

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES



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

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

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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SINFUL JUDGING AND EVIL SPEAKINGS

L. Earl Fly

"Judge **not, that ye be not judged.** For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ..." (Matt. 7:1-2). "**Speak not evil one of another,** brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy: **who art thou that judgest another?**" (James 4:11-12).

These passages clearly forbid a harsh, censorious judgment based on opinion, gossip, and / or outward appearance of circumstantial evidence. Furthermore, the context (Matt. 7:1-5) shows that even if a **righteous** judgment could be made of a small fault ("mote"), one should first take heed to himself to avoid being a hypocrite in correcting his brother. But the kind of judging Christ forbids can result in tragic consequences; even the loss of souls of the judges, the judged and others affected by it. Thus it is an extremely serious matter with temporal and eternal consequences.

To illustrate, I personally know of a case where there was a harsh, censorious judgment of guilt against a brother by several brethren, based solely on evil surmisings, slanderous gossip, flimsy circumstantial evidence of outward appearance, and associating unrelated incidents to form a false conclusion. Among other things, he was accused of being a dope addict, and planning to put his wife in a mental institution so he could be with another woman. The accusations were completely false, but the judges, ignoring God's law, were not interested or courageous enough to investigate to determine the facts. The tragic sequence was much evil speaking, slanderous whisperings and backbitings by unbridled, unruly evil tongues "full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). The results were disastrous: a character was assassinated, a reputation ruined, good influence destroyed. Incredibly, the brother did not learn until several months later what had been secretly whispered and furtively reported. He was deeply hurt, extremely

distressed, severely depressed, very discouraged, and greatly hindered in doing God's work by such covert, grossly unfair, inconsiderate, sinful, crushing and devastating actions by brethren without excuse. The situation worsened when judges who had **never** once mentioned the alleged errors to the accused, publicly and silently disfellowshipped him in refusing to call on him to lead a prayer. Without investigation or a hearing, he was judged guilty. So far as I know that is still the status of the situation. This is certainly contrary to God's law, and even the laws of our land, which presumes one to be innocent until proved guilty by sufficient evidence.

We need to be extremely careful in judging another. It must not be according to outward appearance, but righteous judgment (John 7:24); that is, judgment based on proved (not suspected) facts and indisputable evidence. While it is true we can know a tree by its fruit (Matt. 7:16-20), we should be certain we have closely examined and correctly identified the kind of fruit present before reaching any conclusion or taking any action. At first glance we could be mistaken, as outward appearances do not always reveal the true situation; there could be hidden facts to entirely change the outward picture.

God teaches that love for our brethren will not allow us to think evil about them and harshly judge, but rather "believe all things" (1 Cor. 13:5, 7). We must place the very best construction possible (not the worst) on the words and actions of brethren, presuming them to be completely innocent of any sin, until and unless fair examination of all available evidence definitely proves them guilty beyond the shadow of a doubt. Moreover, this love requires patient understanding and tender compassion toward one in proved error, and seeks his restoration in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1); it certainly will not allow us to trample, crush and destroy him by secret whisperings of his error to everyone else.

Some, when confronted about their sinful judging and evil speakings, have tried to excuse it by saying, "Well, the Bible says shun the very appearance of evil, and it looked like it could have been evil." The misquoted passage actually says, "**Abstain** from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). The American Standard Version says, "Abstain from every form of

evil," proving that the word "appearance" essentially means the actual existence of evil. W. E. Vine says "appearance" means "every sort or kind of evil (not 'appearance')" (Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, Pg. 66). He further says, "Abstain" (apecho) means "to keep oneself from, in the N. T., invariably refers to evil practices, moral and ceremonial" (Ibid., Pg. 16). Hence, "Abstain from all evil practices" is the correct exegesis of the passage. I believe it has been misunderstood and misused in saying it means one must shun everything that looks like it is or might be evil to someone, though it be innocent. If this interpretation should be logically and strictly applied, it would bind Christians to comply with multitudes of misguided and distorted opinions of what looks like evil. We could not work on Saturday, drink tea or coffee, wear any jewelry, eat meats, etc., because it has the appearance (looks like) evil to some! But notice God's law: "For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; **and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth:** for God hath received him. **Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?** To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:2-4). Hence, one is not even bound to "shun" that which appears evil to a weak brother (unless it causes him to sin by doing the same in violation of conscience—I Cor. 8:8-13), much less abide by misguided opinions of others. But even if the passage (1 Thess. 5:22) taught the misinterpretation, it cannot be used to excuse the sins of evil surmisings and sinful judgments.

Concerning evil speakings, we must put a bridle on the tongue, otherwise our religion is vain (James 1:26). Associated with evil speaking is being idle busybodies, meddlers in other men's matters, wandering about from house to house, tattling and talebearing. "For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters" (1 Pet. 4:15-ASV). "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). Some things ought to be kept secret. "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth a matter" (Prov. 11:13). A whisperer separates chief friends (Prov. 16:28); he also inflames strife. "For lack of wood the fire goeth out; and where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth. As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to inflame strife" (Prov. 26:20-21). We should reject the whisperer. "An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips . . ." (Prov. 17:4). "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; therefore company not with him that openeth wide his lips" (Prov. 20:19). God hates one who sows discord among brethren (Prov. 6:1b-iy).

Brethren, let us not be busybodies, meddlers in other men's matters, or guilty of evil surmisings, thinking evil, censorious judgments based on outward

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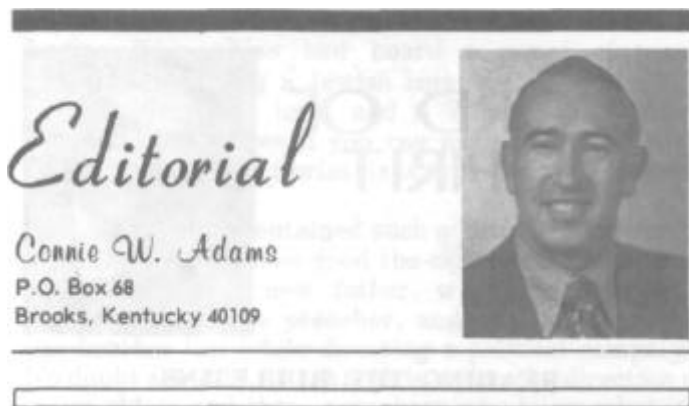
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appearances, evil speakings, or acceptance of the talebearer's secrets. And if we actually know of a brother overtaken in a fault, we should talk to him, not about him, and seek to restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, for none of us is immune (Gal. 6:1). Again I emphasize, let us not be meddlesome busybodies, censorious judges, whisperers, slanderers, talebearers, tattlers, or backbiters, and thereby possibly destroy one for whom Christ died. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1); "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, **and evil speaking be put away from you,** with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). **AMEN.**

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THE PATTERN, AUTHORITY AND THE HERALD OF TRUTH

The July, 1973 issue of the HERALD OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL reviews the first twenty-one years of this program and contains a statement of "position" from the elders of the Highland church in Abilene which sponsors the work. Some excerpts from that statement should be of interest to our readers.

"To that end we remain committed to the authority of the Word of God, the Bible . . . the Bible must be accepted as the sole authority."

"The New Testament is the divine pattern for what God expects the church to be in every generation. The church must not practice anything that is not expressly authorized in the New Testament."

These are good statements and should be appreciated by every Christian. There is an increasing number who claim membership in the New Testament church who are not committed to these principles. Indeed, the New Testament is God's divine pattern for the church. The sum total of all the New Testament says on any subject is God's pattern on that.

Many of the very brethren who endorse Herald of Truth have preached that there is no pattern in the realm of congregational cooperation, the very area of study which vitally affects the scripturality (or want of it) of Herald of Truth. A. C. Pullias, President of David Lipscomb College, wrote a tract entitled "Where There Is No Pattern." During the past two decades numerous articles have appeared, written by defenders of Herald of Truth, ridiculing our appeal to the pattern in cooperation of churches.

We rejoice to see the Highland elders so clearly commit themselves to these valid premises. But it is one thing to enunciate just principles and quite another to practice them. We do not believe these brethren are practicing what they are preaching. The very form of cooperation being practiced by the Highland church and the more than 3,000 contributing churches is without express authorization in the New Testament.

One may read in the New Testament of one church sending relief to brethren elsewhere who had more benevolent requirements than they were able to supply (Acts 11:27-30). We may also read of several churches sending relief to one which was destitute (2 Cor. 8 and 9; Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-3). In every

case in the New Testament where one church sent funds to another, the sending church was able to do so and THE RECEIVING CHURCH WAS AN OBJECT OF CHARITY. This is well summarized in 2 Cor. 8:14 "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." Have the Highland elders discovered in the pattern any exception to this? Is the Highland church an object of charity with more than 2,000 members and a weekly budget of more than \$7,000?

I can find in the pattern where a congregation sent a preacher to another (Acts 11:22), where one church sustained the needs of a preacher in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15-16) and where more than one congregation sent to supply Paul's wages at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8-9). But I cannot find in the New Testament authority for one congregation to send funds to another congregation in the work of evangelism. Have the Highland elders found this yet? They are clearly committed to the ideal that the Bible is the sole authority and that "the church must not practice anything that is not expressly authorized in the New Testament." In article after article and debate after debate over the last two decades, these questions have been raised without successful answer. All too often, any appeal to a divine pattern on this subject has been the object of scorn. We have asked again and again for a direct statement of scripture, an approved apostolic example or a necessary inference expressed either generally or specifically which would authorize the practice of one eldership becoming a receiving and disbursing church for the brotherhood. We have often shown that 1 Peter 5:2-3 limits the oversight of elders to the "flock of God among" them and that this oversight includes the resources of that flock. We have pointed out many times that the elders of one church may not scripturally delegate responsibility for work, worship, discipline or funds to the elders of some other church. None of this is according to the pattern. It is not "expressly authorized" in the New Testament.

As these brethren review the past and look to the future, there is one thing I wish they would seriously consider. While they are counting up all the good they feel has been accomplished by this work, would they please give some thought to the irreparable damage which has been done to the church in our generation? The very beginning of their project forced brethren everywhere to have to make a decision about it. As their representatives blanketed the nation to tell brethren about their plans and to solicit support, havoc was wrought in congregation after congregation across the land. Honest brethren wanted to know where in the pattern they could find such a thing "expressly authorized." When decisions were reached in many places to put this project in the budget, then conscientious brethren either had to violate their consciences or else go elsewhere, often breaking lifetime ties. Families were divided down the middle. Brethren who had stood together and fought side by

side in the battle for truth came to the parting of the ways. Labels were devised. Pressure mounted. There were struggles over custody of property, sometimes ending in litigation in civil courts. Deep wounds were made which have taken many years to heal. Some are still festered.

Whenever the elders of one congregation initiate a project which has the potential of alienating thousands of brethren and dividing hundreds of congregations, then they need to seriously weigh that fact against whatever good results may be anticipated. The things we have described here are not theoretical, they are stark facts. Certainly there have been people baptized as a result of the program. In the last century preachers sent out and supported through the missionary society were able to convert a number of people, but that did not make the society a scriptural arrangement in church cooperation. It was not "expressly authorized" in the pattern. The end never justifies the means. We must not do evil that good may come.

Perhaps an even greater harm has come as a result of the loose attitude toward Bible authority which emerged in the debates and other defenses of the practice. Many younger men schooled on such philosophy have had the intellectual honesty to carry these loose views to their logical end. The result of that has struck terror to the hearts of some who did not really mean to go that far. But there is no way back without restating and defending the Bible principles which were violated in the first place. This creates a serious dilemma. How can these brethren argue that "the New Testament is the divine pattern" for the church and that "the church must not practice anything that is not expressly authorized in the New Testament" without abandoning the Herald of Truth? Either their principle is wrong, or their practice is wrong. In spite of the devastation their project has caused, it would yet be a wonderful day if they would reconcile their practice to the valid principle upon which they claim to stand and thus remove one of the major causes of division and heartache among brethren in Christ.

ABORTION

The Personal Dilemma
by R. F. R. Gardner

Seldom has a more explosive issue burst upon a society than this one. Mr. Gardner is an English Minister and Consultant Obstetrician and Gynecologist, Sunderland Hospitals. He deals not only with the medical aspects which compel him to oppose abortion, but with the moral and ethical problems as well. Gospel preachers must come to grips with this issue. We believe Mr. Gardner's book will provide much help.


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READING THE BULLETINS

It is interesting what one can learn by reading church bulletins. It is amazing and shocking to realize what some churches are doing these days. We wonder if some brethren understand or care what the Bible reveals concerning the God-given mission of the church. May I give you some examples of what I mean.

In the bulletin of the Burke Road church in Pasadena, Texas, March 11, 1973, we find an article entitled, "His Players Will Perform Sunday." The article says:

"His Players, A Christian theater group from Los Angeles, will play a return engagement here at Burke Road this Sunday evening at 6 o'clock. The drama group was here last summer and was well received. Skilled in theater presentation, His Players will present a fast-moving collage of warm, incisive and humorous skits.

"The Christian theater group serves under the elders of the Westchester church in Los Angeles. His Players contribute their ministry without remuneration in the spirit of early disciples who went without purse or pack. They subsist on what is voluntarily given to them and are splendid and dedicated young Christians.

"Undoubtedly you will enjoy this unusual worship opportunity Sunday evening."

No doubt about this being an unusual worship service—that is, if one has been following the Bible. Since when did drama and humorous skits become a part of worship unto God in his church? It is rather amusing to see them compare this theater group with the early disciples. It is true that they sometimes went without purse or pack, but they went out preaching the gospel of Christ rather than presenting dramatic plays for the purpose of entertaining.

In their March 18th bulletin, there is a report of the performance. They said, "The variety offered in their presentation ranged from comedy to serious and deep insights on the human situation. New material since their appearance here last summer was well received, and in fact their new puppets stole the show."

Yes, we agree that this is an "unusual worship opportunity" among people who claim to be Christians and have some respect for divine authority. They announced that the "next special guest group scheduled at Burke Road is the Horizons."

In the March 11th bulletin, they announced that the

Ladies Bible Class had heard a panel of guest speakers, including a Jewish lady, a Catholic lady, a Mexican-American lady, and a White Anglo Saxon Protestant. Now see if you can harmonize that with such passages as II Corinthians 6:14-18 and II John 9-11.

Their bulletins contained such additional foolishness as a statement on how good the cigars were that were passed out by a new father, what one dear lady dreamed about the preacher, and how much weight one brother lost while directing a political campaign. No doubt about it, that church is under the direction of seven elders and three preachers who know what it's all about—the social gospel, that is.

Now let's take a brief look at some recent bulletins from the Broadway church in Lubbock, Texas. An article announces that the Lubbock Christian High School A Cappella Chorus will present a "Concert of Praise" in the Broadway auditorium. "The chorus program will be a most enjoyable musical treat. All Broadway members and guests are invited to attend the concert." Brethren used to condemn the sectarians for their choruses and choirs, but now they have them.

Look at this announcement: "SENIOR HIGH WIN A FREE ROUND TRIP BY CHAUFFEURED LIMOUSINE TO ONE OF LUBBOCK'S MOST POPULAR PLACES. This Sunday evening at 7:20 the chauffeured limousine will arrive at Youthreach Center. The young man and the young lady who have brought the largest number of guests will then depart with their dates on a trip they'll not soon forget. Exiting amid cheers and discharging flashbulbs, they will visit one of Lubbock's most talked about places, a spot which may not be with us much longer and in which the mayor has had vital interest in the past few months. Join us Sunday evening for this exciting event. Bring your friends. You could win."

That reminds me of a local denomination which advertised a "burst-the-balloon-Sunday". Each child present was given a balloon and some of them contained money. I imagine that drew a crowd, just as they did in Lubbock, but with what and for what? It was certainly not with the gospel which is God's power to save, the only drawing power of the church, and the only message it can teach.

Then there were several articles concerning Lubbock Christian College in the bulletins. Of course this is further evidence of church support of colleges which we see and hear more and more these days.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all churches today were under the influence of the kind of teaching which was once heard in the brotherhood? For example, consider the following statements from brother N. B. Hardeman:

"Again, I say to you, with caution and thought, that it is not the work of the church to furnish entertainment for the members. And yet many churches have drifted into such an effort. They enlarge their basement, put in all kinds of gymnastic apparatus, and make every sort of an appeal to the young people of the congregation. I have never read anything in the

Bible that indicated to me that such was a part of the work of the church. I am wholly ignorant of any Scripture that even points in that direction."

"Many brethren have looked upon our young people's meetings with some degree of suspicion. If we are not careful, we may have an organization not at all different from others which we now condemn. Really, brethren, I have failed to find anywhere in the Bible where there is a difference made in teaching or church work between a young fellow and an old fellow. Just where is that passage which intimates that the church should be divided according to years? Brethren Srygley and Tant thought that such distinctions evidenced our drifting away. To say the least of such, there is a danger. I submit to you preachers that we should be exceedingly careful lest, in our enthusiasm to make a big show, we turn apart from the straight and narrow path and have within our midst something that the Lord does not want." (Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons, Vol. V, pp. 50, 53)

What brother Hardeman said was true in 1942 and it is true in 1973. We plead with brethren everywhere to let the church be the church with Christ and his gospel as its only power and work!

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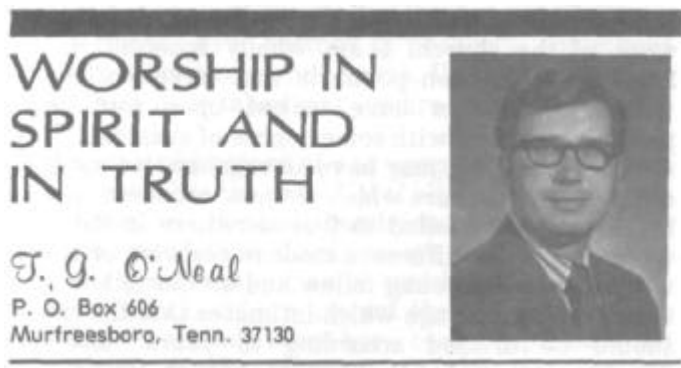
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ARGUMENTS FOR THE INSTRUMENT IN WORSHIP-NO. 2

With this article we continue to look at the arguments made for the instrument in worship.

AID

It is contended that the instrument aids the singing like a walking stick aids walking.

An aid must be subordinate to the thing being done; it is not coordinate with the thing done. Eye glasses aid seeing; they are not another kind of sight. A hearing aid aids hearing; it is not another kind of hearing. The instrument is not an aid, subordinate to the singing which is done. The instrument is coordinate to singing and constitutes, not an aid, but an addition to singing. How does the instrument aid when it is played as an instrumental solo?

TALENT

Some say they have a natural talent to play an instrument and should use their talent to praise God.

This argument would justify most anything. One could say they had a natural talent for baking a cake or pie; for building a house; for cutting hair or repairing machinery and therefore they could bring these things into the worship upon the basis of talent.

ANTEDATES LAW OF MOSES

It has been said that the instrument antedates the law of Moses and when the law of Moses was removed the instrument remained.

Read Gen. 4:1-7 and Heb. 11:4-5 to see that animal sacrifice was also before the law of Moses. From Gen. 17 and Gal. 3 one learns that fleshly circumcision was also before the law of Moses. Shall we practice animal sacrifice and circumcision in the church because they were before the Law of Moses?

UNDER THE LAW

Many contend we should have instruments in the church today because they were used under the law of Moses. So was incense, infant membership of the covenant, animal sacrifice, polygamy, etc. To practice what was done under the law would be to put Moses on an equal with Christ. This we are forbidden to do. (Mt. 17:1-5) Paul shows it would be spiritual adultery

to be under two laws at the same time. (Rom. 7:1-4) To seek to be justified by the law severs one from Christ. (Gal. 5:4) If we depend upon the law, we depend upon that which is invalid. (Col. 2:13-17; Eph. 2:14-16)

DAVID HAD IT

It is often said that David had it and he was a man after God's own heart.

The statement that David was a man after God's heart was not made about the instruments David had. This statement was made in connection with David's selection by God as king over Israel. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) Among other things David had or did was murder and adultery. (2 Sam. 11-12) Could anything that David had or did be practiced in the New Testament church?

NOT FORBIDDEN

Some will often say, "but the Bible does not say not to have instrumental music in the worship of the church."

This puts a premium upon the silence of God. God never said to an angel "Thou art my Son." (Heb. 1:5) Because God did not say this, could an angel claim to be the Son of God? Moses did not say priests should not be made out of the tribe of Juda. (Heb. 7:14) Because Moses did not say this, were priests made out of the tribe of Juda? No, priests were of the tribe of Levi. When God is silent, we should be silent. We should not be presumptuous and speak where God has not spoken. When sent to the store for milk, we are not given a list of all items in the store that are **not** wanted. God does not tell us not to use the instrument; he tells us to **sing**.

HAVE IT AT HOME

It has been said that if one can have an instrument at home, then one can have it in worship.

The instrument is not wrong within itself. If it were, then it would be wrong anywhere. There are many things that are morally right, but religiously wrong. We wash hands (Mk. 7:3-7) before eating, feet are washed (I Tim. 5:10) and we eat at home (I Cor. 11:34). We could name other things practiced at home that are not authorized in the worship of the New Testament Church. A wife cooks, sews, and gives children a bath at home, but not in the worship of the church.

HAVE SEATS AND LIGHTS

Some think they see a parallel in having seats and lights in the place of meeting and having an instrument.

Sitting in a seat with lights on would be authorized by general authority and would expedite the assembly. However, in New Testament assemblies they had seats to sit on (Jas. 2:1) and lights with which to see (Acts 20:8). When one is sitting in a seat with a light on, he is still just singing. When the instrument is **added** there are both singing and playing.

I COR. 14 MENTIONS HARPS

Some see the words "pipe," "harps" and "trumpets" in I Cor. 14:7-8 and they think this is authority for instruments in the worship of the church.

This I Cor. 14 context also mentions war (v. 8) but who would argue this justifies the church to engage in such? I Cor. 9:24 mentions by way of illustration games, but this is not authority for the church to be engaged in sports. An ox is mentioned in I Cor. 9:9 in an illustration but who would want to admit animals into the church? Paul's point in I Cor. 14 is that unless in the use of spiritual gifts there is a distinction in what is done in the assembly, there is nothing accomplished and uses the use of an instrument to illustrate. If the trumpet does not give the distinct battle sound, no one will prepare for battle.

EXPEDIENT

Expediency is something that is often the ground upon which an instrument is defended in New Testament worship.

The New Testament teaches that in order for a thing to be expedient it must (1) be lawful, I Cor. 6:12, (2) must edify, I Cor. 10:23, and (3) must not offend a person's conscience, I Cor. 11:28. Instrumental music in worship is inexpedient on all three counts for it (1) does not edify, (2) it offends the conscience of him who knows God's will, and (3) there is not any law for it in the New Testament.

MUSIC IN HEAVEN

I have heard people say instrumental music was all right in the New Testament Church since it would be in heaven.

To grant this to be true would not prove we should have it in the church. In Rev. 14:6, John said, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven." Do we need angels flying in the midst of the church when it is assembled for worship? Rev. 14:2 is a comparison, note the word "as." The language of Revelation is set forth in symbols. (Rev. 1:1)

From Mt. 6:10 some would say God's will on earth should be done as in heaven. Therefore, we can have instruments on earth in the New Testament Church.

However, this **assumes** there will be literal **instruments** in heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (I Cor. 15:50) How would men without fingers of flesh and blood play upon literal mechanical instruments even if they were in heaven? On earth men marry, rear children (Mt. 22:30) but not so in heaven. The point Jesus is making in Mt. 6:10 is that the will of God should be done on earth as in heaven. In both places obedience to God's will should be done.

These are by no means all of the arguments that have been made, or could be made, to justify instrumental music in the worship of the New Testament Church. Others will think of good points to supplement what has been said by way of answer to

WEDDINGS
and FUNERALS
in the MEETING
HOUSE - No. 2

Weldon E. Warnock

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WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS IN THE MEETINGHOUSE-NO. 2

Brother Ralph Williams said in a review of my February article on "Weddings and Funerals in the Meetinghouse" that "The real issue is: WHERE IS THE AUTHORITY? If such practices are allowable a simple N.T. precept, example or necessary inference is all that's necessary." But the issue is not one of authority (finding book, chapter and verse), but rather it is a matter of judgment. We are not talking about what the church may do, but what individuals may do in the meetinghouse. Certainly the church has no business conducting weddings or funerals in or out of the meetinghouse. We are all in agreement here. But what individuals may do in the church's building is another matter.

To ask for book, chapter and verse for a wedding or funeral in the meetinghouse is about like asking for Bible to comb your hair, tie your shoes, powder your face or manicure your nails in the meetinghouse. Where is there command, example or necessary inference for these things in the meetinghouse? Yet, we all do them (hopefully, not during the worship, however). The church would need authority to comb hair, tie shoes, powder the face and manicure nails, but not individuals.

Our brother states, "I would take exception to the statement, 'The Lord never did say what could or could not be done in a meetinghouse.' Jesus told us that when He revealed the 'church's authorized work.' " No, brother Williams, Jesus told the church what it could do when he revealed its authorized work—not what could be done in a temporal structure. This position eliminates any and everything in the building or on the premises that is not a work of the church. Is riding a bicycle on the parking lot a work of the church? Is playing ball by the neighborhood children a work of the church? Is public parking by the community while shopping or working the church's work? Since none of these things is a work of the church, they must be barred from church property, according to brother Williams' reasoning.

Forced to its logical conclusion, brother Williams'

view becomes an extreme and untenable one. It could be classified as a *reductio ad absurdum*. Putting this in plain language, it means, "disproof of a proposition, etc., by showing the absurdity to which it leads when carried to its logical conclusion" (Webster). Brother Williams' position demands that everything not related to church activity must be kept off the church's premises. No congregation practices this.

My comparison of weddings and funerals to socializing before and after services is parallel, brother Williams to the contrary. I did not say that they were comparable in every aspect, but they are parallel in that neither is a function of the church. Since some are contending that weddings and funerals may not be conducted in a meetinghouse because they are not works of the church, I maintained in my former article that neither may socializing, games by neighborhood children or parking of automobiles by the local residents while shopping or working, be done on the church's premises because they are not functions of the church.

Brother Williams wants to make the socializing proper and permissible before and after worship on the basis of it being incidental. Webster defines "incidental" as "a chance or undesigned feature of something; casual; hence, minor; of secondary importance." Thus, it appears that brother Williams has no objections to undesigned secular matters in the meetinghouse; just those that are planned. Maybe we need to start having unplanned weddings and classify them under "incidentals." To say a thing is incidental seems to make it right. Seriously, we have as much right to perform a wedding or funeral in the meetinghouse and classify it a matter of judgment as we do to talk about hunting there and classify it an incidental. Neither one involves the church in an unauthorized practice.

Our brother said, "I don't know of any churches or elders **inviting** the public to freely use the parking lot or the neighborhood children to turn the premises into a play lot." Why don't they stop the practice, then? If their failure to invite suggests that they disapprove, then they ought to terminate playing and parking on the premises. The fact that elders do not stop playing and public parking on the parking lot is evidence that they have no objections. How many churches do you think would turn down children's request to ride their bicycles on the parking lot or deny a request for some business people to use the lot while they are at work? To be this narrow and restrictive would cast the church in a contemptible position in the community.

Who says that weddings and funerals are the primary issue, except brethren who have made them an issue? They are no issue with most of us, and I regret that they have been made a public issue. If I made children playing on the parking lot and socializing before and after worship an issue, they would be the main issue with me. I could say something like brother Williams said, "Of course how these questions are answered regarding weddings and funerals doesn't really meet the issue of using the

church's premises for children playing and public parking. First tackle the primary issue itself. THEN if these other matters need attention for consistency and truth's sake, work at solving them." Really, public parking and playing on the parking lot are just as much an issue as weddings and funerals in the building, and "for consistency and truth's sake," they need solving by the objectors of weddings and funerals in the building.

Some questions are in order just here: (1) Since brother Williams contended that the church's facilities are "sanctified," would it be permissible for a person to make a phone call on the church's phone that is not related to church work? (2) Could a person get a drink of water when the church is not assembled in the building? (3) May the rest-rooms be used, other than during a service? These things are done in all buildings owned by churches of Christ that are so equipped. Are we to quit allowing these practices on the basis of the facilities being "sanctified"—that they are to be used only in conjunction with the church's activity?

Although I am of the conviction that the usage of the building for weddings and funerals is a matter of judgment, there are some factors to consider as to what may be permitted on the church's premises: (1) Is it morally right? Of course, this goes without saying. (2) What might the potential dangers be to involving the church in the practice later? (3) Would the people in the community get the wrong impression and thus hinder them from obeying the truth? (4) Has the main purpose of the meetinghouse been changed? It was built for the worship and work of the church. If it is used all week for individual projects and activities, has not the purpose for which it was built been altered? As the old saying goes, "The tail would be wagging the dog." (5) Is the activity in good taste? Propriety demands, on the basis of the close proximity of the meetinghouse with religious functions, that certain things are out of place on the church's property. Discretion would have to be used here.

In conclusion may I say that if a congregation saw fit to refuse a wedding or funeral in its meetinghouse, that would be its prerogative, but it has no right to try to impose its opinions or feelings on sister congregations and thereby disrupt the peace and harmony of brethren over such matters that are purely optional. We have enough legitimate issues without creating some superfluous ones.

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"WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES" NO. 2

I pointed out in a previous article that Peter said some "wrest" the scriptures to their own destruction. It was emphasized that "wrest", means to twist or turn. Many of us have found out the hard way that a false teacher can twist scriptures a number of ways to suit his fancy. Our study for this month is on Mark 16:15-16. I have always felt this scripture is one of the best in the New Testament in defence of the necessity of Bible baptism. However, in using this text in public debate I found out that denominational preachers have many ways of wresting this text. I shall present some of these quibbles in this article.

First, it should be made known that grammatically the sentence will stand in defense of the above position. One merely has to show that "He" is the subject, "Shall be saved" is the predicate and that the subject is modified by a restrictive clause "That believeth and is baptized." It may be emphasized that since belief and baptism are joined by the copulative conjunction "and", both belief and baptism are equally important in the sentence. Most Baptist preachers will not attack the grammar of the sentence but will attack other areas. For example, they will quibble about why Jesus did not use a negative with reference to baptism. They go to the text and point out that Jesus said, "He that believeth not shall be damned" but did not say "He that is not baptized shall be damned." Actually, it has been shown scores of times that such would have been absurd. Jesus was teaching, all it takes to condemn a person is a lack of faith, but it takes two things to give him salvation. Debaters in the old days gave parallel sentences to counteract this quibble. One such sentence was "He that makes money and saves it shall accumulate wealth but he that makes no money shall come to want." It was pointed out that saying "Saves it not" would be foolish. How could one save money he had not made? This was done to prove that every affirmative does not necessarily require a stated negative.

After an opponent has tried to confuse the audience over the "Negative" quibble he will come up with what he calls a parallel sentence. It will go something like this. "He that getteth on a train and is seated shall reach Chicago." They will point out that getting on the train is all that is essential and that being seated is for the comfort or convenience of the passenger. Therefore they will argue that believing is all that is

necessary in Mk. 16:15-16, and that being baptized is a matter of choice. This bit of wresting the scriptures sounds good to many unlearned people. However, upon an investigation of all matters involved it becomes a bunch of foolishness. For example, the sentence itself, teaches grammatically, that "being seated" is essential to reaching Chicago. Common sense teaches us this is not so; therefore the sentence states a falsehood! One might as well say, "The only means of travel in the United States is by automobile." Since the statement is false it becomes foolishness. For a bit of humor old time debaters would emphasize that Baptist preachers have the man in Chicago before he has time to sit down.

The third example of wresting this text is in regard to miracles. In the latter part of the text it says, "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents etc." It is then asked if we can handle rattle snakes without injury. Since our reply is in the negative, they argue that this text is not binding. Of course, the answer is in the context. In endeavoring to answer this quibble many brethren have abused the text. Several years ago a young preacher rebuked me for saying that "believers" was the understood antecedent of "they" and "them" in verse 17. He told me that "he" of verse 16 is a singular pronoun and "They" and "Them" of verse 17 are plural pronouns, and since pronouns must agree with antecedents in number the "They" and "Them" of verse 17 had to refer to the apostles and not to believers. This may sound good on the surface but really the young man's reasoning slipped a cog. It is true that pronouns must agree with antecedents in number but they must also agree in person. It must be observed that verse 14 is Mark's record of what took place. The same is true of verse 19. However, from verse 15 through verse 18 we have a direct quotation from the Lord to his apostles. In English we have: the speaker, first person; the one spoken to, second person; the one spoken of, third person. The pronouns "They" and "Them" are third person pronouns, the ones spoken of. But in our text Jesus was SPEAKING TO the apostles. "Go ye into all the world". "Ye" is a second person pronoun, and does not agree with "They" and "Them" in person which is just as much a violation of English as a pronoun failing to agree with its antecedent in number! The truth of the matter is Jesus would have said, "These signs shall follow you that believe", if he had intended the apostles only. It is best to admit that believers in the early days of the church did have power to perform miracles but they ended when the new Testament was signed, sealed and delivered. This can be sustained from First Corinthians 13.

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CALVINISM EXAMINED NO. 2

The Calvinian system is built upon five basic doctrines. Though all have been taught in various forms, Calvin with great skill became the mastermind who developed them into a theological five-point system set forth by five letters that spell T-U-L-I-P. These letters stand for, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Preservation of the saints.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

The Calvinian System teaches that the sin of Adam resulted in the total corruption or depravity of human nature. The true meaning of this doctrine is set forth in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, pages 33-34. "Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that God, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereto."

The things that Calvin and his followers fail to realize is that we all suffer the CONSEQUENCES of Adam's sin, but not the guilt. We are all going to die physically because of Adam's sin. However, Paul teaches that "every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

We want to look now at the consequences of the above doctrine. However, let us state again the doctrine is that mankind is so depraved by nature as to be totally destitute of spiritual good, and inclined only to evil continually. Now if this statement is true, that man is totally destitute of spiritual good, then all babies will go to hell. For, they are totally depraved. The word "total" means, "complete, utter; absolute" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, Page 897). But to believe that one is born into this world as bad as he could possibly be denies a plain passage of scripture. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13). How can man get worse if he is "totally evil" already?


The Calvinistic doctrine of depravity is dishonoring to God and renders him unjust. It also denies a number of passages of scripture. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him,

and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). In Rom. 14:12 Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."

On the basis of these and many other passages, it is my conviction that the very first in Mr. Calvin's theories is false. And, since all of the other steps must of necessity follow because the first step was supposedly true, we would conclude that those steps which follow would also be false.

If the first step of Total Depravity in Calvinism had been true (which it is not), then we could understand how we would need to build the system that Calvin used in order to bring about man's justification. If man has, because of the fall of Adam, wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; then we could readily see how the next step in Calvin's system of unconditional election would follow. For, if all men are so depraved they cannot choose salvation for themselves; and since God is going to save some, it follows that God must do the choosing and that without reference to condition or character. So, when you begin with a false premise, other false theories must be adopted in order to sustain the seeming truthfulness of the basic premise.

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Connie W. Adams

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

LYLE O. KELSOE, Okinawa, Japan. A new congregation is meeting in Okinawa, Japan. We are known as the Mid-Island church of Christ. At present, there are three families worshipping together. We meet each Sunday at 2:00 P.M. in the Futema Marine Chapel. We would be pleased to receive information about any friends or relatives you may have who are stationed or working in Okinawa. If you do know of such persons, please tell us about them and tell them about us. We are the only faithful congregation in Okinawa. Contacts here are: Bruce D. Stults - Phone 7-4145; Michael Head - Phone 098976-2549 or Lyle Kelsoe - Phone 7-3191. Our mailing address is Mid-Island Church of Christ, c / o Lyle O. Kelsoe (DAC), 417-46-7240, USARPAC Calib ag, B1 617, A.P.O. San Francisco 96248. We would appreciate it if brethren would add us to their bulletin mailing lists.

WARREN R. CHEATHAM, 3225 Salinas Court, Irving, Texas 75062. We moved to assist in the North Irving work on May 1, 1973. The North Irving church of Christ had its beginning just after the first of the year 1973 and is presently meeting at 1516 Irving Blvd. West, Irving, Texas 75060. There were 40 members starting the work which had grown to 65 as of August 1. Irving is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the Irving economy is booming due to the new airport which is ready to open on October 1. If in this area we would appreciate your stopping with us.

FRANK C. SARTIN, Greensburg, Kentucky. Paul M. Caldwell of Indianapolis, Indiana closed a gospel meeting here July 15th with the Thurlow congregation. The meeting was well attended and one man was baptized. We wish to express our appreciation to all the surrounding congregations for the support given us in this effort to spread the gospel.

HERBERT FRASER, 1900 W. Elizabeth, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521. From its beginning in 1966, the Foothills church has been the only congregation in northern Colorado known to this writer to be committed against all errors: institutionalism, centralization, the "social gospel", "fellowship without endorsement" (also termed "unity in diversity"), etc. This commitment continues as positively as ever, as well as commitment against marked facets of subjectivism that seem to be affecting some other areas. Further, the congregation is in the best condition ever, with hamony prevailing, and better equipped to advance the cause of truth. We'll be happy to hear of any here, including incoming students at Colorado State University, whom we might encourage. The meeting house is located at 3207 S. Taft Hill Road.

LARRY R. DEVORE, Box 86, Roseville, Ohio 43777.1

am seeking historical information about W. H. (Henry) Devore, who preached in southern Ohio and West Virginia many years ago. If you can help, please do so.

KEN WELIEVER, 133 W. Josie Ave., Hillsboro, Ohio 45133. As many know, I concluded my work as the "full time" preacher for the church in Hillsboro, Ohio December 31, 1972. For the first five months of 1973, my wife and I enjoyed a vacation from located work, while I preached on an appointment basis as the opportunity presented itself. Now, I have agreed to work with the Kettering church in Dayton, Ohio. I began my work with these brethren June 1, 1973 and will move to Dayton in August. This church has three fine elders to feed the flock and three deacons to serve. The congregation numbers slightly over 100. I am looking forward to a successful work with this fine congregation.

DONALD R. GIVENS, 2710 21st Ave., S., Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. We have just completed a gospel meeting with Joe Corley of Dothan, Alabama. We had a total of 22 different non-Christians attend the meeting. Our current membership is 29. There were Mormons, Baptists, a United Church member, Mennonites, Catholics, and Re-organized Mormons present at the meeting. Many opportunities abound for teaching denominational people. Our next gospel meeting is scheduled for September with Bill McCuiston of Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Worship with us when in western Canada.

RICHARD M. BERG, 109 Commonwealth Circle, Charlottesville, Va. 22901. My family and I recently moved to Charlottesville, Va. Unfortunately there is not a congregation in this area which actively opposes institutionalism, sponsoring church arrangements, and other liberal trends in the brotherhood. We drive 70 miles to worship at Richmond. I am hoping that brethren who read this magazine may know of other brethren near Charlottesville or ones who may be planning to move to this area who are interested in meeting with us for worship. Our home is open for the purpose of starting a sound congregation here. If you know of any brethren who might meet with us contact me at the above address or phone (703) 973-4815.

PREACHERS NEEDED

The church in MONROE, LOUISIANA needs a full-time preacher. This congregation began on May 30, 1971 when a group met for the first time in the home of one of the members. 17 were present. Three weeks later they rented a warehouse as a temporary place with 23 present the first service there. On March 26, 1972, they moved into a lovely meeting house with

auditorium and four classrooms. Tom Swilley preached for them from the beginning until last month. The church is able to provide partial support and believes that contacts are already established to provide what is needed additionally. Attendance now runs in the 50's. An experienced man is needed. Monroe is the location of White's Ferry Road church with their WORLD RADIO and liberalism is strong here. If interested, contact Wallace Price, 1103 Glenmar Ave., Monroe, La. 71201.—Bob Buchanon

NORTHSHORE, Houston, Texas. The church in Northshore is looking for someone interested in moving and working with them. Anyone interested may contact the elders: Gene Fain, 13034 Corpus Christi, Houston, Texas 77015 (Phone 453-1848); or Hubbard "Bo" Linthicum, 13926 Waterville, Houston, Texas 77015 (Phone 453-4068).

NORTH STREET, Tampa, Florida. The church meeting at 610 E. North Street in Tampa needs a gospel preacher to assist in the work, beginning October 1st, or thereafter. We need someone who will actively oppose error (modernism and the other attempts to pervert the gospel) and who has the ability to move a congregation to greater zeal and love for the souls of men. We average around 145 on Lord's day morning. Please write or call: Harold Peters, 813-988-5743 or Olin Howard, 813-235-8701.

MIO, MICHIGAN. The church at Mio, Michigan needs a preacher now. Attendance runs about 40 on Sundays. Franklin Sands was with them but has now moved to Winchester, Virginia. The editor was in Mio in a meeting in July and would be glad to share information with any interested party. The brethren there have had a hard struggle. There was a division with the liberals about a year ago. The liberal element kept the building. These brethren bought an old building from the Methodists a block off the main street and have it in fairly good condition. More improvements are planned soon. There are only about a half dozen sound churches in the whole state. Mio is situated in the Huron National Forest and is a favorite vacation area with many. Anyone interested please contact Lloyd S. Sands, P.O. Box 201, Mio, Michigan 48647.

AMBAG, WISCONSIN. The church in Ambag, Wisconsin is in need of a full-time man to work there. A retired man with some income would be best. There is a position available as caretaker of an apartment, lights and phone furnished, plus a monthly wage. The church work would not be easy but very challenging. Many people are studying themselves out of denominationalism. If interested write to Ambag Church of Christ, Route 1, Box 56, Ambag, Wis. 54102.

BLUE ASH, OHIO. The Church of Christ in Blue Ash, Ohio is in need of a full time gospel preacher as of the 1st of August, 1973. Anyone interested please call 1-

513-733-5418 or write to Church of Christ, 4667 Cooper Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio 45242.

PARIS LANDING, TENNESSEE. The Kentucky Lake Road church in eastern Henry County, Tennessee is looking for a mature man, experienced in personal work to work full time with this rural congregation. We started meeting in September, 1965 and have an adequate building almost paid for, and also a large house for a preacher in Paris, Tennessee. Average attendance is 30 in the winter and near 50 in the summer. We are in a resort area (Kentucky Lake) and being the only sound congregation in the area, draw a lot of tourists. We can furnish \$200 per month support plus a house. If interested please contact Jesse O. Hat man, Route 2, Box 208, Buchanan, Tennessee 38222; phone 901-642-0207. For references on this congregation contact James P. Miller, Aude McKee or Bobby Witherington.

W. C. (BILLY) ASHWORTH, Box 500, Franklin, Tennessee 37064. After five and one half years of a very enjoyable and profitable work with the Hillview church of Christ, 7471 Charlotte Pike, Nashville, Tennessee 37209, I am to begin work as evangelist with the Oak Avenue church of Christ at Dickson, Tennessee, on July 22.

The church at Hillview, though not large in numbers by some standards, and young in years, is one of the best churches I know of in its stand for truth and the preaching of the gospel. This church is sending about \$650 each month to preachers of the gospel in other areas including men in Mexico and the Philippines. In addition, a weekly broadcast over the local radio station has been paid for by the church. I have been the speaker on this gospel broadcast for eighteen years and four months. Amos Davenport of Nashville is beginning work with the Hillview church on July 22 and the church plans to continue the radio program. I encourage all faithful Christians who move to Nashville or visit there to assemble with the Hillview church. The building is located one half mile off 1-40 West at Old Hickory Blvd. exit.

The Oak Avenue church is in the center of Dickson County about 35 miles west of Nashville, off 1-40. It is, of course, a conservative church and stands for the truth of the gospel. I believe that Dickson County has more conservative churches than any other area of Tennessee. I look forward to a profitable and enjoyable work there. All saints moving to, or visiting in Dickson are encouraged to assemble with the Oak Avenue church. Harvey Williams, who has been with the Oak Avenue church the past four years and who has done a good work there, is moving to begin work with the Perry Heights church at Donelson on July 22.

PLEASE SEND your news reports to the editor at P.O. BOX 68, BROOKS, KY. 40109. Put them in brief paragraphs with your name and address at the beginning. Others are interested in what is happening where you work.