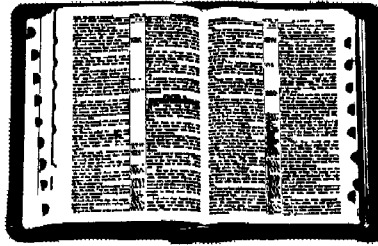


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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

H. E. Phillips
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Tampa, Florida 33612



THE SCRIPTURAL ACTION OF BAPTISM (NO. 2)

Last month some observations were made on the meaning of the word "baptize" I want to continue with this study.

The use of the word "baptize" in the New Testament indicates a definite action and no other will substitute for it. In spite of all the efforts to make the word include "pouring" or "sprinkling" water upon one in obedience, to God, it still remains that the word has but one meaning.

One way to test the meaning or action of a word in a given sentence is to put the substitute word in the sentence and see if it has the same meaning. When Jesus came to John to be baptized the record says, "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan" (Mark 1:9). Could we say, "... that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was SPRINKLED of John in Jordan"? Sprinkle means to scatter in drops. The command to baptize (immerse, dip, submerge) applies to the person and not to the element. The element is not the subject of the action, the person is. To "sprinkle" is to handle the water — the element — and not the person. It is impossible to "sprinkle" a person without destroying his body. I recognize that figures of speech such as metonymy may be used in such a term as "sprinkling" a person, but that word would have to fit the original meaning of the word for which "sprinkle" is used.

But in addition, every time the New Testament tells of the action of one to be baptized, a going down into the water and a coming up out of the water is

required. One goes before it and the other follows it. There would be absolutely no need for this action if one is sprinkled or poured with water. It is true that sometimes the Bible does not tell of the actions that go before and follow the action of baptism. But where this is so there is nothing to indicate any other action than immersion.

A passage sometimes used to try to prove sprinkling of water as baptism is the example of Paul in Acts 22:16. "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Here is the way it is intended by the reference: "And now why tarriest thou?" (you have already been saved) "arise," (and stand where you are) "and be baptized" (have water sprinkled or poured on your head) "and wash away thy sins," (which have already been forgiven in fact) "calling on the name of the Lord."

Now just look how much is assumed that contradicts the plain language of the passage just cited. It is assumed that Paul stood where he was, and that water was applied to him by pouring or sprinkling instead of immersing him in water as the original word demands in its meaning. Of course, it is also assumed that Paul was conscious that his sins were already forgiven when he had this water sprinkled or poured upon his head. If assumptions are in order, it is more reasonable to assume that he followed the same action others took when they were baptized. The jailor in Acts 16 was taught by the apostle Paul, and if Paul was sprinkled and believed it to be what the Lord required, he certainly would not have taken the jailor out in the middle of the night and baptized him. But that is exactly what he did. Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house" (v. 32). "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16:33, 34). The preaching was to all that were in his house, and after he was baptized he brought them into his house. This sounds like they left the house, or the place where the preaching was done, in order to baptize the jailor and those in his house who believed. If there is any inference at all in this language, it is on the side of immersion, not in

favor of sprinkling or pouring water upon them.

But this same Paul wrote a letter to the Romans in which he said, "Know ye not, that so many of us" (he included himself in the statement) "as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we" (including Paul) "are BURIED with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3,4). This makes it clear what action Paul took when he was baptized. He was BURIED!

"Buried with him IN baptism wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). It is an insult to common sense to try to argue that this means to sprinkle or pour water upon a person and call it a "burial".

Three things are implied in the word burial: first, the thing buried; second, that in which the thing is buried; and third, the act of burying. The thing buried may be a person, a seed, or a treasure. It may be buried in water, sawdust, or the earth. But the act of burying is always the same. It demands a covering up, overwhelming in, or immersing in the element in which the thing is buried.

If it be argued that a person could have water poured or sprinkled upon him until he is covered or buried, the requirement of baptism is still not fulfilled. That foolish action of pouring or sprinkling water upon a person until he is covered has never been the practice of baptism. But even if it were practiced, it could not be scriptural because the element is handled and not the person. The person must be buried in that water. This is the action of scriptural baptism. Substitute action is disobedience to God and the end of such a course is eternal damnation. Why not do what the Lord said to do and receive the blessing of forgiveness of sins?

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Editorial

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SUMMER FAITHFULNESS

It is required of Christians that they ALWAYS abound in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). We are rapidly approaching a time of year when many Christians seem to feel excused from such constancy in service. Summertime is a delightful season in many ways. It is joyfully anticipated by school children who need to relax from the regimen of the classroom. Those of us who live outside of tropic climes have experienced three severe winters in a row. Summer offers relief. It is usually vacation time for most famines. That is needed by all.

The truth is that there can be no vacation from godliness of character nor from fulfilling divinely appointed responsibilities where the church of the Lord is concerned. Some do not seem to understand this. In many places attendance wanes and contributions drop while we live it up and enjoy the "good ole summertime." There are at least three areas which threaten summer faithfulness.

Neglected Worship

Regular and consistent attendance at public worship gatherings to engage jointly in acts appointed by God are not only necessary to our commitment to the Lord; such practice is of great benefit to all. We all need what such gatherings provide. But how many families will take off across the country with carefully laid plans for food, lodging and entertainment, but with no advance thought to where they will meet with the saints on the Lord's Day? I know of some who are so careless that they do not even give the matter a thought. They think vacations excuse them from worship with brethren, I know of some who have been in places where there were sound congregations which would have been greatly encouraged by brethren from afar who attended some unsound church because it was convenient. Some of those who so act would not even think of doing this at home. When children are along and worship is ignored for two or three weeks, what must they think? When you pack your clothes, camping equipment, fishing gear, golf clubs, and what have you, do you think to include your Bible? Do you take time to read it? Do you pray? There are some who have so little regard for congregational responsibility that they gad about all summer, visiting from congregation to congregation without knowing where the Bible lesson is, or failing to help their children to be prepared. Summertime can play havoc with any sort of planned teaching curriculum. Enjoy the summer, but don't become pantheists in the bargain,

worshipping the sky, the sea or the mountains. Worship Him who made them all and appointed what we do in public worship.

Misappropriated Funds

Every Christian is to support the congregation of which he is a part with funds proportionate to prosperity, given cheerfully and according to purpose of heart. How could any child of God think that he is excused from his responsibility in this because it is summertime? Why should the work of the church suffer while we lavish funds on our own entertainment and relaxation? Do congregational expenses cease at this time of year? Are there not godly men with their families scattered around the globe sowing the precious seed of the kingdom who are able to be there because of the commitments made to them by faithful congregations? I do not know how readers feel about the matter, but this writer would no more think of spending for personal amusement the money purposed to support the work of the congregation of which he is a member, then he would think of spending the house payment or car payment money that way. All three are honorable commitments and should be carried out.

Indecent Exposure

God's standard of modesty and decency is not seasonal, nor geographic. It is not wrong within itself to swim, sunbathe, water-ski or engage in other such activities within certain limits. But when there is a mixing of those other than the family circle for such activity, then there are some questions which ought to be considered. The revealing near-nudity of the modern bathing suit (not just bikinis) ignores the principle that we are our brother's keeper (and our sister's as well). Such attire, or lack of attire, is calculated to incite lust. Surely no normal, red-blooded man or woman would seriously deny this. Restraints and reserves are broken down thereby. Undue familiarity is encouraged. The danger is even heightened, not lessened as some suppose, where good friends are involved. Adultery is ordinarily committed by people who know each other. Jesus taught that one can lust by looking (Mt. 5:28). This is especially a problem to men, but by no means confined to them. Our society has lost its sense of blush and shame to such a degree that women sometimes gaze with lust after men. While all, men and women alike, should guard their hearts from lust, all of us should consider it a personal duty not to place a temptation in the way of others. And don't be so naive as to think YOU could never stir such impure interest in others.

We wish for all our readers a most pleasant summer season. But we plead with all who read these lines to remember who you are and what your responsibilities are in the work of the Lord. Don't let the casual, easy-going spirit of the warmer months tempt you to sear your conscience and weaken your character before God. This article is written from a sincere desire to fulfill the divine charge to "preach the word in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2-3). As one elderly preacher said one time, "That means when they like and when they don't like it; when they think it appropriate and when they don't."

EXPOSITION: TEXT and CONTEXT

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JESUS CHRIST — LUNATIC, LIAR OR LORD

(In December of 1978, the Unitarians of N. Canton, Ohio invited me to appear on a panel with a Rabbi and Catholic priest to discuss Jesus of Nazareth. Each was allotted about 15 minutes for a speech and then the audience was permitted to ask questions of the panelists. The following is my speech with minor alterations for publications. The title was selected for this article.)

Welcome to this panel discussion, this forum, and we trust that our coming together will be beneficial to everyone as we focus our attention upon Jesus.

Most of you, if not all of you, are familiar with the late Dr. C.S. Lewis, who was professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge. Dr. Lewis said, as quoted in his book, *Mere Christianity*, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him (meaning Jesus): 'I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept his claim to be God.'" Dr. Lewis responded to a statement like that, "That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a made man or something worse."

C. S. Lewis, earlier in his life, was an infidel and through study and evidence that he observed he became a believer in Jesus Christ. He also stated in the book, *Mere Christianity*, "You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." So, according to Dr. Lewis we either must consider Jesus as a mad man, or a Devil of Hell, or Lord and God.

Claims of Jesus

Now Jesus, while he was here tabernacling in the flesh as recorded in the Bible, declared that he was the Son of God and his fellow countrymen, the Jews, understood by that statement that he was declaring himself to be God or equal to God as revealed in John 5:17-18 and in John 10:32-33.

The apostle John wrote in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God

and the Word was God. That's what Jesus claimed for himself. He wasn't the Son of God in the sense that we are sons of God or the angels are called sons of God, but he was the Son of God in a peculiar sense. As John 3:16 says, "He was the only begotten Son of God." He never said, "our Father," as he talked to the multitudes. It was always "my Father" and "your Father." Jesus came from the very bosom of Jehovah God and so was his claim.

He declared himself to be the Messiah to the woman at Jacob's well in the 4th chapter of John. She said "when the Messiah comes he will tell us all things." and Jesus responded unto her in verse 26, "I am He." In John 14:6 Jesus declares that no man can come to the Father but by me. "I am the way (not a way), but the way, the truth, the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."

In John 11:25 at the death of Lazarus, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Martha understood who He (Jesus) was when she confessed that "thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

You know, Jesus said on one occasion in the 14th chapter of John, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." God is invisible but the Bible teaches that the invisible God was made visible through the manifestation of Jesus Christ. In John 8:58 he said, "before Abraham was I am." He is eternal and as stated in John 1:1, the verse we have already quoted, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Jesus precedes time. He is eternal. He is also sinless. (John 8:46). "Who is it that convinceth me of sin?" Not one of his enemies could find a flaw in his life. We know what his friends said about him in Hebrews 4:15, "Who was without sin." A high priest without sin.

Now here are some claims (there are others) that Jesus made for himself. He said, "I am the Son of God;" "I am God;" "I am the resurrection and the life," and in view of those declarations, ladies and gentlemen, it is no wonder that Dr. Lewis said,

"We either have to treat him as a man or a Devil of Hell or confess him as Lord and God, and it is patronizing nonsense to say that a man who made claims like this would be a good moral teacher."

What Others Thought of Jesus

Paul said we look for the blessed hope and appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13). Peter confessed him as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). John said Jesus did signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but "these are written that ye might believe that he is the Christ the Son of God and believing you might have life through his name."

Stephen, as Luke records in Acts 7:59, was calling upon God when they stoned him to death. He was calling upon God and he addressed that prayer, as the verse states, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen considered him God. Nathanael said that he was the Son of God in John 1:49. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God that cometh to take away the sin of the world."

Alternatives

As we look at these affirmations and declarations, as we evaluate them, ladies and gentlemen, what Jesus said, and the others that spake about him, they were either wrong or right. He either was the Son of God or he wasn't. He either was the resurrection and life or he wasn't. He either was the Messiah that the Jews expected as taught in the Old Testament, or he wasn't.

If he were wrong (remember, He was either right or wrong), if he were wrong, you have TWO ALTERNATIVES. Number *one*, if he knew that his claims were false, that makes him a hypocrite. In fact, it makes him a liar; yet, he taught a high moral standard that his disciples emulated. Was Jesus a hypocrite? He was if he knew that he was not the Son of God.

The *second* alternative in this is that if he didn't know it, and was self-deluded, that makes him a lunatic. Channing, a Unitarian, as quoted by Dr. Philip Schaff in his book *The Person of Christ*, said, "The charge of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus." Jesus wasn't a lunatic and neither was Jesus a deceiver.

So, how do we look at Jesus and his claims if he were wrong? Friends, he was either a liar or he was a lunatic! Now, if his claims were true, then we have TWO ALTERNATIVES. We either accept them or reject them.

I believe that the claims that Jesus made are true and to me there is overwhelming evidence, and I share with you tonight just briefly some of this to substantiate my faith that Jesus is priest, prophet and king — that indeed he was God manifested in the flesh — Immanuel, God with us, and he's now at the right hand of God as Lord of lords and King of kings.

The Empty Tomb

Let's look at the empty tomb. In Luke 24:3 when the women came to the tomb, they found not the body — it was gone — it was missing. Now, what happened to the body? The body was buried in Joseph's new tomb, but it was missing. If it were missing, as it was, it was either stolen or it was raised. If it were stolen, it was either stolen by enemies or friends.

But if the enemies stole the body of Jesus, they never did produce it, and on Pentecost in Acts the 2nd chapter, when Peter preached the resurrection of Christ, he convinced thousands of those who had a hand in putting Jesus to death, who had said, "Crucify him, crucify him." His enemies didn't steal the body. What an opportune time, ladies and gentlemen, to squelch the Christian doctrine once and for all if the enemies stole the body.

Well, did the friends steal it? If the friends stole it, when, and how? Really, they didn't have the power to steal it and the enemies didn't have the motivation. What's rather strange is that if the friends of Jesus stole the body why would they have preached a falsehood, knowingly? Why would these disciples become martyrs for that which they knew was a hoax?

We can't accept rationally that the body was stolen: evidence won't allow it. What are we going to do with the empty tomb? That has to be faced. What happened to the body of Jesus? I maintain that it was resurrected on the third day, even as Jesus claimed for himself.

Observations of Prominent Men

William Lyon Phelps, for more than forty years a distinguished professor of English Literature, and author of some 20 volumes of literary studies, said (and I quote from the book, *A Great Certainty in This Hour of World Crisis* by Wilbur Smith), "And it may be said that the historical evidence for the resurrection is stronger than for any other miracle anywhere narrated."

Sir Edward Clark, a lawyer, as quoted in *Basic Christianity* by John R. W. Scott, said. "As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling."

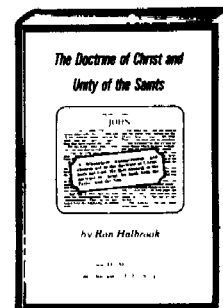
Professor Thomas Arnold who was for fourteen years the famous headmaster of Rugby, and author of the famous three-volume, *History of Rome*, said, "I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, than that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

I'll leave you with this in conclusion as my time has expired. If Jesus was not what he claimed to be, ladies and gentlemen, then he deserves an Oscar for the best actor that ever walked on the face of the earth. Thank you.

— Much credit is to be given to the book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, by Josh McDowell.

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THE ANSWER TO THE MARRIAGE QUESTION

The controversy rages over whether or not the guilty put-away fornicator has the God-given right to re-marry. I do not believe such a person can scripturally re-marry. But even if I could convince the whole world that such is so, we would likely still have the marriage and divorce problem with which to contend.

The answer to the marriage question is to BEGIN NOW, today, to teach our children the Bible truth regarding the seriousness of marriage, the importance of choosing the right mate, and the fact that God's way is always and forever the right way. You see, the fact that we must contend among ourselves over matters such as whether or not the guilty party may re-marry is a lucent demonstration that we are treating symptoms and indications instead of ascertaining and then attacking the actual cause of the difficulty. It should be abundantly clear that until the cause is determined and removed we will be continually beset with the frustrating dilemma of symptomatic treatments which seemingly have no end.

The first thing children need to learn about marriage is that it is serious business. There is today an open flippancy about marriage. And while it is true that living together without a marriage contract has not pervaded the thinking of most morally-minded individuals, it is also true that the permissiveness and tolerant attitude of society has caused many Christians to fail to place proper emphasis on the true seriousness of marriage. As a result, many persons enter into the relationship without due consideration and learn too late that they should have assigned more importance to their decisions relating to marriage.

To begin, children need to learn that marriage is not a mere social relationship. In order for them to be impressed with this fact they must understand that marriage was neither originated in nor is it controlled by society. God originated marriage (Gen. 2:18-25). And God sustains and governs marriage (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Eph. 5:22-33, etc.). The realization of such should cause every person contemplating marriage to consider carefully what requirements are necessary before one is qualified in the eyes of God to enter this highly regarded relationship. God has spoken concerning marriage and that indicates that He has concern for its sanctity and that any marriage not entered into within the confines of his regulation is lacking His approval and is thereby sinful (Cf. Lk.

16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-11). If we are to have any effect on the startling rise in the divorce rate, we must begin to show our children that there are three parties to every marriage — the man, the woman, and God. And we must cause them to see that when the vow is made, God is a signer to the agreement and even if the man and woman seek to nullify the pact, God must likewise be consulted before any change is made.

We need to teach our children to value and respect the marriage vow. They must be made to understand that to make a vow and then dismiss it is a serious crime in the eyes of God (Eccl. 5:1-4). Many a marriage has failed because its partners attached no real significance to the vows which were exchanged at the beginning of the contract. For instance, when one takes a partner "for better or worse" and worse comes, there can be no negation of the commitment on grounds that "I didn't know what I was saying!" "Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:5). And when the times of financial reversals come (and we would do well to teach our youngsters that such times will come!), to endure such is to fulfill the covenant agreement. And God, who was a party to such a vow, will tolerate no less! Children who are reared to respect truth and to follow through with promises and commitments, even if it sometimes hurts, are far less likely to have marriage problems, regardless of the severity of the adversity which attacks their relationship.

Sex is one of the most powerful of all human drives. We must begin now to teach our off-spring that such is the case and thereby impress their minds with its potential danger. Many children have a poor concept of sex and its relationship to marriage. In fact, far too many children receive their sex education from television, which promotes it as a normal appetite which can be satisfied without any moral restraint whatever. Or they receive it from movies, which actually encourage experimentation with all forms of sexual encounters, and which almost never frown on any sexual deviation, no matter the moral turpitude involved. Or they learn about sex from magazine "experts" who have placed the real premium on mere carnal satisfaction and who in some instances actually ridicule those who would run the risk of psychological disaster by denying themselves any form of sexual gratification. Or our children may very well be gaining their sex education from the popular songs of the day, songs which serve to stimulate and heighten sexual feelings to the extent that "turning back" in the face of sexual temptation becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible. Certainly sex is not dirty. Certainly our children must understand that sexual expression is not only normal, but a most beautiful mode of joining two kindred spirits in the deepest communication of total commitment. But when sex becomes merely the animalistic culmination of a law of necessity, it is empty, meaningless, and more importantly, sinful. God has a special aberrance for sexual sins (1 Cor. 6:15-20), and says that "he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body," indicating that the satisfaction of sexual desires outside the

realm of marriage is doing so with ends lower than God intended when he made the body.

We must teach our youngsters that to marry a non-believer is extremely dangerous and is thereby highly inadvisable. I do not believe it to be a sin for a Christian to take a mate who is not a believer. To so teach has God allowing a relationship to continue where one member of the marriage obeys the gospel and the other does not, but disallowing that same relationship to be formed between a believer and a non-believer (Cf. 1 Cor. 7:11-ff). However, for one who is a follower of Christ to marry one who is not is to take a step in the wrong direction and invites certain strained relations at the outset of the marriage. Statistical evidence is abundant regarding "mixed" marriages and shows conclusively that when one marries a non-believer such a marriage is likely destined for trouble, if not the divorce court. Even if a prospective companion is a Christian, that person should be taken as a mate only after serious consideration and much prayer, for the commitment is for a lifetime. Our children need to know that when the honeymoon is over and they must get down to the business of living life, the spiritual ties which are shared between two Christians are a prime consideration and a marriage devoid of such strength is seriously incapacitated, no matter how much "love" is there.

And our children need to be taught the value of good communication in any relationship, but especially in marriage. Of all the couples who have come to my office with marital difficulties I would be hard pressed to name even one instance where a lack of communication was not a major contributor to the problem. And it is no wonder! Husbands today do not talk to their wives; and wives today do not talk to their husbands! We pass along these same attitudes to our children and as a result, in many homes today, there is little exchange of edifying and strengthening conversation. When there is communication it is all too often of the variety which cites the faults of others, screams insults, or loudly proclaims other negative reactions to life. Such verbosity does not lend itself to saying "I love you," or "I appreciate you," or "I am interested, tell me." The value of good communication cannot be overemphasized. And communication BEFORE marriage is as good a measuring device as I know to see whether there will be communication AFTER marriage. The person who would enter into a marriage relationship where there has not already been an abundance of communication is foolish to a fault!

I know some will say that this solution is idealistic and Utopian in its very concept. Maybe it is. But I am tired of trying to solve problems that become so complicated with verbiage and so complex with sophistry that a Solomon would be completely perplexed to solve them. And, yes, there are still some areas where I don't have sufficient information (and the ability to apply what I do have!) in order to affect an equitable solution. In fact, some questions are so complex I don't believe the interrogator understands them! So, why don't we just try something simple for a change. Why don't we just get back to

basics and start at the beginning again. Why don't we teach our children what can happen when God is left out of marriage? And brethren, if we don't start RIGHT NOW to do something to help them learn about the seriousness of marriage they are apt to grow up attaching little significance to it. And our children's children are likely to look upon it as an antiquated puritanical concept which doesn't even deserve sober consideration.

People, the answer to the marriage question is to teach our children that marriage is a spiritual commitment to two partners — the mate you have chosen, and God, who began it all in the first place.

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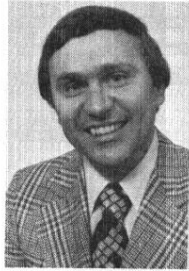


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SHOULD A CHRISTIAN SMOKE?

One hears the argument quite often when he is discussing smoking, drinking, overeating, etc., with his brother in Christ, that it is "not what goes into the mouth that defiles the body, but what proceeds from the mouth" that is harmful. See Matt. 15:10-20 and Mark 7:14-23. Thus the argument goes when discussing the harmful effects of cigarettes or strong drink or even drug effects, that one has Bible proof that he need not worry about putting something into his mouth, for the Bible "plainly teaches" that I should not worry about "defiling myself from without" (taking something into the body) but should worry about what "proceeds from the mouth" (that which leaves the body). How foolish and shallow this argument is. It is quite depressing at times to see how far one will go in an attempt to justify his habit. I sometimes expect this behavior from people in the world, but amazingly I often find more cooperation from a worldly man in getting him to quit smoking than I do from my brethren. The man of the world can see the harm; my brethren try to ignore it, and "quote scriptures" to justify their habit.

Everyone by now should know that cigarette smoking is bad for his health. The latest reminder for all to read is the report on Smoking and Health from the office of the Surgeon General. It is encyclopedic and the obvious effects of smoking read like a plague or major disaster. Notice, 350,000 people will die next year from the effects of smoking. (The smokers retort is . . . we all must die sometime). Thousands more will be incapacitated, yet smoking even among Christians continues. The list of diseases is awesome and the relationships between cigarettes and diseases of the heart, lungs and stomach continue to be proven **beyond a shadow of a doubt.**

Of all the hazards of cigarette smoking, cancer of the lungs stands out the most and is the best known. Can we argue this point any longer, or should we argue it? It is a known fact! The statistics are known, diverse and convincing! The lung cancer rate of cigarette smokers is twenty times greater overall, and more specific cancers of the lung (there are different types) are almost exclusively related to smoking (and inhaling). Experimental evidence in animals is convincing that the risk of developing cancer in the lungs varies with the amount and duration of smoking. Should a Christian smoke?

Besides cancer however, there are many more diseases influenced and caused by smoking. Smoking is the predominant cause of bronchitis and emphysema. You have seen people whose cheeks are

puffed out and can't walk across the room without collapsing and are short of breath at the least exertion. More than likely cigarette smokers. Smoking is one of the leading causes of cancers in the larynx (voice box), mouth and throat. Should a Christian smoke?

An equally discouraging compilation of smoking and disease can be drawn from the heart and circulation. Male cigarette smokers have more coronary artery disease (these arteries which supply the heart with blood) than non-smokers. Smoking is one of the major risk factors in heart attacks and sudden death. If you want to shorten your life, smoke two packs a day, eat all the food you can eat, and quit exercising. It is the surest known way to take 15-20 years off of your life. Other diseases: stomach ulcers are more prevalent in smokers than non-smokers. Cancer of the bladder is more prominent. The most obvious and alarming as well as convincing statistic to me is that all the above mentioned diseases have been found less often in females until ten to twenty years ago, but now even the fairer sex is beginning to be affected by these diseases. Why? Because twenty to thirty years ago women began smoking as extensively as men. You "have come a long way baby" as the commercial sings!

What can be done about smoking? The obvious solution is to quit. How does one go about convincing America with it's vast riches and resources that it has to give up the pleasures (?) of smoking? Obviously we cannot stop production of cigarettes (How nice that would be). I am immediately deluged with the saddened realities of thousands of tobacco farmers going hungry and losing their farms. What will you do with the industry, the cries of the wounded are heard to moan. What about developing a "safe" cigarette. My answer . . . Impossible. Most people are addicted or at least affected by the nicotine in cigarettes. If we were to develop a new cigarette with new ingredients, how are we to know what their effects will be?

Certainly all fair-minded Christians, smokers or not, must know the harm cigarette smoking causes. Are we really caring for the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which ye have from God? (1 Cor. 6:19). I honestly feel that the answer to my question "Should a Christian smoke" is an unqualified, uncompromising, straight forward NO! How about it brethren, what is your answer?

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HABAKKUK — FROM SOBBING DOUBTS TO AN ACTIVE FAITH (PART II)

As we closed Chapter 2 of the Book of Habakkuk we learned God revealed to him magnificent promises. (1) The righteous man will live by his faith and (2) the earth will be full of the knowledge of God. Then we saw where God revealed to the prophet His own plan, first to use the wicked nation of Babylon and then to destroy the nation because of their wickedness. Habakkuk's eyes now SEE God. He now is ready to be silent before Him, and we are ready to enter into Chapter 3. Remember Chapter 1 was: **THE BURDEN** — faith grappling with a problem. Chapter 2 was: **THE VISION** — faith grasping the solution.

Chapter 3 is **THE PRAYER**: faith glorying in assurance. If the first Chapter was faith SIGHING, the second, faith SEEING, now we have faith SINGING. Just as we had 2 **problems** in Chapter 1 and 2 **promises** in Chapter 2, now we have 2 **products** in Chapter 3. These two products of faith are (1) praise for the ability to see God clearly, and (2) the confidence to face uncertainty in the future.

Chapter 3 begins with Habakkuk's psalm of how he is now able to see God.

1. 3:2 -**The Reverence for God**, "I have heard the report and I fear thee." At first he was questioning God and he was calling an investigation to examine His activities, but now faith vindicates God and he has the proper relationship between the superior and the inferior. Without faith this relationship gets all out of perspective.

2. 3:2 — **The Activity Of God**, "Lord revive thy work." Here he is saying for God to continue His work just as He was doing. At first he questioned God's lack of activity because the wicked in Judah prospered, but now he sees that God had a plan all along. Lord continue, "revive it in the midst of the years."

3. 3:3-4 — **The Glory Of God**. Just as He appeared to the children of Israel in Deut. 33:2, "from Teman" and "from Mount Param, His splendor covers the heavens." How beautiful is God to this prophet who now understands by faith and sight.

4. 3:5-7 - **The Wrath Of God**, "Before him goes pestilence." The wrath against the wicked. So just as Job thought he knew God but found he had really only heard of Him, so Habakkuk now SEES, now he KNOWS God in a personal one-to-one relationship. What Habakkuk needed to learn was God's purpose in using a nation like Babylon and this is repeated in 3:12-13: "in indignation thou didst march through the earth; . . . thou didst go forth for the salvation of

thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed." His plan was purification or perfection. Had Judah been allowed to continue to become more and more ungodly she would have ended up as the people before the flood — in TOTAL destruction. But while there was a righteous remnant, purification would preserve the righteous and refine it as fire would purge gold.

Here is the second product of faith — confidence in the face of disaster! Here the prophet is trembling in the inward parts because he knows what is coming upon his people and his home. There will be TOTAL desolation: the fig tree will not flourish, no fruit on the vines, no food from the field, and the flock will be cut off with no cattle in the stalls. NOTHING will be present to eat because of the intensity of judgment, but notice his attitude — "I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." This shows us what one thing it takes to serve God. It doesn't take great material wealth to serve God. It doesn't take great talent to serve God, but it takes FAITH! In spite of everything the prophet is going to suffer in the coming judgment, he is going to maintain his faith. Notice the description of it literally in 3:18 — "he is going to JUMP FOR JOY and he will SPIN AROUND IN DELIGHT." It is going to be so bad there will be nothing to eat, but his faith is great enough to jump for joy and spin around in delight. He had learned his lesson well because "my feet are like hinds feet", the most agile little deer that ran, jumped, and climbed where no other animal could go. The example of the greatness of his faith now, in spite of all, ought to be our goal.

Finally, let us note the 5-step process by which Habakkuk turned from sobbing doubts to the most fervent faith:

First, **he went to God with his doubts**. We don't need men to preach their doubts. All of us have enough doubts of our own without somebody going around preaching about all the things they are not certain about. Every preacher that left the Lord and lost his faith took a certain number with him because he became a spokesman for doubt. Brethren, when we doubt let's not destroy other Christians with our broken spirit, because doubt is an infection that is cultured to grow in a weak heart. Do what Habakkuk did. Take your doubt to God. This small book is one of the few where God is not talking to man through the prophet. Here, it is Habakkuk talking to God and God's response to him. This is the place for the secret discourses of doubt and not to be paraded before the multitudes.

Secondly, **Habakkuk said I will wait**. After one goes to God with his doubts, the next most important thing is patience. Habakkuk was willing to go stand and watch to see what God would say to him. This involves man's part when doubts enter into his mind. He must be willing to meditate, study, explore with God in prayer and finally to wait patiently for the answer. We want our answers in triplicate and right now. Like the woman who called this office stating the need for an answer in the next 4 minutes. Yet, so often the answers to the questions and the doubts need time. We need time for the answer to mold, change and form our lives around

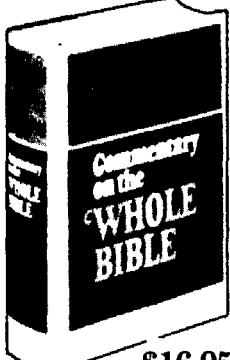
God's response. The story is told of a young believer in the last century who began to question his faith because there was no recorded history of the Hittite nation of which the Bible spoke. Therefore, he concluded the Book must be in error. He heeded not the admonition of those stalwart defenders of the faith to be patient, and then later as the result of a tragic accident died in his unbelief. However, only a matter of months had elapsed when the news headlines read: "New Discovery — The Biblical world of the Hittites found."

Thirdly, **he was ready to praise and glorify God when answered.** The necessity of open-mindedness here is emphasized. Too often doubts become the tool of "intellectual snobbery." Too often those among us doubt because they feel a superior sense of wisdom which gives them a keener insight of the situation than all the other "lemmings" who simply follow the crowd into the sea of belief. The truth is that this is not an honest manifestation of doubt, and the dishonest doubter will not be ready to praise and glorify God even when the answer is received.

Fourthly, **Habakkuk was willing to bear his punishment.** Even though he was not a part of the wicked nation, he will have to endure the judgment that is going to come. So even though the consequences of his faith were not pleasant, he was willing to accept them. When problems arise over doctrine and doubts arise concerning the scripturalness of an issue, we must accept the consequences of a particular answer if we are to make the journey from doubt to faith. Even though the answer was not what Habakkuk wanted, he was willing to pour forth his praise and glory to God for the answer.

Fifthly, **he is now ready to make the total commitment.** Yes, even in trembling and decay of the inward parts "I must wait quietly for the day of distress." This is the final step in the process of development. "Now, Lord make me to walk in the high places." This is as high as the heart of man can go. This is the deepest commitment that man can make as he gives himself to the Lord.

Thus, in conclusion to the Book of Habakkuk, we might ask where are we in this journey? All of us have had our doubts and questions, but how many have made the transition that Habakkuk made? May the Lord grant us time and opportunity.



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"IS MARK 16:15-16 A DIRECT STATEMENT?"

I don't suppose there is a passage in the entire word of God which has been discussed more than the above text. I have spent hour after hour on the polemic platform discussing the text with Baptist preachers. Now it is brought into focus by liberal brethren. It becomes a little trite answering these foolish quibbles but I find it very necessary for the sake of our young people. All kinds of peculiar arguments come from the heat of controversy. The latest comes from my friend, Roy Deaver. Roy is a sort of champion of the "Conservative liberal cause". Young preachers as well as the older ones look up to him for answers to their problems. If these quibbles are not answered, many will feel they cannot be answered and thus will be led off into the wilderness of confusion.

For years brethren have argued that authority in the Bible is established in three ways — direct command or statement, necessary inference or apostolic example. In order to broaden the base of Bible authority, some brethren have taken foolish positions. Both in the Freed-Hardeman lectures and in our debate, brother Deaver took the unenviable position that Mark 16:15-16 was not a direct statement or command, necessary inference or apostolic example. He argued that since it was not one of the three it must be something else. If this is true, there are other ways of establishing Bible authority. To be perfectly frank, I have never heard brother Deaver say what the other way of establishing authority might be. He hinted in our debate it might be expediency. If he thinks expediency is a way of establishing authority, he is in for lots of trouble. He did argue that authority is established only two ways, "Explicitly and Implicitly". Well, all of us have known that for years! Any good dictionary will tell you that "Implicitly means implied or understood although not directly stated or expressed". (American Heritage Dictionary, page 660). In the same dictionary we are told that "Explicit" means to be expressed with precision clearly defined or specific. Well, now doesn't this help a great deal? One doesn't have to be astute to know that a direct statement or command is explicit and a necessary inference is implicit! So this does not add one thing to the way Bible authority is established except a lot of subterfuge. Brethren sometimes like to throw big words around as if they have discovered something new but when reduced to the lowest common denominator, it comes out the

same. This reminds me of an old Indian friend of mine who had listened to a younger man tell how many Indians he had whipped and implied he could take care of the old Indian. After listening he replied, "Ugh, loud thunder, much lightening, no rain"!

Any student of the Bible knows that Mark 16:15 is a DECLARATIVE SENTENCE. I will affirm Mark 16:15 is a direct statement. The text under consideration is: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned". The reason it is a direct statement and not a command is that he uses third person instead of second. This is why we always stress command or statement. Sometimes the Bible speaks in second person and sometimes in third person. Since it will not be denied that our text is a declarative sentence, if we can find out what a declarative sentence is, we will set matters straight. I have before me two good English books dealing with grammar. On page 10, of the "Plain English Handbook" by Walsh he says, "A declarative sentence makes a statement". Then he gives us an example of a declarative sentence. "Our glee club sings well". Now isn't that simple. If Mk. 16:15 is a declarative sentence and, indeed it is, then it makes a statement! The very thing brother Deaver says it doesn't do. Mr. Walsh, the grammarian, even uses the word STATEMENT! The example he gives is certainly DIRECT so there you have it. Our text is a direct statement, not withstanding Roy Deaver to the contrary. The other authority who tells us about a declarative sentence is Jonathan Rigdon, Ph.D, in his book "The English Sentence", He says, on page 224, "A declarative sentence is one that asserts or denies". He, like, Mr. Walsh, gives us an example: "You are mistaken". Excellent! If Roy will allow me to use the third person as the Lord did in our text, I will say, "He (Roy) is mistaken", and brother, that is a declarative, direct statement!


Matthew and Mark differ somewhat in giving the great commission. In Matt. 28:19, Matthew records a direct command from the Lord, to his apostles. He says, "Go teach — baptizing certain people". However, in Mark he speaks to his apostles (second person) and then shifts to third person talking about others, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". This is a direct statement, couched in a declarative sentence of the third person.

How any man could go through the country and tell his students that the great text of Mark 16:15-16 is not a direct statement is beyond me. Every vestige of Bible and grammar is against him. Wouldn't it be nice if people didn't have to defend false doctrine? it surely would save me a great deal of time.

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CHURCH ENTERTAINMENT

A number of years ago brother Athens Clay Pullias, then President of David Lipscomb College, wrote and published a tract entitled, "Where There Is No Pattern." In view of the fact that many desire to do what they want to do, whether they have scriptural authority or not, it was no small wonder that brother Pullias' tract "caught on" among many who were members of the Body of Christ.

Today we are seeing the results of this through many different avenues. In the letter that follows (which is a reduction of the original letter) we see some twenty-odd-years later some of the results of such teaching.


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As you can see for yourself, a congregation calling themselves the Lord's people now has an Acappella Choral Group. Not only do they have this group, of whom Mr. Jete Lee Robinson is the President, but we, members of the Body of Christ in the greater Los

Angeles area, have been invited by means of the above letter, to come to a "Concert" presented by this group. According to Mr. Webster, a "concert" is "A public or private musical entertainment at which a number of vocalist or instrumentalists, or both perform singly or combined" (Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Page 355).

Question: Where is the authority in the Word of God for the church providing entertainment for anyone? Worship is not entertainment! Jesus said, (in the midst of all this talk about "no pattern," and "entertainment," excuse me for bringing Jesus and the Bible into the discussion), "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). One neither has the right "spirit" or attitude toward the Scriptures, nor is it according to "truth" that entertainment be provided by a congregation of the people of God.

But notice also the admission is free — but they are going to accept a donation — free-will-offering-style just like the sectarians have done for years. Thus I see at least three principles violated by this "Concert."

1. It is a lack of respect for Scriptural authority, for there is no Bible authority for the church providing any form of entertainment for anyone. If so, where is the passage?
2. When we sing, it is for the purpose of making melody with grace in our hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:6), not to entertain man.
3. Their "free-will-offering" is not according to the instructions given in I Cor. 16:1-2 and II Cor. 9:7.

You see, I observe the above violations of Bible principles because I believe that the Scriptures inspired of God do provide a pattern — brother Pullias and many other brethren notwithstanding.

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WAS PETER POPE (#2)

In our last article we discussed the following points:

(1) That the office of "Pope" claims to be the Vicar — (to stand in the place) — of the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of His church and the Bridegroom of the Bride.

(2) If this claim is true then all who reject the Pope are really rejecting Christ; and it is NOT true then the office of Pope is the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on earth and all who believe in the Pope are deceived and are yet in their sins.

(3) The study logically involves four questions: (a) Did Jesus Christ establish such an office as that of Pope, or Vicar? (b) If so, who was the first officer, or person to fill that office? (c) Did the Divine Son of God ordain a succession? And, (d) Has that succession been complete and uncorrupt to this present day?

(4) Regarding the first of these questions we learned that there is absolutely NO HINT NOR ALLUSION to such an office in all the Bible; and that such an office is conspicuously left out of all lists of offices in the church — such as, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Bishops, Deacons — given in the inspired Word of God.

(5) To prove that the church must have a head does not prove the office of Pope. Christ is the head of His body, the church. To prove the office of Pope one must prove that the church has a SUB HEAD — A Vicar or Viceroy — a representative or proxy — for that is what the office of Pope professes to be.

Was Peter The First Pope

Let us now consider the 2nd question: Who was the first officer? Or, to get right to the point, Did Christ appoint Peter to be the FIRST POPE??

Logically, this question is already answered in the one we just discussed. Obviously, if the Lord Jesus Christ did NOT institute such an office as that of Pope, He certainly could not have appointed Peter to an office that did not exist. But since Catholics think that Christ made Peter the first Pope when He said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church", then we need to consider their arguments along this line. Their arguments fall into two classes: Scriptural and philosophical. We will examine their arguments from the Scriptures first, then the others, and then we shall offer arguments from the Scriptures showing that Peter could not have occupied such a position.

MATT. 16:18-19

Catholics, from the least to the greatest, quote Matt. 16:18-19 as their first and foremost proof-text. This passage reads — (and I am reading from the Catholic Confraternity translation of the Scriptures, as I will be doing throughout this study. And which, by the way, was given to me by the Catholic Seminary at which I was enrolled by correspondence to study the Catholic Religion) — this passage reads, *Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'. Then Jesus answered and said. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee, but my Father in heaven. And I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'. "*

Catholics argue that Christ here promises to build His church on Peter and to give him the sole authority to bind and loose the doctrines and practices of that church. They thus attempt to establish the OFFICE of Pope by trying to prove that Peter was the first officer. We shall examine this Scripture in detail in future lessons, and will show you that Christ established His church on the fact of Peter's confession that "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*", and that the binding and loosing power was NOT what Catholics claim, but whatever it was, it was given to ALL the Apostles and through them to the Prophets. But we first want to show you that NONE of the 12 Apostles of Christ, all of whom were present and were a party to this conversation — that NONE of the 12 Apostles understood Christ's Words on this occasion to mean any such thing. NONE of the 12 Apostles EVER IN ALL OF THEIR LIVES believed that Christ had made Peter His Vicar and their Head.

Luke 22:24-27 Is Christ's Own Commentary on The Subject of Headship of the Apostles

I invite your attention to Luke 22:24-27 where there is recorded an incident in the upper room where Christ and the 12 Apostles had gathered to eat the last Passover Supper before Christ's death. The inspired writer tells us, "*Now there arose also a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they who exercise authority over them are called Benefactors. But not so with you. On the contrary, let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is the chief as the servant.'*" (*Catholic Bible*).

Friends, the very fact that such a dispute arose among them shows conclusively that NONE of the Apostles understood or believed that Peter had been made their Pope, or the Vicar of Christ. All 12 of the Apostles were present and heard the words of Jesus when He said, 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church', Yet some 2 or 3 years later, on the night of the betrayal and at the upper room where they were all gathered to eat the last supper together, and just a few hours before the Lord was

crucified, the Scriptures tell us, Now there arose also a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest." No such dispute could possibly have arisen among them if they had understood that Christ had made Peter their Supreme Pontiff and His Vicar. Therefore, the apostles did not believe in the office of Pope, nor that Peter filled such an office.

The passage not only reveals the attitude of the apostles regarding the office of Pope and of Peter occupying such an office, but it also tells us what Christ has to say about such an office. You would expect the Lord to settle their argument and to make it plain that He had appointed Peter as their "lord" and Head to "exercise authority over them". The Lord did NOT say, "Children, I thought you understood that I made Peter your Lord and Master back yonder at Caesarea Phillipi when I said 'Upon this rock I will build my church and that I give to thee the keys of the kingdom' ". But friends, this is not what the Lord said. He did NOT announce plainly that Peter was indeed the Head of the apostles and His Vicar, but RATHER, He taught them emphatically that there was NO SUCH PLACE or OFFICE IN HIS KINGDOM!

This passage clearly reveals two things: (1) that NONE of the APOSTLES understood these words of Jesus to have made Peter their Lord and Head; and (2) that the Lord Jesus settled the matter beyond any doubt or dispute by telling them that NONE of them would occupy such an office of Lordship, for the simple reason that no such office would exist in His kingdom!

Now, friends, that should forever settle the matter. Matt. 16:18 could not possibly have any such meaning as Catholics give it in view of this plain teaching. The Bible is in harmony with itself — it does not contradict itself. The Lord JESUS Christ taught this in Matt. 4:7. When the Devil quoted Scripture to the Lord in tempting Him, the Lord Jesus answered, *It is written AGAIN...*", and showed that the Scripture had no such meaning as the devil gave it because the meaning he gave it contradicted the other Scriptures. And just so with Matt. 16:18. The interpretation that Catholics give this Scripture contradicts the other Scriptures. It contradicts Luke 22:24-26, as we have just shown you, and also many others which we shall study; and it therefore could not possibly mean what Catholics claim that it does. Friends, that should forever settle this question without any further argument, but in order to thoroughly study the matter we want to examine every Scripture, and every argument that is made on this subject. (Matt. 16:18-19 next issue).

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SUICIDE: RIGHT OR WRONG

A Solution
Dick Blackford
Box 225
Ownesboro, Ky. 42301

Perhaps you heard about the man who was about to jump from the Brooklyn Bridge. He was seized by a policeman and begged to be let go so he could leap into the river below. The officer counseled with him and made a suggestion. "You take five minutes and give me all the reasons why you think life is not worth living. Then I will take five minutes and give you some reasons why life is worth living. If at the end of the ten minutes you still feel like jumping, I won't stop you. "Each one took his five minutes and at the end of the ten minutes they joined hands and both jumped off together.

I am not sure that story is the best way to begin a lesson on suicide but I have found that it helps to relax an audience that is edgy, uptight, and uncomfortable over this subject. While it strikes us humorously, many doctors and preachers are beginning to realize more than ever the seriousness of the problem of suicide. As bad as it is among middle class adults, it is worse among high school and college students and has been dubbed the "cap-and-gown" disease. It is the number two killer of young people. In many oriental countries suicide has been glorified as heroism. Even yet we read of those who pour gasoline over their bodies and strike a match to themselves on behalf of some political cause. For a long time human life has seemed to be of less value in the Orient. This country is being influenced by that and by famous people who choose this course. Frequently the suicide rate is higher than the homicide rate. Over 600 people have purposely taken their lives by leaping from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The average is one per week since the bridge was built. The same countries (the United States, Australia, Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark) which have the highest suicide rates have also the highest alcoholism rate. Could it be that prosperity, while satisfying our material needs, leaves us with a feeling of intense boredom and that suicide and alcohol are ways of escape from this? Could it be that these statistics drastically illustrate the sublime truth that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?"(Mt.4:4).

WHY THIS SUBJECT?

I got interested in this subject when an anonymous letter was received for a question column I was editing for a local newspaper. The person seemed to be contemplating suicide or at least trying to justify it. A small portion of the letter said this: "What and where does the Bible have to say about suicide? I can't find anything except for one little thing that may pertain to it that may mean it is wrong. Otherwise I think the one who has, may not have been so wrong if it was what he felt was right to do deep inside." My answer to the question began like

this: "It is never right to do wrong. And how one feels about right and wrong is not what determines it. God sets the standards, not man."

Bible Cases Of Suicide

There are seven cases of suicide in the Bible and one "near case" where a fellow was talked out of it. Perhaps we can learn something from these. 1. AHITHOPHEL (2 Sam. 17:23) was a man of worldly wisdom who aided Absalom as conspirator against King David. His suicide could not be called lunacy as every step to it was deliberate. When Absalom did not follow Ahithophel's advice, Ahithophel could foresee Absalom's ruin. He did not choose to witness it and share in the disgrace for he had previously been a faithful counselor to David (U6:23). He let his pride get the best of him and was an example of a bad man who did some terrible things. He "set his house in order" and then hanged himself. A man wrapped up in worldly affairs.

2. KING SAUL (1 Sam.31:4) was a wicked king who tried to kill David and was found in rebellion to God on several occasions because he felt his own ideas were better. He was wounded at the battle of Gilboa. When he thought of what his enemies might do to him if they found him alive, he concluded that dying was better than living.

3. SAUL'S ARMOR-BEARER (1 Sam. 31:5, 6) refused to kill Saul as Saul had commanded. After Saul killed himself, the armor-bearer also decided that living was worse than dying, since he was responsible for the king.

4. ZIMRI (1 Kgs. 16:18) was tormented by the consequences of having committed a murder while drunk (he murdered the king and took his throne). When retribution was squeezing in on him he burned his house down on himself, thinking only of this life.

5. ABIMELECH (Judg.9:51-55) slaughtered his way to his father's (Gideon's) throne. An insurrection broke out and he fled in defeat. He was severely wounded by a stone dropped from a wall by a woman. He ordered his armor-bearer to thrust him through lest it be said to his shame that he was killed by a woman. While the armor-bearer did the actual killing (possibly because Abimelech was unable), for all practical purposes it still classifies as suicide.

6. SAMSON (Judg. 16:30f) whose weakness of heart with a contriving woman was more astonishing than the strength of his body, through vengeance, took his own life by pulling the house down that the Philistines might be killed. It is difficult to say which is worse: Abimelech's chauvinism (he didn't want it said he was killed by a woman) or Samson's henpeckedness (he was allowing Delilah to literally nag him to death) (Judg.16:16).

(Samson's case may be debatable if viewed as being killed in battle. Suicide is defined as "the act of killing oneself intentionally.")

7. JUDAS ISCARIOT (Mt. 27:4,5; Acts 1:18). Sickened by his betrayal of innocent blood, the consequences of wrong doing were more than he could take. With no apparent thought of the hereafter he did what "he felt was right to do deep inside." But was it right or wrong? Jesus said it would have been better if he had not been born (Mt.26:24). That doesn't sound like it was all right. Forgiveness could

have been extended even to Judas if he had truly sought it and he could have gone on living.

Murder (which includes self murder) is wrong (Mt. 19:18; Rom. 13:9). Besides, some have committed adultery, stolen, lied, and murdered while drunk. Are they not responsible for getting themselves into that condition? It so happens that the majority of suicides are connected with alcohol and drugs. We must be careful about making exceptions where God made none.

Why People Commit Suicide

Some reasons people commit suicide are: 1) **They do not believe in a hereafter.** Since they have had some unpleasant experiences in life (financial problems, broken romances, etc.) they convince themselves that dying is better than living. While we do not agree with the premise, once granted, a person may arrive at suicide logically. Of the Bible cases of suicide, there is no evidence that any of them gave a thought to the hereafter. 2) **Because they think it is heroic.** This was Abimelech's reason. They are concerned about being remembered in history as martyrs for a cause. But there is a vast difference in martyrdom and suicide. 3) **Because they will not accept responsibility.** There is much emphasis today on being "free" — liberated. No one wants to be "tied down." Some are so obsessed with being "liberated" that they will choose suicide rather than the alternative of accepting responsibility. 4) **Because of anxieties over the cares of this world.** When the stock market crashes their world crashes too. They are wrapped up in "things." But "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15). 5) **Because they want to be united with a dead loved one.** This writer knew a lady who contemplated suicide because her husband had died. She needed to be reminded that she might not go where her loved one went. A person may talk himself into suicide the same way he may talk himself into adultery, theft, lying, etc. Self-control is a forgotten virtue (2 Pet. 1:6), It doesn't come in a bottle or a pill. There is no substitute for it (1 Cor. 9:25-27). 6) **Some are deceived by false teachers.** They are led to believe that suicide is not sinful or some other false doctrine, such as number one in this list. (A future article will deal with the Jonestown massacre).

What About Insanity?

Some always want to excuse suicide on the basis of insanity. If that be so, then everyone should do it and all would be okay — a sure ticket to salvation. Of course there may be cases beyond the knowledge of the living. No one knows another man's mind (1 Cor. 2:11). This writer does not know whether every person is sane or guilty. But one can arrive at the conclusion that he should self-destruct without being insane (Judas, Ahithophel, etc.). No one should want to take the chance that he can plead insanity before the judgment bar of God. God will not be mistaken in His judgments? He knows the hearts of all men (Acts 1:24).

There is some significance to the fact that of the Bible cases of suicide, none could be called faithful children of God. And in each case it was sin that led to their predicament. There is no reason why the

faithful child of God should want to commit suicide. There may be many reasons why the faithless person who does not have peace with God and with himself would want to take his life.

That "Near Case" Of Suicide

The solution to suicide lies with the case where a man was talked out of it — the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). Why was the jailer convinced not to self-destruct? CHRISTIANITY! Notice the events surrounding his "near" suicide. 1) Paul and Silas had been beaten, imprisoned, and put in stocks unjustly. Would the jailer expect prisoners to be singing as a result of such treatment? Rather than "gloom, despair, and agony on me" they were singing hymns of praise to God. A remembrance of this could have had a telling effect on the jailer. It was abnormal behavior for the circumstances. 2) Paul and Silas were honest in not escaping when the earthquake came. For criminals, that also is abnormal behavior. Let a similar thing happen today and see how many prisoners escape. 3) They saved his life though he represented the government responsible for their unjust treatment. Conversely, many escapees have taken the lives of jailers, wardens or anyone who got in their way of escape. 4) They had a forgiving attitude, whereas some prisoners vow and declare to kill anyone connected with their imprisonment. All of this was abnormal to his way of loving and thinking. I do not imply that he already knew the gospel. He did not. But with these events flashing before him, he had seen enough Christianity in action to change his mind. He wanted what they had. He raised the most important question a man can raise.

They told him to believe (v.31). They then told him **what** to believe (v. 32). Upon hearing **what** to believe he and his family were baptized immediately (v.33). Since they had been through an earthquake, a near suicide, it was after midnight, the wounds of Paul and Silas needed attention, they had to go elsewhere for the baptizing (plus other possible inconveniences), they must have believed that obedience was absolutely necessary to complete saving faith. The candid reader must be overwhelmed with that conclusion. It couldn't even wait til morning! This writer has participated in and known of some inconvenient baptisms, but in all of his life he has never known of one at any time or place that was more inconvenient than the jailer's.

Why the sudden change in the jailer's attitude? Because Christ can make life worth living. What lesson is there for Christians? We need to be in the suicide prevention business!

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SCRIPTURES MAKE DEPRAVITY IMPOSSIBLE

When one listens to what Calvinists teach concerning the doctrine of total depravity, several passages of Scripture come to mind that if true, would make depravity impossible. It is an "either-or" proposition; either the Scriptures are true and depravity is not taught therein, or depravity is true and the Scriptures are false. I will stand with the Scriptures. Notice some passages that show depravity is not taught in the Scriptures.

(1) Ezek. 18:4 says "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" and verse 20 says "the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Also, observe that verse 21 says "if the wicked will turn from all his sins." Ezekiel 18 shows that one commits sin, not that one inherits sin.

(£) Eccl. 12:7 says "the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it." God gave man his spirit; did God give him a depraved one?

(3) Heb. 12:7-9 says, in part, "shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" God is said to be the Father of our spirits. If man is born depraved, thus a depraved spirit, then God is depraved for "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Since God is Spirit (John 4:24) and Spirit does not have "flesh and bone" (Lk. 24:39), man is not made physically in God's image. Since man is made in God's image, with God not being depraved, man is not born with a depraved spirit. Like always produces like. A pure spirit produces a pure spirit; a depraved spirit would produce a depraved spirit. God, a pure Spirit, made man a pure spirit.

(4) 2 Tim. 3:13 says "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." If man is born depraved or evil, how can he become "worse and worse?" The fact that men can become "worse and worse" shows that men are not born as bad as they can become. They can become "worse" after birth, thus, not born depraved.

(5) Matt. 1:21 tells us "and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Observe his people had their sins. From their sins they needed salvation. They did not have Adam's sin and did not need salvation from it.

(6) Acts 3:19. Peter told these to "repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out . . ." Repentance and conversion would blot out their sins; not the sin of Adam.

(7) 1 Cor. 15:17. Paul said, among other things, that if Christ was not risen from the dead the Corinthians were "yet in your (their) sins." If Christ had not been raised, they were not in both their sins and also Adam's sin. They were only in their sins.

(8) Col. 2:13. Paul said the Colossians were "dead in your (their) sins." They were not dead or separated from God in Adam's sin or in their sins and Adam's sin. All the sin that involved their being "dead" or separated from God was their sin.

(9) Matt. 18:3. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If children are born in sin, then Jesus is saying that to become a citizen in the kingdom of heaven one must become a depraved sinner. Since children are born free from sin, having never sinned, Jesus is saying one must be converted, become free from sin in order to enter the kingdom. When people obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to them, then they are "made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17-18).

With men in the church teaching that man is depraved by nature, how long will it be until they consistently follow Calvin's teaching and advocate "that the Holy Spirit must do an additional work to that of the written or spoken word for him to be saved?"

If any Calvinist reading these articles has the courage to affirm "The Scriptures teach that man is depraved by nature and is born in sin" I will be glad to deny such in an honorable discussion negotiated upon an equitable basis.

Special Issue

August, 1979

The War Against the Works of the Flesh

A 32 page special edition with the following subjects and writers:

The Flesh versus the Spirit - Connie W. Adams
Fornication - H. E. Phillips
Uncleanness - Julian R. Snell
Lasciviousness - Dee Bowman
Idolatry and Witchcraft - Tom O'Neal
Hatred and Varlance - J. T. Smith
Emulations - J. Wiley Adams
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Strife, Seditions and Heresies - Eugene Britnell
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About Our Special Issue

For several years, we have presented a special issue every summer on some needed theme. These have been well received and widely used.

This year, we are waging war against the Works

of the Flesh. Many Christians are being engulfed in these soul-destroying works. We need all the help we can get in understanding what they are, the fearful consequences of them, and how we can avoid them. We encourage brethren to order enough for every family.

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

NEW CONGREGATION IN ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA

BILL J. JAMES, 175 Van Dora St., Grenada, MS 38901 — There is a new congregation meeting in Alexandria, Louisiana. Their address is 819 Fisk St. They are meeting in a rented house. England AFB is but a few miles from Alexandria. If the reader knows of anyone living in Alexandria or in the surrounding community, please contact Mike McCarry. His phone number is 318-466-3283.

DON GIVENS, Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada — This plea is unsolicited, and on behalf of another evangelist who is working full time in western Canada. I have always heard that there are very, very few conservative preachers willing to go "overseas" to preach the gospel, but that there is plenty of support available for the few willing to take up roots and go. Well, Canada is not "overseas," but it is "over-borders." William Spaun has been working for 2 and 1/2 years in British Columbia, and for the past 8 months has been some \$400 per month short of total support. He gave up a good secular job in Seattle (at \$1500 per month salary) to preach full time. He is asking \$1200 per month in Canada where the cost of living is 30% HIGHER than in the U.S.A. He has written dozens and dozens of letters and always the answer is "sorry." Can any church or even individuals help keep this evangelist in B.C. where he is the only other conservative preacher (besides Don Givens)? Contact him directly at P.O. Box 192, Haney, B.C. or phone 604-467-2735. Can you help him monthly, or even with a one-time sum? **He will be happy to answer any questions you have.**

WILLIAM C. SEXTON, 2219 South Glenn, Wichita, Kansas 67213 — I have been asked to move to work with the small group of Christians in Manhattan, Kansas. I have committed myself to begin work with them June 1, 1979, providing I can raise adequate support. I must raise \$800 a month of outside support in order to work with them. At this time (March 15) I am \$440 short. If adequate support cannot be raised by June 1, I will have to choose to go elsewhere. I hope the help will be forthcoming.

Manhattan, with its surrounding areas (including K-State student body, Junction City, Fort Riley) has over 100,000 people. There is one sound church more than 50 miles away, in Topeka, and I don't know of

another to the west until the Colorado line. To the north there is not another one until Beatrice, Nebraska, and southward in Eldorado and Wichita, more than 100 miles away. I am asking for two things: (1) Anyone who has funds they are willing to use to help in this work to contact me at the above address or call 316-943-3332; (2) Anyone coming to Kansas State, Ft. Riley, Junction City or the Manhattan area to contact me or Gay Dial, 204 Tremount, Junction City, KS 66441 (913-238-2040); or Tom Dickerson, 115 E. J. Frick Dr., Manhattan, KS 66502 (913-776-6704). If you have relatives in the area now or those moving there, please send us their names and addresses and send them ours, so we might make contact.

Presently, the congregation meets in a private home, as it has from the beginning. Efforts are being made to find a public place. Please pray for us that we may do the will of God, effectively reaching others with the saving message of Christ (Rom 1:14-17). Visit us when traveling through the area.

RON RICHARDSON, Tulare, California — I am writing this letter on behalf of my brother in Christ and brother-in-law, Phil Arnold. In February of this year he and his family moved to Tulare, California to work with the newly formed congregation there. We are the only conservative work along Hwy 90 from Selma to Bakersfield. We are not able to provide full support for brother Arnold at this time. He is receiving some support from other areas but it is not adequate. Anyone who is familiar with Phil knows of his excellent abilities to preach the gospel. Any congregations or individuals interested please contact me at P.O. Box 23, Pixley, California 93256 or phone 209-757-3948.

CHARLES W. WALLER, Rt. 1, Box 32, Darien, Wisconsin 53114 — On March 11 a new congregation began in the Beloit-Janesville area of southern Wisconsin. At present there are three families involved but last Lord's Day we had seven visitors and are excited about the possibilities in this area. We need to find a man to come and work full time with us to spread the gospel in southern Wisconsin. Congregations are few and far between in this state, but the possibilities are unlimited. We are not concerned about the man's age or the number of his children. We do insist that he be solidly grounded in the Word, enthusiastic and energetic and willing to

do a lot of hard work. Anyone interested may contact me at the above address or phone me at 414-724-5140.

HISTORY OF THE WINCHESTER, KENTUCKY CHURCH

PAUL R. JOHNSON, Box 249, Winchester, KY 40391 — In January, 1975, 13 members from the University Heights church in Lexington, Kentucky and three members from the Liberty Road church, also in Lexington, started a Bible class in the old Hotel building in Winchester, Kentucky. Bob Crawley of the University Heights church was the teacher of the class. From this beginning they moved to a college building in Winchester, and from there to the Clark County Board of Education building, where they continued to meet until April of 1978.

At this time Gene McMurray and Ralph Fox, two elders from University Heights, along with Bob Crawley, met with those attending the Bible class to discuss establishing a congregation in Winchester. In this meeting it was agreed that the University Heights church would support Paul R. Johnson for two years to work in the Clark County area and establish a congregation in Winchester. Those attending the meeting accepted their offer.

The writer began working with the brethren on April 15, 1978. Their first assembly as a congregation was on Sunday, April 30, 1978 at the Clark County Board of Education auditorium. There were 30 who banded together to form the new congregation. They continued to meet there until January 1, 1979 when the congregation moved to 7 N. Bloomfield Road in Winchester. We have a one year lease on the present facility with the possibility of an extension at the end of the lease.

There have been three restorations, two baptisms and six to identify as members with us. Our present membership is 39. Our attendance averages between 50-55 each Sunday morning. Our contribution averages about \$275.00 per week. We have a weekly newspaper article and a "call-in" radio program over WKDJ at 100 FM on Saturday mornings entitled "What's Your Bible Question?" Visit with us when you are in the area.

LECTURE PROGRAM IN MT PLEASANT, TEXAS

LEON GOFF, preacher of the Southside church in Mt. Pleasant, Texas announces a lecture program June 17-21 on "Morals and the Bible." There will be singing each night at 7:30 led by R. J. Stevens of El Cajon, California. On June 17 at 10:30 A.M. R. J. Stevens will speak on "Is There a Moral Standard?" At 8 P.M. Dee Bowman will speak on "Human Philosophy and Morals." On June 18 at 8 P.M. Roy E. Cogdill will speak on "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage." On June 19 at 9:30 A.M. Leon Odom will speak on "Homosexuality." At 10:25 A.M. Dee Bowman will speak on "Abortion." At 11:20 A.M. Roy E. Cogdill will speak on "Pre-Marital Sex and Cohabitation Without Marriage." At 8 P.M. A. W. Goff will speak on "Attitudes Towards Morals." On June 20 at 9:30 A.M. Roy E. Cogdill will speak on "Modern Views on Divorce and Remarriage." At

10:25 A.M., R. J. Stevens will speak on "Pornography." At 11:20 A.M., A. W. Goff will speak on "Dancing." At 8 P.M., Leon Odom will speak on "The Home As God Would Have It." On Thursday, June 21 at 9:30 A.M., A. W. Goff will speak on "Immodesty in Dress." At 10:25 A.M., Roy E. Cogdill will speak on "Church Discipline and Morals." At 11:20 A.M., Leon Odom will speak on "Alcohol and Drugs." At 8 P.M. Dee Bowman will close the series speaking on "Women's Liberation Movement and Its Influence on the Church."

As space allows housing will be provided for visitors. Those wishing to make inquiry may call Leon Goff at 214-572-7521.

PREACHERS NEEDED

ALACHUA, FLORIDA—RALPH P. AUTRY, Box 112 A, Alachua, FL 32615 — After three pleasant years with the Santa Fe Hills church we will be returning the last week of June to our home in Dickson, Tennessee to work with one of the area churches. The church here desires a preacher to take up the work with them July 1. This is a good work. Absolute peace and harmony prevail. Able men and women assist in the work. Salary will be negotiable. Those interested may write the church at P.O. Box 866, High Springs, FL, 32643, or call 904-462-2236, or 904-454-1981.

EVENING SHADE, ARKANSAS — The church meeting at the corner of Main Street and Old Hwy #11 is in need of a full time preacher. Gospel preachers interested may write Audy Stovall, Gen. Del., Evening Shade, Arkansas 72532, or call Curtis Royal 501-266-3420, or Shelton McFarlin 501-283-5896.

NEWARK, OHIO — The congregation meeting at 357 Buckingham Street in Newark is wanting to hear from any preacher who would be willing to devote full time to the work in this area. This congregation is about 5 years old and has grown from 19 to the present average of around 50. A meeting house was purchased in 1978. The church is active in personal work and wants a man to work WITH them, not FOR them. Partial support can be supplied. If interested call Nelson Williams 614-892-2501, or Steve Hays 614-345-7079.

PREACHER AVAILABLE

WALTER J. SCHREINER, 195 Moull Street, Newark, Ohio 43055 — I began work with the good congregation in Newark, Ohio in July, 1974. This July I will have worked with them for five years. The work here has grown from 19 to around 50 and now has a meeting place of its own. I feel we could both profit by a change even though, personally, I consider this the finest congregation I have ever worked with. I will be available to work elsewhere August 1, 1979 and would be glad to talk with any congregation interested and in need of a full time preacher. My phone number is 614-366-5262.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	580
RESTORATIONS	86

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)