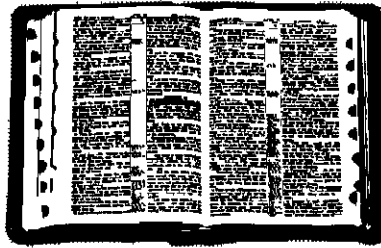


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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.

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VOLUME XXIII

APRIL, 1982

NUMBER 4

THINK ON
THESE THINGS

W. E. Phillips

P.O. Box 17244
Tampa, Florida 33612



THY SPEECH BETRAYETH THEE

One morning a few months ago, a middle-aged man knocked at my door. When I opened the door he politely bowed and quickly introduced himself as a "member of the church of Christ" in a certain northern town. He informed me of his terrible predicament. He looked the part he was portraying—a helpless, poor, neglected and destitute man who had no family or friends on earth. Before he had finished his story he had told me three times he was a "member of the church of Christ" and on one occasion that he was a "faithful member" back home. I did not favor him with the help requested because I knew he lied about being a member of the church of my Lord, and about some of the other things, probably.

You may inquire, How do you know he was lying about being a member of the church of Christ? I answer, Because he used strange language that showed a complete lack of Bible knowledge. Any man or woman must have more knowledge of the Bible than he had before he or she could become a Christian. He used these expressions frequently: "Reverend," "your denomination," "I used to sing in the choir," "I was christened when a child," and "when I got religion." Christians who have been "faithful" in the "church of Christ" as long as he said he had been a member would know better than to call a gospel preacher—or anyone else for that matter—a "Reverend." A Christian would know that the Lord's church is in no sense "a denomination," and that "christening" does not have any place in New Testament practice.

When I informed that man of his mistakes in

language his reactions further indicated that he was lying about being a Christian. At first he turned red in the face and began to accuse me of not wanting to help poor people. He then tried to correct his mistakes by completely reversing his story and telling me that he wanted to "test me" to see if I was really a gospel preacher. Needless to say, he soon left without my aid. When one will lie about his religious life for the sake of money he has something to hide that makes him unworthy of anybody's help.

Now what is the principle to be learned in this experience? We must learn how to use language that will indicate what we really are—Christians. Peter said "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Again, "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).

We are coining phrases every day in expressing a Christian's activity and relationship that are nearly as wrong as the language of the man just referred to. We are calling the meeting house the "church" with such regularity that our children think that is really the church. We talk about "church" weddings, "church" funerals, "church" picnics, "church" showers, etc. We talk about the preacher in a way that he becomes the HEAD of the local congregation. "Our preacher said," "our preacher does," "our preacher approves," etc. Then we talk about "the church of Christ doctrine," "the church of Christ preacher," "the church of Christ people," etc. This is not Bible language, and does not display the knowledge of God's word that we should have.

We are involved with organizations that call for terms unheard of in the word of God. "Captains," "chairman," "superintendent," "circles," (Yes, we have a few of them), "committees," "youth clubs," etc. What place do these terms have in the simple organization of the Lord's church?

We talk about "mission points," "brotherhood work," "sponsoring agency," "central point," etc. These are not scriptural terms. We are either practicing something that we ought not to practice, or we are calling a thing something that it ought not to be called. Let us speak as the Word speaks and we will stay on the right track and speak in right language. (SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES, February, 1960)

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Editorial

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THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (Gal. 1:11). In this statement, Paul placed the gospel he preached in contrast to the perverted gospel which some had brought to the churches of Galatia (Verse 7). He further showed that perverted gospels were appeals to men rather than to God and that those who preached such perversions negated their claim to be the servants of Christ (verse 10). In these declarations, Paul gave his assurance that his gospel was genuine. He had received it by divine revelations. The further context of Galatians 1 shows that he did not confer with those chosen to be apostles before him in order to determine what he ought to believe and preach. After his conversion he went away into Arabia. Even when he did meet with the apostles later in his service to Christ, they "added nothing" to him. He received his gospel by divine revelation even as the others.

We long for certainty in a world darkened by doubt. We do not want to eat meat or drink milk unless we know it has met the standards of purity set by those who regulate such matters. When I get on a jet plane I want to have someone at the controls who has been "certified." When I go to the office of a Doctor whom I have not seen before, I always read his diplomas and certificates displayed on the wall. You see, I want certified meat, milk, pilots and Doctors.

Is it not strange that in a world where so many demand certification about so many things, there are so few who want certification when it comes to the realm of the spirit? Some do not even think there are recognizable standards by which spiritual truth can be verified. Luke wanted Theophilus to "know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:4). It was that certainty which prompted him to speak of "those things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1). But how can we know the certainty of the gospel claims? Have we been gullible? Are we without sufficient evidence to certify it? Consider now the following three lines of evidence by which gospel truth is verified.

Certified by Miracles

The whole gospel system rests on the truth or falsity of the claims of Jesus that he was divine. Were these claims empty boastings, or were there mighty powers performed by him which could only be attributed to Deity?

Consider first the reported miracles of Christ. There were three words which were often used together to discuss both the miracles of Christ and, later, those of his apostles. These were "miracles," "wonders," and "signs" (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12). The word "miracles" referred to mighty deeds and indicated the source of what was done. The might, or power, which stood behind the deed was not human but divine. The second word, "wonders," described the effect such deeds had on the witnesses. They were filled with awe and amazement. The third word, "signs," established the purpose of that which was done. These deeds were divine portents, or evidences of Deity acting in the presence of humanity to convince humanity of the fact of divine intervention.

In the four gospel records there are some 38 miracles of Jesus reported. In the gospel of John there are only seven of these reported, each falling into a different category and demonstrating mighty power in each of these areas. John summarized his purpose in this selection when he said "And many other signs truly did Jesus in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," (Jno. 20:30-31). How do you explain turning water into wine, feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, walking on water, healing the sick, casting out demons, calming a storm by speaking to it, or raising the dead? These were "miracles," mighty deeds which could not be attributed to human resources. Peter said that it was by these that Jesus of Nazareth was "a man approved of God among you" (Acts 2:22).

Then we must consider the mighty deeds wrought by the apostles of Christ. They were his chosen ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Not only were they officially sent, commissioned by the power sending them, but their testimony was certified by "miracles," "wonders," and "signs." These were their credentials or badges of authority. Jesus promised them that as they went abroad to baptize believers, that "these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15-18). What he promised them, he fulfilled. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following, Amen" (Mk. 16:19-20). The Hebrew writer said "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). Paul identified such performances as "the signs of an apostle" and says they were wrought at Corinth "in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. 12:12). Paul's gospel (the certified gospel) at Thessalonica came "not . . . in word only, but also in power" (1 Thes. 1:5). His gospel came in word, for the gospel cannot be preached without word. But it was not the word devoid of the necessary divine credentials

to undergird the certainty of what was said. There can be no doubt that the same "signs of an apostle" which were wrought later at Corinth, were in evidence here in Thessalonica as well.

Paul and Barnabas appealed to the same line of evidence at Jerusalem to argue that their work of gospel preaching among Gentiles was approved by God for they were "declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (Acts 15:12). By such astounding evidences both the ministry of Jesus and that of his apostles were certified.

Certified by Eyewitnesses

The preceding claims do not rest upon the folk tales and legends handed down from mouth to ear nor upon the shifting sand of human credulity. They were "eyewitnesses of his majesty." Peter declared "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18). Peter, James and John were all present and were eye and ear witnesses to the things reported.

To this we add the words of another witness, John. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you..." (1 Jno, 1:1-3).

Every alleged fact of history rests upon four criteria: (1) That reported was done in the past; (2) It was visible so that witnesses could attest to it; (3) There was some marker, record or monument left to memorialize it; and (4) That marker, record or monument must have continued from the time of the reported event until the present. If there is any alleged fact of history which does not rely upon these evidences, I do not know what it would be. Yet, by the same criteria we certify the claims of Christ upon which the gospel rests. We are called upon to believe the certainty of events long past. These events were visible so that they could be reported by witnesses. When Paul stood before Agrippa to speak of "these things" he appealed to the fact that Agrippa himself was not ignorant of these events, for said he "this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). Touching the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Paul recounted the list of witnesses and said "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain (my emphasis, CWA) unto this present, but some are fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:6). There are at least three markers, records or monuments which keep alive the memory of that done in the past which was seen of witnesses. There is the testimony of the indestructible word of God. It survives every attack

with a tenacity which cannot be explained short of divine providence. Then there is the monument of the Lord's Supper. This simple memorial observance takes place every first day of the week the world around and "show(s) forth" his death (1 Cor. 11:26). It is a living marker. Then there is the act of baptism which, when performed, memorializes the fact that Jesus died, was buried and arose the third day. The sinner who submits in faithful obedience to this command of God passes through the form or mold of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It is a living marker. Until the skeptic is willing to discard these criteria upon which he accepts the facts of history, then he would do well not to expose his arrogance and inconsistency in discarding the claims of Jesus and the gospel which rest upon the same kind of evidence.

Certified by Fulfilled Prophecy

After stating that he and others were eyewitnesses of his majesty, Peter said "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Prophecy was that ray of light which illuminated the Old Testament period (the dark place of this passage) until such time as the day should dawn, the time of the fulfillment of that prophesied, and the day star should appear in the person of Christ to be the ruler of this era of divine light and truth. How could the prophets foretell events in minute detail which were to come to pass far beyond the reach of their own time and ability to influence the outcome? There are 332 prophecies in the Old Testament which had to do with the Messiah and his kingdom. With the appearance of the "day star" these began to unfold with exactness and precision. Were they unusually perceptive psychics able to accurately foretell events hundreds of years after their own time? No, my friends, they were "moved" (impelled, borne along, driven) by the Holy Spirit. "This is that" spoken by Joel, Amos, Isaiah or whichever of the prophets, came with a certainty that challenged every other explanation while, at the same time, guaranteeing the certainty of those things most surely believed among us.

In this age of theological guess work and blatant attacks upon the faith once delivered to the saints by moral reprobates and cynical skeptics which question every major premise of the gospel system, it is high time that we stand on the promises and with assurance state our case for the certified gospel. No other spiritual nourishment is acceptable. Any other has the anathema of God upon it and terminates in everlasting ruin. There is also a warning here for those who cling to the certified gospel to be sure what we teach and practice can be located in that gospel which was certified by miracles, eyewitnesses and fulfilled prophecy.

**Florida College
Names
New President**



S. O. Ward, Chairman of the Board of Directors, announced January 29 that Bob F. Owen had been selected by the Board to become the College's third President. Mr. Owen will assume his duties following the retirement of James R. Cope, July 1 this year.

In presenting Mr. Owen as the new President-elect to a specially called assembly of the administration, faculty and staff, Mr. Ward called attention to Bob Owen's 30 years of dedicated service to Florida College. He further observed that the Board of Directors was placing its full support behind him.

Mr. Ward stated that the 33 years of service by President James R. Cope to the College had brought it to its present strong position and that it stands debt-free in the midst of its greatest development period. He expressed his confidence, and that of the Board, that Mr. Owen can continue to build upon the foundation laid by the present administration.

President Cope also expressed his feelings that Mr. Owen's involvement in administrative experience for 26 years serves as an excellent stepping stone to the chief executive's office.

In accepting the appointment, Mr. Owen committed to put aside all outside interests, except church and home, that were not directly related to his work as President, in order to devote himself totally to the ongoing of Florida College. He assured the administration, faculty and staff that he wanted to continue with the present team and asked for their help and prayers as he moved into the new role.

Mr. Owen was born July 30, 1929, in Memphis, Tennessee, to the late Scott Owen and Nell (Forbess) Owen. He has one brother, H. Scott Owen, who also is a gospel preacher.

He is married to Janelle (Boswell) of Lakeland, Florida, and they have one son, Daniel Scott, who also preaches, and one daughter, "Jeni" (Roberts).

Mr. Owen attended Freed-Hardeman College the last two years that President Cope was an instructor there, followed him to Florida college, and was here for Cope's first year as President. He received his B. A. degree from Abilene Christian College and his M. A. from the University of Florida, returning to work with Florida College in September, 1952. He has served as instructor in Bible and speech from that time until the present. From 1956 through May, 1968, he was Dean of Students, then Business Manager for four years,

and has served as Administrative Assistant for Finance since 1972.

Mr. Owen has been very active in community and civic affairs. He is an active member of the Chamber of Commerce in the City of Temple Terrace. He was the Charter President of the Temple Terrace Civitan Club, became a member of the Tampa North Rotary Club in 1970, and served as its President in 1979. During the past 13 years, Mr. Owen has served as a member of the Temple Terrace City Council and served as Vice-Mayor for seven years. For the last several years he has served on the Council of Governments which has placed him in direct association with officials of the surrounding governments. He has a broad base of public and community friends and associates.

Bob Owen is well known among brethren. His meeting work has taken him into most states except those of the far west. He has engaged in regular preaching since his college days and for the last 18 years has preached in Largo, Florida, and presently broadcasts a weekly radio program.

The Board of Directors expresses its confidence that the experience and ability possessed by Mr. Owen will continue to assure the patrons and supporters of Florida College that the children enrolled here will be able to enjoy excellent moral training, Biblical instruction, and secular education.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We extend our congratulations to brother Owen and wish for him great success in leading the administration of FLORIDA COLLEGE. In a future issue of this paper we will comment on the service rendered by James R. Cope, the role the college fills and say more about hopes for the future.)

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I'M TIRED!

Do you ever get to the point where you just have to "blow off some steam"? I do. I am at that point right now. Do you mind if I just sit down right here for a minute? Thanks. I just want you to know, first of all, that I love people. And especially my brethren. And I don't mean any harm to anybody. And I don't think everything and everybody is "going to the dogs," either. And furthermore, I don't profess to know everything. In fact, I know less this year than I did last and it seems the older I get the less answers I have for life's questions. Fact is, I don't even know that I understand the questions! And I am by no means a pessimist. But I get tired nonetheless. Could I just take a few minutes of your time and illustrate? Thanks.

I am tired of people who have no respect for authority. I see people run stop signs, red lights, race through school zones, cheat at things, steal fruit at the store, and all of it as if laws were merely suggestions. And religious authority I guess went out when the "new morality" came in. Even my own brethren don't respect it and are heard to say, "we don't have to have authority for everything we do." I picked up a bulletin from a Houston church a few weeks ago which advertised a "Winter Festival" (\$10.50 per ticket); a golf tournament for the members; a blood drive; and several other things for which one would search in vain for a passage for God's approval. Brethren, I'm tired of churches calling themselves churches of Christ and calling for a "thus saith the Lord" and then doing whatever they want! What about II Jno 9? Doesn't it mean anything? And I Pet. 4:11? And Gal. 1:6-ff?

I'm tired of people who excuse things. Things like homosexuality (Rom. 1:28-ff). Folks excuse it as an acceptable "alternate life style" as if that's all that's needed for the approval of God. And drunkenness? well, that's excused as "just a sickness." And I'm tired of people excusing lying in business by saying that it's just a part of today's commerce and trade. And I'm tired of people losing their temper and then excusing it by saying, "I'm only human." Folks, lying is sinful (Rev. 21:8). So is drunkenness (Gal. 5:21). To lose control of yourself is wrong (Rom. 12:21). Forgiveness is God's prerogative and we do a sloppy job of self-justification.

I'm tired of laziness. Of people who won't work. And it's not a matter of their being unable to work. It's a

matter of they don't want to! And they are not all on welfare rolls. Some of them have jobs and still don't work. Or if they do, they do just enough to barely get along. And sloppy workmanship is commonplace today. It used to be that "Made in U.S.A." meant quality and "Made in Japan" meant a poor copy. No longer! How sad that we have lost the pride of workmanship it takes to do a good job. God expects it (Eccl. 9:10; II Thess. 3:10; Eph. 6:5-6;), you know.

I'm tired of dirty language. It's everywhere—at the dime store, on the news, in the magazines, at the cleaners, the bank, the post office. And all ages do it. I heard enough filth explode from the mouth of a little boy about six years old a while back to do me from now on. And women do it. Boy, do women do it! A lady in her late twenties was seated with several men at the table next to me at the coffee shop the other day. The only difference between her filthy language and that of her male companions was the pitch of her voice! I don't know how I must have looked, but I thought I saw my donut blush!

And I'm tired of fussing and fighting. Of people who "know" other people's motives, who equate soundness with disagreement. It seems to me that we are going to have enough trouble while trying not to! And yet some seemingly think that the only way the work of the Lord progresses is by controversy. Now I guess some folks are already saying I'm soft. But I just believe the work of the Lord is superior to our trivial personality differences and our semantical syndromes. Yes, I know we are to oppose false teachers and expose their doctrines, but some of the time what is passed off as fulfilling these obligations is merely personality pride. Instead of looking for trouble, we should "seek peace and ensue it." And has it never occurred to some of us that we can "earnestly contend for the faith" and still be kind?

I feel better already. Thanks for letting me get that off my chest. Maybe next time I'll listen to you, ok?

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GLEANINGS

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F. B. Srygley was a contemporary of David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, F. W. Smith, M. C. Kurfess, T. B. Larimore, J. C. McQuiddy, and many other stalwarts of two generations ago. F. D. Srygley (Filo B.'s brother) was thought by many to have been a better scribe than the younger brother. F. D. Srygley had died about the turn of the century. I do not recall having ever personally met F. B. Srygley, though I saw him once or twice. He was a watchman for trends among churches with reference both to organization and doctrine and never hesitated to use his pen to call attention to tendencies and trends away from the New Testament pattern. The article below reflects his thinking in the Gospel Advocate of July 4, 1935.

INDIVIDUAL WORK IN THE CHURCH

F.B. Srygley

Most of the work Christians are commanded to do is individual work. There is no organization in the church through which very much can be done, except to meet together to teach and be taught and to worship God. The disciples came together upon the first day of the week to break bread, and Paul preached unto them.

The New Testament has no organization through which its members can work except the local congregation. Of course, much of the work of a Christian is, and of a right ought to be, individual work. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction is pure, practical religion, and can be, and should be, done by individual Christians. Congregations are made up of individuals, and the whole congregation is benefited by the work of its members.

There is little for the congregation to do as a congregation except to congregate and worship God. The greatest power in the congregation is the power and work of its members, even when they are not congregated. The spirituality of a church consists of the spirituality of its members.

Institutions are established with the expectation of their support by the churches, without any offer of control, unless it be by remote control. Large churches are sometimes advocated, I fear, to give some one or something control over the church when the contribution is accessible. The number of Christians composing a local church is not given in the New Testament, except in the language of Christ when he said; "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:

20.) This passage does not teach how many may be gathered together, but it does teach how few can do it with his approval.

It seems that in small congregations the work of the congregation as a whole can better be thrown on the individual than it can in larger churches. The closer the individual Christian can be brought to the public worship the better for the membership as a whole. What is called the organization of the church, if there is such a thing, is exceedingly simple. The New Testament does not use the word "organize" in connection with the planting of the truth in any locality. The church in the New Testament is represented as a building, but not as an organization. Individual responsibility to God is one thing that is emphasized in the New Testament. Too many people are trying to save others by controlling them rather than by teaching them the gospel and allowing them to be controlled by it. We are servants, even bond servants, to Christ; but we are free men, as far as man is concerned. "We shall be delivered from bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "For why is my liberty judged of another?" On the question of liberty the apostle gives a caution that should not be overlooked: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak."



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SPECIAL FEATURE

INSTITUTIONALISM: THE GROWTH YEARS

James L. Yopp
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During the period immediately following World War II, the returning soldiers who were members of the church of Christ brought back to the states a concern for the spiritual needs of humanity. As they viewed the teeming millions of lost souls scattered throughout Europe and Asia, they were moved by their condition and longed to do something for their spiritual well-being.

The ravages of war were also being felt in a physical way. People without homes, without sufficient food, and lacking necessary clothing provoked the compassion of the soldier as he viewed their destitute condition. He felt, and would lead many others in the states to so feel, that something must be done.

The reactions to the pleas of those who viewed the horrors associated with war and the need for the gospel in other places were not immediate. It takes time to formulate and execute programs to satisfy the apparent needs of those living beyond our border. The effect of seeing the needs of foreigners also provoked new efforts within our own country. As brethren started thinking in terms of relieving needs, their sensitivities grew and they began to do more and more toward helping others. An example: In 1950, there were 10 orphanages operated by churches of Christ; between 1950 and 1960, 17 more were established. From a single institution founded in 1909 (Tennessee Orphan Home), the growth rate accelerated after the war.

The social consciousness that took root encouraged the brethren to give attention to meeting the spiritual and/or social needs of others. Trying to evangelize Germany with food to raising the living conditions in the East with "Cows for Korea," programs sprang up during the twenty years following the war that would set the pace for the work being done today by many churches of Christ.

An additional social factor entered the picture when, in the early fifties, communications (radio and television) coupled with the mobility of the people to pave the way for large, cooperative efforts, as the Herald of Truth. The new and easily accessible means of communicating with others made it easy for ambitious men to sell their programs to an eager brotherhood.

With a deep concern for the needy, the easily gained knowledge of other churches (and their activities), and an ambitious breed of men who wanted to "do something," a shift in emphasis and direction for the church started to surface. But one cannot change direction until he changes his thinking. So the next step

became apparent: No longer was an appeal made to the Bible for authority to act, but rationalization, emotionalism, and humanitarianism took over. With cries of "you cannot teach a man when he is hungry" or "what could be wrong with attracting a person through some recreational or social program while teaching him the gospel?" the stage was set, the players were ready, and the audience would listen. What was only a trickle in 1950 would become a raging torrent by 1970.

Three Main Concerns

During the two decades following the war, three main concerns would surface among churches of Christ: Evangelism through cooperation, benevolence through cooperation, and an enlargement of work of the church beyond evangelization, edification, and benevolence.

Evangelization through cooperation. The most often used approach during this period, except for the local congregation, was the sponsoring church. In this arrangement, one church would take upon herself the oversight of preaching the gospel in a certain locality. This sponsoring church would oversee the preacher(s), solicit the funds for the work from other churches, and take a maternalistic pride in protecting her "territory." This type of arrangement was also utilized in certain works, for instance, in the Herald of Truth (national radio and television program), as assumed by the Highland Avenue church in Abilene, Texas in the early 50s (the program had originated in another state, but was transferred to the Highland elders).

Benevolence through cooperation. Institutions that care for the needy grew rapidly (orphanages, old folk's homes, etc.). These cooperative efforts were executed primarily through two types of organizations: A board of directors and local elderships. The board of director arrangements had most of its support east of the Mississippi and the eldership approach found its following primarily in Texas. Both arrangements served as a way for local churches to contribute their funds into a central treasury, activating something larger than the local church.

The work of the church was enlarged beyond evangelism, edification, and benevolence. The recreation craze took over churches. From the seemingly innocent "dinner on the ground," brethren rationalized into a full scale community organization where "fun, food, and frolic" could be found. Also, the church became a funding agency for certain enterprises (as colleges). (Note: Brethren had been doing many of these things, i.e., supporting schools and involving themselves as community action organizations, in other countries long before being proposed and practised on such a wide scale in the United States.)

The Emerging Voices

The emerging voices that would change the face of the church of Christ reflected a new mood. No longer content to stick with Book, chapter, and verse, their writings demonstrated a dependence upon human

reasoning that had not been used since the division that created the "Christian church." One of the publications, Questions and Issues of the Day (A reprint of three sermons preached by Batsell Barrett Baxter at Hillsboro church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, during November and December of 1963), was widely circulated during the period. Where some had only touched the surface, bro. Baxter would, under the guise of giving a scriptural answer, open the floodgates for even more apostasy. (Reference will be made to these sermons (tract) throughout the series).

With the growth of inter-congregational cooperatives, justification was sought for such efforts as the Herald of Truth, World Radio, Cows for Korea, etc. In order to sell the brethren, it would be necessary to destroy the belief in the independence of the local church. So, in his tract, Baxter said,

The very heart of Christianity is love which ties people together rather than separates them. The emphases of Christianity stand solidly in favor of removing barriers and walls of separation in favor of unity and oneness. Only because of geographical necessity were there separate congregations of the Lord's church. (Baxter, p. 7).

In this subtle statement, a seed is sown that would activate the universal church. There is nothing in the New Testament that indicates separate congregations existed because of distance. All that we know is that God made elders only elders in one church (Acts 20:28), and that any cooperative effort that places elders over the work of more than one church violates the pattern set forth in the New Testament. Those who would reshape the church had their tools working.

A further attempt to justify the grand schemes of the new visionaries became apparent in such statements as,

There are some works too big for a single, local congregation to do. (Baxter, p. 11).

This argument was borrowed from Campbell and others who authored the missionary society concept of years gone by. It is nothing new, only a way to erode confidence in the Lord's way. It seems somewhat surprising that apostolic congregations failed to realize they were not big enough to do God's work—they just went ahead and did the work anyway!

When gospel preachers pointed out the distinction between the work of a local church and the work of an individual Christian, some tried to break down the Bible distinction in their responsibilities.

Any "good work" which the individual as a Christian, is obligated to support financially, the church is equally obligated to support financially . . . If it is a good work, which the Lord wants done, the obligation falls equally upon individuals and upon the church, for individuals are the church. (Baxter, p. 23).

It seems unnecessary to point out that 1 Timothy

5:16 makes the very distinction that Baxter denies exists. It is difficult to explain why those who have preached the gospel for years, taught Bible classes on a college level (in schools operated by brethren), and served in so many areas missed that passage. Unfortunately, once a person starts his path into liberalism, he seems to possess an exceedingly bad memory.

While denominations have for many years operated hospitals and other welfare institutions, churches of Christ have been aloof from such efforts. The rising cries of the two decades under consideration would begin to paint a new picture that could open the doors for such institutions.

If there were no hospitals or other means of caring for a sick person, the church would then be obligated to establish some method in order to carry out the responsibility that God has given us to care for the sick. Such was the case at Nowhe Mission in South Africa. (Baxter, p. 24).

What brethren would not do in America, others were doing in Africa. It would seem that earlier preachers, in fleeing the seed of denominationalism, missed the boat altogether. Instead of preaching the gospel, saving souls, and establishing churches, they should have been building hospitals. The social consciousness that was provoked following World War II is beginning to have its effect.

During the early part of the period we are considering, many brethren suggested that a battle was being fought on the orphan homes issue in order to put the colleges into the church budgets. After the initial ground work, it did not bother Baxter to say,

If Christian schools are needed and can be used by the church to train its young, does this not establish a strong implication that the church might have some responsibility in starting such schools and causing them to be available when young people have need for them? (Baxter, p. 27).

The fruit of that position has borne several elementary and secondary schools supported by churches (over 100). While they may refuse a direct contribution from the church treasury, they often meet in church buildings, use church busses, and utilize other facilities paid for and maintained by local churches. Churches of Christ in various communities DO support secular schools.

Do not assume that churches had never supported schools before. It is apparent that David Lipscomb College has, through the years, accepted church donations.

The contribution at Charlotte Avenue Church on March 29, toward the support of education at David Lipscomb College, amounted to \$1,329.85. (Gospel Advocate, April 16, 1969, p. 252.).

Yet, the opposition before the fifties had been for-

midable and only a smattering of such support could be identified. Nonetheless, once the principle had been accepted, that is, churches may support human institutions from the church treasury, colleges could attempt to get "their part."

Seeds Taking Root

As brethren increased their efforts to try to restructure churches in such a manner as to allow the support of human institutions, as well as the enlarging of the scope of the work of the local church, arguments were made designed to teach that orphanages and secular schools stood or fell together. The emotional appeal of a needy child would become the springboard from which support for colleges would be launched. Some brethren had predicted that such would happen and it became a reality when Baxter wrote,

Some who are agreed that the church can contribute to an orphan's home are not convinced that the church can contribute to a Christian school. It is difficult to see a significant difference so far as principle is concerned. The orphan's home and the Christian school stand or fall together. (Baxter, p. 29).

All denials notwithstanding, when it was put in black and white by one of the "leaders" of the institutional movement, none could ignore the implications. Increasingly, more cries went up for churches to begin supporting schools from their treasuries—for, after all, if you can do one, why not the other? Really, why not?

A further erosion of the work of the church took place when recreational pursuits became accepted practices in many churches. One of the churches that presently bemoans the growing liberalism among some churches of Christ was herself one of those who set the pattern of behavior. The Getwell church in Memphis, Tennessee, now sponsors seminars, publications, a paper, and other efforts that attempt to stop the growing tide. BUT—look at the following, lifted verbatim from her bulletin.

OUR THANKS to every one who helped the boys and their ball teams . . . All the young people who went to the ranch parties Monday and Tuesday nights thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the outing . . . The teen-age girls class will present a short play this coming Tuesday night, August 1st, on "Love, courtship, and marriage." . . . There was a good group of men and boys who went on the camping trip last week . . . Our boys are really playing good ball this year from the Pee Wees to the Juniors. (The Getwell Reminder, July 20, 27, and August 31, 1961).

Those who are screaming so loudly against the modern problems had better check their history—they set the pace and men who were even more visionary took the ball and ran (no pun intended).

When a church had determined that it intends to integrate various programs into the local work, there is a demand for facilities. These facilities will become the key to the type of work in which that church engages. It is also a way of seeing the attitude (spiritual or secular) that a congregation possesses.

Preliminary work of construction of a high school student center for the Broadway church of Christ to be located at 1808-12 Main St. has been started by Claude Martin / Son, with the cost estimated at \$53,000 . . . The floor space of 6,200 feet will embrace a large recreation room, snack bar, lounge, kitchen, storage and mechanical rooms, two offices, and restrooms. (Eugene Britnell in Shocking Quotes, p. 2).

Such facilities had been unknown among churches of Christ prior to this time because the churches of Christ had not engaged in work that necessitated such. When men secularize the church they must have buildings that further secular ends. The simple structures maintained by most congregations (auditorium, classrooms, study, storage, and restrooms) indicate a desire to fulfill the work God assigned to the church and NOTHING MORE. Any facility that makes provisions for the church to do something the church is not authorized to do IS WRONG.

When the seeds of the social gospel are beginning to take root, there is a new emphasis upon relieving the needs of a physical nature with less and less time and energy spent on the spiritual man. The two decades under consideration produced arguments that indicated more interest in the physical man than spiritual man. Let us face the fact squarely: the New Testament church had more concern about ministry to the needs of humanity than we do, and New Testament Christians accorded more money and effort proportionately to benevolence than do we. The primary financial concern of the New Testament churches, the Lord's Day contribution, the inter-congregational relationships were primarily centered on benevolence. And the church grew tremendously. (Childhaven News, December, 1964, article by Gale Oler.).

How one who had preached the gospel for years could ever come up with a notion like this is dumbfounding. But when brethren are intent on building their own welfare institutions, they will grasp the last straw to keep from going under. What Oler did was to undermine evangelistic responsibility. Contrary to what he said, the early church grew because the gospel was preached in its purity and simplicity and NOT because someone was fed (Colossians 1:23). This is not to discourage scriptural benevolence, but it must be kept in its proper perspective.

The voices that would change the face of local churches and the work that God had given them were not silent during the 50s and 60s. With vigor, they ac-

cused the antis of everything from being "orphan-haters" to "anti-Christ." But in the 80s, some of the very ones who were so aggressive are beginning to reap what they have sown. Apparently, there are even those among the more conservative minded that would make overtures to the despised "antis." But let them remember who is at fault and who it was that warned of the impending spiritual disasters. Even while they enthusiastically advocated inter-congregational cooperatives, altered the work of the church, and changed the face of the local congregation, there were Christians throughout the land that cried against their schemes. Perhaps it is possible for all involved to take an unemotional and unbiased look at the efforts to halt the rising tide of liberalism and honestly judge why the "antis" cried out against the teachings and practices of some.

Resistance Evident

During the period in which church supported institutions were growing by leaps and bounds, there were voices that cried against the practices. Those who opposed the modern schemes used every means at their disposal to bring brethren back to Bible principles. As is true in every controversy, some listened and some did not. For that courageous few who dared to speak against the powers of the day, we are indeed thankful. Many of them suffered financially (lost their jobs and had meetings cancelled), others found their families alienated by their stand for truth, and the pressures of friends were felt in nearly every quarter. Only those who lived during that period can fully appreciate the circumstances. But what was it they stood for that made them stand against the new wave of activity and thinking?

Elders, preachers, and brethren emphasized that every practice, every idea, and every principle must have Bible authority. Such a position was based on Colossians 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This placed them in conflict with the ones who said we did many things for which we have no authority or we do not need authority for all we do. How foolish not to realize that once we abandon the principle of having Book, chapter, and verse for everything we do in religion, we have abandoned the only standard available and there is no stopping place. The modern leaders in some churches of Christ have accepted the consequences of the earlier refusal to seek Bible authority and gladly accept practices (instrumental music, societies, recreational programs, church support of schools, etc.) because they have been so conditioned. The seeds sown in the 50s and 60s have produced some corrupt fruits.

In an attempt to stave off the sweeping tide of apostacy, brethren pointed out that each church was self-governing and the elders looked after the needs of the local flock. Paul had said as much in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Please note they were

over the flock—not the work of several flocks. The apostle Peter was even more emphatic when he said, "Tend the flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2). Tending the affairs of many flocks (thru acceptance of contributions) or overseeing a work thousands of miles away violates the principle of the passages just quoted. While the desire of many was to see that more heard the gospel, it is significant that by following the apostolic pattern the early church effectively carried the gospel (without TV, radio, and newspapers) into the civilized world (Colossians 1:23). Brethren who lose faith in God's way soon convince themselves that God's way will not get the job done. How faithless!

As a spiritual institution, the church of our Lord has specific works that she is to perform. Each local church engaged in these works. They are named in Ephesians 4:11-12, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Three words may effectively describe what the church is to do: Evangelism, edification, and benevolence. The new wave of the 50s and 60s enlarged these responsibilities to encompass all kinds of social programs, taking over responsibilities that belonged to the family and to the government. Many disciples pointed out the truth as to the church's obligations and chided those who would corrupt the spiritual nature of Christ's body. Again, some listened and some did not. Brethren continued to attempt to bring those who were rushing headlong into apostacy back to the Bible. We have no right to bind more upon the local church than did the apostles of Christ.

Once it was clearly shown that Christ intended the church to engage only in that work she, had been assigned, certain teachings that would regulate that work became apparent. The longer we search the truth, the more obvious are the principles of truth. A careful search of the New Testament proved the following.

1. Each church was responsible to use its own funds in preaching the gospel. No funds for evangelism were surrendered to sister churches to preach the gospel.
2. No funds were sent from several churches to one church to enable it to do more preaching.
3. No funds were sent **through** any congregation to preach the gospel.
4. All funds for preaching went directly from the treasury of the local church to the evangelist (Philippians 4:15-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8).

Therefore, no church has the right to become the evangelistic agency for several churches (This is the error in sponsoring churches and the Herald of Truth). Not only is it scriptural for each church to do her own evangelism, it is more effective and efficient.

WHAT IS IMPRESSIVE TO THE WORLD DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPRESS God. While certain ones seemed to be relishing "our" national

programs and the new image that could be presented by "the church of Christ," we were losing sight of our main obligation: Pleasing God. How can we believe that God is happy with us when we disrupt the autonomy of the local church, involve the local congregation in works that are not mentioned in the New Testament, and restructure the church after our own image of what the kingdom should be like?

Another area in which there was a responsibility for both Christians and the church was that of benevolence. Certain principles were called to the attention of those who would engage the church in general welfare practices. Not only do those of us who lived through the 50s and 60s need to be reminded of the Biblical practices, each new generation must be informed.

1. Each individual was commanded to meet his obligations in the care of the needy. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).
2. Each congregation was to relieve those needy within the local church that were objects of the church's help (Acts 6:1-7).
3. Any destitute church (one that could not care for the needy for whom she was responsible) could receive help from a church with abundance (Acts 11:27-30).
4. No permanent organization for funneling money from several churches to one church existed.
5. Each local church took care of her own needy and did not set up some kind of institution to permanently relieve the needy of the community and/or of other churches.

When Christians meet their responsibilities to the needy (1 Timothy 5:8), and churches meet their responsibilities to the needy (Acts 6:1ff), all needy for which disciples of Christ are responsible will be relieved!

Liberalism: a definition

The preceding background has been presented so that we might be able to define, in a clear and lucid manner, liberalism. It is evident that what brethren refer to as liberalism is not the same as the way in which the world uses the term. Bulletins of churches that would charge many with liberalism are themselves guilty of liberalism. To properly define it for our understanding as brethren, please note the following two characteristics of liberalism.

1. Liberalism is the result of people expressing and/or acting by their own choosing. It is the unrestrained disposition to abandon Bible authority (Book, chapter, and verse) and to determine to act upon some other standard ("it works," "it is a good work," "I don't see anything wrong with it," "How can something accomplishing so much be wrong," etc.).

2. Liberalism is the result of an attitude toward the word of God. Those who follow its principles do not completely abandon the New Testament, but they make allowances for activities that please them without due consideration as to the New Testament order.

As Alexander Campbell rationalized the missionary society, so some of the 50s and 60s rationalized their projects and institutions into acceptance. A conservative approach to an understanding of the Bible will never result in one losing faith in the need of sticking to the book; a liberal approach will inevitably lead one away from Bible authority.

Over the years we are considering, brethren lost faith in the New Testament pattern (some ridiculed the idea of such). Yet, God had always emphasized the necessity of respecting a pattern, even telling Moses, "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5) when he is to build the tabernacle. Over one hundred years ago, John T. Welsh wrote,

I think it is an undeniable truth, that men never departed from primitive Christianity until they lost faith in it. And no Christian ever yet adopted human systems and appliances until his faith becomes weak in the divine; . . . We want more faith and less machinery, more work and less talk, more faith and less planning. The Lord has given us the plan, and bids us go work in his vineyard; but instead of going to work with the tools he has furnished, we spend all the day in making new ones which in our wisdom, we think will work better. Let us quit it and go to work with a hearty good will. Sound advice indeed!

Once a person has abandoned faith in the New Testament order, there is no stopping place.

It is interesting to observe that Dr. L. L. Pinkerton, who formally opened the Kentucky Female Orphan School at Midway, Kentucky, the first week in October, 1849, served as Chairman of the Convention which established the American Christian Missionary Society the third week in October, 1849. From the beginning both of these institutions drew contributions from churches. Pinkerton was also credited with introducing the melodian into the Midway church just ten years later (1859) and then denied verbal inspiration of the Bible within another ten years (1869). —James R. Cope For those of you who have been members of the Lord's church since the early fifties, think of whether the congregation in which you now hold membership is like the one in which you were a part in the 50s. Can you not see what we are saying?

Those who weakened the respect of younger brethren for God's order are now paying the penalty. The far-out


churches of Christ are but the logical conclusion of the arguments that were presented to justify church support of orphanages and schools, and the Herald of Truth and sponsoring churches. Instead of bemoaning the present situation, why not resolve to go back to the fundamental teachings of such passages as Colossians 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and every other passage that emphasizes the necessity of authority? It is not too late for some—it is not too late for you—but some basic changes in attitude must be made.

Only a profound respect for God's order can solve any issue and/or problem among those who would be disciples of Christ. If you still believe this, you are our friend.

Using Great Plainness
of Speech

J. T. Smith

14250 N. Miami Ave.
Miami, FL 33168



"WALKING IN THE LIGHT"

"This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:5-9).

A great deal is being said these days about this subject by different brethren.

(1) Some are taking the position that each time one commits sin that he ceases to walk in the light, breaks his fellowship with God, falls from grace, and is therefore lost until he recognizes such sin, confesses to God, and prays for forgiveness.

(2) A second position is that the Christian can live a humble, penitent, and prayerful life, making a sincere effort to obey God at all times, and that although he may sin, he is forgiven and can stand in God's grace (Romans 5:2), remain in the light, and in fellowship with God and Christ.

My convictions are that both of the above positions carry the subject to extremes, and the truth is included in a modified combination of the two.

1. I believe that sin separates one from God. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you

that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Therefore all sin, of which we have knowledge, must be repented of, confessed, and forgiveness sought by asking God to forgive us. I know from I John 1:7 (quoted above) that the Christian has access to that which is efficacious in remitting sins (the blood of Christ is WHAT remits sins), and we are promised they will be forgiven us IF we confess them. (Thus, the time we confess our sins is WHEN they are cleansed by the blood of Christ v.9). It is interesting to note that the words "cleanse" and "cleanseth" are used in both verses (7 / 9) to describe what takes place when the efficacy of the blood is used as a "propitiation for our sins" (I John 2:2).

2. If we are walking in the light (endeavoring to live the Christian life) will not the efficacy of the blood be applied to our lives unconditionally whether we are able to know all of our sins or not? NO! "But," someone says, "because the word that is used in connection with the blood is present tense, it is therefore stated that the 'cleansing' is a continuing process, and not just a "one-time occurrence." With this statement I am in complete agreement. However, the continuation of the cleansing by Christ's blood is conditioned on two things, walking in the light, and a recognition of, and confession of, one's sins.

There are a number of things I know about walking in light and darkness because God has revealed them. However there are some things I cannot know because God has not revealed them. For example:

(1) I know that the word "walk" is present tense and doesn't mean a one time act but a continual taking of steps and would therefore in the context under consideration mean one's manner of life.

(2) I also know that one may say he has fellowship with God and be walking in darkness. John said, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now" (I John 2:9). At the point he began hating his brother did he take his first step in darkness? If not, how long did he have to hate his brother in order to be considered walking in darkness? There are many who profess they know God and are walking in the light. However Jesus said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me (Matthew 15:8). And Paul said, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him. . ." (Titus 1:16).

(3) The idea, according to the second position at the beginning of this article, is that one "stands in God's grace (Romans 5:2)." My understanding of the passages is simply that according to Romans 5:1 we are justified (absolved of all guilt) by faith, (by the figure of speech called "synecdoche"—a part put for the whole. Thus the word "faith" encompasses all man is required by God to perform to be justified, Hebrews 5:9). Thus by God's grace and our faith we stand justified. However, this seems to me to be all that God is saying in I John 1:7-9. By God's grace we have the efficacy of Christ's blood, and by our faith we believe His Word and seek His forgiveness when we sin.

3. Brethren then begin to categorize sin. What

about sins of ignorance, willful sins, sins that are caused by weakness of the flesh? Are there any other kind? I believe that about covers the entire spectrum of sins that one may commit.

But what happens when man sins, in God's scheme of things, for those who are endeavoring to live the Christian life? to "walk in the light" if you please? The only way I would be able to answer these questions would be to give you God's explanation IF He had explained it—which to my knowledge He hasn't.

There are some things which He has said that I can explain.

(1) He has said one can be justified—absolved of all guilt (Romans 5:1-2).

(2) He has commanded that I be Holy for He is Holy (I Peter 1:16).

(3) He has told us of David's request to be forgiven of "secret faults" (Psalms 19:12), or as my understanding of the passage is, faults (sins) of which David was unaware.

(4) That Simon in Acts 8, even though a new convert, was told when he tried to buy the gift of God with money, that his heart was not right with God. He was then instructed to "repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). This tells us how God expects us to deal with those sins of which we are aware.

(5) That Jesus taught his disciples to ask God to "forgive us our trespasses. . ." (Matthew 6:12); and when the publican prayed unto God, ((God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), Jesus said he was justified. This shows that as I understand that I am a weak and sinful creature and ask God to forgive me of my sins of which I may not be aware, and to be merciful to me as a sinner that He will do so.

(6) I am to "pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). Now noting that John said our fellowship with God is conditioned on our walking in the light (I John 1:7), our walking in the light is conditioned on our being justified (Romans 5:1-2), and our being justified is conditioned on repentance and confession that our sins might be forgiven (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9), while all of this is made possible through the efficacy of the blood of Christ,

Conclusion

Now let me suggest something to you as you read the conclusion of this article. If you have not already, make up your mind now that whatever you learn from God's Word that constitutes sin, whether of commission or omission, you will give it up. Ask God to forgive you of any sin of which you may not be aware. If you know of any sins you have committed but have not repented of, repent of them and ask God to forgive you. Now, if you have done these things, if my understanding of the things I have presented in this article is correct, you are forgiven of every sin whether of ignorance, willful, or caused by weakness of the flesh. (Of course I, like John in our text, am speaking of Christians). If you died now, this instant, would there be any sin on your record? No! Because when you have

been justified you are absolved of all guilt—of every sin. And if you continue to practice the above mentioned things that brought about your justification by the blood of Christ, you can remain in that justified condition.

Neither Judge, Jury, nor The Son of God

"But," someone asks, "what about the Christian who has lived a good Christian life for 25 years and while speeding gets killed in an automobile accident while breaking the laws of the land who does not have time to repent?" There is no revelation from God, of which I am aware, on such a situation. Thus neither I nor anyone else can tell you what God "may do" under such circumstances. If I told you what I thought, that is exactly what it would be, my "think-so." And we tell those in the denominational world that their "think-sos" do not count with God.

Since I am neither judge, jury, nor the son of God, nor is anyone else on earth today, let us all just say what God has said in His Word. We will be forgiven of our sins when we repent of known sins and confess them, ask God to be merciful to us as sinners and forgive us of sins of which we may not be aware. Let us do what He would have us do in studying His Word and living the Christian life, and be what He would have us be, righteous, justified, and holy, as we go about daily "praying without ceasing." Thus we can be justified, live justified, and die justified. In the words of Eugene Britnell in the *Gospel Guardian*, Volume 19, Numbers 8 / 9, Page 14, when he was reviewing some things said by Jimmy Allen of Harding College, "In his Harding speech, he said that one does not have to 'be right in every point to go to heaven,' but that one 'must be right concerning the way of salvation.' I have always thought that the 'way of salvation' was the way to heaven!

"He stated that he did not believe 'that one unrepentant sin will send one to hell.' Now that is a strange statement for a gospel preacher. In debate with Baptist preachers they want to know how many sins will cause one to be lost. We reply that it is not a matter of how many but rather will any sin condemn us, and conclude that one unrepentant sin will condemn. Maybe we have been wrong!

"One sin kept Moses out of the promised land! One sin killed Nadab and Abihu! One sin killed the prophet who was sent to Bethel! Read James 2:10 and Acts 17:30. "Allen asked, 'What about unknown sins?' and then cited Psalm 19:12. That verse doesn't help him. David realized that even 'secret faults' could condemn him, and surely he repented or he would not have been praying. Remember, Jimmy taught that an unrepentant sin would not send one to hell! He said, 'God's way takes care of us' and gave I John 1:7 as proof. But are we walking 'in the light' and in 'God's way' when we refuse to repent? Luke 13:3 doesn't sound like it! I don't believe the blood of Christ will cleanse us of all sins if we are not penitent of all sins." (And this expresses exactly what I have been saying throughout this article JTS).

FAMILY TOGETHERNESS

Luther A. Bolenbarker
1020 Maxey Rd.
Houston, TX 77015

God's people are called His family (Eph. 3:15). We are a member of His family because of love; His and ours. One of the most important attributes for a successful family is love. We are to love our mates and our children (Eph. 5 & 6). This love also is to carry over into the brotherhood (church). We are brethren (brothers and sisters) and Peter says we are to love this brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17). Love in the family (both personal and church) pleases God.

When a member of our family is sick, it should cause concern in the whole family. So it is with the family of God. We should weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Should one in our family not show up at lunch time when expected, it should be a matter of concern to the rest of the family. The same should hold true when one of our family misses worship. It should concern us all.

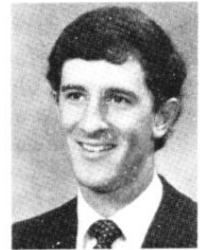
Most families enjoy being together; yearly reunions are held, vacations are taken, great distances are traveled just so we can get together as a family. Parents yearn to see their parents and their children and loved ones as often as possible. It should be the same in the family of God. A love for God's family will cause us to desire to be together, and yearn for the "fellowship" (spiritually sharing together—not dinner on the ground) that can be found only within the body of Christ.

The Scriptures speak often of spiritual fellowship, the sharing together which comes about by our being a close-knit family. Luke tells us in Acts 2:42,46 that some were together even daily. Togetherness keeps the earthly family close. This is also true of God's family, the church. The more we are together the more we want to be together, thus the more love we will have for one another and God. Togetherness is cemented by our love, our common goals and our like precious faith. When our togetherness is motivated by love then religion is real, meaningful and fulfilling. Are you contributing to or hindering the togetherness of your family (both personal and spiritual)?

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OF FOOL-HARDINESS AND FORTITUDE

On August 17, 1969 Hurricane Camille aimed its furious force at the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. Hours in advance of the storm's arrival, state troopers knocked doors in the endangered areas warning residents to flee for their lives to higher ground. Some "brave" souls, however, refused to evacuate. One group of swingers, in particular, remained in their beachfront apartments. Planning a "hurricane party" for that evening. None of them lived to see the light of the next day. Courage in the face of danger? No, fool-hardiness in the extreme.

There is a world of difference between genuine fortitude and mere fool-hardiness. The braggadocio and bravado of the latter is only a cheap imitation of real courage. It swaggers and scoffs at danger, making a showy pretense of its "strength". It is foolishly adventurous and rash. It carelessly disregards even the worst dangers, and thinks itself invincible.

In contrast to this recklessness, true strength never underestimates danger and never runs unnecessary risks. With an understanding of its own vulnerability, it has a healthy respect for threatening circumstances. It has a sober vigilance, an alertness to harm which keeps it clear of peril whenever possible. It has no need to display itself, and does not go out of its way to show how much it can "handle".

In worldly matters, fool-hardiness can be life-threatening, but in spiritual matters it can be even worse; it can be eternally disastrous. The person who courts dangers to his soul, contemptuously disregarding warnings, is bound to pay the price sooner or later. He may temporarily "get by" showing off how many spiritually-threatening things he can involve himself in without his being overcome spiritually, but ultimately he will be dismayed to find that his "strength" was insufficient.

Examples of spiritual fool-hardiness abound. How many young, unmarried Christians have engaged in intimate sexual petting, rationalizing it by thinking they were spiritually "strong" enough to handle it? How many Christians, young and older alike, listen daily to music the lyrics of which are ungodly and impure, believing themselves to be spiritually "strong" enough for it to have no harmful effect on them? How many engage in mixed swimming on the grounds that they are spiritually "strong" enough not to be influenced by near-nudity? How many take a

"social drink" when it fits the occasion, thinking they are spiritually "strong" enough to avoid the pitfalls?

How many Christians believe they can take filth into their minds at the movies or at home on TV and not be polluted by it? How many believe they can listen to and laugh at profanity and dirty jokes on the job or among friends and it not rub off on them? How many believe they can have their closest associations among non-Christians and not be influenced by them? How many believe they can miss services of the church and not be weakened by it?

These questions could go on almost indefinitely, but there is one other question begging to be asked: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned" (Prov. 6:27)? Only the fool (or the incredibly naive) would answer "yes". And only the spiritually foolhardy would claim that the activities mentioned above do not "bother" him. The fact of the matter is that even the strongest person, physically or spiritually, needs to "take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). No one is so strong spiritually that he can afford to disregard danger.

The person who excuses his involvement in morally dangerous situations by defending his ability to come out unscathed is rarely the person who really is spiritually strong. Ironically, it is almost always the spiritually weak person who talks of all he can do and not be hurt. The Christian who does indeed have enough strength to withstand heavy temptation is most often the person who stays as far away from it as possible. He understands the reality of spiritual dangers, and he has no need to display his strength by flirting with unnecessary risks.

Worse yet is the often disdainful way the spiritually foolhardy person treats those who warn against his morally perilous lifestyle. He is impressed with his more "mature" way of thinking, and he is proud of the way he can handle himself in situations that would be the undoing of old-fashioned Christians. He has outgrown the need for sermons on worldliness. He considers those "legalists" who would question his activities and he flouts their admonitions. Like Lot, he is sure he can "pitch his tent toward Sodom" and not be corrupted.

The Bible has a good bit to say about "fleeing" certain things. After discussing several moral dangers, Paul warned Timothy, "But thou, O man of God, flee

these things" (1 Tim 6:11). In his second letter, Paul advised, "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). To the Corinthian Christians who lived in what was reputed to be one of the most morally degraded pagan cities of its day. Paul wrote that they should "flee" fornication and idolatry (1 Cor. 6:18, 10:14). There is nothing any more cowardly about fleeing for ones spiritual life than there is fleeing for ones physical life before a killer hurricane. The question is not one of courage, but of common sense.

To think that we are not "bothered" by the corruption and immorality which literally engulfs us today, is to underestimate the power of temptation and of Satan himself. Surely nothing would please him more than to have us become complacent about our "strength". He understands, though we may not, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Christian friend, whoever you are and however capable you may think you are at holding out against temptation, please be advised that there are limits to even your strength. You think do you, that you are of the few who can handle fire without getting burned? Who are you fooling?

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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FIELD REPORTS—FOREIGN

CARLOS A. CAPELLI, Casilla #83, 1665 Jose C Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina. By the Lord's kindness I was permitted to return again last month to Bogota, Columbia in South America. I preached there

back in 1978 and there were fourteen souls baptized then. This congregation continues to grow. While there this time (29 days) there was much interest and five souls were baptized and two restored. This congregation was begun in 1978 through the work of Wayne Partain and Carlos Restrepo. Also the Lord continues to

bless the work at the San Miguel congregation here in Argentina. While I was away there were two souls baptized into Christ. In the Joes C. Paz congregation things continue well too. While away there were two souls baptized there. I hope that you can see the progress in the Spanish work. May we all take courage and continue to spread the gospel. God bless you all.

PETER McPHERSON, Box 254, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada. After moving to Airdrie, Alberta in August of 1981, I must report that for the sake of my family I must move back to Ontario. Our parents are aging fast and are in need of our care. So we must go and take care of that responsibility for the present. As a result of our move the church here will be looking for a preacher. You may write to Allan Michaud at the box number given above.

FIELD REPORTS—U.S.

RAY F. DIVELY, 425 Dippold Ave., Baden, PA 15005, The year 1981 was another busy year for me. Besides the local work, I was privileged to preach for nine congregations in seven states. Also, I preached in Canada. The Baden church helped support three preachers in foreign fields. One each in Mexico, India, and the Philippines. Also, we helped a little with the work in Japan and another preacher in Mexico. We continue to put in weekly teaching articles in the newspaper offering a correspondence course. I continue to write letters to the editor on Biblical subjects. We are getting some responses from all of this. We also sent several Bibles, tracts, etc., to brethren in different countries in 1981.

HERBERT FRASER, 2920 Michigan St., Sarasota, FL. Following five years work with the church in Osprey, FL, I recently began with the young church in Sarasota. This church had its origin about two years ago, resulting from a desire for scriptural harmony—a condition sadly lacking in former congregational ties. For many years there had been a need for a congregation in Sarasota clearly committed to Divine truth. Paul Branch, of Bradenton, worked with these saints during those two years. Good growth, in both numbers and morale, has been evident since. Outlook of the present and prospects for the future are encouraging.

MICKY GALLOWAY, Box 126, Piggott, AR 72454. Concerning the debate here in Piggott between Keith Sharp and Vernon Barr (May 31-June 4), we have secured a bigger facility than was formerly announced. The debate will take place in the Middle School Gymnasium on S. Taylor Ave., just off Hwy. 62 E. The debate will deal with the subject of baptism the first two nights and Premillennialism the last two nights. For more information please contact me at the above address.

DERREL SHAW, 5927 Spruce Forest, Houston, TX 77092. I have bound volumes of the GOSPEL GUARDIAN from 1949 to 1970. These are volumes 1-21. I would like to sell them for \$600 or best offer received by May 1, 1982.

PREACHERS NEEDED

SELMA, AL—The church that meets on Poplar St. is in need of an evangelist. There are approximately 25 to 30 meeting at this time. Those interested should contact David Barlow, 2519 Hwy. 14 E., Selma, AL 36701. Or phone (205) 872-3822.

MALVERN, AR—The church that meets at 923 Wilson St. in Malvern is in need of a preacher as of June, 1982. Experienced preacher is desired. Must be willing to give book, chapter and verse for all that he teaches. We are self-supporting and have an average attendance of 55-60. Those wishing more information may write Howard Soma at 1426 Pleasant St., Malvern, AR 72104. Or call (501) 337-1233. Or Wendell Williams at Rt. 1, Box 210-B, Malvern, AR 72104. Or call (501) 332-2664.

NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FL—The Central church in New Smyrna Beach is seeking a full-time minister. We are a small congregation of about 35 active members. The man we are seeking must demonstrate the willingness and desire to be extremely active in the

Lord's work. At this time, we are able to provide only \$225 per week toward support. We also provide a small, two bedroom home. Any other monetary support would have to come from other sources. If interested contact the Central church of Christ at P.O. Box 231, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32069.

OKEECHOBEE, FL—The Westside church of Christ here is looking for a preacher. Contact Franklin Varson at (813) 763-2023 days, or 763-3462 evenings for more information.

SANFORD, NC—The church that meets in Sanford is in need of a preacher. Some outside support would be necessary. Interested individuals should contact Eugene Edwards at (919) 944-1409; Tom Gray 776-0373; or Tom Dickerson 483-5723.

KALISPELL, MT—The church in Kalispell, MT needs someone who can devote full time to studying and teaching the scriptures. He will have to be willing and capable of teaching Bible classes nearly every day of the week. This is a very challenging work in a very beautiful valley. For more information call (406) 755-9779 or write the church c/o 170 Wilson Hts., Kalispell, MT 59901.

SUPPORT NEEDED

ROBERT W. TRASK, P.O. Box 178, Cedar Key, FL 32625. I am in need of \$1,000 to \$1,200 per month support in order to continue laboring with the congregation in this place. My family and I have been in Cedar Key for almost two years. During which time we have seen the church grow from 15-18 on Sundays, to 28-30. With the Lord's help we will continue to grow. We are the only faithful congregation for thirty miles. For references, please contact Joe Wilder, the former preacher here, at P.O. Box 356, Cedar Key, FL 32625. Or phone (904) 543-5159. All responses will be answered and appreciated. Also all prayers will be appreciated, for without the Lord's help none of us can do anything, but with His help we can do all.

A GOOD NAME LIVES ON

CECIL DOUTHITT, 3215 London Derry Rd., Fort Smith, AR 72903. There are several excellent gospel preachers in my family tree. My father, William Lawrence Douthitt, preached during parts of my life; also two great uncles, Ira Douthitt and Boone Douthitt, as well as my grandfather, Cecil B. Douthitt. On January 6, 1982 I made a decision to start preaching. I will preach in the Fort Smith area wherever and whenever asked. At this writing I am preaching three Sunday mornings a month for the brethren that meet at Midland, AR. Later this month I will meet with another congregation in the area to discuss preaching for them on Sunday evenings.

The reason I am writing this is because there are many fine brethren over the country that have felt I have some ability to preach and teach but they were concerned about my lack of interest in doing all I could for the cause of Christ. I want them to know that God has granted me the time and maturity to repent and to resolve to spend the future in this service. In my possession are all of Cecil B. Douthitt's sermon outlines, many of his writings and a large portion of his library. For many years this wealth of information has lain idle in boxes but now they are going to be used as Pop would have them used. God has blessed me by allowing me to grow up in the home of Cecil B. and Mary Douthitt. He has blessed me with excellent health; a beautiful Christian wife and two teenage children of whom I am immensely proud. The least I can do, the very least, is spend the future telling others about Him. This is the first time in a long time that an article has appeared under the name of Cecil Douthitt. With God's grace, it will not be the last.

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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)