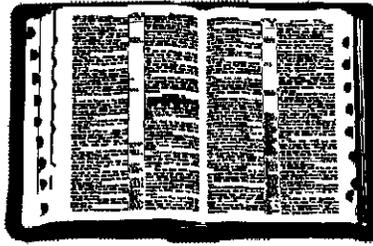


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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

DECEMBER, 1983

NUMBER 12

The Mystery of Iniquity

Eugene Britnell

P.O. Box 5624
Little Rock, Arkansas 72215



IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

Beyond doubt or dispute, the Roman Catholic Church is one of the most immoral institutions on this earth! We are all familiar with the fact that millions of dollars flow into the treasuries of Catholic congregations by various gambling projects. In addition to this, the Catholic Church makes, advertises, sells and consumes alcoholic beverages—the greatest curse and number one drug problem in the nation and world.

On page 47 of the November 1983 issue of **Reader's Digest**, you will see a full page in color advertising Christian Brothers California Brandy. Who are the Christian Brothers? They are an organization within the Catholic Church. The Roman Church has made wine, beer and whiskey for many years. In the **Digest** advertisement, they are trying to show how much better their brandy is than "lots of brandies with fancy bottles and impressive names." We don't find it too impressive to associate the name Christian with brandy. The ad closes by saying:

"So maybe it is stretching a bit to say the people who drink Christian Brothers are all so honest. Let's just say they seem to know the difference between something that's slick and something truly smooth."

The Catholic Church knows all about being "slick" and "smooth," but they know very little about honesty. They don't know what the church is nor what it is to do in the world. They must not know the difference between what is right and moral and what is wrong, destructive and immoral.

We have an article of a few years back by the Associ-

ated Press, datelined Columbus, Ohio, headed "Church Receives Beer, Wine Permit." The article said:

"The state liquor department issued a beer and wine permit to the St. John Cantius Catholic Church in Cleveland this week. Department officials said they could not remember any church ever before obtaining a permanent permit.

"The St. John permit to serve high-powered beer and wine by the drink was made out for the bar in the church recreation center.

"The state liquor director explained that the permit was not illegal. The law merely specifies that if a permit is asked for within 500 feet of a church or school, the institution must be notified and given a chance to object.

"The permit will enable St. John church to sell high-powered beer and wine to bowlers at 12 new alleys in the church recreation building. .."

It seems there was an oversight in the Ohio liquor laws. When they wrote the "500 feet of a church" provision, they evidently didn't even think about a law concerning what was permitted WITHIN a church building. They didn't know Catholics.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The above reveals only one of the many rotten fruits borne by the Roman Catholic Church Tree. And we are made to marvel that so many are yet deceived by those who sow her false seed, from the local priest to the one who calls himself Lord God, the Pope.

The Ohio article calls to mind a book called **The Vatican** by Ann Carnahan. On page 21 one may read that tourists in Rome could sit outside at San Pietro's Cafe to lunch and drink St. Peter's Beer. So in Rome we have a St. Peter's Church, St. Peter's Basilica, St. Peter's Square and St. Peter's Beer.

This last honor surely elevates Peter above the rest of the apostles. Peter should have added a verse to his sacred writing, something like—"If thou becomest thirsty while viewing my sacred bones and kissing my successor's big toe or ring, thou shalt have a bottle of the beer named in my honor, taking care to intoxicate thy friends as well."

At a Small Brewers Convention in Chicago a few years ago, a Roman Catholic priest offered this prayer:

"In the Roman ritual, I chanced upon this blessing. Brief as it is, I believe that it is most important that it be quoted at this occasion. It is the official prayer of the Catholic Church for Beer: 'Bless, O Lord, this thy creation, beer, which thou hast designed to produce from the heart of the grain in order that it might be a healthful remedy for mankind. And grant, through the invocation of thy holy name, whoever shall drink of it shall receive health of body and safeguard of the soul, through Christ our Lord, Amen!'"

Did you know before reading that, that the Lord created beer? No wonder they can justify continuing "his work" by creating beer and brandy.

Searching The Scriptures

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CONNIE W. ADAMS, Editor

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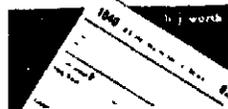
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Editorial

Connie W. Adams
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EDITORIAL STEW

HOME FOR THE WINTER

The editor always looks forward to the end of meetings just before Thanksgiving and to three months of classes with the Expressway church in Louisville. I enjoy the meetings but must confess that along about October a bad attitude is developed toward my suitcase! In 23 meetings scattered throughout the country, there have been about 40 who obeyed the gospel. Attendance and interest have been good in most every place with several places where the buildings were filled to overflowing. Many good brethren are hard at work and there are a number of churches which are growing. Of course, there is much yet to do everywhere, but all the churches are not dying on the vine as some seem to think. If some preachers would spend more time teaching the word from house to house and publicly than they spend going over statistics they might be surprised at the results.

I will teach classes this winter on Philippians, a class for high school age, a class for men (Show Thyself a Man) and a class on 1 Corinthians. Jerry Parks continues to do an excellent work at Expressway. We are at peace and growing. We are served by four good elders and seven deacons. The Bible classes continue to generate much interest with five elective adult classes offered each quarter for Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. One of our deacons teaches a new converts class each Monday night. We had excellent meetings in 1983 with Arthur Ogden and Larry Ray Hafley.

NEW PAPER

A new, 32 page monthly paper, CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE, will begin in January, 1984. It will be edited by David Edwin Harrell, Dee Bowman, Brent Lewis and Paul Earnhart. The paper will devote each issue to a separate theme and these men will rotate as editors. All of these men are well known among brethren and each one possesses great ability. We are confident they will produce a journal filled with useful and helpful material each month. Dee Bowman has written much for STS in the last few years and has indicated that he plans to continue submitting articles to us as time permits. He is not only an exceptionally talented

preacher and writer, but a close and dear friend. We wish these brethren well with the new paper. You may send subscriptions and inquiries to: Dee Bowman, 2229 West Clare, Deer Park, Texas 77536.

ON JUST BEING HUMAN

I have been convinced for sometime that more Christians are afflicted with a Calvinistic concept of the inherent depravity of man than some care to admit. One of the evidences of this is the notion that we just cannot keep from sinning fifty times daily. That is just how we are, and we cannot help ourselves. The first line of defense when one has done wrong is to say, "Well, he is just being human." While we certainly do not subscribe to the notion that a child of God cannot sin, neither do we believe he has a depraved nature. When a Christian fulfills his role in the family, the community and in the church and does what is exactly right for him to do, would it not be refreshing to hear someone say, "Well, after all, he is just being human." Why is it not just as "human" to do right as it is to do wrong? Did not God make all of us with the freedom to choose?

PRAYING WITHOUT THINKING

It is Sunday morning. A brother is called upon to lead the congregation in prayer. As he does so, he correctly implores the Lord to forgive our sins. Then, five minutes later a brother gives thanks for the bread at the Lord's table. Before he is through, he says "Forgive us for our many sins." Then five minutes later another brother gives thanks for the cup and says "Forgive our many sins." Question. What "many sins" since the first prayer and in the last five minutes? Then a closing prayer expresses the thought that we are weak and sinful and again entreats the Lord to "forgive our many sins." We are a sorry spectacle if we cannot sit together for five minutes in the worship of the Almighty without committing "many sins" while we are there. Did we pray in faith? Does God hear and answer the prayers of his people? Surely he does. Or do we pray sometimes without thinking?

DON'T TELL THEM

During a meeting in October with Dick Blackford at Westside in Owensboro, Kentucky, it was my pleasure one night to gather with a number of new converts in Dick's home. After some refreshments and friendly conversation, each one related to me his/her religious background and what lead each one to learn the truth and obey it. As I listened to former Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals and Christian Church members tell of their struggles to free themselves from error and accept truth, I thought of how many times some of

my brethren have told me "This is a hard place—people just are not interested in the gospel." I hope they don't find that out at Westside. You see, they have been out doing what some say cannot be done. In the last few months they have baptized 21 and restored about 15. They have been in their new building a year and already the auditorium is well filled and they will soon build two new classrooms as their facilities are filled. It would be a shame to tell these folks that they cannot convert the lost. They don't know that, and I don't intend to be the one to tell them!

* * * * *

PLANT CITY, FLORIDA

The church in Plant City, Florida is alive and well. We enjoyed a meeting there in September. Gary Ogden is doing a fine work. They are blessed with three good elders and a fine crop of young people who are a credit to the church and to their parents. One of the elders is Hugh Davis who has preached the gospel for many years. He has time for a limited amount of meeting work each year and would do any church good. Address him c/o the church, 803 W. Mahoney St.

* * * * *

SERIES ON CROSSROADS

With the January, 1984 issue we will begin a long awaited series by H.E. Phillips on the Crossroads Controversy. He has taken much time and great pains to be sure he fairly and correctly deals with this important matter which has been the occasion of great controversy, not only among the liberal brethren but with some others as well. The following articles are planned:

- "Emergence of the Crossroads System" "Yater Tant's Involvement with Crossroads" "Unscriptural Organization of the Crossroads System"
- "Why Does Crossroads Teach One Thing Publicly and Practice Another?"
- "Why the Charges of Cultism at Crossroads?" "Why Liberal Institutional Churches Reject Crossroads"
- "The Destiny of the Crossroads System"

* * * * *

BOUND VOLUMES

With this issue we complete 24 years of SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES. Bound Volume 23-24 should be ready by April 1. There will be 576 pages bound to match all previous volumes. The index in this issue is for the benefit of all who purchase bound volumes. These books grow in value as the years go by. All earlier years of the paper have long since been sold. Volume 23-24 will sell for \$12 plus postage. Send orders for these to: STS, P.O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109.

GROWING PAINS

Religious Supply Center has found it necessary to expand their facilities—AGAIN. Everywhere we go we hear good reports of the excellent and friendly service provided by these folks. One man in Oregon last summer told me he felt like he was calling kinfolk every time he called an order on their WATS line. They will continue business at the same location but will enlarge to provide better display space for walk-in business and larger stock for all customers. Once more, while we enjoy a most pleasant business relationship, Religious Supply Center and Searching the Scriptures are two separate, distinct businesses. They cannot process subscriptions and we cannot fill book orders when you address the paper. It is really simple—just address book store business to the book store and paper business to the paper. We hope our readers will continue to patronize the book store. David and Phyllis Key, Marie Ricks and Mary Catherine (Wimpy to most of us) Threlkel are just good folks to know and to do business with. They thank you for "giving them the business."

* * * * *

BEGINNING OUR 25TH YEAR

Much has happened in the world and among the brethren since January, 1960 when H.E. Phillips and James P. Miller mailed out the first issue of SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES. A number of good brethren saw a need which this paper has attempted to fill ever since that time. It has been mailed each month without fail since then. James P. Miller has been laid to rest. His voice is still and his pen has been laid down. Serious health problems forced H.E. Phillips to turn over the work of the paper to another. Since June, 1973 it has been my lot to edit this paper along with the able help of our brother Phillips, and a stable core of able and godly men who have supplied most of the material carried in these columns. Some of the material published here has been put in book or booklet form. Marshall Patton's column, "Answers For Our Hope" supplied the material for a hardback book of that title. Some of Tom O'Neal's material is in booklet form as is some of J.T. Smith's. The material in my own booklets on PREMILLENNIALISM and MIRACULOUS DIVINE HEALING first appeared as series in this paper in the 1960's. Eugene Britnell's series on Baptist doctrine is now in book form. We rejoice in whatever good has been done.

From the start, this paper has been an independent voice. It continues to be so. It is not the organ for any school or brotherhood power center (real or imagined). Since it began, sincere effort has been made to keep it balanced and to press the claims of our Lord with all our might while opposing error both in and out of the church. We have tried to handle controversial matters forthrightly and with the dignity befitting the gospel. For this we offer no apology and promise more of the same. These are treacherous times. Secular humanism struts brazenly in open defiance of all that is decent and right. Political worlds continue to collide. Among

Christians there are serious issues to be decided. A factious spirit is all too evident in many places. There are cranks and crackpots vying for attention. Some would have us grind personal axes for them. No thanks! We shall continue to do the best we can to teach the truth as clearly and fervently as we can. If you think that is worthwhile, then stay with us.

INSTITUTIONALISM WHO MADE A LAW?

A. C. Grider

Rt. 4, 1617 Bill St.
Shepherdsville, KY 40165



During the controversy over institutionalism for the last several years the charge of "making a law where God made none" has been bandied back and forth. The liberal brethren have been rather loud in insisting that we conservatives have thus made a law, while we have always countered that it was the Liberals who have done so. Who really is guilty of this gross sin of making a law where God has made none? This is a very serious thing to do. Let's examine the matter.

The liberal brethren are teaching that churches should support orphan homes. They insist that it is scriptural for them to do so. We counter by calling upon them to cite chapter and verse for what they are teaching. They can't cite chapter and verse for churches supporting orphan homes. We tell them if they will cite just one verse that commands or even allows such church contributions we will accept it and we too will teach that they should do so. But they have never been able to give us such a verse. Now, really, who is making a law where God made none? Is it those who are doing something for which there is neither command, example, or necessary inference, or is it those who simply ask for the scripture that permits such?

But again, the liberal brethren have concocted the "sponsoring church thing." They teach that churches should assume certain works, which becomes theirs exclusively and that they can then call upon sister congregations to help them pay for it. We counter by calling upon them for chapter and verse for such procedure. And they have been unable to come up with any scripture. We tell them that if they will give us just one verse that commands or even permits churches to do as they are having them to do, we will accept it and we will agree to work through sponsoring churches from now on. They haven't come up with a shred of evidence that the sponsoring church arrangement is scriptural. So, we ask again, who is making a law where God made none? Is it those who are advocating something for which there is neither command, example, nor necessary inference? Or is it those of us who simply ask for scripture

for such procedure?

Finally, our liberal brethren insist that the benevolent work of the church is unlimited and that the church is required to assist "all men everywhere." We call upon them to give us a chapter and verse that commands or even permits the church to do so. They can't find a verse that so teaches. We tell them we will accept it if they will only cite chapter and verse for it. We also counter by showing that the Bible teaches that the church should NOT care for some people (1 Tim. 5:16). And we show them every verse in the New Testament that deals with church benevolence and that in every case it says the church should help brethren or saints (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-34; 6:1-7; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-31; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12; and 1 Tim. 5:16). There they are, every verse that deals with church benevolence. Read them. So, I ask the question once more. Who makes a law where God made none? Is it those who are doing something for which there is not a shred of evidence in the word of God? Or is it those of us who call for chapter and verse for what they are doing?

When all of the emotionalism and prejudice is removed from consideration it can be seen that it is the liberal brethren who are speaking where the Bible has NOT spoken and who are silent where the Bible HAS spoken. We continue to ask for chapter and verse for what we do. It is the liberal brethren who have made a law where God made none. It is the liberal brethren who have gone on and are not abiding in the Word of God (the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9). And it is the liberal brethren who have not God. It is serious.

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ATTITUDE TOWARD WORRY

As our final installment in this series on "attitude" gleaned from Philippians we direct the reader to chapter 4. Here our theme is complemented by the admonition, "don't worry" or "be secure in mind". In view of the fact that joy and rejoicing are key terms to this epistle it would seem logical that any factor in opposition to this be considered. We have defined attitude as the "mind in you", drawing from chapter 2:5. Emphasis is on the "single mind", set and unwavering with Christ as the seat and center, the single object. Within the first three chapters we have sought to develop a picture of the right attitude toward circumstances, critics, crisis, people and things. Paul's attitude has been allowed to pass through inspired words in the presentation of the picture.

Beginning with a commendation of the Philippians as reward for his labors, Paul refers to them as his "joy and crown". He immediately enters a plea to two women who are at variance and have disturbed the church, Euodias and Syntyche. The basis of their quarrel we are not told while the effect is implied: they and the church were hurt by the situation. Invariably, indulging unkind feelings impairs spirituality. Dissension has ever been a grievous hindrance to the gospel. Mutual love and harmony are marks of those in Christ and is a continuing plea of Paul along with "maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

From a practical standpoint, the Christian shows his selfishness and disregard for the Lord when he is willing to disturb the body of Christ to gratify self and gain personal ends. The "mind of Christ" manifests a willingness to bear and suffer wrong rather than this. Obviously, the two women here addressed had lost sight of these ideals if they had ever attained them. Just as surely we cannot tolerate this kind of attitude within ourselves.

With verse 4, "rejoice" again appears to further argue for this key note within the book. The word "always" makes for emphasis and lends to the idea of learning to rejoice. When we surrender to and lose ourselves in Christ this fountain of joy and rejoicing opens up and pays big dividends. There will be the "moderation" (cf. v.5), which will make for gentleness and forbearance toward others. An attitude which does not always eagerly insist on our own rights but in a gentle and kind way is ready to give way to others. This verse (cf. 5-6), complements the disposition which does not put undue

store in earthly things because of the realization of loftier ideals and rewards to come.

Joy dispels anxiety and aids to keep the mind dear and calm as an attitude if concentration on the various aspects of the Lord's presence is maintained. This tends to elude the distractions of anxiety. This kind of inner joy is expressed in prayer and supplication. "In every thing by prayer and thanksgiving" punctuates habitual prayer and a continuing awareness of blessedness. This is framed within a context extolling peace, a "peace which passeth all understanding" (v.7). The epitome of joy is in the Lord. Just as earthly joy comes from union with those whom we love, so spiritual joy and peace is produced.

Now to the thrust of this article, the attitude of "don't worry". "Be anxious (or careful) for nothing" is to be understood, presupposing the relationship which is the basis of joy and rejoicing. Why? There is no reason for anxiety, "the Lord is at hand", we are in him and he is in us. He is our advocate, keeper, consoler, provider, and our ever present help in time of trouble. So what have we got to worry about? Considering the security of proper relationship to the Lord and all the Lord promises to be to His own, what justification does any Christian have for the lingering anxiety characteristic of others? In all honesty, we must respond, "none".

Then, we are treated to a prescribed line of thought which will contribute to freedom from worry (v.8). Think good thoughts, we are told. Things that are "true" or truth, which is the basis of real hope and security; truth in completeness, in all it demands as the achievement of mind and rule of life. Mentally dwell on things honest or honorable in the sight of God and man. Things which are in complement to the integrity of heaven. Things "just" envisions justice as maintaining right relationship between men. Justice holds the balance fairly between conflicting interests, knows no degrees. In this justice is peculiar, anything less than just is unjust, therefore there are no degrees to being just or to justice. Then we are urged to think on the "pure", "lovely" or lovable as recognized in relation to character, a quality of character. Think on things of "good report", things about which we can speak and think well. "Virtue" rounds out the list to suggest manliness, courage, valor and every form of moral excellence. If, as we think, so are we and so do we, this prescription will certainly make us better.

Contentment, which is the state of mind and life free of anxiety is learned (cf. v. 11-12). Paul seems to be saying here that we need to learn to be independent of the adverse effect of external circumstances. As is seen in the apostle, the Christian can bear misfortune and hardship with dignity. These circumstances need not make one ill humored, complaining and bitter. Whether rich or poor, honored or abased, the contentment of faith enables composure in everything. What a lesson!

Finally, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (4:13). This is the basis of the secure mind who is inadequate in nothing. Only in Christ is such possible, "All things" are modified by the will and purpose of God through Christ by the gospel. In Him

are all things. His strength is made perfect in our weakness and our weakness made strong in Him. So, no grounds for anxiety and worry exist. We have an ally, advocate and friend, upon which no limits can be imposed. So, my friend, quit your worrying.

Insight

Dee Bowman

2229 West Clare
Deer Park, TX 77536



ECUMENISM: SUBSTITUTE FOR UNITY

There is a move among most religious groups today toward more toleration and acceptance of one another. Ideally, the move has good aims, good motives. Edward Fudge, editor of the new GOOD NEWSPAPER has expressed, rather aptly, the views of the latter day proponents of this movement in a recent item (Vol. 1, No. 21, August 10, 1983, Houston, Texas). "Time was when one's particular church affiliation was something of a prison, isolating him or her from Christians in other groups," he says. The remainder of the paragraph succinctly states the views of the movement as regards its effectivity: "Today such walls are tumbling like so many Jerichos, as believers of many heritages and traditions learn from each other instead. And while hardliners in each camp see the interchange as a threat to their own security and distinctives, most folks across the board seem to enjoy the new whiffs of fresh air."

Ecumenism is not a new concept. It has always been on the fringes of Christianity. But the ecumenical plea is not the same thing as the Bible plea for unity. It has always been part of the plea of Christianity to bring about religious unity. Paul's plea for unity to which we so often refer in 1 Cor. 1:10 was written to restore the breach of unity, and although it was a plea for organic unity, it must be remembered that all deviations from the unity of the faith took place originally inside the body (Acts 20:28-30, etc.). One could hardly beseech people to return to the bible without making a plea for unity, sameness of mind, singleness of aim and purpose, common confidence in our common salvation and many other items which could be cited are but simple small pleas for unity.

But unity and ecumenism are not the same thing. And furthermore, there are some things about our devotion to the sufficiency of the scriptures which are calculated deliberately to cause us to be distinctive and different. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I Jno.

2:19). In II Cor. 6:14-ff Paul admonishes that we "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," for says he, we have no real fellowship with them. Resultantly, he admonishes that we "come out from among them." Now I realize that someone might argue that the enemies under consideration here were "antichrists" and "unbelievers" but I must hasten to add that the reference is to the principle of tolerating, through excessive broad-mindedness, those who do not share the mutual faith in Paul's admonition in II Cor. 6; and the fact remains that unity is not possible when there is not agreement on the principal issues that brought about the fellowship in the first place, as I Jno. 2:19 illustrates. Nor should there be any.

Ecumenical pleas are seen from the first councils of the early church down to the present time. When I was but a youngster, I used to hear the denominational preachers thank God for the fact that there were many churches, thereby furnishing religious people everywhere with a choice about where they wanted to worship. I remember how that our preachers, kindly and with respect (most of the time), would ask that note be taken of the fact that it is possible to make a choice in religion that is not God's choice. They would then point out that the sure way to know that the church of your choice was also Christ's church was to return to the Bible and stand firmly on that. You see, even then there was a noticeable difference in ecumenism and unity. Ecumenism was then and is now, an effort to admit all sorts and kinds of religious beliefs into one's fellowship by compromise. It includes the responsibility to be especially tolerant in those areas where fundamental differences exist. Unity, on the other hand, calls for a healthy respect for the authority by which Christ wanted that unity to be achieved. It means that we will look to his word and its examples as to how and when he approved of actions, attitudes, and activities, then base our unity on that. Ecumenism is compromise. Unity is agreement. There is a great difference in the two.

Mr. Fudge continues by pointing out that the distinctiveness, or what he calls "traditional pigeonholes" seems to be disappearing. God help us if it is so! (Cf Jno 17:17) And I emphatically deny that it is so. We at this church are still trying to preach the gospel that saves, not some watered-down, spiritually limp gospel of compromise, but a message to which the new covert can turn and say, "Here's what I did to obey Christ; it is the same thing as was done in New Testament times." Can the modern day Ecumenists say the same thing? And instead of crediting the "para-church ministries" and "non-sectarian groups" which "bring together men and women from many denominations" we are still making the Bible the basis on which we seek after unity. No unity is possible in such ecumenical innovations—only the agreement to disagree. Unity is samemindedness and samemindedness is achieved by subscribing to the words of Christ.

Finally, Mr. Fudge says that ". . . more and more people, clergy and laity alike, are apparently deciding that no historical segment of Christianity has all the right answers after all, that a sovereign God has seen fit

to deposit at least some of the truth in the most unexpected places, and that they all ought to search the Scriptures afresh and listen to each other as they do." Such reasoning is foolish. If God has indeed deposited part of the truth in several different religious groups, as the article seems to imply, then how are we to identify the true church by the Scriptures (the only place where God ever deposited the truth!) Can we do it? And does God care whether or not we can do it? Arid another thing: Just because we cannot draw a "perfect circle, does that mean we can just cast aside the standard for drawing perfect circles and give every man the assurance that his circle is acceptable? The fact that "no historical segment in Christianity has all the right answers" does not mean that all the answers are not available (II Tim. 3:16-17), nor does it give us the right to form associations with any religious group which has found just one of those right answers. On that basis I do not know of a single religious group which would be excluded from the realm of rightful fellowship. Religious truth is definitive, not relative; and it divides as well as unifies. And the basis on which it divides is always and forever the failure to agree with it. And we trod on dangerous ground when we thank God for the fact that our distinctiveness is being eroded away in a wave of modern ecumenism, a fact which I think probably is so, but which I deplore with a passion!

Ecumenism is not unity. If it were, it would be called that. And it is not wrong to be exclusive, as long as the truth is the basis for it. Let us beg for unity, but let us be wary of its substitute.

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THE SCOPE OF PARENTAL DUTIES

There are two senses in which we may use the expression "Parental Responsibilities"; viz., (1) a parent's responsibility toward God and (2) a parent's responsibility toward the child. The keener the parent's sense toward God the keener the sense toward the child will be. Accountability to God in this, as in all other areas, is determined by what God has told the parent to do and refrain from doing with reference to the child.

Undoubtedly there are many parents who are conscientious observers of God's will toward moral matters who are quite lax in dealing with specific God-assigned duties toward their children. Many parents would never lie, steal, or knowingly violate any other law of God regarding moral conduct. They would never fail to pray, eat the Lord's supper or in anywise neglect public worship. Nevertheless these same parents may allow themselves a sort of conscience-free perverted immunity or indulgence where their children's behaviour is concerned. By this I mean they tend to excuse their own children, to wink at their off color conduct. Somehow they think that it is never their own children's "breath that smells badly"! How God goes about dealing with such parents, I know not. I have no reason to think, however, that God ignores parental responsibility any more than He ignores non-parental duties.

Every parental duty begins and ends with one's own child. This observation is so certain that further comment might seem redundant but further consideration may be helpful as one looks at some practices that grow out of another practice based on a contrary assumption.

No more than a man's God-appointed husbandly duties are toward his own wife or a woman's God-appointed wifely duties are toward her own husband are God-assigned parental duties toward another parent's children. Unless one who has no children adopts them or, by virtue of blood-ties, accepts them as his own, a person has no parental responsibilities. A failure to recognize a difference between divinely given parental assignments and divinely given church assignments has often resulted in a church which claims Christ as its head to become involved in various activities foreign to its God-ordained assignments. The shift goes something like that which I describe next.

Somebody circulates the idea that the local church is not doing anything for its young people and that if it were so many of them would not be involved in drugs,

alcohol and sex problems. This reasoning sounds reasonable to persons of influence in the church with the ultimate result of church sponsored and church financially supported morally clean recreation including a building provided and a program perpetuated by the church and overseen by its elders for which there is no apostolic authority. The local church by thus acting has assumed the role assigned to parents if indeed God made such assignment to anybody. Even the most ardent advocates of church support of human institutions which provide such activities opposed churches getting into the recreation business. Consider this statement of B. C. Goodpasture, erstwhile Editor of the **Gospel Advocate** in which he wrote the following in 1948, p. 484:

"It is not the mission of the church to furnish amusement for the world or even for its own members. Innocent amusement in proper proportion has its place in the life of all normal persons, but it is not the business of the church to furnish it. The church would come off a poor second if it undertook to compete with institutions established for the express purpose of entertaining people. It would make itself ridiculous if it entered into such competition. Again, it is not the responsibility of the church as such to furnish recreation for its members. A certain amount of recreation is necessary to the health and happiness of the individual. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, it is said, and rightly said; but it is not the function of the church to furnish the play. The church was not established to feature athletics. Rather it emphasizes the principle that 'bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.' (1 Tim. 4:8.) Sometimes one would conclude, from the emphasis given to recreation, that godliness is profitable for a little, and that bodily exercise is profitable for all things.

For the church to turn aside from the divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do; and it should not come down on the plans of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly, as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah, will it want to turn from its wonted course to relatively unimportant matters. Imagine Paul selecting and training a group of brethren to compete in the Isthmian games! Of his work at Corinth he said: 'For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' (1 Cor. 2:2.) What, then, is the work of the church?"

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SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

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MEN CHANGE

We live in a world of change. Practically everything man knows is changing. However, we should not become discouraged when we see things changing, because sometimes changes are made for the better. When such is the case, all should rejoice. Think of all the changes and advancements that have been made to make life more enjoyable from a human standpoint. Some changes are good.

On the other hand, there are changes from time to time that are not good. Instead of helping in a given area, they hinder progress in that area. Who would want to go back to the days when there were no automobiles?

The Lord wants men to change in the right direction. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jno. 3:16). "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jno. 3:1-5). Man was outside the kingdom of God, but when he was "born of water and of the Spirit" he entered into the kingdom of God. There was a change from outside to inside the kingdom. Speaking of God, Paul said, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated unto into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). This is from the kingdom or "power of darkness" into the "kingdom of his dear Son." This change is good and right.

We read in 1 Cor. 6:9-11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." These Corinthians had been wicked, vile, and sinful people. They were guilty of gross immorality, but they had changed.

There is possibly no one individual that changed more than the Apostle Paul. When Stephen was stoned, those doing the stoning "laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 7:58). "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me" (Acts 9:1-4)? "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished" (Acts 22:4-5). "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9-11).

Paul changed, he was converted and said, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers, But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus, then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:13-20). When Paul saw that he was wrong, he was willing to make a change. This is what any man who is honest with himself, God, his fellowman and all the world will do. A man is not honest when he is proven wrong and will not change from error to truth.

Inspiration records for us another account of one who was willing to change when he was proven wrong. "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to

Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he had come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:24-28). Apollos came to Ephesus preaching the baptism of John. John's baptism had served its purpose and was no longer being practiced with Divine approval. The man Aquilla, with his wife, Priscilla, upon learning what Apollos was preaching took him unto them and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly. After this, so far as the New Testament record is concerned, Apollos never did teach John's baptism again. He changed his preaching. It did not ruin his usefulness in the Lord's service, as one might suppose, because "... when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace."

Men, therefore, should change when they are proven wrong by the word of God. I have changed on certain matters and do not hesitate to admit such and it is no source of embarrassment whatsoever. The reason I changed was that people would ask me for the scripture that authorizes a certain matter. This I had never considered. I simply took for granted, like a good many other people are still doing, that certain things were right. But when I got my New Testament down and started looking for the passage from God's Book I could not find it. So, failing to find it in the New Testament, I gave it up.

There is another kind of changing that is done. Not only do men change from error to truth, but sometimes men will change from truth to error! This is a sad situation indeed. Men who at one time preached the truth no longer preach it today. Those who at one time stood tall in the Lord's army have now taken their stand with the denominational and sectarian bodies of our land.

There are men today, who when I preach the same sermons that they preached years ago take exception to them now. They have changed. I can go back and get old sermon outlines that are yellow with age in which the truth was ably set forth, and quote from these word for word, only to have my sermons preached from their old outlines rejected. One can read word for word from books of sermons and likewise, exception will be taken. It is honorable to change from error to truth but it is a dishonor to change from truth to error! Of such, Peter said, "... the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according

to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

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EVANGELISM, WHY AREN'T WE MEETING THE CHALLENGE?

Dick Blackford

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Why are Christians today not impressed with the urgency to "ring the message out" to a lost and dying world? The world population just set a record by registering its biggest 12 month increase in history. By mid-June the total was 4,721,887,000, according to an AP release, 8/31/83. "The one year increase of 82,077,000... was equivalent to adding the entire population of Mexico and Somalia to the world, or populating Switzerland again each month or the Bahamas each day."

No one knows for sure exactly how many converts are made each year but it is far from the 82,077,000 increase. Most reference works that compile information on churches list churches of Christ at 2,250,000. We have long been surpassed as the fastest growing religious body and seem content to "hold our own."

Of the 2,250,000, less than one-third would be considered conservatives (750,000). SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES (which keeps a record of conversions listed in bulletins) recorded 3,310 baptisms during the same year the world increased by 82,077,000! The number was probably higher but nowhere close, even to the 77,000. And now, we ask "Why have we so miserably failed?"

We Are Viewing Ourselves Through The Wrong End Of The Telescope!

INDIVIDUALLY, we have blended in with society and become **self-centered**. We "need" all the latest in comforts and conveniences. The things that excite us and on which we waste so many words don't usually amount to a hill of beans! What is the topic of our conversations? How long has it been since you discussed the need to carry the gospel to poor sinners bound for hell? Sports are usually more interesting.

We feel inadequate to teach others because of **fear**. Fear of ridicule, of losing our friends, or that we don't know enough to teach them. "There is no fear in love..." (I Jn. 4:18). When we cultivate a love for God and for lost souls, we will see how foolish this fear is.

Unbelief is also a culprit. On one occasion some first century disciples were hindered by unbelief (Mt. 17:20; Mk. 16:14). But disciples, generally, were able to spread the gospel to the whole inhabited earth (Col. 1:23). They did it without a radio, television, bulletins, periodicals, or computers.

CONGREGATIONALLY, we are content with the status quo. We depend on people placing membership and our children being baptized in order to grow. The

church meets our social needs and that satisfies us. We have forgotten the value of a soul (Mt. 16:26).

BRETHREN, IN GENERAL. In many places brethren are dwelling on the past, still licking their wounds over mistreatment by the liberals 25 years ago! The pessimistic attitude in some cases is "We're antis, we weren't meant to grow, we're supposed to be small and against everything." Is it possible that some became associated with non-institutional brethren because they are basically "anti" by nature? Conservative brethren are a drop in the bucket compared to the world scene. I know the Lord never said his church would be identified by its size, but is that an excuse not to proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ to a dying world? In the first century even civil rulers were well aware of the existence of Christians. Today, there are many places, even in America, who have never heard of us!

OUR WRITINGS. Much of it would cause a Philadelphia lawyer to scratch his head. Gallons of ink and reams of paper are used on issues that do little to attract the lost. We have a misplaced emphasis. Ninety percent of our writing is designed for the 750,000 brethren and 10% is done to reach the 4 billion people in the world! Thousands of them are dying daily while we are trying to decide whether every jot and tittle is in the right place! I know there is a need to discuss various issues, but there is a **crying need** for a return to the simplicity that is in Christ. Because time is limited, the major issue among us should be "How can we reach more people with the gospel?" Everything else is secondary. It is unfortunate and regrettable that some have turned aside to Ketchersidian fables, but in some cases it is not difficult to see why it happened.

PREACHERS. Should preachers engage in personal evangelism? Yes, if they are Christians. Never mind that the brethren aren't doing their part, preachers are to be an example (I Tim. 4:12). It doesn't require much effort to dream up an issue with which to stir the brotherhood. Do we "spend our time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing?" (Acts 17:21). If we were busy telling the old story we wouldn't have time to tell any new ones. The fate wished upon us by the liberals may come true if we are not careful. They said the "antis" would split and splinter among themselves. One thing we don't need is more issues. A preacher should not try to solve brotherhood issues to the neglect of his local work.

ELDERS. We need elders today to guide the flock in the direction of seeking the lost. Members should be encouraged to impart the gospel they have learned rather than merely using their minds as storage closets for academic knowledge about the Bible. There is more involved than ordering literature and keeping records of the attendance.

The Weightier Matters Of The Gospel

If a revelation from God (the Old Testament) could have some matters that were weightier than others (Mt. 23:23), then so may the New Testament. I may be able to prove that one should not call me "Reverend" but that is a far cry from the weightier matter of a man's

immediate need to humble himself before God and become one of his children (Gal. 3:26,27). One cannot start growing until he has been born anew. We can win arguments and lose souls. Christians should be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" and we must be longsuffering (Mt. 10:16; 2 Tim. 4:2). We cannot afford to have a "take it or leave it" attitude toward the lost. Let us major in majors and minor in minors.

How To Reach The World With The Gospel

Someone (unknown to me) has compiled some numbers that ought to intrigue us. Assume that you are the only Christian in the world and it takes you a whole year to make one convert. Then each convert does the same thing. Here is what would happen in 33 years:

YEAR	CONVERTS
1	You
2	2
3	4
4	8
5	16
6	32
7	64
8	128
9	256
10	512
11	1,024
12	2,048
13	4,096
14	8,192
15	16,384
16	32,768
17	65,536
18	131,072
19	262,144
20	524,288
21	1,048,576
22	2,097,152
23	4,194,304
24	8,388,608
25	16,777,216
26	33,554,432
27	67,108,864
28	134,217,728
29	268,435,456
30	536,870,912
31	1,073,741,824
32	2,147,483,648
33	4,294,967,296!

Conclusion

Can we look upon another human being and say "I would like to see that person obey the gospel and spend eternity in heaven?" Let us pray for a compassion for lost souls. Let us ask God's forgiveness for our misplaced emphasis. And then with what ability, finances and methods we have, let us "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ..." (Mk. 16:15). Will a religion that won't take us to seek the lost take us to heaven when we die?

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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FROM THE FIELD

DICK BLACKFORD, P.O. Box 225, Owensboro, KY 42302. The work continues to progress here at Westside. The church began five years ago in October and met in a school for four years. Fifty-one were in attendance when the work began. We are now averaging 110 with a recent high of 117. During the past year 21 were baptized, 13 restored, and 21 identified. We recently had eight home studies underway. There are nine others with whom we have studied who have not yet obeyed. In September we began supporting Eddie Pagan (who grew up here and has been attending the Expressway church in Louisville). He is preaching at Greensburg. The Westside congregation is served by three elders and four deacons. The building is located on Highway 60 West, near the Wendall Ford Expressway.

TOM O'NEAL, P.O. Box 723, Bessemer, AL 35021. I have some additional copies of the 11 May 1983 issue of Walking In Truth, the bulletin published by the church in Bessemer where I preach. This was a special issue dealing with (1) What To Preach, (2) Prayer Posture, (3) The Holy Spirit's Veil, (4) Is Communion On Sunday Evening Scriptural? and (5) Clothing. If any readers would like an additional copy of this material, free of charge, or would like to have a copy sent to someone, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the above address. Or phone (205) 426-4814.

DEBATE WITH MUSLIM

PAUL K. WILLIAMS, 56 Maud St., Florida, 1710 South Africa. I am to meet Ahmed Deedat of the Islamic Propagation Centre in debate on the night of December 2. I will be affirming that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. The debate will be held in a sports stadium near Johannesburg. A multiracial crowd of up to 5,000 is expected. Ray Votaw will moderate for me.

PREACHERS NEEDED

EL TORO, CALIFORNIA—The Saddleback Valley church of Christ is in need of a full time preacher. The church can provide up to \$1,000 per month in support. This is a fast growing area of southern California. If interested please contact Walt Halagarda at (714) 768-8518, or Peter Stratton at 472-0159.

CASEY, ILLINOIS—The Westside church here in Casey is in need of someone who can devote full time to preaching beginning May 1, 1984. He will need to be willing to teach Bible classes 2 or 3 days during the week. We are self-supporting with an attendance of 100. Casey is a town of 3,000 located near I-70, about 35 miles west of Terre Haute, Indiana. For information, write to the Westside Church of Christ, Box 519, Casey, IL 62420. Or phone (217) 932-2290, 932-5643, 932-2670.

GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA—The LeHeights church of Christ in Grand Island is in need of a preacher. The following facts might be considered by those interested in preaching here: (1) challenging and exciting work in a very family-oriented community, (2) small, young, enthusiastic congregation, (3) located 150 miles from Omaha, 90 miles from Lincoln, (4) most support would have to come from outside sources. The church here can only give \$400 per month but is aware of other possible sources of support. Those interested should contact Joe Hurd at 4203 Kay Avenue, Grand Island, NE 68801, or phone (308) 384-0253. Or John Larma at 4204 Norseman Avenue, Grand Island, 68801, or phone 381-0868.

TRENTON, TENNESSEE—The Northside church on Highway 45 in Trenton is in need of a mature gospel preacher who is sound in the faith. Outside support will be necessary. We have been without a preacher since February 1983. We have about 30 in attendance. If interested please call Larry Stephens at (901) 686-0461, or Dennis

Cupples at 692-3376, or write to the Northside church of Christ, Box 367, Trenton, TN 38382.

Florida College Lectures January 30—February 2, 1984 "Ministering Obedience to Christ" — Second Corinthians —

Morning Lectures: Tuesday

- 9:00 Spiritual Comfort (II Cor. 1:1-11)
Phil Morr
- 10:00 Triumph in Christ (II Cor. 2:12-17)
Thaxter Dickey
- 11:00 Hearts and Stones (II Cor. ch. 3)
Walton Weaver
- 12:00 The Gospel in Earthen Vessels (II Cor. 4:1-12)
Jay Guyer

Morning Lectures: Wednesday

- 9:00 Reconciliation: a New Ministry and a New Message
(II Cor. 5:11-6:2)
Ed Brand
- 10:00 The Christian's Separation (II Cor. 6:11-17)
Arvid McGuire
- 11:00 Penitent Christians (II Cor. ch. 7)
John Humphries
- 12:00 Gracious Christians (II Cor. chs. 8-9)
W. C. Hinton, Jr.

Morning Lectures: Thursday

- 9:00 Divine Jealousy (II Cor. ch. 11)
Don Alexander
- 10:00 The Christian's Sufficiency (II Cor. 12:1-10)
Kenneth Chumbley
- 11:00 Merchandizing the Church (II Cor. 12:13-12)
Barney Keith
- 12:00 Approved Christians (II Cor ch. 13)
Sam Binkley

Evening Lectures

- Monday Making Plans in Christ (II Cor. 1:12-24)
7:30 Paul Earnhart
- Tuesday Sorrow and Joy in Christ (II Cor. ch. 2)
7:30 Peter J. Wilson
- Wednesday Seeing the Unseen (II Cor. 4:16-5:10)
8:30 Bob Owen
- Thursday The Christian's Warfare (II Cor. 10:1-6)
7:30 Robert Jackson

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS 240
RESTORATIONS 94
(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)

DEBATES SET

A public debate is to be conducted between Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian) and Jerry L. Hayes (Pentecostal) on December 12-13, 15-16, 1983, beginning at 7:30 each evening. The sessions will be held in the building of the Piney Chapel church of Christ on Alabama Highway 20 (U.S. Alternate 72) at Hillsboro, Alabama. This is about 8 miles west of Decatur. The subjects to be discussed are the "Godhead" and the "baptismal formula."

J.T. Smith, Lake Jackson, Texas, is scheduled to meet **Roy Deaver**, Cookeville, Tennessee, April 23-26, 1984 in a public debate on the Orphan Home question. The debate will be held in Gainesboro, Tennessee (Jackson County). More details will be given later.

Tom Moody of the South End church in Louisville was in a debate with Emmett F. Fields, an atheist, on the subject "Is the Bible God's Word?" This was conducted November 14-15 at the First Unitarian Church in Louisville. The debate grew out of an exchange of letters to the editor in the Courier-Journal.

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