

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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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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JUDGMENT OR CONVICTION?

My faith in the word of God as the final, complete and infallible will of Christ will not allow me to take one step beyond its authority; neither will I assume to leave undone what is authorized. My judgment (opinion) does not constitute any part of God's law. Neither does yours! Some assume that their ipse dixits constitute the law of the Lord, and their arbitrary pronouncements are the last word in divine authority. Let it be understood that this article must not be construed to charge another with any other attitude toward the word of God than that which I hold. Each man's words and actions will tell what his attitude toward truth and error really is.

What I am about to say will no doubt bring the wrath of the gods upon me. But be that as it may, I cannot, in good conscience, remain silent any longer with reference to a number of articles that have appeared in bulletins and in some papers that suggest a compromise on the divorce and adulterous remarriage issue to avoid division. When error is introduced among the people of God, scriptural division is inevitable as long as that error is believed and practiced.

In the April 1, 1978 issue of the Gospel Guardian the esteemed editor carried the announcement of two debates, one of them involving me as one of the disputants. Because of health problems I was not even permitted to attend the debate in Fredericksburg, Virginia, much less participate in it. But brother James Adams had an "Editor's Note" immediately following the announcement of the

debate in which he opined some things that are disturbing. I hold no animosity or ill will toward brother Adams. In fact, our relationship has been rather cordial as far as I know. However, I believe his "candid judgment" on what he calls "the so-called 'Marriage Issue'" and "over-zealous brethren" endangering the fellowship of the Lord's disciples by debating an issue that involves fornication, broken homes, and adulterous marriages is morally dangerous in its implications and compromising in its application.

Brother Adams charges that "over-zealous brethren on both sides" of the issue are pressing their opinions. Just when is one "over-zealous" in defending the truth? I know he considers this issue "some extreme position," but I consider it an issue between truth and error that opens the door to the moral decay of the home and the lives of thousands.

"Over-zealous" means too much zeal. Was the apostle Paul "over-zealous" when he was "set for the defense of the gospel?" (Phil. 1:17). Was brother Adams "over-zealous" when he moderated for brother Roy E. Cogdill in his debate with Guy N. Woods in Birmingham, Alabama in November, 1957? "Over-zealous" could as well be applied to brother Adams' Editorials and Editor's Note to stifle any public debates on the false teaching on divorce and remarriage. I predict that brother Adams will employ an "over-zealous" response of his opinions to this and other articles replying to his vague position on the dangers of the permissive attitude of the divorce and remarriage issue.

In the Editor's Note his classification of the marriage problem as a "so-called 'Marriage Issue'" implies that there is no real issue, just the "pressing their opinions" to the point of division. But the Marriage Issue is very real, and the advocates of the scripturalness of adulterous marriages are pressing their error wherever they can, both public and private. This is where the moral implication of his editorial note is dangerous. This is no more a "so-called" issue than instrumental music in worship, the church support of colleges, missionary societies, and the social gospel as preached and practiced by many "liberal" churches. I know brother Adams will not approve or endorse any of these, and I doubt that he

would consider any of them "so-called" issues. I am sure that he would debate any of these issues with false brethren with great zeal, and not consider himself "over-zealous" in doing so.

His language in recent issues of the Gospel Guardian has been so ambiguous as to be understood by the advocates of the no-fault divorce and adulterous marriages as to be in sympathy with their position because they have used quotations from his editorials and this "Editor's Note" in the April 1 issue. In fact, I have a paper which was distributed at the debate in Virginia by Jack Gibbert and his moderator, Bob Melear, to all present, containing the same quotations to which I referred, and using them to prove that brother Adams endorses full fellowship with them while they hold their unscriptural views. I know that brother Adams will vehemently attack such a use of his name by any one, but he alone is responsible by the language of his writings on the subject. I certainly am not responsible for it.

He charges that the pressing of opinions on this issue will cause division among disciples of the Lord. I suppose nearly every forensic conflict contains somewhere the charge of pressing opinions instead of the word of God, but the charge does not make it so. Brother Adams thinks all these debates are just "opinions" on the Marriage Issue, but I believe this is as much an issue of truth and error as is instrumental music in worship. I cannot accept his "candid judgment" (opinion) that "over-zealous" brethren on both sides are "pressing their opinions" instead of discussing the Bible doctrine that is of eternal consequences.

Brother Adams appeals to the attitude and practice of brethren 150 years ago as the proof of fellowship while discussing the question of divorce and remarriage. If he did not intend that this should prove the position that he advocates, why appeal to them? I have always understood that we establish what is authorized from Holy Scripture and not from the convictions and practice of brethren, either now or in the past.

I am about the same age as brother Adams. I have lived and learned from life exactly as he has. He knows as well as I that fifty years ago a divorced—remarried person was avoided by society in general. It was almost unheard of in the church for a divorced—remarried person to remain in fellowship with the saints except in rare cases. We know full well that the comparison of the discussions and practice 150 years ago are not even close to the issue being discussed today. The arguments of the advocates of divorce and remarriage for any cause and then scripturalize it by adultery and "repentance" was never discussed 150 years ago by the Lord's people. The issue today is the permissive indulgence of divorced persons and unscriptural marriages being retained and blessed in the fellowship of the saints. This is the same as unmarried couples living together and retaining full fellowship with the people of God. This immoral conduct will deteriorate congregation after congregation until they completely rot away from the truth. And then we talk about divisions among the people of God? I can not and will not

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endorse any such conduct. This does not belong anywhere in the realm of candid judgment or opinions of anyone. This is a matter of the faith once delivered to the saints. We are to contend for that faith, and if contending for the faith—debating it—produces division, it ought to be there because it is the result of truth opposing error. Now if I believed the issue was not a matter of truth versus error, as brother Adams obviously does, I would certainly take his position on the matter.

His concern that the ultimate division of many congregations of the Lord's disciples will result from the Marriage Issue is shared by me. No one is more opposed to division among God's people that I am. I deplore any situation that strains the relationship between two brethren in Christ. I preach and practice the unity for which Christ prayed in John 17:20, 21, I preach and strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-5). God condemns division. Someone will go to Hell because of it. But hear this well: I do not intend to wink at sin and

false doctrine and not oppose it with all my being, in order to pretend that there is peace when there is no peace. The word of God teaches that those who teach and practice false doctrines are not to enjoy the fellowship of the saints until and unless they repent (Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:5-11; 2 John 9-11).

Division as the result of preaching the truth is not wrong! The Lord himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). That sword is the word of God (Eph. 6:17), and all who believe and obey it will be divided from all those who do not believe and obey it. That is division that is produced by *the* Lord and it is right. "And have NO fellowship with the unfruitful! works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11) and "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . ." (2 Cor. 6:14).

I know that Jesus also said that "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt. 12:25), but he said he came to bring a sword, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:36).

In his Editorial of the January 15, 1978 issue of Gospel Guardian brother Adams states his opposition to the denominational practice of divorce and remarriage "for every cause", open marriage, and homosexuality. He says professed churches of Christ have not been immune to this influence. He chides those brethren who are agitating the more permissive point of view toward divorce and remarriage, and very boldly warns them about using his name to endorse their positions.

Brother Adams here seems to say, I oppose the permissive view of divorce and remarriage for any cause, open marriage, and homosexuality. He said, "I have never at any time or place taught in a class, from the pulpit, or in the press that the party guilty of fornication in a broken marriage may scripturally marry."

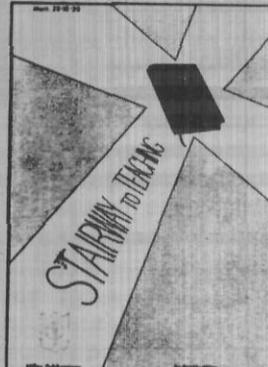
"I understand the stated principles of Holy Scripture on divorce and remarriage and preach them unequivocally. However, I am not always absolutely certain how they may apply in complex marital difficulties involving divorce and remarriage."

With all this I fully agree. I know what the scriptures teach on divorce and remarriage, and will defend the truth against false teaching and practice with ZEAL. I do not attempt to apply the law of Christ concerning this subject to situations of which I have no knowledge. If brother Adams thinks that I preach, write or debate propositions dealing with the application of what the scriptures teach on divorce and remarriage to individual situations, he is mistaken.

"In my teaching, I maintain unequivocally that marriage is for life—one man and one woman and that divorce and remarriage are only permissible when there is violation of the marriage vows—fornication. In a class situation, I do not permit open discussion of the solution of either hypothetical or real situations."

In the February 1, 1978 issue of the Gospel Guardian brother Adams editorialized under the title: "Johnny-Come-Lately-Sommerites," in which he pointed out that B. C. Goodpasture hung the yellow tag of "quarantine" about our necks and classified those who opposed church support of human institutions and centralized control and oversight as "Johnny-Come-Lately-Sommerites." Division resulted! He concludes with this appeal: "Brethren of influence and ability can stop our progress toward oblivion on the road of 'partyism' if they have the courage to speak out against it boldly and plainly."

Whatever my influence and ability may be, I shall speak out against partyism among the disciples of Christ, but I shall also oppose false teachers and their works without compromise to the faith or of my own conscience. There have always been factions and false teachers to promote error. I cannot condone or embrace such in scriptural fellowship. HERE I STAND, SO HELP ME GOD!



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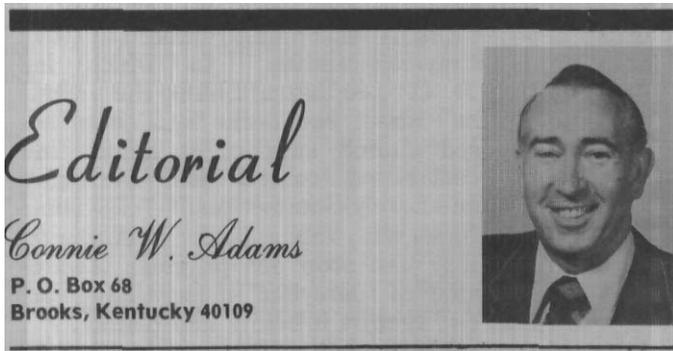
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"SOME EXTREME POSITION"

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an article by H.E. Phillips in response to an editorial note written by James W. Adams in the April 1, 1978 GOSPEL GUARDIAN. We feel that some comments from us are in order. James W. Adams and this editor are no relation in the flesh though we have been friends for a number of years. We have learned much from his preaching, writing and from personal associations. It affords us no delight to have to take public exception to what he has said touching the "so-called Marriage Issue" as he put it. Though we have carried several articles in this paper on this subject and have others on hand which have not appeared yet, this writer has had little to say. But the time has come when we must speak out clearly and plainly.

In spite of the fact that brother Adams spoke out clearly against the permissive attitude toward divorce and remarriage for any cause in his January 15, 1978 editorial in the GOSPEL GUARDIAN, yet his recent editorial note will be (AND ALREADY HAS BEEN) used to create sympathy for the very advocates of this permissive approach.

"The Past 150 Years"

Brother Adams says that brethren have disagreed over marriage and divorce and re-marriage for 150 years without division. It has been within my lifetime (and I am not as old as either brethren Phillips or Adams) that divorce and remarriage has become a commonly accepted thing in society. It was certainly rare in the church. Through the years it has been the practice of each local church to handle each situation on its own merits. For the most part brethren have agreed (with some exceptions, of course) that Matthew 5:32.; 19:9 and Luke 16:18 taught that fornication was the only scriptural ground upon which one could put away a companion and marry another without sinning. But men sometimes change their theology to fit their practices. There have been gospel preachers to fall into the trap of the world with its lusts. There have been preachers who have been so sympathetic with some of their own kin, or close friends who have gotten into marital tangles, that they have modified their views to justify some who were living in adultery. (If someone wants to argue that one cannot "live in" such a state, I will just turn him over to Paul in Col. 3:5-7). E.C. Fuqua came out with his new twist several years ago which argued that an alien sinner is not under God's

marriage law, and took a position, which in all essence said that baptism washes away wives. The whole meaning of repentance was nullified.

Much of the present noise being created over the marriage question traces to the view popularized by Lloyd Moyer and subscribed to by a number of preaching companions on the west coast where his influence was greatest. He was an able man, did much good in his life, and we do not wish to detract from his work nor cast any reflection upon his character. The view that the act of adultery frees everybody (guilty and innocent) so that even the guilty may remarry without sin was welcomed by many who were in questionable domestic circumstances. For several years the advocates of this view have taught it publicly and privately without much opposition. Gene Frost had a written discussion on the subject with Lloyd Moyer in the GOSPEL GUARDIAN several years ago. It was a good discussion, conducted on a high plane, set the two views in sharp focus and stark contrast, and that discussion is still in print and available. Last year we printed the SMITH—LOVELADY debate on this subject. That is still available.

We agree with James W. Adams that some "extreme position(s)" have been taken all right. When men are willing to affix their names to a proposition which says "The Scriptures teach that the guilty party (the one put away for fornication) has the Scriptural right to marry another" as three brethren in California have signed and defended in public debate with J.T. Smith, and as the brother had signed to debate with brother Phillips in Virginia (though ill health prevented Phillips from going to the debate in which J.T. Smith took his place), then we say that is "extreme" to be sure. Now, was it extreme for Phillips (or Smith) to deny such a proposition? If so, then what is the truth between the extremes? Shall this doctrine, with all of its evil consequences go unchallenged?

A Spreading Problem

The changing moral climate of our times has affected more brethren than some realize. Our more liberal brethren are vexed with the same problems, perhaps to a greater degree than some of us. Ruel Lemmons, editor of the FIRM FOUNDATION, has spoken out within the past few months in two very strong editorials against this evil in the churches. He has just carried an extended series of about ten articles by J.D. Thomas in which he forthrightly addressed this issue. The articles were well done and we commend them, as well as the courage it took to publish such material when such was not likely to be well received by many. There have been two debates that we know of among liberal brethren over this issue already in 1978, one between Andrew Connaly and Olan Hicks, former editor of the Christian CHRONICLE.

Congregational Autonomy

We have seen bulletin articles recently bemoaning the discussion of this subject and calling attention to the right of each congregation to handle such problems as they arise, without outside meddling. We

have no quarrel with that. It has always been our disposition to teach the truth as plainly as possible on this subject and then leave the application of it to any who need it. We have never favored (nor do we now) some sort of witch hunt, nor FBI-like search of legal records looking for incriminating evidence. But there are cases where there is no doubt that sin exists and the question has to be resolved as to whether a congregation shall clasp it to its bosom, or repudiate those who refuse to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

While on the subject of autonomy, it needs to be said that the church in Virginia which planned and announced the debate which occasioned the remarks by James W. Adams, exercised its own autonomy in doing so. They had a local problem they were trying to handle and thought a debate on the subject would help them. It did help them and many other brethren who were able to hear it. They did not have to ask anyone if they could have a debate on the subject.

"Over-Zealous Brethren"

It is regrettable that men of the stature of H.E. Phillips should be classified as "over-zealous" for being willing to deny such a proposition. His good work and fidelity to the word of the Lord in life and teaching is a matter of history. His writings have already blessed many and will live on to do good after he is gone. If brother Adams meant to exempt him from such a charge, then we hope he will clear up that point. Right-thinking brethren likewise owe a debt of gratitude to such men as Gene Frost, J.T. Smith, Maurice Barnett and others, who have been willing to prepare themselves to meet and answer the advocates of such permissiveness. If the spread of such doctrine is not checked, then churches throughout the land will be filled with moral corruption. Concerning the unrepented fornicator at Corinth, Paul raised the question which we need to ponder when he asked "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6)? No company was to be kept with any brother who was a fornicator (v. 11) and they were charged to "put away from among yourselves (themselves) that wicked person" (v. 13). 2 Corinthians 2:5-8 shows that the brother did repent and on that basis was to be forgiven.

An Appeal for Purity

We are in sympathy with warnings about fracturing over matters of no importance. We are also concerned for the moral purity of the church for which Jesus died. Of the church, Paul wrote "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that is should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27). The grace of God appeared "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). Doctrinal and moral purity are bound up together. Compromise in one of these areas inevitably leads to compromise in the other. Brethren, let us not

bring the "royal law", "the perfect law of liberty", "the law of the Spirit of life", down to the level of this present, untoward generation. No! A thousand times, No, my brethren! Rather let us with compassion reprove the sinner and lift him UP TO THE STANDARD. If that is being "over-zealous" and puts us in an "extreme position" then we plead guilty on both counts and stand ready to withstand whatever whetted arrows the scribes may choose to fire in our direction. We are NOT FOR SALE and do not intend to be intimidated. When the Goliaths of error stand on yonder hill and shout "The Scriptures teach that the put away adulterer can remarry without committing sin" then just that long there will be David's and slingshots ready to meet them. When they decide to lower their voices and cease perverting the right ways of the Lord, then the level of conflict will diminish accordingly.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT THINKING

Thinking is the mental process reserved for the highest of God's creatures, man. While certain animals may engage in acts which vaguely resemble thinking and may even approximate it under certain conditions, only man can deliberate information, organize it into proper categories, relate it to certain situations, finally determining a certain course of action as a direct result of the entire process.

Thinking presupposes a state of consciousness. Only a conscious mind is capable of dealing with information. In fact, consciousness, properly considered, is merely the mind in the act of knowing itself. It is the engaging of one's power to reason which results in a person's recognition of himself as a free, volitional being, capable of carrying on enterprise in the midst of other such conscious beings.

In Proverbs 23:7, Solomon advises concerning man that, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". This passage relates the true value of good thinking, for the principle states that a person's actions are a direct result of his own deliberation. While some hasty actions are often dismissed with the affirmation that, "I did it without thinking", the truth is that hasty actions are merely the result of hasty thinking rather than no thinking at all. I can think of no case where it could be said that any rational, conscious being ever acted without first purposing in his mind to do so, regardless of how shallow was the deliberation.

Immorality is a problem. And immorality is the direct result of poor thinking. And poor thinking is caused by the selfish use of the mind, satisfying its inherent need to ponder, deliberate and decide with ends lower than God purposed when He designed it. For instance, the problem with pornography is not with dirty pictures, but with the evil thinking which such filth produces. Pornography is actually "mind pollution"! Again, all anger is not wrong nor sinful, but becomes so when the mind is allowed to dwell upon wrath, allowing the deliberation of ungodly actions to be surmised. In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul warns against such poor thinking by saying, "... let not the sun go down on thy wrath, neither give place to the devil". The point of the admonition is that undisciplined concentration on anger results in actually giving a dwelling place to the devil. And that dwelling place is the mind! Immorality, you see, is not caused by our natural appetites and normal

desires, but by our poor thinking regarding them. It is for this very reason that Jesus says that a person who looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her "in his heart" (See Matt. 5:28). He has before conjured up such an act in his mind and to consent to such action is the same mental process, whether or not the act itself ever takes place!

Right thinking requires right information. No person is capable of doing his best thinking while using poor information. The very fact that man was created with the ability to reason demanded that God equip him with the necessary good information for use in such mental activity. This revelation of top quality material for use by the human mind is seen in two areas. First of all, the conscious state of man and his resultant mental intercourse with his surroundings gives him information concerning the laws of necessity, or cause to effect relations. Such information, properly considered, allows him to make beneficial choices which result in his happiness (which is, in itself, a mental state). However, such information as that which is available by natural means does not by itself satisfy man's inherent mental quest for knowledge about himself and from whence he is derived. And no matter where he searches, such information will not be forthcoming, for it is not available by natural means (Cf I Cor. 2:9). God has, however, slaked such a thirst for recognition by the creature of his Creator by revealing Himself to mankind. As a result, I can openly affirm that such revelation makes it possible for every man to know God and offer to Him the praise and noteworthiness He deserves. And I can also affirm that the human mind operates at its peak level of efficiency when engaged in worship and devotion (again, a mental response) to God. Only by the proper use of such information, or through obedience, can man quiet his conscience by knowing he has found favor with God (Heb. 5:8-9). After all, to "fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man". And neither fear, or reverential awe, nor commandment keeping is possible without thinking—and that on right information (I Jno. 4:24).

Thinking is an individual affair. I am aware that we sometimes dismiss a person's actions by affirming that "someone else does his thinking for him", but in the final analysis, no person thinks for any other person. The laws of God concerning human accountability demand such. If my thinking could affect your eternal destiny then individual responsibility would not be a fact and God could not hold every man responsible for his own actions. Such an arrangement would be out of character for a God of system and order. Every man will account for his own affairs (Rom. 14:11-12) and that necessarily means that each man will do his own thinking, resolving, planning and acting!

Thinking takes time. Meditation, the process of deliberating concerning accumulated and categorized information, is probably the most neglected private assignment of every mature Christian. And the main reason given for such neglect is the lack of time.

Such is a foolish neglect, for sincere and determined reflection is absolutely necessary to good mental hygiene. Careful consideration of the goodness of God is the very thing which leads us to deliberate new resolutions, even repentance (II Cor. 7:10; Rom. 2:4). Whatever time there is, a goodly portion of it should be devoted to contemplative reflections concerning the goodness, grace, mercy, and inexhaustible benevolence of God! I affirm that any God-fearing individual who gives the necessary time to such careful consideration will very soon be engaged in prayerful thanksgivings to Almighty God! Whatever time we choose to spend thinking on any subject, it should not diminish from our regular thinking about God. And such is best accomplished by that person who has formed an intimate mental relationship with the Word of God.

Every person seeking the favor of God would do well to take whatever time is necessary to unlearn the habit of not meditating!

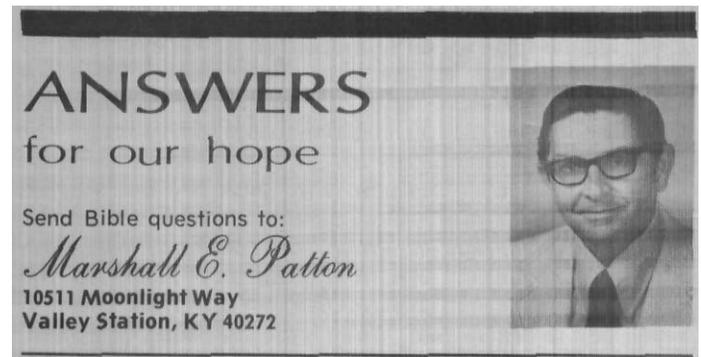
Do not underestimate the value of solitude. Time and time again the Scriptures show the value Christ placed on solitude by stating how he withdrew from the crowds and pondered alone. Although meditation is possible almost anywhere, the very best of it is done when one is not under the duress of some pressing situation. For this reason, it is highly advisable that every person arrange to have certain regular periods of quietness and withdrawal. Introspection demands it, for no person is capable of genuine reflection when distracted by current obligations or demands by his associates. "Half-hearted" religion is due, in the main, to the failure to give single-minded attention to the things of God. And a mind given to a single consideration most often requires solitude.

Patience is necessary to right thinking. Right thinking is not a natural tendency and consequently must be acquired. When a person does not plan (again, a mental action) to be a clear and pure thinker, he will not be. But when that individual decides that good, clean thinking is the most sublimated action of the human mind, and when he is willing to sacrifice the work, demands on his time, and all the other things necessary, he will become a good thinker. Peter says, (I Pet. 1:13), "wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind," an admonition implying endurance and work to bring ones mental processes into rein. Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exhalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity, every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5-6), indicating that strenuous effort is required to discipline and control ones thinking.

Finally, the fodder for the mastication and assimilation involved in right thinking is set forth in Philippians 4:8. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on

these things." True things, properly considered, make for integrity. Honorable things, thought upon, result in the elevation of human dignity. Thinking on just things culminates in moral uprightness. The heart is naturally inclined to and embraces things of beauty. And time spent considering things of good report will logically result in a disciplined tongue, one which reports as much good as possible. The tuning of the human mind to those things assigned for its good is the highest form of right thinking and results in the most good being done for all concerned.

The excellence of the human character, the dignity of our standing in the creation, the future of our eternal destiny demand right thinking, DON'T YOU THINK?



THE GRACE—FELLOWSHIP ISSUE — NO. 2 "GOSPEL AND DOCTRINE"

The NEW UNITY MOVEMENT (NUM) affirms a distinction between the terms "gospel" and doctrine." This effort is made with a view to extending fellowship to sincere brethren in error (See first paragraph in Article No. 1). The idea affirmed by the NUM is that while there must be unity in "gospel" there may be diversity in "doctrine." Some of this movement are more hazy in distinguishing between the two, but, nevertheless, end up with the same conclusion, namely, that sincere brethren in error are worthy of fellowship.

Old and New Ketchersideism

This effort of trying to distinguish between "gospel and doctrine" is not new. Carl Ketcherside did so in his effort to justify his opposition to the "located preacher"—this is OLD KETCHERSIDEISM: "Now, the idea of preaching the gospel to the church, is one that is not held forth in the New Testament scriptures. . . My friends, there is a great difference between preaching and teaching. . . One preaches when he tells sinners about Christ and he teaches when he edifies the church" (Wallace-Ketcherside Debate, Paragould, Ark. 1952, pp 21, 22, 23). Again, his protegee, Leroy Garrett, said: "Friends, it's ridiculous from the very import of the terms before us. So I must admit in the light of this chart that I do not believe that one may preach the gospel to the church. That is quite right. . . I want to know where the scriptures teach that elders ever reached out into the field and brought a man into a congregation to preach the gospel to that church" (Humble-Garrett Debate, Kansas City, Mo., 1954, p 23). Throughout

these debates both Ketcherside and Garrett affirm that one preaches the gospel to aliens and teaches doctrine to saints.

The NUM's affirmation may well be called the NEW KETCHERSIDEISM because it seeks to make the same distinction only with a different application: "Those who are acquainted with affairs within God's family well know of the divisions and heartaches brought about by these multiplied divisions. They don't go away by closing our eyes—they only get worse. I in no way claim to be an authority on the ultimate cure, but, I do believe, with all my heart, that I recognize one of the most prolific reasons for this division — and that is — an almost universal failure to distinguish between the gospel and the doctrinal instructions of the Bible. . . We have stretched the gospel as a blanket to cover every bit of instruction given in the New Testament. Therefore when disagreements arise as to points of that instruction someone is accused or perverting the gospel. . . My brethren — in searching for the cause and cure of such divisions, why have we not started with the *root cause* — Our misunderstandings of the meaning and scope of *gospel* in contrast with doctrinal instructions?" (Arnold Hardin, "What Is the Gospel?", THE PERSUADER, Vol. XII, No. 4, Sept. 25, 1977). Again, "The 'spiritual seed or sperm' that produces children is the gospel (1 Cor. 4:14-15). Children then must be nourished with heaven's instructions — but these instructions or directives are not 'the gospel' (Arnold Hardin, "The Righteousness of God", THE PERSUADER, Vol XII, No. 1, August 14, 1977).

Thus, the NUM reckons the "gospel" as the seed which produces the child and the "doctrine" as the food by which he is sustained. Furthermore, they say that it is impossible to produce a child with the wrong seed, but not all food (though unfortunate) kills. Thus, all must unite upon the "gospel" while division may exist over "doctrinal" matters; aliens must see and understand the "gospel" alike, while saints may differ over instructions directed to them.

In reply, let it be remembered that food essential to life, if taken away, kills. Furthermore, poison in food will kill, and false doctrine is poison. Even a perverted gospel "removed" some of the Galatians from Christ (Gal. 1:6). The doctrine of the NUM implies that "doctrine" cannot be understood by saints. Yet, Paul said to saints "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Something must be wrong with one's faith when he concludes that he cannot do what God commands. It is strange indeed that *aliens must* understand what is directed to them, but *saints can't* understand what is directed to them. This is the old denominational cliché, "We can't see the Bible alike," with emphasis in a different place. It has been my experience that it is just as difficult, if not more so, to get aliens to see what is directed to them as it is to get saints to see what is directed to them. Furthermore, our Lord's prayer for unity was in behalf of "believers" that they all may be one "*as*" the Father and Son are one (Jno. 17:21). The NUM'S "unity in diversity" is contrary to the oneness of this prayer.

Teaching By Inference

As a consequence of this view, some have rejected "Necessary Inference" as a means of Bible teaching. They reason that the salvation of the saint cannot be made to depend upon human inference. Some also reject "Approved Examples" as binding for the same reason. This reduces the means by which the Bible teaches to a "Direct Statement." In reply, I would remind everyone that the salvation of any soul depends upon human reasoning whether he be alien or saint. Where is the direct statement that says the gospel applies to John Doe today? This conclusion is reached only by human inference. "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). The gospel is God's power to save everyone, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 1:16). This includes John Doe, therefore, he needs the gospel in order to be saved. No wonder Jesus said, "Every man therefore that hath *heard* and *learned*. . . cometh unto me" (John 6:45). The salvation of both alien and saint depends upon a learning process. Shall we be driven all the way back to Calvin's "irresistible grace"—salvation void of any human effort?

Hazy Use of Terms

While some make a clear and sharp distinction between "gospel" and "doctrine," others of the NUM are hazy and devious in their use of these terms. These hold that "gospel" includes "doctrine" in that faith in the facts of the gospel, an attitude of respect for the authority of Christ, and a sincere effort to submit to Christ in every thing must continue on the part of the saint. *In this sense they hold that the gospel applies to the saint.* To sin wilfully (Heb. 10:26) would be to deny the "gospel." However, sins of ignorance and weakness of the flesh do not involve such an attitude, and, therefore, is not a denial of the "gospel." It follows from such reasoning that sincere brethren in error are in no violation of the "gospel," but differ only in "doctrine," and are yet in fellowship with God and should be with all saints. They see a problem in the fact that no one saint understands completely every thing Jesus taught, yet, such may remain in fellowship with God. Therefore, they conclude that any lack of understanding on the part of a sincere brother will not result in a break of fellowship with God. Hence, the arbitrary distinction and fuzzy views of "gospel" and "doctrine" are an effort to justify such conclusion. Brethren, this is not the answer! A later article will show the solution to this problem—and do so in harmony with all else revealed.

No Distinction

The Bible makes no distinction between "gospel" and "doctrine." The issue among the Galatian churches involved not only circumcision, but also the keeping of days, months, times, years, and other ordinances of Judaism (Gal. 4:10; 5:4). Such was a perversion of the "gospel" and removed saints from the Lord (Gal. 1:6). Peter, Barnabas, and other brethren "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:11-14). Immorality was declared by Paul to be "contrary to sound doctrine. . . according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1

Tim. 1:10, 11). Furthermore, the gospel was preached to saints (Rom. 1:7, 15), and doctrine was taught to aliens (Acts 5:19-25, 28; 13:12).

2 John 9

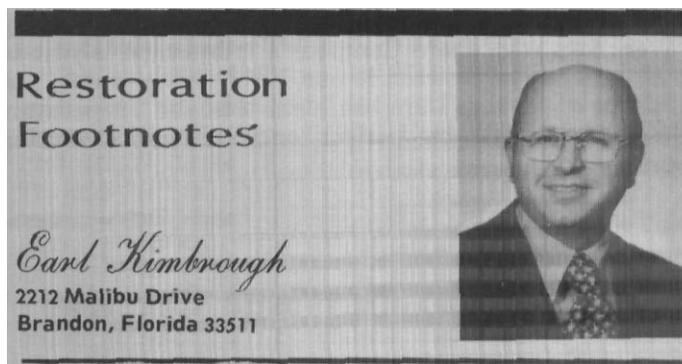
The NUM affirms that "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9) refers to doctrine *about* Christ (v. 7). They say the context demands it, and, thus, they exclude sincere brethren in error from the condemnation of verse nine. However, a more careful examination of these verses shows that verse seven is the exception (a specific of the whole) to the contextual theme (the whole body of truth) which runs throughout this short chapter. The "truth" (singular)—the whole body of truth (vs. 1, 4); the "commandment" (singular)—inclusive of all commandments (v. 6), and "doctrine" (singular)—not one of the doctrines (v. 9) identify the theme of the context. Thus, the NUM's view is arbitrary, out of harmony with other passages (e.g., Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10, 11; 2 Tim. 2:15-18), and at variance with scholarship in general. Consider the following:

"Of Christ' is the subjective genitive: the doctrine of Christ taught and still teaches through his apostles" (R.C.H. Lenski).

Thayer defines the word "doctrine" as "that which is taught, one's teaching, i.e., what he teaches, 2 Jno. 9"

"the doctrine which, proceeding from Christ, was proclaimed by the apostles. The doctrine of Christ is the truth; he who has not the truth has not God" (H.A.W. Meyer).

"not the teaching about Christ, but that of Christ which is the standard of Christian teachings the walk of Christ is the standard for the Christian's walk (1 John 2:6)" (A.T. Robertson). Brethren, be not deceived by those who would make distinctions where God's word makes none, who place a restricted meaning on passages to accommodate their peculiar doctrine, especially when at variance with other passages and scholarship of the world in general. We must always speak that which becometh sound doctrine (Titus 2:1).



NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FURNACE

It may be pure vanity, but I find a measure of satisfaction in being able to identify with respected preachers of bygone days, even though the points of identity usually run along rather insignificant lines. For instance, Alexander Campbell has become a little dearer to me since I learned of our mutual affliction from the climatic condition of meetinghouses. I've suffered enough dry throat, hoarseness, chills, fever and general discomfort to qualify as a first class complainer, if I could find anyone to listen. I've never been able to understand why some brethren think a building should be sixty degrees in July and ninety in January, nor why thermostats are placed under the oversight of Eskimos in the summer and Ethiopians in the winter. But old brother Campbell would have sympathized with me. He had some problems of this nature on an extended tour of the South in the winter of 1838-1839. He wrote in particular about his troubles in the Old Dominion.

"Stoves are generally misplaced in places of worship," he noted. "They ought never to be near the speaker. I have got many a sore throat and heavy cold from these life-destroying machines. Instead of being placed within a few feet of the stand, with their pipes on each side of the speaker, as in the meetinghouse in Charlottesville, and then red as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, they ought to be near the doors to meet the cold air on its entrance, and always heated one hour before the congregation assembles." (*Millennial Harbinger*, February, 1839, pp. 56-57.)

Campbell further felt that meetinghouse floors should be built on an inclined plane with the audience rising above the speaker. "The speaker," he contended, "ought always to be the lowest man in the house." (Of course, some brethren think he is anyhow, regardless of the elevation.) One reason he gave for this arrangement for the speaker is "that he might have the best air, for he needs it most." "No man of science will ask me for an explanation of this matter," he said. Maybe not, but men of science didn't fire the Charlottesville stoves "seven times more" than they were "wont to be heated," nor place their red hot pipes on each side of the speaker's stand. And it is not generally men of science who ride shotgun on our meetinghouse thermostats today. Those who do are often more considerate of their own comfort (or that of their wives, depending on their standing in the home) than that of the speaker.

Nebuchadnezzar's furnace may have set a precedent that will continue until the end of time.

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**PRESENT TRUTH—ADVENTIST
INFLUENCE THE DECALOGUE**

Though the editor of *Present Truth*, Robert Brinsmead, is a Seventh Day Adventist, Sabbatarianism does not seem to be of vital significance to him. But this is not to say that Adventist doctrine doesn't have a subtle voice in some of his articles. I don't believe I'm hearing something that is actually not there, but the reader may decide for himself as we consider the following evidence:

In an article entitled "Hermeneutics," Editor Brinsmead suggests five rules of Biblical interpretation, the first of which is to interpret the Old Testament by the New. In this connection, he tells us that the New Testament not only shows us how to interpret Old Testament prophecies, but also how to interpret Old Testament laws. Following the typical Adventist reasoning, he claims that the Old Testament laws of ceremony met their spiritual reality in the person and work of Christ and were there fulfilled. But the moral laws of the Old Testament "are perpetually binding."

What laws is he referring to? He does not leave us in doubt: "*The Apostle Paul refers to a number of them as a rule of life for Christians. The Sermon on the Mount interprets the moral precepts of the Ten Commandments and, instead of lessening their binding force, strengthens their demand for holiness (see Matt. 5:17-28).*"

He then goes on to teach that Jesus claimed the authority to interpret the law, and as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) He reveals the "proper observance of the Sabbath."¹

The Adventist argument on the definition of sin is unmistakably expressed in another article by the editor. He tells us that sin must be clearly defined, and in the Ten Commandments it is so clearly defined that the ignorant as well as the learned may understand. I John 3:4 is quoted as follows: "*Sin is the transgression of this law.*" Then the comment is made: "*To transgress the Decalogue is an affront to the awesome majesty of a sin-hating God.*"²

Some of the most enlightening statements are made in a couple of special issues entitled, "Covenant." It is claimed that Jeremiah's Promise of a new covenant with Israel is actually but a "*grand covenant renewal.*" The editor says: "*The conditions of the covenant remain unchanged, but God will forgive the sins of his people and put his laws in their hearts (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36:26, 27).*" . . . "

Isaiah 56:1-6 is then mentioned as another example of "the covenant renewal" and it is observed that this passage "mentions the Sabbath and the covenant interchangeably. Evidently Sabbath renewal and covenant renewal went hand in hand. . . ." ³

It is more to our purpose, in this review, to call the readers' attention to these matters than to reply to all the arguments. Suffice it to say on the above that if Jeremiah had merely prophesied a *renewed covenant*, then such would have been according to the covenant the Lord made with the fathers when He led them forth from the land of Egypt. Yet, he specifically stated that it would not be according to that covenant (31:31-40). Also, the Hebrew letter teaches that the first covenant was made old by the establishment of the new (8:13).

Later, in this same issue of *Present Truth*, we are told that our Covenant responsibility is spelled out in the Ten Commandments: "God has but one covenant in mind—a covenant which He renews to different people at different stages of salvation—history." ⁴

It is asserted that what the apostles inveighed against was "not the divine intent at Sinai but the way that the Jews had misunderstood and perverted what God gave to them . . . The stipulations (the Ten Commandment law) were not set aside or abrogated by the work of Christ but were honored and established (Isa. 42:21; Rom. 3:31). . . ." ⁴

This is then tied in with the doctrine of imputation through the allegation that "the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to him is Christ's life of holy obedience to each commandment of the Decalogue." It is then asked: "In view of all this, how can the believer fail to reverence the holy commandments of God and ever walk before the Lord with fear and trembling?" ⁶

Lest anyone think the first day of the week is innocently being called "the Sabbath," let it be noted that Brinsmead criticizes the seventeenth century Puritans who "introduced what they fondly called 'the Christian Sabbath'. . ." ⁵

The Soul

Another doctrine espoused by Adventists which has found its way into *Present Truth* is the materialistic denial of man's immortal soul. Editor Brinsmead labors to persuade readers that the doctrine of an immortal soul is based upon Greek philosophy and not Biblical teaching. In one place, Thorliff Bowan's book, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, is quoted: "In Greek thought man is seen as a duality, with an immortal soul imprisoned or confined in a mortal body; the two are only thought the 'soul' and 'flesh' are not separable, but temporarily or accidentally related. In Hebrew one is the outward and visible manifestation of the other." ⁶

The comment is then made: "It makes a lot of difference whether we think the body is a prison or a 'temple of the Holy Ghost.' I Cor. 6:19. Socrates faced death calmly because of his faith in his own immortal soul. The apostles exhorted believers to put their faith in their life which was hidden in Christ (Col. 3:2-4), and they comforted the bereaved with the hope of the resurrection. Our anthropology and

eschatology will not be Biblical if we read the Bible with Greek glasses," ⁷

This reviewer believes the New Testament teaches both the immortality of the soul (Eccl. 3:21; 12:7; Luke 23:42, 43; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor. 4:16; 5:1-8; Matt. 17:3; 22:32; Luke 16: 19-31; Rev. 6:9-11; I Pet. 3:18-21) and the resurrection of the body (I Cor. 15).

Later in this same article, it is claimed that the concept of man being valuable because "he had within him a spark of divinity—an innate, death-proof entity called the immortal soul" is Greek in origin. *Present Truth* claims that man is valuable "not because of some great value within, but by a great value without. He has been bought by the blood of Calvary's cross." ⁸

This reviewer is convinced that the above propositions are not mutually contradictory.

The Protestant Reformation

Last month we discussed the great emphasis which *Present Truth* places upon the Reformation and the Reformers. This also is a reflection of Seventh-Day Adventism. In the book, *The Religions of America*,⁹ Arthur S. Maxwell, editor of *Signs of the Times*, the leading journal of the Seventh-Day Adventists, was asked: "Are Seventh-Day Adventists Protestants?"

His reply: "Yes. Like the reformers of the sixteenth century, Seventh-Day Adventists believe that every individual may have immediate access to God by prayer. . . They believe that their Church constitutes the nucleus of a twentieth-century Reformation, a world-wide revival of New Testament Christianity."

Compare this to these words on the inside front cover of *Present Truth*: "Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began."

Even their central doctrine, the imputation of Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness to the believer's account, is but a further reflection of the editor's Adventist background. One Adventist brochure in my collection is entitled "We Don't Have To Be Good." (Following the traditional *modus operandi* of this group, it is not identified as an Adventist publication, but it was sent to me, along with a stack of material, by an irate member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.)

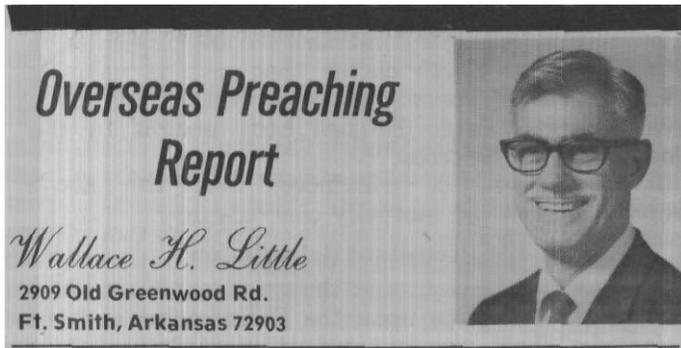
The brochure tells us that one of the three aspects of God's justification of a repentant sinner is: "Imputation of Christ's righteousness. On the basis of Christ's sinless life, God accounts to us the righteous character of His Son. (Rom. 4:3-6, 2 Cor. 5:21; I Cor. 1:30). Christ's perfect character stands in place of our imperfect character."

Finally, even the name, "*Present Truth*" was for years connected with a journal published by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. These are but a few matters that may open a few eyes to the source of some current problems. Let us walk circumspectly.

Next month: *Present Truth* and the Doctrine of Imputation.

1. *Present Truth*, Vol. 3, No. 2, P. 10.
2. *Ibid*, S.I. Jus. by Faith & CM., P. 32.
3. *Ibid*, Vol. 5, No. 7, PP. 26, 27.

4. *Ibid.*, PP. 30, 38, 39, 48, 51, 55; See also Vol. 3, No. 3, PP. 41-43.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, No. 8, P. 5.
6. SCM Press London, Published in 1954 in German and 1960 in English.
7. *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 3, No. 2, P. 42.
8. *Ibid.*, P. 44 (see also PP. 45, 46; also Vol. 6, No. 1, an issue dealing with "Theology and Body," PP. 20, 24, 25, 31f.).
9. Leo Rosten, editor; Heinemann Press, London, 1957, P. 133.



TO THE SOUTH: A Foothold in COLUMBIA

Last August, Wayne Partain and Royce Chandler spent fifteen days in Manizales, Columbia with Carlos Restrepo, the only Christian they knew there. Carlos was converted in a US prison, and returned to Columbia in April 1977. He cannot come back to the US, so efforts to help him must be in His country. At 23, he is a babe in Christ, but with enormous talents, He has been diligent in study and work. Last October, he moved to Bogata, the capital city as the best place to start the Lord's work among that nation's twenty-three million souls.

Bob Crawley and Royce Chandler with their wives were there during the Christmas holidays. They continued teaching Carlos. They also leased a house as a residence for him, and as a place of assembly. Its size permits any who go there to help to use it, avoiding hotel costs. Additionally, they secured furniture and study materials useful for a functioning church. The University Heights church in Lexington, Kentucky and the Danville, Kentucky church share bro. Restrepo's support.

Wayne and Faye Partain returned to Bogata on 16 January 1978. The Lord willing, they will work for three months to help establish a congregation. Wayne and Carlos baptized two women on 4 February. Pray they continue reaping.

The kingdom's growth there rests on Carlos Restrepo. This great responsibility makes it imperative he get as much solid teaching as possible as quickly as possible. He eagerly wants it. Chandler's family plans to go back for six weeks this summer for this. Others may join them for one or two weeks, to help. As Restrepo is fluent in English, Spanish is unnecessary. Chandler asks: "Do you have something to contribute?" (Condensed from a report by Royce Chandler, of Danville, Kentucky.)

OTHER WORK IN SOUTH AMERICA

Two men, bro. Efrain F. Perez of Chili, and Carlos A. Capelli, of Argentina are making good efforts to spread the gospel in their nations. Both men have

been preaching for some years, and have been working as long or longer than any other preachers there.

Bro. Perez is presently in the US. He is studying in the Teacher Training Program in the Danville, Kentucky church, with brethren Kelly Ellis and Royce Chandler as teachers. He writes he is available to show slides and give talks on the work in Chili. For those interested, contact him at: Efrain F. Perez, 1222 W. Walnut Street, Danville, Kentucky, 40422. He expects to be in the United States for a number of months yet.

Bro. Capelli reported several gospel meetings, in the city of Jose C. Paz, and Derqui. He preached in one, and a bro. Arturo Cantu, who worships with the Spanish-speaking congregation in San Angelo, Texas, was down there to speak in the other. Several were added to Christ from these efforts. He also mentioned that he has been doing some radio work in Pilar.

Bro. Wayne Partain (see the summary of the report by Royce Chandler, above) invited bro. Capelli to come to Columbia and assist him (Partain) in his work there. Capelli will need assistance if he is to be able to do this. He may be contacted at: Carlos A. Capelli, Casila No. 12, 1635 Pte. Derqui, Buenos Aires, Argentina, South America.

INDIA REPORT

On 25 December 1977, bro. Wendel Wiser and Ray F. Dively left for a preaching visit to India. It was Wiser's first and Dively's fifth. Their purpose was to encourage and edify saints and hold a training class for preachers. They believe they were successful.

They worked with the approximately seventy churches in the Hyderabad area. These are young in the faith. Most have been established since 1972. They need encouraging and strengthening. There is also a great need for printed materials to spread the gospel. To help fulfill this, they printed two tracts in a native dialect.

The churches in India also have troubles. Dively cited one, a US preacher who introduced a doctrinal problem which set brother against brother. The man insisted women were not permitted to teach other women or children. This has been resolved. Love has returned. The Americans had difficulties created by a dishonest brother who did their interpreting. He overcharged them on the cost of printing, hotel bills and food expenses for the preachers in the training class. When confronted with evidence of his dishonesty, he promised to make restitution, But he disappeared, and was not seen again. On future trips, bro. N.A. Lazarus, who was converted on Dively's first trip, will do the interpreting.

Bro. Dively stressed the continuing need for such trips. Brethren in India are not yet able to carry on the work by themselves without outside assistance and encouragement. The visiting Americans do the same work Paul did on his revisits to churches he established, confirming them in the faith. Americans cannot get a permanent visa for preaching in India, so visits must fill this need. Wiser and Dively solicit the prayers of saints in the US that God's will in India might be fulfilled. (Condensed from a report by Ray F. Dively, of Baden, Pa.)

SOME GENERAL COMMENTS AND NOTES

The similarity of the work in India and the Philippines is startling. There are a number of good and honest hearts who hear the gospel and respond to it; the need for training classes to prepare preachers; the continuing need for visits by American preachers to encourage, edify and stabilize the work; "growing pains" which disturb the work and create problems; and finally, occasional dishonest brethren, seeking to make Godliness a way of gain (1 Tim 6:05). But none of these things, nor all of them will keep God's people from growing numerically and spiritually, as long as we seek God's will in all things.

Jim Puterbaugh recently returned from nearly a year of teaching preachers in the Philippines. I have received hundreds of letters, commending his work and expressing deep appreciation to him for doing it. I hope he will consent to write a report on it, that we can include in a future issue.

It is interesting to note that more and more work is being done or assisted by conservative brethren. The liberals have repeatedly charged us with doing nothing overseas. For a time, it seemed they were correct. That is no longer so. I continue to hear of the gospel being spread in new places, and thank God for this. A point of particular interest is the way work overseas is being done by us. Either we are sending the men to do it (as with Bob Nichols, in Japan) or we are sending men for shorter periods, to encourage and edify and train native preachers. This stands out in sharp contrast to much of the liberals' efforts, where they have spent enormous sums building colleges, establishing medical clinics and so on, where preaching the gospel among peoples hungry for God's Word almost seems as an after-thought. Just which method is closer to that given in the New Testament?

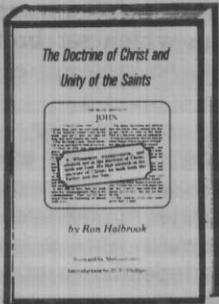
The Doctrine of Christ and Unity of the Saints

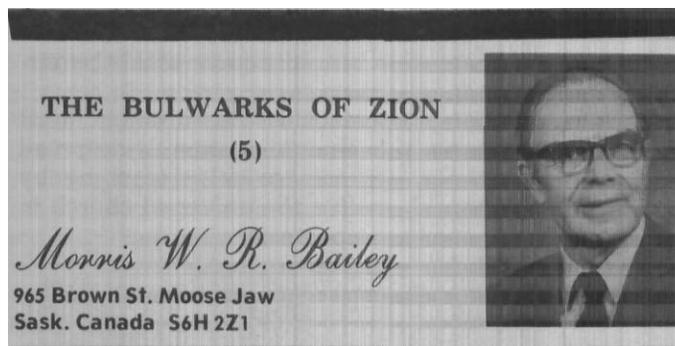
By Ron Halbrook

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In this, the final article in this series. I shall point out that one of the bulwarks of Zion that is designed to fortify the church against apostasy is.....

The Autonomy of The Local Church

Up to this time, I have been speaking of the church in the universal sense. This is the sense in which it is spoken of when Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Also when Paul said, "And he is the head of the body, which is the church" (Col. 1:18). In these passages, and in others, the word, church, is used in a universal sense, to included all the saved, where ever they may be.

But the word, church, is also sometimes used in a local sense. When thus used it includes the saved in a particular city or area. When Paul said, "All the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16), he was not speaking of denominations with different faiths and practices, but of the local congregations. This is obvious from the fact that the book of Revelation was addressed to "the seven churches that are in Asia", but later they were identified as seven local congregations (Rev.1:4,11). This is further seen in the fact that Paul addressed two epistles to "the church of God which is at Corinth." (1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:2).

So then, the word, church, is sometimes used in the universal sense to designate God's people throughout the world. Then it is sometimes spoken of in the local sense to designate God's people in a given city or area. The context usually determines the sense in which the word is used.

Bearing that thought in mind, I want us to notice that in its universal sense the church has no local government. No, I did not say that it has no government. I said that it has no local government. It has no elders. In its universal sense Christ is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). His word is our law (Col. 3:16). In its universal sense the church was never given any mission. The only function of the church is on the congregational, or the local level. Thus any local government is congregational in its scope.

There are reasons for confining such government to the local congregation that will appear obvious to the thoughtful student of the Bible and of history.

(1) There are often day to day decisions that must be made in the local congregation that could not be made by a universal, or even a regional governing body, which might be hundreds, or even thousands of miles away. There are sometimes disciplinary

problems that can be dealt with only on the local level, and by men who are in touch with the circumstances surrounding them.

(2) What is more important is the fact that local government protects the church against widespread apostasy. An unwise decision, or false teaching by universal elders would involve the universal church in that error and in eventual apostasy.

Elders, Local in Function

The government of the congregation is thus local, and is vested in a plurality of elders. In writing to Titus, Paul said, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and appoint elders in every city as I gave thee charge" (Titus 1:5). Not only did Paul give this as a charge to Titus, but he also set an example of the same, in that on the return portion of his first missionary journey, "They appointed elders in every church" (Acts 14:23).

Passing over the qualifications and the responsibilities of elders, I want to point out next that the jurisdiction of elders is confined to the local congregation. In a parting charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit had made them elders over the church at Ephesus, therefore that was the flock to which they were to take heed, and it was the extent of their jurisdiction. They had no authority over other congregations, even in the immediate area.

In a similar charge to elders the apostle Peter said, "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am also a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, . . . tend the flock which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Here again, it is elders that are addressed, and it is noted that the field of their oversight is limited to the flock that is among them — the local church.

That is what is meant by the autonomy of the local church. The word, autonomy is defined by Webster's dictionary as, the power or right of self government. As it relates to states and provinces, each is independently governed, and the laws of one state or province cannot be imposed on another state or province. As it relates to local churches, it means that each congregation is governed by its own elders, and that the decision of no other eldership or congregation is binding on it, and the decisions of its elders are not binding on any other congregation. This applies in every phase of the work of the church, whether it be in evangelism, edification, benevolence, or discipline. Each congregation functions as an independent unit just as the church at Jerusalem functioned in those days before other local congregations were established, and while it was the only local congregation on earth.

Independent local government of the local

congregation is a divine provision to safeguard the church from universal apostasy. Men are fallible. They make mistakes. They sometimes become unfaithful and teach error, and introduce human innovations. As long as the jurisdiction of such elders is confined to the local church, the resultant apostasy will be confined to that one congregation. Other congregations can remain faithful. But when men become universal or brotherhood elders, the resultant apostasy is as wide as their jurisdiction.

Great departures often originate with small beginnings. In New Testament times the terms, elder and bishop, were used with reference to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28). But there came a time when a distinction was made, and a man claiming to be a bishop assumed jurisdiction over the elders. It was a small step. I am sure that no one, even in the wildest flights of imagination, ever dreamed that it was the beginning of an apostasy that would culminate in the rise of one claiming to be a universal bishop, which claim is made by the pope of Rome. Yes, the office of the pope is just that of an overly ambitious elder.

What About Cooperation?

Since the jurisdiction of elders is confined to the local congregation, the work of the church must therefore be carried out on the local congregational level without the building of super-organizations to centralize such work under one governing body, whether it be a benevolent society, or a missionary society, or its counterpart, a sponsoring church. At this point I hear some one say, "O, he is one of those who doesn't believe in church cooperation."

The charge made against some brethren of being anti-cooperation is a red herring that has been dragged across the trail for far too long. And like all red herrings, having got so old, it stinks, and should have been buried long ago. It is the same charge that was made against Jacob Creath, David Lipscomb, Benjamin Franklin, and others who opposed the missionary society which was but the invention of men who were not satisfied with God's plan of cooperation among churches, and thought they could improve upon it.

Let me say for the record that I believe that congregations can and may cooperate. I don't know of anyone who does not believe that churches may cooperate. I believe that New Testament churches cooperated. But it was a cooperation that recognized the independence of each congregation. They worked toward the same end, yet each worked in its own congregational capacity. Two examples are herewith given.

(1) A number of churches supported Paul while he labored at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8). This support was not sent through any society. It was not even sent to the church at Corinth. But was obviously sent directly to Paul by the hand of brethren acting as messengers of the contributing churches (2 Cor. 11:9).

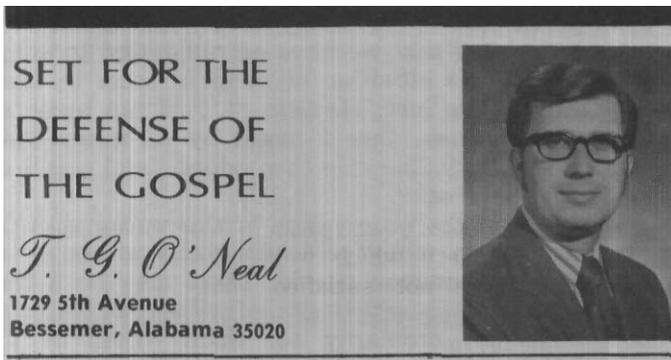
(2) During the latter part of Paul's third missionary journey he stirred up churches to make a contribution for impoverished brethren at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1). Some years earlier a similar con-

tribution had been made by the church at Antioch for the relief of poor saints in Judea (Acts 11:29). In neither case was the relief sent to some central organization. Nor was it sent to some central church to be administered. But it was sent, again by the hands of chosen messengers, directly to those for whom it was intended (Acts 11:30. 1 Cor. 16:3. 2 Cor. 8:23). Does anyone deny that this was cooperation between those churches?

Under such cooperation the success was phenomenal. One third of a century after Pentecost, Paul was able to say that the gospel had been preached in all creation under heaven (Col. 23). As for helping the poor, the response to Paul's appeal to the churches was so generous as to constitute a liberal contribution (2 Cor. 9:13).

Conclusion

The things that we have discussed in this series, — the fact that the church was designed by a divine architect; built by Christ; upon a divine foundation; ruled by a divine head who makes no mistakes; subscribing to a divine creed, written by men who were guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit; and finally in its local sense, ruled by elders whose jurisdiction is limited to but one local congregation — these things, I say, constitute mighty bulwarks that safeguard the church in matters of doctrine, in organization, in work and in worship. Let us mark them well. Let us pray that they may be faithfully preached to the generations following.



REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is basically a theory of Mohamendanism. It says that the soul of one is reborn in another body or form. The idea that demons are spirits of departed wicked men come back to life in the body of another seems to me to be a form of reincarnation. The reason why a cow is so well treated in countries like India is because the 'cow' just might be grandmother or some other relative reincarnated.

Jean Dixon

In the *National Enquirer*, Dec. 10, 1974, Jean Dixon said, "We're on the Brink of Discovering the Amazing Secrets of Reincarnation. . . All of us have lived before. And all the knowledge from our previous lives will surface with tremendous and wonderful consequences. . . Telepathy will become the everyday of communication. . . Age-old remedies will

be rediscovered and applied to modern medical know-how, eliminating all killer diseases. . . In earlier lives some of us were great scientists like da Vince, Galileo and Copernicus. We'll reach into the deepest recesses of our minds and draw out these great thoughts, theories, and ideas of centuries ago."

"Foremost Authority"

The *National Enquirer* of Feb. 14, 1978, page 37, says Dr. Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia is "the world's foremost authority on reincarnation." He claims to have "new evidence that after people die they can be born again." He gives "evidence" (?) of an Indian born again as his own nephew; a boy who was in an earlier life his own uncle, and woman born again as the daughter of a good friend. One psychic researcher said, "I feel it is strong evidence of possible reincarnation."

There needs to be kept in mind the big difference in the Biblical doctrine of life after death and in reincarnation; they are not the same.

Old Testament

(1) Of such Old Testament characters as Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech the Bible says "and *all the days* of" giving their name "were" giving their ages (Gen. 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 27, 31). If *all* their days were a certain number, then they did not have any more. If Methuselah had some days after 969 years, then 969 years were not "all the days of him; they were just *part* of his days.

(2) 2 Sam. 12:23—Of the child born to David and Bathsheba, David said when he died, "can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

(3) 2 Sam. 14:14 says "we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, neither doth God respect any person."

(4) Job 14:1-2—"Man that is born of woman is a few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." Man has a "few days" not a "few days" and then a "few days" again.

(5) Dan. 12:2—of those that "sleep in the dust of the earth" Daniel said they shall "awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Those that sleep will not awake to be reincarnated.

(6) Eccl. 3:2 says there is a "time to be born, and a time to die;" not times to be born and times to die.

(7) 2 Kings 4:35-36—when the son of the Shunammite woman died, Elisha raised him, the same boy, back to life. He came back to life as himself, not as his uncle or some friend.

New Testament

There are not only the above Old Testament passages that disprove reincarnation, but some New Testament passages bear on the matter.

(1) Mk. 5:35-43—When Jesus raised this damsel from the dead, it was the dead damsel that arose in the same body she had when Jesus took her by the hand. She did not come back from the dead in another body.

(2) Luke 7:11-18—Jesus raised a young man from the dead. He sat up with the same body. It was not the young man as a relative that was resurrected.

(3) John 11:43-44—Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and he came forth with his grave-clothes on, thus the same body.

(4) Acts 9:36-43—When Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, she came forth in the same body she had. She was not reincarnated in another body.

(5) Acts 20:9-12—Eutychus was "taken up dead" and Paul said "his life is in him" and he was "alive." After his death he did not come back in another body of either man or beast.

(6) 2 Cor. 5:1-10—Paul said we have "our earthly house" not houses and judgment will be according to what we have done "in this body," not in "these bodies." If man is reincarnated, he will not be judged for what he does in all of his bodies, just one.

(7) 2 Cor. 5:6-8—Paul contrasts the choice "we" have as being "at home in the body" as "absent from the Lord" and "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord." In Phil. 1:21-24 he shows to be "in the flesh" is the opposite of being "with Christ." When absent from the body, Paul was not looking to be reincarnated in another body in a future life back here on earth.

(8) Heb. 9:27—In this plain passage we read "as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." One death and then judgment; not several deaths and more lives of reincarnation.

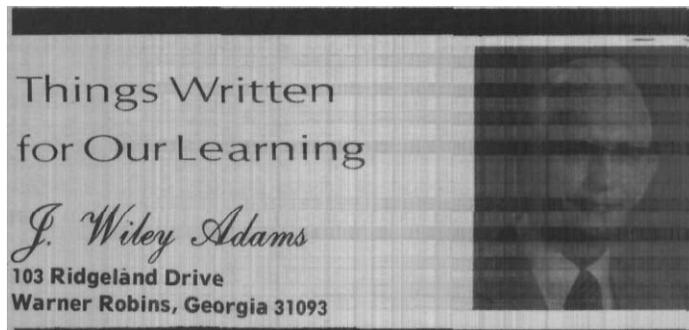
(9) 2 Tim. 4:1-8—Paul said when his departure took place he had a crown of righteousness waiting him, not another life in another body by reincarnation.

(10) John 16:13-15—Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into "all truth." They were not guided by the Spirit into teaching the doctrine of reincarnation. Therefore, reincarnation is not any part of "all truth."

(11) 2 Peter 1:3—Peter said "his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Reincarnation was not that which his divine power gave, thus, it does not pertain to life or godliness.

(12) 2 Cor. 5:7—Paul said we walk by faith and Rom. 10:17 teaches faith comes by hearing the word of God. If there is no word of God for the doctrine of reincarnation, and there is not, then it can not be taught or believed by faith.

Paul warns "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, and after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). The doctrine is one of those which did not originate with Christ and may be classified as "philosophy," "vain deceits," "rudiments of the world" and "traditions of men."



PRACTICAL PREACHING

We sing a song in our assemblies about Christ receiving sinful men in which we urge the preacher to make the message clear and plain. Unless the message of truth is clear and plain, most of us will not understand it. God intended that His Word be presented in such a way that ordinary people, as well as intellectuals, could comprehend it.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold of the days of the gospel and the kingdom of God. He said, "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, should not err therein." (Isa. 35:8). If man cannot understand truth it is of no value to him. To present truth so that man cannot grasp it is to nullify the purpose of truth. Isaiah indicated that even a wayfaring man, even a fool, could walk in the way of holiness. This is a strong argument for plain preaching.

Paul declared that we have an obligation to adapt ourselves to the situation at hand in order to teach the truth to the lost. He said, "... I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (I Cor. 9:22b). He then added "and this I do for the gospel's sake. . ." (v. 23).

It has been the observation of this writer that the preaching of so many preachers today is above the heads of the common people. There may be a time and place for a sophisticated, intellectual discourse but it is not ordinarily so. Such would be understandable to some audiences but not to most.

Preachers need to use some good judgment about this. Good common sense might be a better term for it. Brethren, keep it on the ground! After all, that is where we are standing. Jesus brought his lessons alive by the use of every day illustrations known as parables in which he used the language of the people. His lessons were profound because they were simple, plain and practical. He related his teaching to the day and time and showed the people how it would work for them in everyday affairs. He did not relate it to this life only but projected it to the life after death and heaven.

Compare this with those who flaunt their education and show off their academic ability today. What do they really teach the people? Their words and phrases are out of reach of the man in the pew. This is not an indictment of education. It is to say that we should learn how to use education so as to communicate with all whom we seek to teach. To do otherwise is to make

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one's motives suspicious.

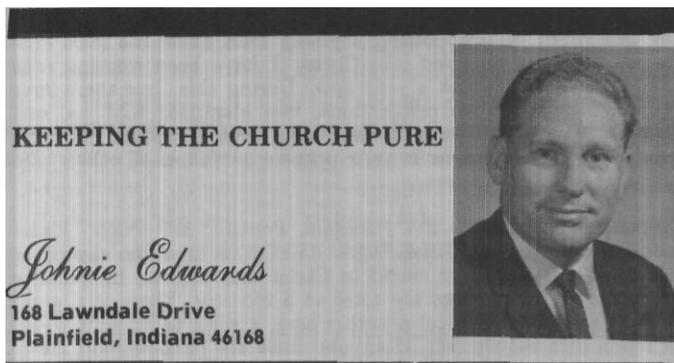
It must be discouraging for a man to work hard all day at a secular job, rush home, eat, dress and go to the services or to a gospel meeting only to come home with nothing. Some may say "climb up" or "bring a bucket to put it in." This may sound funny at first but it is not humorous at all to the one who has put forth so much effort and has gained so little in his spiritual understanding. He listens in vain to words and material so complex and complicated that he can fathom but little of it. A teacher is not successful unless he can be understood.

On the other hand it may be true that there are those who get nothing from most any type of lesson simply because they do not try. But if such a one did decide to try should not the teaching be within his reach? That is the point we are making.

We need to give people practical instruction so that they can relate it to the situations of life which they face day by day. It is only in this way folks can cope with life and its many problems. They must be caused to see that serving the Lord is not just some high-sounding, theological theory but that it works both for now and eternity. It gives meaning and purpose to life here and hereafter. The Christian life is real, not theoretical. It is practical because it works!

We fear that there is something called "intellectual snobbery" among some who preach. A preacher is not really educated unless he can use his tools of the trade to help men to understand. Education should never become a wall between teacher and student. It should in reality be a bridge over which to transfer thoughts. Accompanied with practicality and humility it can be a valuable tool in the hands of the wise.

Brethren, let us strive to make the message plain. Let it not be said when a sermon is done that the people could not understand what was said for the reason that it was over their heads.



God expects the church to be kept pure. The apostle Paul said, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

There are five areas I would like to discuss with you at this time, in which the church must be kept pure.

Conditions of Membership

The church must be kept pure in conditions of membership. God has given the plan and it is not the job of the church to set up its own terms of membership. The conditions of membership are simple: (1) Hearing the word (Matt. 17:5); (2) Believing in Christ (John 8:24); (3) Repentance (Acts 17:30); (4) Confession of faith (Matt. 10:32); and (5) Immersion (Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:16). These conditions of membership must not be changed if the church is to be kept pure.

Sometimes people will fall away after meeting the primary steps of membership and the church has the problem of receiving the unfaithful. Sometimes the unfaithful will want 'to slip back in' without acknowledging their sin. The church must be kept pure in this respect.

Receiving all immersed folks into the membership is an area in which the church must be kept pure. It is true that Bible baptism is immersion (Rom. 6: 3-4) but not all immersion is Bible baptism! Bible baptism must have the subject — the taught (Matt. 28:19); the right element — water (Acts 10:47); the right action — a burial (Col. 2:12); the right purpose — remission of sins (Acts 2:38); to get into Christ (Gal. 3:27); to get into the church (1 Cor. 12:13) and in order to be saved (1 Pet. 3:21; Mark 16:16).

In Organization

If the church is to be pure in God's sight, it must be kept pure in organization. There is no universal organization through which the church is to function. The organization of the church is on a local scale. In writing to the Philippians, Paul states that the organization of the local church is composed of elders, deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1). The only organization through which the church can scripturally function is the local congregation. The authority of the oversight invested in the elders begins and ends in the local congregation where they are elders (1 Pet. 5:1-2). Thus, it becomes unscriptural for an eldership to become involved in sponsoring activities for other congregations in any realm!

Since whatever God provides for the church is complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17), the organization is complete and it becomes a violation of the authority of the Bible when an eldership turns the funds of the local church over to any other organization to do its work.

In Work

There are three realms in which the local church may engage. First, the church has the responsibility of preaching the gospel to saints and sinners according to its ability (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:16-17). Second, the church has authority to conduct worship services (Acts 2:42; Heb. 2:12; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; 1 Cor. 11). Thirdly, the church has benevolent responsibility to needy saints (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:26). This work must be done within the framework of the organization of the local church. When the church respects Bible authority and does just the work authorized in the scriptures, the church

will have no church sponsored ball teams, banquet halls, area wide meetings and campaigns, church camps, colleges in the budget and any other unauthorized activities.

Attitude Toward Error

Many in the church are afraid to expose error, lest it cause trouble. We must earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3) and not be afraid to preach all the truth on any subject. If the church is to be kept pure the word must be preached "in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

In Speech

Paul said, "Hold fast the form of sound words . . ." (2 Tim. 1:13), and speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Peter said, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Departures from God's word are always reflected in the speech of those who depart. Here is a list of things we hear said which reflect a departure from the old paths. "I am a Church of Christ;" "Join the church;" "the Christian sabbath;" "our fellowship hall for socials;" "the sponsoring church;" "the head elder;" "church sponsored recreation;" "college in our budget;" "Christian camps," etc.

May God help us to work, Eve and pray to the end that the church be kept PURE.

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

THE LORD'S WORK IN NORTH DAKOTA

GARY HARGIS, Grand Forks, N.D. and **DON BONNER**, Jamestown, N.D. — North Dakota has two congregations at present adhering to sound Bible principles. Jamestown is the older of the two and is located in the south-central region of the state, midway between Fargo and Bismarck on I-94. Emerado, or the Grand Forks Air Force Base church exists because of the diligence of brother and sister Charles Dick who established the Jamestown work and kept it alive through a number of lean years. Though both are asleep in Jesus at this time, a trust left by sister Sarah continues to support faithful gospel preachers in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana and Texas.

Through the labors of some of the preachers supported by the trust, the Emerado work was established. Now the support to the local preacher comes from all over the country. The preacher from Jamestown preached and taught for both congregations for over a year even though they are 140 miles apart. He was, at the time, the only male member in the state. The diligence of brethren all over the country who gave of their means allowed the work to continue. The trust left by Sarah Dick is bearing its maximum burden at this time and is unable to help further in the support of additional men.

A unique opportunity has afforded itself in that three men have offered to come and labor in this area. Support is needed for the three. All three are coming out of secular work. They have preached and taught with various congregations over a number of years. All are mature Christians with wives and families. They are dedicated to seeing a pure gospel preached in North Dakota. Because of the difficulty of the labor here and its inherent discouragements it is deemed wisest that these men start by laboring with the help of the preachers now working here. One will labor in Emerado with Gary Hargis where the burden of rapid growth has left many babes to be taught and contacts to be firmed. Another will labor with Don Bonner in Jamestown where the work is small. The third will labor with a faithful family in Valley City, 35 miles from Jamestown. It is hoped that a great deal of mutual assistance in personal work will generate the same growth we enjoy in Emerado.

As the works in these areas grow we hope to take advantage of opportunities that are opening in North Dakota. There are yet cities of 10-20,000 who have never heard the pure gospel. The liberal congregations are moaning under the burden of their folly as two Joy Bus programs were scrapped recently. In Minot the church allowed Dave Moyer to teach and preach for a number of years while he was stationed there with the Air Force and is yet open to study. The Grand Forks liberal group has recently invited brother Hargis to come bi-weekly to address them on the differences dividing the two groups. It is our prayer and hope that good will come from the lessons. An opportunity to teach has also opened in Bismarck. Not only have we been invited to teach them, but they have invited Albert Wanous and Steve Wolfgang to

preach gospel meetings for them this summer. The opportunities are abounding as the Lord has opened an effectual door for us. We need laborers. We urge brethren to carefully consider the requests from these men and join us in this work with both material and spiritual support. Some who are familiar with the work here include: James R. Cope, Leslie Diestelkamp, Paul Earnhart, Albert Wanous, Ron Howes, Connie W. Adams, Luther Martin, "Paul C. Keller and many more we can furnish if so desired.

STEVE GOFF, P.O. Box 427, Centerville, Texas 75833 — At the first of July we will move from Centerville, Texas to work with the church in Kaysville, Utah. At this time, the brethren in Kaysville comprise the only sound work in the entire state. If any readers know of contacts we can make in Utah, please write us in care of the Church of Christ, P.O. Box 261, Kaysville, Utah 84037. We welcome Christians to worship with us when traveling through Utah.

MACKAY W. HARDEN, 118 W. Brandywine Circle, Wilmington, NC 28405 — The church here in Wilmington has just concluded a gospel meeting with Jerry Accettura of Chester, Virginia preaching. During the meeting we had 17 visitors who were not members of the Lord's church, many of them attending several nights of the meeting. From these we were able to set up 3 home Bible studies and think there will be one or two more. On the last night of the meeting a young man made the good confession and was baptized into Christ. I have been working with this congregation about a year now. During this time there have been 4 baptisms, two restorations, two identified with us, and several have come forward confessing wrong doings. We ask brethren to remember us in their prayers as well as all others who are working in hard areas.

DAVID L. COOPER, 217 Parkdale, Pontiac, MI 48055 — Please mention in your NEWSLETTER REPORTS that the church at Gingellville is alive and sound in Christ and that we have had a restoration which brings the total to 5 recently. There is a great need for a full-time gospel preacher here. I work 54 hours a week, or more, at a secular job. If anyone could see fit to support me or if there is a gospel preacher who is able to get support, I think his labor would be rewarded. A 1970 census reports 907,000 souls in this county, with 85,000 in Pontiac alone.

RICHARD MERSKIN, 122 4th Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82001 — On April 2, 1978 the church here began meeting at a different location. We now meet at the local YMCA building, for both worship services on Sunday. Our midweek Bible study is held on Thursday evenings at our home until we can find a reasonable place to meet. Johnnie Horton and Frank Driver from the Downtown church in Fort Collins, Dave Swenson from Davenport, Iowa and myself preached in a short meeting here in April. We

urge summer travelers through Cheyenne to stop and worship with us. Call (307) 634-6845 for information.

DELBERT J. NEDDO. SSgt, Mid-Island Church of Christ, PSC No. 2 Box 13168, APO S.P. 96367 — The Mid-Island Church of Christ located in Okinawa has a list of eight Filipino preachers in need of additional support. We have been supporting all of these but have had to cut back because of reduced membership due to military transfers. We have known all these men for several years. Some of our members have visited them and have seen their work first-hand. We highly recommend them and will be glad to send you a list of their names, addresses, and any other information you may need.

PREACHERS NEEDED

OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA — The Westside church in Okeechobee needs a full-time preacher. This is a fast growing area with good potential. If interested contact Franklin Varson, Rt. 2, Box 175, Okeechobee, FL 33472. Phone (813) 763-3462.

BRADLEY, ARKANSAS — A small but active congregation needs a full-time preacher. Andrew Whisenhunt and his son, Warren, presently share the preaching but both are farmers and the work needs a full-time man. The town is small but the people are friendly and prospects are good. Contact Andrew Whisenhunt, Rt. 1, Bradley, Arkansas 71826. Phone (501) 894-3472, or (501) 894-3947.

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA — Our present preacher, Elmo Hazelwood, is leaving the work here in June. We will then need a man to replace him. We are constructing a building in which to work and worship and expect to have it completed in May. Roanoke is a busy and growing city. Our potential for growth here is very good. Anyone interested may call Lewis Sturm collect at

362-6226, or write to the church at P.O. Box 12685, Roanoke, VA 24027.

GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE . The Raven's Branch church needs a preacher by October 1, 1978, if possible. This is in the mountains of East Tennessee. Attendance runs 70-90. These are very good people. Partial support can be provided. If interested contact Olie Williamson, P.O. Box 29, Greenville, TN 37743.

PEORIA, ILLINOIS In March, 1968, the church in Peoria, Illinois divided. One decade later, in April, 1978, the Paris Avenue and Westlake congregations were re-united. The Peoria church will meet at 3004 W. Lake Avenue until that property is sold, at which time they will move to the older, but larger facilities at 1509 E. Paris Avenue. A decision will be made later after further study whether to remain there or build elsewhere. Preachers from both congregations are presently working with the merged group. Al Diestelkamp has worked with the Paris Avenue church for four years, and will continue with the Paris Avenue church until June when he plans to begin work with the church in Davenport, Iowa. William B. Murrell has preached at West Lake for one and one-half years and will stay on with the church in Peoria. About 150 people worship with the congregation

Al Diestelkamp
William B. Murrell

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