

# The Sword AND Staff

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

•

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

## A Fixed Point for Your Life



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### IT MAY BE EITHER WAY

*The weight of sin may show upon a face;  
The back may bend in sin its burden bear;  
The feet may fail then falter in their pace;  
The head of hair may turn to gray by care.*

Or...

*The glow of grace may well reflect a face;  
The back that's bent perhaps a cross may bear;  
The feet may well lift and in purpose pace;  
The head of gray is filled with wisdom rare.*

BY A. BROTHER

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By David Kirk  
Star Route A, Box 70  
Jonesville, Louisiana 71343

ONE DAY a man watched a surveyor starting his work. He seemed to waste so much time looking around, tapping the earth here and there, that finally the onlooker said: "What are you looking for? Why don't you get your instruments and go to work?"

The surveyor answered: "We must first find a fixed point--a place to begin."

As we look at our country today, it is evident that millions of Americans need a *fixed point*--a place to begin to make constructive use of their lives.

Our beloved country faces one of its greatest tests. There are forces without and decay within that gravely threaten our existence as a nation.

All nations of history that attained greatness, first decayed within, before being destroyed from without.

The graduating classes of the schools of this land face challenges and needs that are so many, varied, great and grave. It makes me tremble as I pray to God that He will grant you the wisdom and courage essential to turn our nation back to sanity, the Saviour, and sound government.

Young People, what an *opportunity* is before you! Nearly half of all Americans are under 25 years of age. More than 30 million are in the 15-24 age group.

*Whoever* or *whatever* catches the minds of youth will determine the course of the history of our country.

Hitler captured the minds of the youth of Germany and sacrificed their lives, the best of Germany's youth, in his mad course of world conquest. Nation after nation was trampled under his heel of oppression. When the war was at last ended, Germany lay in ruins, as did other nations. When Hitler saw his plans brought to naught, he destroyed his life with his own hand.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

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Proverbs of Today  
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*If we profit from our past mistakes, most of us potentially have a bright future.*

*"On the plains of hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions, who, at the dawn of victory, sat down to wait--and waiting died.*

*The man without enough religion to take him to church may be sure he doesn't have enough to take him to heaven.*

*"The brotherhood of man and sonship with God cannot be realized apart from the Lorship of Christ."*

*We are limited by the terms of the gospel, but we are not to limit the terms of the gospel.*

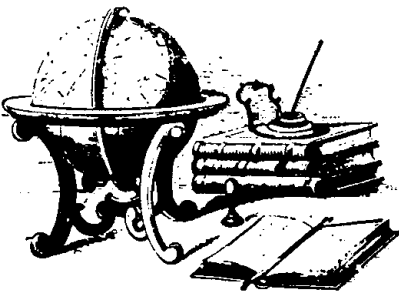
*"The terrible truth is that, if we do not do what we think is right, very soon we begin to think that what we do is right."*

*Is the Bible a part of your library, or a part of your life?*

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EDITORIAL  
COMMENTS...

DIVESTING OURSELVES OF DENOMINATIONALISM:  
DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

ANOTHER OBVIOUS THING that we notice as we approach the study of denominationalism is the type of organization the denomination takes or employs. These are greatly diversified. Certain denominations are congregational (the church is governed by congregational vote). Others have an Episcopalian setup (ruled by bishops aside from and beyond the local church; one bishop is over a certain number of congregations, and the bishops meet collectively to determine denominational policy). Catholicism supposedly is monolithic with one man (the pope) at the head of the structure. Then all kinds of additional religious organizations are employed by the various denominations, e. g., Sunday School organizations, Missionary Societies (within and beyond the local church), Ladies' Aid Societies, etc.

Because of such variety one is left with the impression that the Scriptures surely have not spoken on this subject, but is that the case? Do the New Testament Scriptures present a pattern for the organization or government of the church? Is there some "divesting" that we need to do before we will be on undenominational apostolic ground?

Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came He would direct the apostles into "all truth" (religious truth) (John 16:13). Paul told Timothy that the Scriptures would make us "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). Jesus came into the world and died on the cross to save sinners, and consequently the most awesome task in all the world has been commissioned to His followers (Matthew 28:19, 20). It is folly to think that such a responsibility has been given without the agency for its fulfillment. Jesus did leave a plan for the function of His church, and in the light of the above Scriptures it is found in the Scriptures. Let us examine them.

The New Testament tells us that the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). Angels observe as the church is the agency at work dispensing the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). The church preaches the gospel; the church edifies its membership; the church carries on its benevolent program--but what is the church?

The church is considered from several angles in the Scriptures. Basically the word church (*ecclesia*) signifies a "called out" assembly. Sinners are called by the gospel and added to the assembly of the Lord. In an organized sense this assembly exists only locally, i. e., in local churches. The church universal is not organized, whether it be on a world-wide basis, national basis, or some other basis larger than the local church. The church functions in an "unorganized" sense as each individual Christian on

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

# SYSTEMATIC

## *Scriptural Studies*

### THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONALISM

(CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH)

#### III. WHAT ABOUT THE RISE OF DENOMINATIONALISM?

##### A. *A falling away from the true church foretold.*

1. Some would depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 4:3,4).
2. Peter said there would be false prophets and damnable sects (same word translated *heresies*) among the people (II Peter 2:1-3).
3. Paul told the Ephesian elders that grievous wolves would enter, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:28-31).
4. Paul foretold the Thessalonians that a general falling away would come and that a man would be revealed who would sit in the "temple of God" as if he were God (II Thess. 2:1-12).

##### B. *The falling away came.*

1. Paul said that the spirit of iniquity was already at work in his day (II Thess. 2:7).
  - (1) False doctrines of Judaism were being introduced into the church (Gal. 1:6-8; read the book of Galatians).
  - (2) Gnostic tendencies (certain false teachings) were developing in certain regions (Col. 2:8,18-23; II John 7-9).
  - (3) Partyism and wrong conceptions were raising their ugly heads in the church at Corinth (I Cor. 1:10-13; chapter 3).
2. In spite of problems, the church was more or less true for several centuries.
  - (1) A good number of these false teachings finally crystalized into the Roman Catholic Church.
  - (2) One of the first departures was from the simple organization of the church until finally, after many years, we find the pope at the head of this powerful man-made organization.
  - (3) The man of sin exalting himself as God in the temple of God (a religious relationship) is no doubt the pope (II Thess. 2:3,4).
  - (4) The false doctrines of forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats are a part of Catholicism (I Tim. 4:3).
  - (5) The Dark and Superstitious Middle Ages set in with Roman Catholicism having sway.

3. The Mother of Harlots or Mystery of Babylon the Great in the book of Revelation are easily the Roman Catholic Church and her apostate offspring (Revelation 17 and 18).

- (1) Throughout the Old Testament sexual immorality and unfaithfulness are used to describe false religion and following false religion (Note Deut. 31:16)--thus, the Great Whore and Mother of Harlots are used to refer to false religion (Rev. 17:1,5).

- (2) The true church is the pure bride of Christ (II Cor. 11:2); thus, it is fitting to speak of false religion and the apostate church as an immoral woman, a harlot.

##### C. *The falling away continues even today.*

1. It seems that the state of apostasy and the man of sin would continue until the second coming of Christ (II Thess. 2:8).
2. Christ implies that he will hardly find the faith on earth when he shall come again (Lk. 18:8).
3. Catholicism, human denominationalism is all about us today, each group having its distinctive doctrines and names of men; following the Bible supposedly, but supplimented and contradicted by human traditions and ideas.
4. Jesus said that because of sin and false religion the love of many would wax cold, but if one endured to the end he would be saved (Matt. 24:11-13).
5. The plea of Christ to sincere and potential people in false religion is: "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4).
6. If we will be baptized into Christ like the Bible teaches, the Lord will add us to the ONE church already established in the first century before apostate religion (Acts 2:38, 41,47; I Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:15).
7. Since we are called into ONE body and baptized into ONE body, the Lord adding us to his ONE church, why join a human denomination, or division, not found in God's Word, but expressly condemned by God's Word as carnal and sinful? (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3,4; etc.).
8. Drop all denominational names, human creedbooks and doctrines (traditions); study all the distinguishing marks of the early church and conform to them, being faithful in every respect--ye will not be a denomination, but simply and purely the church; you will not be a division, but you will be united in the ONE church wherein all unity is attained.

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We need less talk about a "Restoration Movement" (what man has attempted to do) and more talk about the church of Jesus Christ (what God has done).

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## Have You Subscribed?

## A FIXED POINT • • •

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Communism, Socialism, God-is-dead, free love, atheism, skepticism and countless other isms and cisms are competing for the minds of the youth of our land.

In a world that is unsettled and constantly changing, Young People, you need a fixed point--a place to begin in your life.

There is *only one fixed point worthy of your life*, that one point is **JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD**. For "He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever" Hebrews 13:8.

Millions of adolescents and post adolescents have adopted the fads, fashions, and foibles which distinguish many of today's youth. Not having a fixed point in life, youth and adults alike turn to drink, to dope, and to illicit sex, and to every new thing they discover that promises a challenge or a thrill.

The plight of youth today is largely due to the failure of their parents. The major blame rests on us, not them. If we parents of the graduates today have failed to give our sons and daughters a proper start in life, we may have waited too late to begin.

Young People, especially you who are being honored today, may I point you to Jesus Christ, and urge you to make Him the fixed point of your life.

People, places, things and ideas change, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, yea, and forever.

Jesus is life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus said. He gives meaning and purpose to life.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, tried all that this world had to offer: Wisdom, wealth, wine, women, mirth, song, building, planting, ruling. We read what he had to say about these things in Ecclesiastes. Hear his account!

"...I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit...And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained

with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my works...Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun...Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:13, 14, 16-18; 2:1-12, 17).

"So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Therefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive" (4:1, 2).

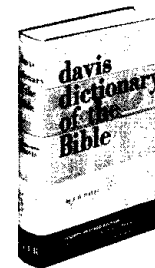
After showing that all of life is vanity, Solomon offers the following advice to the youth of his day. His wisdom is just as sound and as much needed now as it was in Solomon's day.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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# The Value of Calling by Appointment

Harold Buckles

2150 Brown Road, N. E.  
Salem, Oregon 97303

*"Go out into the highways and  
and hedges, and constrain them  
to come in that my house may be  
filled" (Luke 14:23).*

EVERY TRUE Christian who has truly WORKED at the task of soul winning will admit that to "just happen in on 'em" is sometimes a very poor way to get the work done. Disappointments and interruptions are only multiplied when a Christian goes out calling on a hit-or-miss basis. It is our desire in this short article to point out the advantages of calling in the name of Christ by appointment.

1. Calling by appointment helps to locate those who are genuinely interested in the things of Christ. If you have done very much personal work you have found that you have wasted time on those who evidently had no intention of accepting any of the teachings of the Word of God. We have found that the one who will not make an appointment to study the Word of God with you is not much of a prospect. Suppose you have ten possible places where you might make a gospel call. To which one will you go? Answer: To the one or ones with whom you can make a definite appointment--at their home, at yours, or at some other place agreed upon ahead of time.

2. Calling by appointment creates expectancy on the part of those upon whom you call. If the person will agree upon a time when you can get together and discuss the Scriptures you will discover a wholesome mental attitude on his part when you arrive.

Anything which helps to create definiteness in dealing with lost sinners or backslidden church members is greatly to be desired. The very fact that the prospect has agreed upon a time when you can come and converse with him is certain to put him in a more receptive frame of mind.

3. Calling by appointment helps to conserve time and effort. Well do I remember that in a revival meeting several years ago we drove from place to place for an entire afternoon without finding even one family at home! Such a thing is bound to have a depressing effect upon anyone who wants to win souls. Perhaps by now you are wondering what would happen if you couldn't get any appointments. Don't let that bother you, for you CAN get appointments to teach the Word of God if you ASK for them. Once an appointment is made, less time is lost in getting into a worthwhile discussion of the Word after you have arrived. The people knew WHY you were coming to their place. This helps to make it perfectly natural after a few minutes of visiting to open the Scriptures and pursue some special line of teaching. Time is precious, and we need to learn how to make our efforts count.

4. When a non-Christian makes an appointment with you to consider the teachings of the Bible, there is less chance for antagonism or argument when the call actually takes place. Anything that can help to turn arguing into constructive teaching is certainly

ly worth learning how to do.

5. A gospel call by appointment helps to eliminate "false courtesy." The following incident stands out clearly in my mind now even though it happened years ago. It was in the winter time, so I removed my overshoes on the porch before I knocked on the door. The lady of the house answered the knock, and as her children had attended Bible school a few times she invited me inside. I spent some time visiting with but seemed to make no progress. The father was lying on a bed nearby asleep; at least it appeared that way then. He had worked all the night before removing snow from the city streets. It seemed to me that I had accomplished all I could, so I left. Outside on the porch I overheard the conversation inside as I replaced my footwear. The man: "What in the... \* X \*...did you let HIM in here for!?" The woman: "Well, I let him in, and after he got in I didn't know how to get rid of him!" Now before you criticize me, please ask yourself how many times a similar thing may have happened to you and you didn't happen to learn about it? Perhaps you will make less calls at first when you begin calling by appointment, but once you have learned how to get appointments to teach the Scriptures, you will discover that your efforts are much more effective.

6. Calling by appointment has a very wholesome effect on the worker himself. It will cause him to try to learn something about the prospect ahead of time so that he will be able to make the time count the more for Christ when the call takes place. Calls such as we have outlined in this article will require you to plan the call ahead of time. Too many times the caller does not have a definite plan or lesson decided upon ahead of time for the simple reason that he was not too sure with whom he he would be dealing when he start-

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**A FIXED POINT • • •**

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them... when they shall be afraid of that which is nigh, and fears shall be in the way...because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets...then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it...Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil " (11:9,10; 12: 1, 5, 7, 13, 14).

Of Jesus Christ it is said "a greater than Solomon is here. " After hearing from Solomon for a while, now let us hear the one about whom the Heavenly Father said: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him " (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6).

He also said: "...whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it " (Matt. 7:24-27).

You may ask: Why is it wise to hear Jesus? Why make Him the *fixed point of your life*?

**I. HE IS OUR CREATOR AND THEREFORE KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR US.**

"Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves " (Psalms 100: 3). "All things were made by Him; and without him was not any thing made that was made " (John 1:3).

**II. JESUS CHRIST IS AN UNCHANGEABLE, SURE FOUNDATION.**

He is the tried stone. Hear Isaiah the prophet: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation " (Isaiah 28:16).

Peter identifies this stone in Acts 4:10-12. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught (rejected) of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. "

Paul writes: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ " (I Cor 3:11).

**III. JESUS OFFERS MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE CAN OFFER.**

**A. Forgiveness of all our sin, peace of mind and hope.**

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace " (Eph. 1:7).

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give unto you..." (John 14:27).

**B. Jesus offers heaven to all who will serve Him.**

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

**C. Jesus offers to youth the greatest challenge.**

**1. World-wide conquest (Matthew 28:18-20).**

This is a mission of peace--to bring peace and hope to a trouble weary world.

**2. Jesus demands you lay all on the altar of service to Him.**

Matthew 10:37-39. "He that loveth father or mother more than

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**THE VALUE OF • • •**

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ed out. This may be one reason why some personal work has not produced the results it should have.

Learn to be alert for the remarks people make so that you can suggest a time that you may get together and learn what the Bible teaches upon the question at hand. Do not hesitate to ASK for appointments. At work is a very poor time to attempt to teach anyone the Scriptures. Turn their questions and comments into a request that you might come to their place at a certain time and discuss this very thing with them. Be specific. If the person says, "I'll call you sometime, " don't conclude that he will. No one ever has with me! Set a time and place and see if he will agree to it. If not, then try another time until you are able to make a definite appointment. Then go and teach them the Word.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS • • •

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his own volition and burdened conviction personally seeks to save the lost, encourage his brethren, and help the needy. But when the church operates as an "organized" unit, it must be from the local base--single, local congregation. This is the extent of the organization of the church found in the Scriptures. Local churches were attached to others by love and co-operation, but never by a crystalized organization that would continue on a permanent basis. The only authority in the Scriptures for the functional life of the church is the local church.

Philippians 1:1 shows the complete organization of the church. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ (*evangelists*), to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*." All of the other New Testament Scriptures bear out this simple pattern (with the exception of apostles and prophets, whose positions were special and passing, being peculiar to the early church. The local unit (church) calls for bishops (literally *overseers*) and deacons (servants or assistants). Bishops are likewise called pastors and elders. The bishops governed the church (Acts 20:17, 28; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:27), and the extent of their government was the local church--"Feed the flock of God which is *among you*, taking the *oversight* thereof" (I Peter 5:2), and listen to these words to the local church of the Thessalonians: "know them which labor *among you* and are *over you*" (I Thess. 5:12); notice also Acts 20:17, 28. Deacons were men to assist in whatever way needed, but their work was not to govern or "rule." Evangelists were emissaries sent out from the local church to evangelize with the view of establishing other local churches. Paul and Silas were emissaries who had called the church at Philippi into being. Timothy had helped there later. From all indications there were teachers in the local churches besides the evangelist and elders (bishops), but they were not in an organization separate from the church. They served under the elders (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17).

Consecrated Christians under this arrangement were amazingly effective in carrying out the great commission. One generation was all that it took to preach the gospel to the civilized world (Colossians 1:23). The local churches were edified, and local churches responded to the needs of other local churches (Acts 11:27-30). They got the job done. It was left to a weaker and an apostatizing generation to change the simplicity of this setup. History informs us that one of the first general departures of the church was in the corruption of the local eldership as some assumed presumptuous and extracongregational authority. Paul hints of a departure among the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28-31). The papacy in Rome is the climax of an evolving and departing eldership which "cancerously" accelerated with the passing of years (II Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

We now point out certain departures that we must divest ourselves of if we are to return to be the simple, undenominational church of God, but these are not all of them.

1. A corrupted use of *bishops*. In the New Testament there was a plurality of elders (bishops) in each mature local church. Today many denominations have a plurality of churches with one so-called bishop over them--just the opposite of apostolic days.

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## A FIXED POINT • • •

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me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Mark 8:38. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Romans 12:1, 2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed..."

2. Working for Jesus is the GREATEST WORK IN THE WORLD, the work of saving the souls of men.

D. Building upon Jesus, making Him the fixed point of your life is not for cowards (Rev. 21:8).

1. Jesus was crucified. Should his disciples expect easy treatment at the hands of sinners?

2. It was brave men who followed Jesus. Eleven of the original twelve disciples were martyrs for Jesus. Paul also died for the Lord. Stephen was stoned to death. Persecution of Christians has ceased. But the rewards of serving Jesus far outweigh the cost.

I urge you to build your life upon Jesus Christ. Let Him be the fixed point of your life!

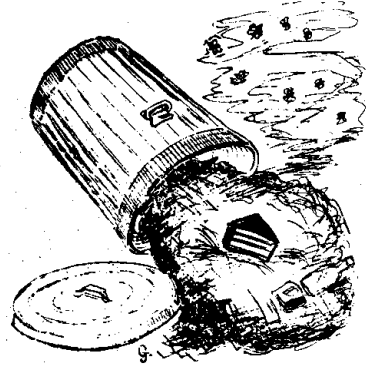
• He is your creator. He knows what is best for his creature.

• He is the unchangeable, tried stone, sure foundation, precious corner stone.

• He offers you forgiveness of

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THE GOOD IN TELEVISION  
is about like...



...a piece of cake  
in a garbage can!

A FIXED POINT • • •

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sins, peace and hope.

- He offers you eternal life in heaven.

- He offers you the challenge of the greatest service that can be rendered to man, the work of taking the gospel of salvation to the whole world.

- He challenges you to all out surrender to His will. Will you accept His challenge today?

- The most precious gift in this world is the Bible. Use it as your guide through life. It will teach you HOW to make Jesus Christ the fixed point of your life. With Jesus thus guiding your life, you will be prepared for what ever God would have you do on earth. And will assure you of a place with Jesus when he comes again.

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7) • • •

Read Titus 1:5-7 to see that the elder and bishop refer to the same office, and also read Acts 20:17, 28, to see that a plurality of them were over each local church.

2. A corrupted use of *pastors*. In the New Testament this plurality of bishops (elders) were also called pastors (Note: Ephesians 4:11 distinguishes the evangelist (preacher) from the pastor; notice I Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). The preacher business today has developed into the professional one-man pastor system, while the Scriptural pastors (the elders) have been put on the shelf or completely discarded.

3. The things mentioned in the very beginning paragraph of this article must all be discarded in favor of returning to the simplicity of the original church, which was local and autonomous in its function.

4. Furthermore, this local church does not need to be organized beyond that which we find in the Scriptures. The elders need to function. They cannot hire a professional to do their job by proxy, although they definitely may assign jobs to people. We should also beware lest we have a church within the church (as well as one aside from the church), usurping the government and authority from the God-given pattern.

Some will cry out that the simplicity of the early church organization will not work in our advanced and complex society. It seems that moderns must flatter themselves into thinking they are greatly different and superior to human beings of another time. But our problems are the same age-old problems: sin is still sin; man still needs spiritual help. If the New Testament plan will not work today, perhaps that really shows the extent we have gotten away from what the church should actually be doing. Perhaps it shows that we have become spiritual Pygmies. God's power, according to Paul, is manifested through weakness. But weak Christians think they must have a powerful organization to get the job done. Where is their God? Then perhaps such a simple setup would deprive others of the ecclesiastical pomp and prstige which they so richly enjoy in denominationalism.

Regardless what some may say, we are deadly earnest about this matter. Let us prayerfully consider these things. If our denominational setups are not allowed by the Scriptures, let us either dissolve them or dissolve our relationships with those who will not dissolve them. It takes courage and, many times, real sacrifice--but we are dealing with that which concerns our precious Lord. *We must return* to the undenominational standard of the first century church.

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