

The Sword AND Staff

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

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

SETTING THE CHURCH IN ORDER

• *"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (TITUS 1:5).*

GOD'S PLAN for world evangelism calls for the evangelists to spearhead this work as they are sent out from the local church. The evangelists (messengers of the good news) proclaim the gospel, convert people to the Lord Jesus Christ, instruct them in the way of the Lord, and organize them into collective bodies called churches. They teach and edify the local groups (churches), setting things in order to finally ordain local leadership. The evangelist may go on to new and needy fields or spend an indefinite period of time with a local church in evangelizing and training other workers. The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament Scriptures bear these things out. It is a shame today that this procedure has been replaced by the traditions of men. Evangelists are only thought of as men preaching protracted "revival" meetings, whereas in the New Testament every preacher is called an evangelist. Another unscriptural class of preachers has arisen which men call "ministers," or "pastors," whereas in the New Testament the elders were called "pastors." We are living in the era of the "pastorized" preacher and the exterminated elder (who scripturally should be the pastors). We could go on and on, but the object of this writing is to emphasize "setting the church in order." The faithful New Testament evangelist is to take the initiative in doing this (let no man despise him, Titus 2:15). In fact, let all of us search the Scriptures and fully co-operate, doing our part to get the job done. The Lord wants us to be a church "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27).

The work of the evangelist in "setting the church in order" is very much needed in the following situations.



ations.

(1) NEW CHURCHES. This seems to be the situation with Titus on the island of Crete. As an associate worker with Paul he was left there to finish the work (or continue in it) of setting the churches in order. This involved teaching them and ordaining elders (Titus 1:5; 2:15; Acts 14:21-23; etc.). New churches today need to recognize the work and the authority of the faithful evangelist in this realm. His authority is the unadulterated Word of God.

(2) WORLDLY AND TRADITIONAL CHURCHES. The carnal church at Corinth got into a terrible mess as well as others. Paul as an evangelist of the gospel with his associates strived to get the situation straightened out (I Corinthians 4:17; 11:34; II Corinthians 13:5, 10; etc.). The book of Galatians shows Paul's efforts to set the Galatian churches aright, for they were going back under the traditionalism of the Law of Moses.

In our day and time we have many churches that profess to be undenominational, New Testament churches, but their stand (or lack of it) and works deny it. They are full of the world and have developed their own set of traditions while at the same time saying they are not a denomination (some not even saying this). The work of a dedicated and faithful evangelist is needed here, for many times it will take the best in a man to ride the rough waters and set these churches in order. Many under such circumstances compromise and take the easy road out, but Paul charged

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THE SWORD AND STAFF

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Proverbs of Today

The "pulpit" is no place to preach our doubts and question marks, but that which we assuredly know to be the truth of God.

"Victorious Christianity is not a matter of enduring pain, but of using it."

Some people who are the most defensive have the least to defend (that is why they are defensive—they feel inadequate and inferior, and are trying to shield themselves, and cover up.)

"We are best to ourselves when we are good to others."

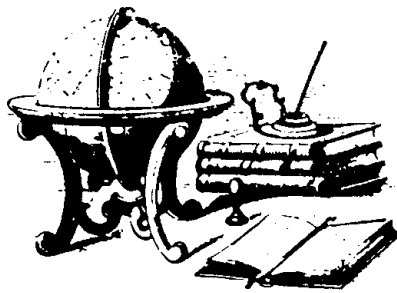
Keep your faith when things are going smooth, then your faith will keep you when things get rough.

"Christ will empower us to do whatever He commands us to do."

You must come to yourself (Luke 15:17) before you can come to God (Luke 15:20) .

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers."

The individual Christian and the local church are central in carrying out God's will in the world.



EDITORIAL

COMMENTS...

THE SWORD AND STAFF AND THE WORD OF GOD

WE ARE INDEED THANKFUL to the Lord God for the gracious privilege of getting out this paper calling men's attention to the Word of God. We love His truth above all else, and wish to exalt it above all else (and the Lord Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of this truth—John 14:6). We bow to no tradition of man, but to the God of heaven as He speaks.

As we have said, this is a "preaching-teaching" paper. The appellation THE SWORD AND STAFF signifies THE WORD OF GOD in its two aspects. It is a mighty sword of conquest in the rebuke and convicting of sin, and it is a precious staff to guide and comfort those who have repented of their sins (heaven awaits). To use another related parallel, THE SWORD AND STAFF could easily symbolize evangelism and edification. And this makes us think of the work of the evangelist and the work of the elder. Thus, we want the contents of this paper to be completely and faithfully oriented Scripturally, as the name THE SWORD AND STAFF signifies then the Word of God and the work of God as it relates to the Word of God.

We have no trouble accepting the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible has not been tried and found wanting, but in most cases it simply is waiting and wanting to be tried. To study and immerse oneself in its sacred contents is to come out a believer. God has spoken to us, and if we will listen we will believe...we have His truth for fallen humanity. He providentially has preserved it for us through the ages (even dark and unenlightened ages). Jesus declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Since God has taken the time and the trouble through the hands of many men over many centuries to reveal His Word to us, we should by all means take the time to seriously and conscientiously study its sacred pages. He has given us a brain and the Bible and expects us to use both. In a land of Bibles (the Bible is the best seller), there is no excuse for anyone not knowing God's plan to salvation and the truth about His church (which is not a denomination). □

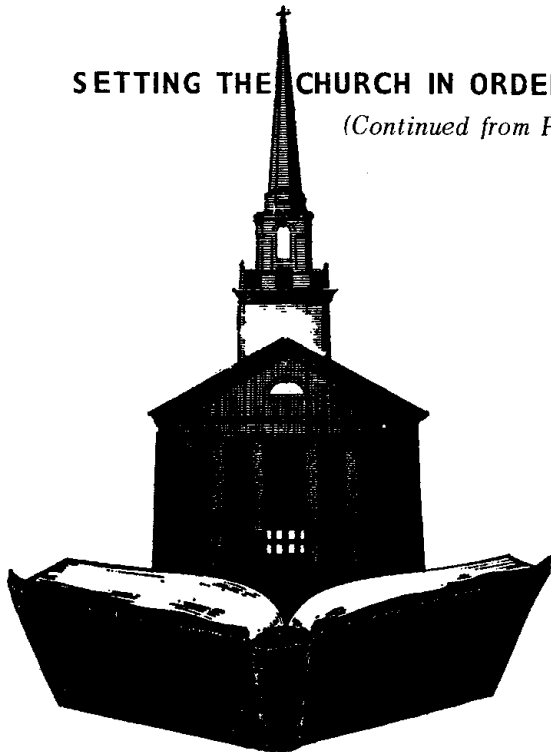
HELP US STAY IN THE MAIL

YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS, renewals, and other offerings (including the "buying" of our booklets and materials) determine our getting THE SWORD AND STAFF out regularly. This is not a business project, but one to get out the Word of God by means of the printed page. However, it would be good if we could have our publishing expenses (which are exorbitant) paid on an "as you go" basis, not getting behind. Delays in publishing are caused by this. Please renew your subscription when you believe it is due. We send no notices.

How can you tell when it is due? Beside your name and address on the back of THE SWORD AND STAFF most of you will find the date when your subscription was entered into our records. Notice that date and renew it every year at that time. You are our life-line. Please keep us going. Thank you! □

SETTING THE CHURCH IN ORDER

(Continued from Page 1)



young Timothy “therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Timothy 2:3).

(3) DENOMINATIONS. This land (the world) is flooded with religious denominations. Obviously something is amiss. The sad story is that the simple plan of salvation from sin is not generally preached; men are not made Christians after the New Testament order. Unbelief is rampant. The doctrines and traditions of men are followed, formulated into humanly divided creeds. The simple organization of the church (which is only local) with its specified offices is seldom found. That which is supposed by men to be the church of Christ is dubbed by names which give glory to men, some over-emphasized religious doctrine, some erroneous system of church government, or what have-you. Yes, in the midst of all this division unbelief, materialism and worldliness thrives and grows.

There is much “setting in order” that needs to be done. First (these words are spoken in all humbleness and sincerity), we must make sure that we are born-again Christians (more than the cheap veneer that is thrown around in this coinage today); then divest ourselves of all traces of denominationalism to emerge and merge into the one undenominational church already established in the first century. If we cannot genuinely bring this about where we are, getting the people really to forsake human traditions (and follow the Bible alone as their rule of faith), we must follow the command and example of the inspired apostle Paul (Romans 16:17; I Timothy 6:3-5; Acts 19:9). There is too much at stake to do otherwise.

(It is the great burden and concern behind this publication to help set churches in order. We profess allegiance to no religious denomination; this paper is not the voice of any denomination or religious fac-

tion. It is our conviction that a religious journal ceases to serve its usefulness when it becomes the organ of a denomination (officially or unofficially). Our mission simply is to call your attention anew to the Word of God (the Word of God is our sword and staff; in fact, it is THE sword and staff). Let us examine all things anew and remove the cobwebs of traditionalism from our minds (some have commented on the vitality and freshness of some of our material—this comes when you remove the cobwebs of human traditionalism, and approach God’s Word with an open mind). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21). If the truth is presented, accept it...follow it. If it isn’t, forget it. We believe that a new and better day is in store for the church as we sincerely endeavor to “set the church in order.”).

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“LET THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH”

THEIR CHURCHES (the churches in early New Testament times) were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. In their church capacity alone they moved. They neither transformed themselves into any kind of associations, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies. They viewed the church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men. They dared not transfer to a missionary society, or Bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in so doing they should rob the church of its glory and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God. In their church capacity alone they moved. The church they considered “the pillar and ground of the truth”, they viewed it as the temple of the Holy Spirit; as the house of the living God. They considered if they did all they could in this capacity, they had nothing left for any other object of a religious nature. In this capacity, wide as its sphere extended, they exhibited the truth in word and deed. Their good works, which accompanied salvation, were the labors of love, in ministering to the necessities of saints, to the poor of the brotherhood. They did good to all men, but especially to the household of faith. They practiced that pure and undefiled religion, which, in overt acts consists in “taking care of orphans and widows in their affliction, and in keeping one’s self unspotted by (the vices of) the world.”

—Alexander Campbell in THE CHRISTIAN BAPTIST

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YOUNG PERSON, IF YOU ARE BORED...

A YOUNG BOY complained to his father that most of the church hymns were boring—too far behind the time, boring tunes, meaningless words. His father put an end to the discussion when he said, “If you think you can write better hymns, then why don’t you?”

The year was the 1600’s, the teenager was Isaac Watts. “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and “Joy to the World” are among 350 hymns written by him. Feeling bored? Do something great! Let the world remember you for 300 years.

—Selected □

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BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK

By JAMES E. GIBBONS

Read Revelation 3:14-20. There is an element of tragedy and shame as we view this scene. Christ says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Think of it, Christ is wanting to come into his own church! The one that he died and gave himself for!

Let us get a closer look at the situation here. This is the church of Laodicea in the region of Asia Minor. From the information that I can find, this was a rich city. The main industry here was the making of wool from the black sheep of the vicinity. There was a medical school for eye-doctors here. In fact the people had enough wealth that when their city burned in 65 A. D., they rebuilt on their own accord unaided. The church was planted here in the midst of leisure and plenty. The members of the church had a tendency to be "lukewarm" and neither "cold nor hot." In the midst of plenty they developed a false sense of security, with their religion falling into the background. Through the inspired apostle John, Jesus said, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Here we have an allusion to their wealth, the city's industry and the medical school. But, most of all, we see that they have let these things come between them and God, chilling their warm zeal for the cause of Christ. Then we come across the sad words of our precious Lord, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

We are living in a time of material prosperity; the same conditions as at Laodicea exist today. And shamefully we say that it is feared that the Lord stands on the outside of a good per cent of the churches that outwardly bear his name, wanting entrance.

Why does the Lord stand and knock at the doors of professing churches today? For the above and many other reasons. Let us consider some of them.

I. "Because People Don't Realize the Importance of My Church"

To most people today the church is optional; it is a matter of one's own choice. Thus, we continually hear the unorthodox statement, "Go to the church of your choice." "You go to your church, and I'll go to mine." But, beloved, the Lord's church is not a matter of human opinion. We have no choice save to obey him if we are interested in eternal life. The church is a divine institution; it has divinity written all over it. Outstanding Old Testament Scriptures continually pointed to the coming Messiah and his kingdom. In more immediate time John the baptizer came preaching, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The very Son of God declared, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:17-19). The inspired apostles under the direction of Christ established the church in Acts 2 in Jerusalem. This church had been in the mind

of God from the beginning. It is called the kingdom of heaven, body of Christ, bride of Christ, temple of God—hence, there is no getting around it. It is a divine institution. Christ demands all allegiance to it, as we serve him in truth, or else stands without knocking, and it is no longer the true church.

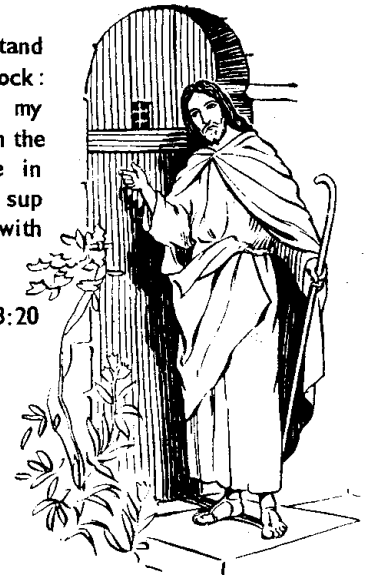
The church is of extreme importance because salvation is within its ranks. As life is in the body, and aside from it is death, likewise life (salvation) is in the body of Christ, the church. Ephesians 5:23 disclose that Christ is the saviour of the body (the church). How then can one be saved if he is not in the church? Acts 20:28 shows that Christ has purchased the church with His own blood. One cannot be saved without the blood of Christ, and again this proves that salvation is in the church. In I Corinthians 15:24 we read, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . ." Of course the kingdom is the church. Christ used "kingdom" and "church" synonymously in Matthew 16:18, 19, and Paul tells us in Colossians 1:13 that we are now in the kingdom. Therefore, when the kingdom is delivered up to God, it means the church, and if we are not in the church we will not be presented before God, and thus we will be among those who are lost. Salvation is in the church. This is very important to realize denominationalism denies it.

Christ says, "I demand pre-eminence in the church." That is what he would say for Paul writes in Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.**" The Lord knocks because men are not giving him the pre-eminence, which rightfully belongs to him for the reasons in this verse. He was an active participant in the creation of all things (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:2). He is now declared to be the Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) with all power and authority (Matthew 28:18). He is

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"BEHOLD, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

—Revelation 3:20



"Religious"



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COMPROMISE

THE TITLE of this lesson arrests your thinking at once—What are "respectable" sins?

These are the popular sins—"Everybody's doing it" (Sin is sin, wrong is wrong, no matter how popular the thing may be).

This is one of the oldest sins. It was practiced by Eve in the garden of Eden. She tried to serve both God and the devil. The devil PROMISED big things for her. But it did not turn out like he promised. Spell it COM-PROMISE—with promise. That is exactly how sin always works, deceitfully. Hebrews 3:13; Genesis 3:4-6.

I. WHAT COMPROMISE IS

Why do we need a definition? The action or essence is in the Bible, although the word itself is not in the Scriptures. The sin of compromise usually goes undetected.

1. Attempting a course of "policy" where God has left no room for judgment.
2. Making concessions where God has made commands.
3. Attempting a middle-of-the-road policy between right and wrong.
4. Covering up, or trying to justify the sins of others (Especially those with authority).
5. A tolerance of sin to the point of damaging weakness.

II. CASES OF COMPROMISE

1. Eve, Genesis 3:1-8 (She knew what God had said, but she gave in to the devil).
2. Israel; Joshua, Joshua 9:3-15 (Made a league with those who were forbidden, Exodus 23:32).
3. Saul and the people, I Samuel 15:9, 19-23 (And Saul eventually became a suicide! Here also the "ground-work" was laid for the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel, the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the Jezebel scourge, etc. When you can see compromise with all its respectable robes torn off, it looks pretty SORDID!).
4. Amaziah, II Chronicles 25:7-9 (But read on to verses 14 and 15. Compromise at work).
5. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-10 (Compromise was behind it all).
6. Pilate, Matthew 27:24—compare verse 18, and Luke 13:13-25.

(There are other cases, but these suffice for here;

look for others yourself).

III. WHY DO MEN COMPROMISE?

1. They lack respect for the authority of God and His Word.
2. They yield, a little at a time, to "pressures" from Satan and sinners.
3. Weary in well doing; a desire for popularity—Compare Micah 6:3.
4. Cowardly fear, looking for an EASY way to serve God—Galatians 2:12.
5. Mistakenly thinking that the WORLD will help to advance righteousness—Isaiah 31:1-

IV. THE CURSE OF COMPROMISE

1. Strengthens the hands of wicked evil-doers, Jeremiah 23:14-17; II Samuel 12:14.
2. Compromisers fight the truth, II Peter 2:1, 2; II John 9, 10.
3. Gives the world the wrong impression of Christianity, Galatians 1:6-10; 3:3; 5:13; 6:7-9.
4. Gives a false sense of security, Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46-49.
5. Makes the church a hot-bed of watered down time-servers, a "numbers racket" (Unqualified elders, unconverted Bible teachers, weird money-raising schemes, etc.).
6. Causes sinners to think "there is plenty of time yet to become a Christian," Proverbs 27:1.
7. Incurs the wrath of God, Proverbs 17:15; Isaiah 5:20; Colossians 2:8; Ephesians 5:6.

V. THE CURE FOR COMPROMISE

1. Realize that Christ refused to compromise, Matthew 4:8-10.
2. Make sure of your salvation, Acts 19:1-5; Romans 6:3, 4; II Timothy 1:12.
3. Look to God for strength, Ephesians 3:16; Galatians 5:24, 25; Hebrews 4:16.
4. Stand fast in the faith, Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 6:10, 11; I Corinthians 15:58.
5. Refuse it—FLEE from compromise as you would the plague! Galatians 2:5-14.
6. See the disgraceful "brood" compromise has shoved into (?) the church.
7. Study the lives of some who refused to compromise—Nehemiah, for one, Nehemiah 6:1-9; compared to Nehemiah, chapters 4 and 5.

SOME APPLICATIONS:

WE ARE LIVING in an age of permissiveness, which in reality is LAWLESSNESS. Now the thing that is popular is CHURCH-AN-I-TY. Ask someone if they are a Christian, and they will tell you what "church" they belong to. There is one Bible verse which aptly describes our present situation. It is II Timothy 3:5—

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away!"

BE A CHRISTIAN — NOT A COMPROMISER!

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"HE WHO THINKS HE HAS ALL THE ANSWERS EVIDENTLY HASN'T HEARD ALL THE QUESTIONS YET."

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR . . .

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the head of the church and the firstborn from the dead. Oh, then, my friend, we plead with you to honor, respect and love the church because of our precious Lord. He is worthy of everything (Revelation 5:12). Enter into the worship and work of the church with a warm and holy zeal. Abhor denominational names, which give not Christ the glory, and denominational doctrines, which reflect on His authority—"that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18).

II. "Because I Want the First Place in People's Lives."

Christ sands and knocks on the hearts door of many individuals and churches today simply because they let everything else come before Him—but the first place belongs to Christ! The point stressing Christ receiving the pre-eminence proves this. Truly the first belongs to the Lord. God has claim on us even from creation. Genesis 1:26 shows that God created us, and then we read Psalms 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein." Under the Old Testament God made a covenant, or contract, with the Israelites; they were His people by agreement. Under this arrangement they literally gave their firstborn to the Lord (the Levites later taking their place), they were strictly obligated to keep God's law, and one-tenth of all their possessions went to God. Yes, God has a claim on all by creation, He had a claim on the Israelites by a contract, but He has a greater claim than that on us today—we, as Christians, are a **bought** people. Paul brings this out vividly in I Corinthians 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Christ by his precious blood has purchased and redeemed us from the corruption of sin that we henceforth should not serve sin. We are a blood-bought people, and Christ demands first place!

The words of Paul to the Ephesians perhaps fit many of us: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation (manner of life) in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2,3). But now it should be and must be different if we are Christians! Christ comes first in our living. Even as Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). We pray to the Father by Christ; we consult Him about what is right and wrong. We wear His name, Christian. He is spiritually the head of our house, even as he is of the church, and the unseen guest at every meal. Every church service finds us faithfully there (Hebrews 10:25). The Lord must have first place in our living! We plead with those who have deceived themselves into thinknig they can be "lukewarm" and go to heaven. The writer of Hebrews asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salva-

tion...?" (Hebrews 2:3). And the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Along with this the Lord must have first place in our giving. As we noticed everything belongs to God by creation (Psalms 24:1). The Jews in their contract with God gave one-tenth plus free-will offerings. But, what about our giving in the New Testament age? We are a bought people, and God has even a greater claim on us. However, the tithe was an institution ordained of God before the Old Testament was given (Hebrews 7:1-2), and thus we must start with the tithe level in our giving. That is the starting point and free-will offerings will be given above the tithe, as we give out of the abundance of our hearts, having first given them to Jesus. We will give systematically and cheerfully our tithes and offerings (I Corinthians 16:1, 2; II Corinthians 9:6-8). Tithing is a good way to break covetousness, which is a sin of idolatry (Colossians 3:5), and which also can result in our souls being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

III. "Because the Church Has Forgotten Its Great Commission."

There is no doubt that Christ stands knocking today because the church has forgotten the great commission, the reason the church was called into existence in the first place. In Mark 16:15,16 we find one account of the great commissionn, which goes, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . ." This was the commission of the apostles, but it is evident that the church was given the same commission.

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The Ministry of the Lowly Earthworm

"O LORD, how manifold are Thy works!" exclaimed the Psalmist. "In wisdom Thou hast made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches" (Psalms 104:24). "Thou has created all things," acknowledged "the four and twenty elders" around the heavenly throne, "and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O God," recognized the Psalmist (Psalms 14:10).

No more striking example of the truth of the latter observation can be found than that of the lowly earthworm, which Scripture seems to accord the nadir of God's creation. Though it is so debased in nature, the very valuable function which God has given it to perform is marvelous, indeed, giving glory to Him who has so endued the humblest of His works.

"Earthworms are found in all parts of the world except Antarctica and Madagascar," says a U. S. Encyclopedia. "They are extremely valuable in many ways. As they dig their burrows earthworms help loosen the soil, enabling rainwater and air to penetrate more easily and reach the roots of plants. They pull dead leaves and other organic matter into their burrows and fertilize the soil. In addition, earthworms are an important source of food for birds and certain animals."

Of a truth, O God, "in wisdom Thou hast made them all!"—the works of Thy hands. "The whole earth is full' of Thy glory, as the Seraphim acclaimed (Isaiah 6:3). May we be given eyes to behold that glory, especially in this day when atheistic and agnostic scientists would wholly obscure it from us. —*Selected*

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"UNFEIGNED LOVE OF



THE BRETHERN"

By JAMES E. GIBBONS — 1535 Fairfield Drive
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• *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:22, 23).*

THESE ARE great verses of Scripture with many obvious and wonderful truths in them. It tells us many things about our conversion and the resultant good that follows. Contrary to what is commonly taught today, we have not been saved by "faith only" (a false denominational doctrine), but have "purified" our "souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." This is called "being born again." It makes a valuable and interesting study to examine and compare the many parallel verses on this same subject. For example, check out the following: John 3:3,5; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5,17; I Corinthians 6:11 and 12:13; Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; etc.

The new birth, the birth of the Spirit, brings us into an experience of love. According to Acts 2:38, we receive the Holy Spirit when we repent and are baptized. Then Paul writes in Romans 5:5, "...The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The essence of the presence of God is love through the Holy Spirit. This is further evident in the fact that the chief fruit of the Holy Spirit is listed as love (Galatians 5:22).

Let us notice what the new birth implies in reference to love.

I. GOD IS LOVE AND THOSE BORN OF GOD ARE LIKE THEIR FATHER.

The apostle John admonishes, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not know-

eth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:7,8). In other words, if we have been born of God, we will be like God. Children are like their father, and "God is love." If this is missing in our lives, we don't even know God.

Paul writes, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: And walk in love, as Christ also hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:1,2). In other words, we should be like our heavenly Father, being his dear children, and "walk in love" (at the same time being like our elder brother, Jesus).

Paul used this same line of thought to back up his admonition which immediately preceded this. Listen. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (4:31,32).

Yes, this old weary universe has a "soul," and it is the Spirit of God. The emptiness of our being is filled with love by means of His Spirit when we are "born again." God is love, and the new birth implies we will be like our Father. And may this all-engulfing love motivate, control, and direct our lives from here to eternity.

II. HE WHO LOVES THE FATHER LOVES THE FATHER'S CHILDREN.

This truth is firmly established in the following verses. John wrote, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God who he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also...and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (I John 4:20,21; 5:1b). If we love God and call him Father, it is altogether natural and expected that we will love the other children that our Father may have.

We are brothers and sisters, members of the same family. Upon being born again we are urged to have "unfeigned love of the brethren," and to "love one another with a pure heart fervently" (I Peter 1:22). This love is real, not pretended—"unfeigned." It is pure; there is no selfish motive behind it. John makes it further emphatic by saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14). It is evidence that we have really been converted if we have genuine love for other Christians. A person does not have to put forth an effort to love his brothers and sisters in the flesh. It comes naturally, instinctively. This is doubly true in the family of God.

Thus, the following admonitions are in order. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with BROTHERLY LOVE; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). "Let BROTHERLY LOVE continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "Love the BROTHERHOOD" (I Peter 2:17). "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, LOVE AS BRETHREN, be pitiful, be courteous" (I Peter 3:8). And may we take these things to heart, realizing that we are the children and family of God. May we prefer one another, and have a special esteem for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. THINGS THAT HINDER LOVE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD.

(Continued on Next Page)

“UNFEIGNED LOVE OF THE BRETHREN”

(Continued from the Last Page)

It goes without saying that if a person has never been born he is not alive. Likewise, if a sinner has not been born again, he is not in the family of God. He does not have the Holy Spirit. He may even be outwardly associated with a local church but has never surrendered himself to God. We cannot expect a person like this to have entered into the depths of divine love. And, as John wrote, “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:14, 15).

If we let love for anyone or anything compete with the love of God in our lives, we are headed for trouble. Our Lord Jesus taught: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). To “hate” is a Hebrew expression meaning to love less. This problem that Jesus is talking about can involve things that are not wrong within themselves, like family (Matthew 10:37) or money (I Timothy 6:10)...anything! Paul even talks about men being “lovers of their own selves,” and then he continues a little later, “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (II Timothy 3:2, 4, 5). Love for anything else more than love for God makes our religion an empty shell. The family of God will mean nothing to us.

The entrance of sin can really hinder, and even destroy, the love of God in the family of God (all sin has its roots in selfishness—just the opposite of love). Going back to John’s writings, we find this strong admonition. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). Paul wrote Timothy, saying, “Demas forsaken me, having loved this present world” (II Timothy 4:10a). Whether overt sin or the paralyzing influence of this godless age continually bombarding us, the results are the same. It is even as the Lord Jesus warned, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:12, 13).

The entrance of sin makes havoc of our relationships with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are the family of God. It is even as John wrote: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” In other words, it is a triangular experience and relationship. By “walking in the light” (I John 1:6, 7) we are in fellowship with God, and are therewith in fellowship with all other brothers and sisters who are doing the same thing. The entrance of sin not repented of in one brother’s life breaks off his fellowship with God, and at the same time breaks off fellowship with all brothers and sisters who are still in “the light.” It really messes up the family of God in more ways than one. A person who continues in sin is alienated from the heavenly Father, in His disfavor; and at the same time he loses his love for God, he loses his love for those who are still in God’s favor. All kinds of frictions and problems can develop when the love of God has been lost.

THEREFORE, dearly beloved, as our brother Peter wrote years ago, let us have “unfeigned love of the

brethren;” let us love “one another with a pure heart fervently.” We have been born into the family of God. God is our Father, and all born into the family of God are our brothers and sisters. This is a most sacred and precious relationship—one that will continue throughout eternity. Let our love be “unfeigned”—REAL (not pretended)! May we really mean something to one another in a world where love is too many times missing. Let it be from a “pure heart” and “fervently” (intensely). We have no selfish motive; we are not trying to “use” someone for personal advantage or gain. The church should be heaven on earth as it is the family of God, the kingdom of heaven. It is the abode of the Holy Spirit, whose chief fruit is love. Our Lord Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). □

I WAS THERE TOO

IN A PAINTING of the Crucifixion by the famous Dutch artist, Rembrandt, your attention, of course, is drawn first of all to the Cross and to Him who hangs there. Then you look at the crowd that is gathered around the Cross and note the attitudes and actions of these people. As your eyes drift to the edge of the picture you see another figure standing in the shadow. This is Rembrandt himself—Rembrandt helping to crucify Jesus! How true that is! The Crucifixion is not merely a historical fact. It is a personal experience...It may be an interesting pastime to point fingers at those who crucified Jesus, but it is a shocking thought that I can be as indifferent as Pilate, as scheming as Caiaphas, as callous as the soldiers, as ruthless as the mob, as cowardly as the disciples. It isn’t just what they did..

*’Twas I that shed the sacred blood,
I nailed Him to the tree,
I crucified the Christ of God,
I joined the mockery!*

I look again and in the shadows with Rembrandt, I am there. —Selected □

THE SIN OF DOING NOTHING AT ALL

*He made no mistakes, took no wrong roads.
He never fumbled the ball.
He never went down ‘neath the weight of a load.
He simply did nothing at all.*

*He lost no hard fights in defense of the right.
He never bled with his back to the wall.
He never fell faint in his climb to the light.
He simply did nothing at all.*

*So, death came nigh, for life slipped by,
And he feared for the judgment hall.
When they asked him why, he said with a sigh,
“I simply did nothing at all.”*

*So, God will pardon your blunder, my friend,
Or regard with pity your fall,
But the one big sin that surely means hell
Is simply to do nothing at all.*

—SELECTED



Lasciviousness

CONSIDER THINGS which lead to lasciviousness as well as what lasciviousness itself leads to. The Greek word *aselgia* (lasciviousness) is used as an adjective. It is translated as such in II Peter 2:2,7, "...their lascivious doings...distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked." Not only, then, is the unlawful unrestrained desire lascivious but that which causes or promotes such is lascivious. Consider the following matters. Perhaps you can improve on the list.

Modern Dancing where there is bodily contact or where (even though no contact) there are indecent bodily movements before those dancing or before viewers, may be condemned at this point. Such dancing is not improper solely because it might lead to fornication but to the degree that it arouses unrestrained desires which cannot be fulfilled under present relations and conditions. Men and women, fathers and mothers, boys and girls, need to understand a fundamental difference in the make-up of the sexes. Generally the male is more easily and quickly stimulated than the female. The mothers and daughters, then, should not be quick to make light of this point.

Promiscuous Petting is worse than the dancing (especially following the dancing). It is usually practiced when a couple is alone and not even restrained by the presence of others.

The Parked Automobile (especially following the dance coupled with promiscuous petting) certainly can lead to lasciviousness.

Alcoholic Beverages (especially following the dance coupled with promiscuous petting in a parked car) should be refrained from if one wishes to remain free from lasciviousness. Alcohol is a depressant even though for a few moments it seems to stimulate. Barriers are weakened and often let down with the use of alcoholic beverages.

Clothing must be seriously guarded. I Timothy 2:9 (modest dress for godly women) has more to do with overdressing than with scanty attire. Lasciviousness should be the key to dealing with scanty dress. Modestly basically means well arranged or orderly, seemly. Might it not

be properly said that all lascivious clothing is immodest, but that not all immodest clothing (such as excessive or extravagant—Editor) is lascivious? Any item of clothing would exploit the body should be avoided. Consider this also in the light of the aforementioned items. Put all five of these together! What then?

Lewd Pictures of every sort, whether still or moving, in color or black and white. Certain pictures display sex in such a way as to make it extremely difficult to prevent undesirable thoughts. Most families today have a private theatre in their homes (TV).

Filthy Conversation, smutty jokes, and suggestive stories can lead to lasciviousness. The mind has the unusual ability to draw up mental pictures suggested by such.

Reading Matter must be guarded. Some have condemned movies and television but would not miss a single best seller.

It has been the purpose of this article to try to list all of the things which might lead to lasciviousness or be lascivious. We must also remember that just because a person condemns such things as listed herein, he will not be or is not free from the sin of lasciviousness. The human mind has the power to call up mental images to suit its fancy. A person could possibly be stirred to flagrant, shameless, lustful passions. Physical conditions are not absolutely necessary to arouse sensual passion.

Again, there is no way of knowing the prevalence of lasciviousness in the world or in the church. On the great and memorable day of judgment every secret sin of every heart will be made known. The sobering thoughts of Hebrews 4:13 should be remembered: "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

We should be concerned with preventing lasciviousness. There are situations which need to be avoided such as would excite lust and desire which may not be properly fulfilled in existing circumstances. Paul said, "But flee youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22). No one knows exactly how weak or strong he may be. It is better to avoid some situations than to risk the possibility of lack of self-control. We must teach young people (our own children) well and honestly concerning sex. We cannot tag along with our young at all times. If we fail to teach them to make decisions, the battle is lost for sure. May God help us!

—By David Claypool—

USE YOUR INFLUENCE

SOME PARENTS say, "We will not influence our children in making a decision in the matter of religion." Why not?

- The press will.
- The whiskey industry will.
- The movies and TV will.
- The neighbors will.
- The denominations will
- The politicians will.
- The schools will.

We use our influence in training flowers, vegetables, cattle and dogs. Aren't our children as important as these?

—Selected—

Twenty-Third Psalm

THE STORY is told of an orator that came to town. A big auditorium was packed to hear him. There was applause and cheering as he gave poems and readings and recitations. People were overwhelmed by it all. Down in the front there was a feeble hand that went up and a voice said, "Mister, could I make a request?" The orator said, "I suppose so; what is it, sir?" "Would you give the twenty-third Psalm?" A hush fell over the audience and then the orator, looking at the man a little more closely, recognized the man as an old preacher. He said, "I will, sir, if after I've given it you'll give it." The old preacher agreed. Then the orator gave the twenty-third Psalm, every word so properly enunciated, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures..." It was beautiful. When he finished the audience roared with applause. It was truly expressive. As the old preacher came to the platform, a silence fell over the audience. He started, with his cracking voice to give from memory the twenty-third Psalm. It went something like this: "The Lord is MY shepherd. I shall not want. He makes ME to lie down in green pastures. He leads ME beside the still waters" and on until he finished. When he finished there was no applause. In fact, the people were wiping the tears from their eyes. The orator stood up and said, "People, let me tell you something and don't you ever forget it. He gave the twenty-third Psalm and I gave it. When he gave it you wiped the tears from your eyes. When I gave it you roared with applause. Let me tell you the difference. I know the twenty-third Psalm. He knows the Shepherd of the twenty-third Psalm." —Selected

"HALLELUJAH!"

*Hallelugah!
Praise the Lord,
Saith the Psalmist
In God's Word.*

*With all our heart
And our mind.
God—CREATOR
Of mankind.*

*Praise Him ever,
Lord and king,
In word of song
As we sing.*

*Hallelugah!
He our power.
Ark of safety
Every hour.*

*Praise His Name,
And the Word!
Precious story,
Ever heard.*

By ROBERT W. COOKE

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR . . .

(Continued from Page 6)

The early church "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). The early church was not slack concerning its commission, and later we read that the gospel had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven. . ." (Colossians 1:23; Romans 10:17,18). They fulfilled their commission in one century, in one generation. Can the church say as much today? Of course the answer is negative.

It is imperative that the great commission be carried out. Just look at man fallen from God and lost in his sins—sins that will damn his soul for eternity! Moral goodness without Christ only degenerates into self-righteousness. The righteousness of humanity is as filthy rags beside of a Holy God. Christ died for the world because the world is lost. Therefore, the world must repent and turn to him or there is no hope!

It is very necessary that we carry this commission out, not only that sinners may be saved, but in order that we may save ourselves. If we do not carry this commission out, God will no longer be with us (Matthews 28:19,20). God moves on when men forget the mission of the church. Jerusalem was once the center of evangelistic activity. Judaism crept into the church, their evangelistic zeal was chilled, they forgot their mission, and God moved on to Antioch. Antioch served as such a center for a long time. Paul and Barnabas were among the number sent out from there. However, finally the evils of a pagan city made great inroads into the church, they lost their vision, and God moved on! The story goes on and on. It is our conclusion that if we are to be a church that God recognizes, we must be concerned about evangelism. If we are not, the Lord stands at the door and knocks!

Dear and beloved reader, does Christ say to the church with which you are associated, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." We hope not; we hope it is a New Testament church wherein breathes the Holy Spirit, and wherein men may experience a foretaste of heaven. Does the Lord knock on your heart's door today? It is possible! If so, yield to his tender voice, and let him in. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

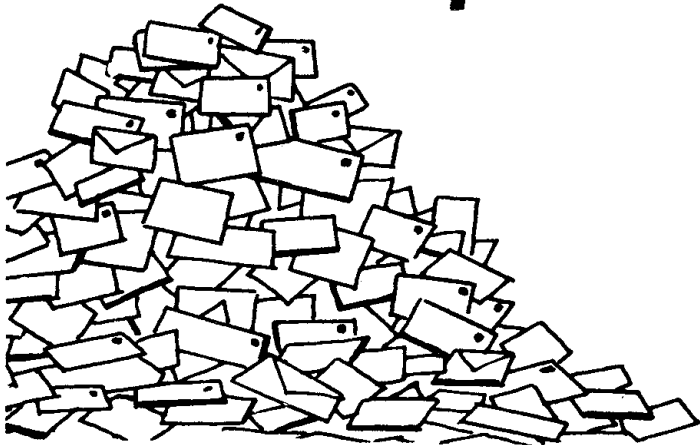
(The foregoing article is a reprint from the July, 1959, issue of this paper).

ARE YOU TONGUE-TIED?

WHEN CYRUS stormed the capital city of the rich Lydian King Croesus, the defeated monarch put on his royal robes, mounted the throne, and awaited the end. When the King's son, who had been tongue-tied from birth, saw a savage Persian warrior about to impale his father on the point of a javelin, the awful agony of the moment caused him to break the bands that bound his tongue and cry, "Persian, spare my father." Let us, whose loved ones are in danger of a worse death than a Persian spear point; break the bands that bind our tongues and speak a good word for the Lord Jesus Christ! □

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... Response



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■ *"Enclosed is a small gift. It won't begin paying for the many volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF we have received. We are very thankful to our Lord that he has men that will stand for the whole truth of His Word. May God bless you greatly."*

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■ *"Enclosed please find check for \$— for help in putting out THE SWORD AND STAFF. Sure wish it could be more as we wish it could come out more often. It is what is so badly needed in this day of so much sin, even in the Lord's church..."*

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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THE DETAILS for the 11 day Bible lands tour planned for March of 1979 (next year) seem to be shaping up. These details will be available soon in a printed brochure, along with the cost, etc. The tour includes Rome, Asia Minor (site of Paul's preaching and the seven churches in Asia), and Israel (homeland of Bible happenings). Everything looks great for an exciting tour. Such a tour adds a deeper dimension to a person's faith and Bible knowledge as well as being a great spiritual experience and the tour of a lifetime. The editor of this paper is slated to be one of the tour hosts.

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IF YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN

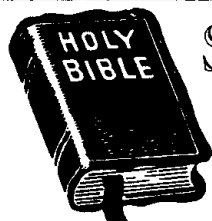
IT MAY BE that you have been reading this paper and have never become a Christian. You have never accepted Jesus personally as your Saviour. God is speaking to you, telling you that you need a Saviour. Only one heart beat separates each of us from eternity, and we are so fragile in this body that we cannot retain this life indefinitely. It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We cannot save ourselves (take away our own sins). Moral goodness, although absolutely necessary after becoming a Christian, can never take away sins. Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross for us because mankind was incapable of saving himself. We must be born again (John 3:5). This takes place when we truly believe in Christ, repent of all sins, and, having confessed our faith in Christ, are baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins. The apostle Peter declared, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)" (Acts 2:38). When we do this, we are born again and God comes to live within us. Then we realize that it is "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)" (Titus 3:5). Thereafter we are to live for Him Who died for us, being a member of His body, the church, which is one and is not a denomination.

BELOVED, you are without hope for eternity if you are not a real Christian. Would you truly believe and obey the Lord? You will be happy! You will be thrilled! You will be eternally glad that you did! (If we can personally help you in this all-important matter, we will be pleased to do so—JAMES E. GIBBONS; Phone: 919-789-1044 — Amen!). □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



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We believe in the all-sufficiency of the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice.

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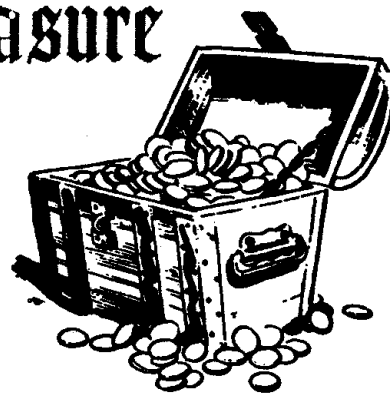
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