

SEARCHING *The* SCRIPTURES

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



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

—Acts 17:11

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RELIGIOUS TURNCOATS

H. E. Phillips

During the wars of this century, especially since World War II, the term "turncoat" has frequently been used to describe those who have forsaken their country and turned to aid the enemy. Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary defines **Turncoat** as: "One who forsakes his party or principles; a renegade." Some really do not have "principles" in the true sense of the word, but those who do have them should hold these principles above all until and unless they are proven wrong. We have "turncoats" in the church by the thousands. In time of war this country disowns those who forsake this country and turn to the enemy, but in the spiritual war with Satan those who forsake the Lord and turn to aid the enemy are very lightly dealt with by the church in many sections. It has almost become a thing of the past to hear of someone being disciplined by the church for any reason. This is a fact to our shame.

In every congregation there are those who wait to see which way the popular swing will be in every debatable question and then, without principles or conviction, they align themselves with that side. They willingly switch sides when they find that they unwittingly selected the unpopular position. There is nothing wrong with changing when one learns he is wrong; in fact, it is the only honorable and honest thing to do. But to forsake one's principles just to be on the popular side of a question is hardly the honorable thing to do.

The word of God speaks clearly on the matter of forsaking one's position with Christ to become aligned with the enemy of the King, whatever the reason may be. We are speaking of those in the church who turn from the Lord to serve Satan. When Joshua was about ready to lead the people of Israel into the promised land, he told them that "if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Ammorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15). To this the people answered: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." (verse 16). These people were given the choice of serving the Lord God or the idols around them. They selected to serve the Lord, but the recorded history of this people proves beyond question that this was a promise of the mouth only and not of the heart.

Joshua further told the Israelites, "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good." (Joshua 24:20). A "turncoat" among the Israelites (one who forsakes the Lord) would receive punishment from the Lord.

Peter speaks of the false prophets and those that "walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" as "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have **forsaken the right way**, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." (2 Pet. 2:10, 14, 15). These had "forsaken the right way", which indicates that they once were in the right way. They were religious "turncoats." They had forsaken the principles that motivated them in service to the Lord.

Paul speaks of one who had "forsaken" him. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. . ." (2 Tim. 4:10). When Paul wrote to Philemon Demas was one of his "fellow-labourers" (verse 24). Demas had forsaken Paul because he had forsaken the way of truth which Paul preached. He did this because he loved this present world instead of the kingdom of Christ.

James says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4). There is no question about where one stands when he loves this present evil world. He is the enemy of God. Paul teaches that we are to walk by the same rule and mind the same thing and to "be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. . ." (Phil. 3:16-18).

All these passages point to three facts: (1) To turn from the Lord is to become His enemy. (2) To forsake the Lord brings the "wages of unrighteousness." (3) One forsakes the Lord by turning from the "right way"—the way of truth—and becoming a servant of unrighteousness.

Today many religious leaders make it easy for those in the church to become religious **turncoats**. They willingly or ignorantly teach false doctrines that encourage worldly practices. For example: Some now teach and practice ungodly and anti-scriptural principles regarding divorce and remarriage. Some have become the enemy of God by turning from the principles governing marriage in the New Testament and accepting the idea that "aliens" can marry and divorce as many times as

they please and then be baptized and get annulment of all previous marriages to live with the woman they last selected to be their "wife." This is NOT taught on a single page of the New Testament. Such teaching turns people from the divine principles and makes them religious **turncoats**.

Some approve social drinking of alcohol beverages and thereby encourage a drunken society of religionists. "Whiskey-heads" and "beer-bellies" have no place in the kingdom of God, and the only way to keep such out is to stand firm upon the divine principles of God's word that deals sharply with such conduct. The social drinker is a religious **turncoat**—he has forsaken the "right way" and adopted the ways of the world—the enemy of God.

Whence came the idea of mild slander, little white lies, deceitful conversation among members of the church? It did not come from sound doctrine, you can be sure of that. It came by the approval of preachers, elders, teachers, Christians (?) in that they silently consent to the practice by not speaking against it and using such discipline as is necessary to keep it out of the church. Every teacher or practitioner of "evil communication" out of the mouth is a religious "turncoat." They have forsaken the principles of truth and have become the enemies of God.

We also have the universal problem of indifference among members of the church. Of course, this is of Satan and not the Lord. All indifference or coldness is the product of ignorance and the lack of real conviction. The Laodiceans were sickening to the Lord because of their "lukewarmness" toward their spiritual responsibilities. They were told to repent. God will not tolerate such attitudes, and the church cannot afford to be guilty of coddling and tolerating such today. The church at Ephesus was industrious, but they had left their first love. This condition could not continue; they had to repent or have the candlestick removed. It is as true today as it was then.

Emotionalism and sentimentalism are supplanting the facts of the gospel in many congregations of the Lord's people today. Much more time and effort is spent in telling some emotional tale of human sentiment than in rebuking sin and admonishing to be faithful to the Lord. If you want to have the anathema of important men upon you, just speak out against the modern philosophy of preaching among the notable in the church today. Go easy, speak softly, do not rebuke or condemn, compliment and natter the church, do not call names, speak in glowing terms of the accomplishment and greatness of the church, but do not expose weakness and lack of faithfulness. This is the modern day philosophy of gospel preaching. One has but to glance at the New Testament to be convinced that this sort of deceptive handling of the word of God breeds religious **turncoats** and never produces faithful workers in the service of God.

Turncoats in the church today are on the increase because of the worldly ambitions and practices within the church. We cannot blame the world for the condition of the church because such evil was present when in the fullness of time God brought into existence the kingdom spoken of by the prophets. The church IS the "called out" from the world into Christ. We have been delivered from the powers of

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darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13). Now why should we blame the powers from which we have been delivered for the increase of **turncoats** in the church today? The real reason is that many "in the church" have never been converted to Christ; they have never been convicted of sin in their own lives; they have never really accepted the authority of Jesus Christ as taught in the New Testament. These denominationalists in the church are religious **turncoats** and the real cause of so many "going after other gods."

This is not a light matter; it is a real problem. We need to be strong in the Lord and in the word of his power. We must oppose sin in every form and in every place. We must insist upon complete obedience to Jesus Christ the Son of God. If not, we are becoming a nation of religious **turncoats**.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Harris J. Dark

FLESHLY INTERESTS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Now let's turn to some Bible quotations which I think furnish a great deal of light upon what we're talking about. You remember the story of the feeding of the five thousand. You find it first in Matthew 14:15-16:

"And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat."

I want you to notice that the occasion of their eating together here was the fact that they had gone all day without food. This part is made still more vivid in connection with the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15:32:

"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

Notice that he fed them because they had been three days without food and "lest they faint in the way." Turning to the book of John, chapter 6, we have another account of his feeding the five thousand and, some incidents that grew out of it. You remember that after it was over he retired to the mountain. During the night he crossed the sea, and the next morning when the multitude found that he had gone across, they also found boats and followed him to the other side of the sea. I want you to notice Jesus' comment on their doing so. He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." (John 6:26.) A great deal depends upon one's motive in doing something. Two people might perform the same act, but with different motives, one doing right, the other doing wrong. The wise men and Herod were all seeking Jesus, the wise men to worship him, Herod to destroy him. That shows how much difference a motive can make. Jesus said the multitude didn't follow him for spiritual good, not because they had seen the miracles, but because they were fed on the fishes and the loaves and were filled. Then he said:

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John 6:27.)

I don't know of any better way to state the truth about this social gospel than Jesus put it right here. The preacher that I quoted said, "We are interested in human life and destiny on earth." Jesus said, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, (you see one is just as far above the other as heaven is above the earth) which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

I want you to notice how they kept trying to bring him back to fishes and loaves:

"Then they said unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." (John 6:28-31.)

Wasn't that a good strong hint to feed them again? But Jesus wouldn't do it.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and

he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:32-35.)

So you see it was not so much a question of whether they eat or didn't eat as it was a question of why they were following him. And, friends, that is applicable today. It's not so much a question of whether we eat or don't eat, but what are our purposes in life? What are we seeking to accomplish? Whom are we following? It's not so much a question of whether we eat within these four walls or don't eat within these four walls, as it is a question of why we come here in the first place. If someone is working on the premises all day and eats his lunch here at noon or I come to the office to work all day and bring a sandwich to eat when I get hungry, that's one thing. But to consider that eating together is the primary purpose of the religion of Jesus Christ, or most especially, the only purpose, is an entirely different matter.

Following these words which I've just read, almost the remainder of this entire chapter, down to verse 65, Jesus talked to the people about the bread of life and the water of life. He refused to appeal to their desire for fishes and loaves or to their worldly interests and instead talked to them about the bread of life and the water of life. Notice the consequences:

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? (Implying that only the twelve were left) Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:66-68.)

They could have turned to somebody else for fishes and loaves, and most of the crowd did. But to whom else could they go for the hope of a home in heaven? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Now, there are plenty of places you can go for amusement, recreation, and food for the body. But there's only one place you can go to find the salvation of your soul, and that is unto Jesus Christ.

Has it occurred to you that Jesus could have removed all poverty from this earth by just a single word or the stroke of his hand if that had been his purpose in coming to this earth? But that was not his purpose. Certainly we are interested, and must be interested, in helping the poor. That's a part of our following God, and not just an end within itself. And we help the poor in the name of Christ, because he commanded it, and not because merely helping the poor is a religion within itself. Jesus could have spoken all poverty out of existence. But rather he said that he had come to seek and to save those who were lost. (Luke 19:10.)

To cite one other Bible example, you remember the man who came to Jesus and said, "Speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." Now, there Jesus might have set up a program of social work—some means of settling disputes about inheritances, some sort of a counselling program to improve human relations. But instead he said, "Man, who made me a divider among you?" That wasn't his purpose on this earth. But rather he said, "Beware of covetousness. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

Jesus really summed it all up when he said in John 18:36:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

His kingdom is spiritual, not material.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

What does all this mean, now, for the Lord's church? First, let me remind you that these preachers from and about whom I read quotations didn't get that way in a day. They became infidels over a period of years, by a process of drifting away from that which is true. It could happen to us. It has happened to some who were among us. So we have to be on guard against the treachery of a gradual departure, so gradual that it's hardly discernible at any one instant. But over a long period, it leads to the very thing that we have brought to your attention this morning.

Second, it means that we had better be very careful lest we adopt the social gospel program, or a part of it, without being aware of its source and its implications which, I suppose, would be a case of the blind leading the blind. We hear of the denominational churches around us practicing the social gospel. One group just a few miles from here meet and eat dinner together every Wednesday night. By bringing the people together to eat before the hour of worship, I suppose they hope to increase attendance. Jesus could have had a Bible class of several thousand if he had given them another fish dinner. But he refused to do it.

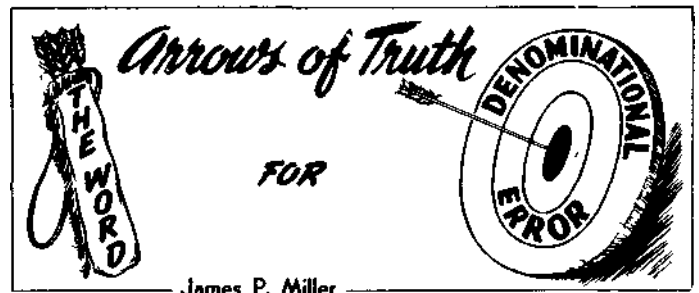
We hear of churches serving coffee and doughnuts between the Bible school hour and the worship hour, building recreational rooms equipped with ping-pong tables, fireplaces, and such like for the young people to meet and roast wieners, and so on. We hear of such being done all around us. It sounds pretty good on the surface. Certainly we ought to be interested in helping the young people. But how many realize the source of that sort of thing? It really stems from people who have denied Christ and don't have anything else to do—no other means of appealing, no other means of accomplishing a better society in this world, to say nothing of a home in heaven at last.

Next, we must be very careful lest we unwittingly set the wrong example by encouraging the social gospel. You notice I said "unwittingly." Unless we are aware of the implications, of the background, of the source of the movement, of its character and the character of the persons promoting it, we may find ourselves doing things that will encourage it without being aware of doing so. We permit ourselves to be misunderstood. Our actions and motives will be interpreted by the world about us in the light of the denominational concept of these matters which we are studying.

There might be some things we could do as a group, on these premises and in this building, which within themselves might not be wrong. But if they would be interpreted by the people on the outside to mean that we subscribed to the principles of the

social gospel, that would be reason enough for leaving those things off. I'm sure you get the significance of this.

This is my message on the social gospel to the best of my ability to present it. In its worst form, in its most matured state, it's a gospel of this world only—ignoring the eternal, the infinite, the divine, the world to come. In its most matured form, it's a Godless gospel. It's a gospel without Christ. It's a gospel without a hell to shun, and without a heaven to gain. Its greatest danger for us is in its modified form with its misplaced emphasis—the danger of our accepting parts of it without realizing the significance thereof. I hope these remarks will help to prepare us to avoid that danger.



A century ago the battle over instrumental music was fought in many fields, but in none with greater furor than on the field of expediency. In our time after one hundred years have passed we are still crossing swords over another issue but on the same field of battle. Institutional warriors miss the same point in the same way. For anything to be expedient it must first be lawful, and for it to be lawful it must be authorized. In looking over some of the notes I have used in debating the music question I came across these that were made on expediency. The men who favored the organ had the same attitude in regard to the scripture and their brethren that the liberals have today. The result of such an attitude needs no comment from me.

1. Hear **Hall L. Calhoun**, formerly with the Christian Church and President of Bethany College:

"It will be admitted that the New Testament nowhere mentions the use of an instrument in connection with the singing in the church. This fact settles, beyond all dispute, that the use of an instrument in connection with the singing in the church cannot be an act of acceptable worship, for it fails to fulfill one of the essential conditions of an act of worship . . . Hence, the only possible ground upon which anyone can seek to justify the use of an instrument in connection with the singing in the church is that of convenience, and not worship." (Calhoun-Kurfees Discussion, pp 10,11)

2. Hear Dr. L. L. **Pinkerton**, who was the first preacher in the state of Kentucky to publicly advocate the use of instrumental music in the churches:

"By what law of man or of God, written or unwritten, what law of gentlemanly civility, is one man authorized to denounce another as without the spirit of Christ, an ape, carnal, without devotion, etc., on account of a difference of opinion as to what is expedient in a community of which the denounced

is a part—of which the denouncer knows nothing?" (Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, p410-411)

REPLY:

1. In order to be expedient, a thing first must be lawful (I Cor. 6:12, 10:23).

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." (I Cor. 6:12,13)

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." (I Cor. 10:23)

2. From these passages it follows that in order to be expedient a thing must first:

- (a) Come within the realm of that which is **lawful**
- (b) Must **edify, build up, instruct, improve**
- (c) Must not be a cause of **destruction** to others.

3. Instrumental music meets none of the requirements of an expedient:

- (a) It is not lawful for the teaching of Christ nowhere authorizes it.
- (b) It is not profitable for edification, neither does it improve the worship.
- (c) It is destructive of the simplicity of worship, the plea for adherence to the scriptural, and the ground of Christian unity.

4. Nothing can be called an expedient that sacrifices a greater for a lesser good. (Whateley's Logic).

5. **Dr. Robert Richardson**, The distinguished author of the "Memoirs of A. Campbell," was made a member of the first faculty of Bethany College in 1841 and was a man of superior scholarship and ability. On the matter of maintaining the purity of the primitive faith and worship, he was out spoken as will be seen from the following extract from his writings:

"As it regards the use of musical instruments in church worship, the case is wholly different. This can never be a question of expediency, for the simple reason that there is no law prescribing or authorizing it. If it were anywhere said in the New Testament that Christians should use instruments, then it would become a question of expediency what kind of an instrument was to be used, whether an organ or a melodean, the "loud-sounding cymbals," or the "light-Guitar"; whether it should cost \$50 or \$500 or \$1,000; and what circumstances should regulate the performance. It happens, however, no such questions or expediency can ever arise in a church that is truly and really governed by the law of the Lord." (Life and Times of John F. Rowe, p. 117)

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"It was good of you to write and to extend continued subscription for us to your paper. We appreciate it very much and still wish for you every

success in the publication and trust that many have sought to add new names to the list of readers. Papers are an excellent way of spreading the Truth but it takes readers of the offered material"—W. C. Hinton, Jr., Nishinomiya-shi, Japan.

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THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

Curtis E. Flatt, Florence, Ala.

Read Revelation 2:12-17. Other than this reference, the history of the church in Pergamos is not mentioned in the Bible. However, we learn much about this church in this one appearance.

INTRODUCTION

As we noted in previous studies, in the introduction of each letter Jesus describes himself in such a way as to show that he is especially qualified to discuss the things which need discussion. This church had two groups of false teachers in her midst. And as one might expect, Jesus described himself as the authority in religious matters. He said, "These things saith he which has the sharp sword with two edges." (verse 12). In Revelation 1:16, when John described Jesus as he saw him, he said: "and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." The word of God is described as a sword. "And take . . . the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17). The word of God . . . sharper than any two-edged sword." (Heb. 4:12). The sword and the arms of warfare are the symbols of authority. No doubt Jesus used this terminology to impress this church with his authority. I am persuaded that Jesus would speak in the same terms if he were to send a letter to many of the churches today. Although it may not be recognized by the offenders, it is definitely true that the source of so much trouble in the churches today is the failure to give heed to the proper authority. What we **think** or what we **feel** or what we **like** or what we **dislike** or what we **want** or even what we have **already done** must not serve as an authority. God, has all authority. He gave all authority to Jesus. (Matt. 28:18). Jesus sent the Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. (John 16:13). The Spirit spake the mind of God to the apostles and the apostles, in turn, spake and wrote that which they were told (I Cor. 2:1-13). Here is the standard to follow in religion. The first thing always must be **GO TO GOD'S WORD AS THE STANDARD**. Already, in some congregations, it is being said that some things are had and done without Bible authority. God forbid! Not only must we always go to the Bible for authority, We must learn to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent. We must learn **how** the Bible teaches: by command, by example, and by necessary inference. We must learn how to recognize each of these. We must learn which is an aid and which is an addition. To be right, these things are a must. Let us always remember that Jesus has the sharp two-edged sword. All in the church at Pergamos did not recognize this. Condemnation from Jesus came because of this.

I KNOW THY WORKS

As in all the epistles, Jesus began by saying, "I know." As we observed in past study, Jesus knew all men. He knew what was in man. He knew even the thoughts and intents of the heart of man. He knew their works. He knew their comings and their goings. He knew their activities. He knew the

facts. We will all be judged by our own works which Jesus knows all about (Rev. 20:12). He knew the works of the church at Pergamos.

I KNOW WHERE THOU DWELLEST

He said, "I know . . . where thou dwellest." He knew where they were living. He knew their surroundings. He knew how evil these surroundings were. He knew their dwelling place was such that it could rightly be called, "where Satan dwelleth." What a source of encouragement that ought to be to us! Jesus knows all about us. He knows our temptations. He knows our burdens. He knows our problems. He knows how difficult it is to live righteously. He knows how much of a problem it is to keep the right attitude. Jesus, who is able to know and sympathize, knows.

I KNOW THOU HOLDEST FAST MY NAME

Jesus said: "I know that . . . thou holdest fast my name." They had confessed their faith in Christ. Even in the face of tribulations and trials, they had not denied the name of Christ. One of their number had been killed over his religious stand but still they had not denied his name. This says so much about that church. We ought to be ashamed to let the unkind things which people say about us and do unto us give us a persecution complex. During this time of turmoil in the church when people have said so many unjust things and have done so many underhanded things, we ought to remember that these are but nothing as compared with what others, who have gone before us, have had to endure. Jesus knew this church at Pergamos had held fast his name.

I KNOW THAT THOU HAS NOT DENIED MY FAITH

Jesus further said: "I know thou . . . hast not denied my faith. If men ever deny their faith in Christ, they have no way left to please God (Heb. 11:6). This statement is closely connected with the statement to the effect that they had not denied the name of Jesus'.

I HAVE A FEW THINGS AGAINST THEE

There is a dark side to this letter, too. Jesus said: "I have a few things against thee." This church is endeared to anyone who has been misused and abused because of a firm stand for truth. However, some things were amiss. It just takes a little to make the picture dark. James said: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10) While it could be said that this church had not denied the Lord's name, still there were some who held to the doctrine of Balaam and some to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Jesus hates false doctrine and will not long tolerate it. The threat, which he here makes, should be a very sobering one to us. He said: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." The guilty had to repent and do right. The innocent had the obligation to see to it that the guilty did repent. If the guilty did not repent, then the rest of the church should have disfellow-shipped them. Any other thing would have resulted

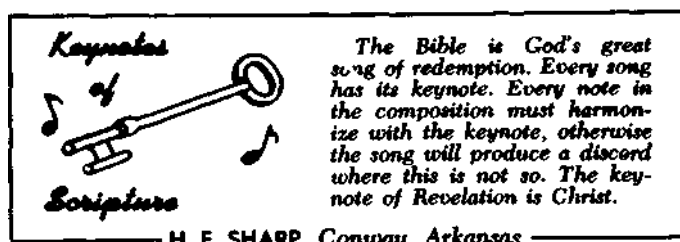
in the whole church becoming contaminated (I Cor. 5:1-8). What a sobering thought that ought to be to us today! How much this is needed today!

LET HIM HEAR

Jesus said then: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." A failure to hear truth and a failure to give heed to that truth will bring condemnation. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . ." (Heb. 2:1-3).

TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH

Jesus made a very gracious promise to the people who would overcome. Not all Christians who become enmeshed in sin overcome. Peter said: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are entangled therein, and overcome, the later end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." (II Pet. 2:20, 21). Incidentally, Peter said this in condemning people who were following after Balaam as were some here in the church at Pergamos. Those who do not overcome will be in a sad condition. But those who do overcome have great blessing. They will get to eat of the hidden manna. Like the Israelites were permitted to eat of the manna in the wilderness, even so those who overcome will be permitted to eat of the joys in heaven which satisfy eternal desires. Then those who overcome will receive a white stone with a new name written there. We don't know what that is yet for we have not received it. However, if we will overcome, we will one day know, because we will have it.



PROVERBS

The book of Proverbs contains the wise sayings of the inspired man. He pictures wisdom crying for man to follow. We cannot know the wisdom of God short of His Revelation, and of course, Christ is the expression of His will and revelation as well as an expression of God's love to man. It is my opinion an outstanding work in this book is to follow Christ as wisdom asks the young man to do. The book of Proverbs is divided somewhat after this fashion.

1. The first nine chapters are as a Master's

- instruction to a pupil or scholar.
2. There are the Proverbs of Solomon.
3. The teacher addresses himself.
4. Some Proverbs gained by the men of Hezekiah.
5. The tribute to a worthy woman.

Our time is not noted for following the words of the Master when rearing a child. Too little time is given to training the child in the words of inspiration. Very little time is given to the training of the child in the home. Too many mothers have gone off to be "Rosy the Riveter", and the art of home making is a lost art. More mothers are leaving their children to the "unbleached American maid" when they would not think of leaving their jewels or other valuables with her. They watch the price of bread more than the price of heartaches from disobedient children. Home-making is an art and girls today need to learn to sew, cook, make a garden, iron clothes and other household duties. They need this much more than learning to use the typewriter, take shorthand, become a designer, etc. The New Testament writer stated, "I would that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the home, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." We may not believe this nor practice this but it is still the will of God. How lost is the little child when it comes home from school and opens the door shouting for "Mother" only to learn she is not home? Our homes have been clubbed to death and the children are paying more than they should in tears for the lack of Mother's love and care. Motherhood just doesn't come as cheap as \$100 per week one may earn in an office. The worthy woman mentioned in Proverbs 31 is a wonderful woman. She is like our mothers of yesterday and a few mothers of Israel in the church today. You will note her work is in and around the home. Her husband praises her. He recognizes what loss he would sustain if she were taken away. Her ability to help him is great. Notice too her children are clothed in scarlet. I am sure they were not parading all over the town with about enough clothing to wad a .22 calibre rifle. See the kindness as a part of her life, her benevolence to the needy. Her children rise up and call her blessed. It is a wonderful thing to me—just to think back as my mother would tell us, "We are going to see grandmother." How kind, gentle, sweet and good she was. She loved us, gave us our mother, trained the one we love as our mother, and made it possible for her grandchildren to have a mother who loved the book of God above all in this world. Though our grandmother is not here, her memory lingers, and in influence she had on our lives is great.

The woman that follows this teaching in the 31st chapter of Proverbs is doing the will of and following the steps of Him who will lead us to life.

The young man who seeks wisdom, will desire this kind of companion and will look upon her as the weaker vessel and treat her so that his prayers "may not be hindered."

Though deviating somewhat in this book it appears that following Christ is an outstanding theme in the book of Proverbs. He is the expression of God's Wisdom.

GIVING THE **ANSWERS** FOR OUR HOPE

Address questions to:
35 West Par Ave.
Orlando, Florida

I PETER 3:15

Marshall E. Patton

QUESTION—What must a married couple, alienated from God and both having living mates whom they divorced for reasons other than fornication, do in rendering true obedience to the gospel of Christ? Is it not true that adultery is an act and not a state in which one lives? If a person guilty of adultery by divorce and remarriage truly repents of his act, does he have to separate from his present partner in order to get right with God?—E. H.

ANSWER—The marital relationship of the couple pictured in the question above is one of adultery. Jesus taught:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matt. 5: 31,32).

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matt. 19:9).

Webster defines adultery as "Voluntary sexual intercourse by a married man with another than his wife or by a married woman with another than her husband." (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

Since the couple under consideration have divorced and remarried without the cause of fornication, they are living in an unlawful relationship so far as sexual intercourse is concerned. Sexual intercourse in this relationship is adultery. It is the unlawful relationship that makes it so. If the same act were performed in a legitimate relationship (one authorized of God) it would not be adultery. Sexual intercourse outside of or in any other relationship except the one ordained of God is sin. Since it is the unlawful relationship that makes the sexual act adultery, it necessarily follows that one may live in an adulterous relationship or state. Paul told the Colossians that they had "walked" and "lived" in fornication." Note the following:

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye **lived** in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." (Col. 3: 5-8).

W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words says "fornication" in Col. 3:5 "stands for, or includes, adultery." Hence, some of the Colossians were "living in adultery" before they obeyed the gospel.

You will also notice in the above passage that they had "put off" the sins in which they "lived." Since it was the unlawful relationship that made them guilty of adultery, it necessarily follows that sexual intercourse in the unlawful relationship is the thing they "put off." If not, then they continued in the unlawful relationship—and, therefore, in sin (1 John 3.4). Obedience to the gospel demanded that they put off everything unlawful and put their lives in harmony with His law.

In obeying the gospel **repentance** demands a turning from everything contrary to God's law. The idolater must turn from his idolatry, The drunkard must turn from his drinking. The adulterer must turn from sexual intercourse in an unlawful relationship—for that is what adultery is!

That God's law of marriage applies to aliens as well as saints is evident not only from Col. 3: 5-8 but also 1 Cor. 6: 9-11. Otherwise, there could be no adultery among aliens. Yet, these were adulterers while they were aliens. Baptism does not change God's law. Baptism does not give one a license to live in violation of God's law. Before baptism one may have lived contrary to God's law, but after baptism he must live in harmony with God's law. But the law remains the same! Obedience to the gospel changes the conduct of man—not the laws of God. Therefore, in obeying the gospel one must turn from every unlawful thing—including an unlawful marriage relationship.

"REMINISCENCE"

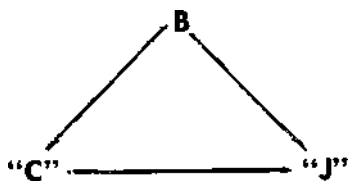
Ward Hogland, Greenville, Texas

Several months ago brother Phillips asked me to submit an article or so for the paper. It was suggested by another that I discuss some of the arguments used by me and my opponents in debates of the past. Under the heading "reminiscence" I shall discuss one argument in each article. These arguments were used on the polemic platform by Baptists, Sabbatarians, the no-Bible-class people and what we commonly call liberals.

The first is known as the triangle argument. Back in 1950 I met a Missionary Baptist by the name of J. W. Kesner. Mr. Kesner was known as "Doctor" by his colleagues because Ben M. Bogard had given him an honorary degree from his seminary in Little Rock. When Mr. Bogard and D. N. Jackson had their split over who would be head man, Kesner cast his lot with Bogard and stayed with him until his death. I understand that Kesner has retired from preaching and is teaching at the school in Little Rock. At the time of the debate he was pastor of the Central Missionary Baptist Church in Ft. Smith. He had a large church, a daily radio program and quite a following in the city. Mr. Kesner had openly attacked the church over the radio, but up to this time would not debate. Before the discussion got under way I spent hours reviewing his book "Campbellism Exposed." It pays to read a man's writings before a debate. He may deny what he has said but it is rather difficult to deny what he has written! I found a statement in his book which seemed to place him in great difficulty.

Since the matter was discussed in the Hogland-Kesner debate book, I now quote from page fifteen where I introduced the argument.

"Now before I go further and before my time is up, I want to roll up the chart and use the blackboard for just a moment. I have here a book "Camp-bellism Exposed! This book has been endorsed by many of his brethren. I suppose I'll be justified in quoting from this book because friend Kesner has advertised it over the radio. I believe it sells for a dollar and I want some of my brethren to buy it, because when I get through with it, his brethren won't have it. (Laughter) —In this book on page thirty four Kesner says, 'Faith changes the heart, repentance the life, and baptism the state.' I can hardly believe a Baptist preacher would make a statement like that. I can hardly feature a Baptist preacher saying that baptism changes the state of man. Here we have a triangle (Hogland draws triangle on the board).



I hope everyone can see this. Right down here I'm going to place a large 'C' that stands for condemnation. Over here I am going to place a large 'J' that stands for Justification. Right up here I'm going to place a 'B' that stands for Baptism. Friend Kesner says on page ten of this book that when a man is baptized he must be in one state or the other, that is, the state of condemnation or justification. And he says that baptism changes that state. Yes, he said it and he'd better not deny it, because I'll call a point of order and read it out of his book. — All right, friend Kesner, is a man over here or over on the other side when he is baptized? (Pointing to the two states) Now, If Kesner says he is in a state of condemnation, then when he is baptized that places him in a state of justification. If Kesner places him here, then I'll just walk right over, shake his hand and we will stop the debate! Will that be all right, friend Kesner? (laughter) But if he says a man is over here, that is under Justification, before baptism, since baptism changes the state that places him under condemnation and sinks the entire Baptist church, Kesner and all because you can't become a Baptist without being baptized, (laughter) Now, friend Kesner, which end of that are you going to take hold of? — I am warning you that both ends are loaded with 'atomic energy'."

Mr. Kesner ignored the triangle in several speeches. But after I had pressed him to place an 'X' on the board by the word Justification or Condemnation, finally, on page thirty five he made this reply: "Now then, I have orders to attend to this so here I go (pointing to triangle on board) (laughter). In the first place, the diagram is his, now that isn't in the book. But here is his argument, this represents condemnation, this justifica-

tion and baptism; referring to my book concerning faith changes the heart, repentance the life, baptism the state. All right you know the argument; he gave it twice. I want to remind you that these are two conditions, (pointing to the board) — condition of condemnation and here the condition of justification. — But nevertheless, the state of justification is when one has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Did my friend and honorable opponent ever say anything about those three sentences there (pointing to board) last night? No sir, he never recognized that chart; he never told me what he thought about my interpretation of those three sentences. I ask now another question, is Acts 16:31 so?"

At this point Mr. Kesner got off the subject and never did place an 'X' on the triangle. I continued to press him and finally just before the debate was over he had this to say about the triangle on page eighty nine: "Now I want to go back and pay a little more respect to I Corinthians. Is that right, elder? I am touching the chart. (Kesner rubbing his hands on the chart.) (Hogland says, 'stay over there.') How long? (Hogland says, 'Long enough to answer it') Well, I got something else to do (laughter) (Hogland says, 'Put an X over there') Oh, ok. Now keep in mind, friends, keep in mind that I've been waiting and- waiting until he got you at a high point. In the first place, the triangle, I answered that. I didn't come around and do that sophistry stunt that he wanted me to do. I didn't fall into a sophistry trap. I am fixing to attend to him, but that is a sophistry catch. I answered that last night (pointing to triangle), and every intelligent person knows I did. I don't mean to infer that he is not intelligent; don't misunderstand me. God forbid I do that. I refuse to mistreat or say anything that will intimidate him in any way. But I just know the tactics of debating, that is all. Now I ask the elder to get his feet down and get ready, and I am going to ask everybody that loves him not to get mad at me. He wants me to put the 'X' here or here, see ? Well, that is a CATCH. I answered that thing just exactly scripturally last night. I can ask plenty of questions and put the box out there, and then ask the elder to put yeast in it. Now he ask me to put an 'X' there. Which do you want? That is what he has BEGGED me to do. I have answered it. I have showed you he is misconstruing my book. Now then I am going to ask the elder when he comes up here if he will put an 'X' in one of these. (Kesner draws two squares on board and places yes by one and no by the other). Have you quit whipping your wife? (Laughter)."

At this point in the debate the audience almost got out of hand with laughter and Mr. Kesner got off the subject again and never did come back to the triangle. He closed by calling it a "sophistry trap" and said he wasn't about to fall into it. I agreed it was a trap but insisted that it belonged to him since it came from his book. This one point weakened him for the two congregations in the city to baptize fourteen Baptists within two weeks following the debate.

The News Letter Reports

"... THEY REHEARSED ALL THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM..."—Acts 14:27

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA DISCUSSION

Charles Holt and Roy Deaver will debate the question of Benevolence June 25-28 in Jacksonville, Florida. The first two nights the discussion will be in the meeting house of the Lake Shore church and the last two nights in the meeting house of the Springfield church. The first proposition will be: "The scriptures teach that in the field of benevolence (assisting those in physical need) churches are limited or restricted in the use of funds from their treasuries to those who are saints (those who have been baptized into Christ)."

Affirms: Charles Holt Denies: Roy Deaver
This proposition will be discussed at Lake Shore, June 25 and 26.

The second proposition will be: "The scriptures teach that a church may contribute to Boles Home, Quinlan, Texas."

Affirms: Roy Deaver Denies: Charles Holt
This proposition will be discussed at Springfield, June 27 and 28.

Further information may be had by writing to Paul Brock, 2121 Blanding Blvd., Jacksonville 10, Fla.

Robert Jackson was in an April meeting with the West End congregation in Bowling Green, Ky., where Ferrell Jenkins is the evangelist. . . Charles Maples and L. A. Stauffer also spoke at West End in April. . . Jenkins preached in a meeting at Shively, Kentucky. . . Paul Brock was the speaker in a meeting with the East Florence congregation in Florence, Ala. in April. . . Harris J. Dark was in a meeting at Jackson Heights in Columbia, Tenn. during the month of April.

James R. Cope preached in meetings at Holden Heights, Orlando; Northside in Lakeland, Fla.; and Westvue in Murfreesboro, Tenn. during April and May. Irven Lee was in a successful meeting with the MacDill Avenue church in Tampa, Fla. during early April. Several responded to the gospel. . . Frank Jamerson is settled in Louisville to work with the Wendell Avenue congregation. Jamerson did a fine work in Richmond, Va. . . The brethren where James P. Needham preaches in Louisville are expecting to be in the new building the first of May. This will be a great step forward for this good church. . . Clinton D. Hamilton is to preach for the Wendell Avenue church June 2-9. Hear him if you are in that section. . . Bob Neely is working with the Central congregation in the city of Louisville, Ky. Other meetings in the Louisville area were: Franklin T. Puckett at Valley Station; Ronald Mosby at Oak Grove; Harry Pickup, Sr. at Park Blvd.; Grover Stevens at Preston Highway; and Rufus Clifford at Manslick Road, May 12-19. . . Robert Welch will be at Eastland June 19-28. . . Marshall Patton was with the congregation at Clermont, Fla. the middle of April. Walter Henderson is now at Clermont.

Eugene Britnell worked with the Washington Avenue congregation in Russellville, Ala. in March. . . John Iverson was the preacher in a series of gospel lessons at the Nebraska Avenue church in Tampa, Fla., April 21-28. C. L. Overturf, Sr. is the evangelist with this congregation. . . F. O. White is the faithful evangelist of the 54th Street church in Miami, Fla. Brother White is an able colored preacher and has debated some of the issues before the churches. Brethren interested in calling him for meetings should note his address. It is 1310 N.W. 43rd Street, Miami, Fla.

Reports are pouring in from everywhere with the story of additions to the body of Christ. Here are some examples: six baptized with James R. Cope at Holden Heights in Orlando, Fla. Earl Fly baptized four more one week later. Five baptized at MacDill while Irven Lee was there in a meeting and by Colin Williamson just after. Three baptized and three restored in a meeting by James P. Miller in North Miami during a meeting with Bobby K. Thompson. One baptized recently at Seminole in Tampa.

James P. Miller, co-editor of Searching The Scriptures, will be in the following meetings: With the South 231 church where Bobby Witherington labors, in Owensboro, Ky., May 10-17, and then to Cleveland, Ohio to be with the Loraine Avenue church May 19-25th. E. A. Dicus has worked with this good church for a number of years. The second Lord's day in June will find him in a meeting with the Academy Street church in Dickson, Tenn. with Harold Howard. Attend these meetings if you are in the area.

Roland A. Warren has recently moved from Dunedin to labor with the Northside Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. This congregation is doing a good work.

Thornton Crews, Pensacola, Fla. — J. Frank Ingram, formerly of this city, has just closed an excellent meeting for us at Myrtle Grove. Four were baptized. Crowds were the best that I have seen for quite some time in this city. His preaching was true to the Book and in power. I am sure any congregation can be benefited by a meeting with him.

Connie W. Adams, Orlando, Fla. — The meeting with the Forest Hills church in Richmond, Virginia resulted in 2 baptisms. Excellent attendance prevailed with a good number of non-members present at every service. James C. Jones has done a good work in Richmond. He now has his support and travel fund to go to Stavanger, Norway in June. My next meeting will be at West End in Franklin, Tenn., June 23-30, where Martin Lemon preaches. Since last report 3 have been baptized, 2 restored and identified and 4 identified here at Pine Hills.

Lee Gunter, Largo, Fla. — For the last three years I have worked with the fine brethren that meet at 1500 Stevens Avenue, N.E., Huntsville, Ala. March 31 brought to a close my part of the work with these fine brethren. I am now working with the fine and faithful brethren at Largo, Florida. When in this section stop and worship with us.

Earl Fly, Orlando, Fla. — The Holden Heights church in Orlando, Florida, conducted gospel meeting, March 31-April 7, with **James R. Cope**, Temple Terrace, Florida, doing the preaching. We had fine attendance with the building practically filled each night. Brethren came from near and afar, including eleven gospel preachers, and many non-members were present for all services. Six people obeyed the gospel. Brother Cope did a fine job in presenting simple, powerful, scriptural sermons.

Tom Wheeler, Titusville, Fla. — **Maurice W. Jackson, Jr.** will begin an eight day meeting with the Church of Christ in Orange City, Florida on April 28th. The congregation there is young and small, but we are hoping, praying, and working for growth in that city. I work with the congregation there on the first day of the week, as they are not able to support a man full time. Brother Jackson preaches for the church in Titusville, Florida and is doing a wonderful work there. The congregation in Titusville is growing and in the process of remodeling and enlarging their meeting house.

Earl Morris, Haines City, Fla.—My labors with the church at Dundee, Florida have been pleasant. Four have been baptized and three confessed their sins, and in addition six have come to us from those who are going beyond that which is written.

NEW CONGREGATIONS

James P. Needham of Louisville, Ky. reports the following: On Sunday, February 24th, another sound church was begun in the Louisville area. It is located in the Thomas Jefferson school on Hamberg Pike in Jefferson, Ind. **Donald Townsley** of the South End church spoke at the first service, and our own brother **Forest Hurst** spoke on March 3rd. Brother **J. F. Dancer** of the West End church preached for them on March 10th, and brother **Amoc Davenport** of the Shepherdsville church on March 17th. Brother **Ronald Mosby** of the Valley Station church spoke for them the next two Sundays.

Seventy (70) were present for the first service, and the contribution was in excess of \$50.00. We urge you to support this new church with your presence at their services.

The beginning of this church was necessitated by the liberalism of the Ninth and Meigs church in Jeffersonville. It is a continuing story all over the nation. When brethren cannot conscientiously go along with liberalism and there seems to be nothing they can do about it, they are forced to move out and start over that the community may have a church that is of Christ.

Bobby K. Thompson of North Miami, Fla. reports the following: The faithful children of God who formerly met for worship at Modello are now meeting at the Perrine Community Center for worship. The Community Center is located on the East Side of Perrine Avenue.

Over one hundred were present for the first assembly in Perrine. Brother **Everett Shoaf**, formerly preached at Modello, is working with these brethren. We believe these brethren are determined to do what is right and stand for the truth of God's word. We want to pray for them and encourage them in their efforts to do what is right. This is another victory to truth in our immediate area. May God bless them! Bible study is at 10 on Lord Day. Evening worship is at 7 p.m. The congregation meets at 7:30 Tuesday evenings for Bible study.

Bobby Witherington, Owensboro, Kentucky — In October of 1960, there occurred an open division in the Central church of Christ at Owensboro, Kentucky, which resulted in the formation of Southside church of Christ. This division was due to internal problems involving personalities and was not doctrinal. Having previously worked out the difficulties that did exist, the brethren of both congregations, on January 27, 1963, merged. The new congregation is known as the South 231 church of Christ, as we plan to erect a meeting house on highway 231, south of Owensboro proper.

Unity prevails and the work is progressing. Brother **James P. Miller** is scheduled to labor with us in a gospel meeting May 10-17. We cordially invite any visitors who may be in the area to assemble with us. Our present place of assembly is located at 320 Washington Ave., Owensboro, Ky.

"JUST PREACH CHRIST!"

L. A. Mott, Jr., Gainesville, Ga.

This is what sectarian preachers are continually telling us to do. It is the advice frequently given by members of the church who have more respect for the feelings of their sectarian friends than for the will of the Lord. The idea is: "Just preach Christ! Do not preach controversial issues. Do not preach against denominational error. Be positive! Just preach the gospel."

This language does not have one intelligent idea in it. The one who so advises does not know what he is talking about. He does not know what it means to preach Christ.

Now, of course, to preach the gospel is to preach Christ, for, in one view of it, the gospel is Christ. In Rom. 1:1-4 Paul emphasizes that the gospel concerns the Son of God. At another place he said, ". . . for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). But in the same letter he said he was determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). Thus, the heart and center of the gospel is not a philosophy, a system of ethics, theories for the improvement of social conditions, nor even a law. The central theme of the gospel is a person, Jesus Christ. Obviously, any preaching which does not put Jesus Christ at its heart and center is not true gospel preaching.

But does "just preach Christ" mean that preaching should be a weak, water-down affair, with hardly anything except great, moving appeals to sinners to "accept Jesus as their own personal saviour," the meaning of which appeal depending on the preacher making it? Certainly not! **Preaching Christ means**

preaching everything which has a relationship to Jesus Christ as these things are related to Jesus Christ. For example, preaching Christ involves the church, for He built the church (Matt. 16:18), bought it with his blood (Acts 20:28), reigns over it as head (Eph. 1:22, 23), and is its saviour (Eph. 5:23). Preach Christ without preaching the church of Christ?!? Absurd!

The authority of Jesus is involved. No one can preach authority in religion without preaching Jesus, for Jesus is the only one who has any authority (Matt. 28:18).

It is ridiculous to say, "Just preach Jesus and his authority as Lord, and leave off controversial commands." The lordship of Jesus implies the necessity of obedience to his commands. One cannot consistently acknowledge the authority of Jesus as Lord and refuse to obey his commands (Lk. 6:46). Preaching Jesus involves baptism, for Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19,20), and it is that which puts us into a saving union with Jesus (Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:27).

But what does it mean to make Jesus the center of gospel preaching? Simply this: Preaching should emphasize Jesus. Baptism, the church, nor any other thing should be given Jesus' place in the gospel. All of these subjects should be preached **as they are related to Jesus.** If something has no relation to Jesus, it should not be preached, that is why those hypocrites who say, "Just preach Christ," and, at the same time, promote a human denomination with which Jesus has nothing to do, disrespect the authority of Christ by following human reason, teach human ordinances rather than the commands of Christ, and practice a baptism which differs in nearly all respects from that of Christ, are not preaching Christ at all.

AUTONOMY OF CHURCHES

Oaks Gowen, Bradenton, Fla.

The word "autonomy" comes from the Greek word "autonomia" — "autos," self, plus "nemo," distribute; and is defined as: "The power, right, or condition of self-government." Does the New Testament teach that churches of Christ are to be autonomous? Is it a vital point of the nature of the local church that it be independent of all others, and that it be subordinate to no other organization, human or divine? I believe with all my heart that churches of Christ were "autonomous" in New Testament times, and that they must be so today if the will of God is to be obeyed. Yes, I do believe the New Testament teaches that churches of Christ are to be independent, self-governed, hence, "autonomous."

Yet, if my life depended upon finding a clear-cut, unequivocal statement in the Bible to the effect that churches of Christ are autonomous, I could find no such statement. The New Testament does not in so many words say: "Churches of Christ are autonomous." But I am not alone in my firm convictions on this matter — ALL my brethren claim to believe in "congregational autonomy," with only one exception. It seems (?) from Reuel Lemmons'

editorial in the Firm Foundation, March 5, 1963, that he does not believe there is such a thing as "congregational autonomy." I say it "seems (?)" he does not believe in it, but I really don't know what Brother Lemmons believes on this subject; and I doubt that he knows. You may ask, however, "if the Bible does not say churches are autonomous, then, why do I believe in the doctrine of congregational autonomy?" I am glad to give answer: my convictions in the principle of churches of Christ being autonomous rests upon the following characteristics of the New Testament churches:

1. **Nature of Organization.** Each church had the same kind of organization; each had its own governing body: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." (Acts 14:23.) "For this cause left I three in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." (Tit. 1:5) From these two passages it is clear that each congregation was to have the very same kind, or class, of men ordained in them. Further, it is as plain as day that the scope of rule, oversight, and authority of elders was to be confined and limited to the one flock or congregation among them. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the **flock**, (not flocks, OG,) over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Again, Peter said to the elders of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, "The elders which are among you I exhort, . . . Feed the **flock** of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." (I Pet. 5-1a, 2a.) A good illustration of the principle of equality of organization is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians concerning husbands and wives, he says, "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (I Cor. 7:2.) It is clear as can be that the phrase, "every man have his own wife," means **every man is to leave the other man's wife alone**, and he sins if he doesn't leave other men's wives alone. The same is equally true with respect to "every woman have her own husband." Every church is to have its own elders! Can this mean anything other than that the elders of one church are to leave other churches alone, and that they sin when they do not?

2. **Equality of Churches.** Nothing is taught more clearly in the New Testament than the fact that churches established by the labors of the apostles were equal as to their: (1) **Foundation.** Each was built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (Eph. 2:20.) (2) **Structure.** Each church was built "for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Each church, the one in Pontus, each one in Galatia, and all those in Asia, was "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:5) (3) **Identity.** Each one of the seven churches of Asia had its own candlestick (Rev. 1:20.) The Lord found something wrong in the church at Ephesus. They had left their

first love. Christ threatened to remove their candlestick out of its place if they did not repent. (Rev. 2:1-5.) The existence of one church did not depend upon the existence of the others. They were each identified separately with the Lord.

3. **Cooperation of Churches.** The manner in which churches cooperated in evangelism, benevolence and edification shows very plainly that they considered each as coordinate, equal and autonomous. When many churches cooperated in sending relief unto the poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul took care to provide "for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but in the sight of men," and instructed each congregation to "approve by letters" their own messengers, and said, "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ."

(To Be Continued)



Throughout the history of science and politics each has had tremendous influence on the other. In early times scientists controlled the politics and political destinies of nations. Later, scientists, as well as their teachings, were controlled and regulated by those in high places in political offices. Many of the scientists, both ancient and modern, would leave God entirely out of the scheme of events by which the universe came into being. Though no evidence has ever been produced in favor of Lamarckianism, this theory has been made the official theory of heredity of the Soviet Union under the name of Michurinism. This is done with the utter disregard to the proven works of Mendel in heredity. The rise to power of Lysenko, which began in the early nineteen thirties and become complete in nineteen forty eight when the teaching and research in Mendelian genetics was abolished, was purely political and truth suffered as a result. Lysenko claimed to have demonstrated the Lamarckian theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics. This claim was evidently like many other Russian claims. Thus Lamarck's theory gained political success but as a scientific fact it still remains to be demonstrated experimentally (by anyone except the Russians, that is!)

Lamarck's ideas on evolution were forcefully criticized by Cuvier (1769-1832), a giant of political and scientific influence in France. Cuvier is considered to be the father of comparative anatomy, the branch of science to which many evolutionists turn today to seek comfort and a basis for their theories. Cuvier, however, believed and taught the fixity of species and that the Genesis record of the flood was true and the explanation of some of the fossil records. He had some rather strange notions but his opposition to Lamarck's theory and others,

hampered the blind acceptance of the theory of evolution. Scientists were not to let him go. In a rather strong controversy between Cuvier and St. Hilaire in 1830, Cuvier conclusively demonstrated that the scale of being or ladder of nature set forth by Aristotle did not exist; that one simple animal did not give rise to the one just a bit more complex, and that no such unity existed. The scientists were forced to accept this is a fact but, they declared, this was a basis for the branch system of divergent evolution. This theory has lasted and the so-called evolutionary tree can be found in most elementary books of biology today. Men who are determined to omit God shall do so in any area by one way or another. After all, this is not so strange nor is the action exclusively among scientists; it is also found among those who claim to compose the church of our Lord!

DANGERS CONFRONTING THE CHURCH--NO. 1

Thomas G. O'Neal, Jasper, Ala.

The church of Jesus Christ has always faced certain dangers. This no student of either Divine or profane history will deny. There were certain dangers before the church during the days of the apostles, dangers confronted the church during each generation since those days, and dangers confront the church today.

It is not the position of this writer to claim to know all of the dangers that the church faces or the solutions to those dangers. However, it is my desire in this series of articles to note some of the dangers the church faces and to **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES** to find the solutions to these dangers.

INSTITUTIONALISM NOT ONLY DANGER

One of the dangers that the blood bought church of my Lord faces today is the danger of institutionalism, i.e., the support of human institutions from the church. This is a danger and all who love the Lord's cause are interested in seeing the truth taught upon this question. I want to stand upon the side of TRUTH with countless scores of other gospel preachers who are opposed to the church composed of born again ones supporting human institutions of any kind. However, our study will not be a study of institutionalism. There will be some things that will be closely connected with the danger, but it is not the burden of these articles to discuss this danger.

PAUL'S ADDRESS

Paul addressed the Ephesian elders in language like this in Acts 20:28-32:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away

disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all of them which are sanctified."

In these words Paul describes the source of these dangers, (1) from the outside, because some will "enter in among you," and (2) from within, men will arise among you.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT DANGERS

1. Recognize the dangers. The foremost thing to be done when dangers arise is to recognize that they are a reality. Some are afraid to admit that the church faces certain dangers. Even in a local congregation dangers confront the church, but those dangers are never recognized. Evidently some brethren don't want to face the fact that there are certain dangers before the church. When brethren have this attitude, they have one big danger, the danger of not being aware of their dangers.

2. Discuss the dangers. When dangers or problems arise the only way to solve them is to talk about them. When there is not talking and discussing of certain dangers, those dangers will continue because nothing will be done about them.

3. SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES for the Bible solution. There is only one way to solve any problem and that is the right way. The only right way is the Bible way. Read, study, seek, meditate and find the Bible solution. No other solution other than a Bible one will last for any length of time.

4. Remove the danger according to the Bible. I am fearful that we may recognize our dangers, discuss them, find the Bible solution, but because of the price we must pay are not willing to remove our dangers. The Bible may call upon us to do things to solve and get rid of our dangers that we do not want to do. But we must remove our dangers or they will be a thorn to us and to our children.

5. Work harder not to have the same danger again. We may be deceived once but we need not be deceived again. We may have certain dangers facing us today but we are poor to learn if we do not profit by the mistakes of yesterday. We should teach, encourage, strengthen ourselves that we do not repeat the same thing tomorrow.

May the Lord grant unto His children the ability to recognize our dangers, discuss them, and remove them that they hinder us not as we serve the Lord in the future.

In our second article our study will be the danger of modernism in the church.

AFRAID TO HEAR THE LORD!

L. E. Sloan, Jasper, Ga.

God spake through Moses hundreds of years before Jesus Christ ever came to this earth, and promised Moses that He would raise up a prophet "unto you of your brethren, like unto me (Moses); him ye shall hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every

soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among people." This was said first unto Moses in Deuteronomy 18, and repeated as a fulfilled prophecy by the apostle Peter in Acts 3:22-23. Thus Jesus Christ came into the world as that prophet that God promised to send for the salvation of the peoples of the earth. But it is very evident to the reader that this result was not to be effected merely by the coming into the world of God's prophet.

God also decreed that when His prophet came into the world, he would speak the words of God unto men. As men heard the words of this prophet, disposition one way or the other, must be made. Man must either accept these words and obey them or either make rejection of them. God made it very clear that those who did not "harken" unto the things spoken by Christ would be destroyed.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he did not leave himself without witness, but demonstrated by the miracles that he performed that he was the prophet that Israel had awaited for her deliverance. Thus he was armed with the credentials of the God of heaven Himself, indicating his power over death even, proving that he was indeed the Messiah who was to come into the world not only to deliver Israel, but to bless all nations, fulfilling the promise which God made to Abraham.

One of the most notable miracles and perhaps the greatest wonder or sign ever done by the Lord was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. One would think that so great a miracle as this would have reached and melted the hearts even of his very bitterest enemies, causing them to renounce their unbelief, and to confess Him as truly Emmanuel. But this was not the result at all. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." (Jno. 11:47-48). The miracles of Jesus worried these chief priests and Pharisees. They reasoned that something had to be done about Him. They saw that His fame was spreading and His miracles were having a definite effect upon many people, causing them to believe on Jesus. So, instead of believing in Jesus themselves by accepting the miracles that He did, they were driven farther and farther away from him. Consequently, these scribes and Pharisees had set themselves against the word of God. Previous to the raising of Lazarus, they had already dared to tell the people that Jesus did His miracles by the power of Beelzebub; thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit who was working through the Lord.

But as the fame of the Lord increased and more people became His followers, these unbelievers became afraid for people to hear the Lord. This has been the exact position of many who have lived in this world. Just like the Scribes and Pharisees of John 11:48, many today are afraid to hear Jesus Christ. Many think their own ideas are better than the words of Him who proved beyond a shadow of any doubt that He was God in the flesh and spoke with all the authority that could be mustered in the courts of heaven.

It is very evident to the Bible reader that God speaks to people through his word. His word today is just as powerful now in written form as it was when Jesus Christ spoke it orally. In fact, for one to reject the written word now is in effect to reject Christ Himself. Jesus told a story one time about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), and in that story the rich man requested Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to testify unto his five brothers "lest they also come to this place of torment." But Abraham answered: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." But Moses had been dead hundreds of years before this. The prophets were also dead. But the sayings of Moses and the prophets were on record in the words of the Old Testament. Thus these men could hear what Moses and the prophets had taught. Abraham went on to teach the rich man that if his five brethren refused to hear what Moses and the prophets had taught, they would not be persuaded though one went unto them from the dead.

It is the same today. God's word is the final authority in all religious matters. There is no such thing as progressive revelation. We have all the revelation that we will ever have in the written word of God known as the Bible. In this written word, God teaches us about His church, the kingdom of God; He teaches us that there is one church and that to get into that church or kingdom, one must be born of water and the spirit. (Jno. 3:5). We are taught in God's word that the church is all-sufficient to accomplish God's purpose in every phase of her operations and mission. Those who love God and His truth are not afraid to hear these things from God through His word. If one refuses to hear God's word, he would not hear one risen from the dead.

The supreme command of the New Testament is "HEAR YE HIM." God said in Matt. 17:5, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." But men today are afraid to hear Christ. Many refuse to study the word of God for fear they will find themselves wrong in their religious convictions.

The Scribes and Pharisees were afraid that the Romans would come and destroy their nation if they believed in Christ. The ensuing event in AD 70 proved to them how wrong they were. They rejected God's prophet, His holy One; but in AD 70 the Roman army came just the same and destroyed their nation. So the thing they were trying to avert by refusing to accept the Lord came about just the same because of their rejection. The rich man found out too late that he needed to accept the message of the Lord. The Pharisees discovered too late that God would destroy their nation because of their rejection of God's prophet. They had their chance and failed to acknowledge the truth which they could not successfully deny. They put God's word from them and refused to believe it.

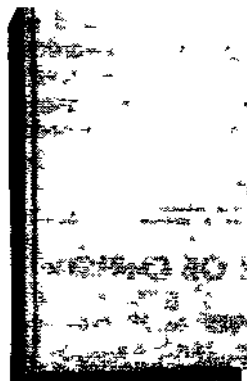
The man today who is afraid to hear the truth, who will not accept the truth when he hears it, but rather casts it aside and tramples it under foot is likely to learn too late the greatest mistake he ever made. As a result, many will lose their souls forever in torment at the last day.

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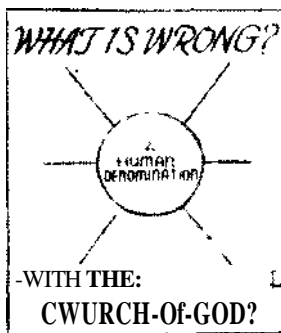
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