

TRUTH

The Final Prophet: Jesus Christ or Mohammed?

Ron Halbrook

IDENTIFICATION MARKS

After Satan led Eve and Adam to sin, God promised a Savior would come to defeat Satan and redeem man from sin (Gen. 3:15). As time unfolded, God gave many promises and prophecies of the Savior, providing marks of identification. In this way, honest hearts could find the true Savior and not be deceived by impostors.

The Savior would be born from the family of Abraham: “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham tried to provide a descendant through his wife’s maid, but God rejected Ishmael and gave Abraham and Sarah a child named Isaac through whom the Savior would come (Gen. 16; 21). In teaching his people to distinguish true from false prophets, God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses, only greater. The final prophet would be the Savior. “I will raise them up a Prophet . . . like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. 18:18).

Unmistakable marks identifying the true Savior included his birth of a virgin, his birth in Bethlehem, his death as a per-

fect sacrifice for sin, and his resurrection (Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2; Isa. 53; Ps. 2). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). Man cannot absolve his own sin and guilt before God, but God himself would provide the perfect sacrifice.

THE SAVIOR-PROPHET IDENTIFIED

The New Testament records the fulfillment of all these promises in the person of Jesus Christ: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). The miracles of Jesus confirmed his identity as he demonstrated his inherent, divine power over nature (walk on water; Matt. 14), over the human body (heal all kinds of sickness, Matt. 4), and over death (raise the dead, John 11). His greatest miracle was his own resurrection, after which he ascended back to heaven (Mark 16; Acts 1).

As the Son of God and Savior of man, he offers forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life in heaven to all
see “Final Prophet” on p. 664

*“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”
(John 8:32).*

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Developing Spiritual Strength

Mark Mayberry

INTRODUCTION

False teachers prey upon those who are unstable, unsettled, weak, and vacillating (2 Pet. 2:14; 3:16). In contrast, faithful disciples demonstrate a resolute commitment to Christ and his Word. The aforementioned passages involve a negation of the Greek word *sterizo*, which describes a positive and very desirable Christian characteristic. Thomas says it refers to a “support” or a “prop,” thus meaning “to make fast” or “establish.” Strong says it means “to set fast, i.e. (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to confirm.” Bauer says it means to “set up, fix (firmly), establish, support.” Louw and Nida offer the following definition: “to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief — ‘to strengthen, to make more firm.’” In the NASU, this word is translated “confirm” (1x), “determined” (1x), “establish” (2x), “established” (2x), “fixed” (1x), “strengthen” (6x), “strengthening” (1x). In this lesson, let us examine these verses, along with several other passages where closely related words may be found.

The meaning of *sterizo* is illustrated by two unusual occurrences. As the time of his death drew near, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-53). The KJV says, “he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” In this context, the word implies steadfast resolve and determination of purpose. Consider Luke’s account of Lazarus and the rich man. Lifting up his eyes in torment, the rich man begged for momentary relief from his agony. However, Abraham said, “No! You received blessings in life — which you did not share — but now you experience agony, which cannot be alleviated.” Furthermore, the father of the faithful said, “Between us and you there is a great chasm *fixed*, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:24-26). The barrier dividing the Hadean realm is fixed, unmovable, and impenetrable. Thus, the word refers to that which is fixed, established, set fast, made firm.

All other New Testament occurrences of this word deal with spiritual growth and development. Spiritual weakness must be avoided; spiritual strength must be developed (Eph. 4:11-16). How is spiritual strength developed?

ROOTED IN PROCLAMATION

Spiritual strength develops when the truth is clearly and courageously pro-
see “Spiritual Strength” on p. 645

Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

HONEST ACCOUNTING

The business world has been rocked lately by evidence of dishonest accounting on the part of corporate officers and accounting firms. This has cost jobs, loss of retirement funds, lack of confidence in big business and for some officials, some well-deserved prison time. Honest people are scandalized by such dishonesty. It is also in order to hold elected politicians accountable for how they throw around tax money paid by hard working citizens.

But there is a need for some admonition on this subject among brethren. When Paul participated in gathering and delivering the relief for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he took precautions to assure honest accounting for these funds. In 2 Corinthians 8:20-21 he said, "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." When a gospel preacher is supported from other places to work in a certain place, it is proper for him to report regularly to those who supply that support, not only updating them on the progress of the work, but also informing them as to the sources and amounts of his support. When we worked in Norway years ago, we had to raise all of our support since we were starting in an area where the gospel was not known. We had a total of \$420 a month support which came from twelve different congregations. Each month we sent a report to each of these congregations and listed each congregation which supplied support and the amount. When Mason Harris came to work there, he did the same thing, as did Bill Pierce who came still later. This practice continued with others who went to work there. This is a standard practice in this country among brethren who have to have outside support. I notice that Paul Williams does this in South Africa in his reports. So does Steve Willis in Alberta, Canada to name a few.

There have been some problems through the years with some of the Filipino preachers not being forthright in their reports to brethren who support them as to the places supplying their support and the specific amounts from each place. In some cases there has been flagrant deception. Whenever this has come to light, it has resulted in the loss of support for these men and the destruction of their credibility. This has not only hurt the deceived churches, it has hurt the men involved and, in a larger sense, it has hurt the work in general in the Philippines. Brethren, once deceived, are reluctant to ever again support a man there in the gospel. Most of the Filipino preachers work with no outside support and sustain their families by whatever work they can find. There are hundreds of these men. Some of them work under the most trying circumstances, facing such poverty as few here can understand

continued on next page

The Final Prophet: Jesus Christ or Mohammed?	
Ron Halbrook	front page
Developing Spiritual Strength	
Mark Mayberry	2
Editorial Left-overs	
Connie W. Adams	3
A Response to Mike Willis' "A Movement Gathers Steam"	
Shane Scott	6
Response	
Mike Willis	7
Response	
Harry Osborne	9
A Response to . . . A Movement Gathers Steam	
Wilson Adams	11
Reply	
Mike Willis	12
A Rebuttal to Mike Willis	
Wilson Adams	18
Final Reply	
Mike Willis	20
"For Our Children's Future . . . Buy Recycled Today"	
Mark Reeves	21
A Tribute	
Bill H. Reeves	22
They "Supposed" He Was With Them	
Larry Ray Hafley	23

—lack of food, medicine, funds for transportation to reach preaching appointments, or even to send their children to school. A few receive support from American churches on the strength of recommendations from those brethren who have visited and worked there. When one of these men acts dishonestly, he not only hurts himself and the work in his own land, he also weakens the ability of the those who gave their word that he is reliable and deserves support, to continue helping the work in that country.

So, a word of caution is in order. Brethren, do not take up the support of any man anywhere without credible evidence from those who know him as to his ability, faithfulness, and suitability for the work. Then, stay in contact. Ask questions. Require a regular report on the work, including a listing of all support and the places from which it comes. If a brother is not willing to supply this, then stop supporting him!

Paul said he took wages of other churches “to do you service” (2 Cor. 11:8-9). It is not wrong to receive wages. But it *is* wrong to receive them and then *not* perform the service for which they were supplied! Preaching is not for lazy people. It is dishonest to accept wages for service and then not do the work. May the Lord help us all to “provide for honest things” not only before God, but before men as well.

THE ANTIDOTE

Some of the writings in some of the periodicals I receive are so insipid as to leave me with a queasy feeling, sort of like too much meringue and too little pie, or too much gravy and not enough meat. I have found a pretty good antidote though. I just take down one of the early bound volumes of *Gospel Guardian*, *The Preceptor*, *Truth Magazine*, *Searching the Scriptures*, *Gospel Truths*, or even some of the pre-1950 *Gospel Advocates* and read a few articles and look at the news columns. What a contrast! Somehow, that seems to settle my spiritual system and get me back

in touch with reality. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). What we read has much to do with what we think. When I read some of those offerings and compare them to much of the present writings, I am made to wonder where some modern scribes are drawing their water. They certainly are not as conversant with the word of God as they need to be and their writings lack the ring of conviction which should be expected of those committed to “the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13).

“SEEING, THEY SEE NOT”

Jesus said, “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matt. 13:13). Sometimes people do not see what is right in front of them. Recently, on our way home from Idaho, we decided to see Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota once again. The morning we drove up there it was raining and very foggy. But we pressed on. There we stood on the observation deck facing that spectacular feat and saw nothing but fog. We had to leave without seeing the heads of four presidents engraved on that mountain. That put me to thinking. The fact that we could not see the mountain did not mean it was not there. Sometimes when we try to teach the gospel to people they do not see the truth because there is a spiritual fog which has clouded their vision. Perhaps it is Mormonism, premillennialism, Catholicism, or a hedonistic manner of life but that fog stands between them and the truth. “I don’t see that” some say about the simple statement of Mark 16:16. But it is still there regardless of the fog. Neither did we see Mt. Rushmore that morning, but it was there. I know it was, for I was there one time before without the fog. What fog hinders you from recognizing the truth which would transform your life?

Box 91346, Louisville, Kentucky 40291

Restoration Principles and Personalities

by Dabney Phillips

An interesting book on the life and work of those involved in the restoration of New Testament Christianity. The author’s institutional leaning is evident in the last part of the book. #17108

\$9.95

A Response to Mike Willis' "A Movement Gathers Steam"

A few weeks ago I received an email containing an article written by Mike Willis entitled "An Issue Gathers Steam." This article is posted on the *Truth* website, and was apparently published in *Truth Magazine*. After some deliberation, I have decided to write this brief response.

If the article had simply attacked me, I probably would have ignored it. I really do not believe anything I say would make a difference to a man who deliberately implied I was a theistic evolutionist in spite of the fact I specifically repudiated any form of evolution — *in the first three sentences* — of the article I wrote about Genesis 1 *seven years ago*. This article was posted on the *Truth* website. Or that it would do any good to respond to a man who ascribed beliefs to me about Genesis 1 which I no longer hold, as I wrote in my response to the Open Letter *two years ago* (and which was also posted on the *Truth* website).

But the reason I feel I must respond is because Willis attacked the entire student body of Florida College for dedicating the school yearbook to me. In good conscience I cannot let Willis mischaracterize the motives of 450-500 young Christians without setting the record straight. Since neither Willis nor his source, Harry Osborne, were actually present at the dedication, it is not surprising that the details of their articles are incorrect. Here are the facts.

The editors of the 2002 *Royal Palm* student yearbook unanimously decided to dedicate the yearbook to me. It was a great honor, one which many other people (such as the late long-time maintenance worker Tom Clark) deserved more than me. However, my time at FC ended without my students knowing — until the very last weeks of the 2001 school year — that I would not be back. Since the short notice of my departure precluded any formal recognition by my students the year I left, the editors decided to recognize me in the 2002 yearbook.

The action of the editors (who I met with and talked to personally) was not designed to "undermine" the admin-

istration or express "defiance of authority," as Osborne charged. Further, while it is true that the then-Director of Publications, Fred Thompson, did not disclose the identity of the dedication until the yearbook was published, this non-disclosure was not part of some plot against the administration. In keeping with long standing tradition, the yearbook dedication has always been kept secret.

From this simple decision on the part of the students, brethren Willis and Osborne have spun an elaborate web of charges aimed at the entire student body of Florida College. According to Osborne, "The real alarm to be sounded about this episode is that a number of young people are about to leave Florida College with the idea that denying the literal interpretation of the creation account is the path to becoming a hero." Willis echoes this in his comments: "In dedicating their annual, the student body sent out a message about what they believe and where they stand on the issue of fellowshiping one who is teaching a non-literal day of creation."

The critical assumption Willis and Osborne make is that the entire student body of Florida College knows about the so-called "creation controversy" and have deliberately pitched their support behind me. This assumption makes several glaring errors.

In the first place, Willis and Osborne assume the student body at FC is as fixated on brotherhood politics as they are. Most students, like most Christians generally, don't receive the papers. Maybe that will be the subject of Willis's next critical article. I am convinced that the great majority of brethren have never heard of Shane Scott, Mike Willis, Harry Osborne, or *Truth Magazine* — and have lost nothing by this ignorance.

In the second place, the statement written by the editor of the yearbook specifies the reasons for the dedication. Conspicuously absent is any reference to subverting authority, undermining Scripture, or making political statements to the brotherhood. Brethren Willis and Osborne have a

penchant for ignoring the plain and direct affirmations of their brethren while extrapolating the very worst insinuations they can devise. But when they castigate hundreds of young Christians in this fashion, it is regrettable.

In the third place, brethren Willis and Osborne are concerned about the views of fellowship these young people may carry home. Osborne wrote: "Those students with those views will soon be in churches across the country and their concepts will have an impact wherever they go." Willis added: "Now these students who voted to dedicate this annual go to their respective parts of the country to take their concept of fellowship with them into the various local churches of which they are members." Apparently Willis and Osborne are disturbed that the students of Florida College will express their views of fellowship in the local churches where they worship. They call this alarming. I call it autonomy. Willis and Osborne have no right to attack these students for making their own calls on fellowship, just as those students would have no right to attack Willis for his personal judgments, such as fellowshiping those he disagrees with on divorce and remarriage (like brother Osborne) on the basis of Romans 14.

I must plead guilty to one charge raised by brother Osborne. The following statement did appear in the yearbook, which he quotes disapprovingly:

He encouraged his students to look at God's word from all directions and motivated them to learn to search the Scriptures for answers to their questions. . . . Although he is no longer on the campus, his influence remains as does his spirit of love for those who stand for truth.

I do insist that the Bible alone is what we must search for the answers to our questions (1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Matt. 15:9), and that open and thorough study of the Bible demands that we must look at God's word from all directions (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1-6). This is the essence of the restoration. The alternative is the sectarian outlook which argues that the restoration is over, that the search for truth can be preempted, and that those who refuse to line up with the conclusions of a cadre of preachers are anathema.

Response

Mike Willis

We are happy to publish a journal which allows those who disagree with us room to express their disagreement. Other journals have a closed door policy which does not allow dissent; when something is published with which one disagrees, he has no way to express to the same audience his dissenting view. Inasmuch as no editor is infallible, a closed door journal is vulnerable to the mistaken ideas of its

editor(s) and staff. The same as is true about closed journals needs also to be said about closed web sites. Brother Scott refuses to post my original article or my rejoinder to him on his web site, even though he requests me to publish his material in *Truth Magazine*.

We are happy to give brother Scott room to reassert his faith in creation. No one has questioned his belief in creation. We have questioned his position that the days of creation are not literal twenty-four days when the text of Scripture reads:

And the evening and the morning were the first day (Gen. 1:5).
And the evening and the morning were the second day Gen. 1:8).
And the evening and the morning were the third day (Gen. 1:13). . . .

The days of creation in Genesis 1 are defined by the phrase "evening and morning," the alternation between darkness and light. We also have asked, "Why are long periods of time necessary between the days of creation?" "What is happening during these long periods of time?" To these things, brother Scott does not reply.

But brother Scott rises up in defense of the students at Florida College who, he believes, have been slandered. More and more one gets the impression that Florida College is sacrosanct in some people's mind. Is Florida College above criticism? And why does one rise up to defend Florida College but will not defend his teaching about the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1?

As to the details of the dedication of the annual to brother Scott, I do not take issue. In the reply to brother Wilson Adams pp. , I acknowledged that my editorial not only contained the accurate statement from brother Osborne about how the decision to dedicate the annual to brother Scott was made by the annual staff, but also statements from me that left the inaccurate impression that this decision was made by the student body as a whole (rather than through its representatives).

Brother Scott seems to argue that the student body at Florida College was unaware of the conflict among brethren over the days of creation caused by his and Hill Roberts' material being presented at Florida College and that their decision to dedicate the annual to him in no way reflected their feelings about the decision not to renew his teaching contract. He wrote,

From this simple decision on the part of the students, brethren Willis and Osborne have spun an elaborate web of charges aimed at the entire student body of Florida College. According to Osborne, "The real alarm to be sounded about this episode is that a number of young people are

about to leave Florida College with the idea that denying the literal interpretation of the creation account is the path to becoming a hero.” Willis echoes this in his comments: “In dedicating their annual, the student body sent out a message about what they believe and where they stand on the issue of fellowshiping one who is teaching a non-literal day of creation.

The critical assumption Willis and Osborne make is that the entire student body of Florida College knows about the so-called “creation controversy” and have deliberately pitched their support behind me. This assumption makes several glaring errors.

Brother Scott’s argument seems to be that the issue of the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 is irrelevant to the students of Florida College; they do not care about the discussion and are not influenced by what he and brother Roberts taught on the subject. Brother Scott and those associated with Florida College need to decide whether or not Florida College influences its students. If they want to argue that what is taught at Florida College and the spiritual environment that is created there *does not* influence their students, let them so argue. If that is the case I can see no reason to send students there. If they want to argue that what is taught at Florida College and the spiritual environment that is created there *does* influence their students, they must not object when we express concern about the influence of what they are teaching on the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 will have on the students who attend there and the congregations to which these students return upon graduation.

Brother Scott wants to portray the discussion about the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 as “brotherhood politics.” He wrote,

In the first place, Willis and Osborne assume the student body at FC is as fixated on brotherhood politics as they are. Most students, like most Christians generally, don’t receive the papers. Maybe that will be the subject of Willis’s next critical article. I am convinced that the great majority of brethren have never heard of Shane Scott, Mike Willis, Harry Osborne, or Truth Magazine — and have lost nothing by this ignorance.

I resent the slanderous charge in such statements as “fixated on brotherhood politics.” I am not running for any office. I am not campaigning for his job, the job of the president of Florida College, or the head of the Bible department. I am content doing my job and resent his unfounded indictments of my motives. I have nothing to gain by calling attention to the issue before us. Why can’t brother Scott accept that those of us who disagree with his non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and are concerned about its influence among us are just as honest and sincere as he wishes us to believe that he is? Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:

for this is the law and the prophets. (Matt. 7:12). My only interest is my loyalty to the plain statement of Scripture which still reads:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day . . . (Gen. 1:1-5).

Brother Scott also commented on our concerns about the views that the young people take back home to their congregations. He wrote, “Apparently Willis and Osborne are disturbed that the students of Florida College will express their views of fellowship in the local churches where they worship. They call this alarming. I call it autonomy.” Brother Scott either misses the point or is creating a smoke-screen. Neither brother Osborne nor I am disturbed that the “students of Florida College will express their view of fellowship in the local churches where they worship.” We are concerned about *the content of the view they express*. Suppose brother Scott had taught that instrumental music in worship is authorized by Scripture and I expressed concern that those under the influence of his teaching would take home what they had learned at Florida College to their respective congregations. Would that mean that I did not want them to express their views on worship in the local church? Of course not! It simply means that I am concerned about the doctrinal views they will be disseminating throughout the country. To imply that brother Osborne and I are sinfully trying to control the churches is ludicrous, if not malicious! I am no more violating the autonomy of the local church when I preach what the Bible says about instrumental music than when I preach what the Bible says about Genesis 1.

Brother Scott closes his response saying,

I do insist that the Bible alone is what we must search for the answers to our questions (1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Matt. 15:9), and that open and thorough study of the Bible demands that we must look at God’s word from all directions (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1-6). This is the essence of the restoration. The alternative is the sectarian outlook which argues that the restoration is over, that the search for truth can be preempted, and that those who refuse to line up with the conclusions of a cadre of preachers are anathema.

Brother Scott’s insistence that the Bible alone be the source for the answers to our questions is identical with my plea. We ask brother Scott, “Using the Bible alone to answer our questions, does Genesis 1 teach long periods of time between the creation days, teach that the days of creation are long periods of time, or use the seven-day

week as a literary framework to tell the story of creation?" What does the Bible alone say? Brother Scott's teaching of his opinions about creation is divisive and contrary to the restoration principle.

The restoration plea is well expressed by N.B. Harde- man who wrote:

I would God to-night that all professed followers in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, and elsewhere, would be content to have but the Bible as their creed, their discipline, their church manual, their church directory, their rule of faith and practice throughout life. There would be oneness on the part of all the splendid people of this great country. . . . I pledge my word and promise myself to-night, if the man will thus show me that God's book does not plainly demand it, I will gladly surrender and give that up that the cause of division may cease. . . . When I announce that platform, it is not narrow, it is not limited, it is not human; but it is big enough, broad enough, wide enough, and comprehensive enough for every son and daughter of God on earth to occupy and none feel that in so doing they have had to sacrifice a single principle of faith. . . . Take your stand on God's book and eliminate all things that are not plainly taught therein; and when you so do, I will gladly come to you and take my stand with you, if there by any preference as to which way the coming is done (*Tabernacle Sermons* II: 185, 186, 187).

We call upon our denominational friends to quit preaching their divisive opinions for the sake of unity. We ask the Methodist to quit preaching his opinions about infant baptism. We ask the Baptist to quit preaching his opinions about salvation through faith only and the perseverance of the saints. We ask the Catholic to quit preaching his opinions about the papacy. Preaching one's opinions rather than limiting oneself to what is revealed in the Bible is the cause of religious division. In keeping with the restoration principle, we are calling upon brother Scott to quit preaching his opinions about creation because they cause division. We ask him to quit preaching those opinions for the sake of unity — to give up his opinions on Genesis 1 and confine himself to preaching what the text of Scripture says.

Furthermore, the essence of restoration is not the *search* for truth; it is *finding* the truth. Brother Scott says that the search for truth is the essence of the restoration movement. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The *quest* for truth is not the goal; the *knowledge of the truth* is. Brother Scott believes it is a "sectarian outlook" "which argues that the restoration is over, that the search for truth can be preempted, and that those who refuse to line up with the conclusions of a cadre of preachers are anathema." Have we arrived at the truth on the resurrection of the body of Jesus from the dead or must we constantly stand in quest of the truth on that subject? When I ask someone to confess his belief in the bodily resurrection, am I asking him *to be sectarian*,

to line up with a cadre of preachers? Have we arrived at the truth on baptism or must we constantly be in quest of that truth? When I ask someone to confess his belief in what the Bible teaches about baptism, am I asking him *to be sectarian, to line up with a cadre of preachers*? Have we arrived at the truth on instrumental music in worship or are we still in search of the truth on that subject? When I ask someone to confess his belief in what the Bible teaches about instrumental music in worship, am I asking him *to be sectarian, to line up with a cadre of preachers*? Have we arrived at the truth on the first day of the week observance of the Lord's supper or are we still in search of the truth on that subject? When I ask someone to confess his belief in what the Bible teaches about the Lord's supper, am I asking him *to be sectarian, to line up with a cadre of preachers*? Why then is it sectarian to ask a person to confess his belief in what the Bible teaches on Genesis 1? I do not disagree that our outlook in learning the truth on any subject is, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). However, statements which imply that we have not and cannot ever arrive at the truth makes the truth unknowable and unattainable, leaving every opinion as equally valid. I am confident that brother Scott does not agree with these conclusions, but they seem to be the logical consequences of what he wrote.

Inasmuch as brother Scott took issue with what brother Osborne wrote as well as what I wrote, I hereby publish the following comments from brother Osborne:

A Brief Response to Shane Scott Harry Osborne

Brother Willis has provided an excellent reply to Shane and it needs no help from me. However, I would like to make a few very brief observations regarding brother Scott's article.

1. Shane claims that I misrepresented facts concerning the dedication of the annual to him, but he failed to show any fact I stated incorrectly. The truth is that I allowed a plurality of students and college personnel to check my statement before I sent it so as to insure its accuracy. All said it was accurate. I also sent my statement to the President and Vice President of Florida College, but they have never corrected me as to the facts stated. My purpose in writing the statement was clearly stated — it was an effort to caution brethren who might tend to blame the Florida College administration for the dedication to understand that the administration was not to blame for that decision. The fact that the administration was not pleased with the dedication was seen in the fact that the administrator serving as the annual sponsor was released from employment within days of last year's graduation. If brother Scott contends such is incorrect, let him seek a statement from the Florida College administration which affirms their full support for his teaching and conduct while employed there.

2. Shane further claims to have written in defense of Florida College students. This action stands in sharp contrast to his failure to defend the former students who verified brother Scott's teaching of error after he had denied such in his response to the Open Letter. Brother Scott claims that we have misrepresented 450 - 500 students, but the facts show otherwise. Neither brother Willis nor I claimed all Florida College students were adversely affected by Shane's teaching. In fact, I know a number who have discussed brother Scott's error with me. Some of those students have rejected the error taught by Shane, but the fact remains that a number of others have accepted the error or come to look upon the matter as unimportant. Having preached in the Tampa area while Shane taught at Florida College, I have discussed the issue with both Shane and some of his students. I have discussed with students how they could answer the arguments they claim he made to them which were the same arguments he made to me. It is not brother Scott who is truly the defender of students, but those who have sought to teach them the truth which helps deepen their faith and a proper respect for the revelation of God as literally stated in the Scripture.

While neither brother Willis nor I have ever claimed to have a scientific survey of the students to see the percentage adversely affected by brother Scott's error, various factors have made clear that the error has had an impact upon a number of students just as we stated. When an editor of the annual called to protest my statement included in brother Willis' article, she claimed that "most" students do not

think the issue is important. I did not ask her to verify her claim with a scientific study as one brother has mandated of us. The fact that a number of students are supportive of Shane despite his teaching of error was clear from the standing ovation given him by a large number at the dedication announcement. During the last weeks of brother Scott's time on the faculty, a protest against his non-renewal was planned by some students supporting him. To his credit, brother Scott quelled the effort before it was carried out, but it clearly demonstrated that he was viewed favorably by a number of students, despite his teaching of error. Even after Shane departed from Florida College, I have been called by concerned parents and brethren who have attested to the fact that a number of students were influenced by the error taught by brother Scott.

3. Shane denies any culpability in causing a perception of insubordination, but that perception does exist. If Shane wants to address that perception, let him take it up with the Florida College administration. Sometimes, a perception of insubordination arises due to words spoken or actions taken which fail to show support to those in leadership. Perhaps brother Scott should take the matter up with the leadership at Florida College rather than uttering words such as those in his article which tend to confirm the existence of an improper attitude and a rashness of action. My hope and prayer is that such may be corrected because brother Scott is a man of talent who could be a great asset to truth if turned to its defense.

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Then Cometh The End:

A Response to... A Movement Gathers Steam

I have read the editor's recent article with the above title and wish to make a few observations. Whether I am fit to make these observations is certainly debatable and I acknowledge my inadequacies in advance. I make no claim to having all knowledge much less answers to every question and issue that trouble good brethren. I write humbly and with animosity toward none. Take issue with my conclusions but not with my heart.

WRONG IMPRESSIONS

First, I believe that Mike Willis left a wrong impression regarding the dedication of the Florida College annual, the *Royal Palm*, to Shane Scott. He quotes Harry Osborne who wrote previously to "relate a word of caution about incorrect implications which could come from the event." Osborne went on to note correctly "the dedication was chosen by the students who produce the annual, not the administration of the school."

Let's be clear. Each year the dedication of the Florida College annual is made by a very small group of students who work on the yearbook project. The dedication of the annual is a well-guarded secret and revealed to the faculty and student body at a presentation ceremony in chapel. It has been that way for years. The editor of this paper has done the very thing brother Osborne warned against when he warned "incorrect implications could come from this event." Brother Willis writes, "The student body for 2001-02 chose to dedicate the annual to brother Scott." The truth is a few students on an annual staff chose to dedicate the annual, not the student body.

Again Willis writes, "In dedicating their annual, the student body sent out a message about what they believe and where they stand on the issue of fellowshiping one who is teaching a non-literal day of creation." The student body of Florida College did no such thing. As already noted, the student body did not make the selection. But more than that, to assume that the young people at Florida College are sending out some sort of student-body endorsement

of a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 is, I believe, incorrect — if not irresponsible.

The editor further concludes, "Now these students who voted to dedicate this annual go to their respective parts of the country to take their concept of fellowship with them into the various local churches of which they are members. To them brother Scott is a hero and those who oppose his loose teaching on creation are dastardly villains to be feared." Come on. If that is not an "incorrect implication," I have yet to see one. Brother Willis sees some kind of vast campus conspiracy involving five hundred teenagers — the majority of whom have never even met Shane Scott (he didn't teach at the school in 2001-02). What you have is a handful of kids who, more than anything else, dedicated an annual to a teacher they liked because of his endearing personality.

Did brother Scott sway an entire campus with his views on Genesis? I don't think so. Did he influence a few? He may have. Were some students aware of the Genesis 1 controversy? I am sure that some were. Were there those who felt the school did a disservice to Shane and who were upset at the criticism he received from others outside the college? Probably. But is the dispersed student body as a whole now dispensing Scott's "non-literal days" idea across the nation as the author assumes? I think that is quite a stretch.

My son graduated from Florida College in the spring of this year. Mike's article casts a shadow of suspicion upon him and other young people like him who have spent the last two years in Temple Terrace. To my knowledge, Dale and others in his sphere of influence do not believe the days of Genesis to be long periods of time and are not in any way advocating such a thing.

INCONSISTENCIES?

Florida College is neither above making mistakes in judgment nor above criticism. Have I agreed with every decision Florida College has ever made? No. Have I been

free to express myself to Colly Caldwell and others about various issues? Sure have. Is the school sensitive and defensive when criticized? Probably so — but I doubt no more than those who operate religious journals.

From comments I have heard in some places, you would think Florida College has jumped headfirst off the deep end. I don't think they have. Two of my children have spent the last four years of their lives going to school in Tampa and it has been the best thing that has happened to them — not only from an educational standpoint but, more importantly, from a spiritual perspective. Being on campus at Florida College has enriched both of them. Each returned home following their respective two years having grown in their relationship with God. They have a much keener awareness of right and wrong and a greater sense of righteousness than ever before. Each has a better appreciation for God's book and they are both dedicated members of local churches where they now live. While at FC, Sharon met a young man from Tucson, Arizona and eventually married him. I have often said that I would rather my daughter marry a godly Christian and live across the country than a godless bum and live across the street.

I am amazed that some write off Florida College quickly and instead (or is it in spite?) send their children to state-supported universities where they are taught by immoral, pagan change-agents? I heard recently a conversation by some (who have been vocal against Florida College) discussing the upcoming football season at their state university and of the need to hurry and buy their season tickets. Folks, am I the only one seeing this inconsistency?

Mike talks about “palatable pulpits” — years ago I heard sermons warning parents about the dangers of sending young people to state universities where there is an abundance of sexual immorality, drinking, drug use, atheism, and a promotion of rank perversion. What happened to those sermons? Then again, some brethren won't support anything about Florida College but will, instead, support athletic departments of state schools and show their spirit by wearing hats, jackets and shirts upon which there is emblazoned the logo of some university. No, I'm not opposed to wearing a hat that says Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, West Virginia, Florida, or South Florida, etc. I am saying we need to keep this thing in perspective.

As Weldon Warnock said tongue-in cheek, “Some brethren might be less critical of Florida College if they had co-ed dorms, hired atheists as professors, and brought in Rick Pitino to coach basketball.” Sadly, he may be right.

FINALLY . . .

My purpose in writing is not to address everything brother Willis mentioned in his article. My purpose is not to defend Florida College against all criticism. My purpose

is to suggest that we need to find a balance in some of these things. “Incorrect implications” lead to exaggerations, false impressions, and internet gossip grows out of proportion.

I tell you what I plan to do. I plan to continue to preach the gospel as strong and as forcefully as I can and to encourage others to do likewise (2 Tim. 4:1-2). I plan to encourage young people to attend Florida College because I believe it to be in their best interest to do so. And I plan on worrying not one whit about pleasing people but pleasing the God before whom I stand.

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Reply

Mike Willis

Printed above is a response by Wilson Adams to my editorial “A Movement Gathers Steam” (August 1, 2002). We publish a journal in which dissent is not excluded, in which both sides of an issue may be heard. Therefore, we are happy to provide brother Adams free space and an audience to disagree with us. Not all papers have such an open format. I accept that brother Adams is writing “humbly and with animosity toward none” and hope that he will assume the same toward me.

WRONG IMPRESSIONS

The main thrust of brother Adams' objections to my article was the impression that I left about who was responsible for the Florida College annual dedication to Shane Scott. I quoted brother Harry Osborne's carefully worded statement that said, “That dedication was chosen by the students who produce the annual, not the administration of the school.” However, in the section that was written directly by me, I said, “. . . the student body for 2001-02 chose to dedicate the annual to brother Scott.” While this is technically correct, it leaves the impression that the decision was made by a majority vote of the student body, despite brother Osborne's clear statement about how the decision was made. I am happy for this opportunity to clarify the point that the student body as a whole did not make the decision to dedicate the annual to Shane Scott; that decision was made by the annual staff. However, brother Osborne also notes that their decision was warmly received by the student body. As a matter of fact, the students gave brother Scott a standing ovation.

Brother Adams minimizes the seriousness of the Florida College annual being dedicated to Shane Scott. The administration thought that this was so serious that one of their personnel lost his job over it. Apparently, the administration understood that the dedication damaged the school in

some way.

HOW MUCH INFLUENCE?

Brother Adams wishes to believe that the decision to dedicate the annual to Shane Scott occurred because a “handful of kids who, more than anything else, dedicated an annual to a teacher they liked because of his endearing personality.” I think that is a rather naive assessment of what transpired when the annual was dedicated to a teacher whose contract the administration chose not to renew and this occurred after he had been the center of attention because of his views about the days of creation. Brother Scott did not even teach at Florida College during the 2001-02 school year; it appears obvious to me that the students were making a statement about brother Scott’s termination.

It is brother Adams’ position that the students were unaware of brother Scott’s controversial position on the days of creation and the consequences leading to his termination, and therefore none of this was considered in their decision to honor him? Brother Adams wrote,

Did brother Scott sway an entire campus with his views on Genesis? I don’t think so. Did he influence a few? He may have. Were some students aware of the Genesis 1 controversy? I am sure that some were. Were there those who felt the school did a disservice to Shane and who were upset at the criticism he received from others outside the college? Probably. But is the dispersed student body as a whole now dispensing Scott’s “non-literal days” idea across the nation as the author assumes? I think that is quite a stretch.

Brother Adams’ own words admit that brother Scott was influencing students at Florida College to accept his views of Genesis 1. We may not agree on how many students brother Scott influenced. However, brother Adams seems untroubled by the “few” who were influenced. What if one of those few were my son or my daughter, or brother Adams’ son or daughter? Would he be more concerned then? I am thankful that brother Adams’ children were not influenced by brother Scott; however, other children might not have been so fortunate. This is precisely the danger which motivated 67 preachers to sign an “open letter” to Florida College.

HOW FAR HAS FLORIDA COLLEGE GONE?

Brother Adams wrote, “From comments I have heard in some places, you would think Florida College has jumped headfirst off the deep end.” I know brother Adams does not hold me responsible for “comments heard in some places” and I certainly did not say Florida College “has jumped headfirst off the deep end.” I have attended the schools that were off the deep end — a school which is secularly oriented and openly flaunts its opposition to fundamentalist religion and two schools founded by members of the church which adopted so much liberalism that they deny the

inspiration of the Scripture and the miracles of the Bible. With reference to those schools operated by those who formerly were our brethren, let me assure brother Adams, they did not “jump headfirst off the deep end.” They got to the deep end one little step at a time. I do not believe and have never said that Florida College is in the deep end. What I have said is that the acceptance of a Bible professor who teaches a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and inviting men to speak at the Florida College lectures who teach doctrines contrary to Matthew 19:9 are dangerous. These are first steps down the slippery slope of liberalism. Extending the right hands of fellowship to those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ is a sin (2 John 9-11). This fellowship is extended by Christians who are acting in their individual capacity (that is, I recognize that Florida College is not a church), but it is just as wrong when committed by individuals as when it committed by a church (1 Cor. 5:11-14).

INCONSISTENCIES

Brother Adams thinks those who criticize Florida College while buying season tickets to a state university’s athletic team and wearing team logos of secular schools where immorality is rampant may be embracing something far worse than Florida College. If one wears clothes, hats, and rings which support the team of a secular university or attends the athletic contests of these schools, does that mean he is not opposed to the sexual immorality, drinking, drug use, and atheism which are prevalent on those campuses? Of course not, as brother Adams admits. So what is his point? If he admits that one is not embracing those things that are wrong at a state university when he wears such apparel, in what way is one embracing such wickedness? In what way is attending the football games of a state university inconsistent with one opposing what he sees wrong at Florida College?

Brother Adams said, “. . . years ago I heard sermons warning parents about the dangers of sending young people to state universities where there is an abundance of sexual immorality, drinking, drug use, atheism, and a promotion of rank perversion.” He asks, “Where are those sermons?” In the congregations where I attend and preach, these sermons are still being preached. If they are not being preached where brother Adams is, he is to blame; if those whom they are inviting for meetings are not preaching these things, they should be inviting someone else to hold their meetings.

What brother Adams is objecting to is that some have quit recommending that their children go to Florida College. Every parent has the right to choose for himself where to send his children to school. There are many churches near universities across this land where the church has provided the spiritual needs of the individual and the secular university has taught computer science, biology, etc. I have

no condemnation of those who choose to send their children to such universities. There are some parents who are gravely concerned about the influence that inviting men to speak at lectures, whose views on divorce and remarriage are contrary to Matthew 19:9, whose views on the deity of Christ are suspect, and who teach a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1, will have on their children. Brother Adams may not want to recognize the legitimacy of those concerns but that will not make them go away. Among these parents, some look at the situation and choose to send their children to a state school while others decide that, despite these concerns, Florida College is still their school of choice. I am not condemning them for that choice. Nor should brother Adams condemn those parents who make a different choice. However, cute remarks that brethren “might be less critical of Florida College if they had co-ed dorms, hired atheists professors, and brought in Rick Pitino to coach basketball” do not seriously address the issue before us. In contrast to these remarks, one might also wonder if some would still defend the school and criticize its critics if the school were to openly endorse theistic evolution, say that the issue of the days of creation is irrelevant, affirm that a local flood is described in Genesis 6-9, deny that Jonah was swallowed by a big fish. Would some proclaim that it is an institution where academic freedom must be maintained, all the while insisting that it is a college and not a church, so that what the Bible teaches about the fellowship issue is immaterial?

Those of us who have these concerns are sincere friends of Florida College. My family is deeply indebted to Florida College. All four of the Willis brothers attended there. Many of the seven Willis children sent their children there. In 1967 Florida College gave “The Friend of Youth” award to my brother Cecil Willis. As one former student at Florida College, I openly acknowledge my debt. Were it not for the good influences on my life which I received at Florida College, I might not even be faithful today. I sent my daughter to Florida College where she met her husband, the father of my dear grandchild. I am not an enemy of Florida College and I resent being so treated. I was one of those parents who wrestled with the decision of whether or not to send my son to Florida College, and he subsequently chose to pursue his education elsewhere. (And, brother Adams, this difficult decision was not made to “spite” anyone, as you conjectured might be the case. My son’s soul is too precious to be used in such games, like King Saul used his daughter Michal against David.) He married a fine Christian lady and is very active in the church, just as active as are my daughter and her husband. I would think that the last thing that Florida College wanted to do was to alienate clientele such as my family. After all, my family and our children have been their customers and supporters. But, I am saying as plainly as I know how, that inviting men to speak at lectures at Florida College whose doctrinal convictions are known to be contrary to God’s

word on divorce and remarriage, on the days of creation, on the deity of Christ, and on unity-in-diversity, is alienating those of us who hold Florida College dear to our hearts. Until these things are changed, I cannot wholeheartedly recommend Florida College to young people who are looking for a place to go to college.

Have we reached the point that we think as follows: “Florida College is our school (the school of the non-institutional churches of Christ). We cannot criticize it regardless of what it does.” Surely all of us can see how dangerous such an attitude would be. Those who address what they perceive as problems at Florida College are not the school’s enemies, but its friends who wish to see it preserve what endeared it to them in the first place. Brother W.W. Otey wrote in 1951,

Perhaps the promoters and managers of such schools have shown the most sensitiveness toward any criticism, even when respectfully and constructively offered, of any other matter or differences among churches of Christ during the half century. Just why this should be true is not quite clear. Every one admits that they are human institutions, originated in the wisdom of men, managed and controlled by the wisdom of men. But this does not of necessity make them wrong. But human things are not always perfect and should be criticized and examined (*Living Issues* 62).

Brother Otey’s words deserve sober reflection.

SPEAKING OF INCONSISTENCIES

Brother Adams addresses what he perceives as inconsistencies. Perhaps he will not be offended when I raise the same issue. Brother Adams argues quite forcefully that the environment at Florida College had a positive influence on his children. If that environment influences, it influences in both directions. How can he then deny that having a teacher who teaches a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 influences those same students? The teacher’s “endearing personality” only increases the danger to these young people. How can he deny that inviting men to speak at lectures at Florida College whose doctrinal convictions are known to be contrary to God’s word on divorce and remarriage, on the days of creation, on the deity of Christ, and on unity-in-diversity influences those same children? Why should he be upset with those who warn brethren about the potential danger of these influences? Shouldn’t he be joining hands with us in alerting parents about this potential danger until Florida College removes those things which pose this threat to its students?

Just suppose that Florida College created an atmosphere which left the impression that what one teaches on divorce and remarriage should not effect whether or not he should be fellowshipped by brethren. Suppose Florida College created an environment which left the impression that teaching a non-literal interpretation of Genesis is inconsequential.

Suppose Florida College influenced its students to think that nothing is compromised about the faith of Jesus Christ by inviting men to speak at lectures at Florida College whose doctrinal convictions are known to be contrary to God's word on divorce and remarriage, on the days of creation, on the deity of Christ, and on unity-in-diversity. Suppose that Florida College created a spiritual atmosphere which castigates those who warn about these dangerous threats and makes heroes out of those who preach these false doctrines. Do you think that sending 400+ students a year from families all over these United States would constitute a potential danger of these same views being carried back home to the churches where these young people grew up? Do you think that these young people might go home respecting those men whose teachings are dangerous and eventually recommend that these men be invited for meetings in their home congregations? Do you think these same students might be prejudiced to object to having those who oppose these false doctrines and false teachers for meetings or as their preacher? Brother Adams, some of us think this is not an unreal assessment of the potential for danger!

CONCLUSION

I want to do my part to encourage brother Adams to continue preaching the gospel "as strong and as forcefully as I can." If both he and I preach what God said on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:9, what God said about the deity of Christ, what God said about creating the universe in six days in Genesis 1, what God said about unity-in-diversity and fellowshiping those who bring doctrines contrary to God's word (2 John 9-11), etc., we will be one in Christ. I suspect that when he preaches strong and forcefully on these subjects, he will receive the same treatment as others of us who have spoken out strongly and forcefully as

we can on these subjects. Doors will be closed that once were open to him.

I am truly amazed that brother Adams has not raised his pen to write about the loose doctrines that brother Hailey taught on divorce and remarriage, not pounded out an article on his computer to write about the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 which has been taught at Florida College by brother Shane Scott and brother Hill Roberts, has not submitted an article to express concern about Florida College inviting those to speak at Florida College whose views on divorce and remarriage or the deity of Christ are contrary to God's word. However, he has risen to condemn those of us who have expressed such concerns. One can tell a lot about what a person believes and teaches by the direction in which the blade of his sword is turned. Brother Adams said, "My purpose in writing is not to address everything brother Willis mentioned in his article." Since he is addressing other issues raised in my article entitled "A Movement Gathers Steam," perhaps he will plainly tell us where is he going to stand on each of these issues.

Brother Adams' help in strong, forceful preaching, exalting the truth and exposing error with its teachers will be a great asset to the cause of Christ. His voice will be widely appreciated by faithful men who have spoken out and are being subjected to exaggerations, false impressions, and internet gossip as a result of their speaking out.

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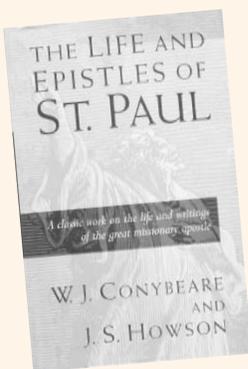
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A Rebuttal to Mike Willis

I trust brother Willis will allow me a rebuttal since his reply to my article casts doubt upon my character and reputation as a gospel preacher. Mike, this is part of the problem. You believe that Florida College is too sensitive to criticism and yet woe is the one who criticizes you. May I do so and remain your friend? Or “have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”

It is agreed that you have points of validity, but your tendency to exaggerate a situation and blow a matter out of proportion leads to an overall inaccurate perception of reality. And, in so doing, you damage the effectiveness of the very thing you are seeking to achieve. Any trial attorney worth his salt will tell you that when you have a case, *the worse thing you can do* is overstate and exaggerate your case. And that is exactly what you have done.

Thank you for making the correction that the entire student body at Florida College did not dedicate the annual to Shane Scott. Accepted. It is the four page “however” part that continues to cause confusion. In your reply to me, you noted that Osborne had said, “Their decision was warmly received by the student body.” You then added, “As a matter of fact, the students gave brother Scott a standing ovation.” (As former President Reagan said, “There you go again.”) The dedication was not warmly received by everyone in the student body nor did all the students stand. And among those who did, I wonder how many stood out of common courtesy? Mike, have you ever been in a public gathering where someone received a standing ovation and you stood out of courtesy?

You state, “Brother Adams minimizes the seriousness of the Florida College annual being dedicated to Shane Scott.” *I have done no such thing.* What I have done is refuse to allow the matter to be blown out of proportion. It looks to me as if the administration of the school dealt with the situation quite effectively. Will you give them credit for that?

You may call me “naïve” or charge me with being “cute” but that still does not deal with the point I made: your ten-

dency to overreact. Yes, I am fully cognizant of the truth that spiritual erosion occurs slowly, sometimes imperceptibly. But you paint with such broad strokes as to lead to a general perception that Florida College *has already* gone off the deep end. Let me ask you a simple question: If the Tampa situation has reached the point that you “cannot wholeheartedly recommend Florida College to young people who are looking for a place to go to college,” — *then why in the world do you have those associated with Florida College writing the Truth Commentary Series?* Last I checked, Colly Caldwell wrote Ephesians, David McClister wrote Hebrews, and I believe you asked Melvin Curry to author 2 Corinthians. And that doesn’t count brethren Hamilton (1 & 2 Peter, Jude) and Harkrider (Revelation) who have long been connected with the school. Mike, that makes absolutely no sense to me. Will you cease to “wholeheartedly recommend” the *Truth Commentary Series* because several of its authors are teachers, administrators, leaders, and friends of Florida College?

You asked me a question regarding inconsistencies I see in that some would wear apparel of a state school but would refuse to wear something promoting FC. Your question was: “So what is his point?” *The point is one of extremism.* Everyone understands that to wear a red shirt that says “Indiana University” does not endorse everything connected with IU. But neither does wearing a red shirt that says “Florida College” imply that I am always in 100% agreement with everything about Florida College. Some brethren get so angry that they set sail on an extreme course. Mike, will you wear a shirt that advertises IU? Will you wear one that advertises FC? Why not?

I am also fully aware that “every parent has the right to choose for himself where to send his children to school.” No one denies that. *I am saying* that to make that decision *on the basis of* one teacher (who has been dismissed) or a faculty member (who is deceased) or a brother who speaks on a lecture program (mistakes can be made there too!) is to go from one extreme to another. To decide that I will not send a child to Florida College *because* a former teacher was in error on the days of creation but I will send my

child to a state school where the majority of professors are atheists leaves me scratching my head.

Mike, where do you recommend that parents send their teenage-fresh-out-of-high-school-and-away-from-home-for-the-first-time-children? I am sure that you are aware that many state schools require on-campus freshmen to live in a campus dormitory. Sure, some kids can handle it and certainly a strong church nearby will help counteract the ungodly campus counter-culture, but the fact remains that some young people have gone to the devil because of the influence they received at a state school. Will you deny that? You chide me because I noted that “a few” kids may have been influenced by Shane Scott. What about the “few” (or is it “many”) who are led away from God by pagan change-agents at secular schools? I fear that your influence in steering young people away from Florida College and toward state schools overshadows considerably any danger associated with Florida College.

I will state clearly once again: *Florida College is not above criticism*. Your 1951 quote from W.W. Otey is a good one and certainly applicable. But Otey’s point (that human institutions are not perfect nor above criticism) can be equally true of religious papers.

You say of me, “Why should he be upset with those who warn brethren about the potential danger of these influences?” Mike, I am *not* upset about warnings against danger. I *am* concerned about misrepresentation of facts and exaggerations that lead to a distorted perception of reality.

You further state, “I am truly amazed that brother Adams has not raised his pen to write about the loose doctrines that brother Hailey taught on divorce and remarriage . . .” Mike, I direct your attention to *Searching the Scriptures*, July 1990, and to an article I penned entitled: “Can We Understand God’s Law?” Read that and see if you have any doubts about where I stand on Hailey’s error. You certainly have my permission to reprint that article. Twelve years later, I still believe what I said in 1990.

Mike, do I have to “pound out an article” in *Truth Magazine* in order to be sound in faith and conviction? Since when is that the criteria by which we measure soundness? And do I become unsound because my judgment may differ from yours? You know, I happen to be one of those strange fellows who believe a person can be sound and saved without reading religious journals or attending Florida College.

You challenge me to “plainly tell us where he is going to stand on each of these doctrinal issues.” Brother Willis, that is real easy.

1. Hailey’s position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is wrong.
2. The days of Genesis are literal 24-hour periods of time. I believe Moses’ Exodus 20 commentary on the creation is convincing enough. (Get tapes from a June 10 sermon I delivered in Paden City, West Virginia, June 2002).
3. Jesus was 100% deity and 100% humanity (Col. 2:9). Can I explain exactly how all of that worked? No. Do I believe that? Absolutely. Why do I believe that? The Bible says that.
4. Can Florida College make mistakes in regard to who speaks on a lecture program? Certainly.
5. Is unity-in-diversity a danger? Always. But we need to define terms carefully. Obviously no congregation could exist without unity-in-diversity on matters of personal faith. However, when it comes to “the faith once for all delivered to the saints . . .” we must stand together. But I am fully content to let the Bible (not *Truth Magazine*, not Florida College, and not any other human institution) define “the faith.” Fellowship begins and ends with each individual child of God and with each autonomous church of God. That’s what I believe. Is that “plain enough?”

You conclude by saying that I have “risen to condemn those of us who have expressed such concerns.” Mike, the problem is that you are doing *more* than expressing concerns. You are *overstating your case* and leaving people with a distorted sense of what is really happening. Shane Scott no longer teaches at Florida College. The dedication of the annual was a “goof” promoted by a small minority and without the approval by the administration. I feel certain that over the course of years some have participated in the campus lecture program that will not be invited back. I don’t know of anyone at Florida College who teaches the Hailey position on M-D-R nor the Welch position on the deity of Christ. *Please give the administration of the school some measure of credit for working to correct problems*. With 150+ employees, and 400-500 students, the administration of the College has a difficult assignment. Yes, people get defensive when criticized. So do you.

Mike, there are not “two mindsets” among us; there are *three*. There is a third group of men who are dedicated to the Book, who preach it without embarrassment, who may never write for a religious paper but who throw their life, energy, and effort into building up a local church. They are men who recognize the potential of any human institution to depart from heaven’s way but they also recognize the *equal* danger of overreaction. I know many such men and am blessed by their friendship, strengthened by their Christ-like character, and encouraged by their deep-rooted faith.

May God help each of us to be firm in our convictions while being fair and accurate in our treatment of one another. And may he help each of us to see that sometimes we fail.

Final Reply

Mike Willis

Brother Adams pronounces that “woe is the one who criticizes you,” although we have allowed his criticisms to be printed in the same journal where our original article was published. Did *Christianity Magazine* allow that? Does Florida College? He expresses “woe is the one who criticizes” and “thank you for making the correction” in the same article. Am I open to criticism or not? I will allow our readers to judge.

Brother Adams thinks that I have exaggerated the problem at Florida College and I think he has minimized it. I am willing to allow our readers to judge for themselves who has more correctly evaluated the matter. Whether or not I have used broad strokes to paint the picture will become more obvious to all of us in the years ahead. I am content to allow time to tell. Brother Adams believes that I have a “tendency to exaggerate a situation” and “blow a matter out of proportion.” Is brother Adams painting with a broad brush in such a criticism? As to wearing a FC sweatshirt, if brother Adams swants to send me one, I will wear it.

Brother Adams thinks me inconsistent for allowing brethren who have taken some steps in the wrong direction to continue to write in our *Truth Commentary* series. I guess that would show, first of all, that I have not broken fellowship while offering my criticism. Have those who disagreed with me continued to keep the doors open? Secondly, the fact that these brethren have invited men for lectures who have wrong positions on divorce and remarriage, questionable positions on the deity of Christ, and positions that espouse that the days of creation are long periods of time does not mean that I am withdrawing fellowship from them. I am simply calling attention to what I think needs correction. What troubles me is the on-going defense of inviting these men (although brother Adams admits this was a mistake). The on-going defense indicates that some see nothing wrong with inviting those who have loose doctrines on divorce and remarriage or the deity of Christ to speak at the lectures and using one who teaches a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 to teach (see 2 John 9-11). As to books and authors, we assure brother Adams that we will not be publishing books advancing such dangerous assertions on the days of creation as, “The days cannot be literal,” or “The days must be ages.” We will not be inviting men to participate in our commentary series who are known to teach false doctrine on divorce and remarriage and a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1.

I am perfectly willing to allow parents to make judgments of whether or not to send their children to Florida College without condemning them for the choices they

make. Is brother Adams? I recognize the danger of the public universities and warn anyone who attends them of those dangers. Those who transfer to these same state universities after two years at Florida College face the same dangers. The question is not whether or not our children will face those challenges; they will. And, we need to do what we can to prepare them for those challenges. If one thinks that two years at Florida College will help him, I have no condemnation; it may be the best for him. Nor do I condemn those who choose to go directly to a state school. I am not in the business of providing guidance to high school graduates in the selection of a college.

Brother Adams directs us to his *Searching The Scriptures* article in July 1990 to tell us what he thinks about Homer Hailey’s doctrine. I went back and re-read it. It says nothing about Homer Hailey, offers no assessment or rebuke of his false doctrine, and does not address whether we can fellowship him and others who teach such error; it is an article with a positive presentation of what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage. In addition to this, one must put into this background that the very men who hammered us for replying to Homer Hailey also said they agreed with us on divorce and remarriage. No one has condemned Ed Harrell, Dee Bowman, Paul Earnhart, Sewell Hall, or Brent Lewis for teaching false doctrine on divorce and remarriage. What we have disagreed about is whether one could have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach what brother Hailey (and others) taught on divorce and remarriage. Sermons and articles on divorce and remarriage do not address the fellowship issue.

We are happy to have brother Adams tell us plainly where he stands on the various issues and I have no disagreement with these plain statements. We simply encourage him to preach these things plainly across America whenever he has opportunity. As he said about “unity-in-diversity,” “we need to define terms carefully.” One could say, “unity-in-diversity” is “always” a danger. But if he continues working hand in glove with those who affirm that Christians can have an ongoing fellowship with those who teach loose doctrines on divorce and remarriage or the non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1, one may think that he did not really think “unity-in-diversity” is “always” a danger.

As to three mindsets, I would like to ask some questions. I recognize two of these mindsets: (a) Mindset one is the mindset presented in the pages of *Truth Magazine*. It says that false doctrines on divorce and remarriage and the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 are matters of fellowship; (b) Mindset two is that espoused by *Christianity Magazine*. The seventeen article series by brother Harrell argued that what one teaches on divorce and remarriage should not interfere with fellowship. Hence, one could teach what brother Hailey taught on divorce and remarriage and remain in the fellowship of God’s saints. I see this

“For Our Children’s Future . . . Buy Recycled Today”

I must confess, I did not originate the above title of this article. I saw it on the grocery bag of a local supermarket chain the other day. It was accompanied by a drawing of several cute, smiling children, one that would tug at anyone’s heart strings.

Somehow I was not completely convinced by the slogan. Don’t get me wrong. I understand that God requires us to be good stewards, whether of the planet or of our money (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; Luke 16:10-12), and I set out my recyclables for pick-up every Tuesday. I’m just not persuaded that our children’s future depends on recycling.

So I decided to come up with some other slogans. Maybe one of these might find its way onto a grocery bag one day. What do you think of this one, “For Your Children’s Future, Be At Church Services This Sunday.” Then I thought about the Lord’s commendation of Abraham as a parent in Genesis 18:19 and came up with this slogan, “For Your Children’s Future, Command Them To Keep the Way of the Lord.”

mindset displayed when men who teach false doctrines on divorce and remarriage are invited to speak at the lectures of Florida College. I see this mindset when Florida College has one serve as a faculty member who takes a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1. This is mindset two. But I need help identifying what brother Adams intends by *mindset three*. Who exemplifies mindset three? Are brother Harrell, brother Bowman, brother Earnhart, etc. in mindset two or three? If they are mindset two, how could he work hand in glove with those with that mindset? If they are mindset two who is mindset three? Is mindset three a middle of the road position? If so what is the middle of these two positions? Is it a limited, partial fellowship with those who teach false doctrines on these subjects? Just what is it? Clarification is needed!

So you say these slogans will never make it? I think you are probably right. And why will they not go over? May I suggest that Satan has again succeeded in diverting our attention from the spiritual to the material. We have been distracted from the one thing that is *needful* (Luke 10:42), to that which is merely good, yet fleeting.

What is alarming is that many professed Christians will display more enthusiasm for recycling than they will for the rearing of their children. More folks will volunteer for a beach clean-up project than will invest an hour a day to teach their children a Bible story. Instead of instilling in their children a respect for others, an appreciation for hard work, courtesy, self-discipline, morals, and such like, these parents scramble to make sure their kids are involved in the latest conservation project. And all the while, they soothe their consciences with the thought, “We’re doing it for the children.”

There is an air of conceit in the idea that the destiny of the planet is in our hands, either by recycling or any other enterprise. The earth is in the hands of Him who not only created it, but who also sustains it (Heb 1:2-3; Col. 1:16-17). And eventually, heaven and earth will pass away. The Lord’s words will abide however (Matt. 24:35), and these are what will provide a solid future for our children!

There is also a hint of worshiping the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). But what do we expect from a society that refuses to acknowledge God, while making man the measure of all things. And even if we were to save the whole planet for our children, and yet they end up losing their souls, what would we have gained (Matt. 16:26)?

Brethren and friends, recycle if you want to be a good steward of material things. But if you want to really do something *for the future of your children*, “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

A Tribute

It is common to compose eulogies upon the death of a person, but why not give him his “flowers” while he lives? It is proper and right to let him know of our appreciation for him and recognition of his labors; after he is gone it is too late to think of doing so.

Our brother in Christ, L. Levoy Free, now in his 84th year of life, is one of the elders of the Bellaire congregation in Houston, Texas. I first met him in 1968, and since then until 1988 I had been supported financially, either in part or totally, by that congregation. This gave me a very close association with my beloved brethren there, including brother Free.

For a number of years several different congregations had been paying the cost of publishing and mailing my commentaries, and other Bible-related works, in Spanish, in a give-away program of getting Bible helps to our Spanish-speaking brethren throughout Latin-America and Spain, and wherever else Hispanics are found residing (U.S.A., Switzerland, Canada, Australia, etc.) Beginning in 1991, brother Free bought a printing press and other equipment and took charge of the complete operation of buying the supplies, printing the materials, and mailing them. He used his shop that for years had been his place of secular business. All the work of collating, stapling, packaging, and delivery to the Post Office for mailing, was done by him (with occasional help from one or two others). All of the expenses of equipment, materials, and postage have been borne by him (with few exceptions)! Some six years ago, he had to sell his business location; so, he built a print shop in his backyard and continued his work without interruption. He has worn out one printing press and several computers, replacing equipment as needed. To date he still works daily at the task. Last year he had an eye-operation, and since then has not been able to drive, but still he works at the computer, using large enough fonts to see his work!

In our day and time of self-centeredness and materialism, it is refreshing to know about a Christian such as our brother Free. He is very quiet and unassuming, a

hard-working and kind person. Generosity characterizes him. Occasionally a few others have made donations to the ever-rising expenses of materials (paper, etc.) and of postage, but mainly the load is borne by him alone. I am embarrassed to send orders to him (virtually, every day), because I know that each one will be expensive to mail. (Hispanic brethren write and e-mail me their requests for literature, and I forward these orders, along with the mailing addresses, to him, and he takes care of the rest!). One package alone, containing one copy of each of my works, currently costs \$95.00 (Air Parcel Post) to mail to a foreign country! The responsibility of the financial burden of the entire project is borne by one man. Lately he has averaged \$500 a month for postage alone.

Every day by e-mail and by regular mail I receive requests for materials and acknowledgments of receipt of mailings sent. (Even some of the Preacher-Training-Schools of our institutional brethren have requested my commentaries and other works!) Since most of the Spanish-speaking congregations do not have full-time preachers, the men themselves in the different congregations do the preaching and teaching, and they use my writings (and those of brother Wayne Partain) for help. I constantly receive letters expressing great gratitude for the works and for brother Free’s great contribution to it

May his tribe increase, although our present culture does not lend itself to such a genre of men. May the good Lord in his beautiful Kingdom richly bless the likes of brother Free. Let us imitate that which is good (3 John 11), and follow good examples (Phil. 3:17; Heb. 6:12; 13:), considering the issue of their lives (Heb. 13:7). Let us lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20).

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Free’s wife, Dorothy, died of cancer. He himself is battling cancer. May many prayers go to the Father to comfort and support him.

(Note: After the completion of the above article, brother

They “Supposed” He Was With Them

I “suppose” every one is familiar with the story of how Joseph and Mary lost Jesus when he was twelve years old. “As they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey” (Luke 2:43, 44). They sincerely “supposed” that Jesus was with them, but he was not.



When they discovered their error, they searched for him among family members and acquaintances. “And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him” (Luke 2:45).

Unfortunately, the same thing is true of many today. They “suppose” that Jesus is personally and spiritually with them, that he is in their midst as they work and worship. Speaking of those who “suppose” they are faithfully following in the fellowship of the Father, Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; *but he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23).

When they could not find Jesus, Joseph and Mary “turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him” (Luke 2:46). The same thing must be done by the “many” who call unto him, “Lord, Lord,” but who do not the things which he commands (cf. Matt. 28:20; Luke 6:46). They must turn “back again to Jerusalem.” Mary and Joseph would not have found Jesus had they gone to Rome, nor would they have found him if they had gone to a temple in Salt Lake City, Utah, for then, as now, he was not to be found there. He was in Jerusalem.

As the prophets had said, “the word of the Lord” went forth “from Jerusalem,” *not* from Rome, nor from the golden plates of man’s imagination (Isa. 2:2, 3; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4). If men are to find Jesus today, they, too, must go “back to Jerusalem.” That is, they must turn back to the gospel which began to be preached there and which was “confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb. 2:3). Jesus now “speaketh from heaven” and reigns at the right hand of God in “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22-25). He cannot be found in Luther’s Germany. He cannot be heard in the creeds of Catholicism, or in the pretensions of Protestantism.

Rather, his vibrant voice resounds and reverberates through the ages on the pages of the New Testament (Luke 10:16; John 13:20; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15). In them, therefore, is “Jerusalem,” in them is where the lost Christ may be found.

The Jerusalem that is above echoes the revelation of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 1:16, 17; 8:2; 16:17). It knows nothing of the harps and smoking lanterns of traditional ritualism, nor does it recognize the contemporary fads and fantasies of arm-waving emotionalism and swaying, sensual romanticism which poses as “worship” in modern churches. Many pretend a public, pious humility while covering their covetousness with the nonchalance of “come as you are” worldliness. All such things are an outward, fleshly show, a sham and a shame (Col. 2:18-23; cf. Phil. 3:16-19).

Have you been “supposing” that Jesus is in your “company” or church? Since the New Testament never places Jesus in the robes of Rome nor in catechisms of Catholicism, why seek him there? Since the word of God never puts Jesus in the confusion and contradiction of the creeds and confessions of Protestantism, why seek ye the living Lord among the dead deeds, doctrines, and declarations of men (Matt. 15:8, 9)? Why not turn back to the heavenly Jerusalem of the New Testament and find and obey Jesus

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“Final Prophet” continued from front page

who submit to him. Jesus said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20). Upon our immersion in water by his authority, he freely pardons our sins and adds us to the church of Christ, which is his spiritual body or kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2; Eph. 1:21-22; 5:5).

Based on the evidence and certain identity of Jesus Christ, Peter preached him as God’s final prophet and Savior of the world: “God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3).

MOHAMMED, ANOTHER PROPHET?

Ubu’l Kassim (A.D. 570-632) was born in Arabia. He claimed visions of an angel as the basis of his new name Mohammed (“highly praised”) and as the medium of new revelations given to him orally (he was illiterate). His sayings were collected after his death and written as the Qur’an or Koran (reading, recitation). Mohammed called his new religion “Islam” (“to submit,” i.e., to God) and followers Muslim (“one who submits”).

The key pillar of this new religion is the confession, “There is no God but Allah; Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah.” Other pillars include ritual prayers in Arabic, fasting during daylight hours of Ramadan, alms, pilgrimage to Mecca, and males answering the call to Holy War against non-Muslims.

Mohammed led his followers in spreading their religion with the sword, raiding caravans and waging war until Mecca surrendered to him in 630. Following the example of Islam’s founder and the instruction of the Qur’an, Muslims spread their religion by both persuasion and force westward into Europe and southward into Africa, until stopped at the Battle of Tours in France in 732. Likewise, Islam spread eastward into southern Asia and on to the islands of the southwest Pacific Ocean. As their expansion continues throughout the world, some Muslims still follow the original ideas exemplified by their founder and the Qur’an in utilizing the weapons of war.

Surah IX, a section of the Qur’an on “Repentance” or “Immunity,” discusses wars against idolaters, including instruction to “slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush” unless they repent. “Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture [Bible],” such as “the Jews” and “the Christians,” “until they pay the tribute.” “Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Al-

lah!” Only “the weak” and “the sick” are excused from the campaign, with those who stay home to gain “knowledge in religion,” but other believers “give their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain.”

In Islam man must work and earn his way to heaven. There is no concept of a perfect sacrifice or atonement for sin as the basis for forgiveness, reflecting God’s justice and mercy. The Muslim must believe in Allah, do good works, and pray for pardon — assured to those who make a pilgrimage to Mecca or die in a Holy War.

SHARP CONTRAST

Jesus Christ was born of Abraham through Isaac by promise, Mohammed through the rejected son Ishmael. All the promises and prophecies of a Savior revealed in Scripture were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. None was spoken of Mohammed. The claims of Christ were confirmed by his miracles, Mohammed claimed no miracles. Christ promised a complete revelation of “all truth” through his Apostles in the first century, and they warned against pretended revelations by angels (John 16:13; Gal. 1:8). Mohammed claimed additional revelations by an angel. Christ promised to die as the perfect sacrifice “for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). Mohammed denied the atoning death of Christ but offered no alternative basis of pardon.

The original example and teaching of Christ authorized making disciples by means of evidence and moral persuasion, but forbade the use of the sword (Matt. 26:52; John 18:36). Professed followers who have used the sword have disobeyed his explicit command. Muslims who have used force to advance Islam have followed their founder’s example and explicit command. God sent his Son into the world to save men, Mohammed sent his followers to slay men. Professed Christians who use force depart from Christ’s original teaching, professed Muslims who repudiate it depart from Mohammed’s original teaching.

EVIDENCE IDENTIFIES

In a free market of ideas, each person is free to pursue the truth in love, with malice toward none. By giving an abundance of evidence, God made the identity of the final prophet and Savior very clear because he seeks the salvation of all men. Jesus Christ is the Prophet of Salvation to Jew and Gentile, to Arabians, Africans, Asians, and Americans. The voice of God echoes through the centuries, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).

(Postscript: Because of the Muslim terrorists attacks on the U.S. September 11, 2001, there is an upsurge of interest among our citizens in understanding the Muslim religion. On the first anniversary of these attacks, our nation recalled the tragedy we shared and struggled again to understand what role Islam played in the events of that

infamous day.

Knowing these matters are on the minds of people everywhere, the elders of the Hebron Lane Church of Christ in Shepherdsville, Kentucky decided to publish this article in the newspaper in an effort to educate people to some of the differences between the gospel of Christ and the religion of Islam. This article appeared in *The* (Louisville, KY) *Courier-Journal*, September 14, 2002 on page B-3. The article is being submitted to *Truth Magazine* immediately, therefore we have not yet been able to gage the reactions to it, but already we know our own members are distributing copies and other congregations are reproducing it.

We should thank God for sparing our nation, and pray that his patience will be extended further so that we can press forward in preaching the gospel of Christ. Both our political and religious leaders are urging us to view Islam as a religion of peace and to embrace it in the pantheon of tolerance, multi-culturalism, and unity-in-diversity. Let us not be ashamed to proclaim that God sent one Savior into the world, and his name is Jesus Christ, not Mohammed.

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“Spiritual Strength” continued from page 2

claimed. Following the Jerusalem council, Judas and Silas assembled with the congregation at Antioch, encouraging and strengthening the brethren with a *lengthy* message (Acts 15:30-32).

Paul longed to see the saints in Rome, in order that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end that they might be established (Rom. 1:11-12). How is faith established? By preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, by affirming the commandments of the eternal God, leading to the obedience of faith among all nations (Rom. 1:16-17; 16:25-27).

In like manner, Peter sought to remind his readers of eternal veracities, even though they already knew them. Why such emphasis on repetition and remembrance? So that they might be established in the present truth (2 Pet. 1:12-15). Ignorance is a threat to one’s spiritual stability; therefore, knowledge growth is an imperative (2 Pet. 3:15-18).

What lessons remain for us? Let us not complain when faithful evangelists, pastors, and teachers present a lengthy message. Christianity-lite will not suffice. “Sermonettes” by “preacherettes” can produce nothing more than “Christianettes.” Therefore, protest not against those who faith-

fully proclaim the word of God. Rather, esteem those who accentuate Holy Scripture above human sophistry. Though many turn away from the truth unto fables, committed evangelists will preach the word, and faithful congregations will accept nothing less (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

ROOTED IN PRACTICE

Spiritual strength is an outgrowth of consistent practice. Expressing his deep longing for the Thessalonian disciples, Paul prayed that their hearts might be established without blame in holiness (1 Thess. 3:11-13). In his second epistle, the apostle wished that they might be strengthened in every good work and word (2 Thess. 2:16-17). “Wake up and strengthen the things that remain!” said Christ to the church in Sardis: repentance and restoration were required (Rev. 3:1-3).

What lessons remain for us? Be not merely a hearer of the word, but a doer of the work (Jas. 1:23-25)! Sanctification and service are demanded. Faith must be living and active. Practice proves one’s profession. The truth must be lived from day to day.

ROOTED IN PATIENCE

Spiritual strength is produced by the staying power of patience. Returning to the interior cities of Asia Minor, Paul strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to remain faithful, saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:21-22). Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica to strengthen and steel God’s people against afflictions that were certain to come (1 Thess. 3:1-3). Persecution, affliction, and suffering call for the fullest measure of patience (Jas. 5:7-11).

What lessons remain for us? Dangers abound. Satan, our adversary, stalks for prey. Saints should be sober-minded and constantly alert. Despite the prospect of suffering, evil must be resisted. Therefore, let us act with firmness of faith and unwavering resolve (1 Pet. 5:8-10).

ROOTED IN PROVIDENCE

Spiritual strength is also protected by divine providence, assuming that we fulfill our obligations. God has granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness; however, it is imperative that we add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:2-11). God, in his faithfulness, will strengthen and protect his children from the evil one (2 Thess. 3:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:9). However, deliverance from temptation can be realized only if we willingly look for the way of escape that God has provided (Matt. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:13).

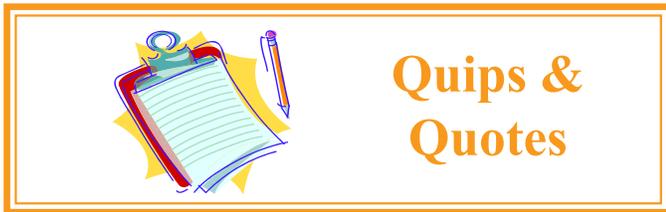
What lessons remain for us? Trust in God and obey his will. Remember the words of that old gospel song, “Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of

you.” Jehovah spoke through the prophet Isaiah, saying, “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God” (Isa. 41:10). Shrink not in the face of opposition. If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31-39).

CONCLUSION

From a biblical standpoint, spiritual growth is imperative (1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:18). In the New Testament era, “the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied” (Acts 12:24). The seed — God’s word — still has potency. “Therefore, by speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Such growth is possible only when we are firmly grounded in the truth, willingly obey its precepts, patiently endure suffering for the cause of Christ, and trust in God’s promises. May the Lord bless us toward this end.

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Vatican Official Writes Gays Should Not Be Priests

Rome — A staff member of an influential Vatican office has published an article arguing that gays should not be ordained as priests.

“If a man is gay, then he should not be admitted to holy orders, and his presence in the seminary would not only give him false hope but it may, in fact, hinder the therapy he needs, Monsignor Andrew Baker of the Congregation of Bishops wrote.

“Reached by phone in Rome, Baker would not say whether his superiors approved the article.

“Baker wrote that homosexuals would have difficulty remaining celibate in the all-male seminary environment and would struggle with church teachings on homosexuality” (The Indianapolis Star [September 20, 2002], A18).

Alcohol Ads Target Kids, Study Finds

Washington — America’s youths saw far more alcoholic beverage ads in magazines in 2001 than did adults, according to a study released Tuesday.

“Magazine advertising for beer and alcohol reached people ages 12 to 20 more effectively than it reached adults, the Center

on Alcohol Marketing and Youth found.

“One of the most important findings, said Jim O’Hara, the Georgetown University center’s executive director, was that marketers of beer delivered 45 percent more advertising to youths than to adults in magazines in 2001, and 27 percent more for distilled spirits brands. Wine advertising reached youths 50 percent less.

“A September 1999 Federal Trade Commission report on the alcohol industry’s advertising and marketing practices urged it to raise the standards to reduce underage alcohol ad exposure” (The Indianapolis Star [September 25, 2002], A4).

Sex Declining Among High School Students, Federal Study Says

Washington — Sexual intercourse among high school students has dropped significantly in the past decade, a federal health survey reported Thursday.

“The number of teens who remained virgins rose 16 percent in the past decade. In 2001, virgins outnumbered those who say they have had intercourse 54 percent to 46 percent. In 1991, the ratio was just the opposite.

“The number of students who have had at least four sex partners dropped 24 percent, according to studies just released by the U.S. Centers for Disease control and Prevention. In 2001, only 1 in 7 teens — or 14 percent — had had at least four sex partners, down from 19 percent in 1991” (The Indianapolis Star [September 27, 2002], A4).

School District to Allow Teaching of Creationism

Marietta, GA — The board of Georgia’s second-largest school district voted Thursday night to give teachers permission to introduce students to varying views about the origin of life, including creationism.

“The proposal, approved unanimously by the Cobb County school board, says the district believes ‘discussion of disputed views of academic subjects is a necessary element of providing a balanced education, including the study of the origin of species.’

“Opponents said it was a backdoor way to bring religion into the classroom.

“In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled creationism was a religious belief that could not be taught in public schools along with evolution” (The Indianapolis Star [September 27, 2002], A4).

Is Christianity a Religion of Peace?

“According to the Saudis, Wahhabist Islam isn’t the world’s major religious threat. ‘Christian fundamentalism is no less dangerous to international peace and security than extremists

in other religions; the national al-Watan newspaper ridiculously claimed in August. 'Rather it is more dangerous, especially if it controls the policy of the United States.' The Saudi Gazette chimed in: 'The Christian fundamentalists are encouraging American militants to raise a dust of hatred about Saudi Arabia.' Saudi Arabia was doing a pretty good job of raising that dust on its own. After all, Osama bin Laden is from the kingdom, as were 15 of the September 11 hijackers. The Saudi royal family funds the madrassas where extreme and violent forms of Islam are taught, and bankrolled part of the Al Qaeda terror network. This isn't the first time Christians have been the Saudis' scapegoat. Officials regularly round up believers, especially those from Ethiopia and Eritrea, beat them, and deport them — all without bring a single charge (CT, July 8, 2002, p. 34). Conversion to Christianity remains a capital offense" (Christianity Today [October 7, 2002], 14).

Abstinence-only In Trouble

"A federal judge has ordered the state of Louisiana to stop promoting religion through an abstinence-only sex education program. Louisiana officials dispute the judge's ruling and will appeal.

"The Governor's Program on Abstinence has received \$1.6 million annually in abstinence-only grants under the 1996 federal Welfare Reform Act. Earlier this year, the house reauthorized the act, which provides \$50 million annually to abstinence programs. The Senate may take it up before 2003. The Governor's Program on Abstinence reaches middle school and high school students across the state through classroom lectures and after-school clubs (CT, July 8, p. 14).

"Until July 1, the program also provided money to religious groups to promote abstinence. Such funding is constitutional as long as the groups do not use government funds to promote religious doctrine" (Christianity Today [October 7, 2002], 16).

Muslim Class Prayer

"A legal battle has erupted over a California school district's decision to teach seventh graders about Islam and Muslim religious practices. Critics claim that a world history class encourages public school students to intone Islamic prayers, take Islamic names, and use a dice game to simulate a jihad.

"The Thomas More Law Center of Ann Arbor, Michigan, filed a lawsuit in U.S. Federal District Court in San Francisco on June 25. The center asked the court to declare the Byron Union School District's use of the Islam simulation materials as an illegal establishment of religion" (Christianity Today [October 7, 2002], 17).

Preachers Needed

Englewood, Ohio: The Englewood Church of Christ is seeking to hire a full-time preacher. Their average Sunday morning attendance consists of about eighty souls. Approximately \$1500.00 per month is available for support of a local preacher. The church will assist the preacher in locating additional support if needed. Interested preachers should contact James Pickard (4781 Rushwood Circle, Englewood, OH 45322, 937-836-8711) or William Matthews (6870 S. Jay Rd., West Milton, OH 45383, 937-698-3760). The church building is located at 1130 S. Union Boulevard, Englewood, OH 45322.

Center, Texas: The Northside church in Center, Texas is in need of a full-time preacher. Center is a thriving little town of about 6000 located in the rolling hills of East Texas. They are small in number, but have a nice debt-free building. They can provide \$1000 monthly in support. This is an ideal situation for an older man with retirement income or one who already has some outside support. Please send resume to: Northside Church of Christ, P.O. Box 602, Center, TX or phone Allen Pennick at 936-598-5221 or Cecil Jones at 936-598-8323.

Early Christians Speak

by Everett Ferguson

A scholarly but readable study of the develop-

ment of early Christian faith and practice as evidenced by selected sources from Christian and non-Christian writers of the first, second, and third centuries. #10082

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