

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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Potent Points



Mound and Starr Nacogdoches, Texas
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ISOLATIONISM

As I go about preaching the Word among the churches I see many encouraging signs, and this I like. Sometimes, however, I see things which I don't like and because of what I read in the New Testament, I don't think God likes it either. What I have observed in a number of places is that some members of the church develop sort of an "exclusive club" made up of those considered to be the "superior" members. It usually consists of those who consider themselves pretty knowledgeable in God's Word. More than likely they have overcome most, if not all of the habits which generally plague us and they are faithful to attend all the Bible classes and assemblies of the church. These people have quite a lot in common and so they fit together in a most harmonious way. I am proud to see Christians grow, and therefore, I commend all such people. But, let me remind you that it is at this juncture in growth that some Christians allow themselves to become members of this "exclusive club of the superior," and drift into a state of *isolation*.

At this point these "well meaning" saints allow themselves to become so isolated that they become as clannish as the old man who said; "Its me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." Because of their supposed "superior knowledge and attainments" they now become sort of an "inner circle" of disciples who feel that they have been initiated into a state of wisdom and holiness which is hardly accessible to the ordinary

members of the body. The apostle Paul was having to deal with a similar problem when he wrote the Colossian letter. There were some among the saints who had fallen into this trap of "superior knowledge" and felt they were the "cultivated few" with qualities which could not be attained by the ordinary masses among God's people. These people are identified by secular writers as Gnostics. Paul warned the brethren against such thinking and assured them that it was his desire to present *every man perfect in Jesus Christ*. He wrote; "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:27-28).

Now, don't misunderstand me, I am not saying that I know of some gnostics among us. What I am saying is that I see brethren who have a tendency to slide into this pattern. In their own maturity they become so isolated that they have no patience with those who are not immediately on their "elevated standard." They become so comforted by the supposed perfection of their own "exclusive club" that they have no patience with the "imperfect." Christians who allow themselves to drift into this attitude seem to forget that they were once among the "imperfect." They forget that they were once spiritually "across the railroad tracks."

As we develop in Christ, brethren, we are not supposed to "draw in," but rather we are to "reach out." There must be no compromise with sin, but there is to be deep sympathy for the sinner. Our Lord had his bosom companions among the strong, but He took His Word and His influence to the weak. It is true that Paul's closest friends were the strong, but he constantly took his efforts to the untaught and weak who needed him most. Brethren, one reason churches are not growing spiritually and numerically is simply, *isolationism*. Many of us who have the greatest capacity to help have cut ourselves off from those who need us most. Beloved, as we grow in knowledge and character, let us "reach out," and not "draw in."

WHOSOEVER GOETH ONWARD

By Bruce Edwards, Jr.

There recently appeared on television an interesting little drama entitled, "Catholics." The story was set in the not too distant future when "Vatican IV," (a parody of the recent so-called ecumenical councils) decrees that a certain order of monks in Ireland must cease performing the Catholic mass in Latin. The theme of the play was the degeneration of religious orthodoxy and morality as a result of the ecumenical movement between various religious bodies. In this futuristic tale, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, in response to the "ecumenical spirit" and the "noble goal" of social reform, compromises long standing beliefs and practices. The inevitable result as portrayed in the play is the all too familiar "this worldly" social gospelism, symbolized by priests who attempt to overthrow South American governments rather than Satan.

Though we have no stomach for "priests," "masses," the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, or other outlandish violations of the New Testament revelation, one can see a definite parallel between these fictitious religious characters and some of those today who profess to be New Testament Christians. In the name of "unity" and "brotherhood peace" compromises of the Lord's truth are being perpetrated across the land. In the Scriptures, "unity" is a **local**, not "universal" matter and where does the concept of "brotherhood" appear? Yet there are those who propose to "unite all segments of the restoration movement" into one colossal "super-church" in which Scriptural beliefs and practices take a back seat to the appeasement of false teachers.

Anyone who is a part of a "segment" or a "movement" ought to absent himself from such and align himself instead with a group of faithful **believers**. The Bible nowhere allows for such an outrageous stretching of Scriptural terminology. The only "segments, movements, or sects" mentioned there are condemned. Inherent also in current "ecumenical" efforts is a militant social gospelism. Witness the bus rider promotions to attain the "greatest 'Sunday school' attendance" or the building of fellowship halls, hospitals, and gymnasiums. Such things are ominous signs of a wicked departure from Scriptural goals and ideals.

We do not (yet) have "gospel preachers" attempting the overthrow of foreign governments or proclaiming the cause of union with "sincere Buddhists," but given time, the seeds that are currently being sown will surely cultivate them. Let us always remember that the church is simply a local assembly of called-out people, not the Republican Party, CIA, Red Cross, or NCAA. The mission of God's people is solely the saving of souls, not bodies. Paul prophesied of the time when "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons," and this prophecy is fulfilled every time man seeks to improve

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over God's plans and purposes. May we prayerfully consider the direction in which we head, knowing that it is a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

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Beginning :

Volume 16

With this issue **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** begins its sixteenth year of publication. This is also the first regular 20 page issue of the paper. We hope to bring you more copy per month for your money. We thank those who have stayed with us and promise all readers interesting things to come.

Editorial

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WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

The American home is in deep trouble. The signs are too plentiful and clear to ignore. Divorces have reached staggering proportions with between two and three out of every five marriages ending in divorce. Divorce laws have been made easier. No longer does society attach a stigma to divorce. The very institution of marriage itself is under attack. Coed dormitories are the order on many college campuses and arrangements to "live together" without honor of marriage are increasingly popular. The "pill" is in common use among many unmarried young women who would have no reason for its use unless they purpose to commit fornication.

The distinct role of men and women in the home has been blurred by the unisex movement in conjunction with the women's liberation agitation. High schools are teaching shop to girls and home-making to boys and while it might be good for girls to know how to fix a few things, and for boys to know a little about cooking, it is not too difficult to catch the drift of this phenomenon. You see, many of the educators who plan curricula for students today do not believe that man should be expected to be the breadwinner and woman the home-maker. The Equal Opportunity Act already passed by Congress is now seeking ratification in 38 states to make it the law of the land. If so ratified (at last count 30 states had already approved it), young women will be as subject to military conscription in time of war as young men. A husband may sue his wife for non-support and children in divorce proceedings may as often as not be granted the husband. Even separate rest-room facilities in public places may come under attack by zealots of women's liberation under this law. On the drawing boards now are plans for government supported daycare centers for the children of working mothers. Indeed, the foundations are crumbling.

What are Christians to do in the midst of such circumstances? We must do what the people of God have always done in time of trouble. We must "ask for the old paths" and "walk therein." We must return to the Bible as our guide and fashion our lives according to its precepts.

The Origin of the Home

When questioned about the home and God's design for it, Jesus referred his critics to the

beginning. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:4-6). When the allowance for divorce under the law was cited, Jesus said "from the beginning it was not so" (Verse 8). God ordained marriage as in the best interest of mankind. He saw that it was not good for the man to be alone and that he needed an help meet. Woman was therefore created to fill a unique role in all the universe which no other creature was adapted to meet. Amid the floral beauty of Eden the first wedding ceremony took place as God "brought her unto the man." Adam made a vow of acceptance, recognized her as now a part of his own life, and stated the rule to govern the family unit for all time; that a man shall leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:18-24). From the beginning the divine purpose called for one man and one woman living together until death. Whoever questions the validity of the family unit indicts the wisdom of God.

The Purpose of Marriage

Companionship was provided by the first marriage. Adam and Eve complemented each other. God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). An "help meet" meant a companion suited to his needs and implied that he would serve the same purpose for her. Mutual understanding, sympathy, and common purpose and accomplishment were basic needs they both had. It is in connection with these needs that the sex urge is to be satisfied in marriage. Separated from such considerations it becomes nothing more than animal passion and greed. This divine arrangement made provision for the propagation of the race for God said, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Into this lovely circle of companionship, unity of heart and life with the underlying purpose to "cleave" together, offspring were to come. Children should be brought into the world only within the confines of marriage where their arrival is hailed as part of a divine scheme raising motherhood to a place of fulfillment and bringing out the best in man to protect and provide for his own. Children born under different circumstances are indeed unfortunate. The family was designed by God for the best interest of the man, woman and child and became the very foundation of orderly society and progress.

Permanency of the Home

God meant for them to "cleave" together, not split apart. Jesus said God "joined" them together and that man was not to "put asunder" that united by God. Divorce entered under the law, not because it was a part of God's original plan, but "because of the hardness" of human hearts and to provide

protection for the innocent victim of abuse. "But from the beginning it was not so"; that is, God did not intend for this to happen nor did he mean for this unit to be put asunder. In Mt. 5:32 and 19:9, Jesus gave the only acceptable cause for putting away a wife or husband and marrying another, and that was for fornication. "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" (Mt. 19:9). Divorce means sin has been committed. Divorce means failure. Divorce means the divine purpose for the home has been ignored. Divorce is a crack in the foundation of the nation. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away" (Mal. 2:15b-16a).

Start Right

Homes often break up because they were started wrong. Shotgun weddings have two strikes against them from the first and are calculated to build resentment leading to friction and ultimate separation or divorce. Fornication and its fruit is not the right way to begin. Teenage marriages are seldom successful. How many people now living with a second companion have been heard to say, "I made a bad mistake by marrying too young." They seem to think that justifies any eventuality. We must teach our young people to honor chastity and to behave toward the opposite sex when dating. It is far better for young Christians to confine their dating to those who are Christians. Some young girls, in love with love itself, use the poorest judgment in gravitating always toward boys with no morals. Perhaps they think they are great reformers, but usually wind up with a life full of trouble. They did not start right. And boys need to use some sense. That pretty little thing may not have much to commend her as a wife except that she is a pretty little thing to look at. What are her values? What is her attitude toward God, Christ, the church and godly conduct? Why should any boy or girl even consider dating a person who is unwilling to go with them to worship the Lord? There are enough adjustments in marriage to make without having to stand apart on the things that matter most. Young person, if you marry an unbeliever, you will have trouble about your time, your money, family priorities, friends, and especially in the rearing of your children. Indeed, when you marry a child of the Devil, you will have trouble with your father-in-law! Start right. Marry a Christian.

Divine Guidelines

God placed the husband at the head of the family unit. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). The wife is to be subject to her own husband, as unto the Lord (Eph. 5:22). The husband is to love his wife as his own body and is to nourish and cherish her,

dwelling with her according to knowledge (Eph. 5:28-29; 1 Peter 3:7). The wife is to "see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:33). The husband is the breadwinner. It was to Adam that God said, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). A "man" is to "provide for his own" (1 Tim. 5:8). Woman's natural role is as the home-maker. Paul said, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Tim. 5:14). Older women are to teach the young women "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:5). Being a good wife, attending the children, guiding the house, is a full-time business. When these divine guidelines are respected, husbands have a sense of accomplishment, wives a feeling of fulfillment and children have a sense of well-being.

The ignoring of these divine precepts concerning "what God hath joined together" accounts for the wreckage of human lives and the collapse of the family unit. What can we do? We can preach on the home. We can have classes for our young to inform them as to what God said. Editors can write articles and staff writers series of articles on the home. But unless there is a practical application in the family life of each of us, then we shall fail. We must have fathers who assert leadership in their families, wives and mothers who view their role as noble and not degrading, and children who are taught by word and example to respect God and his word, their parents, and each other. We must have homes where the Bible is read each day and where prayer is "wont to be made." We must have homes where the emphasis is on character and right doing and not just on making money and surrounding ourselves with luxuries. If our homes are to survive, we must have stronger influences for righteousness than the schools, jobs and entertainment worlds have for unrighteousness. Upon this depends the future welfare of the church of the Lord and even the survival of the nation.

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A NOD OF APPROVAL

A tip of the editorial hat to the College Judicial Board of Ithaca College, in Ithaca, N. Y. According to an AP release, Nov. 20, 1974, the Board put the stops on a student program called SWAP—Switch With Another Person. One 18-year-old freshman girl who roomed with a young man for a week after drawing his name, said: "Sex was not the object of the experiment."

Perhaps the young man couldn't be reached for comment on that, but the Board, composed of administrators, faculty, staff and students, apparently had a different impression.

A statement was released which stated in part: "Any experiments involving cohabitation are considered by the college to be in violation of housing regulations. Failure on the part of any students to comply with this order will result in prosecution under the College Judicial Board."

It's rather unusual to hear of such restrictions in our day and time. In more and more college dorms, the only students who possess rights are those who desire to live as animals. Other students may either put up with such or move out.

We appreciate the decision of the Judicial Board of Ithaca College.

We might add, however, that the experiments of SWAP violate much more than housing regulations. The doctrine of our King and Savior demands:

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" (I Thess. 4:3, 4).

Chariot Fever

"He takes conjectures, accepts them as fact, builds on to them way-out theories, and presents his 'many small coincidences' according to his own preconceived notions. He deliberately chooses the unconnected, weaves a semblance of connection around it, and puts his theories out as foregone conclusions. This approach is often used by writers, and it may make exciting reading, but one dare not accept it as substantially credible."

That's Dr. Frederick H. Giles commenting on the claims of Erich von Daniken as set forth in Daniken's best seller, "Chariots of the Gods?". Giles is Associate Professor, Dept. of Physics and

Astronomy, University of South Carolina. The quote is taken from the book, "Crash Go The Chariots" by eminent archaeologist, Dr. Clifford Wilson.

For those who may be unacquainted with the chariot fever sweeping the land, here's a brief resume of von Daniken's theory: He alleges that intelligent beings from other solar systems have visited the earth in centuries past. Upon their arrival, they found primitive man making his stone tools and killing game by throwing spears. The men in the spaceship tried to teach the semi-savages about civilization and moral concepts. A few specially selected women were fertilized by the astronauts. The evolution of the species was controlled by these "heavenly" visitors.

All history is reinterpreted by von Daniken and other writers who have caught the fever. When I say all history, Bible history is included. According to "Chariots", Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by an atomic explosion, the ark of the covenant was a radio transmitter by which Moses talked to "God" (actually the man in the flying saucer), and Ezekiel saw a spaceship in chapters one and ten of his book.

Isn't it amazing how many who find the Bible incredible will believe such absurd notions as these? Paul described them well when he said, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:21, 22).

By the way, we heatedly recommend the afore mentioned book, "Crash Go the Chariots". It's a paperback, published by Lancer. If the bookstore in your vicinity doesn't have it in stock, you may do a lot of people a favor if you suggest they order some copies.

Attention Readers

It will be my aim in this column to use the sword of the Spirit in piercing, slicing and revealing the true nature of live and current issues of our day.

If you should run across items in local papers or other reading material that you would like to see commented upon in these pages, send them to me at the address above. Though I'll probably not use all the clippings received, such will be of benefit in providing a wider range of source material.

Oh yes. Remember to put the date and name of the publication on all clippings.

Them Beverly Hills

I've read that the ten thousand talents that were owed by the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:24) was equivalent to about \$3 million today. I've considered while reading that parable how difficult it would seemingly be for the average person to get that deeply in debt. Even with credit cards, it would take some time to accomplish that feat.

But one couple did just that! Some readers may recall the publicity that surrounded Ernest and

Margaret Medders, now of Memphis, Tennessee, in 1967 when creditors found out they were broke. This couple, parents of ten children, blew \$3 million of other people's money!

Having been led to believe that he was heir to \$6 billion, Mr. Medders, who knocked down a cool \$65 a week as a mechanic's helper, went on a six year spending spree. Among loans he received was \$1.94 million from an Indiana order of nuns. (You may not believe it, but "The Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph Inc. put up the money!") Medders promised them \$10 million when his ship came in.

According to Associated Press Writer, Bill Simmons, Mrs. Medders had a \$60,000 ring and an \$80,000 mink coat. When they testified in court that their social security checks were not even sufficient to pay their utility bills at "Colonial Acres", 200 creditors filed suit within weeks.

That story is a mixture of comedy and tragedy. But there's a lesson there for those who seek it. Most people are in the same lamentable position as the Medders. They're waiting for ships that never come in. They build their todays upon baseless hopes for tomorrow and take assurance in things that will soon burst like bubbles.

Solomon, who possessed great wealth, said: *"Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."*

Better yet, hear the admonition of our Lord: *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).*


EXPOSITION:

TEXT and

CONTEXT

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MIRACLES - No. 1

This writer has never seen a miracle. I have seen so-called miracles or alleged miracles, but never a genuine miracle. The truth of the matter is that nobody today has seen a miracle. What people are calling miracles are really not miracles at all, but rather natural occurrences that are misinterpreted. God is not working miracles today!

Miracles Defined and Delimited

The theologian, James Orr, defined miracle as "any deviation from or transcendence of the order of nature, due to the interposition of a supernatural cause" (The Faith of a Modern Christian, p. 65). R. C. Trench states that the essence of a miracle is, "An extraordinary divine causality, and not that ordinary which we acknowledge everywhere and in everything" (Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord, p. 10). Trench made a good point when he wrote, "The miracle is not a *greater* manifestation of God's power than those ordinary and ever-repeated processes; but it is a *different* manifestation" (Ibid., p. 10).

We can say, in light of the preceding definitions, that a miracle is a direct intervention of God which differs from the natural order that we see everywhere and in everything. A miracle would not necessarily be, therefore, an inexplicable experience. Man still is not able to explain all the laws of nature. For example, doctors are not able to explain why cancer is arrested in some people, but not in others. There is a natural explanation, but it is not known, presently. When a miracle was worked, there was no natural explanation.

Escaping unharmed from a serious car or plane accident, while all other occupants were killed, is not a miracle. By coincidence, such a person happened to be sitting in the right place at the right time. To call this a miracle is using the word inaccurately. God may have been protecting the person by his providence, but providence is not miraculous. God's providence works through natural order.

A phenomenon is not necessarily a miracle, although miracles were unusual. For example, on Feb. 28, 1963 a large, strange cloud, like a halo in shape, appeared in the stratosphere over Flagstaff, Ariz. It could be seen for hundreds of miles. Pictures of this mysterious cloud appeared in Life Magazine

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and also Science Magazine. There was no reasonable explanation for it at the time. It was too high for normal clouds or even jet vapors. Some declared it to be a miraculous omen. But several months later, Dr. James McDonald of the University of Arizona concluded that the cloud was caused by a rocket being detonated high over Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, dumping water into the stratosphere, causing the cloud to form. The wind later carried it over Arizona. Here was a phenomenon, but not a miracle.

Friends, anytime an event can be explained by natural process, such as curing functional paralysis, hysterical blindness or psychosomatic illnesses, one cannot say a miracle has taken place. God has not directly intervened. The laws of nature have not been transcended. The cure can be easily ascribed to the power of suggestion.

Miracle Described

The Bible does not define miracle but it does give a description. The Bible speaks of miracles as "wonders," "signs" and "mighty works." Peter said on Pentecost that Jesus was approved of God by "miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). Paul worked the signs of an apostle among the Corinthians "in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. 12:12). The word spoken by the Lord was confirmed (established, made secure) with "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. 2:3-4).

The word, "miracle," indicates the source of power, "the inherent ability" (W. E. Vine). The Bible uses the word "wonder" in reference to a miracle, suggesting the effect it has upon the people. Trench says, "the astonishment which the work produces upon the beholders . . . is transferred to the work itself" (Ibid., p. 3). The significance of the word "sign" is to show the design of miracles. Miracles were designed to confirm the word and to establish the divinity of Christ (Mk. 16:20; Jn. 20:30-31). All three words, miracle, wonder and sign, do not denote different kinds of supernatural works, but different aspects of the same miraculous deeds. The healing of the palsied man in Mark 2:1-12 was not only a miracle (power), but a sign (v. 10) and a wonder (v. 12).

Divers Miracles

Hebrews 2:4 speaks of divers miracles. There were many different kinds of miracles worked by Jesus and his apostles. Let us notice there were:

(1) **Miracles of healing.** Jesus Healed all manner of diseases (Mt. 4:23). No case was too difficult. He healed leprosy (Mt. 8:1-4), cured a deformed hand (Lk. 6:6-11), made a palsied man whole (Mk. 2:1-12) and healed a severed ear (Lk. 22:50-51), to name a few. The apostles continued the work of healing in their ministry (Acts 5:15-16; Acts 19:11-12).

(2) **Miracles of exorcism.** There were many in the first century who were possessed of demons. At the

Capernaum synagogue, Jesus cast a demon out of a man (Mk. 1:21-28). At Gadara a legion of devils was cast out of a man and sent into a herd of swine (Mk. 5:1-13). The daughter of the Syrophenician woman was relieved of a demon (Mk. 7:24-30).

(3) **Miracles of raising the dead.** Both Jesus and his apostles raised the dead. Jesus raised Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-46), the widow's son of Nain (Lk. 7:11-17), and the daughter of Jairus (Lk. 8:41-56). Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9 36-43) and Paul restored life to Eutychus (Acts 20:9-10).

(4) **Miracles on material things.** On two different occasions, Jesus fed thousands of people with just a few loaves and fishes. In chapter 14 of Matthew, Jesus fed 5000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two fishes. In the 15th chapter, he fed 4000 men plus women and children with seven loaves and a few little fishes. Great miracles, indeed! At the wedding feast in Cana Jesus turned the water to wine (Jn. 2:1-11).

(5) **Miracles involving nature.** When Jesus chose, he could walk on water (Jn. 6:19). He also enabled Peter to walk on the sea of Galilee (Mt. 14:29). Jesus could calm the sea and stop the winds (Mk. 4:35-41).

(6) **Miracles of punishment.** Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to God (Acts 5:1-11). An angel of the Lord smote Herod because he gave not God the glory (Acts 12:23). Elymas was blinded by Paul for a season for seeking to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith (Acts 13:6-12).

If God is still performing miracles today, why are not the miracles of the first century being worked? Why is not God raising the dead? Why do you never see a man walk on water? Why are not multitudes being fed with a few loaves and few fishes? Why are not withered hands and legs being instantly healed? The answer is obvious . . . God is no longer working miracles. It is not that God cannot work miracles, but rather it is a matter of God not choosing to work them.

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PRIORITIES

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus in Matthew chapter 6, verses 19-34, stresses the matter of priority. Verse 33 seems to summarize the matter, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Priority is defined, "superior in rank, position or privilege; a preferential rating; something meriting prior attention." That which is placed before, given preference, receives priority. As stated in this verse the putting of first things first.

Before one can be successful in this he must have knowledge of what is truly important, what is to be first. A basis for establishing first things must exist. Inherently, God and man value differently. Man assesses on the basis of what is more immediate and on material merit, at times even allowing temporary merit to overshadow his judgment. God, on the other hand, assesses on the basis of spiritual and eternal values. With God this is the ultimate in establishing worth. Many of us are afflicted by a myopic way of seeing things. This deficiency of foresight and discernment can be corrected. By seeing through God's eyes we establish the right priorities. This spiritual insight and foresight results in our putting first things first and we thrill in doing so.

Man's emphasis is quite often like the Pharisee's described in Matthew 23:23. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." I do not understand Jesus to rebuke the tithing of the Pharisee of the smaller things of his productivity but rather the scrupulous attention given to these while ignoring the "weightier matters" which a good heart would produce. Careful attention to the outward requirements of the law while ignoring the inward is the problem with these. To me, the basic failure seems to be in the area of priorities, keeping things in the right order, proper perspective. Because the same problem can be ours and not infrequently is, we need to study with profit this area.

The immediate context of Matthew 6:33 emphasizes that to please God we must make spiritual things first. The fact that Jesus speaks for the

primary benefit of his disciples, those later to become apostles, changes nothing in application of the principles. He here impresses that the blessings of life are made to revolve about the proper relation to the kingdom of God. God's cause is to be the first aim of the true disciple. This is what we are to make first, what we are to give priority and in consequence God will make us His primary concern. The full import of this verse embraces the requirement of kingdom citizenship. One has to be in the kingdom of God, then build and develop internally the qualities of righteousness, a beautiful godly life. Have you ever considered that if things never seem to fall into place, possibly priorities are misplaced?

The kingdom of God and righteousness are inseparable. Righteousness is the standard of the kingdom. Fundamentally, it involves a right course of conduct before God. The only place such is found is in the kingdom. To be in the kingdom is to be in Christ. Consider just here Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:". "In him" looks back to "Christ" in verse 3. So the only way to be "without blame" and "holy" is to be in Christ, in His kingdom, the church. The beatitudes, and the entire sermon on the mount finds application and reality in the kingdom, the church. They point to it in establishment and reality, preview it and give the nature of the citizenship. The first consideration, priority for every man, is to be a Christian, in the kingdom, a member of the church.

The realization that one is lost and needs to be saved brings a looking for that which will save. Appreciation of our most valuable possession becomes a prompting and motivating factor in one's looking to God. Jesus placed the priority here when he said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt. 16:26)? This is first, "seek ye first the kingdom of God."

Secondly, consider, "His righteousness" as that standard of human conduct revealed in the gospel. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," (Rom. 1:16). God's power exercised in and through the gospel affects an internal transformation and a definite external change in those who obey it. Romans 12:2 speaks of this very thing, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." The course of one's life reflects the standard of discipline by which it is governed, the ideal to which it aspires. Our priorities, sense of values, is reflected in our attitude toward the things of God.

Jesus statement in Luke 2:49 is, "I must be about my Father's business." Herein is circumscribed the

priority of the faithful Christian, "Father's business." For Jesus it involved, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Does it involve any less for the faithful Christian? What has God required? Many things, some of which are quite obvious. Diligent attendance of the services must certainly be included. When one lets down here, for any cause, isn't it usually a matter of what received priority? What do I prefer to do? Finally, what is the most important to me? Our contribution must certainly be subjected to the issue of priority with each of us. What is most important when it comes to monetary obligations, the Lord or something else? Interest in souls and the work of the church? Where are our priorities? Do these and all other matters of "the Father's business" receive preference?

Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." The word "preeminence" is used but twice in the New Testament. Here and in 3 John 9 where it is said of Diotrephes that he "loved to have the preeminence among them." "First place" is the root idea in both of these usages. In the latter passage Diotrephes demanded priority for himself, an attitude never justified among God's people. In the former passage the rank of Christ with respect to the kingdom is considered. As surely as He has first place in the kingdom so He is to have this priority in the heart and life of every citizen of that kingdom. What is applicable to Christ is equally applicable to the things of His will. There is no separating of Christ and His will. As we give Him preeminence, so the things of His will.

Our attitude toward the church, toward the "Father's business," toward Christ, is inseparable. What it is to one it is to the other and to all. There can be no inferior position in mind, heart or in life for either. Such being the case we must immediately reestablish priority. The answer to every problem we face is ultimately resolved here. What is first in your life and mine, the Father's business or our business? Our answer will determine our true relationship to God. Consider it well!

SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

T. G. O'Neal

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CALVINISM — No. 1

As a young man of 26 or 27, John Calvin wrote his Institutes of the Christian Religion. His life from 1509 to 1564 influences most of the religious world today. While dead his thoughts are seen in the creeds of men today.

On July 1, 1643, at Westminster Abby in London, England, the Westminster Confession of Faith was drafted for Presbyterians. In 1742 the Second London Confession, which was the Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession, was adopted with minor change by the Philadelphia Baptist Association, this becoming the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. On June 24, 1830, the New Hampshire Baptist Convention met at Concord and one of the results of this meeting was the New Hampshire Confession of Faith by J. Newton Brown (See *Hiscox's Guide For Baptist Churches*, pages 155-157). The New Hampshire Confession is that confession of faith found today in Baptist Manuals.

The major points of Calvinism are set forth in the above human creeds. These major points of Calvinism are (1) total depravity, (2) predestination, (3) limited atonement, (4) direct operation of the Holy Spirit and (5) eternal security of the believer.

In a series of five articles I want to examine these five points of Calvinism.

Predestination

While the Bible uses this term (Eph. 1:4-11; Rom. 9:11-13 and 8:29-30) we must turn to a human creed to learn how Calvinism uses the term.

"God hath decreed . . . from all eternity . . . freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass; . . . By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestined or foreordained to eternal life, . . . others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation . . . these angels and men, thus predestined and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished; Those . . . predestined to life, God . . . hath chosen . . . out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto" (*Ibid.*, page 161-162).

Read the above paragraph carefully to fully understand the doctrine and its implications. If this were true, God would be responsible for man's sin

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and not man himself, even though Calvinism denies this point. If man is lost, God brought it about. If man is saved, God ordered it. Thus, God would be the author of both salvation and damnation.

The premise of predestination is false. Foreknowledge, or knowledge ahead of time, does not mean foreordination. God did not choose to foreknow that Abraham would fear God when called to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:12). Jeremiah said Judah had "built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind" (Jer. 19:5). Here was something that came to pass that had not even come into the mind of God.

Then there are some things God did not fix for certain. Those nations that God intended "to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy" could "turn from their evil" and God would "repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jer. 18:7-10). Ezekiel showed that the wicked could turn from their wickedness (Ezek. 3:17-21). God told David that the men of Keilah would "deliver thee up" to Saul, yet "David . . . arose and departed out of Keilah" (I Sam. 23:6-12). What God told David some would do, they did not.

Some of the decrees of God were changeable. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). God decreed that, yet "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10). God told Hezekiah to "set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kgs. 20:1). However, he prayed unto God and was told God would "add unto thy days fifteen years" (2 Kgs. 20:6).

Problems

Some passages present problems to this theory. In Ex. 20:13-16, God told Israel not to kill, commit adultery, steal or bear false witness. Why should God prohibit such if he had predestinated that they would?

Jesus said, "Come unto me . . . take my yoke . . . learn of me . . ." (Mt. 11:28-30). If man was already predestinated one way or the other for eternity, what sense does the language of Christ make?

James said man could be "drawn away of his own lust" (Jas. 1:13-15). The action of man is what determines whether he sins and not the predestination of God.

Proof Text Examined

(1) **Eph. 1:4-11.** Paul uses the term "predestinated" twice in this passage. Of the word Thayer says "foreknowledge . . . forethought, prearrangement" (page 538) and to this Vine adds "this does not preclude human will" (Vol. 2, page 119). The predestination of which Paul writes is that of a **class of people** and not of a certain individual. Those Paul said were predestinated were "in him" (verse 4); "in the beloved" (verse 6); "in Christ" (verse 10); "in him" (verse 10); "in whom" (verses 7 and

11); and all of these expressions refer to those who are "in Christ." God's "counsel of his own will" (verse 11) was to save all men in Christ. Those out of Christ are not in the class God predestinated to save.

(2) Rom. 8:29-30. Those predestinated in this passage were "to be conformed to the image of his Son" and were those "called." Men are "called" by the gospel (2 Th. 2:14); and those "justified" (I Cor. 6:9-11) had heard the gospel, believed it, and had been baptized (Acts 18:8). They could choose to believe or disbelieve, after choosing to hear or not to hear. They chose to be baptized. Paul says Christ died for "us all" (Rom. 8:32).

(3) Rom. 9:11-13. Paul uses the term "election" in this passage. Instead of the "election" being of those to salvation, it was of which one of the sons of Isaac, Jacob or Esau, would stand in the lineage to Christ. Verse 13 was written after Jacob and Esau (Mal. 1:2-3). This passage does not teach "election" for salvation but rather the choice God made through whom Christ was to be born.

Several years ago I heard Brother Franklin T. Puckett preach on the general theme of Calvinism. He called Romans 2:11 the "safety rope." He was showing how the system of Calvinism made God a respecter of persons and Romans 2:11 said "there is no respect of persons with God." Any system that would make God a respecter of persons is in conflict with plain, simple statements of Scripture and cannot be true. Holding to the "safety rope" of Romans 2:11 one cannot believe God predestinated certain ones to salvation and certain ones to damnation.

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ANSWERS

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QUESTION: I would like some comments on Eph. 4:7-16 in the light of its context, beginning with verse 1. Please answer the following questions: 1) Are the gifts of vs. 7-8 the men in their respective offices mentioned in v. 11? Or, could these gifts be spiritual in nature given to those mentioned in verse 11, until the unity of the faith came in? 2) When will the unity, perfection, and fulness of vs. 12-16 be enjoyed? At the 2nd coming of Christ, or can the saints enjoy and realize this perfection now? — G.P.

ANSWER: Eph. 4:3, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," introduces the primary objective of the verses referred to above. The "unity of the Spirit" to be kept by the saints is not union reached by mutual consent among men, but rather unity upon the basis laid down by the Spirit. Verses 4-6 identify this platform.

Verses 7-11 identify the means to this end. Grace (v. 7) has been given "unto every one of us" (K.J.V.) by Jesus Christ. This grace was given by virtue of the power with which he was endowed when he "ascended up on high" (v. 8; cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:20-23). This is the meaning of "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The giving of the "grace" was in accord with the full measure of power ("gift") received by Him. But what was this "grace"? Verse 8 answers: He "gave gifts unto men." The "gifts" of verse eight constitute the "grace" of verse seven. The "gifts," therefore, are for "every one of us." These "gifts" are then identified in verse eleven, namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Without these "gifts" and their function, the "unity of the Spirit" could never be reached and maintained by the saints. It should be observed that nothing is said in any of these verses about spiritual gifts, although such were possessed by some of these men. However, what was necessary to qualify these men for their function is not here under discussion. The men themselves were given as gifts to the church for the benefit of everyone therein.

Verses 12-16 state the purpose of these gifts, namely, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (v. 12). These objectives are not coordinates, but rather each is part of a whole, and, therefore, dependent upon another. The first "for" of verse 12 is from the Greek "pros" which denotes

the ultimate end in view, which in this instance includes all three objectives of verse 12. The second and third "for" are from the Greek "eis," which means "in order to." It is used to denote the immediate object and the direction of the action toward the end in view. It follows, therefore, that the "edifying of the body" depends upon "the work of the ministry," and "the work of the ministry" depends upon "the perfecting of the saints," and "the perfecting of the saints" depends upon the "gifts" (Vs. 8, 11) or the "grace" (V. 7), and this "grace" was dependent upon the power ("gift") of Christ (V. 7). Behold the marvelous wisdom of God! Wisdom that made every provision necessary for the accomplishment of the divine objectives—even the "unity of the Spirit" among all saints.

"The perfecting of the saints" means fully equipping the saints for service. The word "perfecting" is from the Greek "Katartismos," which means "a fitting or preparing fully" (W. E. Vine). The basic idea is that of putting something in condition for future use. It is used of the disciples mending nets (Mk. 1:19), of restoring an erring brother (Gal. 6:1), and of correcting division and bringing about unity—"perfectly joined together"—(1 Cor. 1:10). Saints must be perfected in this sense, if the divine objectives are to be realized.

"The work of the ministry" refers to the mission of the church. It is inclusive of every work of service authorized for the church, although one must go elsewhere in the Scripture to find out in particular what this work is. While the men of verse eleven accomplish primarily the first objective, that objective in turn makes possible the full work of service of the church.

"The edifying of the body of Christ" is the result of the two former objectives being realized. Thus, the church grows numerically and spiritually.

Verse 13 modifies and amplifies verse 12. It is both durational and objective. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith" refers to the primary objective already mentioned in verse three, namely, "the unity of the Spirit." In "the perfecting of the saints" unity is to be achieved so that they are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). The rest of verse 13 is appositional, showing that the oneness is attained through the knowledge of the Son of God and by developing in character unto the "fulness of Christ." Verses 14 and 15 show further that oneness among all saints is the objective to be realized and that it is accomplished by bringing the "children" in Christ to a state of maturity. The "gifts" (men of v. 11) will be needed just as long as new converts are made. While some saints enjoy this "unity, perfection, and fulness" *now*, having been perfected, others who are yet "children" are on their way toward maturity. The duration of the "gifts," therefore, reaches to the end of time. Revelation still comes through the holy apostles and prophets (Eph.

3:5), and this together with the other men of verse eleven make possible the "perfecting of the saints." Verse 16 recapitulates the whole plan by which the divine objectives are realized under one of the most beautiful and challenging figures to be found in the New Testament. Every member of the body has the solemn obligation to supply his part, lest the beauty of the whole picture be marred, and in order that the divine objectives might have fulfillment.

ARROWS of TRUTH for denominational error

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"THE MELODY BOYS AND MIDTOWN"

It would be wonderful if a writer could always accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. By nature, I had rather encourage the good than object to the bad. However, I feel a person would wind up in hell if he allowed himself to become oblivious to all the innovations coming into the church.

I receive through the courtesy of someone the CHRISTIAN JOURNAL, edited by one of my colleagues, Noble Patterson. This is a monthly out of Ft. Worth, Texas. Several months ago an article appeared with this caption: "Melody Boys Quartet and Horizons to Present Program at Midtown Church." This attracted my attention so I read the article. Well, sure enough another innovation had lifted its ugly head within the confines of the church. The article made it clear that this was pure entertainment in the church. They did not say the church paid the boys, but I am sure someone had to pick up the tab.

The article said, "The Melody Boys Quartet of Farmersburg, Ind. will present a program of gospel and sacred songs on March 24 at 7:30 P.M. at the Midtown Church of Christ. The group was organized as a quartet in 1960 and have been actively working as a singing group since that time."

As I read this I thought this would not have happened a few years back. But since the flood gates have been opened it seems that the sky is the limit. Someone might argue that presenting such a program is justified because they sing religious songs. However one must realize that many entertainers sing religious songs; men like Roy Acuff, Little Jimmy Dickens and Tennessee Ernie Ford all sing religious songs. To me, it would be just as scriptural to have one of these men put on a program as it would be the Melody Boys.

I cannot see to save my life how anyone could call

this anything but pure entertainment! Some might argue that such programs will draw a good crowd. I couldn't argue with that but so do the Dallas Cowboys!

Brethren, how far will some go? A few years back I would have been shocked to read of another encroachment within the church. However, as time has passed, I have become acclimated to these things. We must come back to the basics of the Bible (I Cor. 16:1& 2, II Cor. 11:8, Phil 4:15, 16) That is, the church may spend its money for two things, preaching the gospel and benevolence among the saints. When we leave this we are at sea without a compass. I cannot believe that the program of the Melody Boys was either evangelism or benevolence.

It is no secret that our denominational neighbors have used entertainment in their churches for years. We pointed out with vigor that this was not according to the scriptures. Now our own brethren have succumbed to the temptation. May the Lord hasten the day when the Church will be pure enough that writers can spend more time talking about the good than having to call attention to the bad. Come to think of it Paul himself never lived in such an Utopian era.

FROM ITALY WITH SADNESS

Rodolfo Berdini

What I am writing is the outcome of deep, long, anguished meditation about facts and circumstances that lead me to a negative valuation of the Lord's work in Italy at present, and to a pessimism without horizon for the future work.

At once I want to clarify this my outlet is not the outcome of sadness for a personal failure, since the work I'm doing is one of the few that proceeds well and it is fully satisfactory because I have never allowed anyone to interfere in my work, and this fact because the few inside problems we have had in our congregation, they have been a consequence of contacts that some members have had with the American missionaries and with their free initiatives. If I do write it is because I still believe there is a lot to do for recovering 15 years of inactivity, confusion and mistakes. After 24 years of active preaching, after having abandoned my profession, friends, Roman Catholicism and having established two congregations in Velletri and Aprilia, both near Rome, (Aprilia where at present I am preaching is the most numerous congregation with its 92 faithful members) "To contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), I can't remain insensible and indifferent to the infidelity, liberalism, anarchy and standstill that entered the Lord's church.

Till 1955 in Italy we were 1200 Christians, joined in the faith, full of zeal, sound doctrine and brotherly fellowship. I remember the joys of a congregation were the joys of all; so also the sorrows, problems, difficulties. Today we are not

even 600 members, divided, without fellowship, without zeal, without heat, individualist sectarians. Why?!!! From 1959 tens and tens of American "Missionaries" have followed one another. What did they do? What fruits have we had? Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent for salaries for uprooted enterprises from reality of a pure and simple preaching of the Gospel. Results? Regress . . . Regress . . . Confusion. . . It is difficult to give a satisfactory explanation. With my experience I think to explain the sad phenomenon in this way:

1) Though they are good and prepared, American "missionaries" have the great handicap of the language. When they arrive to Italy they don't know how to say "good morning" or "good night". They need at least 3 years to have some mastery of the language to use it for the preaching, contacts, discussions, debates and other works.

2) The tendency to go where there are colonies of Americans and then delaying an introduction in the work. Many zones of Italy have never had the occasion to know steadily a missionary.

3) When they begin to know the mentality, culture, problems of our society and therefore are ready not to make mistakes, they come back to the United States: the most for homesickness having themselves replaced by others who are new and who need to start again from the beginning.

4) The idea which the new American members come with is that one is to find organized churches like in America. Here in Italy after 25 years, only 2 or 3 churches have Elders and with a lot of problems, because perhaps the appointment of the Elders in some churches would deprive them not only of the authority but also of the same reason to be here.

The fashion of the fellowship with protestant churches in which is used the musical instrument has been inaugurated. I wonder how one dares to print a magazine supported by American liberalism in which is affirmed Christ *perhaps* (with many perplexities) is God's Son. All this is the silly consequence of a situation every time is re-proposed by the new arrived men. In 1946 in Italy there was the Christian church with the organ that by us is called "Church of Christ". For 15 years there have been neither relations nor attempts of relations with them. When the Florence Bible School was created one has not hesitated to enroll the students among these churches with musical instrument, because our young people did not go to Florence for learning to be Christians. From this fact the contacts with the churches with the organ and from the contacts for fellowship the step has been brief and rapid. Can we be puppets that change doctrine according to the missionary on duty? I am grieved and upset! I don't know who sent and is sending these American evangelists, but if those who support them know this reality, they are accomplices of this ruin. I am sure none of these missionaries here would do in America the things that by us mark them: relation

with the protestant churches, authoritarianism in the local church and in other congregations, lack of foundation in the evangelism work. We remained few to be conscious of this situation, maybe two or three Italian evangelists faithful to the sound doctrine, this is the moment to take us seriously and try to program and work on a common platform, God's work in Italy. We know we have to begin again if we want to save the little remaining, otherwise within a short time the church in Italy will become another denomination to add to the others already existing.

While in Italian towns American "missionaries" swarm, with heavy expenses of money, for 15 years, I repeat 15 years, no Italian has been initiated in the preaching nor any other new work has been initiated, but many churches faded or they are fading because evangelists are lacking. Maybe because some years ago these men have had the happy (?) idea that the work of the local preacher is not biblical, as if the concept of the "missionary" were. We Italians have not the possibility to support a native preacher, so we have assisted in a gradual removal of those who were initiated in the preaching. I don't understand why it is necessary to support a very dear Bible school where, people say, the future Elders and educated Christians are prepared and not to support an evangelist who goes working in one of the many churches remaining without a preacher and which is fading. Italy doesn't need elders now, it needs evangelists who can be supported in their work only if American faithful congregations give trust to the Italian ones faithful to the sound doctrine. Since we are not in relation with the churches in the United States we have to remain inert and powerless before decisions of people who decided to be the only ones responsible for the work in Italy. They don't present Christian young people able to evangelize; they decided Italian Christians must not be supported from the churches in America, they program the work so the funds must remain in their hands. In this reality they apologize saying that the churches in America are not any longer disposed to help a work entrusted to an Italian. If this is true I serenely tell the brethren in America they are all responsible for this victory of Satan in my country. But I refuse to believe it.

Now I retain the right to spend some lines about the Bible school of Florence, the source, according to my opinion, of the most part of the evils that afflict God's work. It was born about 12 years ago from the decision of American "missionaries" who held that the school should only serve to form more educated Christians and not evangelists, forgetting God established the church and "made know through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10) and neither schools nor Bible chairs are necessary to produce Christians, but the Church. From this school of Florence, useful only to its leaders, no Christian "educated" has begun a new work.

Another exalting enterprise is the Bible chair in Milan, in which (besides its director who is a member of the church) protestant pastors and liberal preachers teach. And the people say there is no money to support an Italian preacher!

Now I want to mention the scandal of an American missionary who works(?) in Rome, the town where I live. Besides the expense of his generous salary he needs three American secretaries to have care of only 7 members! He is not alone and God's money is squandered scandalously. I wish not to be in their place the Day of Judgement. So the Italian evangelists are now a little group that grows thinner and thinner and myself, after 24 years of preaching, can't work any longer full time because I had to find work for a living while I observe indignantly the waste of money for useless enterprises like:

1) *The Bible School of Florence* which costs hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. And the outcome? For the evangelizing work we had no results.

2) *A Translation of the New Testament*, useless, wrong, producing the contrary effect. The most part of the churches in Italy refused it. We didn't need a translation; we have used for 25 years a good translation. We need people who preach the Word, not people who print it spending hundreds of thousands of dollars.

3) *The Bible chair in Milan*. Results? Those influenced by it run toward apostasy and compromise.

4) *Bible Centre in Rome*, with a group of secretaries and assistants. Results and conversions? Nothing.

5) *Camping*. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent, it serving for the members' holidays. But in Italy we need to save souls, not to spend money for holidays.

6) *Useless rents*. For example only in Rome there are 5 congregations, 4 of them pay the rent while they could stay all together with only one preacher in one building. The members of the 5 congregations are almost the same as 15 years ago when there was only one congregation. The same phenomenon happens in other parts of Italy. This is because every missionary wants *his* church, *his* funds, etc. etc. The missionaries divide between them the members and then report new works are begun. If I followed their example, in Aprilia I could have 10 churches with ten members each and so I could advertise new works. This is a shame!

In accepting the gospel we learned what it means to possess the truth, and what the church means. For this reason there is a jealousy to defend it from every contamination of Christ's bride and this jealousy induces us to rebel and wrestle against those who forget that "Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever" (Heb. 13:8) and who are going beyond "the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

"The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Mt. 9:37).

Pray with us, brethren, and the God of harvest will help us to give Him greater glory and service.

PAUL'S IGNORANCE

Ronny Milliner

Paul, in speaking of himself to Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:13, 14, wrote, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." In verse fifteen he speaks of himself as being the "chief" of sinners. Yet all of these sins were done in ignorance.

Earlier Paul had said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Ac. 23:1). I believe that Paul was a man who was always trying to do what he thought God wanted him to do. He was honestly endeavoring to obey God. Yet, he sinned, doing it ignorantly.

If Paul were around today and committing the same sins that he mentions in 1 Tim. 1:13, there would be some brethren who would say, "Oh, poor Paul doesn't know what he is doing. God by His wonderful grace will forgive him and not send him to Hell, because after all Paul is honestly seeking to do God's will. He will be saved without obeying God's commandments and without seeking forgiveness." But I do not believe these things are based on what God has revealed to us in His word.

There is not a one of us that can be saved without God's grace. There is not a one of us that can be saved without the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. But also, there is not a one of us that can be saved without obedience to God's commands. Paul realized that he was saved by the grace of God and by the death of Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13-16). But how did Paul "obtain mercy?" How did Paul receive forgiveness of his sins? "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). ". . . and (he) arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:18).

Ignorance is no excuse. God through His grace, love, and mercy has given us the provisions whereby we might obtain forgiveness of sins. Accept and obey His will. Then, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:14, 15).

320 Oak St.
Lebanon, Ky. 40033

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

REAVIS PETTY, 216 W. 101st Ave., Tampa, Florida 33612—Since moving to work with the North Street church in Tampa, 8 have been baptized, 8 restored and 5 have placed membership. We had a good meeting in September with Bob Bolton. Our next meeting is in January with Harry Pickup, Jr. When traveling through Tampa on I-75, you will see our building on the right, just past the Sligh Avenue exit. Stop and visit.

BOB DOBSON, 8625 Roberts, El Paso, Texas 79904—After some time preaching in Roswell, New Mexico, I am now working with the church in El Paso, Texas. Visitors in this area are welcome to stop and worship with us.

A. C. GRIDER, R. R. 1, Connersville, Indiana 47331 — I have just finished a very busy meeting schedule for the year. I preached in a meeting at Stevens Avenue in Huntsville, Alabama October 21-28. Several gospel preachers attended at various times. Five were baptized. Quentin McCay is the much loved preacher there. I am to return in 1978. The work continues to be pleasant and profitable at Connersville. We have been here nearly six months and we are getting pretty well situated. We have tried to purchase time for some radio preaching, but none is available now. Plans call for a church paper. Our building is located at the extreme end of the city at 3327 Waterloo Road. If you pass this way, stop and visit with us.

Mexican Work Needs Help

CHARLES F. HOUSE, P.O. Box 1031, Douglas, Arizona 85607—There are several worthy and able men preaching in Mexico who are badly in need of support. Pedro Ramirez needs \$115 a month and Isidro Quijada needs \$160 (which will be complete support for him). The writer is also short \$200 a month in needed support. After 20 years of hard work in this field, we do not want to give up now. It seems that American brethren are more anxious to support gospel work half way around the world than they are at our southern border. Please help, if you can. These men are worthy and in need. For more information on these men and for personal contact, write to me at the above address.

Another Church Takes It Stand With The New Testament Order

G. O. WINLAND, R. D. 2, Box 175-B, Wellsburg, W. Va. 26070—The church meeting at 101 N. 20th Street, (Warwood), Wheeling, W. Va. has renounced liberalism and taken a stand with faithful brethren and the New Testament order of things. They have engaged Lloyd Beard of Alliance, Ohio to work with them beginning in December. Brother Beard is a graduate of Florida College and a very faithful preacher of God's word.

Even The Church Ads Are Teaching

FRED SHEUMAKER recently carried a notice in his bulletin of a letter received from Nicolas N. Evongwa in Nigeria in which this brother tells of his learning the truth about liberalism and taking his stand. He reported that he had been told that faithful brethren are "few in numbers" and that they were labeled "antis, church dividers, trouble makers." He said "Having restored me, Brother Rufus Akataobi, one of the strong and faithful preachers gave me a copy of *SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES*, Volume 15 of April, 1974. I read the beautiful sermons and I found that there are 90 faithful churches of Christ. Although God does not save by many or few, I am grateful for this." Of course, the congregations which purchase ads in this paper are a very small percentage of the multiplied hundreds of churches in this country standing for the truth. But this brother was surprised to learn there were even 90. From this you can tell what he had been told. We have encountered the same misrepresentation in the Philippines. So, brethren, even your ads are teaching.

It Is Enough, Brethren

WALLACE H. LITTLE, P. O. Box 1306, Marshall, Texas 75670 —Recently, flooding brought on by two typhoons caused serious want among God's faithful in the Philippines. Although the disaster this year was much smaller in scope than a similar event several years ago, those within the affected area were hurt as much as earlier. An appeal was made for financial help for these brethren. You responded generously. The scriptural injunction of 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:" is satisfied. More than \$5000.00 has been sent to relieve the privation. There is probably more I don't know about. Excepting for isolated situations, the need is pretty well taken care of. One item still lacking is clothing, but with the import tax imposed by the Philippine Government, it is next to impossible to send this. I have written, seeking a method by which it may be done legally, without the receiving brethren being charged this tax. I am not hopeful for a solution, however. If it does exist, I will advise you through these pages.

Incidentally, not one cent was controlled by any organization or individual. All went directly to the need. This proves again, God's method of assisting needy Christians is far superior to the schemes of our institutionally-minded brethren. And not so incidentally, God's method has another advantage: it has his approval . . . something theirs lacks. See 2 John 9 and Mt. 7:21-23. You are to be commended for your open-handed and rapid response to the needs of our brethren in the Philippines. God will surely bless you for this.

Respect Copyrights

LOWELL D. KIBLER, 906 Graceland Dr., Newport, Arkansas 72112—I have just recently learned (the hard way) that the THEOPHILUS strips are copyrighted and that they must not be reproduced without permission from Brother Bob West which includes buying the package he offers for that purpose. I have ignorantly violated this in the past and have known of other preachers who have picked these strips from other bulletins to run in theirs. This is not fair to Brother West and even though done in ignorance is a form of dishonesty and becomes flagrantly so if done intentionally. This also includes the OUR RELIGIOUS WORLD illustrations. Violations of this may be more widespread than we realize. Brethren, let us be honest.

The work here is going very well. Seventeen have responded to the gospel since our work at Northside in Newport began together in May, 1974. We have begun a biweekly paper called the NEWPORT BEACON that we would be glad to send to anyone interested. It seems to be doing much good.

WILLIAM C. SEXTON, 2219 South Glenn, Wichita, Kansas 67213 —The Southwest congregation, of which I am a member, has a number of good men who are able and willing to present the word of the Lord from the pulpit. This congregation, therefore, is able and willing to support me in preaching the gospel in available needy places. I have prepared a series on "Making Your Calling and Election Sure" which I would like to present to as many people as possible. If you can obtain a place for a week's meeting and get a group of people to come together to consider the word of God, I'll gladly come to your community. I am interested in helping the cause especially in the midwest: Kansas, northern Oklahoma, Nebraska, Iowa, extreme west and southwest Missouri, where the Lord's people are few. If interested contact me at the above address or phone (316) 943-3332.

EDITOR'S MEETING SCHEDULE — During 1974, it was my pleasure to preach the gospel in four meetings in Kentucky, three in Ohio, two in Tennessee, in Georgia, Indiana, Texas and Arizona. A number were baptized and some restored in these

efforts. In 1975, I am to be at Westside, Marion, Indiana March 10-16; the month of April will be spent preaching in several meetings in the Philippines along with Cecil Willis; May 12-18 at Mooresville, Ind.; June 9-15 at Evansville, Ind.; June 23-29 at Northside in Dyersburg, Tenn.; July 7-11 at Highview near Bloomfield, Ky.; in September I am to be at Expressway, Louisville, Ky., and at Fremont, Ohio; in October at Courtland Avenue in Kokomo, Ind. and Stevens Avenue in Huntsville, Ala.; and in November at Milbridge, Maine. Readers in all of these areas are most welcome.

Preachers Needed

MILLINGTON, TENNESSEE - The Central Millington church will be without a full-time preacher beginning in January, 1975. We meet adjacent to the largest inland Naval Base in the world with basically unlimited young people who are receptive to the truth. The preacher is not expected to do the work of the other members. There is a continuous backlog of prescreened souls waiting to study the Bible in this work. Contact Central Millington Church of Christ, 5038 Easley St., Millington, Tenn. 38053. Phone (901) 872-7269, or phone Dave Turner (901) 872-4392.

BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS — Congregation of about 30 needs preacher now. We can supply \$200 per month. The rest must be raised elsewhere. Write to Gap Road Church of Christ, P.O. Box 2751, Batesville, Arkansas 72501 or call Ed Penn (501) 793-3173 or Jim Stevens (501) 793-7838.

TILDEN, KENTUCKY — Small congregation of three families needs a full-time preacher. C. L. Purdom of Paragould, Ark. has been preaching for them but needs to return to his home in Paragould. The congregation has a three bedroom mobile home with attached 12 X 20 permanent room, located on an acre of ground. Tilden is 60 miles west of Owensboro, Ky. and 30 miles south of Evansville, Ind. For more information about this work contact B. G. Hope, Route 3, Beaver Dam, Ky. 42320 or Edgar Willoughby, Route 2, Robards, Ky. 42452.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH	
BAPTISMS	486
RESTORATIONS	92

(figures taken from bulletins and periodicals received by the editor. If we are not on your mailing list now, please inform us of those obeying the gospel where you are).

WHEN YOU MOVE OR CHANGE ADDRESS, please notify us of the change. We must have both your old and new address. This consideration on your part will save us much time and expense.