dorn St Grenada, MS 38901

NEW CONGREGATION

WESTFIELD, INDIANA—A congregation is now meeting at 302 E Main St here in Westfield Attendance on Lord's Day averages about 30 Sunday services are at 9 30 for Bible Study and 10 20 a.m. and 6 p.m. for worship Week-night Bible studies are on Tuesday and Wednesday Westfield is about 10 miles north of Indianapolis on U. S. Highway 31 The meeting place is just three blocks east of U. S. 31 on Indiana Highway 32 (Main St) A sincere welcome is extended to all Phone (317) 896 9244 for further information

FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA—We are hoping to begin a faithful work in Fayetteville this year We would appreciate it if any of

the readers of STS could provide any information concerning Christians in this area or interested persons to contact Information should be sent to Thomas Dickerson, 2437 Torcross Dr , Fayetteville, NC 28304 Phone (919) 483 5723

PREACHERS NEEDED

LEESBURG, FLORIDA—The Michigan Avenue church of Christ in Leesburg is looking for a preacher to begin in May of 1983 Some outside support will be needed as we are a small congregation of about 18 families Contact us by phone or by mail Days—Bob Chastain (904) 728 3428, Evenings—Carey Dillinger (904) 728 0523 Or write P.O. Box 2207, Leesburg, FL 32748

MARYVILLE, MISSOURI—We have a congregation of about 70 members and we own our own property and building We are self supporting but do not as yet have an eldership We earnestly desire to have a spiritually mature man to locate with us to help us grow Maryville is a city of some 10,000 people located in the Northwest corner of Missouri some 45 miles north of St Joseph It is the home of Northwest Missouri State University Those interested in this work should contact the church at Box 31 Maryville, Missouri 64468 Or call (816) 927 3616 or 582-8003

WARRENTON, MISSOURI—The church that meets in Warrenton will be in need of an evangelist beginning June 1, 1983 We are a small congregation of about 45 members We can offer partial support The one that comes must be sound in the faith and be willing to do personal work Please contact Bob Breuer at Rt 1, Box 279C, (314) 456-8723, or Bill Conway at Rt 1, Box 253B, Warrenton, MO 63383

MIDDLEBOURNE, WEST VIRGINIA—The congregation in Middlebourne is looking for a full time preacher The congregation has a membership of 150 with four elders and four deacons A new brick three bedroom house, adjacent to the church building, is provided Full support will be furnished by the congregation Those interested may contact Blake Wells, Rt 1, Box 351, Middlebourne, WV 26149 Phone (304) 758-4828

STAFFORD, VIRGINIA—The Stafford church of Christ, meeting near Fredericksburg, needs a preacher The congregation is small and can only provide partial support This is a growth area and offers great opportunity Please call or write Joe Carter (703) 752-4508, 50 B Woodland Dr , Stafford, VA 22554 or Rick Berg (703) 664-5396, Rt 2 Box 2507, Stafford, VA 22554

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)

BRITNELL ARTICLES ON CATHOLICISM

This series on Catholicism by Eugene Britnell will continue next month. Due to preparations for a debate he was unable to furnish copy in time to meet our deadline for May Much interest has been expressed in this column.—Editor

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