

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

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



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

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

H. E. Phillips

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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

For some time now I have contemplated giving some history of the beginning and purpose of **Searching The Scriptures** for readers who have been taking this paper for less than ten years, as well as many old subscribers from the beginning. It is my persuasion that when people know the **when, why, and how** of such a work as this, they will be much more interested in receiving it each month. I prefer not to rely too much upon my memory in giving this brief history of Searching The Scriptures lest I be unduly influenced by the passing of time. I recounted the beginning in the May, 1973 issue and I shall quote from that page in providing the information in this article. The quotation will assure the accuracy of facts as they were then.

Searching The Scriptures originated in the mind of this writer as far back as 1951. In my final editorial before transferring all editorial functions to the new owner and editor, Connie W. Adams, I wrote under the heading "The beginning of Searching The Scriptures" the following in part:

"Perhaps some brief facts that led to the conception and birth of **Searching The Scriptures** will better express my personal involvement and deep sentiment at the present time.

"I moved from Lake City, Florida, to Clearwater, Florida, in 1945 to work with the church there. Some three or four years later I became aware of some issues which were later to become very serious and prove to be a dividing wedge between many brethren and churches.

"As a young preacher with no more than eight or nine years experience, I did not really understand the nature or the significance of these issues at that time, but I know that brethren were being alienated and I was becoming involved to a degree. During 1949 and 1950 I was preaching on a local radio station and trying to publish a bulletin, but at that time the ability of the church in Clearwater was limited and I could not do more. I read every thing I could find on the history of the church from the early nineteenth century to that day to try to learn, if possible, what was happening and why. I discovered the basis for some of the problems, but did not fully understand their consequences or know how to solve them. One thing stayed in my mind, which I believe was the seed that later produced this publication, I realized that the people would have to be encouraged to read and think for themselves and not be blindly led by prominent preachers and self-appointed guardians of orthodox truth, which very few seemed able to define except by association to a school, some exalted preacher, or an established paper. The question was to me then: How can the simple, plain truth be communicated to brethren over the country by a relatively inexperienced young preacher with little influence or ability beyond the circle of his own community and among his brethren in the locality where he lived?

"There were those who were fighting these battles, some effectively, some not so effectively. Two or three papers were carrying good articles on the growing issues as they began to be defined, and some effective debates followed. But something was lacking. Most people aside from preachers and elders were taking sides for and against without really understanding. I talked with many brethren while in meetings between 1949 and 1955 who did not know what the issues were all about, but they were aligned for one position and against another. Many places where I had preached several years in meetings suddenly apologetically cancelled my meetings with no better explanation than that I was aligned with the wrong group. When asked what was wrong with that group, they usually answered that their preacher or elders said they were teaching error. When I asked what error they taught or what error I taught, many answered that they did not know. Literally hun-

dreds of people in those days would talk with me in this way. I loved them and did not want to see the breach in the church, but how could I get the message of truth to the average Christian to encourage him to study the Word of God in making his decisions? I could not compromise truth. I could not longer preach to many of them. Many of the papers in existence at that time had such prejudice against them that these people would not read them.

"I suppose the anxiety, frustration and impelling drive of this editor to get the message to these uninformed saints determined that some day, some way, by the grace of God he would develop a means of communication unattached to any other paper, school, clique or party by which he hoped to sound out the clear, pure truth that every man should study for himself just what God willed him to do.

"No opportunities were opened and no financial funds were available until 1957. I then lived in Gainesville, Florida, and had been laboring with the University Avenue church since 1953 when I moved from Clearwater, Florida. While at the lectures at Florida College in 1957 I revived the subject with James P. Miller, with whom I had discussed this matter some six years before. We determined to join forces and jointly edit and publish a 'Florida Newsletter' which soon took the name The Southeastern Newsletter. The major objective of this endeavor was to keep brethren talking and discussing their differences and out of this we hoped to save many brethren. We were too late with this effort, and besides we learned that it was not the right way to deal with false teachers.

"We began to write articles, and received requests for more such lessons. But with the articles came cancellations for the newsletter from churches.

"In the early fall of 1959, James P. Miller and I made plans for a new religious monthly, and arranged to meet with some brethren in Orlando, Florida, and tell them of our desire to begin a paper. I called it '**Searching The Scriptures**' because that is exactly what we intended to do. We met with these brethren and got the encouragement we needed. We made plans to begin in January, 1960. Several of the good brethren in Orlando, Tampa, Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Palmetto, and Bradenton and other parts of the country: Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and Missouri sent lists of subscriptions and paid for them for one year. Thus began **Searching The Scriptures**." (From editorial in *Searching The Scriptures*, May, 1973, page 259).

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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TEACHING CHILDREN TO BEHAVE IN WORSHIP

Children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6: 4). "Nurture" means training and "admonition" means to put in mind, to gently reprove, or give counsel and warning. It is clearly, then, the duty of fathers (and mothers) to see to the whole process of training children for all aspects of life, and this must be done consistent with the will of the Lord. Surely that would include training them to be quiet, respectful and reverential during periods of public worship.

A Sensitive Subject

It is natural for young parents (and for grandparents, as well) to assume that their little children are the brightest, cutest and most amusing creatures in all human existence. It is difficult for some to come to terms with the fact that untrained little ones can disrupt the worship of the Lord on the part of parents, grandparents and those seated near them, and sometimes, of a whole congregation so that a prayer, reading, Bible class lesson or sermon cannot be heard.

We all understand that infants will cry at times, no matter where they are. If they are hungry, the only way they can let us know is by crying. If their clothes need changing, they will cry. If they are hungry, or cutting teeth, or hurt, their only means of communication is to cry. But it does not take long for their personalities to begin developing. They soon learn to respond to a warning, or to react to a word or gesture of caution, or disapproval. By the time they are old enough to speak, they are certainly old enough to understand words of instruction and warning, and to get the message from stronger actions which register disapproval.

Young mothers have entered an unknown and uncertain area when they start dealing with babies any place, including a public worship gathering. Some are intimidated by the prospect of trying to control a small child. But they are not exempted from the responsibilities and the needs of public worship. The children need to learn what it is all about. And they begin learning early. We all need to be patient and understanding with young mothers and fathers who are doing the best they can.

Sometimes the task of young parents becomes complicated by admiring friends seated nearby who make faces, or play with the child. Children like an audience and soon realize when they have one. Sometimes the process of training is destroyed by doting grandparents.

I have seen babies and small children passed up and down the row during a service. I have seen grandparents actually take a child from it's mother's arms and just take over. This tug of war helps nobody and actually hinders the training of the child in public worship

Begin At Home

Children who get out of control in department stores, shopping malls, restaurants, doctors offices and in public worship, are not properly controlled and trained at home. Titus was to teach the older women to "teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2: 3-4). There is a dire need for this all over the country. Mothers and grandmothers need to be helping their daughters and granddaughters to learn how to manage their small children in services. There are two sides to this matter. It is the duty of the older women to teach the younger women, but it is also the duty of the younger to LISTEN and LEARN. Some young women think they already know it all and are not about to take any advice from older women, and especially a mother or grandmother.

A daily period of Bible reading and prayer with the whole family at home, is a good training ground for proper conduct in public worship. Teach them to be quiet, to sit still, to listen. Help them understand that this is not the time to talk, or play on the floor. When they are old enough to talk and to understand what you say to them, explain why mother or father cannot talk to them during the Lord's Supper. Explain why they need to sit quietly and listen when one is preaching the word of God. Show by your own interest and attention that this is sacred and very important to you.

Teaching Them Not To Listen

When you take a large bag full of books, cars, dolls, stuffed animals and cookies, you are giving out the wrong signal. I have seen children soon discard all of these and still act like brats and disrupt the whole service. When you put them on the floor to play under the benches, or allow them to run up and down the pew, or you run in and out with them to pacify them and then give them a cookie when you take them out, or even worse, allow them to make a garbage dump out of the pew and floor for several yards around you, you are not training your children to reverence God. You are teaching the child to hold both God and man in contempt. And by the way, if you could get a cookie for creating such a disturbance as to be taken out, would you not soon learn how to go about getting a cookie? I have seen children old enough to go to school sit in services with comic books, or other secular books, and I have seen some do school work while the gospel is being preached. I have seen children who are old enough to hold a song book and learn to sing, allowed to sit while the whole congregation is asked to stand, or worse yet, to make a bed and go to sleep rather than sitting up and being respectful. When parents allow this, they **are** teaching their children, all right; they are teaching them to dishonor God and show contempt for others. When they get older, they will move to the back rows, if you allow it, and there they will sleep, laugh with other unruly young people, pass pictures, write notes, flirt, and they will wander in and out to the

water fountain and rest room.

What To Do With An Unruly Child

What do you do with a child, past the infant stage, who is cranky and unresponsive to warnings? I first heard this formula from Gary Ogden of Plant City, Florida. He is exactly right and I pass it on to you for what it is worth. After trying briefly to get things under control (and I emphasize BRIEFLY — don't sit there so long you destroy the effect of the whole service), then here is what you do: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them right back in. Well, you say, suppose that does not work? Then the next thing you do is: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them back in. If that still does not work, then you: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them back in. You think that won't work? Of course it works. It has been working for years. My own children soon learned that it was not much fun to have to go out and that it was much more pleasant to stay inside and be quiet. I learned the same lesson as a small child. My parents before me learned the same lesson in the same way.

The trouble is that we have too many who are relying too heavily on the instruction of permissive psychologists as to how to train children. There are principles in the word of God that will help with this problem. Consider the following:

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19: 18).

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22: 6).

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22: 15).

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beat him with the rod, he shall not die" (Prov. 23: 13).

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29: 15).

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth and peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12: 11).

To his children at Laodicea, the Lord said "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3: 19).

Let no one suppose that this writer has advocated brutal treatment of children. We are all sensitive to the subject of child abuse these days, and well we should be. But measured, reasonable correction which emphatically makes the point that some behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated is much needed these days. The Lord placed the responsibility for training in the hands of parents. One day he shall call us to account for how we managed the task. If you want your children to grow up to reverence God and obey his will, then you must start TODAY to teach them respect for the worship of God. It will take time, effort and great patience, but it is worth all of that, and more.

Please Renew Promptly

WAKE THE WORLD AND TELL THE PEOPLE

Wilson Adams
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Gambrills, MD 21054



DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN BRIGHT PROMISE OR FALSE HOPE?

The facts are scary. In 1960 there were 393,000 divorces in the United States; by 1985 that number had increased more than threefold to 1, 187,000. It is estimated that in 1989 only 4% of American households will be organized according to God's arrangement for the family: **one man married to one woman for life where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is a keeper at home.** Only 4%! Staggering!

Nothing brings home the general disintegration of the family any more than does attempts at converting the lost. It is becoming increasingly common to have to deal with multiple marriages and divorces among those we seek to reach with the gospel. The exceptions have become the rule.

It never is easy to confront sin. It never has been. Solomon very wisely noted that **"the way of the transgressor is hard"** (Proverbs 13: 15). Repentance has always been man's most difficult assignment. It isn't easy to say "no." Everyone knows that it is downright comfortable to keep things the way they are. Conversion without change would be a nice option were it available. It isn't. In fact, conversion without change is a contradiction in terminology.

And so, what do I tell my inquiring friend about commitment to Jesus? —That he can commit without change? —That he can come to Jesus in whatever state he is in and remain there? —That he can find new comfort in old sin? —That unholy relationships hold forth the promise of becoming holy? —That God makes exceptions on emotional issues? The answers should be obvious.

Should be. There are some who want to make an exception for those living in immoral and illicit marriage relationships. "Baptism washes away sins... **and wives!"** is being preached with greater force and feeling than ever before. And some, while briefly denying agreement with the above stated position, are quick to defend the character of colleagues who preach it while slow to speak out on the issue itself. Have we reached the point where the easy-going spirit of ecumenicalism has blurred our vision with respect to truth on vital issues? Vital issues? Yes! On the surface it appears as a harmless doctrine of much comfort and little consequence, but

beneath the water line it is a deadly promise of conversion without change.

Are Non-Christians Subject To The Will Of Jesus Christ?

Good question and one that is central to the whole discussion. Simplified it asks (in relation to the question at hand): Can one who has been married, divorced and remarried where God has given no right (i. e., where fornication was not the cause of the putting away, Matt. 5: 32: 19: 9) subsequently hear the gospel, obey it and continue living in what was before a sinful relationship? Does his/her non-Christian status offer an exemption from God's marriage laws? Has baptism changed a wrong relationship and made it right?

First, **God's law on marriage is universal.** In fact, in terms of human relationships, it was the first law given (Gen. 2: 24). When Jesus responded to the marriage-divorce question in Matthew 19 He went back to the divine principle established in the very beginning (Matt. 19: 3-6). In Matthew 5: 32 He made it clear that the Father's will concerning marriage applied to **"everyone"** and **"whoever."** (The same wording is also found in Matthew 19: 9.) Thus, God's rule for marriage had it's beginning in Genesis 2 and not Acts 2!. It holds forth universal application.

Second, if the unsaved are not subject to the will of Jesus Christ, then what justification could there be for preaching the gospel to one not amenable to it? Tough question. If this teaching is true, then the challenge of the great commission is absolutely meaningless.

This issue cuts to the core of God's eternal plan. It does not center in personalities (although some on both sides have done an injustice by focusing more on personalities than on the problem. Such is unfortunate for it blurs the real problem by turning it into a "personal" issue). It does not resolve itself in a discussion of "fellowship." That, too, shifts the focus away from the crucial issue. **ARE THE UNSAVED BOUND BY THE LAW OF GOD?** That is the central question and the one question that must be confronted. When it is, the question of fellowship may resolve itself.

Is There Conversion Without Change?

There is no such thing as easy-believism. The cost of following Jesus has always been high. When we attempt to sweep away our Lord's difficult demands we blunt His entire message. This position is guilty of doing exactly that. It's a call for a cheap and meaningless faith — a faith that may be exercised with no impact on the fleshly life of sin. It holds forth a false hope to sinners and promises eternal life while promoting continual living in sin.

Conversion DOES involve change! It's not enough to attempt to re-define sin. The blood of Jesus washes away every sin, for sure, but it never has re-defined a sinful practice and made it a non-sinful practice. For example, in 1 Cor. 6: 9-11 we read of "fornicators," "idolaters," "adulterers," "homosexuals," "drunkards," "swindlers," etc., who "were washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Their conversion to Christ did not change their sinful practices and relationships and grant heaven's approval. Conversion changed THEM! **"And such**

were some of you!"

God forgives if man repents. He always has. For example, may a thief find forgiveness in Christ? Most certainly. May he then continue on in a lifestyle of thievery? Most certainly not. Some early Christians had carried on homosexual relationships prior to conversion. Could they find forgiveness for such abominable acts? Sure. Could they continue therein? No! "Repentance" of sin means a turning from sin (Acts 3: 19; 1 Thess. 1: 9).

If two people are living in a marriage relationship that God does not recognize, the blood of Jesus will cleanse their sin if they are willing to repent and cease the relationship. **REPENTANCE DEMANDS A CESSATION OF THAT SINFUL RELATIONSHIP!** Period. And, contrary to popular opinion, I know of no guarantee of a divine asterisk at the end of that statement. Do you? **"How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"**

It isn't enough to point to emotional appeals. When my friend agonizes over the cross he is called to bear, I likewise agonize with him. Sure, it's an emotional thing. But I do him (nor myself) any favors by extending the promise of cheap grace.

No, it is not always a black and white world we live in. I readily confess that I don't know every answer nor can I solve every marriage problem. I don't purport to. I simply try to teach what the Bible teaches and urge those in unclear situations to come to grips with God's commands as it relates to their circumstance. But not every marriage, divorce, and remarriage encounter is unclear. Some are very clear. And like John before Herod, we must confront the sin of an unlawful relationship and make an appeal for repentance. God's servant can do no less (Matt. 14: 3-4).

Cutting To The Core Of The Gospel

This position will not stand up under scrutiny in light of the Scriptures. It is a position that affects the message of salvation we teach by making no moral demands on one in an immoral relationship. We need to be reminded again of the chilling warning of Galatians 1: 6-8 toward all who tamper with that message. Indeed, the doctrine of salvation is fundamental to all we teach.

We want to make conversion easy. It isn't. The cost is high. As a result, we must never be guilty of inviting people to Christ by overlooking the radical transformation of life that conversion implies. Jesus put the sinner on notice that he/she must turn from sin and not continue in sin. The call of Calvary comes clear: There can be no turning without change. There can be no adoption without letting ungodliness go. It never has been easy to follow Jesus. But it will be worth it for those who do.

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword... "

"He who does not take His cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me... "

"And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell... "

Matthew 10: 34, 38; 5: 29
(Note: The series on "Antioch—The Power of the Local Church," will continue next month)

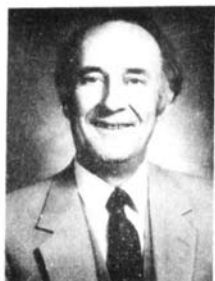
WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

(Rom. 4:3)

Send all questions to:

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KILLING OUR BRETHREN

QUESTION: *What is meant by "ye kill" in James 4: 2? Were there those guilty of murdering their brethren among those to whom James wrote?*

ANSWER: The word "kill," it seems to me, is used in a figurative sense. If interpreted literally, we must suppose that actual murderers were in the congregations, whereas Roman justice would have intervened. "Ye kill" is present active indicative, which means they were continuously killing.

R. C. Trench says that *phoneus*, which is kin to *phoneuo* (kill in Jas. 4: 2), "is capable of vaguer use; a wicked man might be characterized as *phoneus tes eusebias*, a destroyer of piety, though he made no direct attack on the lives of men, a traitor or tyrant as *phoneus tes patridos*" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 314). We could properly say that a wicked man would destroy (kill) piety and a traitor would destroy (kill) his country.

Here in James some killed (destroyed) the character and reputation of their fellow-Christians and others because of their love of pleasures and an uncontrolled zeal for carnal gratification. The strong term, "kill," was perhaps used to show they were just as great criminals as those who took the physical lives of others.

Erasmus found the passage, Jas. 4: 2, impossible to interpret and suggested the translation should be, "ye envy," assuming a mistake had been made in transmission of the text. The two verbs in Greek, *phoneuete* (murder) and *phthoneite* (envy) are not greatly dissimilar, and so Erasmus reasoned that "envy" should be in the text instead of "kill." This position was adopted by Tyndale, Calvin, Moffat and others. However, there is no basis in the Biblical manuscripts that lends any support to such a view.

Some have suggested that James classified them as murderers because their motive was murderous in nature and an attitude which leads man to kill his fellow-man. John does say, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 Jn. 3: 15; cf. Matt. 5: 21-22), but James said, "ye kill," not "ye hate your brethren." The word "destroy" would fit better.

R. V. G. Tasker, in his commentary, interpreted the difficult verse: "James, we must not forget, is writing a

general Epistle, and is not necessarily contemplating either here, or elsewhere, the circumstances actually existing in a particular Christian community known to him. He is rather underlining what *can* happen and *does* happen in human life when men choose pleasure to the exclusion of God. Under such circumstances, as the history of humanity from the days of Cain to the present time makes abundantly clear, the laws of god are disregarded; and pleasure, given full rein, takes control of the situation and often sweeps its victims to murder" (*The General Epistle of James*, p. 87).

What Tasker said is true about what can and does happen in human life, but was he accurate that those circumstances were not necessarily existing in the congregations to whom James wrote? I think not! They were killing and warring, fighting and lusting. James deals with a problem that was prevalent among them at the time. They were killing (destroying) the brethren.

Sermons on Grace

by

Robert F. Turner

Delivered by request of the elders of the College View Church in Elizabethtown, KY, June 1988

SERMON TOPICS

- * If God Has Spoken
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SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED

Benjamin Franklin wrote in his autobiography of a young Presbyterian preacher, named Hemphill, "who delivered with a good voice, and apparently extempore, most excellent discourses... Among the rest, I became one of his constant hearers..."

The year was about 1734. While many admired the young man, the more orthodox Presbyterians did not approve of some of his sermons and attempted to have him silenced.

Franklin continued, "During the contest an unlucky occurrence hurt his cause exceedingly. One of our adversaries having heard him preach a sermon, that was much admired, thought he had somewhere read the sermon before, or at least a part of it. On searching, he found that part quoted at length, in one of the British Reviews, from a discourse of Dr. Foster's. This detection gave many of our party disgust, who accordingly abandoned his cause and occasioned our more speedy discomfiture in the synod. I stuck by him, however; I rather approved his giving us good sermons composed by others than bad ones of his own manufacture; though the latter was the practice of our common teachers."

This incident occurred to me last year when the tumult and uproar presented itself over Senator Joseph Biden's plagiarized speech. I thought, if that is a crime or a sin, then likely ninety percent of the preachers had better amend their ways and nine percent of the rest are so dull in their originality, they would give plagiarism a good name.

A few years ago, one older gospel preacher was giving a lecture to an audience composed mainly of younger preachers. He told us that he did not spend a lot of time trying to be original in his preaching; that he made free use of printed sermons and outlines. Someone asked if he had ever been accused of plagiarism.

"No," he countered. "When I get through with a sermon no one wants to claim it anyhow."

Those who know of whom I speak know that he could not be unoriginal if he tried.

The story has been widely circulated that G. K. Wallace was accused by someone of plagiarism when he presented a series of lectures at Freed-Hardeman College that was very similar to the material in a book by Brother Hardeman. The following day he carried the book onto the podium, held it aloft, and announced that he had been charged with using another's material. "Well, here it is! And it's my material! I paid \$3.00 for it!"

He exclaimed. And that was the end of that.

When I started preaching, about all the extra-Biblical material I had was the Gospel Guardian, Gospel Advocate, Searching the Scriptures, and other such journals. I'll guarantee you I made good use of them. I had been preaching for at least six months before I ever got an original idea. I still remember the pride I took in that sermon "from scratch" based on 1 Cor. 16: 8, 9. But I'm confident that other lessons that were not quite so original were more effective.

I still have original thoughts now and then. (Someone said, "Being original is forgetting where you got it.") But it doesn't bother me one iota to use another's thoughts or material in preaching the truth. Obviously one should not pretend that another's experiences are his own. And one would do well to rearrange material to best suit himself and to blend it with his own background and personality. Then too, if one uses two sources rather than one, he can call it research rather than plagiarism.

But I still agree with Benjamin Franklin: I had much rather hear someone preach a good sermon composed or developed by another than a sorry sermon that was quite original.

Years ago I asked Robert Jackson if it would be all right if I preached a certain sermon I had heard him deliver. "Just don't ask me where I got it," he said. But really, Brother Jackson was never reluctant in telling me where he got the idea, or the basic structure of a sermon.

I heard once of an old preacher and a young preacher who walked along a road. Suddenly a snake slid by them. The young man grabbed the other's walking stick and commenced to beat the snake to death. The old man stood trembling and said, "You almost made me fall!" The young man replied convivially, "I'll use anything I can get my hands on to kill snakes!"

Finally, may I remind you of the words of our Lord: **"Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."** (Matt. 13: 52).

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HOW TO SUBVERT

Mark Roberts
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During the institutional battles of the 1950s and '60s there were many wise men who warned that the liberalism of the day would lead to much greater liberalism in the future. Time has shown them to be exactly right. Below is a copy of a letter that is being circulated among the members of a large institutional church in Duncanville, Texas (a suburb of Dallas). While providing graphic evidence of just how far many churches have gone in their desire to look like the denominations around them, it also provides a perfect blueprint of how to bring in innovations and thus destroy a congregation. The frankness and honesty on the part of the leader in the subversion is shocking, but also most helpful to those who would keep the flock of God from wolves. Here is the chronicle of this wolf's efforts (all emphasis mine — MR):

"On November 6th Dr. Jack Boyd of ACU Music Department spoke at the evening worship service on the history of church music. At 4:30 P. M. that Sunday he met with the elders, the worship committee and interested persons. **He had been invited to meet with this group to help them with the implementation of the chorus into our worship services.** The following paragraphs are quotes and excerpts by Dr. Boyd from that meeting:

"My subject here is to talk about, primarily about, **the use of choruses in the worship — the worship itself.** Minter Lane congregation at Abilene (where Dr. Boyd is an elder) does use them—has for about 2 years now. Before that we did it occasionally on Wednesday night. Then we decided, well, it's time for us to do something a little different. One of my fellow elders said, "well just why don't we have them (the chorus) on Sunday night — just have them stand up there and sing."

About 2 years ago, as I said, we started doing this, on an ad hoc basis, then this last winter we did it—we had a Thanksgiving service on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Then we had a Christmas Eve, not on Christmas Eve, we had a Sunday evening 'Birth of Savior' service, which we try to — we tend to stay away from some of the terms that are flare words among some, particularly some of the older members of the congregation.

A small percentage of your congregation may be a little bit uptight about this. If they really are going to have a lot of trouble with it then, they can just not come that night. That's what we suggested to our people — that if you do not find that viable, then trust us a little

bit, but we won't force you to be there. There are other congregations around, so go to those. That's basically the way we handled introducing the chorus (into worship services). The choruses sang several times (in worship services) over the last year and a half. That was into Christmas, Thanksgiving and then Christmas — then twice in January, in February and then we had Easter. Now it was about that point we had a problem because the crucifixion and Resurrection service was on Sunday morning. You can't have a sunrise service at 6:00 P. M. It just doesn't make sense. As a consequence we had a bit of a problem with that.

We had one other problem which we're going to hold back on — we had readers of the Bible, the five people were up on the front pew with a hand held mike. You couldn't see anybody. There was an older man, a middle aged man, and a young boy, **and an older woman, and a younger woman.** The older woman and the younger woman were where we had the problem because it was a female voice that was heard in this worship service. **The elders** said, "No, there's nothing wrong **with that**" but some people who didn't hold with the same views did have some problems. So we said we couldn't start a chorus, and we can't have the women start taking a more active public part in the worship at the same time — that's simply too rich a diet. So we're backing **off on the woman doing** anything of that nature. We may do it — I'm not sure; however, we may do it on the 'Birth of the Savior service' on Dec. 11th. We're having one person — one female voice — I want desperately to do that. **We're going to 'back off and work it in at a later time.**

We're changing — Minter Lane congregation is not alone in using chorus in the worship service. There are others that are doing this around here. In Houston there are two or three that are using a chorus in the worship service. On the West Coast — there are about four or five congregations that are doing this. It is a very slow moving thing. The people in the Eastern part of the United States are slower to change. I'm very sad to say, because they seem to be a bit more conservative.

I think we had about twenty singing in a men's chorus — not a large auditorium — seats about 400 — sang from the balcony. We have a hard ceiling—a very good sound. **It's a good place to perform.** It has a very nice sound. We started the worship service with that—welcomed the visitors, sat down and then the men's chorus started. It was a very impressive sound.

I'm going to show you the outlines that I gave them to put on my computer from this year's Christmas program —and another one we had for a Thanksgiving program and one for an Easter program, the men's program and the Prophecy program.

Now — congregational reading—the entire thing was printed in a bulletin we handed out to everybody at the beginning. O, Little Town of Bethlehem, the congregational reading — the left hand side of the congregation does first verse, the right hand side does the second verse, then everybody does the third one (verse). They've done this before a number of times, so everybody is familiar with the drill in doing congregational reading. You have not done it yet — so let me suggest that you think about

that, as a possibility because it involves the congregation. There's a technique for doing it...

You can see on this outline that we just sort of alternated chorus, congregational reading, congregational singing, reading, chorus, reading, etc. until we got all the way through the thing. The ending of it comes down here, The First Noel, congregational reading, chorus, a final reading, then we all stand and sing Joy To the World, I Carry the Maker of the World, is about Mary and her thoughts on carrying the baby Jesus.

About twenty years ago I began leading singing at Minter Lane congregation. **I started introducing a few new things at a time.** Later on, using the hymnal we would have one-half of the congregation do the first line of a hymn — the other half do the second line and everybody does the chorus. That works out very nicely. **That gets them used to doing something slightly different** — there are other ways.

I don't think you're quite ready, apparently, for the Christmas program that we had up here. Probably, I could come in with my chorus from Minter Lane, and do it, but I don't think that you could do it with your people. Now there's a curiosity — I don't think that you could do it with your own people, but you could have somebody else come and do a program. Because obviously, the ACU choir, the Harding choir, and the whatever-it-is choir, will come in and do a program — **and they will get by with it.**

There are two benefits that we have — first of all one of not inconsiderable benefit is we're using utilizing abilities of the congregation that they never thought were going to be utilized — and this their singing ability — the women's singing ability, most notably. That's one thing. The second is—you are increasing the amount of — the number of songs that the congregation can hear — the number of words that are available to them.

It came from the **Christian Chronicle**, first, many churches are uncomfortable with anything new or different in worship. **Thus, you have to do it very slowly and introducing the idea that change is attractive as long as it's not wrenching. If it's wrenching, you back off and slowly — try it again later.**" End of excerpt.

Allow me to close with a few observations. First, the patience and persistence of those who would destroy a church is incredible. They just keep coming back to "work it in later." Secondly, the true purpose of a chorus is clearly set forth: "to perform" and to have an "impressive sound." God forbid that we should allow the worship services to become entertainment! Finally, the course of institutional brethren seems set for destruction. Incidents like this one show that the trend is for more and more apostasy. Fortunately, many members of institutional churches just are not willing to go this far. This provides us with an unprecedented door of opportunity. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us wake up and see fields that are white unto harvest! Go to your friends and relatives that are in the institutional camp, tell them of the continued digression, warn them that it will come to wherever they are and then urge them to stand for truth! Many souls are wondering if the church of Christ where

they attend is really what the Bible means for a church to be. Let's find those people and help them before it is everlastingly too late.

SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST

P. J. Casebolt

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"GIVING NO OFFENSE"

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain... Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed" (2 Cor. 6: 1-3).

Jesus said that "offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come" (Lk. 17: 1). Many are the passages, and many are the examples which pertain to offenses, but we will limit this study to those offenses which affect the ministry adversely.

More particularly, we will limit our brief remarks to congregational offenses, since I have just recently written about how preachers sometimes bring reproach upon their own labors.

I know of one congregation which encouraged a man to preach, even though he did not have the ability to do so. The man was willing, and the congregation recommended him to others, but would not let him preach at home because no one, except possibly his family, thought he could preach. After a few abortive efforts, the young man was frustrated, discouraged, and disillusioned.

I'm all for mutual ministry, and believe that we should train and encourage both full and part-time workers, that the ministry of which Paul speaks may prosper, but one qualification of such workers is the ability to do the work (2 Tim. 2: 2). Nothing is to be gained, offenses may arise, and the ministry may be blamed when we try to make an arm do the work of a leg in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 14ff).

Another young man wanted to quit his secular job and devote himself to preaching the gospel. He had preached over Sundays on several occasions, and no one questioned his ability, desire, or faithfulness.

On recommendation and invitation, he "tried out" for a good congregation which had elders and was at peace. Again, the congregation did not question his qualifications, but wanted a man "with more experience." That congregation, after several years of experienced preachers, is now without elders and in bad shape.

Another congregation, weak and without elders, invited the same young man to work with it, and the zealous, would-be preacher was willing to go, but he

lacked support. When he asked his home congregation to make up the difference so that he would be making approximately what his secular job paid, he was told that no preacher needed to make that much. Discouraged, the young man continued in secular employment.

Another young man of my acquaintance had gone to school and trained to become a craftsman, and eventually obtained a good secular job, with good pay. But, he had also done considerable preaching, and again, no one questioned his ability or desire to preach. In fact, he was encouraged to give up his secular work in favor of doing more preaching.

After the usual rejections for "lack of experience," he finally found a congregation which was willing to have him come, but could not support him fully. But this time, the congregation did not want him to obtain outside support, because "it would look bad on them." He finally gave up in frustration and discouragement.

Due to attrition in the form of old age, death, apostasy, and various other factors, good preachers are scarce and in great demand. There will always be a demand for faithful workers, because their labor begets more work. Churches need to encourage, not offend prospective workers in the vineyard.


Just because the Lord said that offenses would come, is no reason for us to feel that we have a divine mandate to make certain that his prediction comes to pass.

SINCERE WORDS

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth (Ecc. 12:10)."

Dick Blackford

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A PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE ON HER BIRTHDAY

In the Scriptures the church is depicted as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5: 23-27). We can know with some degree of accuracy when the church began. The New Testament teaches that it began on the day of Pentecost (Isa. 2; Joel 2; Acts 2). Pentecost was one of three annual feasts of the Jews. It always fell 50 days after the Passover. Passover always came on the first Sabbath after the first full moon following the Vernal Equinox. Using the Jewish method, that would make Pentecost fall on May 14, 1989.

Let us sit down together and view the great portrait of this beautiful bride. It is a masterpiece.

Her Price

As in ancient times when a dowry was paid, so the husband paid a great price to obtain this bride. It cost him his blood (Acts 20: 28). The ultimate price that one can pay for anything was paid by Jesus Christ. He gave his life. My, how he loved her!

How does this compare with the view of those who minimize the bride by saying the church is not important, "you don't have to be a member of the church," "church attendance is not necessary," etc. ? The attitude that some have toward the bride reflects on the bridegroom's intelligence. It also belittles his love for her. Which do you think is right?

Her Purpose

The church makes known "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3: 10, 11). That wisdom is seen in that the church is the realm to which Christ adds the saved (Acts 2: 47). He is "the savior of the body" — the church (Eph. 5: 23; 1: 22, 23). WHY does he do this? "That he might present the church (his bride) unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 27). HOW does he do this? By "nourishing and cherishing" her "because we are members of his body," the church (v. 29, 30). WHEN does he do this? Initially, by the washing of water by the word" — at baptism (Eph. 5: 26; Acts 22: 16). And continually, as Christians "provoke one another unto love and good works" by "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together" (Heb. 10: 25). The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3: 15). The church at Thessalonica was commended for "sounding forth the word of the Lord" (I Thess. 1: 7, 8).

What does this tell us about churches whose mission

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is perverted toward social work, recreation, and entertainment? Remember, Christ does not want a bride with spots, wrinkles, and blemishes. Paul said "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2).

Her Permanency

When Daniel prophesied of the kingdom (the church) he said "it shall never be destroyed," that "it shall stand forever," and that it is an "everlasting kingdom" (Dan. 2: 44; 7: 27). John wrote of the church as "a bride adorned for her husband" and recorded an angel as saying "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21: 2, 9). The Hebrew writer referred to it as "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12: 28). And Paul said the church would manifest God's glory "for ever and ever" (Eph. 3: 21).

Her Plea

As with any portrait, we cannot get a total view of all that the picture represents.

Would you like to know more about this kingdom that shall never be destroyed? Would you like to be a part of the church which wears the name of the bridegroom, which has no plan but to be "of Christ" in all that it teaches and practices? If so, please accept this as an invitation and a plea to learn how you can be a member of the bridal party, partake of the marriage feast, and be "married to Christ" (Rom. 7: 4). Investigate the church of Christ nearest you.

A BURNING FIRE

(Jer. 20:9)

Jim Deason

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ATTITUDES AND ISSUES

It was good for me to attend the Nashville Meeting back in December. It gave me an opportunity to hear both sides of old issues discussed. Many who are my age and younger were not around for, or we were too young to understand, the heated battles fought over the institutional issues. And we were not there to experience the heart-wrenching rending of long held friendships. But whoever said that "truth has nothing to fear from the crucible of open and honest investigation" certainly spoke the truth.

Jesus taught this principle when he said, "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes

to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3: 19-21).

There is a question that has been raised in the discussion of these issues that I think needs to be given more than just a passing remark. That question is, "Are brethren divided because of the sour attitudes of crankish-minded brethren or are real substantive issues of conscience involved?"

Let me first admit that in my limited preaching experience, all of which has been among non-institutional brethren, I have come across more than a few who seemed to be "born in the objective case and kickative mood." But I doubt that cranks are the sole property of non-institutional churches. I rather suspect that institutional churches have their share of them as well.

Bad attitudes are a problem in any local church, institutional or non-institutional. Recently I attended the homecoming basketball game of the school my children attend and during the course of the game I visited with a member of an institutional church. I asked him to visit with us at his convenience and he rather rudely said, "no!" He continued, "I don't go along with all of that stuff!" I couldn't help but wonder, "what stuff?" Did he not know that, in the things which his non-institutional brethren practice, his practice is virtually identical? He can attend the services where I preach and not violate his conscience at all. However, I cannot attend worship regularly where he attends because I would be called upon to participate in activities which I believe are unscriptural and unauthorized. Non-institutional churches are not the ones who practice the "stuff over which we are divided!"

This brings us again to the question of why we are divided. I don't believe it is a bad attitude to say that I can't worship with brethren who use the mechanical instrument of music in worship. *The division over instrumental music is a division over whether or not the use of the mechanical instrument in worship is right in the sight of God, not over attitudes!* Surely, there must have been brethren on both sides of the question whose attitudes could have been better. But the division took place over a fundamental issue and not because of the attitudes of the disputants.

Likewise, my brethren, I don't think it reflects a bad attitude for me to say that I can't worship in a church that either is a sponsoring church or sends money to one. It's not a bad attitude to say that I can't worship with a local congregation who uses its treasury to build and maintain human institutions. It does not reflect a bad attitude to declare that I can't be a member of a church that uses its collective funds and other resources to build "family life centers" and other such unscriptural and unauthorized activities. *I understand the Bible to teach that to engage in such activities is sin* and therefore I cannot and I will not have a part in such or fellowship those who do.

These conclusions were not reached because I like being alienated from the majority of my brethren or I enjoy being in a fuss. My Bible teaches me to be a lover of peace. But if the price for peace is the compromise of studied and genuine conviction, it is too high a price to

pay. Such is not paying the price to have a "good attitude," *it is selling out one's faith* and to be avoided at all costs.

Let us all do our best to exercise the wisdom that comes from above that "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3: 17) and realize that "the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (Jas. 3: 18). But let us also understand that this "seed" of the kingdom is the word of God, the saving gospel of Jesus Christ (Lk. 8: 11; Rom. 1: 16). The apostle Paul was a defender of this gospel (Phil. 1: 16) and we are told to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The word "compromise" as it relates to truth should not be in our vocabulary.

**EXTRAVAGANT
LOVE**

J. Wiley Adams

103 Ridgeland Drive
Warner Robins, Georgia 31093



The love taught by Jesus Christ in the New Testament is a new kind of love. It required active good will expressed in terms of doing that which is in the best interest of **others** rather than **self**. This viewpoint on love frustrated the Scribes and Pharisees, baffled the people as a whole, and astounded the disciples of Christ. It continues to have this effect even now. After all, whoever heard of loving your enemies? The love Christ taught requires much more in its expression than most are willing to give.

Look at nature, if you will. It is one grand extravaganza! We are staggered at the enormity of the universe, our own solar system, and the earth on which we dwell. We are overcome by the vastness of everything around us, the variety of the various plant life, the endless species of life forms, each beautiful in its own way, none without purpose in the overall system of things, and no disharmony until man intervenes and seeks to mess it up.

Take a flower, for instance, to illustrate. Any flower will do. Look at it. Look how exquisite it is in its own right and how beautiful, intricate in detail and breathtaking in effect. And, this is just one flower! God is indeed extravagant in what He has put here for man to use and enjoy.

When it comes to spiritual matters, look at God's scheme for man's redemption from sin and his lost condition. It takes extravagant love to give one's only begotten Son for the salvation of an undeserving mankind (Jn. 3: 16). We are staggered by the generosity of

God in giving us all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1: 3). We are thrilled at the grand blend of the simplicity of the gospel (Rom. 1: 16) together with the overwhelming profundity of it all.

Then there is Heaven for the righteous. Who can fathom eternity with God? We are told of its mansions in John 14 and caused to think again in terms of extravagance. John, in The Revelation by inspiration gave us some awesome glimpses of that wonderful place. If the glimpses are awesome, what must the full realization of it be like?

Man has failed so miserably to comprehend the love of God and His Son. Man is so selfish in comparison. "All for self is the motto of many if not of most. Sacrificial love is what God wants and not a frugal, just enough to get by or simply a duty kind of thing, but extravagant love. Paul taught this principle in I Cor. 15: 58 when he said "always abounding in the work of the Lord." We have a current expression: "have a nice day and pass it on." That's the idea! God and Christ have shown us by demonstration what real love is and we are supposed to "pass it on" in our own dealings with the world and our brethren as we render service to God.

When we understand that love is to abound, husbands will not abuse headship, wives will not scorn subjection. Obedience will become second nature to children. Brethren will not inquire as to how much to put into the contribution basket. They will not ask how many services to attend. Preachers and elders will not have to plead, coax, beg, and persuade the brethren to teach their neighbors the truth. Preachers in hard places will not have to get down on their knees and beg for their support in gospel work. Brethren will content themselves with a "thus saith the Lord" in matters of faith and practice. In the face of God's love in action among His people the devil "will flee from us" and the false teacher will not have the courage to hawk his wares in the face of such formidable opposition.

Brethren, God's love is extravagant! Let us all imitate that love.

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BIBLE TABLES

Johnie Edwards
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There are many tables mentioned in the Bible. The word table is used in the Bible to refer to that which is provided on the table such as privileges given to God's people of the Old Testament and the provisions for Christians in the family of God today. Let's take a look at some Bible tables.

TABLES OF STONE

The ten commandments were written on tables of stone. "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exo. 31: 18). According to Deuteronomy 10: 4 the tables of stone contained "the ten commandments." As the apostle wrote the Hebrew Christians he referred to this law as "the tables of the covenant" (Heb. 9: 4). As Paul contrasted the law of Moses and the law of Christ, he said, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3: 3). The tables of stone have served their purpose and God has taken them out of the way (Col. 2: 14-16). A careful reading of 2 Corinthians 3: 6-16 will help us to understand that the law written on tables of stone has been done away and we are subject to the law of Christ.

SHEWBREAD TABLES

The table of shewbread was placed in the outer chamber of the holy place in the Tabernacle. It was made of acacia-wood overlaid with gold. It was three feet long, eighteen inches in breadth and about two feet tall. There were twelve cakes on it and they were renewed each week. It is written, "And Solomon made all the vessels that were for the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the shewbread was set" (2 Chron. 4: 19). A careful reading of Exodus 25-40 will give much information concerning the tables of shewbread. This is the only Bible table that God gave a divine pattern for its construction size. This shewbread may have helped to remind the people of God that "man does not live by bread alone" (Matt. 4: 4). The fact that bread was always to be on the table helps us to see our continual dependence upon our God.

TABLES OF BENEVOLENCE

A careful reading of Acts 6: 1-8 will introduce us to benevolence tables. The Grecian widows needed help. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should

leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6: 2). The brethren were directed to "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6: 3). The apostles needed to be out preaching the gospel while there were others who could take care of the work of benevolence. It needs to be pointed out that this work of benevolence was done within the frame-work of the local church, "among you," and no other organization was set up to do the work of the local church! This is the way it needs to be done today.

MONEY-CHANGERS TABLES

There are just some things not proper to do in the Lord's house. "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of moneychangers, and the seat of them that sold doves, And said, My house shall be called the house of prayers; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21: 12-13). Doves were used in sacrifice by the poor under the law of Moses (Lev. 14: 21-22). As the Jews came from a distance, they would buy the needed sacrifices after they arrived in the city of Jerusalem. There were those who had "set up shop" to make money in the house of God as they sold and made change for the Lord's people. Certainly the religious Jewish leaders cannot be held blameless in this matter. Certainly somebody allowed these thieves to come in. Jesus showed his displeasure in this mis-use of God's house by overthrowing the tables of the moneychangers and ran them out of the Temple. Churches of Christ need to learn not to abuse the Lord's house today. We all know that the meeting house is not sacred, yet there are some specific things for which it was built and we must not abuse its use. Paul got after the Corinthians for abusing the Lord's supper as he wrote, "What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come" (1 Cor. 11: 22, 34). We can be out of order by using the meeting house or facilities paid for by the church for fun or frolic. If the Lord were still on earth, He surely would turn over some tables today and run folks out of the fellowship-halls and family life centers built by a lot of churches of Christ! We all need to learn "how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3: 15).

BETRAYAL TABLE

Can you imagine the look on the face of the disciples when Jesus said, "But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (Lk. 22: 21) Cannot you just see the apostles looking to see whose hand is on the table. Peter told John to ask, "Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas, Iscariot, the son of Simon" (Jno. 13: 24-26). Later, for thirty lousy pieces of silver, Judas betrayed our Lord into the hands of sinful men and he was crucified for the sins of the world (Matt. 26: 14-16). Would your hand have been on the betrayal table on that occasion?

THE LORD'S TABLE

The Lord's table is in the Lord's church and contains the Lord's supper. Jesus said to the apostles, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom..." (Lk. 22: 29-30). Jesus himself instituted the Lord's supper as recorded in Matthew 26: 26-30. The bread and the fruit of the vine called the cup was to remind the Lord's people of the body and blood of the Lord. On this occasion Jesus affirmed that the Lord's supper would be in the kingdom. Later we find the church of Christ at Corinth observing the Lord's supper. Remember the Lord's table was to be in the kingdom. Therefore the church at Corinth was the kingdom of Christ. The Lord's supper was observed by early Christians on the first day of the week (Acts 20: 7) and the Lord's table must be spread each Lord's day as we gather to worship God on Sunday.

A PREPARED TABLE

David said in the beautiful 23rd Psalm that The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psa. 23: 1). To help us appreciate the care of our great shepherd, he further said, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies..." (Psa. 23: 5). Because of God's care and protection for his sheep, we can sit down and enjoy the blessings of God, even in the presence of foes roundabout. This lesson comes from the tender care of the shepherd watching over and making provisions for his sheep even while the wolves may be lurking in and around the sheep. Surely God loves and cares for his own. Are you a part of God's flock, the church?

**SWIFT TO HEAR,
SLOW TO SPEAK,
SLOW TO WRATH
(James 1:19)**

**Mike Johnson
P. O Box 626
Fultondale, AL 35068**

James 1: 19 gives us some very important and practical advice. This verse says, "**Wherefore, by beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.**" James addresses this to his "beloved brethren." It has some advice that we need to consider.

James emphasizes that we are to be: swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. Contextually, these exhortations seem to refer particularly to our disposition towards God's Word (1: 18, 21, 22). We are to be swift (i. e. quick/speedy) to listen to God's Word. It is difficult to learn when we are talking. We are to be more ready to hear than to speak. We must have a disposition to learn. We are to have a meek attitude that is receptive to truth so that we can understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5: 17). The text also says that we are to be "slow to wrath." A person whose disposition is characterized by anger is generally not very receptive to the truth. It is hard for a person to listen to God when he is full of wrath and bitterness. So we are to be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath with regard to the reception of God's Word.

The principles of James 1: 19 about hearing and speaking would also apply in a more general way. Have you ever engaged in a conversation with a person who would hardly let you get a word in, and when you did say something you got the feeling that the person was not listening? I am sure that this has happened to almost everyone. Perhaps we have been guilty ourselves of always being quick to speak and slow to listen, instead of being quick to listen and slow to speak. It is very important for us to be good listeners so we can gain knowledge and wisdom.

There have been many maxims and expressions in different societies that have expressed this idea. In ancient times it was said, "Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak." Another ancient quotation said, "the ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds." A person named Xenocrates was once reproached by others, and he met their reproach with a profound silence. Someone asked him why he was silent? He replied, "I have sometimes had occasion to regret that I have spoken, never that I was silent." (**Barnes**) A maxim that many are probably familiar with says, "Speech is silver,

THE DISCIPLING MOVEMENT

(A study of the Neo-Crossroads Philosophy among churches of Christ)

by Maurice Barnett

This is a powerful assault on the discipling movement which includes what is called Crossroadsism and what has gone far beyond that movement. Evidences of the influence of this movement are being seen among conservative churches.

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Connie W. Adams

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silence is golden. "

There are various Bible passages which speak of the tongue in a similar way as James 1: 19. **Proverbs 10: 19** says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." **Proverbs 17: 27-28** says, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words... Even a fool when he holdeth his peace, is considered wise..." **Ecclesiastes 5: 2** admonishes, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God..." **Proverbs 29: 20** has these words of wisdom: **Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him. "**

Today, in all areas we must be slow to wrath. Anger itself is not wrong (note Eph. 4: 26). The real question is how we handle our anger. Do we let anger stay with us? Does our anger lead to other sins? We certainly do not need to be quick to anger. We should not go around ready to explode. **Proverbs 16: 32** says, "He that is slow to

anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. "

We need to be sure and take heed to the commandment of James 1: 19 and be **swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath.**

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

Send all News Items to: Connie W. Adams, P. O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109

JOHN HAINS, Timmins, Ontario, Canada — The work here in Timmins is going well. We began five years ago with two families and now we are 30-40 in attendance on Sunday mornings. We have also adventured to start another work 55 miles from here in Iroquois Falls. There are four families meeting there now. We praise and thank God for this. We have recently baptized five more into Christ. We would appreciate your prayers for these two new works in northern Ontario.

DOMTNADOR D. ARCEGA, San Felipe, San Manuel, Tarlac 2309, Philippines — On January 30-31 the San Felipe congregation conducted a lectureship. Four were baptized the last day. The theme was "Restoring New Testament Christianity." The speakers were: Vic Tibayan, Pasay City (Manila); Andrew Gawe, Baguio City; Bert Enostacion, La Union; and Noli Villamor, Metro Manila. The topics were: "Restoring the New Testament Church"; "Restoring the New Testament Principles"; "Restoring the New Testament Form of Worship"; "Restoring the New Testament Distinctiveness." In the evenings we had an open air gospel meeting with these subjects: "Church Prophecies and Fulfillment"; "Denominational Errors"; "Authority in Religion Today"; and "Plea For Biblical Unity. "

JOE MCDONALD, 4924 N. W. 18th, Oklahoma City, OK 73127 — I have video tapes of the Nashville meeting. There are four tapes for \$50.00.

YOUNG BROTHER KILLED IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Editor's note: Christians in this country have followed news from South Africa with much interest and have prayed often for our brethren there. The following is lifted from a newsletter from Paul Williams, dated February 7, 1989).

PAUL WILLIAMS, P. O. Box 324, Eshowe, 3815 South Africa — Brother Solomon Mzolo phoned to say he had just baptized 4 young men—the same ones whom he had brought from Greytown to attend our Bible school, including his son, Mbuso. Three days later on Sunday, January 29, brother Mzolo phoned again, this time to say that 16-year-old Mbuso had been shot to death the day before as he was walking home from town. I was asked to preach the funeral. I would have to be at Greytown at 7: 30 AM. Friday for a briefing from the security police. The funeral would begin at 9.

It was raining when David Nkonyama and I left at 5 AM. We were glad because riots do not occur in the rain. Captain Davis of the security police told us of the regulations governing the funeral. There must be only one speaker, the speaker must be an ordained minister, only 200 people allowed inside the hall, the mourners must go to the cemetery in vehicles not on foot, the whole procedure including burial must be finished by 12, the police would search the men going into the hall and would be present throughout.

There were probably more than 200 allowed into the hall, mostly young people, and the service was orderly and solemn. Paddy Kendall-Ball from Pietermaritzburg led the prayer, then I preached that God does not allow us to return evil for evil but that God will take vengeance. I preached the gospel as I believed it should be preached on that occasion. The hearers were attentive. And sad. It is not pleasant to bury a 16-year-old boy, a son whose parents will not see him again on earth, a brother from whom sisters and brothers are parted as long as they live. I was thankful that Mbuso appeared to have repented of his sins and truly obeyed the gospel a few days before he was killed. I was able to point to the hope given by the word of God, the hope that sustains Christians in such terrible times.

NEY RIEBER, 6413 Zion Church Rd., Sanford, NC 27330—Though I have had some difficulties with the new head chaplain at Polk (prison) in Raleigh, who wants to change things so that I can only baptize once a quarter, the prison work remains lively. In January I baptized 11 young men at Polk.

DEBATE ON CUPS AND CLASSES

On the nights of April 17, 18, 20, 21 Jeff Asher will meet George Battey in a discussion of the following propositions:

(1) "The Scriptures teach that an assembly of the church of Christ for the communion, must use one cup (drinking vessel) in the distribution of the fruit of the vine. "

Affirm: George Battey

Deny: Jeff Asher

(2) "When the church comes together for the purpose of teaching the Bible, it is scriptural to divide into classes for this teaching, some of which may be taught by women. "

Affirm: Jeff Asher

Deny: George Battey

Proposition one will be discussed the first two nights in the meeting house of the Dumas Drive church of Christ, 5416 Dumas Drive in Amarillo, Texas. Proposition two will be discussed the last two nights in the Forest Hill Elementary School Cafeteria on the corner of Grand Ave. and Amarillo Blvd. East (3601 Amarillo Blvd. East). For more information contact either Jeff Asher (806) 383-4451 or 352-2795, or George Battey (806) 376-1042.

D. E. (EULANE) WALKER, P. O. Box 532, Union City, TN 38261 — April 1 st, 1989 marks the beginning of my ninth year with the First Street church here in Union City. The past eight years have been pleasant indeed. In recent weeks we have seen two repent of waywardness. In February a lady in her 70's was baptized. She was formerly a Methodist. We have a weekly radio program. Dan King will be with us in a meeting April 2-7, then Bill Cavender will be here in August or September.

DAVID PADFIELD, 2612 S. Villa Dr., Evansville, IN 47714 — **GENE TAYLOR** and I have started a small publication that will contain clip art for use in church bulletins and class booklets. We have no grand plans for the paper—we simply want to help church bulletin editors "adorn the word." Each issue will contain 10-12 pages of clip art and "filler." The "filler" will contain capsule sermons and other brief teaching aids. The material is NOT copyrighted. Cost will be \$16 per year. A sample issue can be obtained for \$2 by writing to: Gene Taylor 3208 Baldwin Dr., West, Tallahassee, FL 32308.

PREACHERS NEEDED

HILLIARD, OHIO — The church meeting at 4840 Cemetery Road in Hilliard is looking for a full time gospel preacher. Our present preacher, John Gibson, who has been with us for 10 years, will be moving this summer. For more information call: Al Ferguson (614) 272-8099 or Dick Ogilbee (614) 876-4713; or write to: Church of Christ, Box 96, Hilliard, Ohio 43026.

PALATKA, FLORIDA — The Palatka church of Christ needs a full time preacher. The congregation is small with attendance of about 25. The work began just over two years ago in a challenging area. This is a town of about 19,000 with some light industry, good schools and a Jr. College. We can presently provide \$400 per month in support. Outside support would be needed. We meet in a rented hall. Contact Richard Vandagriff (904) 328-0811; or Bill Methvin (904) 325-2700. For background information on the work, please contact Keith Ward (904) 496-3976, or write him at Rt. 3, Box 1559, Lake Butler, FL 32054.



EXCHANGE ON DOMITIAN PERSECUTION

For many years there has been an honest difference among serious students of the book of Revelation as to the date of the book. The greater number of commentators have assigned the book to the reign of Domitian about 95-96 A. D. An increasing number of writers have taken the earlier date, before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Associated with the later date is the view that there was a persecution against the church by Domitian. In his commentary on Revelation (**The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets**), Arthur M. Ogden takes the earlier date and argues forcefully that there is no reliable historical evidence of a persecution against the church by Domitian. Ferrell Jenkins, who also has written a book on Revelation (**The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation**) and who is widely respected for his scholarship, takes the later date and believes there is reliable historical evidence for a persecution in the reign of Domitian. Both men are excellent gospel preachers and careful students of the scriptures. I have asked them to each prepare two

articles stating their views on this matter. I now have those articles in hand. They are to have a brief rejoinder and as soon as I have all of it in hand we will proceed with publishing it in STS. I hope to begin it in either May or June. The date assigned to the book of Revelation has much to do with properly understanding much of the symbolism of the book. This material should be a welcomed addition to our study of this subject, the kind of material you will want to keep. They have each done their work well and have written in a brotherly spirit to shed light and not to generate heat. Be watching for it and be prepared to file it away with your notes and books on Revelation.

WHAT IMPRESSED MARTIN

When our boys were small, and through growing up years, we took them often to gospel meetings. On the way home we would question each as to what particular thing impressed him about the sermon. This was designed to insure that they would pay attention. We took them one night to hear Robert Jackson in Akron, Ohio. Martin was a little fellow then and he sat on the front row. On the way home, we asked him what he liked most about brother Jackson's sermon. He thought a little while and then said "I liked his cufflinks." Robert had been a good friend for many years and we told him about it. A few years later Robert stayed in our home during a meeting at Manslick Road in Louisville and Martin was baptized during that meeting. Before Robert went home to Nashville, he called both boys into his room and gave each of them a pair of his cufflinks. That called for shirts with french cuffs. Both boys went to services with arms extended and their coat sleeves pulled up high enough to expose Jackson's cufflinks.

STATE OF THE CHURCH

There are still a few brethren around who remember J. Early Arceneaux. I had the pleasure of meeting and hearing him when he was quite elderly. Once he was preaching for a church in west Texas which was short on zeal. At a gathering of preachers, one brother asked brother Arceneaux how things were going where he preached. He hesitated a little and then said "Brethren, I am afraid that church is asleep in Jesus." And I am afraid there are still some of those around!

THAT'S FRIENDLY

Luther Blackmon had more "down-home" expressions than anyone I ever met. Once he described a man to me as being "as friendly as a wet dog." That's a little too friendly.

A FEW WORDS TO WRITERS

Writing is exacting and time consuming work. This editor has done enough of it to know how to appreciate the effort of those who are kind enough to put the benefit of their study in written form for the profit of all. We have a few requests of those who send manuscripts to STS:

- (1) The longer your article is, the harder it will be to find space for it. A manuscript of 3 and 1/2 pages typed will fill exactly one page in the paper.
- (2) All manuscripts must be typed, double-spaced with at least one inch margin all around the page. Some have sent me single-spaced articles. I have to send them back. I have neither the time nor enough help to re-type manuscripts.
- (3) The writer should put his name and address in the upper left corner of page one of the manuscript.
- (4) I FERVENTLY request that you use a paper clip instead of a staple to fasten your manuscript together.
- (5) If you prepare your manuscript on a word processor, please disassemble the pages yourself, number the pages and fasten them with a paper clip.

Attendance to these things will save the editor a great deal of time, and that does become a factor when working on a stack of 10 or 12 manuscripts.

Thanks for your work, brethren.

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