

The Sword AND Staff

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

• *"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)*

The Law of



DEGENERATION

IMAGINE!...wearing the same shoes for 40 years. Wouldn't that be great on the budget?! That's how it was with the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. But that was unusual. Shoes usually wear out. It took a special act of God to keep those shoes in good condition.

When did your present car roll off the assembly line? The 70's? The late 60's? Maybe a few from the early 60's? But who has one from the 50's? If so, it's probably not even an "old" car anymore. It has graduated to an "antique." Few automobiles today are as old as their drivers.

Does your washing machine run better the longer you have it? Does your saw get sharper the more you use it? Does your dining table look better the more wear it gets?

Man-made things get old, wear out, fall apart, and are sent to the junk pile. Man-made things are constantly proclaiming the truth of that law we shall be calling "the law

By D. VAUGHN ELLIOTT

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of degeneration." Everytime you paint, repair, fix up, discard, and replace, you are bearing witness to the law of degeneration in regard to man-made things.

The same story is found in nature. We are told that the minute we are born we begin to die. Disease, decay, and death are all about us. Much of our life's energies are spent simply in the effort to keep death away from our doorstep.

What if the farmer neglects the corn field? Does the field improve its yield of corn or does it degenerate? What if the owner of the orchard refuses to spray, to prune, and to thin? What if Jimmy never mows the lawn? Do the neighbors enjoy the ever increasing beauty?

Turning a little deeper into science, we find the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law says that the available energy is decreasing. Everything tends to become simpler, more random, more disordered. In short, it is often expressed simply that the universe is running down. Just as a car runs down, and you run down, so the whole universe is running down.

Man-made things degenerate. Nature degenerates. But that is not all. Human nature also degenerates!! All human experience and all history agree with the dictum of Solomon: "...a child left to himself causeth shame..." (Proverbs 29:15). Nations rise, flourish, degenerate, and crumble. So also do institutions, organizations, and even churches. Would any deny that New York City is in a state of degeneration? Would anyone deny that the United States is in a state of degeneration? Would anyone deny that our public school system is in a state of degeneration?

To float downstream is easier than to fight one's way upstream. The path of least resistance may be helpful for building a road in the jungle, but will it build character? No, my friend, the law of degeneration is too much with

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THE SWORD AND STAFF

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Proverbs of Today

"What you are is God's gift to you; what you make of yourself is your gift to God."

It is a dangerous and sick religion that feeds upon emotionalism and then calls it the Holy Spirit.

"A hot head seldom sets the world on fire."

God will help those who help themselves and those who can't help themselves, but He will not help those who will not help themselves.

"If you use strong drink, your family has a drinking problem."

In the long run you don't help a person much unless you teach him to help himself.

"Some persons complain that they can not find words for their thoughts, when the real trouble is they cannot find thoughts for their words."

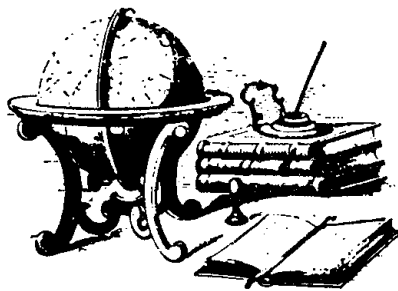
There are not short cuts on the road to heaven, but there are many side tracts.

"LETTING UP in spiritual matters will surely let you DOWN."

If we were as vague when we went to a restaurant as many people are when they pray, we would never get served.

"Conscientiousness is no substitute for obedience, but there is no substitute for conscientiousness either."

If you must have a love affair, have it with your wife—that is God's plan!



EDITORIAL

COMMENTS . . .

NOW IS THE TIME!!!

IF WE EVER needed to be getting more done for the Lord, it is now! In the kind of world in which we live today to be alive is to feel a sense of compelling urgency for the Christian. Time seems to be running out, and the old Devil seems to be working overtime. In view of this, there are tremendous possibilities with the "printed page" in confronting the forces of darkness in the battle for men's minds; in dispensing the Truth of God, calling men back to the "old paths" wherein is the good way.

We are glad to report that the Lord has blessed with extra help in our humble printing endeavor. The Ron Bushong family volunteered and moved to Mount Airy the latter part of last year. We are thankful to have them here. However, more of the other "ingredient" necessary for continuing and expanding our efforts is needed—the financial "ingredient." We have many things on the waiting list that need to be printed when this side catches up.

Perhaps it is needless to tell you something you already know. The cost of everything keeps going up. Within a relatively short period of time, the cost of paper on which we print THE SWORD AND STAFF has doubled. The cost of mailing this periodical has gone up about 800 per cent since reviving this paper in 1967. We could tell you other things, but you know the story.

We are telling you this to encourage you to renew your subscription when due. If you don't know when it is due, pick a date (like the first of each year) and renew it at that time every year. The newer subscriptions have the date when you subscribed with your address (on your issue) each time. Take it from there, and renew your subscription each year on the basis of that date. Really the so-called subscription just amounts to a token offering to help us keep going.

How long has it been since you renewed your subscription? Now would be a good time to do it. Have you been thinking about sending an offering? Now would be a good time to do it. And, why not for some others while you are at it? How about this? EACH ONE SEND SIX IN SEVENTY-SIX!!! Just think, if everyone when renewing his subscription would send only six gift subscriptions how our outreach for good would increase! We are now mailing around 6,000 copies of each issue now. If we added 36,000 to that—WOW!! If this paper needs to be published, and you say "AMEN" to its contents, then you need to help us get it into the hands of more people.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU. OKAY?

□

BEWARE OF PAGAN PHILOSOPHIES

HAVE YOU ever talked to anybody about the Bible, the truths of God which you assuredly believed, but what you were saying just

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The Law of Degeneration

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us, to mighty a force, too destructive of communication with God, for us to ignore it. Entire religious movements degenerate. Individual congregations degenerate. And individual Christians degenerate.

Let us now turn to the Word of God to see four striking examples of this law of degeneration in operation. And, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Asa was the third king of Judah following the division. There was a great need for reform, and Asa filled the need. He removed foreign altars, high places, sun-images, and idols of Asherah. He put sodomites (homosexuals and lesbians) out of the land. He removed his own mother from being queen because of her open idolatry.

When the Ethiopians came against Judah with an army of one million, Asa called upon God for help. God answered and the children of God had a great victory. As northern Israel saw in various ways that Jehovah was with Asa, they "fell to him out of Israel in abundance." Surely, "Asa did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, as did David his father."

For more than 30 years all went well. Then one day the king of Israel, Baasha, built a fortification a little north of Jerusalem to cut off contact between Asa and the people of the north. Asa responded by taking silver and gold treasures out of the temple of God, sending them to the king of Syria, and asking him to attack Israel from the north, so that Israel would leave Asa alone in the south.

Then came Hanani, the prophet, to rebuke Asa for relying upon the king of Syria instead of upon Jehovah as he had done when the Ethiopians attacked earlier. Do you know what Asa did? He got angry, went into a rage, put the prophet into jail, and started oppressing some of the nation. What a pity!! Surely, for some reason or other, after more than 30 good years, Asa was degenerating.

About 150 years later, Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah shortly before Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians. Hezekiah was one of the best of all the kings. He not only cleaned out idolatry, and cleaned up the temple, but he destroyed the high places, destroyed the brazen serpent that Moses had made (because the people were burning incense to it), and kept the Passover like it had not been kept since the days of Solomon!

One day Hezekiah fell sick. He besought God for an extension of life, and he was granted 15 more years. As a sign the sun dial's shadow went backward ten steps.

But the sad thing is that "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up..." (II Chronicles 32:25). Imagine—God's tremendous and gracious answer to Hezekiah's prayer almost became the occasion to ruin his life (he did later repent). Degeneration was setting in.

There are few men as outstanding as Solomon in the entire Old Testament—or in the entire history of the world. Solomon reigned over the united Israel during the period of the greatest might and glory that it would ever see. Solomon was the richest king in the earth at that time. So much wealth was rolling that cedars were like sycamore trees and silver and gold like stones! (II Chronicles 1:15). All men sought for the presence of Solomon.

Solomon was wiser than all men—a true wisdom that was given to him by God in answer to prayer. Solomon wrote three books of the Old Testament, thus being exceeded only by Moses. Who does not still benefit from the tremendous wisdom packed into the book of Proverbs? And God chose Solomon to build the temple of Jehovah in the chosen city of Jerusalem. What a special place Solomon had in God's dealings with his people!

Yet THIS Solomon degenerated! He backslid. He fell from grace. He withdrew from his close walk with God. Solomon's books are still in the Bible: but where is Solomon?! That's an awful question to even think about, and only God knows the answer for sure; but, according to the record, Solomon fell and did not turn back to God before death took him away. A sadder case of degeneration would be difficult to find!

The fourth example is found in II Ephesians. You never heard of II Ephesians? Well, how about I Ephesians? It is a beautiful epistle written by Paul, isn't it? What errors is Paul correcting in this letter? None that we can say for sure. I Ephesians is nothing like I Corinthians or Galatians. From what we learn in Acts and Ephesians, the church at Ephesus was a great church in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now turn to II Ephesians—better known as Revelation 2:1-7. Still the church is a great credit to the Kingdom in many ways: "...works...toil...patience...canst not bear evil men...didst bear for my name's sake...hast not grown weary..." What else would we ask for? But, the brief letter does not end there. "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." Somehow, somehow, the Ephesian Christians had allowed their deep love for Christ to cool off.

Boy meets girl. They walk on cloud nine. Wedding bells ring. The honeymoon is terrific. With the cry of an infant the couple becomes a family. Years roll on. Bills pile up. Illness visits. There are problems with the children. The couple plug along with their responsibilities. They remain faithful to each other and to God. However, their thrill is now more like a business arrangement than a love affair. They spend little time together alone. Kisses are few and far between. "I love you" is seldom heard. They have left their first love!

Man meets Jesus. A whole new life is opened to view. The baptismal waters stir. The new life is wonderful. The fellowship is great. He even leads a friend to Christ. Years roll on. There is still a struggle with the "flesh." Some Christians fall away. There are some problems in the church. The Christian plugs along with his Christian duties. He never misses a service. He is not led astray

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THE LAW OF DEGENERATION

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by false teachings. However, he is no longer as excited about Jesus. The song service does nothing to him. His prayers are not as fervent. He is tired of trying to show others the narrow path. His church membership is more like a business arrangement than a love affair. He spends little time with Jesus alone. Meaningful Bible study is rare. "Thank you, Jesus" is seldom heard. He has left his first love!

The Ephesian church had many excellent qualities, but listen to Jesus as he warns them about falling from their first love: "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." The sober truth is that the law of degeneration had wrought its awful work once again.

Listen, brother, if Asa could degenerate, if Hezekiah could degenerate, if Solomon could degenerate, if the Ephesian church could degenerate—then surely you can degenerate! Worse yet, you might even be in a degenerated condition already. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Individual Christians degenerate. Christian families degenerate. (Maybe yours?). Local churches degenerate. (How about where you fellowship?). Religious movements degenerate. (Would any deny that this has happened to the "Restoration Movement"—even more than once?).

But, WHY does this degeneration take place?

One big reason is over-confidence, pride over success, and the feeling that the battle has been fought, has been won and is now in the past. Hezekiah is a case in point. He "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up..." Success may be harder to bear than defeat. Consider Ezekiel's inspired evaluation of ancient Sodom's problem: "Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her..." (16:49).

The very affluence of Sodom was at the heart of its downfall. Could this be true of the United States today? ...of the churches of the United States today?...of you? ...of me? Could this be a partial explanation of the 20th century degeneration of the 19th century movement to restore the Lord's church? It is not the first movement that has arisen to success only to crystalize and fossilize. Beloved, we must remember two things: 1) success does not always mean that God is blessing (the biggest church in town may be filled with idols and supported with gambling); and 2) even if the success and prosperity is God's blessing, still the praise and the thanks belong to Jehovah. There is no room for complacency and pride—unless we want victory to be turned into defeat.

Another reason for degeneration is battle fatigue. We do exactly what Galatians 6:9 says NOT to do. We become weary in well doing. We become tired of doing the same old thing over and over again: of singing the same old songs, of hearing sermons on the same old subjects, of helping new people with the same old problems, of finding new problems with the same old people, of fighting the same old weaknesses in ourselves. "But, Lord, I'm tired! Haven't I done enough of all this already?"

There are those who think—and even preach—that youth have the worst temptations. I believe this is a clever deception of Satan to lull the middle-aged into self-

satisfaction and laziness. Certainly youth do have special temptations. BUT middle-age ALSO has ITS special temptations. Call it the "middle-aged-blues" or whatever you want. The children are moving away one by one. The man man sees many of his life's dreams unreached. They now appear to be unreachable. The woman is going through "change of life." Life begins to seem empty as an awareness of approaching old-age creeps in.

It is at this age in life that many "social drinkers" become "problem drinkers." It is at this age that erst-while "strong preachers" begin to water down their message. It is at this time that older Christians begin to sit back and let others do the work. Could this be what happened to Asa? Could this be what happened to the Ephesian church? Could this be what happened to you, middle aged brother or sister? Surely many Christians do not today stand for what they used to stand for simply because they have gotten tired of the battle before the battle was over! Surely many Christians do not today labor with the enthusiasm and vigor they once did because they want to rest before it pleases God to take them to the eternal rest.

A final reason for degeneration is ill-begotten friendships. Says the Word: "Evil companionships corrupt good morals." Maybe it's the fellows at work. Maybe it's the the "girls" in the neighborhood. Maybe it's the team members of the bowling league. Maybe it's co-operative efforts with the denominationalists. Maybe it's the professors of the theological school. Maybe it's the fellow-members of a worldly congregation. There are many types

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TWO TEMPLES

A Builder builded a temple,
He wrought it with grace and skill;
Pillars and groins and arches
All fashioned to work his will.
Men said, as they saw its beauty,
"It shall never know decay:
Great is thy skill, O Builder!
Thy fame shall endure for aye."

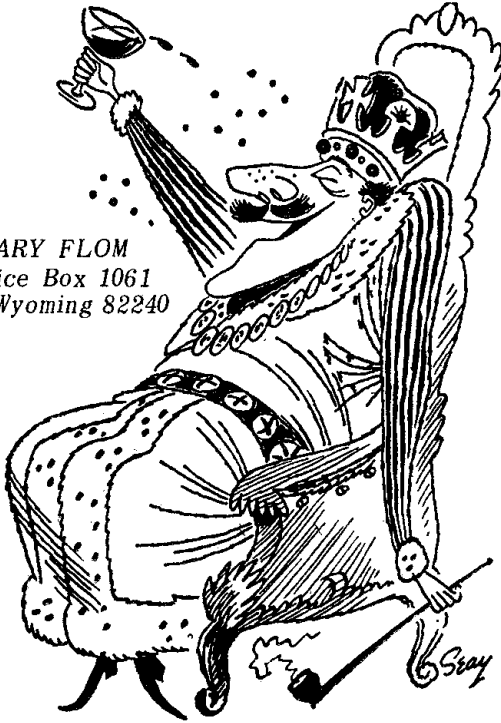
A Mother builded a temple
With loving and infinite care,
Planning each arch with patience,
Laying each stone with prayer.
None praised her unceasing efforts,
None knew of her wondrous plan,
For the temple the Mother builded
Was unseen by the eyes of man.

Gone is the Builder's temple,
Crumpled into the dust;
Low lies each stately pillar,
Food for consuming rust.
But the temple the Mother builded
Will last while the ages roll,
For that beautiful unseen temple
Was a child's immortal soul.

By HATTIE VOSE HALL

Existentialism

• By GARY FLOM
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SELF

IT'S IN THE AIR! It has influenced every area of life! It's a philosophy of life that is displayed by such bumper stickers as: "Do your own thing" and "If you like it, do it." It is a philosophy that causes the young rebel to say: "You can't tell me what I can't do." It causes the college professor to ask: "What is truth?" Or the religious clergy to say: "The thou shalt nots no longer apply."

Existentialism is a philosophy that stresses the free choice of man with self as the only guideline. Existentialism is directly or indirectly responsible for the following problems existent today: no school dress codes, free sex, women's lib, no child discipline, acceptance of homosexuality, long hair on men, disrespect for authority, rioting, drug abuse, the hippie movement, unisex, equal rights, the acceptance of witchcraft and oriental religions, demon worship, etc. The list is endless.

Existentialism has brought this about in a very simple way. It has changed the world's concept of what truth is. It was only a few decades ago that societies' concept of truth and the Bible's concept of truth were basically the same. Truth was accepted as "absolute." When truth is absolute, then the opposite of truth is always false. For example: Hetrosexuality was right and encouraged by both society and the Bible. It's opposite, homosexuality, was wrong and great shame was attached to it by both society and the Bible. The Bible and society were in agreement because they had a common understanding of what truth was. But not so today. The Bible remains the same, but society has changed. Society today is asking us to accept the homosexual as an equal with the hetrosexual because

everyone has a right to choose how he wants to express himself sexually. Society today has moved both groups of people into a neutral area. Neither are right or wrong.

With this new concept of truth there are no extremes. There is no black and no white, unless you want it that way. Everything is relative to the person and to the situation. Anything that is relative has no opposite. In this situation then, God can be both dead and alive. Both situations are "amoral." Then too, if one person accepts God as alive, he has no right to insist that others accept him that way also. When there are no absolutes, then there is no authority. Is it any wonder that we have so much rebellion against authority today?

This is a condition of anarchy and it will destroy any society. It is an unstable condition and cannot exist long. Anarchy signals a change. John F. McManus in his film "An Overview of Our World" said: "If an individual does not like the form of government under which he lives, he can advocate Anarchy so that when he has no government, he can insert what he would really like to have in its place." I believe that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn understood this when he spoke to our country and said: "we are approaching a major turning point in history." He went on to say that we have a political and a moral crisis in our country. He said we need political leaders like those who founded this country. These men, he said: "never lost sight of their moral bearings. They did not laugh at the absolute nature of the concepts of 'good' and 'evil.' Their policies were checked against a moral compass." (*Reader's Digest*, 12/75).

Mr. Solzhenitsyn is a man who has seen the effects of existentialism. He was driven out of Russia. Communism is existentialism through and through. He said in this same article: "Communism has never concealed the fact that it rejects all absolute concepts of morality. It scoffs at 'good' and 'evil' as indisputable categories. Communism considers morality to be relative. Depending upon circumstances, any act, including the killing of thousands, could be good or bad. It all depends upon class ideology, defined by a handful of people. In this respect, communism has been most successful. Many people are carried away by this idea today. It is considered rather awkward to use seriously such words as 'good' and 'evil.' But if we are to be deprived of these concepts, what will be left? We will decline to the status of animals." This, of course, is what evolution has been teaching us for years!

Look around! Do you see any effects of existentialsim? Can you see its influence in Modern Art? A painter (I hesitate to call him an artist) can drip or throw paint on a canvas and call it "art." No guidelines, no absolutes for the Modern Art painter.

Can you not see its effects in some of today's music? I recently read of John Cage who "began to compose his music through the tossing of coins. It is said that for some of his pieces lasting only twenty minutes he has tossed the coin thousands of times. This is pure chance, but apparently not pure enough; he wanted still more chance. So he devised a mechanical conductor. It was a machine working on cams, the motion of which cannot be determined ahead of time, and the musicians just followed this. Or as an alternative to this, sometimes he employed two conductors who could not see each other, both conducting simultaneously; anything, in fact, to produce pure chance.

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Existentialism

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But in Cage's universe nothing comes through in the music except noise and confusion or total silence." ("The God Who Is There" by Francis A. Schaeffer). This may sound like an extreme, and perhaps he is, but all will admit that much of today's music is nothing more than "noise" and "confusion."

What about literature? It wasn't too many years ago that some things were never written down for reading of the general public. Then every story had a moral and taught a lesson. This is not so in some of today's books. Some stories today are meaningless. They have no real plot, nor moral lessons. Some are pure pornography. There does not seem to be any guidelines anymore.

What about the movie industry? Are there any real guidelines for the content of their productions? I don't see any. The ratings only tell us the degree of filth found in any particular film. As far as what can be put in, there is no limit.

What about the new concepts of child discipline? I had one Social Worker with a Master's Degree tell me that when a child throws a tantrum on the floor, that the parent should provide the child with a pillow so that he won't hurt himself. Is it any wonder that we have a nation full of rebels!

Can you not see the effects of existentialism in our schools? The "New Math" seems to be an attempt to teach the absolutes of math in a relative manner. Most public schools today have abandoned a dress code, for both teachers and students.

Even our government has lost some of its abilities to discern "good" and "evil." Desertion from the military in time of war use to be punishable by death. But now we invite them to come back into our society, saying they have a "right" to object to our country's war policies. Next, we will give them the GI benefits!

I believe the rise in "no-fault" insurance and "no-fault" divorce is all a part of this "no-fault" moral system. The home structure has been destroyed by existentialism. Women now are demanding the "right" to be free from all domestic responsibilities. God is being totally ignored in these matters.

Policemen must be careful to explain the criminals "rights" to him. With no absolutes a person can be "wrong" and insist upon his "rights." When truth was an absolute, a person who chose the "wrong" had to forfeit the opposite, his "rights."

All of this change in society has influenced the religious world also. For many today, the Bible is no longer looked upon as absolute authority. Rather, it is just another book among books. It has some nice precepts and some good advice, but its commands are all relative. When the Bible ceases to be absolute in people's minds, then it loses its distinctive appeal to the hearts of men.

The switch away from evangelism is a product of existentialism. If all religions are right, and one can go to heaven whether he worships Buddha or Christ, then there is no need for evangelism. The pendulum has swung from evangelism toward a purely "social gospel." A "gospel" where everything is love, and the preacher gives nothing but "positive" messages. No more of these "hell, fire and brimstone" messages. We are told that "negative messages" do not show love.

When truth is regarded as "absolute" then every posi-

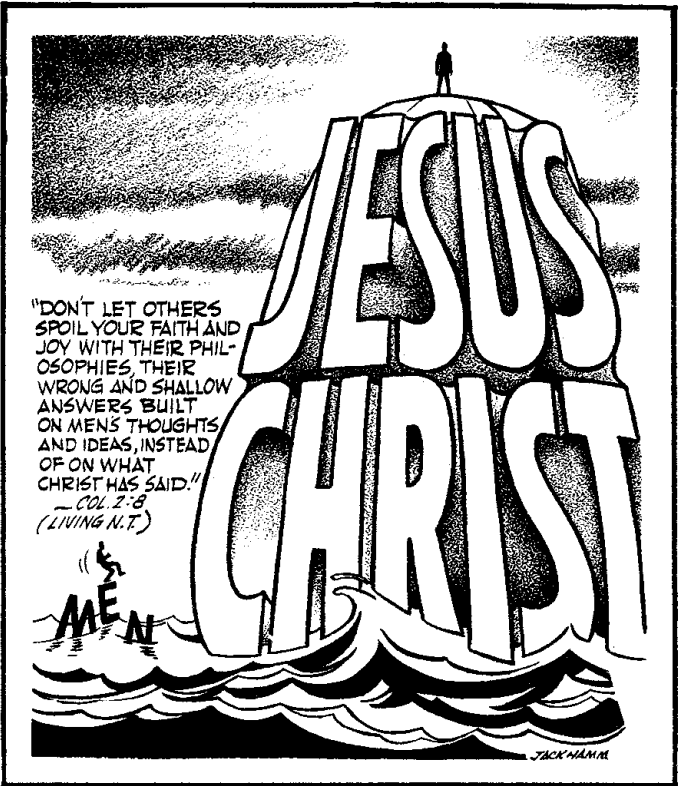
tive has a negative. One is true and the other is false. This is essential for the existence of an absolute. When a preacher preaches only one, to the exclusion of the other, he has destroyed the absolute nature of his message; it thus becomes relative, simply because it has no opposite. Everything that has no opposite is relative.

The trend away from "negative preaching" in the lives of some preachers in the brotherhood disturbs me, because it shows the inroads that existentialism is making into the body of Christ. Brethren, I plead with you to take a long hard look at your preaching. God's Word is absolute truth, and as such it has both a positive and a negative. If we are going to preach only the positive then we have destroyed the absolute nature of the Word of God. It becomes relative!

When the gospel is preached only positively, and people learn to love everything, including their sins, and all you have to do is be right in your heart, and everyone is your brother, then there is no "fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1) in people's hearts. Without negative preaching there would be no John the Baptist, Martin Luther, John Wesley, D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday and many more.

Jesus said: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Truth in its absolute nature, where both its positive and negative elements are preached, will set men free. The world's changed concept of truth as something relative, will never set anyone free. Brethren, let's be aware of the subtle influence of this Devil-inspired existentialism and let's preach the Word with the power and authority due this "ABSOLUTE" authority. □

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THINK ABOUT THIS

IF IT makes no difference what you believe, then it makes no difference if you believe.

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Who is a



CHRISTIAN?

• By ARCHIE WORD, Gering, Nebraska 69341

Read I Peter 4:1-19.

IT IS QUITE the common thing now days to call almost anything that looks decent Christian. Masons, Odd Fellows, Lutherans, Catholics, Elks, Moose, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Eagles, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals or Bereans, they are all chunked off as Christians. They seem to forget there is authority in Christianity. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me." Man is not the one that is to say who is a Christian, but the Lord is in His Word. The rules for this sacred name are God-given.

Masonry has rules from headquarters to determine WHO is a Mason and WHEN he becomes one. You are not a Mason until you are "raised" a Mason. There are no infant Masons, they are F & A M. You may be as good or even better than a Mason, you may be as sincere as any Mason, you may be upright and as honorable as any Mason, you may be loving and even call yourself a Mason, but you are NOT a Mason until you are "raised" a Mason according to Masonry's rules.

It does not matter how much you say you are a Mason, or how much you claim to be a Mason, or how many times you sneak into the Lodge room of the Masons, or how much you are taught to attend lodge, or how big you can talk about Masonry, or how much ritual you know, you are not a Mason until you are "raised" one, and that, ac-

cording to the rules of the Masonic order. They have laws and rules that control Masonry and SO HAS OUR GOD FOR HIS FOLLOWERS.

Not everyone who says he is a Christian, is such. Every Communist, if he thinks it will profit his cause, will claim to be a Christian, but that does not make him one. All religious professors are not Christians, by a long shot. Jesus pointed this out in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my father who is in heaven." If you want to know for certain if a person is a Christian, just compare him with the New Testament standard. Measure him by the Word of God because Christianity and the New Testament are inseparable. A Christian is one who belongs to Christ. A Christian is a member of HIS church, which He calls His "body." According to the Word of God, there is no Christian who is not a member of the church for which Christ died. He is the LORD, and He tells us WHEN people are added to His church. Read carefully Acts 2:38-47 and you will find that "the Lord" does the adding.

No denomination is Christian. No sect is Christian. No nation is Christian. Why? Because they have not obeyed the commands of the Lord, upon which church membership and Christianity are built. The Pope is not a Christian; in fact, he is a curse to Christianity. Read I Tim. 4:1-3. A Catholic priest is not another Christ (mediator); that is blasphemy, I Tim. 2:5. Why do the Communists hate the church? For the same reason the French Revolution hated the church. It was a false church, with standards diametrically opposed to the teaching of Christ. They have seen an apostate organization that is misrepresenting Christianity. The name Christian has been misapplied. Christ has been lied about and misrepresented. They have seen denominations and catholicism that call themselves Christian but they have not seen Christianity portrayed in the lives of a people who are "born again" and filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

In so-called "Organized Christianity" they have seen confusion and every vile deed. Under the guise of Christianity they have seen dirty politics, double talk and smooth diplomacy. They have seen religious wars that have lasted as much as 30 years and involved almost all of Europe. They have seen homos and drunken priests. They know about "Extreme Unction" and sprinkling babies, doctrines diametrically opposed to the Bible's teaching. They know of great warriors who have worn the name Christian. They have read of the thousands of innocent people killed in the St. Bartholamew's Massacre by the Roman church in France. They know of religious thieves who have usurped thrones, with the Pope's blessing. The history of the religious activities under the name of Christianity smells to the high heavens and after 400 years, the enmities aroused by them are still seen in South America. Mussolini, whom the Pope said was "sent from God," was never excommunicated. He claimed to be a Christian.

In the name of Christianity, the rich have led the poor into starvation, nakedness, disease, tobacco, drugs, whiskey and gangdom. No wonder people are asking, "WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?" Remember, not everything that claims to be a Christian is Christian. A Christian can be identified accurately by his likeness to the teaching of the Lord in the New Testament. Christians are people who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and accepted His

(Continued on Next Page)

THE LAW OF DEGENERATION

(Continued from Page 4)

of damaging friendships with the world; and the Scripture just quoted says, "Be not deceived."

Solomon is perhaps the best example of degeneration via wrong friendships. Solomon had the greatest godly wisdom of any man that has lived, he wrote three books of our Bible, and he built and dedicated Jehovah's magnificent temple in the Holy City. "...among many nations was there no king like him (Solomon), and he was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless EVEN HIM did foreign women cause to sin" (Neh. 13:27). Even him!! If Solomon was not immune from the corrupting influence of evil friendships, then no one is — not even you!

Undoubtedly there are other reasons. The possibility is clearly there. The Word of God sounds the warning. YOU can degenerate, backslide, fall from grace. Your church may be degenerating already. Our fellowship may be degenerating. We cannot rest upon the accomplishments of the past, whatever they may be. Yesterday's home run will not win today's ball game!

We cannot assume we have "arrived" and there is no more to "restore." Both early and recent church history clearly prove that correction and restoration is the work of each new generation. We must yet press forward. We must yet work harder. We must yet seek a closer walk with God. We must yet love more fervently. We must fight against the strong currents of the day that we may ever move up-stream and up-hill.

Oh, yes, we failed to mention why it is that degeneration has not long since completely ruined nature. It is because there is another, counter-acting force. It is called germination and birth!

With deep meaning, the counter-acting force in the spiritual realm is called the new birth. It is also called REgeneration. Clearly, God's cure for degeneration is regeneration. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." By the Spirit of God, let us be like Paul, who said, "But though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." Praise God for new life in Jesus Christ!

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

(Continued from Page 7)

teaching for the pattern of their lives. They have FAITH in Him, and there is no hope without that. Christians have repented of their sins and been converted; their lives transformed and having a new allegiance. After having believed in Christ and repenting of their sins, they have been buried in New Testament baptism where their Lord promised to cleanse them by His blood, from all sin. They were promised the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, when they were raised from baptism—Romans 6:3,4; Acts 2:38. With clean hearts and being empowered by the Spirit of God they went forth to demonstrate WHO IS A CHRISTIAN.

As Christians they demonstrated the fact by having love for all mankind, they hated only sin. They were people who did good to all men, even their enemies. They would not take the name of their God in vain. They would not lie, cheat or steal. Their morals were above reproach

and the heathen among whom they lived could see that they lived differently from them. They would not add to God's Word nor would they detract from it, because as Christians they were not of this world. They were hated by the world and persecuted by the world because they would not live like the world, but with the opposition of the world, they refused to take up arms and fight them. They willingly died for their faith, but they refused to kill others in defense of their faith. They recognized this world was not their home and that they were strangers and pilgrims in this stage of the game.

THE NEXT TIME you call someone a Christian, look him over carefully before you give him that sacred nomenclature. □

I DON'T DRINK! (ALCOHOL)

Everybody's doing it? No, not yet;
Because I'm somebody, don't forget.
Anybody with courage to stop and think
Is certainly somebody; and I don't drink!
Many a "Somebody" who didn't think—
Became a "Nobody" because of DRINK.
Anybody can do what others do,
I'm trying to be somebody, How about YOU???

By HAROLD BUCKLES
1009 45th Avenue, N. E.
Salem, Oregon 97301

ONE HOUR IN THE CEMETERY

A BUSINESS MAN, harrassed and discouraged from over-work, took his problem to a psychaitrist, who promptly told him to do less work. "Furthermore," prescribed the doctor, "I want you to spend an hour each week in the cemetery for your own good."

"Why do you want me to do this? What should I do in the cemetery?" the man asked.

"Not much," was the reply. "Take it easy and look around. Get acquainted with some of the men who are already there permanently and remember they didn't finish their work either."

—Selected □

THERE ARE FIFTEEN BOOKS OF THE BIBLE HIDDEN HERE (in the following sentences)

"I ONCE made some remarks about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu; kept some people looking so hard for facts and studying for the revelation, they were in a jam...especially since the books were not capitalized.

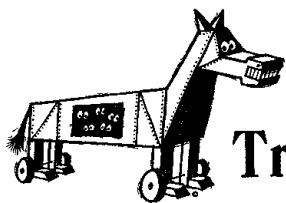
But the truth finally struck numbers of our readers. To others, it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you.

Yes, there will be some real easy to spot. Others will require judges to determine. We must admit it usually takes minutes to find one, and there will be loud lamentations, when you see how simple it is.

One little lady says she brews coffee while she puzzles her brain. Well, there are 15 of 66 books tucked away in this."

(From Lakeland bulletin)

DENOMINATIONALISM:



Trojan Horse

• By ROBERT S. MORSE, 33 S. JOHNSON AVENUE
Indianapolis, Indiana 46219

IS IT GOD'S WILL that there should be hundreds of denominations within "Christendom," each with its distinctive doctrine, organization, human tradition and man-made names? Not if Jesus' prayer for the unity of His believers means anything. They must be "one" even as He and God are one (John 17:20-24). Not if Galatians 5:19-21 means anything, for "*factions, divisions and parties*" will keep people out of the kingdom of God. Sectarians must face the only alternative for eternity, and that is destruction.

But is denominationalism safely outside the ranks of those who advocate a "New Testament church," or is it a trojan horse within, already disgorging thousands of devil-warriors intent upon mopping up the last vestige of non-sectarian Christianity? To answer this question, consider a number of alarming practices, denominational in nature, yet indulged by many who should know better.

FELLOWSHIPING WITH AVOWED DENOMINATIONALISTS

What business do Christians have joining in "union services," ministeral associations, church federations or or interdenominational campaigns? Did not Jesus command, "*Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind*"? (Matthew 15:14). Did not the Holy Spirit order Christians to "*Come out from among them and be separate*"? (II Corinthians 6:17).

Some Christians even think it is smart to be yoked together with those in main-line, *modernist-dominated* denominations that deny everything from the virgin birth of Christ to His resurrection. "*What portion hath a believer with an unbeliever*?" (II Corinthians 6:15). Other church members join lodges such as the Free-Masons, who promise salvation not through Christ but through their cult and mythological characters and through the very swearing that Jesus forbid. If we join in such associations we must share in their eternal damnation. "*Come forth, my people, out of her (Babylon) that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*" (Revelation 18:4).

UNSCRIPTURAL ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

If we advocate doing things Biblically, where do we find authority for missionary or evangelistic associations (shades of UCMS), convention organizations or Bible Colleges? If we make all things according to the pattern that God has shown, and rightly criticize such human innovations as archbishops, dioceses, papacy, colleges of cardinals, synods, etc., how can we have a part in *any religious organization outside the local congregation*? Or is the church designed by Jesus inadequate to cope with its God-given responsibilities? No. It is the "*pillar and ground of the truth*" (I Timothy 3:15). Let not its functions be usurped by denominational organizations of men.

UNSCRIPTURAL ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Rightly do Christians urge denominational people to leave churches that make no pretense of accepting Biblical organization. But what of those who do exactly that, make a pretense? "The church must be under elders," we are told. But if each elder is not 100% qualified according to I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, the eldership is a cruel hoax of the devil. An elder *must* have "*Believing children*" and be "*apt to teach*," etc., just as one *must* be born again. Then, too, how can we have such parodies of scriptural church government as "church boards" (often with women as co-rulers, when they should be silent), and still claim to be following after scriptural ideals? Quit the masquerade and and let denominationalism be uprooted at the home church first!!!

UNSCRIPTURAL CHURCH NAMES

Following the instructions in I Corinthians 1, believers should not be divided into groups named after men. How can the bride (the church) be named after anyone but the bridegroom (Christ)? There are indeed scriptural terms such as "church of God," "churches of Christ," "the church," etc. Apparently Martin Luther invented the term "CHRISTIAN CHURCH." It is not found in Scripture. The word "Christian" as a modifier means either "of Christ" or "of Christians." Who owns a "Christian Church"? It might be Christ, according to its name, or it might be the members. Ownership is uncertain. How can we urge people to forsake a Lutheran Church because it is not found in Scripture, and then join a Christian Church which is also not found there?

DENOMINATIONAL BAPTISM

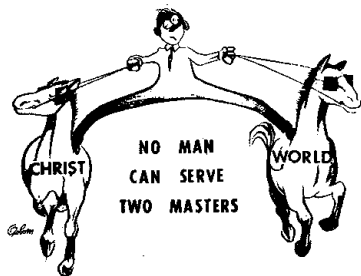
Many churches know enough not to accept as members those who have been merely sprinkled or baptized so young that they could not have first believed. In baptism there is a divine action, a burial (Romans 6:4), and a divine order, belief before baptism (Mark 16:16). But there is also a divine purpose, "the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38). Yet supposedly New Testament church rolls bulge with the names of those who were once immersed in denomination-alism, but NOT "*for the forgiveness of sins*." How can a church be Christ's when its members are unregenerate, having never obeyed the gospel? Of course they must be baptized "again" (having never been scripturally baptized at all), if they are to be Christians. Who has the decency to tell them this? Tragically, not many of the preachers.

DENOMINATIONAL "SALVATION" WITHOUT REPENTANCE

Why do so many so-called New Testament churches live and act no differently than the world does? All of the members passed through a baptismal tank after making a "good confession." Yet there are no evidences of a changed life. Members cuss like the world, smoke like the world, drink socially like the world, soak up television influences like the world, fight and kill like the world, dance and pet like the world, dress (or undress) like the world, and put everything under the sun before Christ and his church—like the world.

The answer is simple: they did not repent of their sins before being baptized. "Repentance" was a mere word to them, since preachers carefully refrained from preaching in a down-to-business manner against sin and *for* holiness of life. No repentance, no salvation, no church of Christ. All that is left is a sham-denominationalism pretending not to be such.

(Continued on Page 11)



WHO WANTS A "DIRTY" ROSE?

A COLLEGE PROFESSOR was teaching a class of young people on morals. He knew the necessity of impressing his lessons on the mind of each individual student.

The next morning before class the professor bought two dozen of the most beautiful roses he could find. There would be one for each boy, with one left over. He picked the very prettiest rose out of the bunch, and passed it to the boys, letting each one smell it and handle it. Then he put the handled rose back into the bouquet. After fluffing it with his hands, he passed the bouquet around and let every boy take the rose he wanted.

In the end, the handled, misused rose was left. The professor made this point. A boy may go out with a girl that is misused, but in the end he always desires to pick out the one that is pure for his wife.

—GOSPEL DIGEST

JOY IN THE MORNING

"WEEPING may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5). The feelings of the morning have a quality all their own. When the whistling of the birds arouse us from slumber to greet the coldness of a fresh dawn, and the yellow face of the sun smiles upon us as it comes forth to rule the day, no word save joy can describe what we feel. As we climb, leisurely or hastily, from the bed, stretching our bodies to full wakefulness, while we anticipate the work before us, it is joy; surely David could not have selected an expression more appropriate.

It is, however, in a more than literal sense that joy comes in the morning. For it is the experience of all righteous men that after gloom comes gladness, and after shadows there will be sunshine. May we be encouraged with this truth, and led to an attitude of patience, while we wait, seemingly in darkness many times, for God to bring the morning of vindication. —G. Wilson—

EDITORIAL COMMENTS . . .

(Continued from Page 2)

seemed not to be registering with the person at all? It seemed that they just didn't have the mental adhesiveness to get hold of what you were saying. And it wasn't because the person you were talking to was "dumb" either. In fact, the more "educated" the person was the less mental adhesiveness he seemed to have. This experience is not uncommon.

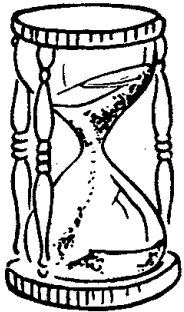
The sad truth is that our whole modern society is largely victimized by prevailing pagan philosophies which leave people bankrupt mentally, helplessly and hopelessly adrift. Men like Immanuel Kant, Hegel, and Soren Kierkegaard, who denied absolutes and believed that truth was simply relative, have cast long, ugly shadows across the modern scene. Then add to the strange alchemy Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud; their contemporaries and those that followed. You have the making of the "modern" mind. Man has been made to believe that he is an animal. Truth is only truth as it comes from and relates to his own experience. He accepts no externally imposed absolutes. He alone works out his own creed of life. This "existentialism" thing has permeated the modern mind, starting with higher education (in the past) and has now filtered down through the most elementary of grades in the public schools. We have lost our birthright and don't even know it. The vitals of our society have been sapped. Religious groups have been directly and indirectly influenced (and their influence for truth and right neutralized).

The apostle Paul knew about such philosophies of this present world, for the Greeks were well noted for this. He deals with the preaching of the cross and human philosophy in I Corinthians 1:18-31. Mankind could not lift himself by his own bootstraps. God had to intervene from heaven with ultimate (and absolute) truth and the Saviour. With human philosophers in mind, Paul said, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22). He also speaks of those "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7). Therefore, he warned Christians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). And he charged Timothy, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith..." (I Timothy 6:20, 21).

Beloved, enough has been said. Beware of pagan philosophies. We can be brainwashed today and not even know it. □

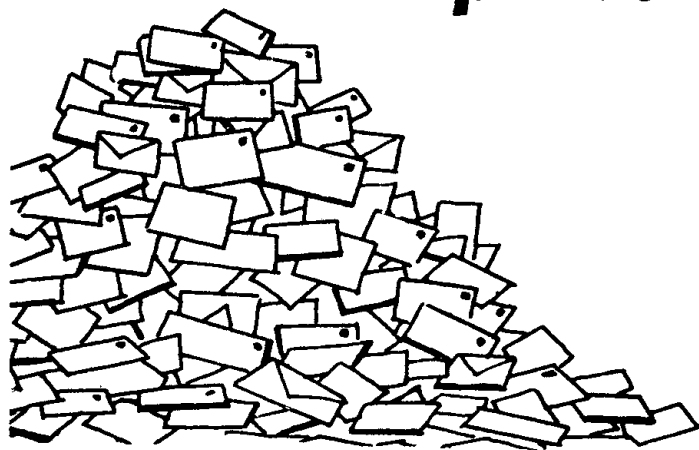
*Time is
Running Out!*

EACH 1 SEND 6 IN '76!



READERS'

... Response



NORTH CAROLINA :

■ *"It has been some time since I sent a contribution, however I am very happy that you continued to send THE SWORD AND STAFF. I am enclosing a small check which I hope will help keep this fine publication in circulation."*

■ *"Your November-December issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF arrived today and I appreciate very much your fine articles in it. I was wondering why you have not offered your lead article as a tract. It is very good and I'm sure would be well received by those to whom it would be presented... I pray you will have a safe and prosperous new year as you witness for the truth."*

VIRGINIA :

■ *"Would it be possible for you to produce in tract form your grand article, 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?' which appears in the November-December issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF? I do hope something can be done."*

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF is the only paper I get that I read every line. And agree with every word. God bless you for your efforts for Christ's purpose. Forgive my neglect in sending pay for something I receive that means so much to me. I am buying the volumes for my daughter, who plans to use them whenever needed to help a friend see the truth and be led to accept it... Thanks again and God go with you."*

KENTUCKY :

■ *"Please renew my subscription to THE SWORD AND STAFF as it has been a great help to me, especially the article by William E. Paul in the September-October issue on original sin in the light of the Bible. I'm a Christian only and I had never heard that doctrine preached among our people until recently. And how many of our young preachers are teaching it! I have tried for twenty-five to find some one who could explain Psalms 51:5 and had failed, but brother Paul did it beautifully. I can't find any record of David's mother in the Bible. Was she a sinner at the time of his birth?"*

"I read all of THE SWORD AND STAFF as soon as it arrives and enjoy every page of it."

OHIO :

■ *"Thank you for sending THE SWORD AND STAFF. We*

don't know who sent our name in but we certainly have enjoyed it. We use your short articles in our church bulletins. Enclosed please find a much overdue check."

■ *"Sorry I haven't sent any money for so long. I enjoy your paper very much. It is one of the most inspiring and educational papers I receive. Please continue to send your paper to me... Thanks again to you and your staff for the good job they are doing. May God bless you all."*

IOWA :

■ *"Do you have the article, 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?' by James Gibbons in the November-December, 1975, issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF in tract form? If you don't, I sure hope you do have, in the near future, because I can use a number of them."*

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Yes, we do have the material, "What Must I Do To Be Saved?" now prepared in tract form. We anticipated that this could be put to practical and immediate use, and printed several thousand of them. We have arranged it in a handy vest pocket booklet size. We are making this available to you at 6¢ a copy in any numbers. Order from *The Sword and Staff*).

NEBRASKA :

■ *"Please remove my name from your mailing lists. I am receiving two copies of SWORD AND STAFF. I did not subscribe to it, and I do not wish to receive any of your literature or magazines."*

■ *"As I was reading your September-October issue I read where you are sending bundles of your paper to people who can't afford to subscribe for it; people that live in India. I would like to subscribe for THE SWORD AND STAFF (using your introductory offer) and I would like the rest of the money to help pay the cost of sending issues to people in India (or where needed). Keep on printing the truth about the Bible and I hope we may win more souls for the Lord."*

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks so much! Now if we could get others to help underwrite such efforts, we could get more done).

CALIFORNIA :

■ *"Enclosed please find two one dollar bills, for which please send me as many as this two dollars will cover, of the November-December issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF paper that has your article on 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?'—That is the best I have ever seen on that subject. I want a few to hand out to others..."*

OREGON :

■ *"Please forgive my neglect in sending subscription renewals. I do appreciate your faithfulness in continuing to send the paper even when I have been so careless. The SWORD AND STAFF would truly be missed if it hadn't kept coming."*

"I thank the Lord for all the articles, poems, and for the true Bible teaching. Thank you and may God bless you and your paper as it goes out that many souls will be turned to the right."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DENOMINATIONALISM: Trojan Horse (Continued from Page 9)

Perhaps the reader is not satisfied with these things. Have the courage to act. Leave the whole mess. If you want the real thing in Christianity, find those of like mind and cast your lot with them. And make sure you are not among the lost. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Materials You Can Use!

FOLLOWING you will find a current listing of the booklets, tracts, and other materials available from us. We have tried to keep the charge nominal. Also listed are the bound volumes of back issues of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. They make a valuable addition to your library and to your life, and more and more people are buying them. If you wish you may help with the postage on the mailing of your order—especially on the small orders. We think you will find these materials timely and worthwhile to use.

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- ☐ *The Meaning of Suffering in the Life of the Christian*—10¢ each; 100 for \$8.00.
- ☐ *Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered*—8¢ each.
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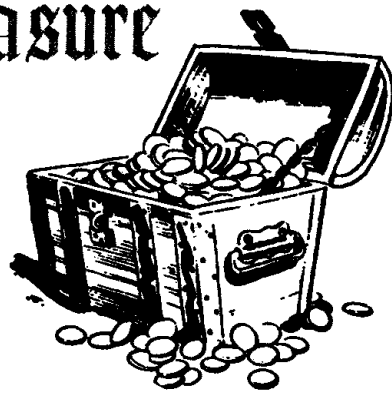
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He who stands for nothing falls for anything.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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WE HAVE PREPARED the vital material that was on the front page of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* last month in a handy tract-booklet form, bearing the title, "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" This is the most important question that a person can ask, and various people have requested that we make this available in tract form. You should be able to put this to very good use immediately and under all circumstances. The cost of the tract-booklet is 6¢ a copy in any numbers. Why not place an order to *THE SWORD AND STAFF* today?

ALSO NEW is a tract answering objections to the weekly observance of the Lord's supper. It can be used by itself, or it could be used in a good way with our tract, "Every Sunday?" The cost of this tract is 3¢ each.

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