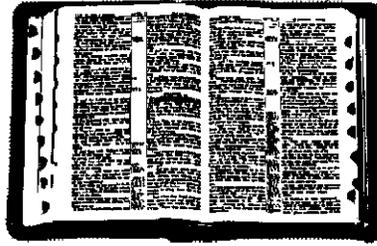


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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"

VOLUME XXIII

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SLOPPINESS

Ronny Milliner

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Middlebourne, WV 26149



The father was trying to teach his son to be more aware of his messy eating habits. "You eat like a pig, son," said the father. Then remembering that his city-bred son probably didn't know what a pig was, he asked, "You do know what a pig is, don't you?" The little boy scratched his head and answered, "Isn't that a hog's little boy?"

Now there may be some ways in which we are like the "hog's little boy." Let's take a look.

Sloppy Dress

"So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone'" (Gen. 35:2-3). Notice that when Jacob took his family to an altar to worship God, they were told to "purify yourselves and change your garments."

In Ex. 19:10-11 the Lord gave instructions to Moses on what the Israelites were to do to come into His presence. He told him, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people." To come into the presence of the Lord meant something special to these individuals, and they showed it by their actions in preparing for it.

How unlike Jacob and the Israelites are some mem-

bers of spiritual Israel. Today the dress of some Christians suggest they see no greater difference in worshipping God than in attending a sporting event. To come into the presence of God is just another casual, everyday-type of event with no great importance.

What do you mean preacher? Do you mean to say that a man has to wear a suit and tie before the Lord will accept his worship? Does a lady have to wear at least a \$30 dress before she shows respect for the Lord? Are you saying it is a sin to wear blue jeans to services? NO!

The point is that dress manifests attitude. There is a type of dress which suggests labor (Jno. 21:7). There is a type of dress which suggests royalty (Gen. 41:42). There is a type of dress which suggests harlotry (Prov. 7:10). Why would a person wear one type of clothing to eat lunch at McDonald's, and another type of clothing to dine at the White House?

Now what does our clothing say about our attitude when we worship God? God has always demanded the first and the best. I may not have a suit to wear, but I can wear the best I have. One can appear neat and clean, and thus show that he did put a little effort into preparing to come before the Lord. When we come to worship God let's "dress up" instead of "dressing down" because of the fact that we are coming into His presence.

Sloppy Actions

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God, And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!' while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Ezra 8:5-6). Why did these people stand up, answer "Amen, Amen," lift up their hands, and bow low to the ground? It wasn't because they were in a Richard Simmon's exercise class. All these actions were expressions of reverence for God.

We see a lot of these same actions today in our worship assemblies. We see people standing up to leave early. We see people answering those who are

whispering to them. We see people lifting up their hands over the seats to pass children back and forth. And we see people bowing low their faces to the ground in pursuit of children crawling under the pews. Yet even though the actions seem to be the same, something appears to be lacking in the modern assemblies.

Why can a child sit in school for three hours with one trip to the rest-room, but he can't sit in a church building one hour without three trips to the rest-room? And why does a child always have to go out during the invitation song?

It's amazing what a preacher or teacher hears while trying to teach the Word of God. He hears people talking (even two or three pews back from him), the constant clipping of fingernails (I believe some people must have fifteen fingers), and children racing their cars on the pews ("Boss Hogg will never catch the Dukes"). No wonder a fellow occasionally has a lapse of memory.

It's also amazing what a preacher or teacher sees while trying to teach the Word of God. There's always a few folks just looking around as if they are bored to death. Then there are those who consider this period their siesta time. And space doesn't permit us to consider all the funny faces of gumchewers and the antics of children.

What shall we say? "Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).

Sloppy Manners

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

How much do we consider "the interests of others" while we are in the church building? Do we talk and disturb the worship of others? Do we bring cookies for our children to eat, and let them crumble them up into 8000 little pieces without ever offering to clean up the mess? Do we push and shove our way out of the building because of our eagerness to depart? Do we help to care for the building and the church's property, or do we contribute to its abuse and disfigurement?

Let's practice the Golden Rule at all times. "And just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way" (Lk. 6:31).

Conclusion

The Proverbs writer said, "I passed by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down' (Prov. 24:30-31). The sluggard's sloppy field was representative of his own sloppy character. We may say more about ourselves by our outward appearance and actions than we wish to declare. Let's clean ourselves up!

Searching The Scriptures

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Editorial

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THE MAILBOX ON THE CORNER

When brother Yater Tant proposed his "box in the vestibule" idea twenty-five years ago, as a possible solution for keeping brethren together who differed over church support of various projects competing for funds from the church treasuries, we wondered then why that should ever be necessary since we already had the mailbox on the corner. Anyone who wanted to support a college, benevolent institution or other such project, was at perfect liberty to do so without the administration of funds left by the same individuals in a box in the vestibule. Now that brother Tant has proposed the same thing again, and there is considerable discussion in the papers about it, we cannot help wondering the same thing now we did the first time around.

Then and Now

The world has turned many times since the early stages of the division among brethren over the relation of the church to private enterprises. No longer do the "issues" involve two or three easily identifiable practices. The practical differences are many today. Joy buses with reward motivation, puppet shows, fellowship halls, church owned camps, gymnasiums, acrobatic demonstrations, special singing groups performing for local churches and going "on tour", are common fare these days. Who can seriously believe that a box in the vestibule is even a beginning place to resolve differences of such magnitude? Then, as now, the basic problem comes down to Bible authority. Is the New Testament a pattern by which churches today must be regulated? What constitutes scriptural authority? How is it expressed? Is the silence of the scriptures permissive or prohibitive? The whole issue involves the nature, work and organization of the church. The distinction between individual and collective church action underlies much of the difference.

How are such differences to be resolved? The solution is the same now as it has always been: A RETURN TO THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD. The answer is EDUCATION. Not boxes in the vestibule. Not proposals of compromise. Ever since these issues intensified, there have been honest souls who wanted to know and practice only what the Bible authorizes. There have been whole congregations which have taken a stand in favor of work which is clearly authorized in the Bible and in opposition to

anything they cannot find there. In one five-year period the editor had a part in helping twenty-five congregations get off the fence they were delicately trying to straddle. Since that time there has been an increasing number of sound, active and growing churches in that part of the country. How did that happen? Teaching, my brethren, teaching. There were public debates, gospel meetings in which faithful men of God laid it on the line, church bulletins which effectively taught truth and caused brethren to study for themselves and periodicals which dealt with the issues. Let me tell you how it was NOT done. It was not done by compromise. It was not done by just preaching principles without specific application. It was not done by passing by opportunities to teach the people. It was not done by public speaking which entertained the audience and drew repeated laughter while failing to address serious issues and problems. It was not done by deception. It was not done by leaving the brethren with the impression that we approved of what we really did not approve.

Narrowing the Gap

Brother Tant speaks of both sides attempting to "narrow the gap." Very well, that implies that each side has something to discard and throw into the chasm so it can gradually be closed and a causeway built. What will the "conservative-minded pro-institutional" churches have to give up to fill in the gap? Will they not have to abandon every congregational practice for which there is no divine authority? Has any of that really changed? Now, on the other side of the gap, just exactly what is it that our brother thinks we have to give up? What item in either teaching or practice can he sacrifice? Is he ready to give up on the distinction between the individual and the church? What error do we practice in church cooperation? Is it still scriptural for churches in evangelism to cooperate concurrently by supporting preachers directly in the field? If so, shall that practice be sacrificed to the sponsoring church arrangement? What in our worship and work is unscriptural? What shall we discard into the chasm to fill it up?

On the other hand, if our brother really does not mean to give up anything, then is not his whole proposal an exercise in deception? From discussions now going on among some of the "pro-institutional" folks it is being bruited about that some of us are ready to give up the fight and "come home." What is the source of this impression? Were the liberals right in saying it was all a big noise about nothing? I do not think so. The underlying differences are as serious as they have ever been. The issues must be resolved scripturally or they cannot be resolved at all. There is a place for negotiation and concession in politics, but not in the religion of our Lord where unchanging principles are involved. "Thus saith the Lord" is still the final gap closer in every dispute. We are as ready now to strike hands with honest brethren on "that which is written" as we have ever been. We are as ready to discuss the word of God at every fair opportunity as we have ever been. But we are no more ready to accept

unscriptural teachings and practices now than twenty-five years ago.

Who Speaks For Whom?

This editor has never thought that he spoke for "the brotherhood." I can only speak for myself. The same is true for brother Tant. He does not represent anyone but himself. He most certainly does not speak for me. And judging by the unusual response of letters, phone calls and personal remarks we have received from over the country since our March editorial appeared, brother Tant evidently does not represent the thinking of a good many others. Judging from the articles appearing in other papers of late, it is evident that he does not represent a number of other writers. We have seen and heard sentiments among brethren which range from shock to sadness to outrage over these proposals and their implications.

Our brother has no corner on willingness to talk and study with sincere brethren of a different persuasion. What we have never been willing to do is to even suggest the possibility of compromise where any point of truth was at stake. But now, brother Tant has proposed that congregations may support and work with both preachers who endorse institutionalism and those who oppose it, that they may share the pulpit, and that these same churches may alternate meetings with preachers who both favor and oppose these objectionable practices. The evidence of this is in his VANGUARD editorial of February, 1982 entitled "Almost!—But Not Quite." In this editorial he detailed efforts of two churches in Birmingham to merge. One was "pro-institutional" and the other "anti-institutional." They sought merger on a nine-point basis which included his box in the vestibule idea. Consider the following items:

"3. Both preachers will be retained by the new congregation, alternating in their preaching assignments. ..."

"4. For five years following the merger, preachers invited for gospel meetings will be asked on an alternating basis—first one from 'pro' group, then one from the 'anti' group."

"8. Meetings of other congregations (both 'pro' institutional and 'anti' institutional) in the city shall be announced without discrimination..."

What was not detailed in these items was what liberties the preachers involved should have in their pulpit work. Was a blanket of silence to be imposed so that years would go by without the congregation receiving any teaching on scriptural authority, the nature, work and organization of the church and the difference in individual and collective action? What of "sound speech that cannot be condemned"? Would the "whole counsel of God" have been welcomed? Or were there to have been limitations imposed on these preachers? If so, what self-respecting men could have been a party to such human bans? No wonder the effort failed. The proposal raised more questions than it answered.

An Appeal to Brother Tant

We bear no malice or ill-will of any kind toward Tant. We have known him a long time, enjoyed his company

in our home, been aided by him in many ways over the years, and have read everything he has written for the last thirty-five years. I respect Paul's admonition to Timothy to treat the aged men as fathers (1 Tim. 5:1). But as a student of the Bible and a preacher of the gospel, I have learned that men sometimes err grievously in the sunset years of life. Solomon is a case in point. We have seen men of our own time spend their declining years lending their names and influences to causes which they opposed with clarity and effectiveness earlier in life. Thus they closed their early sojourn under a cloud which tended to darken their influence for good. I hope our beloved brother will not be offended by my citing the following: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:1-2). My dear brother, I publicly appeal to you not to leave the next generation with another mess to clean up over the same issues which divided the Lord's people thirty years ago. As to your proposal, we do not need a box in the vestibule. We already have a mailbox on the corner. What we all need is book, chapter and verse for all that we teach and practice.

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"THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE..."

The conflict between the Jew and the Gentile is as old as Abraham. The conflict between the Jewish mind and that of the Gentile is obvious in New Testament scripture. In an effort to show that all men are under the condemnation of God, Paul wrote in Romans chapter one concerning the total decadence of the Gentiles, in chapter two of the arrogant hardness of the Jews regarding the same principles, and finally in chapter three that "there is none righteous, no not one" (vs. 10) and "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (vs. 23). In showing that both Jew and Gentile were under the same curse of sin, he could then show that all men have need for a common Saviour and that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

Early on, when the gospel was first preached, the Gentiles were excluded from it. This in spite of the fact that its first spokesman, Peter the Apostle, had stated in his Pentecost sermon that "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39), a clear reference to the Gentiles' acceptance before God. Peter was later convinced by a miracle from God that "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts 10:34-35), and resultantly the gospel was extended to include the Gentiles with the baptism of the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:47). Oddly enough, even after such a bold assurance, Peter was troubled about the acceptance of the Gentiles into the fellowship of the saved, for when certain of the Jews came to Antioch from Jerusalem in Gal. 2, Peter, who had formerly freely associated with the Gentile brethren, withdrew himself from their presence, causing even Barnabas to disassociate himself as well. The action incurred a severe rebuke from his fellow apostle Paul for his hypocrisy.

Paul, who describes himself as "the apostle to the Gentiles," (Rom. 11:13) has much to say about the Gentiles' acceptance by God in the letter to the Ephesians. Says he, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off (Cf. Acts 2:39) are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us..." (Eph. 2:13-14). He further argues this point to the Romans by saying, "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither, because they are

of the seed of Abraham are they all children..." (Rom. 9:6-7) and "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart..." (Rom. 2:28-29).

The irony of all this is seen in the fact that even though the gospel first came through the Jews and the Gentiles were at the beginning excluded, almost the opposite later became the case. The Gentiles were far more receptive to the gospel message than were the Jews and even today it is a rare occasion when one of the children of Israel accepts Christ as the chosen Messiah. Paul gave strong indications that such might be the case when he argued, "and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou (Gentiles), being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them (Jews), and with them partakest of the root and the fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee" (Rom. 11:17-18). "And they also (Jews), if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted, for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23).

I preached in a gospel meeting recently at the fine Expressway church in Louisville, Kentucky. At the first service I was introduced to a young man named Bob Darnell. He was a handsome lad with a thick tuft of black hair crowning a distinctively olive complexion. Soft-spoken, mild mannered, his friendliness did not at all detract from his obvious humility. I had seen him in the audience and had judged already his interest by his unusual attention to the lesson. Following the services my friend Connie Adams told me about the young man and his rather distinctive case.

"Bob Darnell is Jewish," brother Adams said, "he is bright and intelligent and is interested in what is right." As he continued his explanation I caught a gleam in his eye that bespoke of his concern and interest in the young man. "Jerry Parks and I, along with others, have been studying with him for almost two years and have found him to be very perceptive and concerned about our differences." He went on to say that the young man had requested a Bible study with the two of us following the services on Wednesday evening.

I continued to watch him with much interest, like all of us are prone to do with those not of our persuasion or nationality. His natural warmth and respect were obvious and his comments concerning the sermons were not as lavish as they were sincere and I was impressed. I was likewise impressed with his attitude toward the Bible, particularly his willingness to study the New Testament. I wondered if the situation were reversed whether or not I would have the same kind of objectivity and lack of bias. Upon further investigation I learned that he readily admitted that Jesus was an historical figure and that he was an outstanding one at that. He was greatly impressed with his teachings and could not account for the fact that a mere man could so influence the entire course of mankind just by what he said and the way he lived. Furthermore, he was at a complete loss to explain how

that this Jesus fulfilled so many of the Old Testament prophecies contained in his own Jewish Scriptures. His own personal honesty had lead him to confront his Rabbi with such fulfillments and he freely admitted that his Jewish mentor had not dealt with them to his satisfaction. The Scriptures were at work on his heart!

When Wednesday night came he was anxious for the class, showing his anticipation by reminding both brother Adams and myself about our commitment following the services (little did he know that we were as anxious as was he). When the time came and most of the people had departed the building, we entered one of the classrooms and took our seats. He had several questions concerning forgiveness and its relation to the sacrifices in the Old Law. Brother Adams fielded each question with kindness and verve, all the while making sure that the young man read the answers for himself out of the Bible, and adding simple but forceful illustrations to further enhance his understanding of each scripture. Before long it became obvious to me that Bob had reached the stage in his learning that he no longer could withstand the signs of the Messiahship of Jesus. The gospel had him upset with his current state of affairs!

Brother Adams told me, now in his presence, about how they had researched the Scriptures and had seen the many prophecies therein as they were fulfilled in the birth, life, teachings, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The recollection of it seemed to wipe away every objection he had had to the reception of Jesus as the Messiah. We then went to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and showed this young Jewish man how that there were similarities between his case and that of his Jewish ancestor. He was visibly shaken by the comparison. We sought to show that, like Paul, he must show his courage and deal for himself with Jehovah and that without regard to ancestry, heritage, or religious background, he must now regard what Jesus said, that "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

His eyes filled with tears; his jaw became rigid and set; he looked past both of us and into himself. I quickly called his attention back to the conversion of his countryman Paul. I asked him to consider carefully the question put to him on this occasion by the preacher: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away the sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Again the flush of tears filled his eyes. There was a prolonged silence, the kind that is thick, pregnant with important reflections because of the specialness of the occasion. You could almost hear the heartbeat of the two concerned Gentiles, and the Jewish lad who was so intently contemplating his future. Could he? Dare he turn his back on his religious training at the synagogue? Could he again face his parents? Would there be expulsions because of this decision? How would such a decision affect his future? I am sure all these questions flashed before his mind as he stared straight through us.

Suddenly, with great courage and a determined look,

he said, "I am ready!"

I can hardly speak of the occasion without the feeling of joy rushing through my mind. It was a rare occasion. I have seen many people obey the gospel and I have rejoiced at each and every one of them. But there was a specialness to this one. The confession never had more meaning to me than it did now. Connie W. Adams, a Gentile preacher, a man dedicated to the cause of Christ, a preacher of righteousness, asked this young Jewish lad, "Bob, do you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

"Yes sir, I surely do!" came the answer.

And he baptized him into Jesus Christ.

As they dressed I could hear the conversation plainly as I stood and waited. "You realize," said the new brother in Christ, "that I will need you now more than ever?" Brother Adams' assurances were tender, kind, believable. As they came out we all embraced. I asked if I might read a passage.

I could almost hear the voice of another Jewish convert nearly 2,000 years ago, as I read, "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." We prayed; as brethren in Christ are wont to do.

I left the building that night with greater faith in the gospel, with a new realization of the power that is in it, with a renewed zeal for its proclamation, and with a new brother in Christ, a Jewish man named Bob Darnell.

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This is typical of those involved in various types of charismatic religions. Yet it certainly is not something new. Throughout the years there have been a certain number of people who could be persuaded to follow some man because they believed that God was giving "Latter Day Revelations" through that person. Who could forget Jim Jones and the Guyana tragedy! How could he get such a following? Simple, he convinced people that God was speaking through him. Think of the infamous "Rev. Moon". How could he acquire such a following of naive and idealistic young people? Again, the answer is the same. He convinced these people that God was speaking and working through him in some special way. Why is there such an attraction for the "PTL Club" and the "700 Club"? The answer is always the same. They have convinced a certain number of the populace that God is speaking through them.

In each of these cases, God supposedly told the individual to do the things the person wanted to do. Thus, Jim Bakker builds a resort in North Carolina; Oral Roberts builds a university in Tulsa; "Rev." Moon acquires a fortune in property in New York as well as other parts of the world; and Jim Jones travels to Guyana to create his Utopian society.

Let me assure you, this type of accommodating revelation is not new. The master of this type of manipulative activity would have to be Joseph Smith, the Mormon "prophet". Without a doubt, Joseph Smith had one of the most creative minds in all the world. Because of his clever audacity and brazenness, Smith would often find himself backed into a corner with seemingly no way to remedy his problems. His answer was always the same. A revelation from God justifying his conduct or requiring his followers to accommodate his need.

Most latter day revelators follow a similar pattern. They start out with rather ambiguous and conservative revelations. Smith's revelations were no different. The Book of Mormon, his first attempt at recording his revelations, has been described as "chloroform in written form". In this revelation, he claimed that God gave him the inside story on the origin of the early inhabitants of the American continent. But as we get into some of the later revelations, such as "Doctrine and Covenants", it becomes apparent that Smith became more and more glib and quick on the draw with his accommodative revelations. Permit me to give you a few colorful and perhaps even humorous examples of what I am talking about.

In September 1830, shortly after Joseph Smith started his church, his power was challenged by his associates, Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses of the golden plates, thought there should be a sharing of the apostolic gifts and that he, like Smith, should give revelations. How was Smith to treat this threat? Simple, Just get another revelation saying that he was the only one that should receive the revelations. That is exactly what he did. Thus we find recorded:

"Behold I say unto thee, Oliver. . .no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church, except my servant Joseph Smith Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. . . .But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom: And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church."
(Doctrine / Covenants, Sect 28).

Thus, if there had been any doubt as to who was the head of the Mormon church, Smith quickly removed the doubt along with the threat by this accommodative revelation.

Next, let us turn back the time to August, 1831. Smith, along with Sidney Rigdon and a few others, were traveling back to Kirkland, Ohio from "Far West" (Independence, Mo.) where he had dedicated the "Temple Lot". This is where the Mormon temple was to be built in that generation, according to Smith's prophecy, which never came to pass. They were making the trip from Independence to St. Louis by canoe on the Missouri River. For some unstated reason the canoe that Smith and Rigdon were riding in was overturned and the two of them almost drowned, whereupon Smith received the following revelation on the bank of the Missouri River:

"And now, concerning my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, let them not come again upon the waters, save it be upon the canal, while journeying unto their homes; or in other words they shall not come upon the waters to journey, save upon the canal."
(Doctrine / Covenants, Section 61).

I believe I might also receive such a revelation if I found myself going down for the third time. Now I ask

you, is that not a revelation of convenience?

Now let's proceed a few years to August, 1936. At this point Smith was in deep financial trouble, which wasn't all that uncommon for him. In addition to the \$13,000 debt on his Kirkland Temple, there were other debts totaling over \$40,000 that were about due. About this time Smith read an article in the Painsville Telegraph concerning a vast treasure buried beneath an old house in Salem, Massachusetts. This is where Smith had spent his childhood days treasure hunting; so the article was intriguing to say the least. In his childlike simplistic approach to things, he evidently felt assured that he could find the treasure and thus solve all his financial woes. Realizing that it would be viewed by his followers as unseemly for him to be off on a treasure hunt, he made the trip under the pretense of a "missionary tour" back to Salem. When they arrived in Salem he was faced with the awkward task of explaining his true objectives to those who were traveling with him. How was he to solve this problem. Easy, just conjure up another revelation, which he quickly did.

"I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, not withstanding your follies. I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion. . . . I will give this city into your hands, that you shall have power over it, insomuch that they shall not discover your secret parts; and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours. Concern not yourself about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them. . . . And inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city. . . ." (Doctrine / Covenants, Sect. 111).

Smith searched for over a month to no avail. Finally, when the true nature of the trip was revealed, his followers shook their heads in disbelief. One Mormon writer later wrote, "We speak of these things with regret." Eventually, the incident was forgotten, but obviously on this occasion, his revelation of convenience got him into a lot of trouble.

None of this, however, slowed Smith down, and the revelations continued to pour out whenever they were needed. Such was the situation in July, 1843. Smith was now living much more dangerously. He and his followers had been run out of town after town, finally ending up in Nauvoo, Ill., where he built his "Mansion" as he had done in Kirkland. By this time, the practice of polygamy, or "Celestial Marriages", was well under way. The "Mansion" served to house many of these "lady" guests. Emma Smith, Joseph's real wife, was well aware of his indulgences, but never approved. As a matter of fact, on a number of occasions she became very hostile about the matter. Back in Kirkland, for example, in 1835 she furiously drove Fannie Algers (Joseph's first plural wife) from the house when Miss Algers was no longer able to conceal the consequences of her "Celestial" relation

with the prophet. On another occasion, Emma caught Joseph embracing Eliza Snow in the upstairs hall of the Nauvoo mansion. Emma went into a rage chasing Miss Snow down the hall. In her flight, Miss Snow fell down the stairs, seriously injuring herself. Emma pursued, chasing the frightened young lady out of the house in her night clothes.

Well, obviously something had to be done. Joseph was not about to give up his sensual night prowling, so what was he to do? Or need we ask? You guessed it, there was need for another revelation. But this revelation would have to be a real gem if he was to convince his skeptical wife. So this time he outdid himself with his revelation, even mentioning Emma by name. He started out laying the groundwork:

"Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instruction which I am about to give unto you. . . For behold, I revealed unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into glory."

Smith goes on in the revelation to mention the plural wives of David and Solomon stating that "in nothing did they sin," Then the revelation goes on to mention Emma:

"And let my handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those who have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me. . . And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law." (Doctrine / Covenants, Sect. 132).

Emma was not very happy with the revelation, but the Lord had spoken, so there wasn't anything for her to do but to try to bear up under a very disheartening situation. The revelation goes on but this is sufficient to make our point concerning revelations of convenience.

We cannot help but wonder how people can be so gullible as to be led away from the word of God by such foolishness. But such actions are common and the cause must either be ignorance of God's word or else a lack of faith in God' word. The New Testament claims to be a complete, sufficient and final revelation for man. Jude says that it has been once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). Other passages to consider would be Jno. 14:26; Gal. 1:8,9 2 Tim.3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:3,4; 2 Jno.9. Let us simply have enough faith to be obedient to the gospel that God has entrusted to us.

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THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST—TEACHING

Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). There are several declarations that the Apostle makes in these verses.

(1) One is that **he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ**. Many today could not make that statement because they are afraid and ashamed of Christ and of his gospel. Paul affirms that the gospel is God's power. These verses show that salvation is conditional upon man's part, that is, he must believe, which is used here to embrace all that is necessary to becoming a child of God. The universal plan of salvation is shown in these verses, because the gospel is God's power to save both the Jews and Gentiles.

(2) Since this gospel is God's power to save, it suggests that someone is lost. That one who is lost is man—you and I. When man is lost and One can save him, it is good news to him. Since man is lost in sin and Jesus Christ came to save him, it surely is good news to the human family that the gospel is its hope of salvation. The Scriptures call the gospel "glad tidings" or good news. In Rom. 10:15, the record says, "... how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things"!

In verse twelve Paul said, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."; and then in the next verse he quoted a passage from Joel 2:28, when he said, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He proceeds to show that one cannot call upon the name of the Lord in whom he does not believe, and that he cannot believe in him of whom he has not heard, and that one cannot hear without a preacher. A preacher cannot preach unless he is sent with "glad tidings" to preach. Paul's language is, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all

obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17).

(3) The gospel which is good news or glad tidings to the sinner must be taught. Jeremiah prophesied the gospel was to be taught in language like this, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34). The Hebrew writer quotes this in Heb. 8:8-11.

In giving the great commission, Jesus commanded his disciples to teach his will unto people. In Mt. 28:18-20, Christ said, "... All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This shows that Christ wanted his gospel taught unto men, and even after they had obeyed it, he wanted them taught some more. Christianity is a teaching process. No man, regardless of who he may be, gets to the point that he cannot learn more of the will of the Father. Mark records this incident in language which is found in Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

(4) The gospel is not only God's power unto salvation, but **it is also the medium through which God draws men unto himself**. In John 6:44, Christ said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." To come to Christ, he said the Father must draw men unto him. But I raise the question, "How shall God draw men to Christ?" The answer is found in these words in the next verse, which is quoted from Isaiah 54:13, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Please note, that they were to be **taught** of God. When they were **taught**, they would **hear**, then learn and then come unto Christ. The thing they would hear and learn was the thing which they were to be taught, which was the gospel—they were to be "**taught** of God."

Teaching, hearing, and learning appeals unto the mind of man. They appeal unto that part of the mind known as the intellect.

Ours is a world in which many want to appeal to the lost with something besides or in addition to the simple gospel story of a crucified and risen Lord. Instead of making an appeal with the gospel of Jesus Christ which is able to save the soul (Jas. 1:21), lost humanity is being appealed unto with what is called the "social gospel". The emphasis is being put on the social; not the gospel of Christ.

The result of the social gospel is seen in the attempts that are being made to draw a large crowd with anything other than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some try to draw a big crowd with ice cream suppers, hamburger suppers, big buildings, big named preachers, social position and distinction, celebrities, coffee and donuts in the "fellowship hall" which is nothing but a kitchen and banquet hall. These are but a few of the efforts that are being made to get people to attend the services of some so-called church claiming to belong to Christ. All have heard of efforts to get people on the church rolls with chicken suppers, ice tea and ice cream and cake. If an effort of this kind is successful, those who are gained are as dead as the chicken, cold as the ice cream, and weak as the tea. Furthermore, to draw people with these means also means that they will have to be kept with these means. If people are drawn to Christ with food and entertainment, they will have to be kept with food and entertainment. When the food and recreation stops, so will those drawn by such.

One can read in the New Testament of great multitudes that followed Christ. Of those in the multitudes very few followed Christ because of his teaching. Many were present to get a meal. Of some, Christ said, "... verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (Jno. 6:26). When the going became a little rough for some of them, the record says, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Jno. 6:66). It was upon this occasion that Jesus asked his disciples, "Will ye also go away" (Jno. 6:67)? Yes, the Master had those following only for the loaves and fishes.

All have heard the saying that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Many young ladies have won their husbands by appealing to the stomach. While this may and will work to get husbands, **it will not work in the kingdom of God!**

Men are foolish indeed to attempt to win people and convert them to Christ with anything but the gospel of Christ. The material things of this earth are but for a time, but the word of God, which is the gospel of Christ will remain when the worlds are on fire and the elements melt with heat.

I challenge your attention to investigate the book of Acts and see how the church grew rapidly in the first century. The contributing factor was that the gospel was preached wherever the disciples of our Lord went. It is interesting to note that there is not the first case of conversion recorded in the New Testament in which the word of God was not at first preached unto those who were lost.

The gospel is God's power unto salvation. Man was not able to save even himself. He could not direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). By his own wisdom, he did not even know God. Paul said, in I Cor. 1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Since man is not able to save himself; he did not even know God through his own knowledge, it would seem that man should be willing to let the Lord direct him in the salvation of his precious soul. Man's will and wisdom will not save his soul. The gospel of Christ is the salvation that Jesus Christ provided and it will save the souls of all the lost of earth if they will but turn unto the Lord and be willing to be saved upon the terms set forth by Christ in the gospel.

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

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NEHEMIAH: RISE UP AND RESTORE The Place of Prayer in Spiritual Revival

In the last several articles we have seen Nehemiah as a leader in spiritual restoration. To make application of that principle we have examined several of our needs for spiritual restoration and revival in the kingdom today. We have catalogued at least 5 great needs in the church today: (1) zero growth, (2) fragmentation in parties, (3) materialism, (4) stability of the home and marriage relationship, and (5) the development of an inner relationship with the living Lord. It is this last need that we wish to examine in this article. Nehemiah 9 is a record of the prayer, from Verses 5-31, that the Levites had for the people. Needless to say, the heart of an inner relationship with the Lord is built on prayer. Yet, for the prayer life of a believer to be what it ought to be there must be something much deeper in the heart to produce a vital and living fellowship with the Father. This basis for a living relationship with God is also seen in this 9th Chapter. Now, let us begin our study together this month by defining what we mean and what the need is for this knowing of God.

The Need to Know God

The fact that we can be so very busy in the work of the Master and never know Him comes as a surprise to many. Yet, it is the truth, as we shall see. Our God is a people orientated being. He made man in His own image, and He walked with him in the garden in the cool of the evening to have fellowship with him. But man's sin broke that fellowship and man hid himself

from God. As Nehemiah points out in Verse 7, God sought out Abraham because God wanted fellowship with man. It was His desire to develop a nation from which we could enjoy a special and unique fellowship, as well as bring a Savior into the world so that all men might overcome the sin that severs the fellowship. Then, as Nehemiah continues the history, we see God in Moses building the Tabernacle. Why? So that God might better dwell with man and might have fellowship with him. Then, as the Kingdom of Solomon with its glory reached its zenith, God fellowshiped man in the Temple with its rites, ceremonies, pomp and splendor. Even that was still incomplete, so in the fullness of time, God did the ultimate to have fellowship with man. God came in human flesh and tabernacled with us. All of this was Heaven's gradual plan to bring man into fellowship with Him. Still, all through that period of time and up until today, it did seem as though the harder God tried to fellowship man, the less interest man had in his heart in knowing this God who was seeking him so cleverly. The heart of the Jew was always turned toward the doing of a ritual and never toward knowing his God. Yes, over and over the Jew was condemned for doing the right thing in religion. Why? Because his sin was that he never ever loved or sought to be near his God.

Maybe we can illustrate our plight in the church today with this crude example. My wife and children think I am the best thing since sliced bread. So, one day I come home from holding a gospel meeting and they do not even look up when I walk in the house. "Well, what's everybody doing," I ask? "Oh, we are writing a book about how great you are!" they all reply. Of course, I am somewhat amazed. But, I wait around for everyone to quit what they are working on and sit down and talk to me. Alas, they do not have time to talk to me about it. Finally, after several days have passed, they have finished their little book, and now I just know they are going to sit down with me and talk to me about what was going on while I was away. But now, they have all started to memorize it, and they are going around all the time quoting what they have written about me. Before too long they start making outlines and giving expository explanations of what certain paragraphs meant. At this point I have just about had it. I plead with them to stop what they are doing and sit down with me, and tell me what is going on in their lives. "Well, we can't do that now," they reply. "We have to start the door-knocking campaign." "What?", I ask. "Sure, we are going to start telling everyone in the neighborhood what a great fellow you are." Of course, before too long people are meeting in the living room and they are all talking about me, and more and more people are coming. My wife has not had time to put her arms around me in months and my children have not climbed up to sit on my lap for ages. Nobody even knows that I live in this house any more. Oh, they wave as they come and go. But, nobody cares that I want to spend some quiet time with them and share thoughts and our love for each other. Well, before too long, you

would probably not be surprised to hear me say, "I hate your stupid little book, and your going, and your telling, and I wish you would just forget it all."

Do you suppose that this might possibly have been the feeling of the Lord when he said in Amos 5:21: "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offering and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. **BUT LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVER FLOWING STREAM.**" Their worship here was not an idolatrous worship, but nevertheless it was condemned. It was even the right kind of worship, but the people didn't really care anything about the object of their worship. It was only a self-righteous worthiness of performing their ritual. They were a generation of people that were so busy playing religion that they could never take time to know their God! Now, are not our own lives too often just like this? We are so busy with a combination of material events and ritualistic religious acts that we too never have time to sit down daily and read, study, meditate and pray with our God? Our Lord longs to be with people. Am I too busy getting up a Sunday morning sermon to spend an hour with the object of that sermon? I am going to teach a Bible class, but I do not have time to spend in preparation, and anyway, so what if I have no time to spend in prayer that I might know God?

We have substituted a multitude of things for knowing God. We have substituted doctrinal soundness for knowing God. We have substituted singing without a piano for knowing God. We have substituted personal evangelism for knowing God. We have substituted the Lord's Supper for knowing God. The Jews didn't care if they knew God or not; they just wanted to be sure they were doctrinally correct on the subject of the Sabbath day. A woman, according to the Talmud, could not pluck a hair from her head on the Sabbath because plucking hair was a lot like plucking wheat, and plucking wheat was reaping, and reaping was work which was forbidden on the Sabbath. Also, you could not move a footstool on the Sabbath because the woman might find a particle of dust under the footstool, and if she did, she might want to remove it. If she removed the dust, that was the same as digging in the dirt, and digging in the dirt was the same as sowing seed, and that was work which was forbidden on the Sabbath day. Do you see why the Lord would say, "I HATE YOUR SABBATHS! You do not care about me, the only thing you care about is legalistic approach to your ritual." Would it be possible that we could be guilty of the same thing? Would it be possible that our lack of prayer, which Nehemiah saw so necessary in spiritual revival of the people, has been unacceptable? Could it be that we too are so concerned about things that are right and good within themselves, that we have forgotten what it is like to spend time with the Lord in a quiet, meditative moment?

How much do we pray? Would we spend an hour each day in prayer? Maybe some do. Would we spend an hour every day reading our Bibles together with our families? Maybe some do. Would we have a place, a time, and a desire to give a part of every day to talking with the Lord about the large and small things of our lives? God desires us TO COME TO HIM! Worship is defined as "to kiss toward." Also, as a small child that climbs to the lap of its father or mother to share some quiet private moments of love and devotion. Do we think of our God as our Father?

Because we have spent so much time trying to get members of the church to attend services three times a week, we have by default fallen into the trap of defining a "faithful Christian" as "one who attends three times a week." But some do go farther, such as "he or she is one who attends and teaches a Bible class." Still others, even farther, such as "one who does personal work." But you see in all of our definitions we are leaving out the heart of man seeking to know and express his thanksgiving, praise, adoration and love to a God who is his Father. Yes, we all know what it is to talk with our earthly fathers about life when we are disturbed and perplexed. But until we can develop that yearning that Jesus exhibited in His life to talk to the Father daily about every aspect of his earthly life, we have not really defined "faithfulness." Isn't it strange that if we could develop such relationship with God, our assembling three times a week would take care of itself? No, not really. We can never direct the hand until we motivate the heart.

Our next article will discuss a necessary ingredient that makes this relationship possible.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT RELIGIOUS DEBATES?

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It seems that in recent years religious debates have fallen out of fashion even among the people of God. In view of the commands to ". . .be ready always to give an answer..." and "...earnestly contend for the faith.." (1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3) as well as the examples of Jesus, Paul, Stephen and many other disciples, this is a discouraging and unprofitable development. In this article, we will attempt to uncover some of the reasons people in general (and some brethren in particular) are opposed to religious debates. We encourage each reader to examine his own attitude while seeking to conform his mind to the word of God.

Some people oppose religious debates because of the mistaken notion that such violates the teaching of the Bible. They point to passages such as Romans 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 12:20 in which "debates" are condemned. However, a study of the context and the meaning of the Greek words translated "debate(s)" in the King James Version will reveal that honourable discussion and debate are not under consideration but rather strife motivated by contentious aims! A religious debate could degenerate into what these passages condemn, but it certainly shouldn't and doesn't have to. Far from condemning debating for truth, the Bible encourages and commands it!

Others oppose religious debates because of the abuses they have witnessed or heard about. It is true some preachers use debates to showcase their egos and are not so much interested in defending truth as in promoting self. It is also true that some debaters, **even those defending truth**, conduct themselves in an unworthy and un-Christian manner. Such ought not to be, and those who perpetrate such abuses will have to give an account of themselves to God. However, these abuses do not negate the fact that honourable debate engaged in by **gentlemen** is an excellent and scripturally approved way of seeking and determining truth! The church, elders, and the Bible are abused, but we do not dispense with them on that account.

Some people, including some brethren, oppose religious debates because their minds are closed, and they do not want to hear the "other side." They have made their choices and wish to hear nothing further, even further study from God's word. They are not like the noble Berean Jews who ". . .received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily. . ." (Acts 17:11) You may find this hard to believe, but there are probably those whose minds are so closed that they will not even read this article. Hearing truth and error side by side is an excellent way of learning truth and discerning error. Public debates provide such an opportunity.

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Some preaches and other religious leaders oppose debates because they recognize that their practice and teaching is unscriptural and cannot stand the test of public investigation. If one is unsure of the authority of his position, he may find it easier to ignore rather than debate those with whom he disagrees. Such insecurity is evident in a refusal to find some respectable forum for public discussion.

Christ and His disciples debated both privately and publicly (Mark 12:18-27; Acts 6:8-10; Acts 15:2-7; Acts 17:1-17; Et Cetera). In following their example, we must always be careful not to abuse public debate and to conduct ourselves in the proper manner whether as disputants or members of the audience.

Would you like to hear public discussions of religious controversies? Does the opportunity to hear both sides of an issue with open minds and open Bibles appeal to you? Let us never be so smugly satisfied that we do not continually and eagerly search for Truth. How about it, brethren and friends! Are we building walls to protect our little religious fiefdoms, or are we diligently seeking the truth? Think about it!

DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE DISCIPLES

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Unity is stressed in the Scriptures. Jesus prayed that all who believe might be one, that the world might come to believe (Jn. 17:20, 21). Paul exhorted the Corinthians "that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). In spite of these encouragements to singleness of mind, disagreements frequently occur. How shall we react? Perhaps a study of some New Testament cases of disagreements among the disciples will help.

Doctrinal Differences

The disciples differed on circumcision (Acts 15). This was among the first doctrinal disputes in the Lord's church. The question of whether Gentiles (the uncircumcised) were to be accepted as subjects for baptism had recently been settled. Now certain brethren contended that circumcision and adherence to the Law of Moses were essential to salvation. How was the issue to be settled?

It was determined to have a meeting of the elders of the church at Jerusalem (whence the advocates of circumcision came) and the apostles to look into the matter. After much discussion, Peter took the floor and related his experience at Cornelius' house (Acts 10). Since God had made no distinction between Jew

and Gentile with reference to their hearing the word of the gospel, giving them the Holy Spirit, and cleansing their hearts by faith, Peter could only infer that for the disciples to make such a distinction would be wrong. He further reminded those gathered of the practical impossibility of being justified by the law; that all who are saved are saved by grace. Paul and Barnabas followed, relating signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. Finally James spoke, quoting direct statements of Scripture, reminding his audience that several of the prophets had foretold the days when the Gentiles would be named among God's people. He concluded, "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:19).

How shall we settle doctrinal differences? Certainly not through conventions or councils. Some appeal to Acts 15 as their authority for such. But this meeting was not composed of delegates, nor does the Bible even hint that any kind of voting took place. The decision was made by inspiration, not election. Whatever doctrinal differences exist among the disciples today will only be settled when we go to the inspired word of God and accept what is written therein. Whether by direct statement, approved example, or necessary inference, we must have "book, chapter, and verse" for all that we practice and teach.

Have you noticed that no new revelation was needed to settle the question of circumcision? The decision was made on information already available. Truly God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

Judgmental Disagreements

Not long after the meeting in Acts 15 Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return and visit the brethren in the cities where they had preached on their first tour. Barnabas was desirous of taking John Mark along with them, but Paul refused because John Mark had earlier deserted them. "And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus" (Acts 15:39). No point of doctrine was involved here. It was a matter of judgment regarding how best to do the Lord's work.

Many such judgmental matters arise within a congregation: which preacher(s) to support, what means of teaching to employ, how best to divide and schedule Bible classes, what order to follow in the public assemblies. Unfortunately brethren often disagree on these things. Even in churches with elders, those overseers may not always be in accord as to what is best.

How shall we settle these disagreements? Here are a few suggestions. First, we must always give attention to any Biblical principles involved (e.g. *God's* view of the qualifications and work of the preacher, or the orderliness He expects in public worship). Then we need to consider the overall purpose or goal we are trying to accomplish. Consideration should also be given to what suits our particular situation: what we can afford, what skills we have to utilize, what special

needs we may have. The fact that a thing works well at one place does not guarantee its success at another. Listen carefully to the voice of experience. One of the fallacies of majority rule in the church is that it gives the novice the same voice (vote) as the most seasoned veteran in the Lord's army. And by all means, "Let the peace of Christ rule [act as arbiter] in your hearts" (Col. 3:15). Finally, we need to learn not to pout or rebel if we do not get our way.

Personal Disputes

"And an argument arose among them as to which of them might be the greatest" (Lk. 9:46). The disciples' disagreement was not over a doctrinal question, nor did it involve matters of judgment about the Lord's work. It was simply a personal dispute as to which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. As is often the case in such disputes, all were in the wrong. Jesus pointed out that unless they were converted and became as little children, they would not even enter the kingdom, much less become great in it.

According to Matthew's account, Jesus went on to explain how His disciples are to settle personal disputes (Mt. 18:15-17). The first step is for the offended party to *privately* seek reconciliation. That rules out bitterly holding a grudge and waiting for the other fellow to make the first move, as well as slandering him at every opportunity. Elsewhere Jesus taught the one who had wronged his brother to seek reconciliation (Mt. 5:23, 24). If these efforts fail, one or two witnesses should be called in. If that fails, it is to be told to the church. If the one in the wrong still refuses to listen, he is to be withdrawn from.

Paul dealt with the same problem in 1 Cor. 6. He suggested selecting a wise brother who would be able to decide the case. In any case it would be better to suffer the wrong and be defrauded than to submit the matter to unbelievers for judgment.

May God help us to minimize our differences. When they do occur, let us resolve to go about settling them as God would have us do.

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WHAT IS A CHILD WORTH?

"In New York City, where I grew up, a child is worth \$25,000 a year in welfare payments to an institution. If that child gets adopted, he is worth exactly nothing to them. So New York has the lowest adoption rate in the country."

The man who said that is Glenn Hester. His book, *Child of Rage*, speaks passionately of what the foster care system in the United States did to one human being, according to a review in *The Tennessean*, Oct. 1, 1981. It's not a pretty picture.

Hester was born out of wedlock and by the time he was three, he had been in four orphanages in New York City. At eight, he became the victim of a homosexual rape by a staff member of one of these orphanages. By ten, he had gone through a couple more institutions and four foster homes.

"By the time I was a teenager," he relates, "I had seen and been the victim of so much violence, I became violent myself. At thirteen, I was put in a juvenile detention center. At seventeen, I was in a place for the criminally insane. The guards entertained themselves with violence. I was the youngest person there."

"Murder would go almost unpunished there. There was no such thing as justice. One time, I spent two months in solitary confinement in chains. I could go to the bathroom at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. They fed me mush. I had dysentery. They would clean up the place only every two or three days."

Hester, whose survival is described as "something close to a miracle," (Though I deplore the practice of equating *the remarkable* with *the miraculous*, I'm almost moved to concur with that description.) now has a heating and air conditioning business and is using every opportunity to cry out against the foster care system.

"They are interested in that money," he states. "They aren't interested in the welfare of the child. He isn't going to get any emotional support. He isn't going to get any love. We are just raising children who will fill our prisons."

Whether you agree or disagree, that sentiment is from someone who's been there. Perhaps we should add our voice to his and demand that legislation be passed to change this abusive system.

What is a child worth?

"\$25,000 a year to an institution."

The ancient prayer of David may appropriately

grace our lips: "Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless . . . Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the opposed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress" (Psalm 10:14,17,18).

Things Most
Certainly
Believed

Julian R. Snell
4724 E. Manslick Road
Louisville, Kentucky 40219



A MODERN THORN

Does forgiveness of sin for the alien require faith, repentance and baptism? Seems to be an elementary question for the average member of the church as an affirmative answer is immediately given. In application, however, there is growing difficulty for some, the issue becomes quite thorny. The troublesome area involves divorce and remarriage. Must one involved in an unscriptural second marriage, one formed while the former mate is yet living and where divorce resulted from something other than sexual infidelity, dissolve that marriage in order to become a Christian? Is baptism valid in the absence of repentance and does repentance require dissolution of all unscriptural second marriages?

Repentance is a prerequisite to scriptural baptism and involves a quitting and turning away from sin. Such is worked by "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:10) and produces a changed life moulded in the righteousness of Christ. As one repents there is a complete turn around affected with the penitent's will being submitted to the will of God in all things. One who is a gambler will have to quit, a prostitute will have to cease and desist in her pursuits and an adulterer will have to quit committing adultery. Now that is pretty simple, repentance demands this kind of change. Where these known activities are established as sin, quitting is essential to baptism, if such is to affect remission of sins.

Conceivably, one might be justifiably refused baptism. When one refuses to repent of admitted sin and persists in a sinful course there is no need to baptize. Let us suppose the local gambling czar presents himself to be baptized after learning the fundamentals of the gospel. In the course of discussion he informs he has no intention of curtailing these activities because this is his living and besides this, he is not convinced it

is sin anyway. Would there by any need to baptize him? An admitted prostitute wants to be baptized but declares her intention to continue making her living in this way. Any need to baptize her? A couple in an unscriptural marriage, a second with no scriptural ground for divorce and with the former mate yet living, admitting such is the case and refusing to end the relationship, maybe arguing they are not sure it is wrong if they continue to live as man and wife. Any need to baptize them? The issue is in reality repentance. Will baptism wash away sin which is unrepented? Scripturally, we must answer, no!

Does this conclusion require an investigation of these or other specifics, where they do not present themselves as obvious, as a prerequisite to scriptural baptism? No. It does, however, admit to certain actions and relationships which indicate obvious rebellion to God's will and unwillingness to conform. Where such is the attitude, God's plan is of no effect, it is nullified.

The consequences of unscriptural divorce and remarriage are multiple and far reaching. Problems from such are a constant experience in most congregations. These are not relieved nor resolved by compromise of truth, neither by ignoring or putting the matter on hold until a consensus of judgment is reached. The fact of different positions does not justify a maintaining of open minds or a refusal to accept plain and simple conclusions demanded by Scripture. If this has merit we would be undecided about baptism, instrumental music, and any number of other matters which continue mooted. Dedication to truth and safety within its unchallenged precincts necessitates conviction and a position. We need to quit grinding any personal axe, trying to justify what we have already decided, serving self in this matter, if such is the case, and accept the truth and the consequences of it. The Lord still said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). I believe just what he said, don't you?

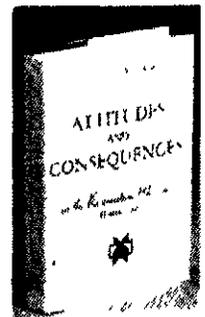
Attitudes and Consequences in the Restoration Movement

By Homer Hailey. The aim of this work has been to trace the development of two attitudes toward the Scripture authority in the Restoration Movement: that of the early spirits in the movement, and another which grew up within it, leading ultimately to division.

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NOTICE

**Ralph Walker
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To: all men attending the monthly business meetings. Subject: saving time when discussing various

proposed programs, ideas, projects, etc. or when asked to perform some task. Much of our time is taken up in expressions of disagreement to ideas brought forth. In order to save time, from now on instead of a lengthy verbalization of those objections, please simply refer to the number of said objection listed below (each man will be given such a list, with extra copies going to those most likely to wear them out). Example: Brother A says "I'd like to see us buy some

filmstrips" Brother B says "Number 1" and his point is made.

LIST OF OBJECTIONS FOR USE IN ALL BUSINESS MEETINGS (to be expanded as new objections are raised)

- #1—Jesus and/or the Apostles never used those things and they did all right without 'em.
- #2—We've never done it that way before.
- #3—We've always done it this way.
- #4—We tried to do it that way once before and it didn't work.
- #5—People/things are different nowadays-that won't work.
- #6—I just never have been any good at it.
- #7—I'll do anything else but don't ask me to
- #8—I don't do anything unless I'm told. I got chewed out once for steppin' out on my own.
- #9—I forgot all about that,
- #10—I just don't think that that is that important. #
- 11—Get somebody else this time. #12—I'm so busy I can't get to it right now. Maybe later.
- #13—I thought I told somebody else to do that.
- #14—Let's discuss it in detail at the next meeting—we're out of time. The above is free to use to the glory of God!

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

, Send all News Items to: Wilson Adams, 6334 Auburn Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737

FIELD REPORTS

PAUL A. BRUCE, 502 Main Avenue, St. Maries, ID 83861. The church here in St. Maries, Idaho has now been in existence for ten years. This is the only church in this area that stands up for the truth and opposes the doctrine of institutionalism. Presently we have 16 members with attendance in the twenties. We have several visitors coming to our services and have many Bible studies going on during the week. The brethren here have a good attitude and are growing spiritually. However, I have had to inform the brethren here that unless I receive more support in the near future that, because of my financial obligations to my family, I will be forced to move. When we discussed the situation of the needed support with the congregation, they all voiced their hopes that we would be able to remain. Several of the members are now writing letters and calling churches in other parts of the country to see if they could help us. They expressed their concern that brethren elsewhere might not want to or be able to help, and they are afraid that once again they will be without a preacher. To some of you who have heard many preachers, you may be thinking that they can get someone else in a few weeks. This is not the case here, where they have had only one other preacher before me. He only remained here for one year. Now they face being alone again. It's discouraging, and makes them feel that they might not be important enough to merit help. I have grown to love these people as my own family. This work **MUST** go on, but it will only if you can help. My family and I have sold almost everything we had to be able to come here. The members have given us food, money, and clothing to help us. My family of six has lived on \$500 to \$700 per month for the last several months. But the Lord has helped us through the toughest months. Can you possibly help us? For more information you may call: Barney Cargile of Post Falls, ID at (208) 773-9734, or Samuel Dawson

of Amarillo, TX at (806) 352-2809, or Henry Kirkland of Napa, CA at (707) 253-0215. Or you may call me at (208) 245-2698. For your careful consideration, I thank you.

JIMMY TUTEN, 7911 Country Dr., Mobile, AL 36609. The first of April finds the work at Tillman's Corner moving into full swing. More involvement on the part of the brethren in the work is evident. We have completed some work on the building and on the land. We are at peace. During the first three months of 1982 we baptized three and had three restored. Also six identified with us, Come visit us! Phone (206) 666-5769.

KEITH WARD, Rt. 2, Box 736, Lake Butler, FL 32054. On January 1, 1982, I began work with the Danville church near Lake Butler, FL. Danville is two years old, young in membership, but positive in outlook. We have begun a weekly article in a local paper, put a tract rack in the laundromat, begun door knocking, and improved our class teaching. As a result, we have had some visitors and a greater interest by our own members. I am interested in hearing about some inexpensive methods of getting the gospel out to people. At this time I am still short \$400 a month in support. If you can help, please contact me.

LOREN T. STEPHENS, 325 Kessler Blvd., Seymour, IN 47274. After five and a half years with the church here in Seymour, I will be moving to work with the West Main St. congregation in Easley, SC the first week in June, 1982. The work here has been encouraging and profitable spiritually. During the last five years there have been 18 souls baptized, 45 confessions of sin, and 34 to place membership. There was an overall increase in membership from 56 to 75, with a similar increase in contribution. The congregation now has

elders and deacons, and is for the most part peaceful and working for the continual growth of this local church. The elders have asked Bro. Jerry Sayre, of Johnson City, TN to come and work with them here. Should you be traveling between Indianapolis and Louisville please stop in and worship. We are located on the east side of I-65 at U.S. 50. Our services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays and 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays.

TROY ADAMS, P.O. Box 506, Ellsworth, ME 04605. I have been back in Maine since last November and am still in need of additional support. It has been a tough winter for my family of seven (our heating bill in January was \$350). I presently am in need of \$1,500 per month. If you cannot help on a continual bases, please consider helping on a temporary basis. For references please contact: Ralph Smart, 516 Union St., Bangor, ME 04401; The elders of the Temple Terrace church of Christ, 501 Bullard Pkw., Temple Terrace, FL 33617; The elders of the Hillview church of Christ, 7550 Charlotte Rd., Nashville, TN 37209; The elders of the Highland church of Christ, 1226 Highland Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78210; of the elders of the Annandale church of Christ, 4709 Ravenworth Rd., Annandale, VA 22003. You may phone me at (207) 667-9661.

KENNETH E. THOMAS, 401 24th St. W., Bradenton, FL 33505. The Manatee County church of Christ has had a weekly radio program for several years now. We have a fifteen minute taped sermon followed by a live call-in portion of 45 minutes. Often we wonder how much good a radio program is accomplishing since we rarely see the attendance increase by any large amount.

Some months ago following a series on liberalism, I received a call from the preacher for a congregation of our black brethren in Sarasota, FL, inquiring if I would be willing to preach in a gospel meeting there for a week, I replied that I would be happy to if I could "declare the whole council of God." The preacher assured me that he had talked it over with the elders and they wanted to be as he stated it, "A model New Testament church." The preacher's name is J.W. Green.

Knowing a little about their background in "liberalism" and their association with others of the more liberal congregations in the area, I was shocked and happy to know that the radio program had made them re-evaluate their position and to make the decision to turn back from any and all unscriptural activities. I pulled no punches during the week, I preached on the organization and work of the church, the difference between individual and collective responsibilities, fellowship, marriage, divorce and remarriage, masonry and some first principle lessons. Several from the "liberal" church at South Trail in Sarasota came several evenings until the preacher from South Trail came one evening. He and I had a mini debate at the back door where he sought to justify the "sponsoring eldership" with the foolish statement about "no authority for fertilizer on the preacher's grass either but we do it anyway" argument. He had been called on to lead prayer that evening. The next night I told them about our discussion at the back door of the building and showed them why they should not ask him to participate in their services as such is bidding God-speed to his error. I fully expected to be called during the meeting and asked not to return to finish out the week. I even stated such and then commended them for their willingness to accept the rebuke and study every action in the light of truth.

Two firsts took place that week. (1) I was the first white man to preach a meeting there, and (2) this was their first meeting to run through a Saturday night. There was no doubt another first as members of the Manatee County church as well as members from Palmetto, Osprey and Sarasota (where Herbert Fraser now preaches) turned out to support the meeting. They asked the preacher from Palmetto, Ken Weliever, to speak up the last evening of the meeting if he wished. He did and admonished them to continue to seek truth and commended them for having me in the meeting.

Recently, the Manatee County church had a black brother for a meeting—F.O. White. While he was here he visited Bro. Green. Bro. Green talked of the pressure the "liberals" were putting on him, but affirmed that he was going to stand for the truth to put it in his words, "If I have to eat dirt." I asked if they had discontinued

having social function in the building annex. He showed me a letter signed by the elders and himself to the effect that this was no longer to be a part of their functions.

We believe they intend to be a faithful congregation and are seeking to be scriptural in all their activities. They continue to listen to our radio program and have stated their desire for me to preach in another meeting. Yes, radio programs do good! We have seen other examples of the good the program is doing. There are still good and honest hearts out there who will respond to the truth of Christ if only we will preach it plainly, without compromise and in love.

The Manatee County church has experienced good growth and has an active program of work. We are in the first phase of our building program. Potential for future growth looks good! Anyone visiting in the area is invited to come and worship with us.

FOREIGN WORKS

CARLOS CAPELLI, Casilla #83, 1665 Jose' C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina. I was invited to preach a gospel meeting in March in Valdivia, south of Chile. The church there is well with 25 members who are zealous for the Lord's work. I had to provide the expenses for that meeting from my own pocket. Following the meeting we visited the Efrain Perez family in Vina del Mar. We had not seen them for seven years. Also I visited the Santiago church along with the congregation in Puente Alto. Back in Argentina at Mendoza there was a meeting with Bro. Partain. The attendance was around 30 each night. Three were baptized. The congregation here at Jose' C. Paz continues to do well and is at peace. The Hueytown, AL church has notified me that they will have to discontinue their \$200 monthly support in May. So I will need to seek additional help for my support. May God bless each of you.

CHARLES HOUSE, P.O. Box 1031, Douglas, AZ 85607. We are happy to report that one was baptized in March at the congregation at Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico. Membership at Agua Prieta is 41 with Sunday attendance running around 100. Many visitors are coming to the services.

PREACHERS NEEDED

COOKEVILLE, TN—The Jere Whitson Rd. church is looking for a full-time preacher to begin working with them around August 1, 1982. House and support are available. Anyone interested may write the church at 329 Jere Whitson, Cookeville, TN 38501. Or call (615) 823-2258 or 528-5382.

RICHLAND, WA—The Tri-City church of Christ in Richland, WA needs a preacher. We are a new congregation and can furnish partial support. Contact Sterling Harper at (509) 547-8027 or Joe Bricker at 588-3307.

PREACHERS AVAILABLE

STAN WENCK, 2700 W. 96th PL, Evergreen Park, IL 60642. I have part-time experience and am interested in getting into full-time work. I am 36 years old. Phone (312) 422-8746 after 5 p.m.

DAVID L. WALDRON, 5643 Newberry St., Wayne, MI 48184. After working with the small church in Clare, Michigan for eight years, I came to work with the Palmer Rd. congregation in Westland, Michigan last November as a "fill-in" until Bro. B.G. Echols could move up from Texas this summer. As of July I will be able to work elsewhere. I have been in full-time work for over 11 years, and part-time work 12 years prior to that. I have worked mainly with small congregations where outside support was necessary, but would be glad to talk with any church in need of a preacher. I am able to provide a portion of my support by means of Navy retirement. Phone me at (313) 326-0690.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	443
RESTORATIONS	162

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)