

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



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

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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Restoration Footnotes

Earl Kimbrough

2212 Malibu Dr.
Brandon, Florida 33511



THE BIBLE ONLY

Thomas Campbell stated the main themes that directed the thinking of the early nineteenth century Restorers of "the ancient order" "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent". "A thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent, for every article of faith and item of religious practice". "Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a test of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament". "The restoration of primitive Christianity, in its doctrines, its ordinances, and its practice"! These principles formed the great war cries of the Restoration movement.

As might be expected from a people wedded to such themes, the Restorers relied heavily on "the Bible alone" in their evangelism. It was the simple proclamation of the unadorned word of God that made their plea unique in pioneer America and that appealed so largely to the sectarian-weary citizens of the new nation. The preaching of these Reformers was wholly Biblically oriented, with stress on those passages held to be of primary interest to restoration.

1. **Their Preaching Was Fundamentally Expository in Form.** James DeForest Murch says: "In the early days of the movement, preaching was almost exclusively polemical and evangelistic. Preachers were under attack by the denominations and were driven to defend their simple New Testament position. They constantly inveighed against the evils of denominationalism and

called upon members of other churches to 'come out of Babylon'. The proof-text method was popular. Sermons portrayed the glories of a united church and the religious millennium that would come on earth when all God's people were one. In the so-called protracted meetings, they preached expository sermons largely drawn from the book of Acts and concluded with a 'gospel invitation'. This invitation to accept Christ at the close of every sermon remains until this day a distinctive feature of Disciples' preaching and worship service". (Christians Only, p. 195.)

2. **They Preached While Looking in Two Directions.** They looked back to what they believed to be the pattern of Christianity in the first century, and they looked forward to the millennium when all of God's people would be one and the world converted to Christ. Dwight E. Stevenson gives a summary of the early nineteenth century disciples' views regarding this two-directional look, as reflected in their evangelism. He writes: "It is as if they were thinking of two golden ages. One lay behind them in the Mediterranean world of Peter and Paul. The other lay before them on the American continent, to be announced by the trumpet of the seventh angel of the Apocalypse. The way to the golden age of the future was by way of the restoration of the golden age of the church from the ancient past". (**Disciples' Preaching in the First Generation**, p. 65.)

While they looked for a world characterized by post-millennial idealism, they did not dwell on it, nor did they speculate about it to any great extent. Alexander Campbell reflects the view of many regarding the millennium. He changed the name of his journal to **THE Millennial Harbinger** in 1830 and stated his millennial views in the first issue. But during the next thirty-six years of publication, he paid scant attention to the expected golden age of Christianity. He was far more interested in what he conceived to be the means of bringing it about: the conversion of the world to Christ. However, when some of the leading brethren were diverted briefly to pre-millennialism during the 1830s, he exposed the errors of this doctrine and perhaps saved the brotherhood from its folly. But he spent relatively little time dealing with his own post-millennial views.

3. **The Preaching of the Pioneers Was Unique in**

Their Day. They rejected the homiletical style then popular in the denominational world. Campbell wrote: "The whole system of sermonizing, text preaching, expounding scriptural scraps, and of doctrinal expositions, is unauthorized by God, and it is not the way to save sinners or edify saints. There is no trace of such a mode of procedure in the apostolic age, nor in the times immediately subsequent thereto. This system has darkened the counsel of God, and filled the world with error". (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1834, p. 589.)

Barton W. Stone said this kind of preaching had "almost ruined the world, and swelled the number of skeptics". (*The Works of B. W. Stone*, p. 342). Walter Scott poured equal scorn on textual preaching, condemning such texts as: "Naphtali is a hind let loose"; "Ephraim is a cake not turned"; "Remember Lot's Wife"; and "Judas went out and hanged himself". The Restorers did not object to such texts in sermons, but they believed they should be used only when viewed in context. Stephens said, "In a word, the only textual preaching to be trusted was contextual preaching".

These men also opposed the preaching harangue then in vogue among sectarians. Abraham Lincoln is said to have preferred to hear a man preach like he was "fighting bees". He had ample opportunity, but "bee fighting" preaching did not suit those who called themselves "Christians only". They preferred reason to emotion and were accused of having "head religion", as opposed to "heart-felt religion". Of course, they did not object to emotion, but opposed placing it above reason. "Come let us reason together" said the Lord and so said these nineteenth century Restorers.

Their preaching was an open war on Calvinism and Arminianism. They searched for Biblical models for all they practiced in religion: the plan of salvation, the organization of the church, the order of worship, and other matters of primary concern.

One cannot be committed to "the Bible only" without it having a profound effect on his preaching. Having adopted the Bible alone as their sole authority, the Restorers of "the ancient order" preached the word of God, as near as possible, just as it came from "the fountain-head of inspiration". They saw denominational preachers as clouding the truth in the minds of the people with their creeds, opinions and textual preaching. They were determined not to follow their example. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Restorer's evangelism was their total reliance on the word of God, both to advance the pure gospel and to oppose its enemies of whatever stripe or cast.

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THE MIND OF CHRIST AND ERROR

The statement "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5), challenges every disciple from the moment of his translation into the kingdom of God's dear son until the time of his transition to yonder's world. The context of that passage speaks of the willing obedience of the Christ who, though "in the form of God", and "equal with God", was fashioned in the likeness of men to suffer at the hands of men the humiliating death of the cross. All of this was presented to provide the supreme illustration of what it means to have "lowliness of mind" and "esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2: 3).

It is not uncommon to equate the "mind of Christ" with compassion, meekness, tenderness and forgiveness. And these were clearly seen in his character. Who could forget his tender compassion for the woman taken in adultery whose accusers fled the scene? Or his commendation of the woman who brought the cruse of expensive perfume which Judas said was a "waste"? How could we forget his tears at the grave of his good friend, Lazarus? Or his fervent "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" on behalf of those who had him crucified? Indeed, he left us an example, that ye (we) should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2: 21).

While Jesus was compassionate with the sinner snared by Satan's trap, he was militantly outspoken about sin, the cause of it and about those who made human traditions equal to the law of God. He saw false teachers as servants of the Devil and branded their doctrine as soul condemning error. He came to seek and save the lost and false teachers were themselves lost and the cause of others being led astray. To fail to see this is to miss vital truth and to gain a one-sided concept of the "mind of Christ."

It is thought by many, including a growing number of Christians, that it is not nice to reprove error and rebuke sin. We must "think positive", never condemn, always build but never tear down. Editors and writers in religious journals who dare to examine false doctrine and who name those who promote such error can expect to hear from whiners who don't think it is shows "love" to write in this vein. Sermons along this line will get complaints from those who wring their hands and think the preacher does not have the "spirit of Christ."

Consider the following examples of what Jesus said. How better to discover the "spirit of Christ" than from the words of Christ himself?

In Matthew 13: 14-15, Jesus quoted the prophecy of Isaiah and applied it to some of his own day when he said "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

In the parable of the tares in the same chapter, Jesus plainly said that the "enemy" who sowed tares in men's hearts was the devil (v. 39).

Behold the spirit of Christ in Matthew 15 regarding the false teachers of his day.

To the scribes and Pharisees he said:

"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition"? (15: 3). "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (15: 7-9). "Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (15: 12-14).

When Jesus said "Leave them alone" he was not telling them to ignore their error. He certainly did not ignore it. He was charging them not to support it in any way. No passage better shows the Lord's attitude toward false religious teachers than Matthew 23. Hear him:

"But do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (23: 3).

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (23: 13).

"and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (23: 14).

"ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (23: 15).

The condemnations were severe. The circumstances merited what he said. Had Jesus been in the good graces of these religious leaders they would not have clamored for his blood. He had no fellowship with them and they wanted no part of him.

Throughout the land there is a need for more militant evangelism. Error struts brazenly without being challenged. The airwaves are filled with the voices of those who are preaching another gospel and who therefore stand under the curse of God. Multitudes are led astray by these teachers. In almost every community denominations and sects are thriving on error. In those places where those who profess to be simply Christians are found in large numbers, the religious world scarcely

knows of their presence. Our liberal-minded brethren have a national radio and television program. And what do they talk about? "The Problem of Aging. " "Depression. " "How to Cope With Being Alone. " Where are the definitive sermons which draw the line between truth and error, between the church of the Lord and the churches of men, between Bible salvation and false systems of men? Among those who claim to be more conservative, why is it that we now have a generation on our hands which cannot abide preaching which has some teeth in it. We do need teeth in our preaching to take a bite out of sin and denominational error.

The prophets of old spoke plainly. So did our Lord and so did his apostles. It was out of love for lost souls that they placed truth ahead of popularity. They did not lick a finger and hold it up to see which way the wind was blowing. They did not wait to find out which position would be more popular. They were not reeds shaken by the wind. They were not men-pleasers nor time-servers. They were servants of the Lord and accountable to him who shall judge the hearts and labors of all men.

My brethren, let's put Bible preaching back in the pulpits. Let's show the difference between the truth and error both doctrinally and morally in terms everyone can understand. Let's call on honest souls to forsake the ways of the devil and flee to the Rock of Ages for safety. And let's challenge the purveyors of religious error to defend their cause by the word of God, or else, failing that, give it up for the salvation of their own souls as well as the souls of those who are influenced by them. That is also the "spirit of Christ."

AN APPRECIATION GET-TOGETHER

Longtime friends and brethren of **BROTHER ROY E. COGDILL** are planning an appreciation get-together to honor him and his life of faith and labor of love for the Lord on the occasion of his seventy-eighth birthday. This affair will be the evening of April 23, 1985. For details contact either: James W. Adams, 1402 Robinwood Dr., Lufkin, TX 75901; Tel. 409-639-2665; or James D. Yates, P.O. Box 19429, Houston, TX 77224; Tel. 713-497-2111 or 578-7233.

Using the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ken Green

2212 Jordan Lane, S.W.
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COMMON SENSE ECONOMICS

Paul Harvey recently reported that the Haggar factory in Oklahoma City is closing down after manufacturing slacks for 11 years. Another Haggar factory in McKinney, Texas is also closing its doors. The reason? They cannot find enough people willing to work for \$6. 50 an hour. The Oklahoma City factory employed 200 people, only a third of what they needed and wanted.

"In Omaha, " Mr. Harvey reports, "employees at Burger King are offering bounties of up to \$50 if they can recruit another worker willing to work. " They have 200 unfilled jobs.

All of this while one in five Americans is receiving welfare. \$107. 5 billion of our money was spent last year by federal, state and local governments on welfare. Most of that went to grease the wheels of "the bureaucracy which administrates welfare. "

I do not claim to be an economist. Many who claim to be leave room for doubts. We would probably be about as well off to let the economists predict the weather and the weathermen predict the economy. I think I do have some common sense, however, and that is something many economists do not seem to have.

You see, I understand why taxes have increased until an estimated 42% of the average working man's salary is spent for federal, state, and local revenues. I see why the national deficit has climbed until we're over one trillion dollars in the red. Most of our leaders do not perceive what the problem is, but it is not really difficult.

Let us imagine a family which continued to grow uncontrollably. First there's just "Molly and me and baby makes three. " But then there's two, three, four; later six, eight, twelve youngsters. Then grandchildren start appearing while the kids are still at home; some with husbands or wives, some without. Then let us suppose a few aunts and uncles move in. And let us imagine that very few of these add anything to the family ante. All they know how to do is spend and waste.

It doesn't take a college education to know that that home has problems. And that's what we're looking at when we look at the federal government. The bureaucracy has grown until its estimated that one in eight to one in six workers is employed by the federal government. When one considers the wasteful habits of our big

brother's family, it's hard to imagine a more unfaithful steward. He is a prodigal in the truest sense of the term.

Couple that with the millions on welfare who are able to work and will not, and the problem becomes obvious. Milton Freidman (one economist who seems to have some common sense) said in his best selling book, "Free to Choose" "**The Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, established in 1953 to consolidate the scattered welfare programs, began with the budget of \$2 billion, less than 5% of expenditures on national defense. 25 years later, in 1978, its budget was \$160 billion 1 1/2 times as much as the total spending on the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It had the 3rd largest budget in the world, exceeded only by the entire budget of the U. S. Government and the Soviet Union.**

I do not begrudge for a moment the assistance which is given to people truly in need. But unfortunately the welfare system is founded on a premise which is contrary to God's word and is thus detrimental to our society. Paul said, "**For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat**" (2 Thess. 3: 10).

BREAD OF LIFE

"I am the bread of life... so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Jno. 6:35, 57.

Herschel E. Patton
7637 Fleming Hills Dr. S.W.
Huntsville, Ala. 35802



FALSE RELIGION IS NOT BREAD

(In a previous article, entitled "Not Bread", based upon Isaiah's question, 55: 1-2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?", I pointed out that Humanism, Materialism, and Sensuality are not life-giving bread. In this article, as promised, I discuss "False Religion"—H. P.)

The popular feeling in our day is that religion—any religion—is bread of life. The one who believes and declares there is one God, one faith, one body, one Lord, and one hope (Eph. 4: 4-6) is regarded as a narrow-minded bigot.

Religion comes from a word that literally means "to bind back", involving man being bound back to God. "Others derive 'religio' from 'relegere' to gather, to collect, making the primary meaning a collection, and then more specifically a collection of religious formulas. 1. A system of rules of conduct and laws of action based upon the recognition of, belief in, and reverence for a super human power of supreme authority. 2. Specifically, a particular kind of faith and practice entertained and propagated by its devotees; as the Christian or the Jewish religion. 3. The essential observances and practices of a religious people or of a sect. 4. Spiritual purity,

as distinguished from intellectual and social characteristics. "—Copied from Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary.

According to these definitions many varied beliefs and practices may be called "religion". Only definition No. 1, quoted above, concerning those who believe in a supreme being and the Bible, would involve true religion. Everything else would be of human origin (human wisdom) and, therefore, false.

False Religion

False religions can be found in nearly every country and age, carrying the promise of being bread to their adherents. We can read about them in the Bible.

Pharaoh and the people of Egypt looked to their gods to bless and save them, but were proven completely impotent before representatives of the God of heaven and earth.

The followers of Baal and his prophets failed miserably before Elijah, a prophet of Jehovah, at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18: 19-46).

The Bible carries many warnings, denunciations, and predictions of doom for false prophets and their followers. (Deut. 18: 20, Isa. 9: 15, Jer. 14: 13-5; 28: 15-17; Ezek. 13: 1-6; Matt. 7: 15; 2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 Jno. 4: 1)

The numerous gods (religions) of the people at Athens were declared by Paul to be powerless in contrast to the "Lord of heaven and earth... who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things... and in whom we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 22-28).

True Religion

True religion is, and always has been, based upon the existence of Deity, creator and preserver of all things, and the fact He has spoken. True religion is manifested by those who with faith in Him, live and act according to what He says. Any other faith and practice is not, and cannot be, "bread of life".

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1: 1-2). In time past God spake unto Adam, Enoch, Abraham—the fathers or patriarchs—directly and by prophets. Those who listened and obeyed were the followers of true religion at that time. Those who didn't were false and doomed.

With the redemption of all mankind in mind, God chose Abraham and promised that through his seed all nations would be blessed. Abraham's seed became a separate nation and to them God, through Moses, gave the Law. "Now therefore hearken, O Israel unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4: 1-2). Again and again, Israel was reminded that their happiness, success, and salvation was conditioned upon their faith in God and faithfulness to his word. Hearing and doing God's will was

bread of life to them, and was a manifestation of true religion. For them, any other system was false and destructive.

True Religion Today

In the fullness of time, the Law that was a schoolmaster to bring unto Christ (Gal. 3: 24), was fulfilled through the coming of Christ and his death upon the cross for the sin of the world (Col. 2: 14), and the New Covenant (Heb. 8: 8-13) became operative (Heb. 9: 15-17; Luke 24: 46-47; Acts 1: 4-8; 2: 1-42).

The church to which the Lord added the saved (Acts 2: 47) is the body of Christ (Col. 1: 18; 1 Cor. 12: 27), kingdom of Christ (Col. 1: 13; Heb. 12: 23, 27), New Covenant or Christianity, which was the subject of prophecy, and the manifestation of what had been a mystery for years (1 Cor. 2: 6-3). This only is true religion in these last days; the only bread of life for people today.

Jesus said that He was the bread of God which came down from heaven and giveth life unto the world (Jno. 6: 33) and "I am the bread of life; He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (vs. 35). . . "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (vs. 51). . . "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day; For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (vs. 54-7).

In these verses, Jesus shows how he is the bread of life. Eating and drinking are figurative terms showing how one partakes of Him and lives—has eternal life. In the first place, Jesus is the bread of life because of his death on the cross (the sacrifice of his flesh and blood). Eating and drinking Him is a matter of "Seeing Him, believing on him (vs. 40), hearing and learning, resulting in coming unto Him (vs. 44-45), dwelling in Him (vs. 56), thus living-having life. In this same way, receiving and doing the Father's will, Jesus lived by Him (vs. 57). When the disciples of the Lord failed to understand the figure of eating and drinking, He said "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (vs. 63).

Jesus is the only bread of life and those that feed on him are whoever hears and learns His word, believes on Him (Rom. 10: 17), cometh unto Him, and dwelleth in Him. People who thus responded at the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost (Acts 2) and thereafter, constituted the Lord's church (body-kingdom) and were called "Christians" (Acts 11: 26; Acts 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 16). So, as it has always been, the true bread of life is Deity, hearing, believing, and obeying His Word. No other one, thing, or system can save and give eternal life. Everything else is "a stone, not bread", "fools gold", "nardoo bread", "false religion" that can never give life to those feeding thereon.

One of the greatest tragedies at the judgment will be

the denial of many who were religiously active, doing many wonderful works, but failing to do "the will of the father in heaven" (Matt. 7: 21-23). They simply laboured for that which is not bread.

Many people are shocked at the thought of the devotees of religious systems, that do not accept Christ, being lost or dead spiritually. It is impossible to reconcile the revealed will of the all authoritative God with other systems arising from other sources or beings. We have already shown that all such is condemned throughout the Bible.

Even faith in Deity and partial submission to His revealed will is not life-giving bread. Christianity, so called, is fragmented by numerous sects or denominations because of the doctrines and commandments of men. Jesus says all such is "vain worship" (Matt. 15: 9), and will be "rooted up" (vs. 13). Those who go outside or beyond the teaching of Christ forfeit a relationship with God (2 Jno. 9).

It is always necessary to ask concerning every faith and practice, "What saith the Scripture?" "Is it from heaven or from men?" John warned "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jno. 4: 1).

Indeed, there is in the religious world much deceiving bread—that which is called bread, but is lacking in certain spiritual ingredients essential to spiritual life. Devotees spend their lives feeding on this, and feel satisfied, but at the judgment, learn that they died spiritually long ago, or were never alive, and will be lost eternally.

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EXPOSITION: TEXT and CONTEXT

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GUARDIAN ANGELS

QUESTION: *In view of Matt. 18: 10, Acts 12: 15 and Heb. 1: 14 would you say that each Christian has a guardian angel?*

ANSWER: First of all, let us quote the Scriptures under consideration in order to see what they say. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18: 10). "... Then said they, it is his angel" (Acts 12: 15). "Are they (angels, WEW) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1: 14)?

There is nothing in these passages that gives credence to "guardian angels." This idea developed out of pagan philosophy and Jewish superstition rather than divine revelation.

McClintock and Strong state: "It was a favorite opinion of the Christian fathers that every individual is under care of a particular angel, who is assigned to him as a guardian.... The Jews (excepting the Sadducees) entertained this belief, as do the Moslems. The heathen held it in a modified form. There is, however, nothing to support this notion in the Bible" (*Cyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 228).

"Their Angels"

Notice in Matthew that Jesus said "their angels are in heaven, beholding the face of the Father," not on earth acting as personal protectors. The message Jesus was conveying seems to be that if the angels of heaven take special interest in and concern for the little ones, surely no Christian should despise, treat with disdain and contempt, even the most obscure disciple who shares in heaven's blessings in the kingdom of God on earth. What peculiar functions angels perform in heaven today on behalf of earthly saints are not revealed, except Rev. 8: 3 does indicate that angels are involved in conjunction with our prayers to God. However, they are servants in the vision of John (burning incense) and not mediators between man and God.

In contrast to this, several espouse the "guardian angel" position. *Pulpit Commentary* said on Matt. 18: 10, "the angels especially appointed to watch and protect them—their guardian angels" (*Matthew*, Vol. 2, p. 210). J. W. McGarvey commented on the verse, "the angels especially charged with ministering to them individually. The fact stated of these angels is that 'they do

always behold the face of the Father in heaven—a fact which shows the efficiency of their guardianship" (*New Testament Commentary*, p. 157). Adam Clarke stated, "Our Lord here not only alludes to, but, in my opinion, establishes the notion received by most all nations, viz. That every person has a guardian angel" (*Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 183). Others could be cited to show the prevalence of this view.

Although many noteworthy men subscribe to the "guardian angel" view, in my estimation they presume the position rather than establishing it from the Scriptures. As Clarke said, it was his opinion.

"His Angel"

It appears in Acts 12: 15 that we have stated a superstition that was widespread among the Jews. After Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel (vv. 7-10) he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. Rhoda, responding to Peter's knocking at the door of the gate, recognized his voice and rushed back in with gladness, proclaiming that Peter stood at the gate. They replied, "It is his angel."

Hackett wrote, "It was a common belief among the Jews, says Lightfoot, that every individual has a guardian angel, and that this angel may assume a visible appearance resembling that of the person whose destiny is committed to him. This idea appears here not as a doctrine of the Scriptures, but as a popular opinion, which is neither affirmed nor denied" (*Commentary on Acts*, p. 200). This interpretation is more plausible to me than any of the other positions postulated. Barnes wrote, "There is no evidence that they were inspired in these opinions, nor are their notions countenanced by the Scriptures" (*Acts*, p. 193).

"Ministering Spirits"

As to Hebrews 1: 14 we are not told how angels minister for the benefit of the elect. Conybeare and Howson translate the text, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to execute (His) service, for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation?" This is a general statement, contextually showing the inferiority of angels to Jesus, and nothing is stated about the service rendered by these angels on behalf of God for those inheriting salvation. To read "guardianship" into the verse is, again, being presumptuous. The verse says, "ministering FOR," not "TO the saints." This is significant.

Angels have had various roles as set forth in the Bible. In the Old Testament angels were used for various and sundry reasons. An angel ordered Abraham to refrain from sacrificing Isaac (Gen. 22: 11), protected Jacob (Gen. 48: 16), escorted the Israelites through the wilderness (Ex. 23: 20-23), fed Elijah in the desert (I Kgs. 19: 5) inflicted disaster on the Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 19: 35), and several other things that could be listed.

In the New Testament an angel(s) announces the birth of the Lord (Lk. 2: 8), strengthens Jesus (Matt. 4: 11), rolls away the stone at His tomb (Matt. 28: 2), releases apostles from prison (Acts 5: 19), directs Philip (Acts 8: 26), and appears to Paul in a dream (Acts 27: 23).

Angels rejoice over one sinner that repents (Lk. 15: 10), desire to look into God's way of saving man through the gospel (1 Pet. 1: 12), behold the manifold wisdom of God demonstrated in the church (Eph. 3: 10), carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16: 22) (Would not this indicate that angels accompany all the redeemed after death to their dwelling place to await the resurrection?), will come with Jesus when He returns (Matt. 25: 31), will separate the righteous from the wicked (Matt. 13: 41, 45) and will hear Jesus confess or deny those who confess or deny Him before men (Lk. 12:8-9).

From Genesis through Revelation angels have been actively involved in the service of God and the affairs of men. Their work continues as God executes His purposes, and it will persist through the consummation of man's redemption, and for eternity. Let us be cautious that we do not take verses where angels appeared on earth and worked in a miraculous way and try to apply those instances to possible angelic interventions today in the lives of God's people. Miraculous operations have been suspended!



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The Mystery of Iniquity

Eugene Britnell

P.O. Box 5624
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A LETTER FROM ITALY

As I write this, Pope John Paul II is on another of his famous world tours, this time to Latin America. I received the following letter yesterday, dated January 16, 1985, from brother Vincenzo Ruggiero of Salerno, Italy. We are glad to know that this paper is being read in many parts of the world, and of course we think it should be read by everyone.

As you read the letter, please remember that much of it is a translation into English from another language, and the wording is not always as we write in this country.

Dear brother Britnell,

I read often your articles in **Searching the Scriptures** and I know you like to have news about the Pope, useful for articles. Recently on the daily paper "La Repubblica" of January 15, 1985 there was published an article of Domenico Del Rio whose title is "How much travel this Pope" and the sub-title "And the great actor cried aloud: Peace in the world." I suppose the translation would be interesting for your articles. I shall write one in Italian for our paper, "Sentieri diritti."

The beginning is this: "What is the difference between God and Wojtyla? That God is in every place and Wojtyla has already been there." The witty remark, a little irreverent, which gets about into the roman curia (Holy See) describes the most remarkable and characterizing aspect of the Pontificate of Giovanni Paolo II, and with the travels and image that the Pontiff gives of himself to the world.

"I could define him a charismatic man," says Emile Poulat, historian, author of books of analysis on church problems, "however he knows too well the usage of mass-media. He is the Pope-Show, like Reagan, who is actor. There are two great actors in the world: Wojtyla and Reagan. (That's a matter of opinion, E. B.) Cemienko isn't an actor; he works in twilight. For the pope, travels are an instrument to govern the Church. Charles the Great sent to the Empire lands his 'missi dominica' (master's servant). Today Wojtyla does by himself his own 'missus dominicus'.

"I ask myself if it isn't the time to think to a different style of these papal travels," says the jesuite Garcia Perez director of the cultural centre of Madrid. "It would be necessary that were less triumphal and with possibilities of greater results. It is true, people rush to see the pope, but these travels seem to me like a powerful wind, which arrives, moves a little and then disap-

pears, letting everything like before. One of the most glamorous papal travels has been that in the United States. Crowds, stadiums of people, went into raptures for Wojtyla. Well then I have heard this remark by an American: 'We like the singer, but not the song.' He wanted to say that in the United States they were impressed more by the Pontiff's personality than by his message."

"A papal travel, in order to be apostolic," says Jose Maria Gonzales Ruiz, theologian of Malaga, Spain, "would undress itself of all triumphalism by which it is surrounded. But the popes like these things. I don't think that Wojtyla is vainglorious, but he thinks that all that makes the papacy a kind of power to contrast other powers. And that forms part of Poland mentality. A pope should introduce himself around the world with a more evangelical aspect, without political personal marks. I remember when Wojtyla met the poor Ernesto Cardenal to Managua airport, who knelt before him, and the pope scolded him, waving his finger on his head, telling to regulate his position, abandoning his office of minister. But how? You scold the monk Cardenal because he is minister, and you, pope, are chief of State; you arrived like a King, received with military bands and music and salute of guns, as generally is done with kings and emperors! I am in agreement there mustn't be minister priests in governments of right nor in governments of left. Bishops and priests must not become political leaders. It is known what leaders are like to the people, every leader is holy... The pope is a good actor and is able to do his part of holy person—kisses the earth, waves the hands, catches hold of children—this is a Devil temptation. Christ was persecuted by the mighty ones. The pope is welcomed by the mighty ones. In Spain, here, all the socialist government has welcomed the pope in the city of Seragozza. Never Jesus was welcomed by the Sadducees or by the chief priests nor Pontius Pilatus went to salute him when he got out from Jerusalem nor Herod Antipas went paying his respects to him when he went to the other bank of Jordan River. The pope yields to the diabolic temptation. It has been the great temptation of Jesus: the peoples of earth will applaud you; you will have at your feet all the world's kingdoms... Vade retro, Satan (Begone, Satan). And on the contrary, I pope, I have visited with all the world's kingdoms and they applauded me. But that is what the Devil told Jesus."

These are the most important pieces translated, but many others I have of Josip Turkinovic, Yugoslavia, of Machel Demaison of France, Miguel Lamet of Madrid, and many other priests.

I think all this material you can use for a good article I shall read when Searching the Scriptures will publish it and when it will arrive at my home (after some months).

I hope and pray you and family and brethren in Little Rock enjoy good health.

In the daily paper "La Repubblica" of January 16 there is the news that journalist Domenico Del Rio has been excluded from Papal airplane by which he has to fly from January 26 to February 6 in order to be in

Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru. Domenico Del Rio was included in the list of journalists accompanying the pope during his journeys till January 15, but his articles and his interviews are offensive for the pope. In this case he isn't different from communists of his Poland. May God's richest blessings be with you always.

Vincenzo Ruggiero

Commending you to

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

Marshall E. Patton

1024 Coronado Dr., S. E.
Huntsville, Alabama 35802



OUR LORD'S INCARNATION—(2) HIS VIRGIN BIRTH

Skeptics, materialists, and destructive critics of the Bible have long rejected the incarnation of Jesus. Especially, have they made the virgin birth a focal point of attack. True, some regard the virgin birth as unimportant according to their view of His Sonship. However, from the viewpoint of His being the Son of God in the sense of deity, the virgin birth is the very foundation of His incarnation. Furthermore, the Bible makes the virgin birth an integral part of the whole scheme of redemption.

It is involved in the curse pronounced upon the serpent which curse gives to fallen man his first ray of hope: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3: 15). In symbolic language victory over Satan is foretold. The seed of woman triumphs by inflicting a fatal blow to the head of the serpent while only being bruised in the heel in the process. The expression "seed of woman" involves an idea contrary to all biological experience. We read of the seed of man—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—but never do we read of the seed of woman except in this instance.

Sometime later the prophet Isaiah throws some light on the meaning of this expression: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 14). Thus, the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, which idea harmonizes with the expression "seed of woman." From these verses we learn that He was begotten by deity, conceived and born without an earthly father, and His very name means "God with us" (Matt. 1: 23)—hence, His incarnation!

"Almah"

The word "virgin" (KJV) in Isa. 7: 14 is from the Hebrew word "almah" which according to authorities may be translated "young woman." Hence, forces of opposition sometimes deny that this verse affords evidence of the virgin birth. The translators of the RSV (all Modernists) make this verse read "young woman." While "almah" is generic enough in meaning to allow the translation "young woman," most of the time it was used to mean a "young woman" who was a virgin. The context, circumstances, and conditions determined the issue.

In Isa. 7: 14 the context—even the verse itself—demands the idea of "virgin." Note: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive...." The "sign" exists only if the idea of "virgin" is involved. A young woman giving birth to a child was a normal experience.

It is significant that the Septuagint Version, which is a Greek translation of the original Hebrew text, translates "almah" using the Greek word "parthenos," which has only one meaning, namely, "virgin." Thus, the translators of the Greek Old Testament understood the meaning of "almah" in this verse to mean "virgin." Furthermore, this is the version that Jesus and the apostles quoted from in their day.

But this is not all. When Matthew wrote, using the Greek language, the Holy Spirit moved him to use the word "parthenos" when he quoted Isa. 7: 14 in Matt. 1: 23. Thus, we have the Holy Spirit's own commentary on the meaning of "almah" in Isa. 7: 14. To deny the idea of the virgin birth in this Old Testament passage is to take issue with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and the Virgin Birth

It is sometimes alleged that Paul never one time mentioned the virgin birth of Jesus in all of his writings; that his silence shows his lack of faith in it, and that such silence minimizes its importance. Such, however, is not true! There are a number of verses from his pen which can be understood only in the light of the idea of the virgin birth of Jesus.

For example, consider the following: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," (Gal. 4: 4) While the expression "made of woman" is sometimes translated "born of woman" in modern versions the word "made" is different from the word "born" generally used in reference to the birth of man, e. g., the birth of John—"born of women" (Matt. 11: 11; Lk. 7: 28). The word "made" in Gal. 4: 4 is the same word used elsewhere when the idea of divine creation is involved (Cf. Jno. 1: 1, 3, 14; Phil. 2: 5-7; Rom. 1: 3). From this I conclude that the Holy Spirit moved Paul in Gal. 4: 4 to use a word that would embrace the idea of divine creation—hence, the virgin birth. Remember, Paul is the author of the following verses already cited: Rom. 1: 3; Phil. 2: 5-7. Again, Paul wrote 2 Cor. 5: 19: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3: 16). These verses can be understood only in the light of the virgin birth by which He became incarnate.

Why His Incarnation?

While there are a number of verses that answer this question rather pointedly in part, the one passage that most fully and clearly answers the question is Heb. 2: 9-18.

Look at verse nine: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." This verse not only affirms His incarnation with the objective, namely, that He might "taste death" without which there could be no atonement for sin. This death was to be experienced "for every man." Thus, the doctrine of limited atonement is refuted, and all the rationalism of Calvinian theology cannot set aside the universal atonement here affirmed. What a paradox! He accomplished in death what all the power of angels could not. Yet, in order to do it, He became lower than the angels, who are not subject to death. Truly, by reason of His incarnation, power was made perfect in weakness.

Verse ten amplifies this objective by showing that His experiences in a flesh and blood body perfectly qualified Him to be the "captain" or "author" (cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9) of our salvation. He was made "perfect" not in the sense that He finally attained the level of sinless perfection—this He had from the beginning for He never did any sin, neither was guile found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2: 22). However, by this experience He perfectly qualified Himself to be our Saviour. He could never have authored salvation for anyone—become a "propitiation" for sin—without the sacrificial blood of the innocent. His earthly experience made this possible. His incarnation was necessary!

The remaining verses of this passage set before us other objectives of His incarnation which time and space forbid discussing fully just here. Notice, however, that by reason of His incarnation He was able to destroy the devil and his power over death (v. 14); deliver us from the fear of death (v. 15); and become "a merciful and faithful high priest (v. 17), and is therefore, "able to succour them that are tempted (v. 18).

Let us maintain faith in the incarnation of our Lord. Let us thank and praise God for the incarnation of His Son. By reason of it, we cherish in our hearts the hope of immortal glory.

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THE ALIEN AND GOD'S COVENANT

One of the most difficult questions that arises when we come to a study of the divorce and remarriage issue is stated in the title of this article. And, even though some might not be able to see the difficulty involved, many brethren who teach and write on the subject have made it one of the "major issues." What does one's being an alien sinner, or for that matter a Christian, have to do with what is taught in the New Testament on the marriage and divorce question? Many think it has a great deal to do with it.

First of all, some do not believe that one is subject "to the covenant" unless he is "a part of the covenant or in the covenant." Thus, it is reasoned by proponents of this position, that unless one is a Christian he is not amenable to the New Covenant or New Testament.

Meaning of the Word "Covenant"

The word "covenant" is from the Greek word *diatheke* and, "primarily signifies a deposition of property by will or otherwise. In its use in the Sept., it is the rendering of a Hebrew word meaning a covenant or agreement (from a verb signifying to cut or divide, in allusion to a sacrificial custom in connection with covenant-making, e. g., Gen. 15: 10, 'divided' Jer. 34: 18-19). In contradistinction to the English word 'covenant' (lit., a coming together), which signifies a mutual undertaking between two parties or more, each binding himself to fulfill obligations, it does not in itself contain the idea of joint obligation, it mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person" (W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Pages 242, 243). In view of what Paul said, the new covenant was established by God, through Christ, that He might "... reconcile the world unto himself..." (II Cor. 5: 19).

Now then, in view of the above definition by Mr. Vine, there only has to be one party involved in the making of a covenant. However, the thing set forth in the covenant may or may not involve an agreement by another party. Let me illustrate. In Genesis 9: 8-17, God made a covenant with Noah and with all his seed which should follow after him, that He would never again destroy mankind with a flood. The rainbow was to be a sign or memorial unto the people, that this would never happen again. It should be obvious to everyone that man did not have to agree with what God had said in order for Him to either make or carry out this covenant.

A Covenant Involving Man

Actually, no covenant of God has to be accepted by man in order for God to make it. It is obvious, however, that some covenants must be accepted by man IF man is to be the recipient of the blessings that are promised by the one who makes the covenant.

For example, God made a covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 17: 2-8 God said, "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abraham fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Now it should be obvious to everyone that God could make the covenant. However, if Abraham and his seed were to receive the blessings that were promised, then they would have to meet the conditions set forth by God in His covenant. The covenant, then, was made by God with Abraham. Even though God made the covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, many of his seed did not receive the blessing **promised because of their disobedience**. Nevertheless the covenant was still in existence, and was still applicable to all those who were the seed of Abraham **whether they accepted the terms of the covenant or not**. The covenant and its terms were announced. God gave man a choice. He could either accept the covenant or reject it. However, and this is very important, the covenant was in existence **regardless of man's choice**. Those of Abraham's seed were amenable to it. And regardless of whether they were willing to accept the terms of it or even had knowledge of it; God still held them accountable for either obeying it or not obeying it.

God Gave Abraham Laws

In Genesis 26 God told Isaac that He had sworn with an oath to his father Abraham, "And I will make thee multiply as the stars of the heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26: 4). You will notice that God said He gave Abraham laws.

God Made A New Covenant

In Hebrews 8: 6-10, the Hebrew writer describes a "new" covenant that God said He would make with the house of Israel. The text here is a quotation from Jeremiah 31: 31-34 and states that this "new" covenant would be "... a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (v. 6).

This "new" covenant is referred to in Hebrews 9: 15-17 as a "testament," which is in harmony with the

definition given for a "covenant" in the first part of this article. Paul said, "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Thus God has established a new covenant.

With Whom Did God Make The New Covenant?

According to Matthew 28, Mark 16, and Luke 24, after His death, burial, and resurrection, Christ, now having all authority both in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28: 18), instructed His apostles concerning those with whom the covenant should be made. Matthew 28: 19 "Go ye therefore and teach all nations.. ." Mark 16: 15 "... Go ye in to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Luke 24: 47 "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Now, Christ died to establish the covenant (Hebrews 9: 16-17). And just as God stated the covenant to Abraham and promised that Abraham's seed would be the recipients of the covenant, God, by the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, stated the terms of the covenant to the people on Pentecost (Acts 2: 36-38); and as God told Abraham, so the apostles told these people, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (v. 39). Thus the new covenant was to be with every creature, all nations, both Jew and Gentile. And, besides that, by approximately 62 A. D. Paul wrote to the Colossians and said that the gospel (this good news of the coming of the Messiah who "... by the grace of God should taste death for every man"—Heb. 2: 9, and by doing this establish His covenant), "... was preached to every creature which is under heaven..." (Colossians 1: 23).

Thus the new covenant (for every creature, for all nations), was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And just as the covenant was made with Abraham, and all his seed were amenable to it, in like manner today all men are amenable to the new covenant regardless of whether they disobey it, refuse it, or never heard of it. Who can deny that this is the truth? But, you may ask, what does all this have to do with marriage, divorce and remarriage?

Everything! It means that those who are not Christians are amenable to every law on marriage, divorce and remarriage just like those who are Christians. What Jesus said in Matthew 19: 3-9) (and all the other passages that we have studied in previous lessons involving marriage, divorce, and remarriage) is applicable today to all men, everywhere.



Building Better Families



James R. Cope
301 Green Castle
Temple Terrace, FL 33617

ELEMENTS OF DISCIPLINE

Communication—The Key

Earlier we observed that discipline is "the treatment suited to a disciple". If a disciple is a "learner" it follows that discipline involves the learning process, the process by which one gains information.

The seed or root out of which grows all discipline, good or bad, is **communication**. **Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary** defines this word to be "1. the act of imparting, conferring, or delivering, from one to another; as, the communication of knowledge, opinions, or facts. 2. intercourse by words, letters, or messages; interchange of thoughts or opinions, by conference or other means." This same work says the verb communicate means "to have or hold intercourse or interchange of thoughts; to give, or give and receive, information, signals, or messages in any way, or by talk, gestures, writing, etc."

A Two-Way Street

Regarding the parent-child relationship, communication is, or should be, a two-way street. It is meaningful to both parent and child to whatever degree each party is benefited or injured by the other. Too often, I fear, parents see communication as a military arrangement wherein the captain tells the troops what to do, when, and where! This is not to fault a parent's right or responsibility to "nurture" the child but it is to warn parents that they are under divine orders not to provoke the child to anger on the one hand or to discouragement on the other. I caution: **let the parent who wants wisdom be warned!**

Whether it is a word and its sound, a facial expression of pleasure or displeasure, or a physical touch which soothes or pains, the fact remains that all of these expressions of mind and emotions are media through which parent and child communicates approval or disapproval to one another. This is why we say that **communication**, yes, **two-way** communication, is the basis of ultimate success or failure of parental discipline or treatment of the child. The child becomes the teacher of the parent if the parent is willing to learn from the responses of the child to the stimulations imparted by the parent.

We make the same point another way by identifying "stimulation" and "response" as the "cause" and "effect" constituting the disciplinary process. Because of

maturity parents are in better positions than the child to weigh objectively the temporary effect of the stimulation they give the child through word and deed from birth to adulthood. The wise parent learns from observing what treatment succeeds and fails in the formation of the child's overall personality, i. e., the child's complete self—physically, mentally, socially, morally and spiritually. In many ways—by action and inaction (both are forms of reaction)—the child informs the parent of the education it is receiving as the object of parental interest or disinterest.

Parents May Prove Themselves Stupid

Parents who fail to learn about themselves from their child's reaction to their treatment of that child are fools! Even trainers of lower animals learn what is needed to cause these unhuman beings to react to various stimuli. (Is a man no different from a sparrow or a sheep? See Matt. 10: 31, 12: 12) True it is that the child matures rapidly but the maturing is not so rapid that observing parents cannot correct the misdirection if they will give attention to what is happening to the child's moral and spiritual character. All parents know that there are physical defects observable in newly born children which can and must be corrected while they are young. Likewise, to neglect character infirmities in the days of childhood is to bring sorrow, and often shame, to the neglectful parent.

Biblical Abundance

The Bible has too much to say about good and evil influences of parents over their children for any Bible believer to deny that morality and spirituality cannot be taught effectively by the parent and learned and exemplified by the child. Whether it be by impartation of facts, commands, promises, admonitions, reproof, warnings, correction, punishment or examples of the effects of good and/or evil conduct, these and other parental procedures may quite properly be called "communications" to the child while the child's reaction to such stimulations is its "feedback" from which parents learn the degree of effectiveness of their efforts.

Regardless of the direction the cause moves in effectuating **change** over parent or child the interchange and exchange is "communication". This word summarizes all the elements of the disciplinary process. Hopefully, we shall look at various expressions of this basic concept in future columns. Meanwhile let us not forget that though the parent is in the driver's seat, in discipline the most effective teachers constantly learn from the pupils!

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SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST

P. J. Casebolt

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THE "TRY OUT"

Before writing this article I considered a number of titles for its heading, but I would probably have said the same things anyway. It is something on the order of what A. C. Grider said about propositions for a debate—the disputants will generally say what they want to say anyway.

We've heard of the Miss America Pageant, and the various satellite pageants associated with it, or similar to it. I almost called this article the "Preacher Pageant," but restrained myself. Still, there are some things which need to be considered, and I think I can say them objectively. I've been preaching long enough that I don't need to establish a reputation for myself by pretending to be an expert on some thorny problem. And, I have never had a problem finding enough preaching to keep me busy, so no one can accuse me of the "sour grapes" syndrome. I have preached part time, full time, been supported by the church full time and part time, and have supported myself full time and part time, and have experienced about every combination of the aforementioned conditions. I have rented property, purchased property, lived in housing furnished by the church, have paid my own moving expenses and have had those expenses paid by the church. I have no pet cause to champion.

Over the years I have witnessed this preacher-related practice called a "try out," and at times it takes on some of the characteristics of a pageant or a phenomenon. A time or two I have found myself right in the middle of, as one preacher aptly put it, "laying out my wares."

I can understand that when a preacher is just starting to preach that he may not be well known among the brethren. Also, it is possible that a preacher may be well known in one area, but not in another. Even Saul needed a recommendation at one time in his ministry (Acts 9: 26, 27). But this doesn't account for some of the things I've seen and heard.

I've known of congregations having a dozen preachers in the "try out" line, and they expected the first ones in line to wait until all had filed across the pulpit and through the "confirmation hearings" of a business meeting. Needless to say, such a practice may be an extreme example, but it points out the waste of time and money for all concerned. And, the problem is compounded when a congregation doesn't have elders.

At present, good preachers are in demand, and this

fact may swing the pendulum the other way, tempting some preachers to play one congregation against another. Some congregations seem to think they are entitled to the best preachers in the brotherhood, and one preacher told me that he "had served his apprenticeship, had a typewriter, some books, and a mimeograph, and was entitled to a larger church." A preacher may not be a powerhouse in the pulpit, a specialist in the study, or a Dale Carnegie in the community, but he can still be a good, solid man for some congregation.

It would be difficult for a congregation to find a preacher who would please everyone, or for a preacher to find the perfect congregation. (I always figured a perfect congregation didn't need me anyway). But, it does seem that a congregation should have some idea of the kind of man they need, contact such a man from personal knowledge or recommendation, then go on from there. Otherwise, while the preacher is waiting for the decision of the judges, he must contact some other congregations to protect himself in case his first "try out" fizzles. Add to this picture the fact that most preachers—congregations need to give a reasonable notice of a change in plans, and at the last minute you have congregations trying to get the house ready between preachers, moving vans jostling each other in the drive-way, children trying to graduate from one school and enroll in another, while the post office and utility companies are trying to unscramble the mess.

It is strange that brethren are so concerned about "how they spend the Lord's money" when it comes to paying the preacher they already have, but will pay the expenses of several "try outs," end up paying moving expenses for someone, and even refurnish or remodel the house for a new preacher.

No, we don't need a conference like the sectarians to decide when and where preachers should move. Neither do we need to sign a long-term contract, as one preacher suggested. Nor, does a congregation have to keep a preacher beyond his effectiveness, or take the first man who applies for the job. Just a little plain old common sense and courtesy will solve most situations, and the rest would fit under some "Believe It Or Not" column in some publication.

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LITIGATION AND THE CHURCH

**G. Spencer Miller
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Most members of the body of Christ have become familiar with the civil suit in Collinsville, Oklahoma where a member of the church who had been withdrawn from received a judgment in the aggregate of \$390,000.00. The theory of recovery pursued by the plaintiff in that case included the concept of invasion of privacy with a request for actual and punitive damages. Since the verdict in the Collinsville case, lawsuits against the church and/or individual members have been reported in Garden Grove, California; Lafayette, Louisiana, and Del Rio, Texas. As a result of these activities, brethren everywhere are pondering what they ought to do to prevent the possibility of a disastrous verdict against the local church where they are members. Although there is not a simple answer to that complex inquiry, this article will propose certain actions which may be taken to alleviate the problem.

Fulfilling Our Responsibility

Initially, it is noted that a proper course of conduct does not include the decision to stop withdrawing from those wayward members who need to be disciplined. As faithful members of the Lord's church, we have a God given responsibility to comply with the commands set forth in passages such as 1 Cor. 5.

Shirking our responsibility is not now nor has it ever been a proper response to adversity.

Consistency

Now more than ever before there is a need for congregations to be consistent with their application of discipline. In the past there have been circumstances where withdrawing fellowship was applied on a hit and miss basis with no consistency at all. Such a course of conduct is not only inconsistent with sound doctrine, but it could also be used against a local church.

In almost every case that has been filed against various Churches of Christ, there has been a claim for punitive damages. Historically, punitive damages have been allowed only in those cases where there has been intentional conduct that has been motivated by malice. Malice has been legally defined to include "hatred, ill will or spite". Like many other matters, malice is seldom, if ever, susceptible of direct proof. Rather, there is usually an attempt to prove malice by circumstantial evidence. It could be argued that the fact that one particular member is singled out for withdrawal while others who have been guilty of similar conduct were not circumstantial evidence of ill will directed to the person from whom the congregation has withdrawn.

In light of these circumstances, it is imperative that God's people consistently practice God's plan for discipline. Inconsistency will certainly not be tolerated by the Almighty and may not be tolerated by a civil jury.

Authority and the Use of the Lord's Money

Another threshold question that must be addressed is the issue of what a local congregation may do with the Lord's money in this context of lawsuits against the church. It is not the purpose of this article to provide an extensive analysis of this issue. However, it has been assumed that there is scriptural authority for a local congregation to own a meeting place and the property associated with it. If that is true (and the author believes that it is) then God expects us to be good stewards. We can not squander the Lord's assets or allow them to be misused. With this concept in mind some of the recommendations set forth herein will be more meaningful.

Insurance

Probably one of the most cost efficient methods for approaching the problem of lawsuits against the church is the procurement of a liability insurance policy which includes coverage for claims of invasion of privacy, libel, slander, defamation, etc. Such policies are available on the market. Two companies which issue such policies are Church Mutual Insurance Company and Lumberman's Mutual. The cost is not expensive. If we have secured insurance policies in the past in order to protect against the loss of the church building by fire, then there is even a greater need to protect the Lord's property from a rebellious member and his or her attorney.

In purchasing an insurance policy there are several important considerations. First, the policy must be designed to provide the coverage needed. It is more than just a fire insurance policy. Advice from an attorney or independent insurance agent may be necessary to insure that the policy purchased is adequate.

Second, the policy must have a very broad definition of who is an insured under the policy. The definition of "insured" should include the church collectively and those acting on behalf of the church such as evangelists and elders. In the cases that have been filed to date individuals have been sued as well as the church collectively. Therefore, broad coverage is essential.

Third, consideration must be given to the possibility of purchasing coverage in addition to the basic coverage. An endorsement is available with some policies which includes counseling malpractice which would involve those situations where marital counseling by the elders or the preacher results in a claim that the situation was mishandled. Also, umbrella coverage may be purchased in addition to the basic coverage which would increase the applicable limits of liability. A question to consider is related to the value of the local church's property. It would be unwise to believe that a \$100,000.00 liability insurance policy would be sufficient to protect the assets of a congregation where the fair market value of the church building and preacher's

home is in excess of \$300,000.00.

By purchasing an insurance policy, one item that is covered which is extremely important is the cost of defense. That means that the attorney's fees and associated defense costs which includes expert witness fees, deposition expenses, etc. will all be paid by the insurance company. Without an insurance policy those expenses necessary for protecting the Lord's property will probably be paid out of the church treasury. Those expenses could be substantial and could put a strain on any church's finances.

In The Event There Is No Insurance

Obviously, there are some situations which already exist, where a lawsuit has been filed and there is no insurance. In that event, the case must be defended. It would be improper to simply allow a rebellious member to receive a default judgment and allow the church building to be auctioned on the Courthouse steps or the Sheriff take the contribution every Sunday in order to satisfy a judgment. Action must be taken.

One pitfall that must be avoided is the selection of counsel to represent the church who will do an adequate job defending the case. There is probably no way that any of these cases may be settled. If we are doing God's will by withdrawing fellowship from wayward members, then we can not pay such a member any money simply to settle a lawsuit that is filed against the church. Although it is proper to take money from the church to defend a lawsuit in order to protect the Lord's assets, there is no authority that would allow money to be taken out of the treasury to pay a sinner for a law-suit. Therefore, since the case will not be settled, a well qualified attorney is critical.

Perhaps, a member of the local church is an attorney who will know who to hire. Perhaps, a member of the local church because of unrelated matters knows of a good trial lawyer. On the other hand, if information is not available in regard to the employment of an attorney, it is recommended that an attorney who is a Christian be contacted even in another city or state so that information may be obtained to aid in the selection process. A bad lawyer is almost as bad as no lawyer.

Conclusion

The popularity of lawsuits against the church will probably pass with time, but in the interim action must be taken to prepare for the possibility of such a suit. It is hoped that the information set forth in this article will assist in making the necessary preparation. We can not allow the affairs of the world to interfere with God's plan to keep the church pure.

(Editor's Note: The author is an attorney of the firm of Miller & Dougherty of Kansas City, MO, and is one of the deacons of the Vivion Road church.)

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NEW CONGREGATION IN QUEENS, NEW YORK CITY

RON ROARK, 26 Raker Dr., Poughkeepsie, NY 12603—After much prayer and hard work, a church has been established in the borough of Queens. This work began in January, 1985 and for the first six weeks an average of twelve met for worship on the Lord's day. New York City is the largest city in the United States and is composed of five boroughs, is just under 10 million. Queens has 2.5 million. To my knowledge, in all of N. Y. C. there is only one other English speaking church attempting to follow Jesus without building and/or supporting human institutions and that church is in Brooklyn.

The church is renting a storefront in the city of Flushing (a city inside the borough of Queens). It is located between La Guardia and Kennedy airports at 36-24 Union St., 2-R, Flushing, NY. Union St. is just one block east of Main St.. Telephone number at the building is 718-445-1512. We meet on Sundays for worship at 3 P. M. with classes at 4:15 P. M. On Wednesdays we meet at 7:30 P. M. for classes. Please pray for these efforts and send us names of people you know in the area who might be interested in the gospel. There is much to do. If you are planning a visit to the city, please visit us. Better yet, why not move up and help us? In addition to my address above, my phone number is 914-462-0045. Or you may contact Jim Swann, R. D. 3, River Rd., Stanhope, NJ 07874. Phone 201-347-9372.

ALABAMA SONG LEADERS SCHOOL

JOHN M. KILGORE, 10918 Hazen, Houston, TX 77072—R. J. Stevens assisted by Sewell Hall, James Walker, Dane Shephard, David Pickup and myself will conduct a song leaders training school in Athens, Alabama, July 14-19, 1985. The curriculum will include: music theory, conducting, sight singing, song service preparation and voice training. All interested men 16 years and older please contact me at the above address for brochure and other details, or phone me at 713-498-8782.

MEL ROSE, 176 B. Street, Brawley, CA 92227—After four pleasant years with the church in Hillsboro, Oregon, I have moved to Brawley, California. While in Hillsboro, I still was able to be involved in the Spanish speaking work, holding meetings in Mexico each year. Since Brawley is only twenty-two miles from the Mexican border, and since the population of the city is predominantly Spanish speaking, I will be much more active in that work than before. My primary commitment is to the English work in the Brawley area, but the elders will help and encourage me in devoting a portion of my time to the Spanish work.

Correspondents please take note of my new address.

PHILIPPINE PREACHER DIES

PETER B. HUPA, Buug Church of Christ, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines—I am sorry to inform you that LENGHANAN SENDIL of Buug, passed away on January 17 in the Provincial Hospital at Pagadian City. We had two successive night services for family and friends and on January 20, final services were conducted in the Buug meeting house. Ramon G. Carino delivered a comforting message and was assisted in the services by brethren Bedia, V. Lumantam and F. Mandao. Brother Sendil preached the gospel for 18 years and led many to Christ. I will continue in the work of the Lord here along with the elders and deacons. His death has already resulted in the restoration of some family members. His death is a great loss to the work in this area.

PREACHER NEEDED

FALLBROOK, CALIFORNIA—The church in Fallbrook needs a gospel preacher. We are a small congregation in a community of 25,000, sixty miles north of San Diego. Liberalism is strong in this area and we will need a man well grounded on that among other things. Camp Pendleton, a Marine base, is located nearby. We can only supply \$300 a month, so obviously we need someone who can raise additional support. Those interested may contact Roger Borst at 619-723-8808; Jim Freeman at 619-728-7870 or write to P. O. Box 692, Fallbrook, CA 92028.

PREACHER AVAILABLE

R. T. (TED) MITCHEL, P. O. Box 61029, Fairbanks, Alaska 99706-1029—After nearly five years with the Chena Small Tracts Rd. church in Fairbanks, Alaska, I have given my resignation, effective May 31, 1985 and desire to relocate with a congregation in the "lower 48" states. Due to personal business, I will not be available until after mid-August. I am 32 years old, married and have no children. I have been a Christian for 10 years. Fairbanks is my first full-time preaching experience but I had quite a bit of experience prior to moving here. An integral part of my work with a congregation is an adult Bible class curriculum that I developed with the help of two Christians with degrees in education. Much of my preaching is coordinated with this curriculum. Until May 31, I can be reached at the above address or by calling 907-455-6312 (home) or 907-79-6170 (church building). After May 31, you may write me: c/o W. F. Mitchel, P. O. Box 52, Bremen, IN 46506.

EDITORIAL LEFT-OVERS**FLORIDA COLLEGE AND EDUCATING YOUR CHILDREN**

In these days when educational approaches often desensitize our children and grandchildren to spiritual values and godly principles, when secular humanism so dominates the atmosphere in which they are daily schooled, there is more than ever a need for schools like FLORIDA COLLEGE. It is not perfect. But it has a lot going for it which would help your children build a solid bridge between high school years and the last two or more years of college work.

What does it have going for it? For one thing, all of the administration and faculty are Christians. The study of the Bible is encouraged and opportunities are given to include that along with training in secular subjects. Effort is made to provide a moral climate in which study, dating, drama, music, sports and other things may be pursued without losing sight of reverence for God and his word. I am amazed that many parents do not see the value of these things and that more young people are not encouraged to take advantage of such opportunities. Private education is one of the best hedges against humanism available to us.

I attended Florida College and greatly benefited from my experiences there. It was there that I met Bobbie and that we planned for a life together. We sent our two sons there and both were richly rewarded. Over the years we have encouraged a number of young people to go there and have watched them become successful in various endeavors in life. Many young people have been helped a great deal by their experiences in faithful churches in Tampa area while students. We urged our sons to worship under the preaching of H. E. Phillips and both were richly rewarded through the influences of that great man and his family. Scores of others have been similarly helped, not only where brother Phillips has preached but in other area churches and by other good families interested in young people.

The school has many critics. At times, I have been one of them. Ask the administrators. Ask various teachers. Ask the board. I have tried to be a responsible critic and have addressed such efforts to those in position to do something about them. I shall continue to do that. But my wife and I thought it was the best alternative we could find to start our sons on a college education. We have watched many of our friends agonize over the educational experiences of their children. I do not believe, and am not arguing here, that there are no other alternatives in educating young people. But it is a sensible alternative. "But don't they have rules"? We gave our boys an option. "Spend your first two years of college work there and we will help you all we can financially. If you want to go elsewhere, then you will have to find the money." Do you think that was too hard? Do you think they hate us for it? Ask them. They are of age.

Nobody asked me to write this. Nobody at the college knows about it. They will learn of it when they read it in the paper. I think they need a helping hand at a critical time for them. It is also a critical time for YOU and for YOUR CHILD when it comes time to leave home and go off somewhere to college. Do yourself and your child a favor and look into it. It might help a lot of things.

TO THE WRITING BRETHERN

We have on hand a considerable backlog (180 articles) of material from various writers. Most of this material is good, reflecting careful study and capable writing. Some of it has been on hand for a long time. Perhaps a word of explanation is in order. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES has about a dozen men who have been asked to contribute articles under assigned headings. This is designed to create balance in subject matter and to assure that the bulk of material appearing here will be supplied by men familiar to our readers and known for their faithfulness in life and work and ability as students of the Bible and writers. Many of our older readers have come to look upon these men as "family". Newer readers soon come to feel the same way and look for material from their favorites. Since these men have been asked to do this work, we give preference in the space available to their writings. That means that material other than theirs must appear as space is available and as the material is suitable. We try to avoid as much overlapping in subject matter as possible.

Also, the length of an article may well determine how soon it can be used. I have some excellent material I have not been able to carry yet because it is too long. Three and a half pages double-spaced will fill one page of copy in the paper. Articles which run to five or more pages are going to have a tough time finding space anytime soon. An average issue of STS will carry ten or eleven articles along with a news column and contracted ad space. That is not to say that we never carry longer articles, for readers of the paper know that is not the case. But conciseness is one quality of good writing. Instead of writing five sentences to say the same thing, using in each sentence a different synonym, why not decide which word says it best, use that one in a well-worded sentence and be done with it?

On occasion, we have gone to the trouble and expense of having an article set in type only to see it appear in another paper before we could get it in print. We ask writers not to send to us any article which has been submitted to another paper. We prefer that our readers have material which was prepared only for this paper. That does not apply to news items which need as wide coverage as possible.

Also, we ask writers not to engage in personality attacks on those with whose views they disagree. We are not opposed to error being exposed, nor even to identifying the proponents of error by name. But we do expect writers to exercise restraint, write with dignity, practice the "golden rule" and not grind personal axes in these columns.

We appreciate the desire of writing brethren to have their material appear in this paper. If we have material from you which you sent sometime ago and you wish to submit it to some other paper which might be able to use it sooner, then please let us know and it will be returned to you. Writing is hard work and I don't blame anyone for wanting to see his work used as soon as possible.

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