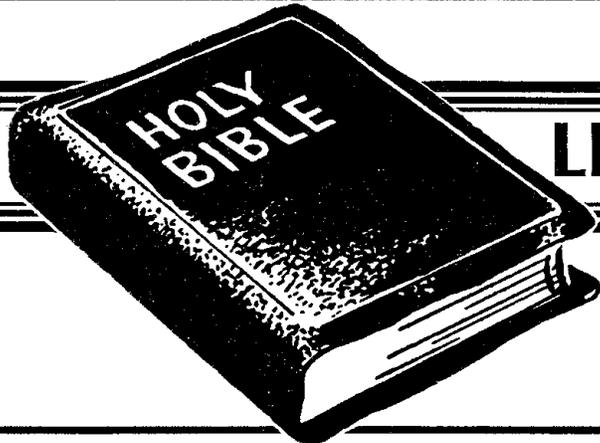


# The **Sword** AND **Staff**

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

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



## LET'S *Study* THE BIBLE

By **JAMES E. GIBBONS** — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
Mount Airy, North Carolina 27030

WE BELIEVE the Bible is the Word of God for mankind. As it is commonly known, it is made up of 66 books, thirty-nine constituting the Old Testament Scriptures and 27 the New. The Holy Spirit moved upon the minds of holy men (II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21) under different circumstances and guided them to the extent that they recorded what should be written (but they never lost their distinctive styles and personalities). This happened over a period of many centuries (about 1600 years), touching upon several continents, countries and cultures—and involving several languages (i. e., Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). We have been honored by the God of heaven in that He has not left us in the dark concerning His personal reality and His purpose and plan for mankind.

It is a constant thrill to study the Bible, but to properly understand it (II Timothy 2:15) certain things must be kept in mind. As we approach any given book of the Bible, the first basic consideration is to determine whether it is in the Old Testament or the New Testament. God's revelation has been progressive, and the Old Testament was preparatory for the New. The New Testament is God's completed and final revelation to man. Here the expected Saviour has come. God's plan of salvation has been completed.

Before us is a book of the Bible (and a particular verse). It is found in the New Testament. We wish to study it, finding out all of its glorious truths. How do we go about doing this? First, the nature of the book and who wrote it should be ascertained. Some books are biography, history, prophecy; others, letters written to churches and to individuals, etc. Then, we should focus our attention on the background and to whom the book was originally written. Suppose that we are studying one of Paul's epistles (letters) written to one of the churches he helped get going. A simple review of that particular church as recorded in the book of Acts would serve as a useful backdrop to better understanding the people and the letter. Then, what occasioned the letter to be written, etc.? Getting the over-all purpose and plan of the book in mind can help us better understand each individual verse. Most books have a fairly clear outline, and even a key statement (or verse) can be picked out (telling us what the book is all about). And, as we proceed into the Scripture, it is always wise to keep the immediate context in mind (what is said just before and right after what is being studied). This can make a world of difference in really understanding a verse.

It is suggested that you study the Scripture (under consideration) initially in the translation that you will be commonly using, letting God's wonderful truths "sink in." Usually everything will be plain, but at times you will run across difficult passages. Having several different translations (versions) of the Bible will be helpful here. The original language of the Bible (as the New Testament, Greek) is of such a nature that one word carries much thought and sometimes it is hard to express it as exactly as it should be in

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## Proverbially SPEAKING...

*WHEN YOU throw a stick into a bunch of dogs, the one that is hit will "yelp" first.*

"When you add to the truth, you subtract from it."

*How to invalidate grace: (1) have a dead faith and no works and think it will save you; (2) think God will have to save you because of your works.*

"Christ does not pull his sheep by a rope; in his army are none but volunteers."

*The person with a loose tongue will get himself into a lot of tight places.*

"A man's character is like a fence—it cannot be strengthened by whitewash."

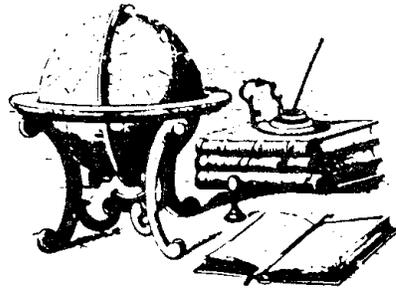
*The devil tempts the idle (an idle mind is the devil's workshop), but Christ calls the man already employed to follow him (note the disciples).*

"If we would have God hear us when we pray, we must hear Him when He speaks."

*God has made grace available in order that we might be forgiven and forsake sin—not that we might willfully continue in it.*

"Don't complain about growing old; just think of those who were denied this opportunity."

*With many people who have no problem in talking, talking is their problem.*



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

### THE DIABOLICAL INTENTIONS OF THE DEVIL

IF YOU WERE THE DEVIL, and wanted to work as much havoc as you could in God's creation, how would you go about it? The devil is in rebellion against the Almighty God of eternity. Obviously he knows that he cannot win (in the long run), and at the same time he knows that he is beyond redemption, so he tries to work as much havoc as he can while he can. Really he is no match against God, so the brunt of his attack must be elsewhere. Man is made in the image of God, yet on

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## EDITORIAL *By-Ways*

### ADVENTURES IN BIBLE READING

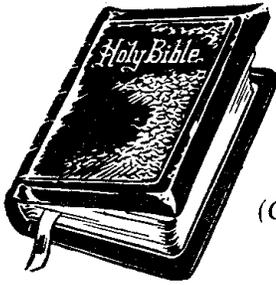
I GREW UP in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. Although our family was about average religiously, my mother would read me Bible stories (much to my delight). I learned to love the Bible at an early age. Then in Sunday School they always gave out these lesson picture cards to take home with you (which I always liked). We lived near a cemetery, and I remember more than once watching the funeral processions of sadder people go by (even small children died). All of this made a profound impression upon my young mind.

I can remember from an early age holding on to the back of the seat in church when the invitation hymn was sung. I was under deep conviction of my need of the Saviour. My first experience of reading the Bible alone was one time when the folks were gone. I realized I was lost. Covertly I decided to read the Bible and see what God said for myself. Opening to the first of the New Testament (Matthew chapter 1), and somewhat nervous, I began to read. But not for long. I thought, "What in the world am I reading?" (Genealogies do not best initiate a young Bible reader unattended). Then at another time, realizing that I was still unsaved, I got up enough courage to try it again. This time I turned to the last book of the Bible, Revelation. It didn't take but a minute, and again in bewilderment I exclaimed (and recoiled), "What in the world am I reading?" However, when I was about 15 years old, I first professed religion in the Methodist denomination (denominational style).

Reading the Bible became a source of much enjoyment

(Continued on Page 6)

# LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE



(Continued from Page 1)

one English word. One translation may emphasize one side or angle of a word, whereas another translation may bring out another possibility. By comparing translations you see the different possibilities in the word, getting a deeper insight into the passage. As we well know, there are different versions of the Bible (different translations), some being more literal than others—and some more of a free style (paraphrasing and even interpretive). Know your translations (their strengths and weaknesses). It seems that Jesus and his disciples used both the Hebrew and the Septuagint (Greek) Old Testament Scriptures. It seems that there were things about the Septuagint to be desired at times, but it was commonly used.

God has communicated to us in words. Therefore, knowing the exact meaning of words is very important. A good English dictionary should be close at hand. Also, a good Bible dictionary is of great value in studying the Bible (especially the information therein readily available about Bible places and people). A good knowledge of the Bible can be gained by conscientiously studying the English translations of the Holy Scriptures, but deeper insights can be gotten by those who wish to dig a little deeper. As we know the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language (with the exception of a very small section in Aramaic), and the New Testament was written in the Koine Greek. For those who would like to get a glimpse of the Greek words behind the English (and their meaning), but are not familiar with the Greek, Robert Young's **Analytical Concordance to the Bible** and Vine's **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** are very good tools to use. They would be good to add as part of a basic library for a Christian. By using these tools, and doing simple word studies, the truth and vitality of certain verses of Scripture can really be augmented.

Commentaries are a source of information in studying the Bible. These are books wherein scholars have written their insights and comments. If commentaries are used, it is better that they be used as your last stage of study. It is best that you make independent study, and think for yourself, before the commentaries are read. Then, if you make a practice of using commentaries, it is good to have more than one commentary to get different viewpoints. Also, if commentaries

by different denominational scholars are used, be alert to their denominational slant so as not to be misled. Be an independent thinker and use commentaries only to stimulate your own thoughts (not to replace them nor to mimic what someone else says, being a brainless wonder).

In studying the Bible, you will notice that some Bibles have cross-references (little footnotes) tied in with key words (and thoughts) in the verses. This makes an interesting and expansive way of studying the Scriptures. Theoretically, these references tie in with other verses on the same subject. And, checking out these related verses can be a great way in getting the over-all picture on a particular subject. However, sometimes these references do not apply (you need to be aware that they were prepared by man). The use of a complete concordance (a good one has already been named) can be really helpful here.



THESE HAVE been some very elementary thoughts about studying the Bible—but, we trust, practical. They are not complete, but, if heeded, will serve as a starter in getting you going on the great adventure of a lifetime (learning and living the Word of God). It cannot be learned all at once, so don't become impatient and despair. Each new truth learned is a precious treasure that is lovingly placed in our storehouse of knowledge. Christians eagerly study the Bible all the days of their lives, and as a by-product their lives are filled with stability, strength and vitality. They live out their days with hope and assurance, looking forward to that eternal day. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## WHAT MEN WILL DO

MEN WILL wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; die for it; anything but live for it.—C. C. Colton

# His Last Song

A TOUCHING STORY is told concerning the singing of part of a well-known hymn by Cowper, "There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood." A young man, suffering from cancer, was about to undergo an operation in one of the large hospitals in Scotland.

When the surgeon had made a careful examination, he discovered that the only hope of saving the life of the patient was the removal of his tongue. The young man was already in the operating room when the surgeon, in a tender and sympathetic way, explained to the sufferer that, even though the operation should be successful, he would never again be able to speak and was asked whether there was anything he wished to say before the operation commenced.

For a moment a shadow crossed the brow of the young man as the thought that he would never again be able to testify in song or word for the Master whom he loved. But soon the shadow passed and a smile lighted up his face. He sat up, lifted up his voice, and sang the hymn, "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood."

Before the third verse was reached, not an eye of those who stood around the bed was dry. How he sang! For his heart was in the song. Then came the last verse.

*"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing thy power to save,  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue  
Lies silent in the grave."*

Anaesthetic was administered, the operation was performed, but alas, the patient never regained consciousness. Thus his last song on earth would be his first in heaven.

May the possession of that hope which this young man possessed so sanctify and consecrate the lives of those who may read this touching story, that we may sing with unswaying conviction:

*"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood  
Shall ne'er lose its power;  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."*

*—Truman Spring (Via Words of Life)*

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*TO RECOGNIZE and acknowledge a weakness is evidence of strength of character.*

*Our righteousness begins and ends with Jesus Christ.*

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS . . .

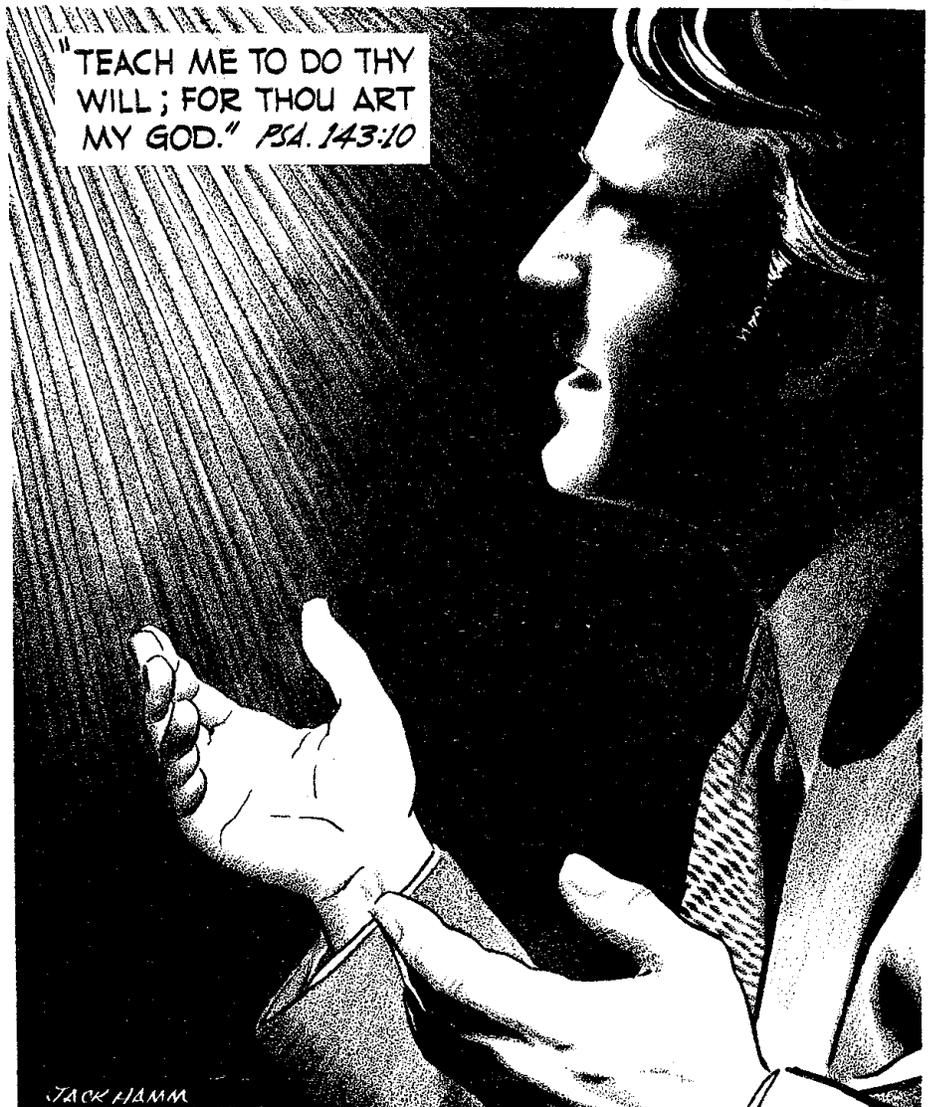
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a very scaled down basis, being made lower than the angels. Therefore, humanity (especially when separated from God) makes a very vulnerable target for the devil's diabolical intentions. To hit at man would be to get back at God. So, to really mess things up, to get right into the procreative process whereby humanity comes into being would be ideal as far as his purposes are concerned. And that is just exactly what the devil has done today. Men are willing and foolish victims.

Consider the plightful situation in the United States today. We are told that: (1) One out of every two marriages ends in divorce; (2) One out of every four pregnancies ends in abortion ("1.55 million legal abortions were performed in the United States in 1980"); and (3) "At least one of every six American babies now is born to an unwed mother."

Obviously the sacredness of sex, marriage, and human life is on the decline. (It is a national disaster, and to say that it is worse in communistic countries does not help the matter). If a person does not respect his sexuality, limiting it to the sacred bounds of marriage, he

## "Yield Yourselves Unto God"—Rom. 6:13

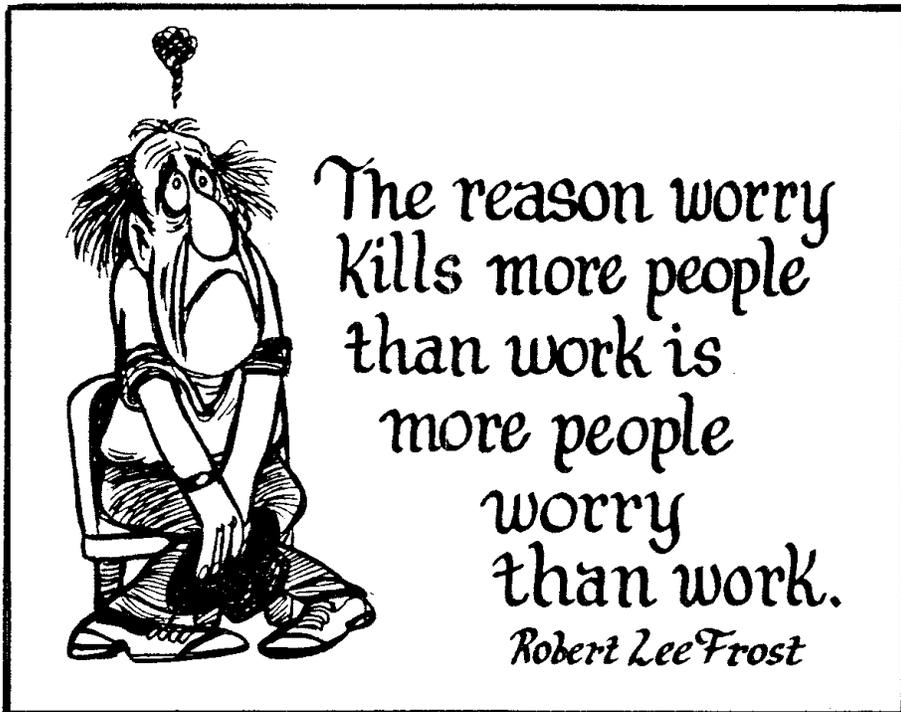


will not respect what sex produces, other human beings. And the sexual act is of such a nature, being intended only for the consummation and oneness of marriage (I Corinthians 6:15-18; Hebrews 13:4), that to enter into it lightly (promiscuous relations) is to invite all kinds of psychological problems (and disorientation toward life itself). Broken homes can only mean broken lives and people with problems. Some point to the rise of homosexuality in connection with the increase in the number of broken homes. One parent families (some say), and situations where husbands or wives will not accept their God-given roles, can make for disorientation in the child (at times) in reference to his or her sexual identity. Etc. Etc.

The problem of ungodliness continually bombarding the home through the medium of television is one of alarming national proportions. Violence and un-Christian (and anti-Christian) displays of sex are continually glamorized as entertainment. We are told that "eighty percent of the allusions to sexual intercourse in prime time television last year were depicted as being outside of marriage"—and this was unashamedly presented as the accepted way of life. Along with this, humanism in the public school systems, modernistic "churches" (whose spiritual vitals have long ago been sapped), a supreme court that cannot define or identify pornography, and an irresponsible concept of the "freedom of speech"—all of these things have served to undo our society. Swelling crime statistics (and prisons), broken homes, and sexual promiscuity follow in the wake of this. It is a matter of cause and effect. Only the most naive (and spiritually blind) cannot see this.

And the devil is behind all of this. He is doing his "thing," and his diabolical purposes are being accomplished. He is working havoc in God's creation by deceiving man to destroy himself in the very fountainhead of his existence (procreation and the very relationships that are essential to sustain society). We need to "wise up." How foolish can we get?!!! □

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### THE DIFFERENCE

*I got up early one morning  
And rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
That I didn't take time to pray.*

*Problems just tumbling about me,  
And heavier came each task;  
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.  
He answered: "You didn't ask."*

*I wanted to see joy and beauty—  
But the day toiled on, gray and bleak;  
I wondered why God didn't show me,  
He said: "But you didn't seek."*

*I tried to come into God's presence,  
I used all of my keys at the lock;  
God gently and lovingly chided:  
"My child, you didn't knock."*

*I woke up early this morning  
And paused before entering the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
That I had to take time to pray.*

—Author Unknown

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### LOTS OF LITTLE BEARS

TWO MEN were talking. One was a giant of a fellow, and the other was quite small. The little fellow, admiring the physique of his friend, said, "Man, if I was as big as you, I wouldn't be afraid of nothin'. Why, I'd go out in the woods and find me the biggest bear there, and I'd tear that bear from limb to limb; that's what I'd do!"

The big man replied, "There's lots of little bears in the woods, Son. Why don't you just go out and tackle one of them?" —Lexington Lamplighter □

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### IS THIS YOUR TALENT?

THERE are men who pride themselves on their candor, saying audibly what they think on everything and to everyone (regardless). One such man said to John Wesley once, "Mr. Wesley, I pride myself in speaking my mind; that is my talent." "Well," said John Wesley, "the Lord wouldn't mind if you buried that talent!"

—Griffith Thomas

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IF YOU PRIDE yourself in saying what you think, it would be a good idea for you to think before you say it.

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## EDITORIAL BY-WAYS

*(Continued from Page 2)*

to me. I believed it was God's Word and eagerly turned through its pages. I remember the first time I ever read the book of Proverbs. I said, "Boy, this is great reading!" I was fascinated by the Bible and would read it at opportune times. The verses that seemed especially outstanding I would always underline (and it wasn't long until my whole Bible was marked up). And, as I said, I grew up on a mountain farm in southwestern Virginia. I remember that while plowing corn more than once I would take more rest stops than I should have just to read and mark my Bible (at this point, a pocket New Testament). I just read the Bible by myself, believing that God intended for me to understand it. When I came to something I didn't understand, I would put a mark beside it, and then when I had the opportunity I would ask the preacher or someone what it meant. I didn't know there was such a thing as a commentary, and when the Methodist preacher one day let me borrow a volume of ADAM CLARK'S COMMENTARY, I was really amazed.

Later as a graduation gift from high school, my aunt gave me a Bible that had cross references in the margin (and a concordance in the back), as well as being thumb indexed. Although the cross references didn't always apply, this really opened up a whole new approach of studying the Bible to me, and it was exciting and great! (Through the years this Bible has been replaced several times by an identical new one until now the exact replacement is hard to find).

I learned to be an independent thinker in reference to the Bible, to think things out for myself. (I guess that is why I have little patience with religious traditionalists, whether denominational or otherwise). In my innocence I am glad that I was exposed to much of the Bible before I realized there were books written about the Bible. I came to my own conclusions and convictions (they were mine). I believed the Bible was the Word of God and had committed myself to it.

And that is where the rub came with the Methodist denomination. Strange things were appearing in their teacher's material (which I was studying). The Bible was pictured as not being trustworthy, and the God of the Old Testament was not the same God of the New Testament. The "idea" of God was spoken of, and reference was not made to the actual reality of God, etc. They thought we might one day learn how Jesus healed people (as if by natural means). Then the matter of the METHODIST DISCIPLINE (creed book) bothered me. I found things in there which did not square with what I had been reading in the Bible (among them infant baptism and sprinkling for baptism). Although I had committed myself to become a Methodist minister, something else had to be considered. I had committed myself to something higher—namely, the Bible and its message. Finally I approached the local Methodist minister. I had to say it: "I cannot be a Methodist minister." There was no easy way to say it (or hear it), and somewhat taken aback, he wanted to know why. I simply said that I could never baptize babies or sprinkle anyone in the place of baptism. Jesus had said to search the Scriptures for by them you think you have eternal life. I had done this and could not find sprinkling or infant baptism in the Bible. I

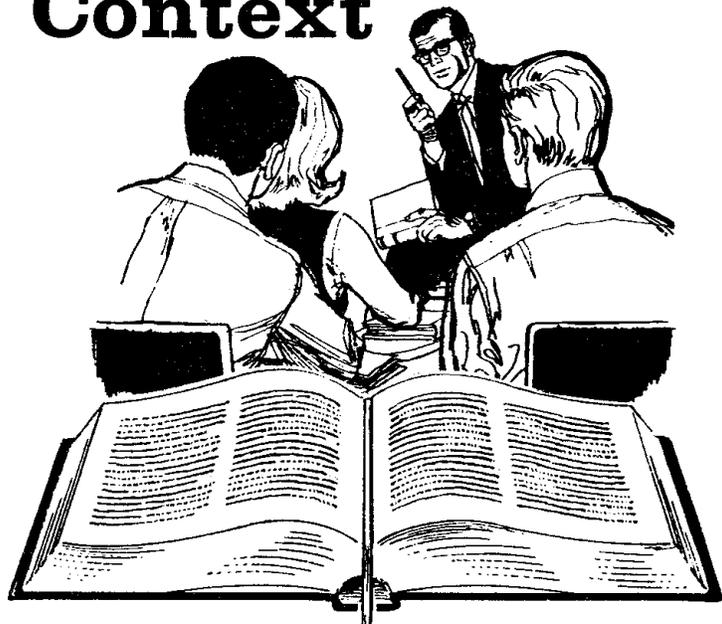
knew he would not be happy with what I said, but I was not ready for his reply: "Would you put your life between the covers of a book?!" As a young and committed Bible-believer that really floored me. If we could not put our lives between the covers of the Bible, where (tell me) could we put our lives? Why bother with religion?

This shocking experience stiffened my resolve to be more committed to my beloved Bible. I left denominationalism years ago in favor of simple, undenominational, New Testament Christianity (the kind they had in the beginning). I wished to be identified with the church of the first century and that alone (the Scriptures alone being my rule of faith and practice). It has been an unparalleled adventure to search out the Scriptures anew, fresh, and unencumbered by the restraints of human traditionalism (just take the Word as it is). But it is just about like signing your name to a blank check. You sign and let God fill the rest of it in. You must be willing to pay the price. I didn't know where such a course would lead me except that I would be led by God and to God. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The interest, excitement, and adventure are still there. As we dig deeper into God's Word, we realize it is an endless, inexhaustible gold mine, and we find out and bring out things both new and old (Matthew 13:51). We share Paul's experience as recorded in Philippians chapter 3 (read it). At the end of the way is Christ and heaven—life evermore; joy unspeakable and full of glory, as Peter said. (Amen! And, in the meantime, we are experiencing a little bit of this down here below). And, yes, God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge (*epi-gnosis*, full knowledge) of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

All of us should (and must) share in this great adventure of studying the Bible. So many have never personally embarked upon this adventure of a lifetime, although the Bible is found in almost every home. They really don't know what they are missing. So many are restrained by denominational limits and off-limits. So many have been fed pabulum for so long in the diluted form of anemic literature put out by some profit-hungry publishing company that they really have no appetite for anything better. Some have written to me of their disgust with the literature they were using, wanting to know what literature I would recommend. What would I suggest? Well, who said that we had to use literature anyway? I suggest that we get serious about studying the Bible, and quit having kindergarten (and play school). Why hold back and deprive the people of the Word of God and the thrill of this great adventure? Yes, I admit that someone is going to have to do some studying. People are going to have to become interested and get involved (but they are Christians, aren't they?). Why have a whole denomination of people geared to some watered down diet, ever dependent upon some profit-hungry publishing company to plan and dispense their formula (who never intend for them to advance beyond the pabulum)? (Then if someone really gets interested in studying the Bible, he will have to be sent off to someone's Bible College). Let's get serious. What are elders and teachers for anyway (as well as preachers)? Let's get into the real thing without having it diluted! □

\* \* \* \* \*

# The Bible in the Light of the Context



● By James E. Gibbons

TO BE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, all Scripture must be understood in the light of its context (setting and circumstance). This includes the Scriptural context and the secular context. Realizing the existence of both kinds of contexts is very essential to a true appreciation and a clear understanding of the Bible. Let us elaborate.

## I. THE SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT.

The apostle Paul admonished young Timothy: "Study to shew thyself approved to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Timothy 2:15, KJV). The Bible must be "rightly divided," or handled aright, to get the right meaning, and basic to this is understanding the Scriptural context.

1. *The Testament.* We must know basically that there is the Old Testament and the New Testament, or our understanding will be forever darkened. The Old Testament was originally given to the Jewish nation, was not universally for mankind (as far as observance is concerned), but is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Its validity ended with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:14). Upon his dying, the New Testament came into force (Hebrews 9:15-17). The answer to the question of man's salvation must be found this side of the cross. The "Testament" context must be ever kept in mind when reading the Bible.

2. *The Book.* Any verse of Scripture found in any book of the Bible must be understood in the light of the overall purpose of the book as it concerns the ones to whom it is addressed. For example, the book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were much discouraged and ready to forsake their religion altogether. The writer attempts, and very forcefully does, to show the superiority of Christ

over the Old Testament religion. Another example: It seems that one of the reasons the apostle John is writing I JOHN is to combat the rising false doctrine of gnosticism, which denied that Christ Jesus had come in the flesh. Thus, such Scriptures as I John 4:2 cannot be applied universally today. This must be understood in the light of its context bookwise.

3. *The Immediate Context.* A verse of Scripture must be considered in view of the verses that go right before and those that immediately follow. What is the immediate matter under discussion? What is the whole picture? Some have taken (for example) Acts 16:31 and have dogmatically preached that salvation is by "faith only." They have avoided the verses that follow, as well as what we read elsewhere in the book of Acts, and the rest of the New Testament. As another illustration, the meaning of certain parables of our Lord might be just a little more evident if we "backed up" a few verses in the chapter (or read on a little further). I think you get the point.

## II. THE SECULAR CONTEXT.

Of course by secular we mean that which pertains to this world, and by secular context we mean the world situation at the time the particular Scripture under consideration was written. The historical background and cultural pattern cement the scenes together in meaningful relationship, and a knowledge of such will greatly increase our comprehension of what took place. Even the geography of the land falls into the realm of secular context.

1. *Time in History.* We read the Bible in different places and it has to do with such ancient world powers as Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. We read of the birth of Christ in the days of Caesar Augustus. We read of the Herods. Then more of a localized matter as Gallio becoming proconsul of Achaia, and in particular his coming to Corinth while Paul was there (Acts 18:12). A knowledge of ancient history (from secular sources) will greatly augment our appreciation/understanding of the times and circumstances when these governments were in power, and introduce us more intimately to these outside personalities who appear on the pages of the Bible. It can help us in dating the events of the Bible. It can give us insight into the fears and hopes of the common people.

2. *The Culture.* Perhaps this is closely related to the above. The countries and peoples involved in the historical setting determined the culture. Yet this is separate. We become more informed about Jewish customs, as well as their religion, and the impact of certain happenings in the Bible dawns on us. We understand the particulars of paganism, as at Corinth, and we know why they had such moral problems in that city. A knowledge of the widespread practice of human slavery (a big percentage of the population) in the Roman Empire helps us to be sensitive to various statements that stand out in the Epistles. The modern science of Archaeology has done much to fill in our gap of understanding here, as well as confirming the Bible and the historical context.

3. *The Geography.* When we read of these various lands of the Bible, and are not familiar with the physical features

(Continued on Next Page)

**THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONTEXT**

*(Continued from Last Page)*

of the places, our appreciation/understanding is incomplete. The rugged terrain of Palestine, the situation of the Sea of Galilee, the winding course of the Jordan River, and the scale of miles stand out as important information. Such knowledge would tell us that Jesus walked about 70 miles to be baptized. We could see more fully the distaste the Jews had for the Samaritans by the out-of-the-way route they traveled north (and south); plus many other things. Maps and Bible atlases will be found helpful here. Yes, the happenings of the Bible are confined to time and space (and confirmed).

THEREFORE, Beloved, when you study the Bible, take into account the Scriptural and the secular contexts as we have endeavored to show you. I think that you will find your Bible study much more fruitful. To be properly understood, all Scripture must be understood in the light of its context.

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**A FAULTFINDING SPIRIT**

A LECTURER once held up before an audience a large white handkerchief marred by one small blot. "What do you see?" he asked. "A blot," was the almost unanimous reply. *Practically no one noticed the white background.* How like human nature. Most are quick to see the faults in others, but overlook their good qualities. Jesus warned: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:11).

The Lord was not condemning the proper kind of judgment, for he said: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). However, he was prohibiting faultfinding and criticism in which there is no love.

Those who have a faultfinding spirit which judges the motives of others, overlooking the good while criticizing the evil, are like buzzards that fly over acres of beautiful flowers to feast on putrid meat.

One lady criticized her neighbor for hanging dirty clothes on the line, only to find that the dirty streaks were not on her neighbor's wash at all, but on her own window. One might criticize others, not because he is looking at them fairly, but through his own nasty disposition.

Tragically, a person's loved ones are often the most frequent victims of his unkind remarks of criticism. Ella Wilcox wrote:

*One great truth in life I've found,  
While journeying to the West  
The only folks we really wound  
Are those we love the best.*

*We flatter those we scarcely know,  
We please the fleeting guest,  
And deal full many a thoughtless blow  
To those we love the best.*

And remember these words: Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother. . . judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? (James 4:11, 12). —THE LIGHT □

**INGERSOLL NONPLUSED**

IT WAS SAID that the late Robert G. Ingersoll, well known infidel, used to tell this story: "I was never non-plused but once. I was lecturing one night and took occasion to show that the resurrection of Lazarus was probably a planned affair to bolster the waning fortunes of Jesus. Lazarus was to take sick and die. The girls were to bury him and send for Jesus. Lazarus was to feign death till Jesus should come and say, 'Lazarus, come forth.' To emphasize the situation I said, 'Can anyone here tell me why Jesus said, 'Lazarus, come forth'?' Down by the door a pale-faced, white-haired man arose and with a shrill voice said, 'Yes, sir, I can tell you! If my Lord had not said, Lazarus, he would have the whole graveyard of Bethany coming out to him!'" —Sunday School Times □

**GOD'S MAN**

*I saw him standing there, this man of God;  
Standing firm where saints before had trod.  
I saw the Book of Books held in his hand,  
It was the word he'd preached throughout the land.*

*A godly man of faith; of truth; of tears;  
Remaining strong and true through all the years.  
Though many mocked his work, and taunted,  
I beheld him standing there undaunted.*

*I saw a gray-haired man, who, in his youth,  
Dedicated his life to preach the truth.  
I watched him there, and saw the years unfold;  
Saw happy saints who'd heard the gospel told.*

*I saw a man who'd seen a lot of life;  
Of joy and happiness; of tears and strife.  
I saw him in a cemetery, where,  
He bowed his head and voiced a quiet prayer.*

*I saw a man, weary to the bone,  
Answer pleasantly on a midnight phone.  
An urgent call to help someone in need;  
Perhaps with some despondent soul to plead.*

*I saw the ones he's helped along the way;  
The dying, lonely, the lost, astray.  
I saw a man who's spent his life for men  
Whose faltering faith was revived again.*

*I saw a man whose life was not his own,  
Bearing the scars of sacrifice alone.  
I saw a man walking the narrow way,  
His once dark hair now turned to gray.*

*I questioned him as he was standing there,  
"Why give your life for those who do not care?"  
For your service to man cannot be hid."  
With shining eyes he said, "My Jesus did!"*

—By ED HENRY

# The Scribes and Pharisees, the Tradition of the Elders, and the Word of God - and Us



• By JAMES E. GIBBONS

AN INTERESTING EPISODE in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was upon this earth is found in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. He and His disciples were just returning from their first withdrawal from the territory of Herod Antipas, following the horrible death of John the Baptist. On the other side of the lake beyond Bethsaida-Julius the multitudes (5000 men, not counting the women and children) had been miraculously fed with five loaves and two fish. After the annoyance of the excited people trying to make Him an earthly king (such a king who could take care of their creature needs would be great!), then His seclusion in the mountains, and a stormy night on the deep for His disciples, they were now back on the western bank in more familiar territory. But unfamiliar and unfriendly scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem itself were there to "greet" them. Perhaps as they made their way back to Capernaum (the boat had landed a little south in the plains of Gennesaret), the disciples, who had been too busy to eat, "grab" a bite from the leftovers of the miracle of the day before. Like birds of prey the self-righteous spies from Jerusalem were ready for whatever caught their eye. Their hyper-critical thoughts

are pointedly verbalized in a question to Jesus, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat?"

This question coming from such hypocritical and superficial men who cared little for true religion was one too many for our Lord. He responded with a provocative question of His own, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" He did not deny the charge in their question (which really was aimed at Him since disciples follow their Master). Their "concern" was of no spiritual consequence. The "tradition of the elders" was not part of the Spirit-inspired Word of God, but accumulated judgments and customs (especially ceremonial) which had come into being independently of the Law of Moses. They were of men, not God. And the question at hand had to do with ceremonially washing one's hands before a meal (the more religious washing during the course of eating and after eating). If they had been in the marketplace a complete bath was in order before eating. Et cetera; et cetera. Even though it offended these pompous ecclesiastics (and was of concern to His disciples), Jesus cut through their pre-

tentious masquerade and threw the ball back into their court. The traditions of men made the commandments of God of "none effect." Jesus gave some glaring examples.

The Law of Moses (which the scribes and Pharisees professed to be the guardians of) plainly said by way of direct commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." Jesus also pointed out that it said, "Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." "Honour" meant not only to show respect personally, but personally to provide for their needs in their old age. The Law was explicit in this double-barreled command (in fact, this was one of the ten commandments). Jews who had no feelings for their aged parents were getting around showing this "honour" (and with the blessings of the scribes and Pharisees upon them). By simply saying, "Corban" over their worldly possessions they were exempted from helping their needy parents. "Corban" means gift, and theoretically it was given in some way to God (although there is no evidence this was ever carried out). A "tradition of the elders" allowed all of this. Their tradition made the command of God of "none effect." And Jesus equates their actions with cursing father and mother. The Law called for death in such a case. But the traditions of men nullified all of this. It was no wonder that Jesus said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." He went on to say, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

The religious traditions of men always tend to replace the commands of God, making them of "none effect." It was true back then. It is true today. And the Lord's indictment of such and verdict are the same today as back then. It seems that each religious denomination has its own distinctive trappings and traditions reflecting the age from which it emerged, which have been crystalized and set forth in each respective creed book. Many are very proud that they are an old traditional denomination. Traditions are found tied in with about everything—salva-

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## THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS, & THE WORD OF GOD—AND US

(Continued from Last Page)

tion, the name, the organization of the church, et cetera. The New Testament tells us not only that we must believe, but we must repent and be baptized for the *remission of our sins* to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21; etc.). Protestant creed books say that we are saved by “faith only,” thus by their tradition discounting and discrediting the Word of God. Creed books say sprinkling, pouring, or immersion—take your choice; all are baptism. The New Testament does not say that. Baptism is for people who believe, repent, and surrender in allegiance to God—not babies. The command and purpose of God is set aside when infants are “baptized.” The organizations of men replace the simple organization of the Lord’s church which thereby becomes defunct. Man-made special days and holy days are emphasized at the expense of the Lord’s day (replacing or detracting from it). The Lord’s supper goes unobserved. And you could keep right on listing the traditions of men and how they make the commands of God of “none effect.”

Remember what Jesus said, “But in vain they do worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” And EVERY PLANT which the heavenly Father had not planted would be rooted up. The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom and when planted in its purity produces the undenominational church of Christ. In the Old Testament the Jews were not to plant “divers seed (various kinds of seeds together): lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard be defiled” (Deuteronomy 22:9). Nor can we plant the Word of God (after a fashion) and the traditions of men and get good results (Galatians 1:6-9). Take warning, rest assured, EVERY PLANT the heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. These plants (denominations) come from seed other than the Word of God (i. e., the doctrines and traditions of men—that’s what makes them denominations). Therefore, let us divest ourselves of all human traditionalism, getting back to the Lord’s church as it was in the beginning. This involves getting rid of (1) all denominational names; (2) all denominational doctrines (the traditions of men); and (3) all denominational organizations (all religious organizations save the local church as found in the New Testament Scriptures with its distinctive offices). The traditions of men in all of these categories must be laid aside if we are to be found acceptable in God’s sight. Let us honor the Word of God in all its purity. □

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### EITHER SELL THE OX, OR FILL THE DITCH

DID YOU ever try to soothe your conscience for missing a gospel service by saying, “The ox fell in the ditch, and I had to pull it out.”

This expression originated when Christ was criticized for healing on the Sabbath day. He asked, “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 14:5). Jesus was trying to show them the unreasonableness of their criticism. They knew they would not hesitate to pull an ox out of a dangerous predicament. How much more valu-

able was human life.

But there is where the parallel ceases! Some have seized upon this incident to excuse themselves from being present for Bible preaching. You see, Sunday is an opportune time to “rest”—I worked so-o-o hard all week.” “They offered me double pay for working on Sunday. I just couldn’t turn it down!” “The old car just HAD to be fixed—Sunday was the only day—the ox fell in the ditch, and I had to pull it out! Surely God will understand.”

To those who so misuse and misapply this Bible incident, we suggest at least three things.

1. Do not deliberately PUSH the “ox” into the ditch so you will have an excuse to pull it out! For shame! What hypocrisy!

2. SELL THE OX! If you had an ox that looked for a ditch to fall into, you’d sell him. If your business demands so much of your time that you cannot serve Christ, SELL IT—change jobs. Whatever...

3. FILL THE DITCH! No sensible farmer would leave an “ox trap” around, so that a valuable animal would be destroyed. Why constantly expose your soul to the devil’s DESTRUCTIVE ways?

For the sake of your soul’s salvation, either sell the ox or fill up the ditch!!!

(NO quibbling at the JUDGMENT!!!)—Harold Buckles □

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### WHAT DISTURBS YOU THE MOST?

A SOUL on the way to hell, *or a scratch on your new car?*

Missing the church service, *or missing a day’s work?*

Your Bible being unopened, *or your newspaper going unread?*

Your contribution to the church decreasing, *or your income decreasing?*

Your children being late for Bible school, *or late for Public school?*

Your work of the church being neglected, *or your housework being neglected?*

Low attendance at a church meeting, *or a low attendance at a party?* —SELECTED □

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### PUNKS ON TRIAL

A “NEWLY RICH” but ignommat millionaire, greatly impressed with his own importance was seeking to appear sophisticated, when on an extended tour of Europe’s most celebrated art galleries. As he looked over the masterpieces, he spoke his mind—criticizing both the artists and their works. “Very amateurish,” he mumbled, “just a bunch of punk pictures!”

Finally a man standing next to him—a scholarly patron of the arts—could stand it no longer. Turning to the self-styled critic, he said, “These pictures are not on trial. They have been praised by kings, artists, and scholars for hundreds of years. You are the real punk, my friend. YOU ARE ON TRIAL, not the paintings! Their worth has been established. Your ignorance is fully revealed by your estimate of these superlative works of art!” So, too, any man who finds fault with Jesus Christ of the Bible is out of order. He himself is judged by that very Word!—Challenger.

# BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

(THE FOLLOWING printed material about the book that will be mentioned comes as a pleasant surprise since we personally know no Baptists who take this position. In fact, all Baptists known to this writer go out of their way to deny that baptism is in any way connected with the remission of sins—even in the face of what the New Testament says about it. Material submitted by JOHN A. OWSTON).

VARIOUS GROUPS of Baptists often assert that the ordinance of baptism has absolutely nothing to do with salvation. It is usually taught that one is saved before baptism through faith only, repentance, praying through, or having a religious experience. It is not always agreed upon at what point one is saved, though it is generally agreed that baptism does not enter into salvation...

This is all very interesting in light of a book by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977). Dr. Beasley-Murray, himself a

a Baptist, formerly Principal of Spurgeon's College in London, is presently serving as Professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He even teaches the course, NT 2284 (Greek Exegesis: The New Testament Teaching on Baptism).

The following are some excerpts from his book which indicate what he believes concerning the subject of baptism. In the Preface he states: "I have striven to interpret the evidence of the New Testament as a Christian scholar, rather than as a member of a particular Christian Confession." (p. vi)

## ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS:

"...in the world of N. T. ideas baptism and the remission of sins are inseparably associated." (p. 80)

"...Acts 22:16, the exhortation to Paul, 'Rise and be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on His name', implies that his sins will be washed away in his baptism accompanied by

prayer. The word of Peter in Acts 2:38 conveys a similar impression: 'Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" (p. 102)

" 'Get baptised and wash away your sins, calling on his name' (Acts 22:16) is so close as to make it difficult to dissociate the 'washing' of I Corinthians 6:11 from the baptismal cleansing." (p. 163)

"Forgiveness, cleansing, and justification are the effect of baptism in Acts 2:38, 22:16; I Cor. 6:11." (p. 272)

## ON THE ESSENTIALITY OF BAPTISM:

"...the Apostolic proclamation included the demand that this repentance and faith be objectified in baptism." (p. 97)

"Acts 2:38 teaches nothing other than that for Luke baptism belongs to the much more important fact of conversion." (p. 121)

"...the new life from the Spirit in baptism (John 3:5) is indistinguishable from the eternal life in Christ granted on the basis of redemption to the man of faith (John 3:15)." (p. 231)

"...The necessity of baptism'. Who would have wished to raise the question? It would have sounded strange to a first generation Christian as many other queries of our time..." (p. 297)

"That the rite of baptism is represented in the N. T. as necessary for salvation is believed by many exegetes. Their reasons may be summarized as follows: (i) In all parts of the N. T. baptism is presupposed as normative for the acceptance of the Christian faith and entrance into the Church; (ii) The significance attributed to baptism by the Apostolic writers shows that they viewed it as a means of grace. (iii) Faith admittedly is required for the appropriation of salvation but it is questioned whether saving faith can exist without baptism; (iv) Since saving faith cannot exist without baptism, faith without baptism is obviously unprofitable." (p. 298ff)

"It behooves us to make much of baptism. It is given as the trusting place of the sinner with His Savior; he who has met him will not despise it." (p. 305)

## ON THE HOLY SPIRIT:

(Continued on Next Page)

**1. IF-**  
When Baptized,

**YOU:**

- PUT ON CHRIST (Gal. 3:27)
- WASH AWAY SINS (Acts 22:16)
- HAVE REMISSION OF SINS (Acts 2:38)
- ARE MADE FREE FROM SIN (Rom. 6:17-18)
- BENEFIT BY JESUS' DEATH (Rom. 6:3-4)
- ENTER THE BODY OF CHRIST (1 Cor. 12:13)

**2. THEN-**  
What Is Your Condition WITHOUT Baptism?

## BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

*(Continued from Last Page)*

“The impression is given that the gift of the Spirit will be given in or immediately upon baptism (2:38).” (p. 105)

“Whatever the relationship of baptism and the gift of the Spirit elsewhere in Acts, there appears to be no doubt as to the intention of Acts 2:38; the penitent believer baptized in the name of Jesus Christ may expect to receive at once the Holy Spirit, even as he is assured of the immediate forgiveness of sins.” (p. 108)

Commenting on John 3:5: “The popular idea, that the water represents human birth. . .in contrast to the divine birth given by the Spirit, is excluded by the fact that the whole expression ‘out of water and Spirit’ defines the manner in which a man is born ‘anew’ and John 1:13 declares that the birth from God has nothing to do with human begetting.” (p. 228)

“...no Christian writer could have understood them (‘out of water’) except as an allusion to baptism...the separation of conversion and baptism would have been meaningless to a Christian of the first century.” (p. 229)

“The new life in the Spirit is given in baptism according to Titus 3:5, John 3:5...” (p. 273)

“one N. T. writer makes the summary statement, ‘Baptism saves you.’ (I Peter 3:21) (p. 273)

“Baptism is thus represented as the occasion when the Spirit brings new life to him that believes in the Son of Man...” (p. 278)

### ON THE CHURCH:

“Baptism to Christ is baptism to the Church; it cannot be otherwise, for the Church is the Body of Christ.” (p. 279)

“Baptism is to Christ and the Church; but to which Church? The Church visible or invisible?... to be baptized to Christ in Corinth was to become a member of the Church at Corinth and a member of the Body of Christ.” (p. 282, 283)

### ON INFANT BAPTISM:

“The mature person is made to be aware of his sins, hence Peter’s first word, ‘Repent and be baptized...The entire symbolism of baptism is suited to be a conception of this order; but how can it be predicated of infants a few days old?’ (p. 365)

“Forgiveness of infants, even in baptism, is a notion exegetically unjustifiable and theologically indefensible.” (p. 368)

### CLOSING REMARKS OF DR. BEASLEY-MURRAY:

“First, there ought to be a greater endeavor to make baptism integral to the Gospel. Peter’s response, however, to the cry of his conscience stricken hearers on the Day of Pentecost was not, ‘Repent and believe,’ But ‘Repent and be baptised’ (Acts 2:38). Naturally faith was presumed in repentance, but Peter’s answer told the Jews how to become Christians: faith and repentance are to be expressed baptism...Baptism is here a part of the proclamation of Christ. In an Apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion. An effort ought to be made to restore this note in our preaching. Secondly, there should be a serious endeavor to make baptism integral to conversion. Baptism and conversion are thus inseparables; the one demands the other, for neither is complete without the other. This, al-

though elementary, is not obvious to all and it requires to be made explicit. Finally, there should be the endeavor to make baptism integral to church membership.” (p. 393, 394) □

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## TWISTING TERMS MAKES SIN ACCEPTABLE

PEOPLE do not have “affairs.” They commit adultery. People do not “live together” before marriage — or “swing.” They commit fornication.

People do not have “gay” lives. They commit homosexual acts.

In Revelation 2:20, God indicts the church at Thyatira saying, “But I have this against you...you allow that woman Jezebel to teach that sex sin is not a serious matter.”

In the same way, God indicts America...including Christians in America. How many times—at workshops, in Christian homes, on Christian campuses—one hears Christians (ignorantly) capitulate to the sins of the world by using the beat-around-the-bush words of the world.

And when we use the words of the world we, too, “teach that sex sin is not a serious matter.” What, after all, is so serious about “having an affair?” An “affair”—a sin? Come now! It not only sounds innocent, it sounds attractive. “Having an affair”—carefree, flamboyant and romantic.

But God calls it adultery. And adultery is God’s name for the sin of sexually using another’s mate.

“Living together” sounds innocent enough, and “swinging” sounds inviting. “Swinging” is cool and classy; the swingers have their act together; the non-swingers are out-of-date and stodgy.

But God calls it fornication and fornication is God’s name for the sin of sexually using anyone.

Who wouldn’t want to be “gay”? Preachers and elders and deacons talk worriedly about the “gay movement” and “gay rights”—not realizing they help “gays” just by calling them “gay.” God calls it homosexuality (sodomy). And homosexuality is God’s name for the sin of sexually using another of the same sex.

Let’s call popular sins by God’s names. That’s not only true to Scripture, but helps slap sense into people. When they hear that adultery, fornication and homosexuality are sins, they’ll see they’re caught up in something that ravages. And the only way they’ll hear God’s names for popular sins is for Christians to scuttle the habit (even at home) of echoing the words “affair,” “swinging,” and “gay.”

We’re fooling ourselves.

We’re failing the pitiful people caught up in these sins.

—Neil Gallagher

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## PLEA FOR MERCY

A MOTHER sought the pardon of her son from the first Napoleon. The emperor said it was his second offense, and justice demanded his death. “I don’t ask for justice,” demanded his mother, “I plead for mercy.” “But,” said the emperor, “he does not deserve mercy.” “Sire,” cried the mother, “it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.” “Well, then,” said the emperor, “I will have mercy.” And her son was saved.—*Good Company* □

# “Undue Respect”

(JAMES 2:9)

• By Millard Root

JAMES GIVES a warning that has not been heeded. Because this subject has not been taught or understood, we have a lack of understanding on the New Testament position.

Alexander Campbell made two statements that were not listened to. In a quote from 1842, he said, “I’m afraid we have not yet thoroughly refuted the language of Ashdod.” (I Peter 4:11; I Timothy 6:2-3a).

To understand the New Testament in practical application, we must get the upper hand on sin in our lives and refuse “undue respect”—or, simply stated, apply the subject of humbleness (James 4:6-10; I Peter 5:6). It was in this very vein of thought Jesus spoke in Matthew 23:5, 6, 12. But Jesus made it clear the only ones who will be exalted are those who refuse such titles of regard.

Again, Jesus said in Matthew 20:20-27 that this was not to be practiced by his disciples. Truly people today honor Jesus with their lips, but their heart in obeying what he said is far from Him (Matthew 15:8; Romans 6:17). This very problem arose in the church and Paul practiced what he preached. He told Timothy in I Timothy 5:20, 21, “them that sin rebuke before all. . .” Now notice Galatians 2:6-14, “I said unto Peter before them all. . .” Notice the seriousness. Peter was to be blamed, and Paul withstood him. In verse 11, they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. In verse 13, an old traveling companion, Barnabas, also was carried away with dissimulation or hypocrisy.

There is a great lesson here that has been overlooked. Even though these men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; Ephesians 3:4, 5; I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 1:19-21), they had to be very careful to apply these truths in their daily walk (I Corinthians 9:27).

This principle is also laid down in the Old Testament. David in Psalms 51:1-11 and Daniel in Daniel 9:3-20. David knew the Holy Spirit could be taken from him (Psalms 51:11). He’d seen this happen with King Saul (I Samuel 16:14), though Saul was also numbered with the prophets (I Samuel 10:9-13).

Balaam spoke as he was moved by the Holy Spirit but did not measure up in application. Moses fell short twice. The first time, he was almost killed by the angel (Exodus 4:24-26). For the second offense, he lost his physical life (Deuteronomy 32:48-51). Moses fell short as Daniel warned in Daniel 9:10. Moses learned the hard way. Many haven’t learned this lesson yet.

We as Christians listen carefully to the change of the New Testament over the Old and of Hebrews 7:12, of the New Testament priesthood. It is not like the Old but has been practiced like the Old. We have not learned a great lesson from I Samuel 8:1-9. God’s people wanted to be like the nations around them. God wanted to be the unseen King. The great majority of professed Christians have fallen into this same trap or snare that Satan has laid. They are not

spiritually strong so they walk by sight (II Corinthians 5:7; 4:18). Paul said if you want to follow men, you are carnal (I Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4), and to be carnally minded is death (Romans 8:6).

Jesus said to beware of men in Matthew 10:17 and Luke 16:13-15. Some men can try to justify their titles and positions but fall miserably before the All Powerful Word.

Any title of respect (undue respect) is out of place. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:6 to not think of men above that which is written. There is not one inkling of humbleness in exalted titles: Pope, Cardinal, Archdeacon, Reverend, Doctor, etc. Any such distinction among brethren is condemned. It can only water down and make ineffective the priesthood of all believers (Hebrews 7:12; I Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:6).

Righteous Job gave us sound advice in Job 32:21, 22. Jeremiah warned us in Jeremiah 17:5. Paul said just to glory in Jesus, whom we can’t see (II Corinthians 5:16; 10:17) and not to glory in men (I Corinthians 3:21).

Just because men are fallible, Jesus is not fallible. Jesus said we are all just “brethren” (Matthew 23:8). Bowing before men is inexcusable in the light of the Word (Acts 10:25, 26; Revelation 19:10). The warning is out: Jesus—Matthew 10:17; 15:9-14; Paul—Ephesians 4:14; 5:6, 7; Romans 16:17, 18; Philippians 3:16-19. Beware of men!

IN CONCLUSION, I Corinthians 3:5-7, Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God giveth the increase.” Verse 7, “So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”

If any one of us encourages, or is involved in making a distinction between the priesthood of all believers in practicing a specialized priesthood with undue respect, he of necessity discourages and waters down the true priesthood that Jesus made, Revelation 1:6, and will slow up effective involvement of all the saints and will have to answer to Jesus (Ephesians 5:24; John 5:22; 12:48). □

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## DO WE HAVE ENOUGH “RELIGION”?

A SISTER said, “My religion would not allow my divorcing him.” But her religion did not prompt her to be a sweet wife and work at having a good marriage. She had religion but not righteousness.

We have enough “religion” not to shoot anybody but not enough “righteousness” to keep our big mouths shut, and to forgive and forget. We have enough “religion” to argue who is right or wrong religiously, but not enough “righteousness” to teach cottage classes and to save a man’s soul.

We have enough “religion” to know giving is a part of duty, but not enough “righteousness” to give liberally, regularly, and lovingly.

We know enough about “religion” to attend once a week, but not enough “righteousness” to attend any gathering of the saints.

Perhaps our trouble is “religion.” Jesus said, “Hunger and thirst for righteousness,” not “religion.” Perhaps we have “religion” but not “righteousness.” We many times offer God “religion” but not “righteousness.”—Selected □

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**DON'T—**

- Don't visit the church—Worship.
- Don't hurry away—Speak and be spoken to.
- Don't dodge the preacher—Be friendly.
- Don't dodge the contribution plate—Share your money.
- Don't whisper to others—Listen to the sermon.
- Don't stare blankly while others sing—Join in.
- Don't criticize destructively—Remember your own frailties.
- Don't wait for an introduction—Introduce yourself.

**—Selected**

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**ECCLESIASTICISM**

(from the July, 1960 issue of *The Sword and Staff*)

ECCLESIASTICISM is religious authority which has been assumed by man but has not been given by God. Ecclesiasticism manifests itself in Religious Councils, Synods, Missionary Societies, Bible Colleges, and other religious organizations, conventions, and unscriptural offices. All of the above have and exercise authority religiously which the Bible has not given, even as the pope of Rome exercises such authority. The others may be in a lesser degree.

When a state secretary of a missionary society (as in the Disciples denomination) says that all must support the said organization, that is ecclesiasticism. When he puts himself in an unscriptural position to influence the local church, that is ecclesiasticism. The use of national, state, or regional labels for conventions, gatherings, etc., fosters ecclesiasticism. The North American Christian Convention is a good example. Of this convention one well-meaning supporting writer said, "The Convention will not leave the 'old paths' to fight or quarrel with anyone, but it will constructively present the things that need to be stressed in this hour, and *any man not in sympathy with the procedure of this gathering will be manifesting in no uncertain manner the fact that he is out of step with the great Restoration Movement.*" (NAAC paper, September, 1956). The words that are in bold type in this quotation have the tint of ecclesiasticism all over them. No group has a right to speak for the church. Then to speak of the North Carolina Christian Rally, or Carolina Lectureship, is to do the same thing. There is an official note implied when the name of the state is used. The implication is that the Rally or Lectureship represents all of the churches and those not included or co-operating are among the unfaithful. Also, Bible colleges are guilty of ecclesiasticism. Sometimes pressure is used in an effort to keep their graduates in line with a traditional school of thought. Evidently one is not free to study the Bible a little deeper for himself. One preacher was notified that he was "under obligation to those who taught him the Word." This is ecclesiasticism, and one of the reasons why we have denominationalism today! My loyalty is to Christ and not to some man-made Bible college!

The highest "court of appeal" as far as the function of the church on earth is concerned is the qualified eldership in the local church. And they merely have the oversight

of those "among" them (I Peter 5:2), not beyond the area of the local flock. However, evangelists, or preachers were sent out from the local church to preach the gospel, win souls, set churches in order, and edify the churches (as well as train faithful laborers). . . But we do not see the preachers in the New Testament organizing groups separate and independent of the church and placing authority in them. The local church did not have to compete with district organizations, state organizations, or national organizations for authority. There were no independent religious organizations (just the church) to throw weight around, leave the local church inactive and helpless, while the unscriptural and anti-scriptural organizations did the work of the church. Some of you reading this perhaps don't believe that God's plan is perfect for His church. You don't believe that the simple organization that the Lord gave for the church is enough to carry out God's program of evangelism. You don't believe that it is sufficient to fulfill His teaching and training program for the church. It seems folly to me to think that God would commission such a tremendous work as evangelizing the world without giving us the plan and agency through which it is to be accomplished. Paul told Timothy that the Bible would make us "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Is evangelism, teaching, or training a good work? (II Timothy 3:17). Thus God's plan is all that is necessary when we have a church full of CONVERTED people, and preachers have NOT COMPROMISED the high standards of work and qualifications forelders, preachers, and deacons. And no other group or person has the right to exercise religious authority save the church as God has directed. Anything else is ecclesiasticism. □

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**ONE SMALL LIGHT**

DURING an Atlantic crossing a severe storm arose and a passenger lay in the bunk seasick. In the dark of the night he heard a cry, "MAN OVERBOARD!" as some poor soul was swept from the deck.

The sick man lay there thinking there was surely no hope for the poor fellow who had fallen and that he could do nothing to help. But then he thought, "I could at least put my lantern in the porthole."

The man was rescued, and he recounted the story the next day. "I was going down for the third time," he said, "when someone aboard put a lantern in the porthole. It shone on my hand and a sailor in a lifeboat grabbed me and pulled me in."

One small light! It belonged to a sick man but it enabled a strong sailor to save a life. Was the sailor who pulled the man into the lifeboat more important to his "salvation" than the man who put the light in the window? Which of the two could he have done without?

Every Christian can do likewise for his fellows. The Lord didn't bless us all with the same talents, but you can do something. Is your light shining? "Ye are the light of the world."—*W. Eugene Springer* □

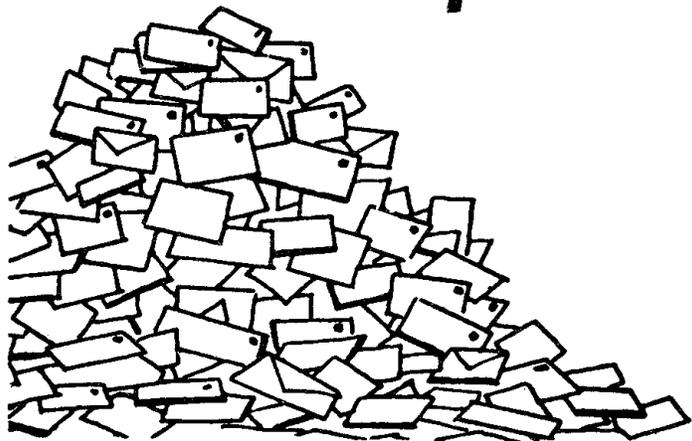
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**"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# READERS'

## ... Response



### SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"We have a dear friend who suggested we write for your ...SWORD AND STAFF. We are very much interested as he vows it is one of the best he's ever read."*

### OHIO:

■ *"I enjoy your publication so much. I received your bound volumes and have read them from cover to cover. I can tell by your writings it is truly a joy to serve the only God as it is for me. Praise God for your work."*

### ILLINOIS:

■ *"Please remove me from your mailing list."*

### MISSOURI:

■ *"We just received your latest issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF and want you to know we really enjoy your paper... May God bless you in your efforts to serve Him. Keep up the good work. We feel your paper is one of the best—both in material and quality."*

### CALIFORNIA:

■ *"I have received THE SWORD AND STAFF for many years and it is a paper I hope to always receive; wished everyone could read it. I do thank God for men that still teach and preach Christ as it should be..."* □

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## Can You Identify These Wives ?

- (1) Would you believe this beautiful lady  
Won a king's heart after she was eighty?
- (2) When the Hebrew she failed to win  
She lied to her husband  
And he was thrown into the pen.
- (3) Her bridegroom had paid in full just the week before  
But on the wedding night he owed just that much more.
- (4) To a far away land the fair damsel went,  
And spent her wedding night in her mother-in-law's tent.
- (5) She helped her husband scheme and plot,  
So people would think they gave a lot;

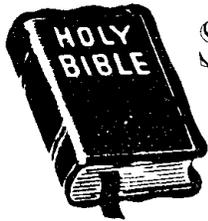
- But, alas, when she too had lied,  
They buried her by her husband's side.
- (6) "Don't pout, my King, I will get the field,"  
Promised the queen, as a letter she sealed.  
And soon a righteous man lay dead...  
Just like she said.
  - (7) No other woman of any time, or land  
Could be so pure a bride of mortal man.
  - (8) The king's daughter loved and wed  
The handsome man of war;  
And though she saved his life, I've read,  
Never a child for him bore.
  - (9) He neither loved nor courted her in years that were gone.  
But the tender-eyed bride kept her secret till dawn.
  - (10) Her husband had been rich, churlish, and now lay dead;  
She quickly married the brave fugitive she had fed.
  - (11) By following her mother-in-law's skillful plan,  
She became the bride of a very rich man.
  - (12) At God's holy word she did laugh;  
And the times she lied were three;  
Yet this fair woman in holy writ,  
Is a model wife for you and me.
  - (13) Oh, this brave wife of Heber the Kenite  
Gave the evil captain milk so white;  
And when to sleep he lay down,  
She quickly nailed his head to the ground.
  - (14) Her noble husband on the battle field lay, the victim  
of an evil plan,  
That the fair mother-to-be might become the wife of  
another man.
  - (15) You might think it a thing so little,  
But when his wife revealed his riddle,  
Angrily he called her a heifer,  
And in a huff up and left her.
  - (16) This, my dear, will be your duty;  
Because you are such a beauty,  
Don't reveal you are my wife  
Lest the heathen take my life.
  - (17) Ah, thou wife of Lapideth,  
Who dwelleth beneath a palm,  
Though thou go into battle,  
Of another you'll sing your psalm.
  - (18) He met them at the well...seven daughters of a priest;  
There he befriended them, from the elderest to the least.  
And all their flocks he watered before the day was done.  
But of all the seven daughters, he married only one.
  - (19) To save her baby she fled away,  
Her husband at her side;  
And in Egypt there they stayed,  
Until the wicked king had died.
  - (20) She dared disobey her husband...  
For this she became a spectacle,  
Lest other wives in the kingdom  
Should follow her example.

—By Jennie L. Flowers

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**IF YOU TAKE SERVE out of service (serv-ice),  
you have ice left—many Christians need defrosting.**

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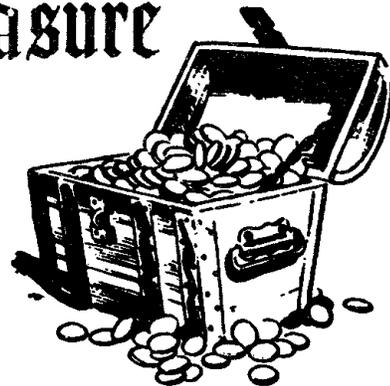
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