

The Sword AND Staff

"Preach the Word!" (II Timothy 4:2)

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"Feed the Flock!" (I Peter 5:2)

THREE WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT GOD

By Dale V. Knowles

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THERE ARE numberless wonderful things about God. It is not to indicate that there are not when we limit ourselves to a consideration of only three of them in this message. Furthermore, it is a shame that the wonderfulness of even these three cannot be more ably presented than is done here, but the gap between the human and the divine is immeasurable, so it will always be that the best of man's efforts to glorify God will not equal the reality of His full wonderfulness. Nevertheless, consider:

I. THE FACT THAT GOD IS.

It is wonderful that God exists at all--that there actually is an Eternal Person known as God. It answers many difficult questions that man in his wisdom cannot. It solves the big puzzle of origins as no theory does. It answers to the quest of man's mind that there is an Infinite Master Mind.

It is wonderful that God is as the Bible says He is. The realm of nature and the whole, vast theatre of the universe declare His existence. They show unmistakable design, and design argues a Designer. They reveal remarkable precision and mathematical exactness, and mathematics requires

a Mathematician. But it is the Bible that tells of His loving-kindness, forbearance and love. Were not God all this, He could not be wonderful, for wonderfulness must be permeated with inherent goodness.

God is what great thinkers conclude God ought to be: rational, patient, generous, just, holy, perfect--and so God is all this, as the Bible declares. Universally so! Unchangeably so! Everlastingly so! Wonderfully so!

Notice that thought of unchangeableness. This is wonderful because it is unique. What need is there for God to change? What change could be desired in that which is perfect? Radical changes have been made in the progress of medical science. The death of George Washington has been attributed to the practice of that day of doctors bleeding the patient, actually draining out of his body that precious fluid concerning which the Bible has said for generations: "the life is in the blood." Today the reverse is done. Instead of deleting the blood supply, it is built up by transfusions. Just so have there been changes and variations in the matter of child rearing. One generation hears the authorities saying, "Spank not!" Then when the ugly fruit of that imbecility produced its rash of delinquents, the



trend was reversed. So now the books read: "Spank--at least somewhat!" There was no need for God, however, to change in this regard at all. His Word has always said, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth...shame." (Prov. 29:15).

It is wonderful that God is, is so perfect, is so not in need of change, and is eternally so. It takes us out of the drivel of evolution and provides for us a noble ancestry--"in the image of God"--not in the comical buffoonery of an ascent from the baboon.

II. THE FACT THAT GOD IS GREAT.

In wisdom this is so. To have planned all things so excellently is wonderful. He "doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number" (Job 5:9). The astounding works in the

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The SWORD and STAFF
Post Office Box 681
Galax, Va. 24333

Subscription rates: \$1.50 per year; next 5 additional subscriptions, \$1.00 per subscription; any number sent above this, 50¢ per subscription; other arrangements.

The Sword and Staff is published monthly by the Locust Grove church, Galax, Virginia. James E. Gibbons is editor. Second class postage paid at Galax, Virginia.

Proverbs of Today
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We are living in a Society where young virgins, mothers, and grand-mothers vie to present themselves as painted, semi-clothed, alluring sex symbols rather than what is evidently considered to be outdated and old fashioned--namely, innocence, purity and goodness.

"Much good work is lost for the lack of a little more."

If you do not use your knowledge you will lose it.

"Those that would be fearless must keep themselves guiltless."

You can be sure that the man who talks too freely to you about others will talk about you when he is gone.

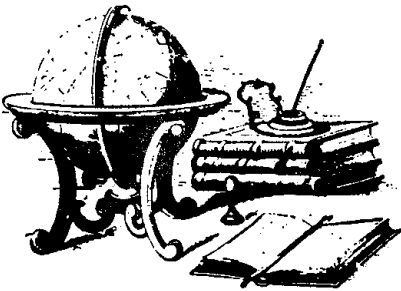
"Being nice does not change the fallacy of believing wrong."

Stubbornness is not necessarily a virtue, but steadfastness is.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Some go to church to take a walk;
Some go to church to laugh and talk;
Some go there to meet a friend;
Some go there their time to spend;
Some go there to meet a lover;

Some go there a fault to cover;
Some go there for speculation;
Some go there for observation;
Some go there to doze and nod;
The wise go there to worship God!



EDITORIAL
COMMENTS...

DIVESTING OURSELVES OF DENOMINATIONALISM:
DENOMINATIONAL NAMES

THE LORD WILLING, we plan to devote several articles to the theme, "Divesting Ourselves of Denominationalism." The things we will present may seem quite elementary to some, but new to others, for we have a rather checkered reading audience. We feel a deep concern to examine the Scriptures anew and seek out the ancient landmarks of the Lord's church. The early church existed as one before the era and error of denominationalism.

The word *denomination* literally means that which has been named and is called by name. Hence the first thing that we notice about a religious party is its name. These unscriptural names, plus many other things, divide religious people asunder and hinder the prayer of Christ from being answered (John 17: 20-22). Paul confronted the party spirit at Corinth in the first century church. Although these people did not completely divide themselves from the local church, they proudly claimed, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I of Cephas" (I Cor. 1:12). Paul sharply rebuked them and said, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not yet carnal?" (I Cor. 3:4). Then speaking of those who would disrupt and corrupt the church, he stated: "If any man defile (destroy) the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:17). Party names and partyism is condemned as sinful in the Word of God. Read Colossians 1:18. Notice how Christ is presented in His greatness; then it declares, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Truthfully now, does he get the pre-eminence in all things when men wear denominational names which call attention to someone or something else? How would you like for your wife to wear another's name?

It would seem that denominational names fall under the five following headings, although there may be other classifications. We present some examples, not to belittle or antagonize, but to illustrate.

- (1) A Human Name--Lutheran is an example.
- (2) An Emphasized or Overemphasized Doctrine--Some examples are Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, and Pentecostal Holiness.
- (3) A System of Church Government--Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Congregational will serve as examples.
- (4) A Regional or National Name--Examples are Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Moravian (these names are used by these denominations although not residing in the said countries).
- (5) Scriptural Labels--Some examples are Church of God, Church of Christ, Christian and Brethren.

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SYSTEMATIC

Scriptural Studies

THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONALISM

(CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH)

II. WHAT ARE SOME DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF THE CHURCH?

A. *In reference to its rule of faith.*

1. Their basic faith was produced by God's Word (Romans 10:17; Acts 8:12).
2. The Word was profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, making them thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16, 17; I Thess. 5:21).
3. All things that pertain to life and godliness (all religious truths) has been revealed (John 16:13; II Peter 1:3).
4. Change or addition to God's plan is strictly forbidden (Gal. 1:6-8; II John 9; Rev. 22:18, 19).

B. *In reference to the plan of salvation.*

1. All men (everyone) had to believe in Christ as the divine Son of God (Acts 16:30, 31; Acts 8:36, 37).
2. All men (everyone) had to repent of all their sins (Acts 17:30, 31; Acts 2:38; 3:19).
3. Everyone had to confess his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9, 10).
4. Everyone had to be buried and resurrected from a watery grave (be baptized) for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-39; 22:16).
5. Everyone had to be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10; Galatians 6:7-9).

C. *In reference to its assembly.*

1. The public worship of the church was very spiritual (John 4:23, 24; I Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19).
2. It was very simple, conducted decently and in order (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 14:40).
3. The central purpose of the assembly on the first day of the week was to observe the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7).
4. The women were not to teach nor usurp authority over the men in the public assembly (I Cor. 14:34; I Timothy 2:12-15).

D. *In reference to its organization.*

1. The organization of the church is strictly local and very simple (Phil. 1:1).
2. To govern and oversee the local church, there are to be elders, also called bishops and pastors (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5-7; I Peter 5:1-4).
3. There are to be deacons in the local church as a special group of servants (Phil. 1:1).

4. Evangelists are sent out from the local church to win souls, establish churches, set churches in order, and edify them (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 1:5; Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1-3).
5. Others serve as they are needed under the direction and oversight of the elders (Eph. 4:16; Rom. 16:1; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17).
6. The office of apostle and prophet were in the early church, but are no longer in the church today (Ephesians 4:11).
- (1) Apostles were the official eye witnesses of Christ and His resurrection (Acts 1:8, 21, 22; 4:33).
- (2) The gift of prophecy would cease to be in the church (I Cor. 13:8).

E. *In reference to its holiness.*

1. The church (the "called out" ones) are a separate kingdom from this world (II Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1; I Peter 2:9).
2. We are commanded not to love the world nor to be a friend of this world (I John 1:15-17; James 4:4).
3. We are commanded not to conform to this world (Romans 12:1, 2).
4. We are to seek those things which are above where Christ is now (Col. 3:1-4; Hebrews 12:1, 2).

F. *In reference to its mission.*

1. The great commission was given to preach to every creature, and the early church recognized this as their very own, and fulfilled that commission in the first century (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Col. 1:23; Romans 10:16-18).
2. The church says come, and it is by the church the wisdom of God is made known (Rev. 22:17; Ephesians 3:10).
3. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15).
4. The church is to make increase of itself unto the edifying of itself (Ephesians 4:11-16).

(CONCLUDED NEXT MONTH)

O PRECIOUS TRUTH—

O precious Truth,
Thou art clear as the morning sky
And simple as a little child;
My weary spirit searches nigh
To breath Thy freedom through a smile.

O precious Truth,
On Thee my soul desires to fill;
I thirst and hunger for Thy Word;
To taste the true my being thrills.
And it demands that Thou be heard.

By A. Brother

THREE WONDERFUL THINGS • • •

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

system of the balance of nature mark the wonderfulness of God. The supply for man in his physical, moral, social, spiritual and eternal needs is a source of wonder. How wisely God has provided for all things as He has so clearly foreseen them.

In power is His greatness wonderfully displayed. The great, immense reach of His creation, of His power to sustain it--oh, the wonder of it all. So massive, so delicate, from the telescopic to the microscopic, so awesome, so beautiful, so magnificent, and so amazingly accurate. Man can predict to the day, hour, minute and second the phenomena of the universe because of the wonderful power of God to establish it that way in the beginning and to regulate it through all time since.

In mercy for erring man is His greatness revealed. Of all the wonderful Bible words that show God's feelings toward us, this ought to be a favorite. Again and again, from the first book of the Bible to the last, does this word stand forth. An entire psalm (the 136th) is devoted to the refreshing repetition of the fact that "His mercy endureth forever." It means that He doesn't treat us as we deserve to be dealt with according to our sins--"the compassionate treatment of an offender." And it is great. Often do the Scriptures say so (e. g. 2 Sam. 24:14; Psalms 119:156; Eph. 2:4). When we consider the years of our transgressions, and the sum total of our sins of omission and commission, then does the mercy of God become great, and in the greatness thereof wonderful.

Wonderful greatness! Enough to offset all evil power around us. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens

shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 2:2-4).

Wonderful greatness! Enough to bring His own purposes, and our commitments to Him, to pass: "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

III. THE FACT THAT GOD IS "ON OUR SIDE."

It is frightening to consider how many things are against us in this world, from the devil himself through a host of people and things under his wicked influence. But it is wonderful to know that God is for us.

This was beautifully shown in the incarnation. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us" (Matt. 1:23). "...He shall save His people from their sins" (1:21).

It was dramatically demonstrated at Calvary. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

It is heralded in the Gospel. "For...the gospel...is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

It is radiant in the terms of pardon. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

It is assured in the prayers and confession of Christians. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Take heart here, O ye saints of His! Sometimes we feel that God must surely reject us because of our miserable failures. We maybe sense that His wrath (which is very real, to be sure) will be unleashed in all its fury as it was on Sodom, or as in the days of

Noah. But if God is for us in the Incarnation, at Calvary, in the Gospel, etc., will He so suddenly and unaccountably change in His attitude? The way some preaching sounds, yes. But the Christian himself would need to radically change first. It is true that God is angry with the wicked every day, that His anger waxes hot, that His wrath is terrible, and that many people have felt its full force. But who were they? Were they humble, God-fearing, repentant, praying people? Were they not, rather, wicked, defiant, indulgent, hypocritical, obstinate ones? Was this not so in the case of the Flood, of Sodom, of Korah, etc.? Was it not of such of whom Jesus so scathingly spoke in Matthew 23? What then, of the earnest, sincere, concerned, trying souls--people who want to please God, who go all out to do all things according to His will? Surely God is on their side. And that is wonderful. No wonder Christian songs have so much to do with praising God. So, when we sin, much as that should move us to godly sorrow, we must remember that our God is a forgiving God, if we will repent and confess those sins. He has promised to forgive. Wonderful!

A word of caution is in order right here. We Christians dare not become complacent. Our concern for righteousness, holiness, obedience and faithfulness must be constant and intense. Laodicean lukewarmness is a blight to beware of. Sober awareness of the possibility of losing our vigilance should combine with our daily joy in fervent attention to the will of God.

God is on our side! When we consider what God will do to the devil and the fallen angels (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), evidently with no opportunity to be saved from that terrible fate, yet we are given the privilege to be saved from our sins. God sent Jesus to be "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). And just as Jesus came once to do that, He

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A Spirit-Filled Church

By James E. Gibbons

This message appeared in the 2nd issue of *The Sword and Staff* (February, 1957). We present it here since we do not have a supply of that particular issue to include in our bound volumes.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:18-22

The great spiritual power that the early church experienced amazes and challenges us. We are fully aware that certain aspects of the Holy Spirit as they had are not available to us today, but there is a measure of the Holy Spirit for all children of God in this age. Those who have repented and been immersed into Christ have the promise of the Spirit and have access to the Spirit. (Acts 2:38, 39) Not only do we have access to the Spirit, we must possess the Spirit! "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9) The church is to be the inhabitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) Therefore, let us notice some of the characteristics of a Spirit-filled church.

I. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH WILL MANIFEST THE SPIRIT OF LOVE!

The evidence from the Scriptures is overwhelming in showing that a Spirit-filled church most certainly will manifest the Spirit of love. Romans 5:5 states, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The beloved, apostle John declares, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (I John 3:14) As Paul gives the fruits of the Holy Spirit, he heads the whole list with LOVE. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love . . ." (Galatians 5:22)

Oh, how we need to love one another! I don't mean to love a few friends with whom we "hob-nob" around! I don't mean to love just simply by saying you love everybody, but let us prove it by deed as well as word! Listen, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10) Listen further, would you? "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:17, 18) Paul tells us about some words of Jesus that we do not find in the four gospels. They are: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Brothers and sisters in Christ will certainly look out for one another when the going gets rough—they will manifest their love.

We will prove that we love one another and have the Holy Spirit by controlling our tongues; not indulging in idle gossip. Oh, how some people just simply love to wallow in the mire of gossip! They are looking for something to say or tell! How people behave

themselves as children! And just let a gospel preacher "step on their toes"—The least spiritual will "squak" first! They will reveal their lack of the Spirit of Christ! "Nice" people become so nasty then! Especially when blood-ties and friendship-ties run closer than Lord-ties!

Neither will the members of a Spirit-filled church hold grudges and hatred toward one another. One time a woman was talking with a preacher. Something was terribly wrong in her spiritual life, and she said that she just couldn't figure out what it was. Finally the preacher said, "Let's pray the 'Lord's prayer' together". They knelt on their knees and began to pray. Everything went fine until they got to the part where it goes, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors". The woman "broke down" and confessed that she had a grudge in her heart against someone. This had crushed her spiritual life. It is such a serious matter to hold malice in our hearts. In no uncertain terms John says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (I John 3:15)

II. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH WILL BE DEDICATED TO HOLINESS!

If a church is ever going to be spiritual it must be dedicated to holiness. After all, it is the HOLY Spirit. The church is spoken of as the temple of the HOLY Spirit. (I Corinthians 3:16) In Romans chapter 8 we see how the carnal things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit are at odds, warring one against the other. Galatians 5:16 reads, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." So when the Spirit comes in a lot of other things must go! A Spirit-filled church must of necessity be HOLY!

I think of the shepherd boy, David, and then David the king, a man after God's own heart—A spiritual man! But David sinned! He fell into the pitfall of the devil as he looked upon the nakedness of Bathsheba! David committed the awful sin of adultery! Also he was responsible for the death of Bathsheba's husband! Then the prophet Nathan came. He told a little parable, then he pointed his finger at old David and said, "Thou art the man!" Guilty king David repented! Listen to him, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." (Psalms 51:10, 11) David was well aware that if he were going to be a spiritual man again, he would have to be a holy man dedicated to holiness! The Holy Spirit and sin don't mix! James says that the prayers of a righteous man avail much—Simply because he is righteous, holy!

Bake sales, auctions, and church suppers as they are used to "raise" money for the "church" are bad enough the way they are, but I personally know of a church on a corner in Cincinnati, Ohio, that SOLD BEER AT A BAZAAR TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE CHURCH! Who can top that one?! There was spirit in that church, but it was NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST! A Spirit-filled church will be dedicated to holiness and the closer they can get to God the better! They will cast off the things of this world! They will not grumble when the preacher bears down on sin and vice!

Once a Roman Catholic priest was talking on the radio. The story he told was this (and it was a story—

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A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH • • •

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

false—!): One time a group of people came to the pearly gates of heaven, and they wanted entrance. Saint Peter looked at them, then turned them away because of their sin. It just so happened that mother Mary looked out of the windows of heaven and saw what was going on. She rebuked Peter, next opened wide the windows of heaven and let them all come in. The priest made the application of the loving, forgiving Mary, the mother of God. Oh, my friends, it takes more than the wave of "Mother Mary's" hand to usher people into heaven! The writer of Hebrews declares, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14) The Holy Spirit must reflect His holiness in us as we yield ourselves to Him!

III. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH WILL BE EVANGELISTIC IN NATURE!

Perhaps nothing is anymore evident than this in the New Testament. A spiritual church will be an evangelistic church. Jesus said to the apostles, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Another good example is found in Acts 13:1-4. This was the church at Antioch. Notice, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." In the last book of the Bible we read, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) While Christ was upon this earth he said that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now he has gone back to heaven. He still has a body on this earth, and that body is the church. It's work is to seek and save the lost. The Spirit is the life in the body, the church, as it endeavors to carry out the commission.

Are the churches of today evangelistic in nature? Is it the motivating aim of every church member to win a soul or souls to Christ? If it isn't, why not? If we have the Holy Spirit we should be concerned about winning souls! The burning passion will be in our hearts to win souls! A church that forgets the great commission ceases to be a New Testament church and degenerates into nothing more than a club or social organization! God moves on when our evangelistic zeal is chilled! Without the warm concern in our hearts for souls religion is reduced to cold formality!

One time, the story goes, of a preacher who invited this old hardened sinner out to church. The sinner stubbornly refused to go to church, and said that it would be the last thing he would ever do. Time passed, and one day there was a great clammer as fire trucks rushed down the street! The church house was burning to the ground! Everyone was running to see what was happening! Lo, and behold, in the number was the man who said that he would never come to church! The preacher saw him, and catching his breath, reminded him of what he said about coming to church. The man looked at the preacher and exclaimed, "It's the first time the church has ever been on fire!"

What a hidden truth this hardened sinner revealed! Many a church needs to get on fire SPIRITUALLY for the Lord! This old world is lost and dying in sin but who cares about that! The church member has got to spend his spare time having a big time! We live like we think we would live here forever on this earth! How we need to let the Spirit of God take control! We need to spend more time fasting and praying rather than feasting—"eating, drinking and being merry"! It was under the circumstances of fasting and praying that the Holy Spirit directed that Paul and Barnabas be sent out. Perhaps the same thing would repeat itself if we let God have His way in our lives.

IN CONCLUSION: A Spirit-filled church can be no less than these three things— (1) A Spirit-filled church will manifest the spirit of love; (2) A Spirit-filled church will be dedicated to holiness; (3) A Spirit-filled church will be evangelistic in nature. These are a few of the characteristics of a Spirit-filled church. There are more. Are we truly spiritual? Oh, how we need a spiritual church today! As the body without the spirit is dead, so is the church!

I LOOKED BACK

*I looked back--
I despaired at the unconcern of men;
I despaired at the fleshly love of sin.*

*I looked back--
I despaired at the divided religious world;
I despaired that life had been to me so cruel.*

By A. Brother

THREE WONDERFUL THINGS • • •

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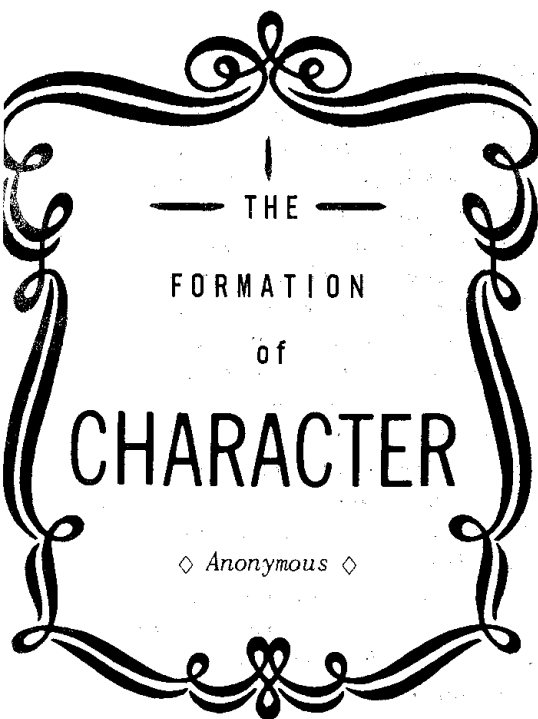
will also come a second time to receive His own, "that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

What an appeal this should be to all sinners to become Christians, and for all Christians to always be steadfast to the very end, for he that is "faithful unto death, I will give...the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

This message is prepared primarily for Christians who fear what God will do to them because of their failures, faults and sins. All Christians have them, and many, if not all Christians, become obsessed with a dread of God because of them. But God isn't a God of automatic, instantaneous, spontaneous, destructive intent the moment a Christian errs. The Christian who sins offends God, yes; and jeopardizes his salvation, yes. But God, as the prodigal son's father, waits with open, loving arms to receive the chastened, repentant, returning, confessing child.

Our God is a wonderful, wonderful God, as only truly dedicated Christians know.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



THE
FORMATION

of

CHARACTER

◇ Anonymous ◇

THERE IS a difference between character and reputation. Character is what we really are. Reputation is what others suppose we are. A man may have a good character and a bad reputation, or he may have a good reputation and a bad character. The reason of this is, that we form our opinions of men from what they appear to be, and not from what they really are. Some men appear to be much better than they really are, while others are better than they appear to be.

Most men are more anxious about their reputation than they are about their character. This is improper. While every man should endeavor to maintain a good reputation, he should especially labor to possess a good character. Our true happiness depends not so much on what is thought of us by others, as on what we really are in ourselves.

Men of good character are generally men of good reputation; but this is not always the case, as the motives and actions of the best men are sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented. But it is important, above everything else, that we be right, and do right, whether our motives and actions are properly understood and appreciated or not. Nothing can be so impor-

tant to any man as the formation and possession of a good character.

The influences which operate in the formation of character are numerous, and however trivial some of them may appear, they are not to be despised. The most powerful forces in nature are those which operate silently and imperceptibly. This is equally true of those moral forces which exert the greatest influences on our minds, and give complexion to our character. Among these, early impressions, example, and habits, are perhaps the most powerful.

Early impressions, although they may appear to be but slight, are the most enduring, and exert the greatest influences on the life. By repetition they acquire strength, become deeply rooted in the mind, and give bent and inclination to its powers. "The tiniest bits of opinion sown in the minds of children in private life, afterwards issue forth to the world, and become its public opinion; for nations are gathered out of nurseries." Examples, it is said, preach to eyes; and there are but few persons, especially among the young, who can avoid imitating those with whom they associate. For the most part, this is so unconscious that its effects are almost unheeded, but its influence is not on that account the less permanent. The models which are daily placed before us, tend to mold our character and shape our course in life. Habit results from the repetition of the same act, until we become so accustomed to it, that its performance requires no mental effort, and scarcely attracts our attention.

By the influence of early impressions, the force of example, and the power of habit, the character becomes slowly and imperceptibly, but at length decidedly formed; the individual acquires those traits and qualities by which he is distinguished, and which bear directly upon his happiness and welfare. It is very important for everyone, and especially for the young, to be very

careful as to the impressions he cherishes, the example he imitates, and the habits he forms. These are important elements which go to constitute character, and if they are of an improper nature, the result will be ruinous. Character is everything. It matters not what a man's reputation may be, without a good character he cannot be happy.

In the formation of a good character, it is of great importance that the early part of life be improved and guarded with the utmost diligence and carefulness. The most critical period of life is that which elapses from fourteen to twenty-one years of age. More is done during this period to mold and settle the character of the future man than in all the other years of life. If a young man passes this season with good morals and a fair reputation, a good name is almost sure to crown his maturer years, and descend with him to the close of his days. On the other hand, if a young man, in this spring season of life, neglects his mind and heart; if he indulges himself in vicious courses, and forms habits of inefficiency and slothfulness, he experiences a loss which no efforts can retrieve, and brings a stain upon his character which no tears can wash away.

"A fair reputation, it should be remembered, is a plant, delicate in its nature, and by no means rapid in its growth. It will not shoot up in a night, like the gourd that shaded the prophet's head; but like that same gourd, it may perish in a night." A reputation which has cost many years to establish, is often destroyed in a single hour, or even minute. Guard, then, with peculiar vigilance, this forming, fixing season of your existence; and let the days and hours that are now passing be occupied in acquiring those habits of intelligence, of virtue and enterprise, which are so essential to the honor and success of future life.

No young man can hope to rise in society, or act worthily his part in life, without a fair moral

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

READERS'
... Response

CALIFORNIA:

"I surely appreciate your paper. The articles are very good together with the Scriptural Studies and the Proverbs. It is well written and can be read by many who can be helped."

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NORTH CAROLINA:

"No, I cannot subscribe for your paper for I see where you stand. You are already in tune with the Catholic popes, Communists, and against God." (WHEEL--Editor).

CHARACTER

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

character. The basis of such a character is virtuous principle, or a deep, fixed sense of moral obligation. The man who possesses such a character can be trusted. Integrity, truth, benevolence, justice, are not with him words without meaning; he knows and he feels their sacred import, and aims, in the whole tenor

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

As we are humbly trying to return to apostolic grounds, we readily search the Scriptures, and have no trouble at all concluding that the first four classifications will not suffice. The fifth heading (Scriptural Labels) catches our attention. What about this? Certainly Scriptural designations are correct if used in a Scriptural context, otherwise they also become denominational trademarks. We call the names from the Scriptures "designations" because in reality they are not proper names. This may be a new thought to some. Please notice, for example, Romans 16:16 and I Corinthians 1:2. The expressions "churches of Christ" and "church of God" are translated with a little "c" (Proper names start with capital letters). Therefore we should (if we are going to be undenominational) use all designations of the church found in the Scriptures interchangeably. Let us be careful lest we denominationalize a perfectly good Scriptural expression. This writer was once introduced as a minister of the Church of Christ Church. Do you see what we mean? The limited use of one designation to the exclusion of the others has a tendency to denominationalize it. It is correct to call followers of Christ Christians and brethren, but these are not used as designations for churches in the New Testament.

Are we willing to divest ourselves of all unscriptural things? Are we determined to divest ourselves of denominationalism to return and be united as the simple church of our Lord as it was initiated in the first century? We challenge you to humbly and honestly consider this matter. We are convinced that nothing else will do.

of his life, to exemplify the virtues they express. Such a man has decision of character--he knows what is right, and is firm in doing it. Such a man has independence of character--he thinks and acts for himself, and is not to be made a tool of to serve the purposes of others. Such a man has consistency of character--he pursues a straight forward course, and what he is today you are sure of finding him tomorrow. Such a man has true worth of

character--and his life is a blessing to himself, to his family, to society, and to the world.

NOTE: For free copies in booklet form of "JESUS VS. SANTA CLAUS" by Vaugh Elliott (this appeared in the Dec. issue) write him at the following address: 257 E. TENTH ST. NEW YORK, N Y. 10009

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