

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.

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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By Whose Authority?

"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21: 23).

God possesses inherent authority by right of creation, and that all power in heaven and earth flows from Him. Jesus himself said that all authority had been given unto him; therefore, he possesses the delegated authority from the Father. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power (authority — ASV) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28: 18). He said it is **given** unto him; somebody gave him the power. It would follow that he did not have all power until it was given unto him. We are talking about a power that rules supreme in this dispensation, and Jesus said this power was given unto him. It would follow that anything in this age must be authorized by Jesus Christ in order for that authority to be divine.

In John 12: 48-50 Jesus speaks of this power: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

On the first Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus, Peter made the following statement asserting the power of Christ: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians of the blessings from God through Christ that were in accord with His eternal purpose and power, and said, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 20-23).

Christ sat down at the right hand of God after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 10: 12). His authority began when he was raised from the dead and sat down at the right hand of God. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3: 22).

It will be noted that Jesus received ALL authority, that all principalities and power have been made subject to him, and that the Father speaks to us today through His Son (Heb. 1: 1, 2). He has all authority until the end of time: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3: 17). We are directed to act by the authority of Christ in all that we do and say. To speak by the authority of Christ is to speak by the authority

of God, from whom all authority emanates. To speak by any other authority is to deny the authority of Christ.

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" QUOTE

**"Truth never damages a cause
that is just."**

—Mohandas K. Gandhi

UNQUOTE "

Editorial

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The Veneration of Mary

Somehow the word got out that Mary was to put in an appearance at a Catholic church building in Cold Spring in northern Kentucky around midnight on August 31. As might be expected a large number of people gathered, some from distant places, to witness this event. The media gave it wide coverage. A professor from a Catholic school said it was his "opinion" that Mary did appear to the "pastor" of that church and thought that this place might become a shrine. Another party said she saw Mary in a pine tree. One woman said she had already had a miracle - her silver colored rosary beads turned to gold.

What is behind all this excitement? Numerous claims have been made over the years that Mary has appeared in unlikely places. At Conyers, Georgia a woman claimed that Mary appeared now and then to her on her computer screen. Busloads of pilgrims have been there. We have all heard of Fatima and Lourdes. Many miracles have been claimed at these spots. Entrepreneurs have seized the moment to hustle all the traffic would bear. At Cold Spring, before the day was over, T shirts were being stamped and marketed.

But all of this grows out of ignorance of the Bible and what it teaches about Mary. Superstition thrives on ignorance. The Bible teaches that Mary was a devout young Jewish woman who was favored by God when she was allowed to be the mother of Jesus our Lord. Isaiah had prophesied that "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and thou shalt call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 14). Mary was that virgin. An angel of God appeared to tell her "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Lk. 1: 28). Then she was told "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (v. 35).

Mary was a virgin at the time of conception and remained so until after the birth of Jesus. "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus" (Mt. 1: 24-25). But she was not a perpetual virgin as Catholic dogma insists. The expression "knew her not" means they had no fleshly relations "till she had brought forth her firstborn son." The

implication of that is clear. He did not "know her" until after Jesus was born. Did he "know her" after that? Yes, indeed. Jesus not only had a mother, he also had brothers.

"While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him" (Mt. 12: 46). When he came to Nazareth the people who knew him there said "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon and Judas?" (Mt. 13: 55). In Mark 6: 3 his brothers are named again and it is added that he had sisters.

That Mary was a devout, God-fearing woman we stoutly believe. That she was a virgin at the time of conception we also confidently believe. But to teach that she remained a virgin is to flatly dispute what the Bible clearly states. The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is false. "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13: 4). That was true for Joseph and Mary as for others. Mary was never intended to be the object of veneration. She was not declared in Scripture to be a mediator or intercessor for God's people. There is not a trace of a hint in the word of God that prayers were ever addressed to her so that she might "pray for us sinners." "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5). Jesus taught his disciples "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (Jno. 16: 23). In fact, the whole notion of dead saints interceding for the living is foreign to the Bible.

Christians constitute a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2: 9) and we have every right to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4: 16). Every Christian is a priest unto God and may "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2: 5). We have only one high priest, Jesus Christ. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6: 19-20).

For centuries the Roman Catholic church has required superstitious relics to keep the ignorant deceived. I have witnessed at St. Peter's in Rome a long line of pilgrims waiting their turn to kneel and kiss the foot of a metal statue seated in a chair which purports to be a statue of Peter. The truth is, it was originally a statue of the Greek god Jupiter which was taken in one of the crusades and brought to Rome and given a new identity. The foot which these pilgrims kiss is actually the third one welded to that leg, the first two having been missed so many times they were worn away. There are two Catholic churches in Rome each claiming to have as a relic the skeletal head of John the Baptist. Two-headed, was he? Near Rome is the Church of the Three Fountains where it is claimed Paul was executed. The legend goes that when his head was severed from his body at the executioner's block that it bounced three times and that each time it struck the ground a fountain burst forth. They have an abbey there and a church


building is constructed so that the altar is near the spot of these three fountains. Near the catacombs is a small church building with a velvet rope around a plaster caste of what is claimed to be the footprint of Peter preserved for centuries in the sand and now given more permanent form for posterity to see. This is in the "Quo Vadis Church." In the cathedral in Turin there is a vial of cloudy looking substance which purports to be actual milk from the breast of the virgin Mary. The relic in numerous locations is a splinter from the actual cross of Jesus. One Catholic church building in Rome displays the chains of Paul. On and on it goes with legend after legend to dazzle the faithful.

The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed by the Holy Spirit to inspired men in the first century who spoke that message orally and who wrote it down on the pages of Scripture. Divine Providence has preserved that sacred message for all the world to read. It is an absolute standard by which every doctrine and practice may be measured. It says the same thing to every body. We may misunderstand it differently, but if we understand it, we will understand it alike. That message was confirmed by miraculous demonstrations in the time frame in which it was being revealed and attested by witnesses who told what they saw and heard. 2 Pet. 1: 16-18 and 1 Jno. 1: 1-3 speak to this point.

In spite of all the excitement and expectation on August 31, 1992 in Cold Spring, Kentucky, the only appearance was in the imagination of those who willed it so. Of the resurrection of Christ, Paul said "this thing was not done in a corner." After his resurrection Paul said "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15: 6). How different that is from a professor saying that it was his "opinion" that the "pastor of the church" did receive an appearance of the virgin, Mary, or a woman saying that she saw her in a pine tree. Frankly, I would not turn around for the difference in this whole affair and the claim of Oral Roberts that he saw a 900 ft. Jesus who talked with him for several hours and told him to tell his viewers on television to each send him \$40 so he could get his troubled "ministry" out of debt. Both of these claims are based on subjective evidence.

Respect Mary for her devout character and rejoice that God so favored her to bear our Lord. Absolutely! But venerate her beyond the role God gave her and address prayers to her and invoke her to "pray for us sinners?" Well, no, we have one mediator to do that for us and through his name we may come before the throne of the Almighty ourselves with our petitions.

**ACCEPTED
OF HIM**
(2 Cor. 5:9)
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A Couple of Thoughts

Below are a couple of short thoughts that are unrelated, yet we include both in this column for your consideration.

Sunday Morning

It was Sunday morning. The sun was bright, the air crisp and the birds were flavoring the morning with their songs. I had just walked out the door to head to Bible study when I noticed the parking lot was full of cars — cars that were not usually seen until the next hour. "What is going on?" I thought. "Have we overslept and missed Bible study altogether?" Then I looked at my watch and was assured that we had not. "Hmmm... this is strange" I said to myself as I pushed the door to enter the building.

Standing in the vestibule were not only our "regulars" but many of those who either occasionally or never come to Bible study. I overheard one brother say "We decided we could do better than we have been doing." I spoke to a few and made my way into the auditorium where there were others who had not been in the habit of attending at this hour. A smile came across my face that every one noticed.

My second reaction was one of shame. "How could I ever have thought that they were not interested in what we are studying in class?" I thought to myself. "I must apologize for ever saying that those kind of people will never change" I whispered to the song leader that day. They did change! They were there!

On how we sang with zeal and enthusiasm just before we dismissed to the classes. "This is going to be a great day" I thought as I watched the children file to their different rooms. I was standing up ready to teach my class when Joan awakened me and said it was time to get up, get my shower and take Krista to school.

My Word Processor Doesn't Know Much About The Bible

I have a word-processor with a built-in spell checker that "sounds off" when something appears on the screen that it doesn't recognize. This can be, and in fact is, helpful when I misspell a word. Yet, it gets to be annoying when it "sounds off" about things it knows nothing about.

Practically every thing I run through this WP is religious in nature. I compose all my sermons, class notes, articles for a local hand-out bulletin as well as

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articles for this journal on this WP. Every time I give a Bible reference it "sounds off." At first, I would check the screen to see what was wrong. But with time, I have learned to just ignore the "sounding off" when I have cited a Bible reference. I've concluded that my WP doesn't know anything about the Bible. Oh, don't get me wrong. It recognizes God, Christ, Jehovah and a few Bible characters, like Moses, Peter, Paul and John (oops, its telling me it doesn't know John). But, you see, that's not real Bible knowledge. It is just unfamiliar with any reference I cite.

Sometimes people are like Word-Processors. They know a little about God, Christ and a few Bible characters. Yet, when you begin discussing what the Bible really says and cite Bible passages, they don't know what you are talking about. And like the WP, that's when they "sound off"—when they don't know what we are talking about.


Now, I can solve the problem with the WP. It has a "user's dictionary" which is where I can teach it things it doesn't know. I can put Bible terms there so that it will recognize them when they come up on the screen. I must confess that I haven't put anything in my "user's dictionary" yet, because it takes time. It is a slow process. But, if I ever did, I think my WP would quit "sounding off" so much.

You see, we can solve the same kind of problem with people as well. Each person has some unused capacity to store more information. The answer is to take the Bible, little by little, and feed it into the mind. This is called "growing in knowledge" (2 Pet. 3: 17). This also requires an open and receptive mind (Acts 17: 11). When we develop a good working knowledge of the Bible, we will know what we are talking about and consequently we will do less "sounding off."

Using the

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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Guidelines of Justice

An article appeared in **Christianity Today** a few years ago which provided some observations on the subject of capital punishment that enhanced my understanding. I jotted down some of the basic points and have used these in my teaching; but I've lost the original source, so am not able to give credit to the writer.

We tend to assume that the Old Testament was filled with such vengeance and blood that the ultimate penalty was carried out with little forethought. This article demonstrated that while the death penalty was clearly authorized under the law of Moses, as it is also under the authority of Christ, that there was several guidelines which served to place restraints on the execution of such punishment.

Here are seven such principles:

Proportionality: "... you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21: 23-25).

The punishment was to be proportionate to the offense. One was not to be put to death for knocking someone's tooth out.

Intent: "But if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait, or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, then the congregation shall judge between the man slayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments" (Numbers 35: 22-24).

In such a case of accidental death, even where negligence played a part in the tragedy, the man slayer was not to be put to death. He was punished, however, in that he was compelled to remain in a city of refuge until the death of the current high priest (verse 25).

Due Process: These passages in Numbers 35 imply the right to trial. One had the liberty to flee to a place of judicial asylum until his case came up. Six cities of refuge were appointed for this purpose (verses 9-15). In the event of such incarceration, one was responsible for his own upkeep. The government was not liable for such. The victim's family was prohibited from taking vengeance until the case was heard.

While the victim's next of kin was to be the avenger

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of murder, it was not his place to determine guilt. Impartial judges were appointed for this purpose (Deuteronomy 17: 8-13). The "eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth" principle was never addressed to individuals, but to judges duly appointed and recognized.

Individual Responsibility: "The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24: 16).

Under God's law, one was responsible only for his own actions. There are problematic passages such as the case of Achan's transgression (Joshua 7). His entire family was put to death, though Achan was the one who transgressed the Lord's command and brought defeat to Israel. We can only conclude that Achan's sons and daughters were co-conspirators in the concealing of the stolen goods, though this information is not explicitly given.

Fairness: "You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. Keep yourself far from every false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous" (Exodus 23: 6-8).

There was to be equal justice regardless of wealth, status, prestige, or rank. Though a system of servitude was recognized, the servant was not without rights: "And if a man strikes the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maidservant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. And if he knocks out his servant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth" (Exodus 21: 26, 27).

Reluctance to Execute: "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33: 11).

To some the Old Testament seems bloodthirsty. But actually, the death penalty was applied with great restraint. Exceptions were made as in the case of David: "And Nathan said to David, The LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12: 13). Mitigating circumstances were considered.

Certainty of Guilt: "Whoever is worthy of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses, but he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness" (Deuteronomy 17: 6). Those witnessed were to then participate in the execution. Such would generally give one pause to consider the gravity of the issue at hand!

Also, if one testified falsely to pervert justice and have an innocent person put to death, and this was discovered, then: "you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil person from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you" (Exodus 19: 19, 20).

That passage, by the way, should settle the question for Bible believers as to whether capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime. God said it does.


I believe that government has the right, and has too

often failed to exercise the right, to require life for life. But these principles should serve to emphasize that such is an awesome responsibility and should be approached only with the utmost care and procedure.

**SIMPLICITY
IN
CHRIST**

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Pitfalls of the Preacher's Study

Since the miraculous gift of knowledge has been done away (1 Cor. 13: 8), preachers have to acquire knowledge by study (2 Tim. 2: 15).

A preacher has to study somewhere (1 Tim. 4: 13). Some preachers may be able to study anywhere. Others need an environment that is conducive to study and meditation, which may also vary from one preacher to another. Some are not in a position to be choosy, and have to do the best that they can with what they have.

Some preachers with families simply do not have the room to study at home or conditions are not conducive to concentration. The church building may provide a place for study, but it can be next door or across town.

The preacher's study may come in all shapes and sizes. They run the gamut from suites fit for corporate executives to damp dungeons stuck in some underground corridor. One preacher I knew built his study a Sabbath day's journey from the house, framed it out of rough sawmill lumber, and positioned it on stilts to fit the hillside. The floor plan was so cramped that one person had to enter, close the door, then move out of the way so the next person could enter. But, it was his study, and he was proud of it.

But I'm more concerned about what goes on in studies than I am about the architecture or the geographical location of said study. Some preachers, elders, and brethren may appreciate what I have to say. A few may not. And, while I would neither desire nor attempt to formulate guidelines to cover the situation, there are some things worthy of our consideration.

Sometimes the preacher's study takes on the role of an office, or it may serve a dual purpose. I have no objection to the nomenclature, but different people have different concepts of what an office is or isn't.

Once a preacher is settled in a regular office with regular hours, he can expect the professional bums to start calling. (They have been calling all the time, but no one was there to greet them.) These highway hoboes, either local or transient, will rob the preacher of pre-

cious time as well as anything else they can get.

Then, there are the telephone solicitors. They want to sell the church something, are making a survey, or some civic or social club wants something for nothing. Even when I go to the building for an hour to put my lesson on the board, the phone will ring. It must ring dozens of times when I am not there (my study is in my home).

There are members of the local congregation who think that just because the preacher is at the building that they need to call him for something, no matter how trivial. Some call or stop by just for a social chat, or have some foolish question to ask. You almost have to be rude to get these folks off the line so you can get back to studying.

Sometimes the preacher's study or office turns into something akin to the popular confession booth peculiar to the Catholic church. A sister comes by to seek counseling or pour out her troubles, and the preacher tries his best to console or counsel, as the occasion requires. The motives of both may be as pure as snow, but one thing leads to another until both are in too deep to avoid temptation.

I would not for a minute impugn the motives of my sisters or fellow preachers, but I personally know of some illicit affairs which had their origin or consummation in the church office or study. Maybe the incident began elsewhere, but the secluded "study" provided a convenient place for the temptation to turn to enticement and that which follows.

Yes, some people will abuse anything, and if they are

determined to sin, they will find a way to do it. But I am not talking about hardened, willful sinners. I'm talking about recognizing a situation which may contribute to unintentional sin and its resultant reproach, and the removal of those ingredients which may lead to such.

Another pitfall of the preacher's study, and possibly more demanding of our attention because of its prevalence, is using the study to turn the preacher into a "pastor" by proxy.

We are aware that some preachers fill a dual role as both elder and preacher, but I would think these arrangements are in the minority. Some elders simply want the preacher to do their work of overseeing the flock and taking the pressure off of the elders, and some preachers may love to have it so. Other preachers tell me that they don't like the arrangement, but don't know how to get out of it gracefully.

If preachers are going to be of any value to the world or to the church, it will be as a preacher doing "the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4: 5). The preacher can take more pressure off of elders by doing the work assigned to him by the Holy Spirit, than by trying to do the work of the elders. And, elders can take the pressure off of the preacher by being elders, and thus leaving the preacher free to do what he is supposed to do, and best suited to do.

As an evangelist, I want to share my knowledge with anyone who can use it, and I want them to feel that they can call on me twenty-fours a day, seven days a week when they need me. I will make arrangements to get my

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needed rest and relaxation as occasion requires.

As an evangelist, I have helped and encouraged elders in their duties, and have stood in front of them, beside them, and behind them as they endeavored to discharge those duties. Not a few will testify to this fact.

But I am not going to sacrifice my opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges to study the word of my God, even if I have to stay out of the "study" to do it.

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"Unity In Diversity" Puts On A New Dress

The old denominational idea of "unity in diversity" has put on a new dress and come to town. Some brethren are taking up with the idea not recognizing it for what it is. Or, do they know?

Denominational Concept

Paul said, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (Eph. 3: 3-4). "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5: 17). From these verses one learns that to read the writings of the apostles of Jesus Christ, the will of God can be understood. Paul and the other apostles wrote what was revealed to them (2 Peter 1: 16-21; 1 Cor. 15: 3).

However, the denominational world has said we can not understand the Bible alike. You see it one way, I see it another way, and still someone else sees it a different way to the two of us. While we all disagree about what the Bible says, divided, we are agreed, united, that we are all headed to the same place. There are just different roads to the same place, heaven.

If the denominational world should look into the Bible, they say the one God, Christ, Spirit and hope of Eph. 4: 4-6 we agree on, thus these are essential. However, the one body, baptism and faith of Eph. 4: 4-6 we do not agree on, thus these are essential. Just who has set the standard of how to determine what God has said is essential and non-essential I have never known. Denominationalism says all churches are just branches of the One Vine. All denominations make up the one true Church of Christ. Thus, denominationalism pic-

tures for us organic division (different churches) yet spiritual union (all churches headed to the same place). All of this is the concept of "unity in diversity" or unity in division.

Such is a contradiction of terms. "Unity in diversity" makes as much sense as a square circle, a hot snow ball, liquid ice, or dry water. **Any time people talk 'unity in diversity' they are talking COMPROMISE OF THE TRUTH.**

Christian Church

When brethren departed from the faith and went out to form the Christian Church and introduced the missionary society in 1849 and the instrument of music in 1859, one of the things that followed was their wanting to be united while separated or divided from their brethren. The attitude was if you will not worship with us using the instrument, then worship elsewhere, but don't condemn us for using the instrument. We can be divided, worship in different congregations, yet be united by your not condemning us for our innovations. Call it what you will, their concept was "unity in diversity. " The Christian Church people wanted to be united even with differences between us. Meetings were conducted to try and have unity with us. Have brethren forgotten the Murch-Witty meetings? All of the talk about unity was in reality talk about how they could be united with us through a compromise of the gospel. They wanted error to go unopposed. We can be united if you will not say anything about our innovations.

Institutionalism

When brethren began the practice of the "sponsoring church" and church support of human benevolent and educational institutions, their plea was for a "unity in diversity" of a sort. Their plea was you preach the gospel the way you see best. You care for orphans the way you see best. Let us do the same and we will all be one big happy, united family. Their plea was for a "unity in diversity" which amounted to a compromise of the gospel. There were those of us who would not agree to their compromise and preached, wrote and debated against their departures from the pattern set forth within the Scriptures. Just like those who introduced the instrument without scriptural authority were responsible for the division in the church, so these who introduced the "sponsoring churches" and church support of human benevolent and educational institutions are today responsible for the division that followed.

Ed Fudge

Following the teaching of Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside a few years ago, Ed Fudge began to follow them into digression and today has left the Lord's church and is out there in the sea of denominationalism. When they started their journey the only thing that was important was **gospel** which they defined as believing Christ was born, lived, died, rose, was seen, ascended and was crowned. Anyone who believed this, regardless of anything else, they perceived to be in fellowship or united with them. On **doctrinal** matters like the instrument, Premillennialism, institutionalism, etc. these they said did not stand in the way of unity. So regardless of what you believed about these matters they would be

united in diversity with you. They were bit with the "unity in diversity" but and when that bug got through chewing on them, the virgin birth was no big deal to some of them, others were "witnessing for Christ" on the topless beaches of the world, and all at once there was no hell! They started out trying to justify their position by a misapplication of Romans 14. They finished up a long way from Romans 14 or any other Bible passage.

"Unity in Diversity's" New Dress

With brethren being exposed to "unity in diversity" as advocated by the denominational world through the years, with essentially the same arguments being made by the Christian Church folk, then the institutional brethren singing the same tune, and seeing the havoc such brought to the church when promoted by Ed Fudge and company, one would think God's people would be so well acquainted with this error that we would reject it as soon as it would raise its head again. Not so!

This error has put on a new dress and come to town and a lot of brethren do not see it for what it really is. It is the same old denominational attitude of compromise. Denying it will not change the facts.

Within the last couple of years the beloved brother Homer Hailey brought out his most recent book, **The Divorced and Remarried Who Would Come To God** in which he advocated that the alien sinner was not under the law of Christ in regard to marriage, divorce and remarriage. Therefore, one who is not a Christian may marry, divorce and remarry as many times as he chooses. When he comes to Christ in gospel obedience, the one to whom he is then married is the one to whom he may stay married. We are told the teaching of Jesus in Matt. 19: 1-9 does not apply to the alien sinner, just to the Christian. This is not a new doctrine among brethren. Essentially the same thing was taught 35 years ago by a man in the Fort Worth, Texas, area by the name of E. C. Fuqua. However, for the most part it was rejected by brethren back then.

Before brother Hailey's book came out, he had publicly spoken his views and written them in some of the papers. Several brethren took the time to review what he had said and answer it.

The New Testament has somewhat to say about how to deal with those teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ. Paul said, "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (1 Cor. 4: 6). "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds: (2 John 9-11).

Yet, in view of this plain teaching, the biographer of brother Hailey, brother Ed Harrell wrote a long series of articles in his paper, **Christianity Magazine**, in which he says he does not agree with the teaching of brother Hailey. However, he is not willing to call him a

false teacher and thinks brethren should continue to extend the right hand of fellowship to him and others who believe and teach the same thing. Thus, on the question of morals one brother can believe and/or preach one thing and another brother can believe and/or preach another and we are told both should be in fellowship with each other. Upon what basis is this defended? Upon the same basis all the other groups mentioned in this article defend their "unity in diversity" — Romans 14.

Jesus plainly said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19: 9). Jesus said "whosoever," He did not say "a Christian." Adultery does not fit the context of Romans 14 and cannot be defended by this chapter.

Romans 14 deals with matters that do not in and of themselves affect the salvation of the soul — eating meats or herbs (v. 1-3) and how one regards a day (v. 5). God received both those who ate meats and those who did not, and those who regarded one day above another and those that did not (v. 3, 15: 7). Each man was to do what he was "fully persuaded in his own mind" (v. 5). If a man is "fully persuaded in his own mind" that adultery is fine, does that make it so? If a man regards adultery unto the Lord (v. 6) does that make it acceptable to the Lord? I am surprised that brother Harrell and some other able brethren are making this use of Romans 14.

Another defense that was made of brother Hailey's position was that some of those objecting to it were young men. Does that mean if a young man quotes Mark 16: 16 that it should be disregarded because of his age? How can a man whose hair Mother Nature had turned silver and whose grandchildren are nearly ready for high school be called a young man? One of the men calling someone a young man is only **eight** years older than one of the men he is calling young.

Modern Day Gospel Advocate

For the benefit of a host of my younger fellow gospel preachers, let me call something to their attention. Back during the institutional controversy the late brother B. C. Goodpasture was the editor of the **Gospel Advocate**. He had a one sided paper—anybody or any article that disagreed with the **Advocate**, brother Goodpasture would not give them space in the **Advocate**. You either agreed with him or you could forget about getting anything published there.

Of brother Goodpasture's refusing to print both sides of a question, brother Harrell once observed "Goodpasture refused to open the **Advocate** to opposing articles, judging, he said, that such would not be in the best interest of the church... He defended his decision to close the **Advocate** to open discussion.... " (**1981 Florida College Annual Lectures**, p. 244).

Further, brother Harrell said, when discussing "the Emergence of Denominational Leadership, ""The method used to spread the message in a young religious movement, including the New Testament church, is open confrontation. Both in the first century and in more recent times the spread of the gospel has been marked

by open discussion and debate. When one is truth-oriented, he has nothing to defend except his teachings and he has no tools for fighting except his ideas. When one's religion becomes institutional other forces come into play. Open debate (even limited debate) may no longer seem wise if it disturbs the peace of the group and threatens the health of institutions" (*Ibid.*, p. 250).

In refusing to print some excellent material on Romans 14 by brother Harry Osborne, material which differed with brother Harrell's position, it appears he is setting Christianity Magazine in the same direction Goodpasture set the Gospel Advocate. I am sorry to see brother Harrell follow the path that Goodpasture did in refusing to print good material that differed with his views, for in time, it will work the same havoc within the church that Goodpasture caused. Any paper that does not permit an honorable, open investigation and discussion of the Word of God does not deserve the respect and confidence of brethren. No editor should print a fuss or a dog and cat fight. However, an honorable exchange of views on positions or various passages is how we learn. Ideas and views that are challenged and exchanged in discussion is how we learn. Learning is not re-reading what you already know and believe.

Preaching The Living Word of the Living God In Order To Produce A Living Faith and Living Hope (II)

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Since I believe the Bible tells us WHAT to preach and HOW to preach, I believe gospel preaching is distinctive. There is a difference in a sermon preached by a committed preacher from that which is delivered by a man who is not on fire with the greatest message that lost and fallen humanity has ever heard. The **urgency** with which the sermon is delivered tells a lot about the preacher — the fearless approach, the realization of the awesome responsibility he has as a person who is in the "soul saving" business, the boldness and plainness of speech which he uses in order to reach the hearts of his hearers, the sincere persuasion he demonstrates as he warns and exhorts hearers to "save yourselves from this untoward (corrupt) generation."

One of the surest signs of God's people beginning to drift is lack of distinctive preaching. The preaching of the truth in love admits NO apology. The preachers of the gospel, as shown by the examples we have, refused to compromise the truth in order to persuade people to be baptized. From all indications they did not shorten their sermons to keep some disgruntled members of the audience from "walking out" on them while they were trying to help them go to heaven. They never heard such expressions as we are hearing, such as "That kind of

preaching won't work any more. You are going to be a dinosaur. You are just preaching yourself out of a place to preach with your long-winded sermons, and your speech is just too hard." Also, "Do not call names of the people or churches of whom you speak. I have a friend visiting with me and he/she will get offended if you do such a thing." Brethren, I have heard such ridiculous assertions as these from unconverted members of the church of Christ.

I hope the reader will pardon some personal remarks I have to make here. I have been preaching the gospel of Christ for nearly forty years. As R. L. Whiteside wrote many years ago, "I was baptized into a fight." He was baptized into a fight against false doctrines of denominationalism without the church! I was baptized into a fight against denominationalism within the church! Having left the denomination in which I held membership from age twelve, I understood "the issues" of human institutionalism the first time it was explained to me. It was not that I was so "smart" that I understood so quickly. It was that I had just left that over which my brethren and sisters were dividing the church. From that day, I "unsheathed the SWORD" and have opposed the digression of God's people which has now developed into just another denomination!

I had suffered the loss of family and former friends with whom I was associated. That hurt. But the vicious opposition toward me and my preaching by professed Christians, members of the church of Christ, has hurt much more. Now, as I am in the process of "winding down" (not quitting!) my nearly four decades of preaching and teaching the wonderful gospel of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I am saddened by what is happening among us (conservatives, the remnant which I helped to save from apostasy). There are ominous signs I see as the prelude to another apostasy which may not culminate in my lifetime, but is surely coming! Here are some things that bother me very much:

1. There is a growing indifference among us about spiritual matters. We are living in the latter stages of a half-century of fiscal prosperity financed by deficit spending by the Federal government. Secular education to equip our younger people to make lots of money has become a real problem. Many members of the church today know much more about how to make money that they do about how to make heaven. They often lose interest in things spiritual. Marriage counselors tell us that money is the main problem in divorce proceedings. The Federal government's irresponsibility in spending far more than it takes in has become a way of life by Americans. The advent of television has been devastating to our nation and much of the world. The amount of money the television industry accumulates and controls is beyond comprehension. This leads to the next item of concern:

2. The control that the secular humanists (atheists) have secured over the news media and the public educational process in this nation, is the greatest threat to faith this world has ever faced. The secular humanists are determined to eradicate the reality of "the prayer-hearing God" (Preface: Humanist Manifesto II, p. 13). In

some public schools here in Middle Tennessee, the heart of the South, students are forbidden to mention GOD in addresses at the end of the school year. The liberal news media are determined to make a nation of agnostics out of my children and grandchildren, and YOURS. They have gained control of television, newspaper, magazines, in which they promote that "science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces (Ibid, p. 17). Further, "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural;... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves... Ethics is autonomous and situational" (Ibid, pp. 16-17).

There it is. These infidels have tried to dethrone God and enthrone man. "Values clarification" in our school systems — at least many — encourage the student to disregard the teaching of loving parents and religious leaders and set their own standards. All of this devastation of morality and crime-ridden cities by drug abusers is the result of such atheistic garbage. When we hear grown people who are members of the Lord's church say that "Man is an animal," it would be interesting to ask them where they got that information since it is a flat denial of God's revelation!

3. I am gravely concerned at the deterioration of "gospel preachers" who have been seriously affected by the swift change in society during the past twenty-five years. Much of it is due to the changing demands made on preachers by elders and/or members in general. Often, when disgruntled members insist on a change in the preacher because they do not like him or his preaching, even though such people are usually in a minority of the congregation, elders, or in the case of absence of elders, the leaders listen to their complaints which are usually trivial — seldom is there an accusation that the preacher they do not like does not preach the truth—the whole counsel of God! It usually amounts to just the opposite. These people are often as they were in the days of Isaiah: "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30: 9, 10).

Although I have debated publicly the "anti-located preacher" brethren three times, affirming the proposition that "it is scriptural for a gospel preacher to locate with and preach to a church (congregation)," I am persuaded that their objections to the "system," as they call it, are built on abuses of located preachers who will "water down" the message in order to preach for a congregation who makes such demands on preachers in order to pacify the factions. Why would elders have to get approval of the factions of a preacher whom they are considering for the local work. ?

Back during the days of the division over institutionalism, some preachers compromised their convictions (if indeed they had any) in order to be employed by churches who did not want any preacher who might "rock the boat" in which they were enjoying sailing undisturbed on the way to apostasy. I knew preachers when the fight started who knew the truth but compromised and lost entire congregations to apostasy.

Baptism Administrator

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For a few moments of time think along with me on the subject of Baptism Administrator. Who is a proper administrator of baptism? Does the Bible give any qualifications for one to be an administrator of baptism? Or, as we would normally ask it, "Does the Bible give any qualifications to baptize?" If so, what are those qualifications?

Denominational Dogma

"In answer to the oft-repeated question, What is Baptism? it may be said, Baptism is the immersion in water, by a proper administrator (emphasis mine, wvb), of a believer in Christ

By a proper administrator

... is meant a person who has received from a church authority to baptize.... it does seem incredible that baptism should be valid in the absence of the church authority referred to. What other authority is there? Will anyone say, the authority of Christ? The supreme authority is undoubtedly his, but does he confer on men the right to baptize **through his churches, or, independently of his churches?**" (J. M. Pendleton, **BAPTIST Church Manual**, pp. 64-65). Before going on a side trip, it is in order to pay my respects to a portion of Mr. Pendleton's statement. The Lord does not have churches (plural)" unless, of course, Mr. Pendleton has reference to local congregations. Jesus promised to build, as He said, "my church" (Matthew 16: 18). Jesus is said, by inspiration, to be "head over all things to the church, which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1: 22-23).

The Church of God denomination (headquarters in Cleveland, TN) has three different classifications of ones who can baptize. Both the ORDAINED MINISTER and the LICENSED MINISTERS "shall have full right and authority to:... Baptize converts... " (**The 59th General Assembly of the Church of God 1982 Minutes**, "Supplement to the Minutes," pp. 95, 96). The EXHORTER "shall have full right and authority to:... In cases of emergency he may be authorized by the State Overseer to baptize converts... " (Ibid., pp. 96, 97). The LADY MINISTER is "without authority to baptize converts... " (Ibid., p. 97). I would pause just long enough to ask for Book, Chapter and Verse for an ORDAINED MINISTER, LICENSED MINISTER, LADY MINISTER or a "State Overseer. "

"In the absence of an ordained pastor, the elder shall request the president of the conference or local field to arrange for the administration of the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with his church" (**Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual**, p. 85).

"Non-Catholics and sinners may validly baptize, for the validity of the Sacrament does not depend upon the personal worthiness or orthodoxy of the minister..." (Bertrand L. Conway, **The Question-Box**, p. 238).
What Saith The Scriptures?

There is, so far as I know from studying the Bible, not one mention of any qualifications necessary for one to baptize another, or as the denominational writers would say, to be a baptism administrator. If such is to be found, I have missed it. If you know of one, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, please let me know. In all of the examples it was noted that those doing the baptizing were men... but even this is not stated as a qualification, only noted as examples. When at all possible men should do the baptizing, as per the examples. What if such is not possible? Suppose two women were stranded on the proverbial desert island, I would see absolutely nothing wrong if one baptized the other.

There are some principles that need to be considered when looking at this subject. The New Testament is silent regarding a "clergy-laity" distinction. This is, I believe, the real source of misunderstanding about who can baptize. All Christians are priests (Revelation 1: 6; 5: 10; 1 Peter 2: 5, 9). If we can not talk about it in Bible language it is time to leave it alone (1 Peter 4: 11). Where do you read, in the New Testament, about "clergy" and/or "laity?"

We need to learn to respect the silence of the scriptures (Hebrews 7: 14). Since there are no qualifications given in the New Testament, **how dare we** (mankind) **presume to speak for God?** We could repeat, for emphasis, the "clergy-laity distinction" here. Dear reader, **how dare** we?

The apostles were commissioned to teach and baptize (Matthew 28: 18-20)... before the church was established (Acts 2). Our authority ("... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you..."

— Matthew 18: 20; see also 2 Timothy 2: 2) is found in the Great Commission and based on their being given this authority.

In the "great persecution against the church" (Acts 8: 2) were only "ordained ministers" persecuted? "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" (Acts 8: 4).

Are only "ordained, licensed ministers" and "exhorters" faithful? None would declare such. But we read of "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2: 2). The command was to MAKE DISCIPLES

— BAPTIZE — TEACH (Matthew 28: 18-20).

Qualifications And Baptism

There are qualifications connected IN THE NEW TESTAMENT with baptism... yes indeed. The qualifications are not concerning the one doing the baptizing (Baptism Administrator)... if there are such where are they? The qualifications given in the New Testament, concern, the one being baptized. What are these qualifications? What are these prerequisites to Bible Baptism? Bible Baptism requires a taught person (Matthew 28: 19-20) who has come to be a believing individual (Mark 16: 16). One who believes what? The gospel, the thing taught. For some specifics see He-

brews 11: 6; John 8: 24; and Colossians 2: 12 (Romans 6: 4). This taught believing person must also be a penitent individual (Acts 2: 38), who has confessed his faith (Matthew 10: 32; Acts 8: 37).

If there were qualifications connected with the one doing the baptizing (even if it were necessary that that one was a Christian), we could never know if we were scripturally baptized or not. Our faith would have to stand in man ("Was he really a Christian? Was he ordained? Is he a proper baptism administrator? Etc.). As it is, Praise God, our faith stands not in man, but in the Blessed Son of God, the lamb of Golgotha.

"The Sin of Backsliding"

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To call one a "backslider" is not the most complimentary thing he could be called. Many folks who are in reality backsliders do not like to be so designated. They choose a milder term to describe themselves or another who has lapsed into sin. "Erring" and "out of fellowship" are frequently substituted, for they do not sound so harsh. Webster defines the term "backslider" as "To slide back; to lapse morally or in the practice of religion. "

It means a starter who doesn't finish. It means one who reached a certain plateau and slid down. It means one who began but did not continue. It means a failure, or at least about to fail. No, it isn't complimentary!

Some will jokingly call themselves back-sliders, but backsliding is not a laughing matter. It is a serious situation. The kingdom of Judah in Jeremiah's day is a good illustration. While there are many references in the Old Testament in which God's people are called backsliders, for now consider just Jeremiah 2. Look at some of the figures God uses to depict their condition.

They had been given a good land, but they defiled it (Jer. 2: 6-7). Even their pastors had transgressed, the priests did not know the Lord, and the prophets prophesied by Baal (v. 8). While nations who worshipped idols were unknown to change their gods, God's people "changed their glory for that which does not profit" (v. 11). In short, they had "forsaken" Him (V. 19). Yes, truly backsliding is a serious thing.

Backsliding results when the heart is not right (Prov. 14: 14). The heart is not fully committed to God and his ways (cf. Mat. 22: 37), and the affections are not properly focused (cf. Col. 3: 1-3). The heart is the seat of action (Prov. 4: 23). Thus when the heart is not right, the actions will reflect it.

Are there any present-day backsliders? There were

some in the days of the apostles. Peter spoke of some becoming "entangled again" in the rudiments of the world (2 Peter 2: 20). Paul called some by name (2 Tim. 4: 10; 2: 16-17), and James said Christians could be guilty of spiritual adultery and become enemies of God (Jas. 4: 4).

We frequently find those who have "quit the Lord," turned back to the world, and sold their spiritual birthright. Many never assemble with the saints (Heb. 10: 25), live unbecomingly (Phil. 1: 27), leave their first love (Rev. 2: 4), become lukewarm and indifferent (Rev. 3: 15-16). In short, they have lapsed in the practice of the religion of Christ. They are backsliders!

How great is the mercy and long-suffering of God! He appeals to the backslider to return to Him. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3: 22). "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity... I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hos. 4: 1, 4). And again, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved...." (Jer. 4: 14). And in the New Testament the appeal is, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works..." (Rev. 2: 5). And even to those backslidden into self-satisfied indifference, the Lord pleads, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3: 20).

God's plan makes a way for all people who would be saved; so, dear backsliding brother or sister, He will save you if you will repent and return unto Him. Otherwise you will be lost forever in the devil's hell.

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**"Go into all the world
and preach the gospel
to every creature"
(Mark 16:15)**

Where Is God?

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One of my favorites among the Psalms is the 139th. In it David writes: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me" (Psalm 139: 1-5). To some this might seem very frightening, to know that God knows our thoughts and is acquainted with all our ways. But David seems to view it differently for he writes in verse 6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." One clear thought of this Psalm is that God knows all there is to know about you and me. Is this frightening? It doesn't have to be, but it is sometimes when we have failed to live up to what He expects of us.

As David continued, in the next section he tells that were ever we go, God is there. Again, this is not intended to be frightening, but comforting to the one who seeks God's presence and care. David wrote: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139: 7-12). Where can I go that God does not see me and care for me? Can I go into the heavens, off into space somewhere and God not be there? NO! Can I go into the grave and God not know about it? NO! If I am in peril in the sea, does this hide me from God or keep me away from His loving care? NO! Can I go into utter darkness and be hidden from His view? A THOUSAND TIMES, NO!

In the next few verses David tells of God's blessings upon him, even before he came into this world. David wrote: "For thou hast possessed my reins (formed my inward parts—nkjv): thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance,

yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139: 13-16). These are very interesting verses, especially in light of the current thinking of so many people that an unborn child is not really a person, only tissue that a mother may decide to keep or abandon. But David said that God formed his inward parts in the womb, and that God saw him while he was yet unformed and imperfect. God knew all about him even before he was fully formed in physical terms. How could this be if the unborn child is not a living being?

Then comes the final section of this marvelous Psalm. David wrote: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee" (v. 17-18). Perhaps if we appreciated God's knowledge of us, His constant presence in our lives, and His constant provision of us we too would say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me." Yet we often act as though God's thoughts, His word, is the least important of things when compared with TV, magazines, books, sports, etc.

In verses 19-22 David speaks of God's eventual punishment of the wicked, and declares that he too hates those who hate God and who rebel against Him.

How many of us would say as David did in verses 23 and 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God does know our hearts, and the evil thoughts that sometimes try to enter there are not hidden from Him. Now is the time to examine our hearts, and to know if there is any wicked way in us. Now is the time for us to long to be led in the way "everlasting."

Certainly God will not lead us in the wrong way, but we don't always follow as closely as we should. Now is the time to recognize the blessing of having God with us, knowing us and caring for us. Now is the time to examine our hearts to know what evil is there so that we may remove it. Now is the time to prepare for everlasting life. And "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8: 31).

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Blaspheming God

Wallace H. Little

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Misguided consideration for the oversensitive feelings of the spiritually weak and inept, by sugar-coating God's Word to make it more palatable, 'humanizing and modernizing the gospel in order to bring it up-to-date,' and a reluctance to clearly delineate sin, is but a manifestation of one's own incompetence and lack of love for the sinner. Far better that these be shown the certainty of their own damnation in their present wandering path so that they might come to a complete understanding of unquestioning acceptance of God's Word, and their need for obedience to it.

If it is possible to prevent it, after a study of the Bible, publicly or privately, no one should ever be permitted to go away thinking he has a choice between two evils and still be acceptable to God. We must leave no doubt in his or her mind on where he or she stands as shown by the precise mirror of God's Word, the Bible, the ONLY thing that is able to save our souls.

Teaching must be so unmistakably plain that everyone who continues to follow the devil understands that this is his or her own personal choice. He or she must be made clearly aware of the consequences of this personal decision.

The gospel must be preached plainly, simply, earnestly, with an open bible and an open heart, and with all the love and ability of which the preacher/teacher is capable, along with all his force. In 2 Timothy 4: 1-4, the grand apostle Paul wrote it this way: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

To fall short of this, when teaching or living, is to debase yourself, and all those about you, and to blaspheme God.

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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DONNIE V. RADER — P. O. Box 9, Lexington, AL 35648 — We just finished a meeting at Northside with Donald Townsley. We had good attendance every night. Non-Christians from the community attended. We were able to set up at least one home study during the meeting with the possibility of another. The preaching was true to the book. Donald is a book, chapter and verse preacher who stands strong against sin and error in every form. One lesson we could learn from this meeting is that you don't have to have a softer or "moderate" form of preaching to have good numbers. Preaching it like they did in the N. T. still works.

MATTHEW KEITH UNDERWOOD

Matthew Underwood, the two-year-old son of Harold and Sue Underwood, died on February 3, 1992 just a month before his third birthday. Matthew was born with severe physical problems and his short life on earth had been a tremendous struggle. His doctors were amazed that he lived as long as he did. David Thomley conducted the funeral on February 6 at the Hawkins-Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville, Kentucky, with the burial at Fountain Run Cemetery. Harold Underwood continues to preach for the Green's Chapel church of Christ. Friends may write to Harold and Sue at the following address: P. O. Box 698, Munfordville, KY 42765. — David Thomley, Bowling Green, Ky.

NORMAN BROWN, Virginia Beach, VA—There is still a congregation in Virginia Beach. The majority moved out to another location but those of us with a long history in Virginia Beach wanted to continue the work in this city. We now have 40-50 attending almost every Lord's day. We have 20-30 on Wednesday nights for Bible study. We still have the same goals as most congregations: to teach the gospel, to have scriptural elders and deacons and to have our own place to meet. But it will be a long hard struggle. We presently worship at the Bow Creek

Recreation Center, 3427 Club House Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23452. Phone 804-486-6245 or 804-486-6639. Mailing address: P. O. Box 8693, Va. Beach, VA 23450.

NORTH FT MYERS CHURCH OF CHRIST, 200 Pine Island Rd., N. Ft. Myers, FL 33903 — a letter signed by men of this congregation states that Jimmy Tuten, who has labored with them for the past eight years is in need of additional support. After economic circumstances caused the loss of support he was able to bring with him when he came here, he agreed to work with his hands as a "finish specialist" in home construction. For the past five years he was worked two days a week at this sometimes working 14 hours a day in order to keep up with both secular work and his work with the church. He has maintained a busy schedule of classes, preaching and home studies. The church grew spiritually and numerically. Internal strife erupted and caused losses of numbers and financial resources which set us back a couple of years in our effort to be self-supporting. We need his effort here on a full time basis and appeal for \$500 a month in support to be sent to him. If any can help or wish additional information, please call him at 813-772-4934, Russ Mathews at 813-694-1016 or Richard Combs at 813-574-1445.

SPECIAL TRAINING SERIES FOR PREACHERS

The church in Annandale, Virginia announces a second series of lessons to assist the preachers they support in the gospel. This will be conducted Nov. 3-6, 1992 with classes beginning at 9:30 A. M. with a one hour break for lunch. Also, in connection with this series we will conduct a gospel meeting using five of the men who plan to attend. Others are invited and members at Annandale will offer hospitality to as many as possible. Those who wish to stay with a family there, please contact Derrick Proctor, 4731 Hersand Ct., Dale City, VA 22193 (703-680-3420). Speakers for the series will be Hiram Hutto (Language of the

Bible), F. Chappelle, Dale Smelser and David Brewer (Preaching the Word), Bobby Graham (Pastoral Epistles), Sewell Hall (Problems for Preachers), Ney Rieber (non-verbal Communication), Alan Williamson (Practical Computer Use).

DEBATE NOTICE

J. T. Smith, Tulsa, Oklahoma and Olan Hicks, Searcy, Arkansas will discuss the biblical teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage. The discussion will be held in the meeting house of the West End Church, 1609 Parkside Dr., Bowling Green, KY. The dates are Nov. 30, Dec. 1, and Dec. 3 and 4. Each session begins at 7 P. M. with three alternating twenty minute speeches. The first two nights Olan Hicks will affirm: "The Scriptures teach that all divorced people, including those whose former mates are still living, may, with God's approval, enter and maintain a marriage with another person." The last two nights, J. T. Smith will affirm: "The Scriptures teach that only those persons who have divorced their mates for fornication and those whose mates have died, may, with God's approval, enter and maintain a marriage with another person." For further information call 502-842-7880 or 502-781-4947.

BARRY M. PENNINGTON — The church at Huntsville, Texas has asked me to "come over into Macedonia" to strengthen them. They have about 25 in attendance and a small weekly contribution. Many of the former members have moved away. They are able to supply about \$250 per week in support. Huntsville is the home of Sam Houston State University and there are about 30,000 in this area. The Southside church has had good times and bad and has stood for the truth over the years. They need help and I need help to devote full time to the work. You may contact the elders of the Woodlands, Texas church where I have been preaching for information about me. They are; Dennis Bray (713-367-1235) and Rod McCasland (713-367-9833). Also for reference you may contact Oliver Murray (713-460-1429) or Ardie Brown (214-221-5777).

PATRICK L. KELLY, P. O. Box 822, Portland, ME 04104 — Our Sunday morning attendance averages 19 and our contributions averages \$212 a week. I am working here with inadequate support (short with \$1,000 a month) but am determined to preach the gospel in this needed place. I conducted my first meeting at LaVista, Nebraska and also spoke in Sioux City, Iowa. Mike Divis from La Vista returned to Maine with me for the funeral of Marcus Dixon, one of our members and Mike has seen first-hand our situation and needs here.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

KENYA, EAST AFRICA — Paul Ayres and Allan Turner spent six weeks in July and August preaching in Kenya, East Africa. They traveled about 2,000 miles in the country, witnessed the baptism of 45 (including seven denomination preachers) and saw churches established in six different areas. As far as is known, this is the first such effort there by non-institutional brethren. The door in East Africa seems to be standing wide open at the moment.

INDIA—On September 21 John Humphries left for his 16th preaching and teaching trip to India. Untold good has been accomplished by these efforts and others who have at various times accompanied him.

PUERTO RICO — Ray Madrigal, 165 Hillington Dr., Paducah, KY 42001, reports he spent two weeks in July, 1992 preaching in Puerto Rico. Although 90% of the people of this mountainous island claim to be Catholic, several Pentecostal groups have been active there in recent years. Since the mid-1950's, over 30 churches of Christ have been established with 40-50 members average. Institutionalism and the social gospel are present almost everywhere due to the influence of DeWayne Shappley and his "Prenza La Paz" publishing house in Bayamon. Brethren with whom Ray studied were hungry for teaching, especially on the subject of Bible authority. The church in Dorado has been resisting the errors of liberalism and teaching sound doctrine since 1979. Due to the preaching of Ramon Vargas and Herminio Isern, this church is growing in grace and knowledge. Both men support themselves as they labor for the Lord. On one Saturday afternoon brethren from all over the island came to the home of Ismael Rosario (in Aibonito) to study, sing and pray together. A lesson was taught on "Authority" which dealt with sponsoring churches and church support

of various institutions. Several were present from institutional churches and listened intently and manifested a good spirit. Ray said "While brethren and churches rightly respond to the unprecedented opportunities in East Europe, let us not forget our Latin-American neighbors who are also receptive and hungry for the truth.

LITHUANIA—Steve Wallace from Germany reports on efforts which he, Derek Chambers, Kieran Murphy and Harry Osborne made in Vilnius, Lithuania. This was a follow-up effort to what had been done earlier there by Wallace and Chambers. Much material was prepared in both Russian and Lithuanian. Their collective work lasted six weeks. They set up tables on the "municipality Square" each day but Sunday and spent 3 to 4 hours daily at this task. They gave away much material and had many Bible discussions. They also distributed announcements about their Sunday Bible lectures. On Sundays they had a lecture period from 1 to 5 P. M. Two lectures were given through an interpreter, each followed by a question and answer session. Private studies grew out of this. The results of these efforts were: (1) over 15,000 tracts were given away; (2) there were many public Bible discussions on the square; (3) organized studies of greater length were conducted with a good number of people; (4) many heard the gospel appeal for the first time; (5) many contacts made for future studies; (6) it was confirmed that balanced preaching (including the negative with the positive) does not drive people away; (7) it was learned that much can be done there for a fraction of the cost for the western world; (8) a number of needed study materials are now in process of being printed in Russian (9) the stay was not long enough. There is a need for long term workers to come and work this field. A longer effort is planned for this fall.

PHILIPPINES—KENNETH MARRS, P. O. 453. PINOLE, CA 94564 reports on a trip in March and April, 1992 with his son Kenny to the northeast province of Cagayan on Luzon. They worked out from Tuguegarao visiting congregations in the surrounding areas, conducted "home yard meetings" at night, preached on the radio, had a class for song leaders and held many informal discussions. Thirty-six were baptized during this time. The abject poverty of many people among brethren was seen often. Brother Marrs plans to go again next January and February for a month for preacher training and teaching but this time in four different population centers. He says "one cannot ignore the pleas, urgings and the need to return... I know of no place on earth where a more enduring and burgeoning good can be done in so short a time. It will not always be so: Satan will see to that. But right now these fields are white and begging to be harvested." He stands in need of some help for the expenses of his trip. The editor of this paper met with brother Marrs in California last summer and discussed his earlier trip to the Philippines. He is in his 70's but still very active and his held in respect among the brethren who have observed his work for many years. Write to him at the above address or call 510-799-2864.



OF ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL

Christians in Jerusalem were so united in heart and soul that the deprivation of some was felt by all, so much so that land owners willingly sold possessions so that none among them lacked what was needed to sustain life. There is still a refreshing generosity among the Lord's people when there is a storm or other natural disaster. Conversation with two brethren in the Miami area a few days after hurricane Andrew devastated a thirty-mile path across lower Dade County, Florida, told of calls from throughout the nation to find out the needs of victims there. Both of them had received and disbursed much goods to those who lost so much. I am frequently called by brethren who have received appeals from other nations where drought, storm or civil strife has touched the lives of Christians in those areas, trying to verify the needs with someone they think has either been there, or knows of the need from other sources. This speaks eloquently of tender hearts.

But what about "one heart and one soul" when there is not a storm or other calamity to bring out the best in us? What about the splitting and splintering of once strong and peaceful congregations by folks who just don't like each other? I often get news items about a "new congregation" from places where I know a congregation has existed for many years. While I understand the need to plan and help new congregations to begin in needed places, all too often the story is repeated—there is strife and clamor. I commend the outpouring of help from tender hearts in time of trouble. But should we be less concerned about the tragic wreckage of congregations by self-willed people who have so little regard for the welfare of a local church? "Of one heart and one soul"? Well, are we?

EUODIAS AND SYNTYCHE

There is a mild hint of trouble in Phil. 4: 2 when Paul wrote "I beseech Euodias and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." We know nothing more about it than what is stated here. Something threatened harmony between them. Paul's appeal was gentle. "I beseech." He wrote.

I thought of this today when I received a report from a brother in another country about a problem which surfaced between two sisters known to us who were co-owners of a business. They decided to sell the business and hard feelings arose between them. It threatened to undermine not only the relationship between these two women who were among the firstfruits of the gospel in that place, but also the harmony between families, the faith of children in both families and the peace of the congregation itself. Three wise brethren went to them and reasoned with them. They pointed out how much they had suffered together from family and friends when they obeyed the Lord. They were admonished about the harmful spiritual effects this could pose to their own children and what it could do to the church. Guess what? They listened! Those arriving early for the service the following week found

these families embracing each other. The husband of one of the sisters stood before the congregation and said that all difficulties were settled. There was great rejoicing. Now that's a story with a happy ending.

Somehow I like it better than hearing "the church at _____ has divided over personal differences (that is seldom ever acknowledged -CWA and a new congregation has been established three blocks away and we are looking for a sound preacher and want to find congregations that will support him to help us meet this great challenge."

"LEAVE GOD OUT OF THE CAMPAIGN"

I don't believe God is either a Democrat or Republican. But I surely do believe that we are in trouble in this country for having already left God out of things. We have left him out of school. You can take his name in vain before a classroom of students, but you'd just better not say one word to commend him. We have left God out of sex education. You can teach young people in school how to commit fornication in graphic detail and give them birth control information and devices but you can't teach that it is sin to engage in sex relations outside of marriage. We have left God out of families and the wreckage from that ought to be evident even to the most sophisticated unbeliever. God is even left out of churches when his word is scorned or ignored. He certainly has been left out of Washington for all too long. Those who do not read and believe the Bible are blissfully ignorant as to the root causes of the horrendous moral mess in this nation. The principle is so simple. "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14: 34). The Lord's people ought to be far more concerned with questions and issues which have direct impact on morals than they are with purely secular objectives. No, let's NOT leave God out of the campaign. Let all contenders for public office revere the word of God and let them seek to lead these people by time honored principles of justice and truth, the practice of which has been a boon to those nations which have exercised them and a scourge to those which have disdained them.