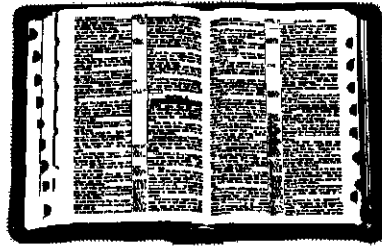


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

VOLUME XXIV

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The Mystery of Iniquity

Eugene Britnell

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72215



AN INTRODUCTION TO THESE STUDIES

As a Christian, I love every member of the Roman Catholic Church on earth. Because I am a Christian, I hate Catholicism with all the power I possess. My attitude was described by the Psalmist who said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). Anyone who understands the truth must hate error while at the same time loving those who are in error.

Roman Catholicism is a powerful force in this nation and the world. It is a composite of religion, politics, business, education, paganism, superstition and idolatry. This we are prepared to prove. It has deceived and enslaved more than fifty million people in the United States, and claims a membership of more than five hundred million in the world. Of course the majority of the members became Catholics without their knowledge or consent. They really don't know what they are, nor why. Approximately 140 members of the Catholic Church are in the present Congress of the United States.

The present pope, John Paul II, is a very warm and gentle man with a winning personality. He has a great influence upon the world of our day. He has traveled more than any pope in history, and his trips to other countries are covered by the news media of the world. Especially is that true with the newspapers and radio and television networks in this country. Much of the time, Americans hear about the pope and Catholicism on just about every newscast. It would cost untold millions of dollars to buy the time which the Catholic

Church gets free to use in spreading its influence throughout the world.

Generally speaking, the Lord's true church is doing very little to expose and oppose Catholicism. Other than **the Voice of Freedom**, I can't think of any papers among us now making a consistent effort against this system of error. We seem to be far more concerned with issues and doctrines (both in and out of the church) which are far less important and dangerous than Roman Catholicism. We have decided that Catholics cannot be taught and converted, and that isn't always true. And somehow we seem to feel that "protestantism" will answer the error and control the growth of Catholicism, but that isn't true either. The protestant denominations are not going to oppose Catholicism. How can they when they are equally wrong and have borrowed much of their teaching and many of their practices from Rome? The truth is, if Catholicism is opposed, consistently and effectively, the Lord's church will have to do it. We have no doubt about that!

For some time, brother Adams and I have discussed the need for more teaching on Catholicism. We have decided that the need justifies a regular column in this journal. I will either write or select the material for this part of the paper. Let it be understood that I'm not an expert on Catholicism—nor anything else. I do understand what the Bible teaches concerning the church and salvation, and for a good many years I have collected information and studied the teaching and practice of Romanism. I believe that I am able to expose and oppose the unholy teachings of Rome.

We have chosen to write under the general heading "The Mystery of Iniquity." It is scriptural in origin and will be relevant in application to the things we propose to discuss. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the inspired apostle Paul wrote:

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:7, 8, New King James).

The old King James reads "mystery of iniquity" but

the rest of the verse is clearer in the new. Many scholars and commentators have regarded this (verses 1-12) as a prophecy of Catholicism. It does seem to describe that or a similar system. For example, who but the popes of Rome ever claimed such a position on earth as that described in verse four? Whether the "man of sin" is the pope, the system, or neither, it remains true that the phrase "mystery of iniquity" does describe Catholicism and is an appropriate title for our studies.

"Mystery" can refer to something not previously revealed but possible for man to comprehend (Eph. 3:3; 1 Tim. 3:16). It also means "Something that has not been, or cannot be, explained; an enigma." "Iniquity" is simply lawlessness. It means to teach and act without divine authority. For today, it means any practice not authorized in the sacred scriptures—God's means of speaking to man.

I believe that O.C. Lambert understood Catholicism as well as any man of his time, yet in many ways it remained a mystery to him. While visiting in my home in 1955, he remarked that one of the mysteries of Catholicism, at least to him, was how it had become so powerful in America. He said that he could understand how the pope and hierarchy could deceive and control the people in the backward nations of the world known for poverty and illiteracy, but not in America, a land of Bibles, religious freedom and literate people.

One hundred forty-five years ago, on January 12, 1837, Alexander Campbell gave a seven-point description of Catholicism which we present as an accurate representation of our present convictions. This will also give the reader some idea of the work before us in these studies. Campbell said:

"1. The Roman Catholic Institution, sometimes called the 'Holy, Apostolic, Catholic, Church' is not now, nor was she ever, catholic, apostolic, or holy; but is a sect in the fair import of that word, older than any other sect now existing, not the 'Mother and Mistress of all Churches' but an apostasy from the only true, holy, apostolic, and catholic church of Christ.

"2. Her notion of apostolic succession is without any foundation in the Bible, in reason or in fact; an imposition of the most injurious consequences, built upon unscriptural and anti-scriptural traditions, resting wholly upon the opinions of interested and fallible men.

"3. She is not uniform in her faith, or united in her members; but mutable and fallible, as any other sect of philosophy or religion—Jewish, Turkish, or Christian—a confederation of sects with a politico-ecclesiastic head.

"4. She is the 'Babylon' of John, the 'Man of Sin' of Paul, and the Empire of the 'Youngest Horn' of Daniel's Sea Monster.

"5. Her notion of purgatory, indulgences, auricular confession, remission of sins, transubstantiation, supererogation, etc., essential elements of her system, are immoral in their tendency, and injurious to the well-being of society, religious and political.

(continued on Page 4)

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Editorial

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HUMANISM, THE SCHOOLS AND THE COURT

Secular Humanism is the religion being exercised in public schools in America today, all the while contending that any semblance of the Judeo-Christian religion must be excluded from public instruction because it would violate the "establishment of religion" clause of the United States Constitution. In every court case where the right to teach creation by Divine act, alongside the hypothesis of evolution, has been challenged, the courts have ruled that creationism intrudes "religion" into the schools in violation of the law.

Humanism and Evolution

In HUMANIST MANIFESTO II, under the item "Religion" we have this:

"We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity" (p. 16).

"Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces" (p. 17).

From the above, and other evidence which could be cited, evolution is one "belief", or tenet, of the philosophy of Humanism. The following extract from Texas Tech University Law Review states the matter clearly:

"Secular Humanism as a religion is incomprehensible without the evolutionary hypothesis. The evolutionary hypothesis is one tenet, if extracted, that will disembowel Secular Humanism. In fact, the other tenets of Secular Humanism are themselves based on the evolutionary implications of there being no Creator and no revelation from the Creator. If there is no Creator, then man is not dependent upon Deity, because Deity does not exist. Thus man is autonomous. The religion of Secular Humanism, based upon its six tenets, places Man at the center of its worship, and denies the traditional concept of God. The implications of a culture's rejection of traditional theism in exchange for Secular Humanism are far-reaching." (Volume 10:1, 1978, *The Establishment of the*

Religion of Secular Humanism and Its First Amendment Implications; by John W. Whitehead and John Conlan).

This explains why Humanists are so insistent on protecting their right to teach evolution without any competition. According to this Godless philosophy, man's origin, purpose and destiny must be understood without any reference to a divine Creator. The end result of this concept is stated in the HUMANIST MANIFESTO II:

"We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest" (Ethics, p. 17).

According to this, a thing is not right or wrong because God said so, for there is no God to say anything! Every man is his own law, answerable only to himself and free to clarify his own values based on the situation at hand. It does not take a Solomon, nor require a college degree to see what the prevalence of this notion has done in terms of the moral chaos in modern America.

The Courts and Religion

The American Civil Liberties Union, which has gone to bat to defend the right to include evolution in the schoolrooms of America while excluding any reference to Divine creation, has contended that creationism violates the "establishment of religion" clause of the Constitution of our nation. But this poses an interesting problem. If we could ever find a judge who was not himself the product of humanistic brainwashing and an attorney who would do his homework and could emancipate himself long enough from humanistic presuppositions to be objective, then an interesting case could be made to show that evolution is but one religious tenet of the religion of Secular Humanism.

The Supreme Court did not attempt to give an interpretation of religion clauses of the Constitution until the 1870's when the Mormon practice of polygamy had to be decided. George Reynolds, a member of the Mormon Church was both indicted and convicted of bigamy. He claimed that the practice of polygamy was a "tenet of faith" in his religion. The court ruling in the case clearly implied that the court recognized and supported traditional theistic tenets. Polygamy was wrong because of the truth of God's word and was opposed to the best interests of society. Later, in the case of **Davis v. Beason**, the Court said:

"The term 'religion' has reference to one's views of his relations to his Creator, and to the obligations they impose for reverence for his being and character, and of obedience to his will."

Here, again, "religion" was equated with theism and polygamy was contrary to such principles.

The Humanist Manifesto I was issued in 1933. By the 1940's and into the 1950's, traditional religion, which was built on the premise that man is subservient to his Creator, came under increasing fire from the Humanist Movement. Correspondingly, a Supreme

Court with judges who had themselves been influenced by Humanism, began to broaden the definition of "religion." By the end of the 1960's "religion" as defined by the Court had shifted from belief in and obligation to the Creator, to the effect of the belief in the life of the person holding it. In the case of the **United States v. Kauten, Kauten** pleaded exemption from military service as a conscientious objector, but said that his action was not based on a "belief in Deity." The Court ruled that his belief constituted a "religion." In the case of **the United States v. Ballard**, the Court moved even closer to the position of Secular Humanism that life is man-centered and that the measure of religion is the sincerity of the belief.

The matter was brought into clearer light by the 1961 decision in the case of **Torcaso v. Watkins**. The law of the state of Maryland was struck down—a law which required that a notary public must declare belief in God as a condition for his appointment. The Court held that this violated Torcaso's "freedom of belief and religion." The Court said:

"Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others." Very well then, according to the shifted definition of "religion", the highest Court in our land has ruled that Secular Humanism is a "religion." Indeed, Humanist Manifesto II, published in 1973 along with 261 signatures, is the "creed" of the Humanist. Throughout this document, the framers thereof employ the terms "we believe", "we affirm", "we are committed" and similar expressions to indicate what they hold to be true. It is as much a creed as the Methodist Discipline.

Now, here is my point. Since by Court definition Secular Humanism is declared a "religion" and since evolution is one of its tenets, in fact, a tenet absolutely essential to the whole structure of the system, then why is not the teaching of evolution (along with the Humanistic values clarification strategies) in our public schools just as much a violation of the establishment of religion clause as the inclusion of creationism in the study of origins? This question deserves an answer and we believe it deserves it from the Supreme Court of our land. It is time to put the shoe on the other foot and place the Secular Humanists on the defensive. When will someone rise up and file suit in the courts with the determination to appeal all the way to the Supreme Court charging that the "beliefs" or tenets of Secular Humanism, whether evolution or values clarification, constitute a violation of the clause which forbids the establishment of religion in our public schools? The truth of the matter is, we have never had a better example of this very practice than what we have right now in our public schools. Our children are daily being brainwashed to believe the various tenets of Humanism as they are spelled out in Humanist Manifesto I and II. The Court ruled that Secular Humanism is a religion. Why, then, can it not be banned from our public schools on that

very ground?

Meanwhile, godly parents and grandparents who want their children and grandchildren to grow up with faith in God as the divine Creator and revealer of truth must struggle against the inconsistencies of a system which bans one religious viewpoint regarding origins and ethics while firmly establishing another. The threat is real and it is much later than some think. As one high school student asked me several years ago, "if I cannot trust the first two chapters of Genesis, then why should I trust any of the rest of the Bible?" Indeed, why?

This editorial is somewhat different to most we carry here. But we are convinced that unless Secular Humanism is checked, then the faith and morals of our children and our nation will continue to deteriorate until the justice of God demands that we take our place among the has-been nations of the earth.

(Continued from Page 2)

"6. Notwithstanding her pretensions to have given us the Bible, and faith in it, we are perfectly independent of her for our knowledge of that book, and its evidences of a divine original.

"7. The Roman Catholic religion, if infallible and unsusceptible of reformation, as alleged, is essentially anti-American, being opposed to the genius of all free institutions, and positively subversive of them, opposing the general reading of the scriptures, and the diffusion of useful knowledge among the whole community, so essential to liberty and the permanency of good government."

Roman Catholicism will come as close to doing everything which Jesus Christ said not do as any religion on earth. Catholics remind us of the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes during the personal ministry of Christ, but even they were not as guilty of violating the teachings of the Lord as the average Catholic is today.

We sincerely hope that our readers will find our material interesting and profitable in their own lives and their efforts to teach sincere Catholics. We welcome suggestions, questions, constructive criticism, and any material which you think we would find useful in this work.

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC—VESTIBULE BOX AND UNITY

The attitude toward the authority of the New Testament and the nature of the Lord's church that is loose, liberal and perverse is responsible for the existence of the Christian Church and Disciples of Christ with all their iniquity. Such is also the same leaven that is working in the "pro-institutional" or the "liberal" brethren who have deserted the ranks of faithful service to Christ nearly thirty years ago.

The constant effort on the part of well-meaning men to mend the fences as digression continues toward complete apostasy, leads us to problem areas we must re-study and re-examine. Such is the proposition presented over several issues of *Vanguard* by its editor, Yater Tant. He has proposed a plan which intends to bring together two opposing groups of brethren to work and worship as one body of people. I do not believe it is possible because the division involves a matter of faith and not opinion.

Besides the "box-in-the-vestibule" plan for support of orphan homes and other institutions, Yater Tant has offered another possible alternative in the same editorial of June 7, 1956. He said, "Some churches are taking up a special contribution' on one Sunday each month after their regular contribution has been taken. It is emphasized that this 'special contribution' is going to some particular work— orphan home, *Herald of Truth*, or some such project—and the regular funds of the church will not be involved.

Yater endorses this practice in his editorial with the same gusto as he does the "box in the vestibule." But "peace, harmony and unity on a 'thus saith the Lord,'" is his reason for this extreme measure.

Now hear him as he evaluates his own proposal for peace, harmony and unity: "That there are objectionable features to it we freely concede; it is admittedly a 'compromise' proposal. But it will at least allow brethren from both sides of this question to worship together."

"And is not this better than division?"

At the present time brother Tant resents having his proposal classified as a "compromise," but he made such a classification himself at the beginning of the proposition. He also approved the "special contribution" taken after the regular contribution (a second contribution) in the assembly to go for any

"good work" which the elders desired to support, if they would not cause division in the congregation by taking money from the first contribution and support any of these projects.

An All-Purpose Box

The principle that permits a "box" anywhere in the building for the purpose of collecting funds for orphan homes, *Herald of Truth*, Colleges, etc., will permit "boxes" for other desired activities in a congregation. A box could be placed anywhere in the building for any legal and moral activity that INDIVIDUALS could contribute to, and as far as I am concerned, it would stand with the vestibule box for the purpose of INDIVIDUALS contributing to orphan homes. But it is non-sense to clutter up the meeting house with collection boxes for INDIVIDUAL activities.

But we can have more than "boxes" in the vestibule. Many brethren believe the early church had "fellowship meals" in connection with their worship, and they have gone to considerable expense to provide large "fellowship halls" with kitchens and dining halls in which brethren may pass from the assembly auditorium to the fellowship hall and eat their social "fellowship" meal. This dining extravaganza costs many, many times what the finest "box-in-the-vestibule" costs, and it is paid for out of the **first** or **regular** contribution of the church on the first day of the week.

No One Will Buy Tant's Box

Brother Tant is far more naive than I think he is if he thinks brethren—even the conservative "pro-institutional" brethren—will sacrifice their "sacred right" for the church to contribute to these institutions to "do the work of the church." But assume they will yield, why bother with a "box-in-the-vestibule"? Let them do as the "anti-institutional" brethren: individuals do what they please to do as individuals, and let the church contribute only to that which is authorized in the scriptures.

Unity And The Vestibule Box

Brother Tant says: "In 1982 I hope to use *VANGUARD* in an effort to 'narrow the gap' between conservatively minded 'pro-institutional' brethren and their 'quarantined' brethren. In fact, nearly thirty years ago, I proposed a simple move which I felt could have largely averted the catastrophe which has happened—a receptacle of some sort in the vestibule of each congregation where individual Christians who had a particle interest in supporting some orphan home, a Christian college, some particular recreational center, or other institution could drop their contribution, having it plainly designated for their particular interest. Then let some individual periodically send the collected contributions to the institutions designated."

"I got a lot of 'flack' both from the 'pro' institutional

brethren and the 'anti' institutional brethren over this proposal . . .but I STILL BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE AVERTED DIVISION! It would have provided a way by which both 'pro' brethren and 'anti' brethren could have continued to worship God and work together in unity for the saving of the lost. Why was it not tried? I do not know!" (*Vanguard*, editorial, Dec, 1981, p. 3).

One would think brother Tant believes the problem is about HOW to get the money from the pockets of brethren into the treasuries of the various benevolent, educational, evangelistic, and recreational institutions? I know he does not! I have read too much from his pen in the *Bible Banner*, *The Gospel Guardian*, and even in *Vanguard* to accept that explanation. But do you know we have had to fight this question of the "WHO" and not the "HOW" with the institutional brethren every mile of the way to the present time? Brother Tant was in the battles. He knew the difference in his two debates with E. R. Harper.

Does brother Tant really believe that Guy N. Woods and Reuel Lemmons will accept his "box-in-the-vestibule" plan as a substitute for the church "from its treasury" contributing to these various eleemosynary, evangelistic, educational and social institutions? The dividing wedge is not individual Christian support of orphan homes, colleges, etc. The real issue is the CHURCH SUPPORT FROM ITS TREASURY of all these institutions.

The issue is not HOW the funds will be collected to support these institutions, but WHO will do it, the individual or the church from its treasury? How a BOX IN THE VESTIBULE can resolve the WHO completely escapes me. Surely Yater is not naive enough to believe that even the conservative "pro-institutional" brethren will not realize that they are surrendering their ground, and they will have to answer to hard nose generals like Woods and Lemmons.

I know Guy N. Woods, who has debated this question all over the country, will not sit still and allow a "box-in-the-vestibule," by which INDIVIDUALS (which has never been a question) could contribute to the institution of their choice, to substitute for his claim to the scriptural (?) right of the CHURCH to contribute FROM ITS TREASURY funds to support these human institutions.

Why The Box-In-The-Vestibule Will Not Work

Before the "quarantine" by B. C. Goodpasture and the *Gospel Advocate*, followed by those influenced by this power, and before the actual division of brethren and churches over the church supported institutional craze, the social gospel influence upon many churches, and the drift toward full fledged liberalism, no box of what ever color, size, shape or make, placed anywhere in the church building or on the grounds, would have averted a division, because the BOX-IN-THE-VESTIBULE can only serve one function: to keep the money from going into the church treasury from which

it would be taken to contribute to schools, colleges, orphan homes, homes for the aged, homes for unmarried mothers, half-way houses, hospitals, sponsoring church evangelistic programs, etc. Brethren tried to persuade the "pro-institutional" brethren not to press for the CHURCH SUPPORT of these projects that would violate the conviction and conscience of those of us who believed individuals could do many of these things, but the church from its treasury could not scripturally do so. I appealed to many elders, preachers and churches not to force church support of human institutions upon those who sincerely believed it to be wrong. Of course, they all admitted that this work could be done by individuals, but they insisted that the church could also do it, and they were determined that the church would do it, even if it meant division!

This was the same attitude toward Bible authority and human wisdom that divided the church more than a hundred years ago over the instrument of music in worship and the American Christian Missionary Society. A division among believers followed, and the Christian Church came into existence. Every plea, every argument, every effort to persuade the advocates of the musical instrument in worship and the Missionary Society to forego these things for the sake of UNITY AMONG BRETHREN fell on deaf ears and hard hearts. Now that the division has occurred, what can be done to bring these brethren together again to worship in unity and harmony? Claud F. Witty and James DeForest Murch worked several years to bring about unity without either side giving up anything. They utterly failed because it is impossible to have scriptural unity until and unless that wedge that caused the division is completely removed. The Christian Church and Disciples of Christ love instrumental music in worship and Church funded Missionary Societies more than they love the unity among brethren for which Christ prayed (John 17: 20,21).

Why Not Give The Instrument Brethren A Chance?

To establish my point I propose what I believe to be a parallel to Yater's "box-in-the-vestibule" plan to get the "pro-institutional" and the "anti-institutional" brethren together again as one body of believers worshipping and working in unity. This proposal would allow, upon the same principle held out by Tant, the instrumental music brethren to join this effort at unity of believers.

We put the "box-in-the-vestibule" or the "special contribution" for one group who want the church to support human institutions, and the "piano-in-the-back-room" for those who want to worship with the musical instrument. The piano would be piped into the auditorium by way of headphones. Those who wanted to sing to the accompaniment of the piano would use the headphones, and those who believe that it is contrary to scripture would not hear the piano and could sing without the instrument. If the song leader

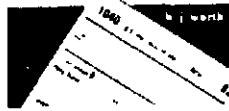
was an "instrument-man" he could use the headphones; if he was a "non-instrument-man" the piano player would have to use headphones to be able to follow his lead. In this way each could sing "together" in the same auditorium, with or without the piano, and we would have unity! Shades of logic!

Anyone who wants to can understand how far from UNITY these singers are who are singing "together" with and without the use of a piano, depending upon who is using the "piano-in-the-back-room." By the same reasoning anyone can see how far from UNITY these brethren are who are "working and worshipping" together with and without the use of church funds, depending upon who is using the "box-in-the-vestibule" or the "special contribution."

We will do well to ignore all schemes of men and try to build unity upon the word of God.

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GLEANINGS

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PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO EXISTING CONDITIONS

In our former number we dealt with facts and figures which reflect the general moral depression in our nation. In this and another article or two we shall be examining some contributing factors to these conditions.

We should be aware that, as a general rule, each generation bequeaths to the succeeding generation whatever moral or immoral values it has gleaned from its immediately preceding parentage and that each generation therefore reflects the accumulative moral and immoral values of all preceding generations. When children are born they bring no evil with them but soon are influenced by the mores of their fathers and mothers.

There is only one offsetting factor to the bequeathing of one generation's morals to the next generation. **That factor** is education! In our present context we refer to the impartation of righteousness or unrighteousness from parent to child. Overall, to the degree that parents teach and exemplify righteousness before their children, there should be, like leaven working, moral improvement as population changes. Likewise to the extent that Christians convert those outside their families to Christ to that same degree there will be moral improvement.

While it is true that each generation reflects the good qualities of its parentage, this is not the primary concern of this present study. We are interested herein with **the evil influences present parents are passing to their children.**

Almost 45 years ago I heard the then aged T. Q. Martin say to an audience of 500 parents and children at David Lipscomb College: "As parents we have certified our potatoes, tomatoes, corn and peas; we have registered our cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry; and we have turned our sons and daughters out to graze!" He then observed, "Boys and girls, the greatest fear I have for your generation is that most of you will turn out just like your pappies and mummies!" He then proceeded to upbraid the parents for their negligence of good moral examples in their own lives and their failure to teach diligently their children the need for personal moral and spiritual uprightness.

In keeping with this long-ago observation, I submit here some quotations from an address- "Concern About

Unconcern"—I made during the 1981 Florida College Annual Lectures. These quotes appeared in *Searching The Scriptures*, June 1981:

"I confess to you that within the last ten to fifteen years I see a definite reassessment of moral values and attitudes which were not spawned here, but were brought to this campus . . . My brethren, God's people have always lived in the midst of the worldly ways of worldly thinking and godless people. Christians are said to be 'in' but 'not of' this world. Nevertheless, when Christian parents tolerate in their children moral practices generally characteristic of the non-Christian world, there is no way for such children suddenly to become lily-white because they are exposed to the controlled environment of this campus. "I bring no wholesale indictment against any parent or child in particular. Yet, both inside and outside homes I visit, more and more I see a lessening of respect for the hoary head, less reverence where worship is taking place, and more scoffing at regulations imposed by both public and private school officials. I observe an increasingly sloven 'don't care' attitude toward neat, clean dress habits and the type clothing worn in public. I observe scanty, sexually suggestive, and often shameless attire worn by both male and female, plus a disgustingly increasing fondling of the bodies of the opposite sex, often in the presence of the youth's own parents! I see a 'don't care attitude toward what older and wiser heads suggest as proper behavior and all this coupled with a 'nobody's going to tell me what I am going to think, say or do disposition.' These are some of the things I continue to observe in families of men usually thought of, in many churches, as leaders and feeders of the flock of God.

"Parents cannot wait till their children are ready for junior high, senior high school, or college, to start discipline. These same parents must learn that they must begin by loving and respecting each other as husbands and wives. We spend fortunes and the first twenty years of our lives learning to make a living but precious little time learning to make a life together with the opposite sex.

"We spend years preparing for livelihoods, occupations and professions and little or no time preparing our minds or those of our children for love and tenderness, the patience and politeness, the thoughtfulness and unselfishness, the common sense and common decency, the mutual respect and the mutual responsibilities of marriage.

Shall we never learn and shall we never teach our children that happiness is not discovered in sex alone? Shall husband and wife never learn that happiness is a state of mind created by two persons committed to God and to each other in the completing of each other's whole being and personality?" Among parental contributions to existing conditions. I submit that **inconsistencies between parental teaching and practice** is a major one. The following letter, written to one of the most widely read columnists in the world, very accurately points up the problem:

"I'm a 19-year old girl who is getting more and more confused about the word 'morality.' Who decides what is morally right? My parents? Society? The law? or should I make the decision myself?

"My parents are divorced and I live with my mother. She keeps company with a nice enough man, but they go away together for weekends and I'm sure they do more than hold hands. I don't know why they don't get married.

"Meanwhile my mother doesn't want me to stay out too late with my boyfriend. He's in law school and we can't afford to get married until he graduates. "He doesn't see anything wrong in premarital sex, but it just doesn't seem right to me. I've been able to hold out so far, but why should I? The pill is available, so there is no danger of my getting pregnant. Besides, we love each other, so what's wrong with making love?

"I'm sure my mom thinks it's okay for her to do what she does, but she'd have a fit if I did it. How come the difference in standards?

—(signed) PUZZLED."

How embarrassingly true it is that what one is speaks so loudly that the listener hears nothing he says! This was obviously the case with this young daughter and her mother. With the example pictured above it is little wonder that the daughter had any moral standards or strength whatever! This young girl put her finger on the panic button present in too many parents. Our children are not "dumb dumbs" but, for the most part are alert to detect the inconsistencies between parental teaching and practice. What parent can rightly teach one lifestyle to his or her children while practicing another that repudiates every iota taught by word of mouth? "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1). Christians are exhorted to "put away all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1). Parents are no exception to this rule. Nothing can frustrate a child more than to learn that a parent is

teaching him one thing and practicing another. The natural result for the child is to conclude that if an evil practice is right for the father or mother it is suitable for the child or else it will tend to persuade the child that he can do what he desires without serious repercussions from parents. If not, why not?

Inconsistency, however, usually involves more than that between parental practice and parental precepts. Erratic parental demands of a child may confuse the child to such point that he may not honestly know what a parent expects and this erraticism may well lead to serious emotional problems for the child. Such consistent inconsistency by a parent could reflect that parent's childhood treatment by his own parentage. Sad, sad, sad!

This problem of inconsistency may exemplify itself in a form other than simply toward one child. It is often reflected in partiality between two or more children. The mistake of parental favoritism is well illustrated in the story of Isaac and Rebekah toward Esau and Jacob as well as Jacob toward Joseph (Gen 25:28; 27:1-45). Childhood jealousies often have their carry-over into adult life, sometimes even to a second or third generation, and frequently manifests itself in estate settlements.

It is truly lamentable when a child says, "My greatest problem is my parents." At this point it is probably too late to rebridge the chasm of separation between parent and child.

Our next installment will deal with other contributions parents are making toward the moral breakdown of modern society.

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WHEN THE PREACHER IS AN ELDER

For about ten years this writer has served as an elder as well as an evangelist. From that vantage point please allow me to draw on personal experience.

For one thing, serving in a two-fold capacity is a very heavy task. Either one by itself is a big job. When combined they can be downright formidable and intimidating. But this should not mitigate against it being done, all else being equal. Some evangelists cannot do it and some churches will not allow it. Some places it will work and other places it will be a bone of contention depending upon the parties involved.

Since desire to serve plus ability and qualification to serve are key factors when elders are being selected, then all such men have a right to be considered. No one should be omitted because he is the preacher nor should he be put on the list because he is the preacher. He, too, is an individual. (Believe it or not!)

The first thing many think about in such cases is how will this relate to the disbursing of the funds. Usually what is really in their minds is that the preacher might have something to say about his own support. God forbid! This nearly worries some brethren to death. Well, if he is the right kind of person there will be no problem provided the other members are also the right kind. If he is not the right kind he should not even serve as the evangelist let alone serve as an elder. Usually the ones who raise all the questions about the support are the ones that need to be watched.

Let me say that all of the elders have the same right to participate in every decision (including the financial ones). If the elder-preacher chooses to exercise that right, he should not be prohibited. If he chooses to waive that right to involve himself in certain decisions which may have a bearing on himself personally, he has the right to do so. A proper background of teaching on such things **prior** to the appointment of elders will eliminate a lot of these otherwise troublesome questions. From time to time this might need to be repeated for the benefit of new members.

All elders are to be selected by the congregation. When additions are made to the eldership, the pattern of selection should be the same. Only the congregation selects and causes elders to be appointed. This is not the prerogative of the preacher alone or of the other elders. Likewise, when an elder needs to be recalled, the

ones who selected him to start with are the ones to recall him. For elders to "fire" one of their own is without precedent in the Scriptures. The congregation "appoints" and "dis-appoints."

There can be some distinct advantages when the preacher is one of the elders. He can integrate his teaching efforts more closely to the work which together they have planned. This can enhance his preaching as well as his oversight. When this happens, the whole church is benefited.

When the preacher is one of the elders, he will need to be at home more. He cannot be gone three or four months out of the year and be a good elder. This will tend to cripple the eldership because many matters that need to be considered might have to wait for his return. If a preacher is unwilling to limit his gospel meeting work when he is serving as an elder, he ought not to serve in that capacity. If he chooses to hold a few meetings, he should so space them out over the year so as not to be gone too long at the time. You cannot oversee the local flock from a neighboring state or country.

Some fear if the preacher is an elder, that he will intimidate the others and overshadow them. Some preachers have been heard to say this. If we are talking about "qualified" men the argument is invalid and who is willing to advocate the appointment of unqualified men to the eldership? Granted, the brethren sometimes select and appoint unqualified men. However, at the beginning of this series of articles we made it clear that our beginning point would be "qualified men". So much is bound up in that statement. If preachers who serve as elders should seek to intimidate or overshadow their fellow shepherds, then we must change the subject and start talking about the qualifications of elders. Any elder, preacher or otherwise, who is not qualified, should not be appointed. Likewise, if any should become disqualified they should either resign or be recalled.

Prominence in the eldership is not equal to **preeminence**. All of the apostles were equal as ambassadors of Christ but all of them were not as prominent as Paul and Peter. In an eldership this may also be true. One elder may be more prominent than the rest. The preacher might be that one or it might be one of the others. Some get more involved in what they are doing and they therefore become more prominent. This does not reflect on the others and the good work they may be doing.

NEXT ISSUE: Problems That Arise

WHEN YOU MOVE—Please allow two months for change of address notices. We have a cut-off date for changes each month. *Thanks for your help.*

Restoration Footnotes

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MISTAKES IN RESTORING THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH (PART 2)

(Note: The mistakes of the early restorers of New Testament Christianity that are being discussed in these articles are the kind that had a direct bearing on the course of the movement, or at least a sizeable segment of it. Your attention is called to the introduction in part one for the nature and purpose of this study.)

The Failure to Maintain The Spirit Of Christ

One of the first weaknesses apparent among the pioneers of the return to the ancient order of things in America pertains to an attitude contrary to that exemplified in Christ. As the movement succeeded in drawing thousands into its fold, many of the brethren began to display a rather haughty disposition. Barton W. Stone became aware of this and in 1832 wrote:

At the commencement of our struggle for Christian liberty, we acted on the defensive—our weapons were those afforded us by the Bible. These, in the spirit of humility and unceasing prayer, we wielded to good effect against the combined, the mighty and innumerable forces of opponents. Our only hope, confidence and strength, was the Lord. In this humble war against such fearful odds, we firmly stood, gained ground, and prevailed beyond all calculation—public opinion was in our favor and multitudes crowded to the standard of truth and liberty. Here, pride, that busy sin, imperceptibly began to inflate us on account of our successes. (*Christian Messenger*, 1832, p. 198-199.)

Strangely, it was "the scourge of Shakerism", which invaded the Restoration ranks and carried off many brethren, that Stone credits with saving the church from destruction by its pride. He said except for this, "what might have been our end . . . God only knows". But the cure was not permanent. In a sermon preached not long before his death in 1844, Stone was still disturbed by this problem. He said:

My dear brethren, we have advanced and become a great people. Now is the time of danger, now there is need of humility, watchfulness and prayer . . . Instead of thanksgiving and praise to God, because he has so wonderfully prospered our labors in uniting so many thousands, it is to be

feared that pride may yet succeed, and spoil all our works. (F.L. Rowe, compiler, **Pioneer Sermons and Addresses**, p. 150.)

This proud spirit displayed itself in arrogance, concern for numbers, and rashness. James E. Matthews, one of the stable leaders of the Restoration in Alabama and Mississippi, in the letter to the editors of the *Christian Messenger*, wrote:

I have long been the advocate of reformation, but I review with extreme regret the spirit which seems to prevail among many of those who profess to be reformers . . . Teachers of the religion of Jesus, should feel so solemnly the responsibility resting upon them, as not lightly to proclaim as truth that which is questionable. But this is probably not the greatest evil that is obtaining among us; especially our young brethren. It appears to me that there is too much rashness and self-confidence with a censorious spirit manifested in their discourses, for them to be profitable . . . I have seen so much of this, as I think, that the cry of reformation from such, has almost become disgusting to me. (*Christian Messenger*, 1832, p. 376.)

Matthews believed that some brethren clearly failed to maintain "the spirit of Christ". "Many of us have reformed in theory", he observed, "but there is a greater and more thorough reformation needed". He referred in particular to "the humility, kindness, forbearance and love—that contempt for show and parade—of popularity and worldly advantage which shone so conspicuously in the primitive saints". The fruits of the Spirit named by Paul, he said, "appear almost to have fled" to the disgrace of the reformers, being "rarely" found among those "who call themselves Christians". (Ibid., p. 376-377.)

A failure of those who claim to follow the meek and lowly Nazarene to remain humble in the teaching and practice of the Divine will has plagued the church to some extent throughout its modern history. We sometimes forget that a restoration of "the spirit of Christ" is as essential to pleasing God as the restoration of the doctrine, faith, and practice of the early church in other matters.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5.)

The Failure To Temper The Spirit Of Controversy

The Restoration movement was born and flourished in controversy. Stone said, "We had to combat for every inch of ground we possessed, and every fortress we gained". (Rowe, op. cit.) But spiritual warfare became such a way of life among the early restorers that it actually became a hindrance.

This spirit of combat was not confined to sermons and their informal aftermath. It was injected into the magazines and erected into forensic occasions of public debate, attendant with the excitement of a football game. Nearly all the early Disciple preachers engaged in this sort of thing with great gusto. They went at their task of

proclaiming the gospel like the soldiers of an attacking army who expected to sweep all before them. In this atmosphere of almost universal debate, individual sermons partook not only of the spirit but also the techniques of argumentation and debate. (Dwight E. Stevenson, *Disciple Preaching in the First Generation*, p. 79.) Both Stone and Alexander Campbell began to witness with misgivings the spirit of contention that prevailed in the brotherhood, especially as they watched the preaching of younger men. Campbell, himself a skilled controversialist and debater, tried to temper the argumentative spirit in the 1830's, but for decades to come, the brethren generally imitated the adviser and ignored his advice.

Stone saw this spirit as affecting harm to the disciples' cause. In describing the attitude that prevailed among many of the Kentucky Christians early in the nineteenth century, he later wrote:

Here again we erred; we substituted offensive, instead of defensive war, and attacked our opposers in their strongly entrenched speculations and opinions. In this, we appeared to succeed; and the judgment of multitudes was, that our opinions were more correct. In this offensive warfare we gained popularity, but lost much of humility, and fervent piety. The loss infinitely exceeded the gain. This was seen, felt and deplored. We had zeal, but it was too much to increase our numbers, and to disseminate and confirm our opinions. For a world in ruins there were comparatively few tears, few sighs, and but feeble exertions—sectarians were proscribed by some, not in the spirit of meekness and love, but with a bitterness unbecoming to an humble Christian. Many seemed to glory in the flesh, I mean, in having many persons of influence and wealth to join our ranks. Here truly we have erred and gone astray. These acts I disapprove and am ashamed of them. [*Christian Messenger*, op. cit., P. 199.)

Dwight E. Stevenson, in his study of preaching among the first generation restorers, concludes in regard to the spirit of controversy which prevailed that, "It is perhaps for this reason that early Disciples never produced a significant literature of devotion". (Stevenson, op. cit.) Historian W.E. Garrison, without indicating the motive, concurs in the paucity of devotional literature by the disciples of Christ even up until the time of the Civil War. He said:

The early Disciples were devout men but they failed to write devotional books. They read their Bible and wrote their arguments but extemporized their devotions. (Garrison and DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, a History*, p. 545.)

Nor did the periodicals of the day give much space to devotional material. Whether due to the spirit of controversy or to neglect for some other reason, not much edification and instruction in righteousness is apparent in the early writings of the Restoration. This

within itself was an obvious mistake of major proportions.

It is not wrong to earnestly contend for the faith; it would be wrong not to. But the truth of the gospel must be preached in love.

"Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2).

Insight

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE AND PROSPERITY

Dr. David E. Harrell, in his effort to show the evolution of the healing revivals of the 1950's into the neo-pentecostal movement of the 1960's and 70's, says, "Perhaps the most important new idea of the charismatic revival was the emphasis on prosperity. The belief that God would grant prosperity to his people was an old tenet of the movement; even in the 30's Thomas Wyatt had considered the doctrine as the foundation of his ministry. But in the 1960's the message almost supplanted the earlier emphasis on healing; every evangelist came to advertise his own 'master key' to financial success. Third John 2 became the most quoted text in the revival."¹

The doctrine that the atonement provides prosperity is an emphatic part of the media evangelist's means of attracting participants and inviting them into his personal ministry. The assurances run from the mild to the extreme, but almost all the charismatic preachers are today selling some sort of formula for financial well-being. Pat Boone, who left the Church of Christ in preference for the new pentecostal movement, is known to preach, however mildly, that his "new discovery" brought him from the brink of bankruptcy to a new financial stability. Dr. Frederick J. Eikenrenkoetter II, better known as "Reverend Ike," has taken the promises of prosperity popularized by the radio and television evangelists to such an extreme that he is heard to scream, "you can't lose with the stuff I use." At collection time in his United Palace And Science of Living Institute at Broadway and 175th St. in New York, he has been heard to admonish the audience, "Please do not give change. Change makes me nervous in the service." He further advises people to use mind power "in order to get green power." Among his other suggestions: "Don't be a hypocrite about money. Say, 'I like money. I need money. I want money.'"²

"Reverend Ike" and others of his stripe are extremists regarding prosperity and the Abundant Life theory. One could no more judge the people's theories concerning financial success by him than he could judge their doctrines concerning spiritual gifts by the snake handlers which appear in the movement from time to time. However, we must realize that there is the seed of the same excesses in the modern "blessing pacts" offered by the likes of Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker or John Osteen. Brother Al, with his "Health and Happiness Plan," Oral Roberts' "Seed Faith," and the late A.A. Allen's "Key To Financial Success" all end up at the same place: that atonement guarantees financial security, the freedom of economic stability.

Did God actually promise that when a man obeys the gospel, accepts Christ as his personal Saviour, he will be blessed with financial blessings? Is there scripture evidence that if a man comes into a right relationship with God and obtains an abundant life, that he will receive as a part of that abundant life financial security? The modern-day pentecostal minister says he does.

Jerry Sholes says of the Oral Roberts concept, "the concept of SEED FAITH is simple. You have to give something; give it because you have a need that you want to be met, and then you have to expect a miracle from God."³ Kenneth Hagin says, "Do you mean God is going to make us rich? Yes, that's what I mean." Even though he proceeds to explain that they would not all be millionaires, the idea of financial blessings as a result of atonement is still the message. He further states, after having quoted Philippians 4:19, "All your needs includes your financial and material needs as well as others."⁴ One of the lesser-lights, Brother Al, says, "All of Satan's demons in hell cannot stop God from blessing you Financially (sic) when you step out on God's precious promises, according to Philippians 4:19, 'I shall supply ALL your needs according to my riches in glory.'"⁵

There is considerable controversy among the mainline pentecostals and the new charismatics about how far the preachers can go in promising financial prosperity. "In a 1980 conference at Oral Roberts University, ORU professor Charles Farah read a paper attacking Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and Fred Price, as well as some others, concerning their financial blessings doctrine, which he described as 'confession and possession' teaching. In his address, Farah cited many histories of persons who had been disillusioned by the teaching, although he admitted that the faith-formula teaching is 'without question the most attractive message being preached today or for that matter, in the whole history of the church.'"⁶ And so, after reading a paper rebuking the doctrine, the ORU professor still maintains that the promises of miraculous financial blessings are a vital part of the pentecostal ministry.

While many of the Abundant Life evangelists make loud warnings against money as a main priority and warn against putting material things ahead of God,

they still preach a health-wealth gospel. Gordon Fee puts it well, "the fault, of course, lies not with such isolated truths, but with the bottom line, which always come back to one continual re-affirmation: God WILLs the (financial) prosperity of every one of his children, and therefore for a Christian to be in poverty is to be outside God's intended will; it is to be living a Satan-defeated life."⁷

Jesus teachings are contrary to today's popular theories about financial blessings accompanying conversion. In Matt. 19:16-22, Jesus told the rich young ruler that "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me." Paul said that Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). He further enjoined, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus ..." (Phil. 2:5) and then proceeds to show how Christ gave himself for us. These and many other similar passages are irrefutable indications that the religion of Jesus is a giving religion not a receiving one.

Furthermore, there is ample Biblical evidence that accepting Christ had quite the opposite effect as that promised by the hawkers of the health-wealth gospels of today. For instance, in Hebrews 11:35-39, there is a list of the awful treatments extended to many on account of their faith in God. In I Pet. 4:12-16, Peter warns that "fiery trials" would come and that they very likely would be called on to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings," but that such sufferings should serve to strengthen their faith. In 2 Tim. 3:12, there is recorded the outright promise that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. The emphasis of the proponents of the Abundant Life theory on the financial is not a Bible emphasis, but a deluded and, I am afraid, poorly motivated interpretation of Scripture.

The appeal by the Abundant Life theorists, rather than being toward selfless and sacrificial love, is an appeal to the baser sense of greed and personal financial success. It places emphasis on the mundane, the corporeal, and not on the spiritual—mindedness which the law of Christ enjoins. "Despite all protests to the contrary, at its base the cult of prosperity offers a man-centered, rather than a God-centered, theology."⁸ As Gustav Allen says, "Every attempt to transform Christian faith into a religion of satisfaction and enjoyment is thereby doomed to failure. Egocentricity masquerading in the robes of religion is excluded."⁹

Furthermore, the Abundant Life theory is based on a false premise regarding giving. It affirms that we are to give in order to get. Such a motive is unscriptural and anti-God. Listen to the appeals: Brother Al says, "Just as soon as you mail your first page . . . start looking for that better job, that new home, that raise in pay, that new car, or whatever you desire ..." ¹⁰ "Rev." Ike: "The Blessing Plan is the idea of success and prosperity working in your mind, moving you to give."¹¹ The Christmas newsletter from Pastor David Epley of the Baptist Church of the Good Shepherd

sends a small piece of paper it calls a "Billfold Blessing." It contains instructions on how to use it to gain prosperity and protection. In his appeal Epley says, "Now take the Billfold Blessing I have enclosed and carry it in your wallet for the next several weeks. It's your blessing of protection and prosperity."¹² But that blessing, according to Epley is possible only for those who give to his ministry. "Rev." Ewing's recent advertising piece offered "Anointing oil to turn on God's healing and prosperity blessings in your life," further stating that "one lady gave \$20 in our prayer meeting and was blessed with a very large financial blessing," to which he adds by way of instruction, "when you anoint your money with this anointing oil anoint every bill you have, make a cross on every bill," and then tells them to send the \$20 in order to receive a greater financial blessing.¹³ These, and literally dozens of others like them, show the ridiculous extremes to which these preachers have gone in promoting the give-so-you-can-get theme of their ministries. And yet the religion of the Bible shows how the giving spirit is one of a pure motive, one which gives without regard to reciprocity, one which gives without regard to the worthiness of the recipient. That is the giving spirit of our Lord and it is the giving spirit he recommends.

That the Bible promises deliverance and vindication for the Christian who must suffer on account of his faith is obvious. But it is not an immediate deliverance. The promise is eventual, as the Hebrew writer declares, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36). Paul warns, "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). And to the Corinthians he says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far greater and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). And to the Romans, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). The Bible view of prosperity, while certainly visible, is obviously eschatological.

The doctrine of a health and wealth gospel is being promoted, along with the rest of the pentecostal notions, in all areas of today's religious life. It is time the people of God raised their voices against it. It has appeal. And when it is connected to the already popular doctrines which relate to a new world concept of religion, it is just the materialistic tool needed to further dupe an already susceptible people into thinking religion is more for the here and now than for the hereafter. The atonement of the Bible is a purely spiritual matter and the blessings that attach to it are primarily spiritual in nature. The promises of God do not give assurance of financial prosperity nor of perennial health. The theory of the Abundant Life, furthermore, is not a Bible doctrine, because it does not appeal to your sense of guilt, nor promote godly

sorrow. It preaches a doctrine of health, wealth, and happiness while the Bible teaches a doctrine of service to God.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE*, by Dr. David E. Harrell, Jr., published by Indiana Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1975, Pg. 229 ² *ESQUIRE MAGAZINE*, June, 1973, "The Sweetheart Of The Divine Universe," by William C. Martin. ³ *GIVE ME THAT PRIME TIME RELIGION*, by Jerry Sholes, published by Hawthorn Books, New York, 1979, Pg. 25 ⁴ *REDEEMED*, by Kenneth E. Hagin, published by Hagin Ministries, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1980, Pg. 8. ⁵ *UNITED FAITH MAGAZINE*, edited by Brother Al Ministries, Fresno, California, Pg. 15 ⁶ *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*, "Charismatic Leaders Seeking Faith For Their Own Healing" Pg. 44-45 ⁷ *THE DISEASE OF THE HEALTH AND WEALTH GOSPELS*, by Dr. Gordon D. Fee, published by Word For Today, Costa Mesa, California, Pg. 3 ⁸ *Ibid*, Pg. 9 ¹⁰ *UNITED FAITH MAGAZINE*, op. cit., Pg. 15 ¹¹ *THE PREACHERS*, by James Morris, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1973, Pg. 173 ¹² Mail-out advertising piece ¹³ Mail-out advertising piece

**MY SERVANTS
THE PROPHETS**



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**THE PLACE OF TOTAL COMMITMENT AND
SPIRITUAL REVIVAL**

Part 2

As we discussed in last month's study, Nehemiah called Israel to enter into a covenant committing themselves to God for their lifetime, and for future generations. We must turn our hearts and lives to Him today in the same type of total commitment. This commitment is not to be made to a preacher with a particular style of church growth. It is not to be made to a group of elders or to a building, but rather, the commitment that will keep the church in existence in this generation is a total commitment to Jesus Christ. Nehemiah sought in the covenant found in chapter 9 commitment to the word of God, to the commands of God, to purity in marriage, and to worship on the Sabbath. The terms of our covenant for today are just as needed as those of Nehemiah's day, and our covenant also has terms that need to be heeded. Let us notice the terms of our covenant.

Our Lord said that to live you must die. Matt. 16:25: "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake shall find it." The life we are to lose, to give away, to turn our backs on is this natural physical life. The life we gain when we do this is the spiritual life that our Lord came to give. John 10:10: "I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly." So many people are looking for "LIFE" but they don't know where to find it. They are looking into Eastern cults, material possessions, and long weekends with the boat and camper. Yet, they are living what Schaeffer calls, "Ash Heap Lives." They are empty and they don't know why. Our Lord said that I can fill you full of life, so full that it over-flows on all sides, but for Me to do this, you have to give up on the life you now have. You must totally commit yourself to Me! Just how many Christians do you know who are totally committed to the Lord? Demas is an example of too many of us in the church. He was listed with great men of the Lord's second team. In Col. 4:14, he is listed with Luke and in Philemon 24, he is listed with Mark. Two are authors of the life of Christ, but Demas just wasn't totally committed, so he left the Lord and forsook Paul "BECAUSE HE LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD." He was a man of divided loyalties! James tells us the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. The Renaissance Man is dead. Striving to excel at any and all things

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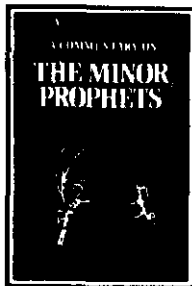
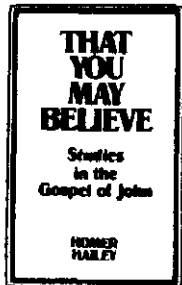
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materialistic is just folly in this life. While Demas is an example of a man who failed, we see David as a man who succeeded in his commitment.

In Psalms 138:8, we see David's prayer: "The Lord will fulfill his PURPOSE for me, your love, O Lord, endures forever, do not abandon the works of your hands." Notice that David prayed that he might be able to fulfill the purpose that God had for him and that the purpose would be worked out in the power of the Lord in his own life. Now, when we come to Acts 13:36, we find Paul making one of the most outstanding statements ever made concerning any individual in the Bible, "for when David, after he served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep." Yes, David prayed that he would serve God's plan for him, and 1000 years later Paul said it was exactly what He did! How can a person stand and look at all the options before him and make the proper selection, so that it could be put on his tombstone that he "fulfilled the purpose which God had for him?" Well, Verse 22 of Acts 13 gives us the answer as to David: "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do ALL MY WILL." How could it be said of David that he fulfilled God's purpose for him? Simply that he was totally committed to DO GOD'S WILL.

There are four areas of David's life that show this commitment to do God's will:

1. **First, he was a servant.** He cared for the sheep and cared for his brothers. Too many will not fulfill God's purpose for them because they have never learned to serve others. Seldom a week goes by that a bulletin does not run an article about how useless it is for the preacher to visit the sick and how he is not the pastor. True, the preacher is not the pastor, but he is a servant. Just as certainly as the Lord stripped to a towel and washed the disciples feet, the preachers could spend some of their time and effort in visiting those who desperately need encouragement. Every congregation is divided into two groups: the takers and the givers. The takers are the ones always demanding attention but never giving to anyone else. It is not until we learn to serve that we will see God's will done in our lives.

2. **David knew how to take abuse, not only from his enemies, but also from his friends.** The 52nd Psalm is the agony suffered by David because his friend betrayed his position to Saul who was seeking to kill him. It is difficult to accept betrayal from anyone, even an enemy, but when it is your best friend, it really becomes difficult to continue to seek to do God's will.

3. **Thirdly, David's heart overflowed with God's word and with David's praise for Him.** Since David was a warrior all his life, he knew that every soldier of the Philistines, Moabites, Amorites and Edomites would have given anything to cut off David's head. David lived one step ahead of death at every turn, while he was obeying God's will, and this developed for David a dependence upon God's providence and help every day that he lived. Under this much pressure, David still lived a life so close to God that he was called a "man after God's own heart." No one's life can

fulfill the purpose of God, unless it is a life spent in meditation with God during the night watches, for unless that life is spent in prayer and devotion, God doesn't have to preserve that life for even one more day.

4. **David realized he was a sinner.** Ps. 51 shows his humiliation at the words of Nathan, "thou art the man." Broken in repentance, David pours out his soul to God. No arrogance in recounting all the good things he had done up to this point in his life and which he already had to his credit. He was still a broken man. Again, it is not until God breaks us that He then can use us. David fulfilled God's purpose because He was totally committed to God's will.

Consider all the causes that people are committed to that are worthless. The problem in the church is that too many are giving FIRST PLACE DEDICATION TO SECOND RATE CAUSES. We have dedicated ourselves to being the best trap-shooter in the country, to being the best model-airplane flyer, to being the best fisherman, or to being the best ball player, and all the while the world's population is going to Hell. Years ago Lenin said to a room filled with those of a radical new movement: "Give me 4 totals, and I will give you the world,—"TOTAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE CAUSE, TOTAL DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE, TOTAL DISCIPLINE IN THE CAUSE, and TOTAL ACTION FOR THE CAUSE." From that one room full of men, today the world is one-third Communist. They did not spread Communism to one-third of the world by going deer-hunting, by weekend trip taking, by working overtime to get ahead on the job, or by model airplane flying.

Why is there such a need for total commitment, both in the day of Nehemiah, in the day of our Lord, and in our own day? The example of the Lord with the disciples gives us the answer. Beginning in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:10-12, He started to prepare them for future suffering when they would be tempted to give up their commitment. Then in Matt. 10:17-19, He was emphasizing it again. Then in Matt. 16 he tells them two shocking truths: (1) that He must die, and (2) that they must take up their crosses and follow Him . . . that they must die! Finally, in John 15:18-20, He said that the world hated Him and it would hate them too. He knew what was ahead for them and that they would have to be totally committed in order to be able to withstand the force of persecution. He was telling them that they would have to give up everything to follow Him. It is interesting to read Solzhenitsyn's THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO, the Chapter on "The Interrogation", to see that he said exactly what our Lord said over 2,000 years ago:

"So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?

"What do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap? "From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you.

At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: 'My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there's nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom, I am condemned to die—now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me' "Confronted by such a prisoner, the interrogator will tremble.

"Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory."

His statement here says you have to give up living to endure: "My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there's nothing to be done about it... I no longer have any property whatsoever." By this statement he was confirming that only with this outlook of total commitment can one withstand the persecution when it comes. Exactly what our Lord said!

Where are we in our level of commitment? Is there any way to evaluate as to what degree of commitment we have made to Christ our Lord? Yes, there are some easy steps in our own lives which we can observe which will help us make that decision. Each one of us is somewhere along this path:

Stage One: "I will do what I want. I don't

Stage Two: care what God wants me to do."
"If God will give me what I want first, then I'll give Him what He wants."
Stage Three: "I give God what He wants first, with faith that He will then give me what I want."
Stage Four: "I will give God what He wants, regardless of what He gives me."

Do you see the shift in focus from SELF to God? We sing the song, All Of Self And None Of Thee, in the first verse. Then by the time we get to the last verse, it is All Of Thee And None Of Self. It is not until we are ready to tell the Lord, ... "I don't care what you do with me in this life, the only thing I want is to glorify your name, and to fulfill your purpose for me," will we be totally committed to Him as Lord. We have to give Him the right to give us health or sickness, fruitfulness or even emptiness, company or loneliness, financial prosperity or serious want. Give Him your families and your loved ones; give Him your material possessions. Give Him your hopes and dreams. Give Him your most cherished possession of your heart. Then say: "Lord, it is all yours. I want your will, no matter what you do for me." This is the kind of commitment of the heart which will lead to fruitfulness in the external deeds which we so often speak about. Nehemiah sought to commit the people of his day with a Covenant. The Lord seeks to commit the people of our day with a Cross.

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

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

MILLINER—REYNOLDS DEBATE

RONNY MILLINER of Middlebourne, West Virginia will meet Jerry Reynolds, Baptist, of Parkersburg, West Virginia in debate Feb. 21-24. The first two nights will be in the building of the Fair Ave. church of Christ in Middlebourne. The last two nights will be held in the conference room of the Holiday Inn located at the intersection of 1-77 and U.S. Route 50. Each session begins at 7:30 P.M. Ronny Milliner will be affirming the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, with Jerry Reynolds representing the Baptist position. For further information you may write Ronny Milliner, P.O. Box 88, Middlebourne, WV 26149, or phone 304-758-4313.

WILSON ADAMS, 6334 Auburn Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737—In order to help improve our teaching program, the Wildercroft church (suburban Washington, D.C.) has invited Rodney and Carla Miller to come and work with us April 3-8. The Millers are well known for their dedication to spiritual instruction and will be able to offer helpful suggestions on (1) discipleship training, (2) improving Bible classes, (3) implementing the program. Their book, UP THE STAIRWAY TO TEACHING, will be used as a study guide for the series. Rodney Miller will instruct the men and Carla Miller will teach the women at 7:30 each night. If you live along the east coast and would like to attend but need a place to stay, please write me at the above address or phone 301-474-8133. We will try to arrange accommodations for you to share this profitable week with us.

LECTURESHIP—YOAKUM, TEXAS

The church in Yoakum, Texas plans a lecture series in the Community Center Feb. 25-27. The following speakers and subjects will be presented:

"The Attributes and Character of God"—Joe Fitch "God's Plan of Salvation"—Dee Bowman "The New Testament Church of Today"—Elmer Moore "The Cause and Origin of Division—Does God Accept It?"—W.R. Jones

"The Grace of God—How It Works"—Wayne Partain "The Biblical Doctrine of Faith—How It Saves"—Clyde Carter "Works of Many Which Save"—Barry Pennington "The Security of Saints—Can Man Fall From Salvation?"—Robert Goodman

"Putting God Above All Else"—Eddie Callender, Jr. "The Christian's Strength Is in Christ and His Word"—Kevan O'Banion

"The Christian's Duty to the Church"—Warren King

"The Christian's Attitudes"—Curtis Wubbena

Call Terry Starling at 512-293-5423 for more information.

ROY S. BRADSHAW, P.O. Box 867, Vernon, TX 76384—I have been working with the church which meets at 4800 College Dr. since August 1, 1982. The congregation is about four years old and about

23 in number. I have found them to be strong in the faith and commend them for their Christian attitude. We are located on U.S. 70, south of U.S. 287, between Dallas and Amarillo (55 miles N.W. of Wichita Falls), on the west end of Vernon. We stand for the truth and are opposed to any innovations of human origin. Tom Baker, Jr. of Dallas just concluded a very fine gospel meeting for us in late November. Should you be passing through Vernon we would be happy to have you stop and visit with us. We meet Sunday mornings at 9:30 for Bible study and 10:30 for public worship and again Sunday evenings at 6. Also, at 7:30 Wednesday evenings for Bible study. My phone number is 817-552-7306.

HERSCHEL E. PATTON, 7637 Fleming Hills Dr., S.W., Huntsville, AL 35802—In mid August I retired from "located work and moved back to Huntsville, Alabama from whence I fill appointments, hold meetings and conduct special studies with churches inviting me. The elders at Jordan Park here in Huntsville, where I preached for over five years, invited Reba and me to work and worship with them, when not preaching elsewhere, and we have thus committed ourselves.

Since moving here, I have preached in Scottsboro, at Jordan Park in Huntsville, Cullman, and Savannah, Tennessee. I will be in a Monday—Friday meeting at the Eastside church in Scottsboro, Alabama Nov. 29-Dec. 3, preaching a series on "Marriage And It's Responsibilities." I have promised to help more in Savannah, Tennessee (Savannah Heights) while they are seeking a man to move there. My health is excellent—able to do as much work as ever—since my heart surgery last year. I am happy to be kept busy preaching the word where ever I am needed for meetings, classes, or studies of special themes. Such activities have been somewhat curtailed since last year's surgery and our move to Huntsville, but I am now able, and have the time, for more of this kind of work.

LEWIS—SMITH DEBATE

JULIAN R. SNELL, Frankfort, KY 40601—On the nights of December 6-7 and 9-10, Harry Lewis, Christian, met Gerald Smith, Baptist, in debate at Lexington, KY. The proposition, "A child of God can so sin as to be lost in hell" was discussed, with Lewis in the affirmative the first two nights and Smith in the negative. The last two nights Smith took the affirmative with the proposition being changed by "cannot" to reflect the Baptist position. Attendance ranged from 300-400 for the sessions.

Harry Lewis, preacher for the Liberty Road church in Lexington, has a daily call-in radio program. Gerald Smith, who preaches for the Northside Baptist Church in Lexington, apparently prompted by what he heard on the program, called in and challenged brother Lewis for the discussion. During the course of the debate it became apparent that Smith had been a regular unidentified caller on Lewis' program as questions and answers there given made up a prominent part of Smith's argumentation. Much out of the ordinary for present day Baptists was the aggressive spirit of Mr. Smith and his associates in challenging for other debates. Propositions were signed during the discussion for a debate on "essentiality of baptism" and arrangements are in the making to debate the "origin and name of the church."

The first two nights of the debate were held at the Northside Baptist Church where Harry Lewis affirmed. The last two were in a school auditorium provided by the Liberty Road congregation, where Smith affirmed. This produced an interesting development giving real insight into at least this group of Baptists' attitude toward other churches, the Lord's church in particular. Preliminaries to the debate included a song and prayer, intermission also including a song. The Baptists declined to participate in this and when someone questioned and chided the failure, the moderator for Mr. Smith gave a revealing explanation. His words, as nearly as I remember, were; "We did not contract to worship with you people and refuse to do so. We will not sing with a group of infidels who have denied and refused the grace of God."

While our purpose here is to simply report the debate, we would pay compliment to the splendid job brother Lewis did in presenting truth and exposing error. He was well prepared with telling affirmative arguments, beautifully presented by charts. His an-

ticipation of Smith's arguments was reflected in the charts prepared in advance which proved devastating. Mr. Smith found it necessary to stay in the negative even through a greater part of the last two nights when he was supposed to be affirming. Actually, he presented no affirmative argument until his last speech the final night. This within itself showed his difficulties. At one point when clarification of statements was necessary, Mr. Smith was asked, "Do you believe the Christian can sin?" He answered, "Yes", and in so doing sacrificed his proposition. This really tells the story of the debate.

While this was the first debate for both men, though each is an experienced preacher, it was fairly representative. Mr. Smith has been 17 years at Northside Baptist Church. Harry Lewis is in his first year at Liberty Road, though many years a faithful preacher. He conducted himself admirably and his efforts are appreciated by all who were present. He deserves the commendation of brethren everywhere who love the truth.

FILIPINO PREACHER DIES

NARCISO S. ROMIO, 1010-C Tayabas, Tondo, Manila 2807, Philippines—I am sorry to inform you that my co-preacher, ISIDRO TAN ALAS died of heart disease on November 9, 1982 at the age of 54. Until death he remained steadfast in the faith and died a faithful servant. His death was really a great loss to the Lord's work here and to his family. Many preachers attended the funeral service and gave their last respects. Brother Tanalas' son, Emmanuel (age 27) and my son, Enrique (age 18) are helping me in the work, the product of our training classes for young men.

LECTURE SERIES—CLUTE, TEXAS

The church which meets at 343 S. Main in Clute, Texas will conduct a lecture series March 14-18, 1983 at 7:30 nightly with the following subjects and speakers: March 14—"Atheism"—Dee Bowman March 15—"Denominationalism"—Harold Fite March 16—"Worldliness"—James Rodgers March 17—"Evolution"—John Clark March 18—"Alcohol and Drugs"—Jim Ward

Lodging will be provided for out of town visitors. Write to us at P.O. Box 457, Clute, Texas 77531 or call 265-5283 or 265-2933.

PREACHERS NEEDED

FRANKLIN, NORTH CAROLINA—The Westside church in Franklin will be needing a preacher about June 1, 1983. We are able to provide a reasonable salary. Those interested may contact Horace Gentry at 704-369-8216 or Edward C. White at 404-782-2104.

FRANKLIN, KENTUCKY—The church in Franklin needs a full time preacher to begin work immediately. The congregation is relatively small and can furnish partial support. There is a great possibility for growth at Franklin. Please call or write: Harold H. Clark, 1027 31-W By-Pass, Bowling Green, KY 42101, phones 502-843-3731 (days) or 502-842-4829 (nights).

PREACHER AVAILABLE

JACK NUNN, 95 Leonard Rd., Butler, NJ 07405—After more than 34 years working for Western Union and preaching on a regular basis during the past 17 years, I intend to retire on or about June 1, 1983 and devote full time to preaching the gospel. As my employer has transferred me over the years, I was able to preach on a regular basis in Ohio, Michigan and New Jersey. I am 52 years old and will have no children in school when I retire. Any interested congregation may write me at the above address or phone 201-838-6101. References will be furnished on request.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)