

# The Sword AND Staff

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

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

## Some More People God Called Fools



By JAMES E. GIBBONS — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
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THE WORD "FOOL" is found many times in the Bible. Our simple English word "fool" is used to represent several different Hebrew and Greek words. Such adjectives as the following would somewhat describe the spectrum of thought behind the original words: Boastful, self-confident, thickheaded, empty-headed, unwise, thoughtless, witless, senseless, heedless, stupid, dull, etc. Our English word "fool" has many foreign ancestors in its line of descent, going all the way back to the Latin *follis* (also from whence comes our word "folly"). *Follis* had reference to a wind-

bag or bellows.

As we know, Jesus said to call no man a "fool" (Matthew 5:22). We should never vent our anger in such unseemly name calling. May we be content to let our "yea" be "yea" and our "nay" be "nay," and let God take care of all the uncomplimentary name calling. Really, He knows the situation as it is, and no mistake will be made in what He says. When God calls someone a fool, know assuredly that is exactly what he is.

Realizing this, let us dig into some more prodding lessons as we consider some more people that God called fools.

### I. THE MOCKING FOOL (Proverbs 14:9).

Proverbs 14:9 reads, "Fools make a mock at sin..." The Amplified Bible puts this rather vividly: "Fools make a mock at sin and sin mocks the fools..." And how true that is! Sinners may make a joke out of sin, but you can't sin, belittle God, and go scot-free. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:7-9). Ananias and Sapphira found this out the hard way to their eternal doom (Acts 5:1-10). Then Proverbs 20:1 reads, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." This certainly gets the point across that "sin mocks the fools." How utterly degrading and shameful a person can look under the influence of alcohol! A lot of fools today, who do not envision themselves as such, are further making fools of themselves.

Fools mock Christ and His message. "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29). They did this and many other humiliating things to Jesus before He was ignobly crucified. But that is not the end of the story. The Messianic 2nd Psalm, having reference to this very circumstance, said, "Why do the

(Continued on Page 3)

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## Proverbially SPEAKING...

*CHRISTIANS should be the most forgiving people in the world for they know what it is to be forgiven.*

*"Never trust a man with the Lord's business who will not mind his own."*

*Religious unity based upon compromise (and not the Word of God) does not comprise "Christian unity."*

*"You can tell how big a man is by observing how much it takes to discourage him."*

*To use television as a baby sitter is as bad as enlisting a dirty-minded old man to take care of your children.*

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

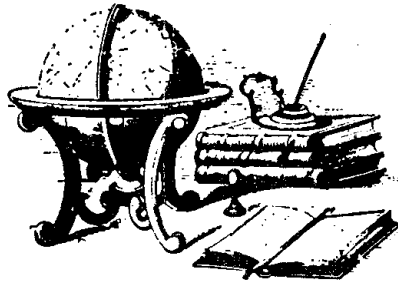
*Many times little people show their littleness by making big issues of little things.*

*"It is easy to find fault; appreciation requires intelligence and character."*

*If we keep God's Word, God will keep us.*

*If a man's wife is his "better half," and he has been married twice, what has happened mathematically?*

*The double tragedy of a dishonest person is that not only is he dishonest with other people, he cannot be honest with himself.*



## EDITORIAL

## COMMENTS...

### THROWING A LOPSIDED BALL

THE GREAT COMMISSION may well be called the charter of the church (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-16; Acts 20:26,27; Galatians 1:6-8). There are certain guide lines that must be followed; there are certain things that must be preached to accomplish the salvation of man and his maturity in Christ. Along with the basic message, Christ said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Some choose to preach just part of the gospel, not teaching men to observe "all things." They even add the doctrines and traditions of men. The Protestant Reformation was characterized by reactionaryism. This can be seen in Calvinism and doctrines like "faith only." We are justified by faith (Romans 5:1), but not by "faith only" (James 2:18-26). So many denominations have come into being because they have emphasized one doctrine out of proportion to another (hence, some denominations are even named after a doctrine, etc.).

Today we see various manifestations of the unbalanced message. Some smooth-talking preachers go overboard in making everything positive in their approach. Others seem to be motivated by a reactionary negativism in their preaching, whereas a healthy balance would be more desirable. (A battery must have the positive AND the negative elements to accomplish its purpose). Some preachers get preoccupied with the kind of preaching that emphasizes one theme. Their thrust may be in fields like patriotism, anti-communism, fighting alcohol, exposing witchcraft, etc. Or they may be on an anti "anti" crusade. There is nothing more pitiful than an anti who is anti "anti" but does not envision himself as being "anti" (although his words and writings are permeated with the spirit and tone of anti-ism in his opposition to it). The thrust of some writings may all be "Christian unity." While preaching on such things is good in its place, the gospel preacher is under a wider commission which includes "teaching them to observe all things."

Faithful Bible preaching must include the positive and the negative in its content and in its delivery. Positive preaching is good, but there is a place for exposing and opposing the wrong (a place for rebuke). We will preach a well-rounded message if we work under the great commission. Like the steady falling rain does the crops the most good, the faithful, consistent, and well-balanced preaching will get the job done the way the Lord wants it done. (However, an occasional storm is not all bad. It will remove the dead limbs from the tree).

THEREFORE, may our message be well-rounded, whether in the sense of preaching all of the Word of God or otherwise. If you throw a lopsided ball it will not go straight, veering off into the "wild blue yonder." Jude called the false teachers, "wandering stars." Then he said, "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13). Our English word "planet" comes from the Greek word translated "wandering stars." Stars occupied a fixed position in the heavens whereas the planets ("wandering stars") could be seen at different places. False teachers are "wandering stars" (planets). They are not fixed. They are off course.

**DON'T THROW A LOPSIDED BALL!**

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## SOME MORE PEOPLE GOD CALLED FOOLS



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heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed (Christ)...He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Yes, the tomb was found empty. Yes, the church was established and victorious. Yes, there is a great day of judgment coming. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Revelation 1:7).

Fools mock the messengers of God and Christ. Old Noah probably was the laughing stock of his day, but we know the rest of the story. The prophet Elijah was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, going up in a whirlwind. His mantle fell upon Elisha, and he became his successor. For some reason some young fellows from Bethel (42 in all) began to make fun of this bald-headed prophet, saying, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head" (II Kings 2:23, 24). They mocked the prophet of God, but before it was over they wished they hadn't. Two "she bears" came out of the woods and made short work of them. Of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, we read: "Others mocking said, These men (the apostles) are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13). But how you treat the servant of God is how you are treating God. Peter told Ananias, who had just spoken to him, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). Saul, who was persecuting the church, was in reality persecuting Christ for Christ said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Preachers are "ambassadors for Christ" (II Corinthians 5:20). To humiliate and mock the ambassador representing a country is more of an affront to the country than it is to the ambassador.

Be careful what you say. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalms 1:1). Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36, 37). Jude told of those who speak evil of those things which they know not" (v. 10), and reminded his readers of the apostles of Christ, "How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own lusts" (v. 17-19). But they will give an account of their "hard speeches" when Christ comes to execute judgment upon all..." (v. 15). The tables will be turned on the mocking fool.

### II. THE SELF-SUFFICIENT FOOL (Proverbs 28:26).

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26) (Jeremiah further testifies: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," Jeremiah 10:23).

The man who utterly trusts "in his own heart" is the self-confident (or self-sufficient) fool. He may be a "self-made" man, and thinks that he has no need of God or his fellow man. He is almost the same as the proud fool (note verse before, Proverbs 28:25). He may be a "know it all" type of person; you can't tell him anything.

This self-sufficient feeling may have been brought on by many things, among them material things. The man who God called a "fool" in Luke 12:20 thought that he "had it made," putting his trust in his possessions. The church of the Laodiceans in Asia Minor was at the point of losing Christ. The Lord said to them, "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" (Revelation 3:14-18). Paul says that "godliness with contentment is great gain." Then he warns against covetousness (which will destroy this contentment). The Christian who aspires to be rich is headed for all kinds of trouble: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:6-11). Then he warns those who are already rich: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (6:17). Yes, the spiritual side of man suffers from the "self-sufficiency" brought on by the abundance of material things. Beware!

Perhaps the most foolish of the self-sufficient fools is the one who feels self-sufficient in reference to his righteousness. He is the self-righteous person. The classic example of this can be seen in the Jews of Paul's day, his fellow-countrymen. Paul testified of their religious zeal, but prayed that they might be saved, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-4). And many today feel perfectly content with themselves as they are, but God calls them fools. Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Then: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23). Isaiah 53:6, looking forward to the coming Saviour of men, said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The awful fact is stated, which should deflate our balloon of self-righteousness, but at the same time the anticipated answer to our problem is given, the sinless sacrifice for sin (Jesus Christ). Jesus is the great sin-bearer. We cannot be good enough to tip the scales in our favor (that is how bad sin is). We cannot take our own sins away. Therefore, Paul writes, "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

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**SOME MORE PEOPLE GOD CALLED FOOLS**

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the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). When we repent and are baptized (immersed) for the remission of sin, Christ’s righteousness is counted to be our righteousness, and our sins are all forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6). But until we do this, every sin that we have committed is “on the books” against us (and the wages of sin is death, eternal separation from God). A man is very foolish if he thinks he can be saved without doing this. We cannot take away our own sins. To think that we can be saved by our own self-righteousness is very foolish indeed. We are telling God that we don’t need Jesus, that He made a mistake in having him to die on the old rugged cross. How foolish can a person get?!

Regardless what causes you to feel self-sufficient, remember Proverbs 28:26, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...” Remember that man is incapable of directing his own steps without God (Jeremiah 10:23). (“For...the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” I Corinthians 1:21; man was incapable by human wisdom, i.e. philosophy, etc., of knowing God—it comes through the gospel). Man is not self-sufficient. In one way or another he will make shipwreck of his life. He will end up on the refuse heap of lost souls for eternity.

**III. THE CARELESS FOOL (Ephesians 5:15).**

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil...” (Ephesians 5:15,16) The word “fools” here is used in contrast with wise. In fact, the Greek word for “fool” is *sophos* (wise) with the privative *a* in front of it, thus making it “unwise” (*asophoi*). We have what the wise man will do and what the fool (unwise) will not do; that is, “walk circumspectly.” Our English word “circumspectly” is a combination of Latin stems plus the adverbial ending: circum-spect-ly. *Circum* literally means “round about” (i. e., circle, circus, circumference, etc.) with “spect” having reference to seeing, looking (i. e., spectrum, spectacle, etc.). So, the wise man (if we take this word literally) is looking round about as he walks (which the fool is not doing). He is careful in the way that he lives. The careless fool is not. The wise man will be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The fool will not. He could care less for he is the careless fool.

He proceeds to tell many ways to “walk circumspectly,” one being “be not drunk with wine.” Jesus gave a parable of a “faithful and wise servant” (who would be such), and it involved the wisdom in watching for his coming. But this servant became a careless fool, and said (in essence) in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming.” He “begin to smite his fellowservant, and to eat and drink with the drunken” (Matthew 24:45-51).

Lessons on the careless fool are further brought out in Matthew 25, following this, in the parable of the ten virgins. Five were foolish and not prepared. They did not get to take part in the wedding feast. How we need to be always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58).

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should

let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels (the Law of Moses) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...?” (Hebrews 2:1-3).

THE REFERENCES are many that could be pointed out where God called someone a fool. Get a concordance. Look these up and do your own study. But this present study is enough to move us to not want to be called “fool” in any of these ways by God. No good end is in store for those who are any of these kinds of fools. May we take these things to heart and be otherwise. Amen. □

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**HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS—**

HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS through which to do the Lord’s work reflect upon the wisdom of God. Since the Lord’s church has been designed by the wisdom of God, it is sufficient to accomplish His purposes. When men build human organizations as an aid or substitute for God’s organization, they evidence their lack of faith in the sufficiency of that which God has provided and their dissatisfaction with God’s ways (Isaiah 55:6-9). Men have the same right to write a chapter and add it to the Bible as to build an anteroom on the church of God.

Since God has given by divine wisdom an organization to the church, the congregation, and has made it sufficient to accomplish His purpose, it is the only medium of work and worship through which the Christian is to accomplish His purpose, and we must be satisfied with His will, His way, and His Word. —Selected □

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**THE BEST BIBLE TEACHER**

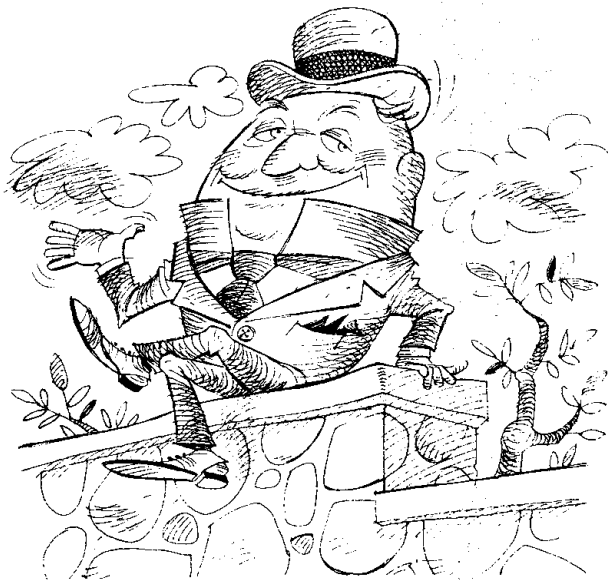
MANY OF US can look back at the time when we were students sitting at the feet of various teachers and remember what characteristics we appreciated in them. Perhaps the following marks (and others) cause one teacher or more to stand out as the best Bible teacher in your memory.

*The best Bible teacher is the faithful teacher.* Paul wrote, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Timothy 2:2). No matter how well one is able to present the subject matter to one’s students, if one is not faithful in attendance and service to God, one is a poor teacher (I Cor. 4:2).

*The best Bible teacher is a prepared teacher.* No student appreciates an unprepared teacher. The Lord does not look with favor upon a teacher who enters a classroom and wanders aimlessly through a lesson. Just as Ezra, the scribe, “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10), so should every teacher make adequate preparation. Even those who desire to teach some time in the future should begin now making preparations. Jesus prepared for 30 years in order to teach for about 3½ years of his ministry (Luke 3:23).

*The best Bible teacher is the enthusiastic teacher.* One who enjoys teaching the Bible will soon develop students who enjoy studying the Bible. Enthusiasm breeds enthusi-

# Humpty Dumpty's Great Fall



*Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall;  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again!*

THUS GOES a well known nursery rhyme all about a broken egg. And there is a parallel to this which is universally true. The Humpty Dumpty is man. The great fall is sin. The shell of innocence is broken and forever shattered. And "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "All of the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again." Yes, all of man's efforts (personal and otherwise) to solve the problem of sin are futile. We just can't undo what has been done. We can't put it back together again.

There is no way that man can undo the guilt and consequence of sin. But (praise God!), Almighty God can! "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed

away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

## BROKEN PIECES

*Have you failed in life's battle to accomplish your plan?  
Is your heart heavy laden? do you fear the Lord's command?*

*Do you feel that no one loves you and there's no use to try?*

*Just bring your cares to Jesus; your soul He'll satisfy.*

*You may feel that there's no hope—broken hearts just cannot mend;*

*Tho you're torn in many pieces, Christ can make you whole again.*

*Storms of doubt blow all directions; but don't you be afraid;*

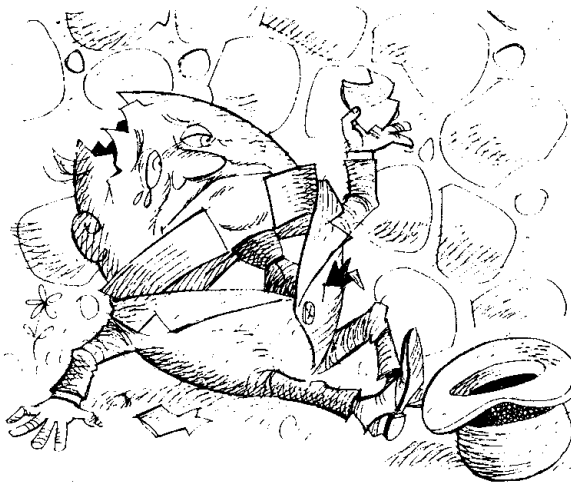
*God can make all corrections, He made a body out of clay.*

*Pick up the broken pieces and bring them to the Lord.  
Pick up the broken pieces, trust in His holy Word.*

*He will put them back together and make your life complete.*

*Just place the broken pieces at the Savior's feet. (SONG)*

—By J. GIBBONS



asm. Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). If one does not have this characteristic, one should not be teaching. The molding of lives should not be placed in the hands of apathetic potters.

*The best Bible teacher is a caring teacher.* A teacher should care for his students. If they are absent from class, the teacher makes an immediate effort to find out why by dropping them a note in the mail, calling on the phone, or even going and visiting those who need encouragement (Psalms 142:4; Acts 2:44; 4:32).

*The best Bible teacher is a Bible teacher.* The Bible teacher is not an arts and crafts teacher. He is not as concerned with cutting out, pasting, and coloring, as with teaching the Word of God (Deut. 6:7). The best Bible teach-

er is one who places emphasis upon BIBLE study, BIBLE memorization, BIBLE knowledge, and BIBLE application, rather than other subjects. Leave the pagan holidays for the world, but let us hold up God's Word (I Timothy 3:15).

*The best Bible teacher is one who continues to grow* (II Peter 3:18) and go (I Cor. 15:58). God's Word is a rich volume, and in three lifetimes one could not learn it all (Romans 11:33-36). Not only does he continue to grow spiritually, but *go on* spiritually. He is not a quitter. He has "stick-to-it-tive-ness" (Revelation 2:10).

*The best Bible teacher was Jesus Christ* (Acts 1:1). Follow Him (I Peter 2:21). —B. F. Vick, Jr. □

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# THE CHURCH AFTER THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN

BY JAMES E. GIBBONS

The theme of our discussion at this time is the church as found in the New Testament. The study of the church is indeed a great one, and we find a definite plan concerning the church in the Bible. As on every other subject, God has spoken on this, and especially since His great plan of the age hinges around the church. But the way most people talk today you wouldn't think that God has said a single thing pertaining to the church. Everyday we hear people say, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe; go to the church of your choice." This is the spirit of this age of spiritual shallowness. We are living in an age when religion is only skin deep and concern for true religion is lacking. It is not a matter of the church of your choice, my choice, or anyone else's choice. The basic question is: what does the Word of God say about it? The truth is that the Word of God goes into detail on this subject. In reference to the church we shall consider its establishment, its terms of membership, its supper, its organization, its name, and its mission—then we will not have covered this great subject.

## I. Its Establishment.

In the 16th chapter of Matthew, verse 18, Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This was after John the Baptizer had been beheaded, later in the ministry of Christ. John could not have started the church because our Lord placed it in a future date from this time. The truth of the matter is that the church was not established before Christ's death and resurrection. In the book of Acts Jesus ascended back to heaven, having charged his disciples to wait for the promise of the Father. In the 2nd chapter of Acts, the first Jewish Pentecost after the resurrection (which came 50 days after the Passover) the church of Christ was established in Jerusalem. After this event it reads that the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved (Acts 2:47). Thus, the church is now a reality, Christ having established it through his appointed apostles. Any "church" that has a starting date later than this, or claims one later, was started too late to be the New Testament church. The church of the New Testament begins at this point.

## II. Its Terms of Membership.

Terms of membership in this church are evident as we look at the 2nd chapter of Acts, the record of its initial establishment. The fact is that the same thing that saves us "automatically" makes us a member of the Lord's church. Salvation is for "whosoever will," and on the day of Pentecost 3,000 lost souls wanted to know what they must do. The immediate reply in verse 38 is, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Following, verse 41 reads, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." In further connection with this, verse 47 adds that the Lord added to the church. Therefore, my dear friends, when one believes enough to repent of his sins, utterly forsaking them, and will gladly be baptized for the remission of sins, the Lord will add him to HIS CHURCH, not a human denomination. Notice the inspired record said that the Lord does the adding. A person cannot JOIN the church of Christ; if he joined anything, it was not the Lord's church. The Lord adds repentant believers to His church, who have been baptized into his death. No man can vote you in or out of the church that is found in the New Testament.

Let us be clear about what we mean by baptism. Every account of baptism in the New Testament depicts clearly

beyond unbiased doubt, **immersion**, a burial in water. Romans chapter 6 says that one is "buried" in baptism—Does sprinkling or pouring convey this action? Our English Bibles are clear on this, but did you know that in the Greek New Testament (the language in which it was originally written) the word for baptize is **baptizo**, which literally means "to dip, dip in, immerse" (**Greek-English lexicon**, by J. H. Thayer, p. 95) and has never been translated clearly into English simply because of biased denominational theologians? If men would throw away their human creeds and traditions that have come out of the superstitious and dark middle ages, sprinkling and pouring would go too.

So membership in the undenominational New Testament church is brought about by faith, repentance, (confession), and baptism. I Corinthians 12:13 says that we become members of the **one** body of Christ, the church, by baptism. If we have never come through this door, we are not a member of the church of God.

## III. Its Supper.

The worship in the church of the New Testament was very simple. It was strictly Christ-centered, outside of the fact that human beings were participating in the worship. Worship was not a means of parading the vanity of men in robes of arrogance (Mark 12:38), but a means of pouring out the contrite heart before the throne of grace; a means of expressing our joy heavenward.

The Lord's supper was the center of worship in the New Testament church, and it is in the Lord's church today. Acts 20:7 reads, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . ." Please examine this Scripture with me. (1) The disciples were coming together on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. (2) The purpose of their coming together was to "break bread" or to take the Lord's supper. This was the center of their worship. They met their Lord in his death every Lord's day, in the Lord's supper, where he said that he would meet them. Not only does the Bible prove that the early New Testament church partook of the Lord's supper every week, but outside secular history reveals the same truth.

How many so called "churches" that you know of observe the Lord's supper every Sunday? If they do not, they are not New Testament churches because the church of the New Testament had the Lord's supper every week, and those endeavoring to be just simply the church are doing the same today.

## IV. Its Organization.

The organization of the church found in the New Testament is very simple. It was merely on a local basis, with each congregation taking care of its affairs as it was governed by local elders (Acts 20:28). Read the book of Acts. There was a plurality of elders (pastors) in each church, also called bishops (Philippians 1:1). They were assisted by deacons, which means servants. Preachers or evangelists were sent out from the local church to evangelize the world, establish churches, and to set things in order. At one time there were apostles and prophets in the church, but their positions are no longer in the church today simply because the Bible shows that they would cease, even in the first century, no longer being needed.

Men today have departed from the New Testament plan both in a local sense and in a universal sense. Most denominations have corrupted the organization of the local church by adding additional organizations other than the church organization found in the Bible. In a wider sense, in departing from the simple Scriptural organization, one man has been set over a certain number of churches, being called a "bishop" (and various other names, as state secretary, etc.), or over an entire religious body, being called the "pope" and



the head of the church. Problems are unending when men depart from the simple plan of God's Word.

V. Its Name.

Our message would not be complete without referring to the names applied to the church of the New Testament. The word church itself, *ecclesia*, means "the called out" ones. Christ said, "I will build MY church . . ." Romans 16:16 states, "The churches of Christ salute you." Inasmuch as Christ built the church, purchased it with his own blood, the least that we can do is call it by his precious name. Many times we find the church spoken of in the Scriptures as "the church of God"—God planned the church, and thus it is fitting to call it by His name. All of these New Testament names give glory to the personalities to whom it is due. The name of the individual member of the church, **CHRISTIAN**, likewise highly honors our Christ.

On the other hand denominational names promote division and give the glory to human beings, human systems, or over-emphasized religious teachings. Remember, the name is very important. Would you let you wife wear another's name? Would you sign someone else's name to your check? In the first chapter of I Corinthians Paul strongly condemns this sin of wearing religious party names, and in that same book 3:4, he declares, "For while one saith, **I am of Paul**; and another, **I am of Apollos**; are ye not carnal?" Is that not conclusive enough for you, kind reader? This is not this preacher's opinion (as such), but the words of the inspired apostle Paul. Colossians 1:18 states that Christ is the head of the church "that in **all things** he might have the **pre-eminence**." If we are to be pleasing in the sight of God this is exactly what we will do, giving Him pre-eminence in the NAME and in our very lives.

VI. Its Mission.

The great motivating mission of the church in the world is to evangelize the world. The great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and various other references bear this out (Ephesians 3:10; Revelation 22:17). A sin-sick world is lost and must be saved before it is eternally too late. But too many "churches" today get side-tracked from that mission. The redemptive gospel has been replaced by a social gospel, which denies the importance of the blood of Christ. Churches have been reduced to mere clubs, social and cultural organizations. Churches have all kinds of activities, but when it gets down to calling and soul-winning, no one can be found! When it comes to helping struggling new churches on their feet, who cares about that? If only some churches could experience what small bands of faithful struggling brethren are going through trying to get the kingdom going in remote and gospel-desolate places, their hearts

would be filled with zeal for evangelism. We pray that God will open many eyes!

Mind you, this is the mission of the church! The church cannot put it off on some other organization. The church is the God-ordained means and agency for converting the world. When the God-appointed offices of work are carried out, and every Christian is a soul-winner as the New Testament teaches, there will be no need to think of man-made organizations. We are that much short of being a New Testament church when the church cannot even carry on its own work. The church itself is the missionary society. Would to God that men who profess to speak where the Bible speaks would speak where it speaks. If only qualified men were put in as elders and deacons, and every church member were truly converted, and if evangelists would do the work of evangelists, Oh think of what could be done! There are no inactive members in the New Testament church!

Yes, there is a church found in the New Testament; the coming of Christ and the church commenced God's climaxing plan for the age in His effort to restore man unto Himself. The church is divine; it is the tent "the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). We have only touched the hem of the garment in considering only a few things about the New Testament church. We invite you to turn from denominationalism to the Lord's church, free from denominational tradition and bondage—"no strings attached." It does make a difference what doctrine you believe (I Timothy 4:16; Galatians 1:8). We invite you to make a thorough study of the New Testament. If you are concerned about the truth and your soul, you will.

(This appeared in the March, 1959 issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF, 25 years ago.)

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Preacher's Predicament

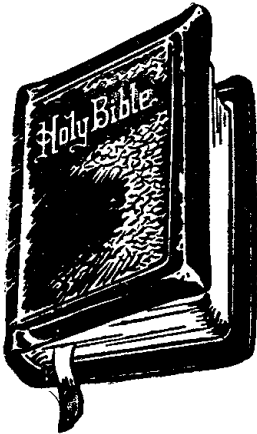
A man had a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital. He could receive little company and was not to be excited. While in the hospital a rich uncle died and left him a million dollars. His family wondered how to break the news to him with the least amount of excitement. It was decided to ask the preacher if he would go and break the news quietly to the man.

The preacher went, and gradually led up to the question. The preacher asked the patient what he would do if he inherited a million dollars. He said, "I think I would give half of it to the church."

The preacher dropped dead.

—The Plea

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THE BIBLE ONLY MAKES ONLY CHRISTIANS, MEMBERS  
OF THE LORD'S CHURCH.

THE BIBLE PLUS THE CREEDS, TRADITIONS, AND  
NAMES OF MEN EQUALS DENOMINATIONALISM.

# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

THERE IS no reference made in the Scriptures to the "doctrine of the church of Christ." There is reference made of the "doctrine of Christ" (I John 9) and the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The doctrine does not belong to or originate with the church. It comes from Christ (and the inspired apostles) and belongs to Christ. We are simply stewards of it. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). □

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# YOU HEARD IT WRONG

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S message from the wilderness was not, "Smile! God loves you." It was, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Jeremiah was not put into a miry pit for preaching, "I'm OK; you're OK." It was for crying against the adultery, idolatry and other wickedness of his nation.

Noah's message from the steps of the ark was not, "Something GOOD is going to happen to you!" He condemned the world and was (a preacher) of righteousness.

Jesus Christ was not crucified for saying, "Consider the lilies, how they grow," but for saying, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...child of hell...fools and blind...whited sepulchres...generation of vipers."

—Pulpit Helps

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# TURN IT DOWN (OFF—Editor!)

PARENTS, are you aware that most youth in this generation will possibly go into adulthood with serious hearing loss? And if I told you that audiology will be one of the ongoing vocations in the future, would you believe me?

For years medical authorities have been warning us that music played at high volume and listened to by our youth, is slowly but surely wrecking their sense of hearing. Once the loss is incurred, it is permanent. The auditory nerve, when damaged by excessively loud noises, cannot be corrected surgically. Hearing aid devices help, but they cannot restore the natural sense of hearing.

These same medical authorities have been telling us that loud, rock music found at concerts, on cassette tapes, stereos and on radio is the principal culprit. They affirm that we need to redirect our children's musical inclinations and pursuits. They recommend that we keep them from rock concerts and insist they turn the volume down on cassette players, stereos and radios. Otherwise, they assert, within a few years we will be faced with a generation of half-deaf adults.

But why do our youth insist on listening to ear-splitting music? First of all, they live in a drug-oriented society where "getting high" is the thing. And it is no secret that loud, rock music and the drug culture are tightly interwoven. They are bed partners, inseparable, and of the same family of social abuses. Rock bands, whether Satanic or "Christian," know what appeals to our youth and what "turns them on." If these same bands, while "in concert," turned their music down to a decent level, our youth would refuse to respond. Why? Because thunderous, unintelligible music

appeals to the animal (carnal) nature or base emotions. They are "charged" by the music's loudness. So having their animal passions aroused they respond by gesturing and acting like animals.

A matter which disturbs me greatly is that many of our Christian youth have been sucked into rock concerts of the "Christian" variety. At these "Christian" rock concerts the paganistic beat is prevalent, sensationalism is widespread and unintelligible sounds are common. Animal emotions are addressed and set on fire. Intellectuals are left barren. These young people will bear the physical and spiritual injuries of their exposure to these "Christian concerts" in later life.

Our youth are living in a dangerous generation for it is locked and tuned in to all of the abuses associated with the drug and booze cultures. They need all of the help we can give them. Above all, we need to turn them away from those cultures that are dragging our nation's "cream of the crop" down to the very depths of the gutter. —Buff Scott, Jr.

# "REPENTANT THANKS"

*Lord, how can I be thankful  
in inflated times like these,  
When grocery bills are rising;  
Lord, tell me how please?*

*What can I be thankful for  
amid such need and distress?  
Seems expenses tally more and more  
and my income counts for less.*

*Every time I think I'm getting  
maybe just a little ahead  
Something new crops up before me,  
then back I drop into the red.*

*...Forgive me, Lord, for mistaking  
what really matters most;  
It's not in all these pointless worries,  
but in Thy blessings we should boast.*

*How can I o'erlook Thy goodness,  
when it flows so full and free?  
How can I not see my blessings  
daily as they come from Thee?*

*O, we are such a spoiled people,  
accustomed to having more than we need  
We should count our blessings more often  
and upon Thy heavenly manna feed.*

*Pray, may I give true thanks to Thee,  
bowing happily humbly upon my knees  
That I may know Thy grace for me;  
Dear Lord, help me be so, please?*

*"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of  
God in Christ Jesus concerning you"—I Thessalonians 5:18.*

By BOB WICKLINE  
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# YOU, YOUR INSECURITIES, AND GOD



• By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 FAIRFIELD DRIVE—MT. AIRY, N.C. 27030

IN PROVERBS 30:21-23 we come across some very interesting Scripture which gives insight into human nature. It has to do with various insecure people. We see how they react (especially after being repressed) when suddenly propelled to higher elevations above their peers when obviously they are not prepared for it psychologically, emotionally, or otherwise. Not many can handle a situation like this with a level head.

This Scripture reads: "For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth: and a fool when he is filled with meat: For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress." This "King James" wording is very good, but perhaps the Revised and the New American Standard Versions are even better: "Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up: a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is filled with

food; an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maid when she succeeds her mistress" (RSV).

Very interesting, but this Scripture does not represent isolated instances of bygone things. Whether we like to admit it or not, all of us have insecurities of one kind or another in one way or another. No one is perfect. Thus, it is well for us to consider this matter a little more.

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF INSECURITIES (FEELINGS OF INSECURITIES)

A person may feel insecure because of low self-esteem, which could be caused by a variety of things (known and unknown). A person may have pegged himself low on the social scale. He may think he has come from the wrong side of the "tracks." He may feel insecure because of being poor or having come out of a background of poverty. He may feel insecure because of a lack of education (or for failure to

do his best). An unstable home situation, or having come from one, may cause such feelings. A person may feel insecure because of some physical characteristic or imagined imperfection in this respect. For some not having what they regard as nice clothes, or thinking they are not dressed properly, may cause feelings of insecurity. Wrong living, secret sin, and not being right with God (living under a dark impending cloud) are causes of deep insecurities. Because of question marks about ones salvation and relationship to God a life may be plagued with insecurity. Uncertainty about the future, etc.—yes, we could go on; there are so many different kinds of insecurities. And, all lives are touched in some way with them.

## HOW INSECURITIES MANIFEST THEMSELVES (WITH RESULTANT PROBLEMS)

### In General

Some people who feel insecure become quiet and withdrawn while others become loud, boastful, and domineering (put up a front). (What strange creatures we human beings are!). The know-it-all person has to show how much he knows because he feels so insecure. And snobbery really is but a display of insecurity.

Young people feel insecure. The young person who is not quite a man or woman yet (but almost) is subject to insecurity (and can be a sitting duck for the devil and all kinds of problems). He or she may be loud and blustery. Many feel the need of popularity. They want to prove themselves to the group, and be accepted, and are open to all kinds of possible problems involving drugs, drink, and sex. Many times girls who feel insecure will want to wear makeup (and a lot of it) and will display themselves (and their bodies) to prove that they are a woman. And what boys will do! But only the weak must prove they are strong. Only the person who is in doubt about his or her manhood/womanhood must prove it.

The wearing of makeup, jewelry, and a preoccupation with being in style are evidence of insecurity. Cosmetic industries try to make women feel insecure (and unhappy with themselves) so they will buy their products, and how the weak ones fall in line. Many women would not think of facing the

(Continued on Next Page)

## YOU, YOUR INSECURITIES, AND GOD

*(Continued from Last Page)*

world with the face that God gave them (I Corinthians 12:24). They are made to feel insecure unless they are painted sex symbols.

Men and women who are not faithful to their mates are insecure people. It is not always just a matter of simple lust, but insecurity enters the picture. They must keep proving to themselves that they are desirable. (Think how insecure the many times married and divorced person must be!). The man who faces the so-called middle age crisis and chases younger women really is insecure. He must prove to himself that he is still a man.

We are suspicious that the so-called "WOMEN'S LIB" movement is but the outcropping of insecurity. The hypersensitivity about the use of the word "man" is really a joke. We are not supposed to say "chairman" anymore; it is now "chairperson," etc. But anyone can see that you can't say "woman" without saying "man" (and the word "woman" literally means a man with a womb). However, the word "man" not only has reference to gender, it is used in the more general sense of humanity or mankind (but, we can't use these words without saying "man" either: hu-man-ity, man-kind; likewise with fe-male).

This writer firmly believes that RACISM (being down on other races) is a form or expression of insecurity. Insecure people seem to be the most racially conscious and discriminating (as well as being class conscious).

The insecure man must continually assert that he is the head of the house and be overbearing with his little wife.

Jealousy is many times evidence of insecurity.

On the job the insecure boss is the "bossy" boss.

The insecure person over-reacts.

Etc.

### In the Bible

Proverbs 30:21-23 has already been called to your attention. The earth trembles when these insecure people are elevated: (1) when the slave becomes a king; (2) when a fool (*nabal*, empty person—a pun) is filled with food (not accustomed to such fancy eating, he further makes a fool of himself when invited to such a banquet); (3) when an unloved or odious woman finally gets a husband (*odious* means arousing or deserving hatred or loathing; disgusting; offensive)—thus the woman who has become an old maid because she is so hateful that no one will have her finally gets a man. Look out! (4) when a handmaid (servant girl) falls heir to her mistress (an illustration of this, up to a point, can be seen in Hagar the handmaid of Sarah. Abraham and Sarah, being childless, followed a custom of their times. Sarah's handmaid Hagar was to bear children for her. When Hagar had conceived by Abraham, we read that "her mistress was dispised in her eyes," Genesis 16:4. Then after the son of Hagar was born, and years later when Abraham and Sarah finally did have a son, Ishmael son of Hagar mocked the baby Isaac—Genesis 21:9-11).

Saul responded in apparent humility to Samuel, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (I Samuel 9:21). But it seems that insecurities are mixed with his humility for when Samuel would publicly present him as the new king of Israel, he "hid himself among the stuff (baggage)" (I Samuel 10:22). Saul at first did a good job of be-

ing king of Israel, but it seems that his insecurities later played a part in his downfall. He took things into his own hands in offering sacrifices and circumventing the commands of God (I Samuel 12:13,14; 15:10-31). Perhaps the exalted position of the monarchy was too much for him to handle. It went to his head.

The principle of the earth trembling when the servant reigns can be seen in Herod and many of the Caesars. The original Herod (the one who had the babies killed when Jesus was born) was not a king by birth. He was a private citizen whom the Romans made a king, but he had to take his kingdom and consolidate his rule. Consequently his life was one of insecurity; he trusted no one. The fortresses and embellished places of retreat about the land are standing evidence of this. His tyrannical rule testifies to this. Not only did he have the babies killed when Jesus was born, a wife (his most beloved), three sons, two high priests, most of the Sanhedrin, and others suffered the same fate. And the story is the same with so many of the Roman emperors with the dismiss of the republic. Their position really was an unlawful one, and some of them seem to have been just common soldiers who made it to the top. Their insecurities are seen in their excessive living and tyrannical rule.

We could go on. Not many people can handle a sudden and high promotion; a gradual coming up the ladder is better. Even the disciples (apostles to be) of Jesus suffered from this. Most of them were just everyday ordinary people, i.e. fishermen, etc. Their misconception of the kingdom of the Christ is common knowledge. More than once there was bickering among them as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom, or who would get to sit in the positions of greatest honor on the right or left side of Jesus. Of course with their spiritual change and enlightenment, these thoughts vanished. Of all the Bible characters, Joseph in the Old Testament presents a superb example of a man who could handle his insecurities.

### In the Church

It is hard for the insecure person (one overly so) to be a real Christian (if his insecurities are not brought under control). Romans 12:2 plainly says: "BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD." There is so much in this present world at variance with God (I John 2:15-17; I Peter 4:1-5). "Broad is the way that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13). But the insecure person will feel that he must go along with the crowd. He can't say "no" when offered a drink and will laugh at the dirty jokes. If the women of the world are wearing indecent "mini-shirt" dresses, the insecure Christian will be under great pressure and want to comply. If the men of the world are letting their hair grow long (like a woman), the insecure Christian will want to do the same (although the Bible says it is a shame for men to have long hair). Usually I Timothy 2:9,10 and I Peter 3:1-6 are totally disregarded (but they are as much a part of the Bible as John 3:16 and Acts 2:38).

Many leaders in the church, who think of themselves as self-respecting free men in a free society, may really have the heart of a slave (Proverbs 30:22). When preachers and elders like to be the "boss" and lord it over their brethren, they are really showing how insecure and unqualified they are. Jesus plainly said that such a procedure would not be

## What Church?

Folks are asking every day,  
"To what church do you belong?"  
I answer, "There is only one;  
I think your question's wrong."  
You mean, "What denomination?"  
And I quickly answer, "NONE!  
I'm a member of the body  
Of Jesus Christ, God's Son."

You cannot "join" this body;  
You are added by the Lord.  
Denominations are another thing;  
You join them with a card.  
The Church which is Christ's body  
Demands Obedient Faith.  
To join denominations,  
Do what the devil saith!

Let's erase denominations  
And recognize ONE faith,  
As one body stand together,  
I plead for Jesus' sake.  
If you're regenerated,  
To the Word you've given heed.  
Then there'll be NO divisions,  
Christ's Church is all we'll need.

Revised by Harold Buckles

in his kingdom (Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 24:45-51). Elders are not to be "lords over God's heritage, but...ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:3). Diotrophes well illustrates this negative element (III John 9). Even though Paul had the authority of an inspired apostle, it was used with restraint (II Corinthians 13:10; 10:8-18; etc.). These thoughts make us recall the qualifications of the elder, one of them being, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil" (I Timothy 3:6). Spiritual preparation was necessary for him to handle/rid himself of his insecurities. The church is a priesthood of believers (a kingdom of kings and priests unto God, Revelation 1:6), and having weak, insecure persons lording it over others is very much out of place.

No doubt insecurities account for much apostasy in connection with the church (among leaders and the rank and file membership). Some cannot cope with their insecurities in being associated with a small church group, and they desire something bigger. Some preachers may crave denominational status or recognition (which the simplicity of the Lord's church does not afford), so they seek it elsewhere. In reference to some of Paul's writings, the apostle Peter said "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (I Peter 3:16). Unstability and insecurity seem to enter into their misapplication of the Scripture. They try to force meanings

that are not there to meet their own fancies. A stable person will handle the Word of God aright and not be likely to be carried away with different winds of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). An interesting Scripture that has a bearing on this is found in II Timothy 3:6. The wording in some of the older translations is confusing here, but the idea in the original is how gullible insecure and guilt-laden women are to false teachers who go from house to house. Actually the word translated "silly women" (KJV) is the diminutive for women, meaning little women. It is used as a word of contempt. They are so weak and insecure and open to false teachers, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verse 7). They who are right with God and know it (really knowing God's Word), have nothing to fear from false teachers. They are happy, well-adjusted, and content. Apostasy is far from them.

### FACING UP TO AND GETTING OUR INSECURITIES UNDER CONTROL

We need to face up to our insecurities and get them under control. God knows who and what we are (and what we are not), and all of us basically are the same (sinful human beings). Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and the next verse reads that "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All basically have the same fears, the same problems, the same needs (similar insecurities—some more, some less than others). There is no room for snobbery. There is no room for self-righteousness or conceit. There are no big "I's" or little "U's" before God. In the language addressed to the Corinthians, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (I Corinthians 4:7). And that is true any way you want to look at it. We need to stop being uptight and defuse our feelings of insecurity. We need to be honest with ourselves. Face yourself with all your imperfections and insecurities. Be honest, and go from there. Like the alcoholic at the AA meeting who finally has come face to face with himself, stripping away all the veneer, publicly states: "I am an alcoholic." You say: I am a sinner; I am a weak human being with problems and needs. This may not be a lovely sight. In fact it may be a traumatic and soul-shattering experience, but you will be glad that you did. Jesus said, "Blessed (happy, fortunate) are the poor in spirit (they who declare spiritual bankruptcy; acknowledge their need): for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The strong man can talk about his weaknesses; the weak man cannot—he is devastated. Be devastated! Get your values straight about what really matters, and go from there.

God and His amazing grace will help us get back on the track here. Through Jesus Christ He will take away all of our sins (I Timothy 1:15; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38). No more hidden insecurities here. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Think of that! God who knows all things chooses not to know (remember no more) my sins when He looks at me! He forgives and forgets (and may we do the

(Continued on Next Page)

**YOU, YOUR INSECURITIES, AND GOD**

*(Continued from Last Page)*

same—to self and to others). Christ becomes our all. Paul declared, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Self with all of its insecurities has been discarded. There are no reasons for us to have defensive insecure feelings for “of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Corinthians 1:30). We are not the object of attention and focus now; Jesus Christ is. We glory in him.

We have peace; we have hope; we have security (and it is all engulfed in love). “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith in this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God...And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Spirit) which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5). The apostle John further tells us that “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him...There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment...” (I John 4:16-18). You know that when you pray “the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ” (Philippians 4:6,7,13), and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. “...For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5, 6). Consider Romans 8:28-39. In being a Christian you know you are a winner even if you “lose.”

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalms 23).

With self gotten out of the way, and all of its unlovely limitations, God is all and in all. Insecurities will be under control; even subside and go away. Self-consciousness involved with insecurities is really evidence of too much self, pride. Actually self-consciousness is inverted pride. If pride was not there we would not even think about what people thought. But as a Christian it really doesn’t matter. Our values are straight. Christ is all. He is everything. □

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**IN COMPANY WITH GOD’S PEOPLE**

IT IS the desire of the heart to spend more time on the things we like most. That which attracts the mind and soothes the feelings of the desire of the heart, attracts us. Every man can use this gauge to judge his station in life with respect to where he or she shall spend eternity.

It is a true Scriptural saying, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Jesus is teaching us to place our treasure in heaven and make heavenly things the foremost thought of our everyday lives. Jesus knows that we are going to spend eternity with the type of people we feel the most at home with here on the earth. Let this be a challenge to you to make your company with God’s people in the worship services regularly (and otherwise). —Adapted. □

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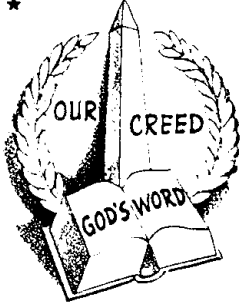
**UNNECESSARY BURDENS**

MANY CHRISTIANS have been carrying around burdens that the Lord never intended us to bear. We spend precious moments and hours pushing, tugging, lifting and dragging crosses that are none of our affair. Our shoulders are battered and bruised. Let us not confuse these weights with the burdens God gives us as a part of our spiritual responsibility. Rather, let us think specifically of the hurts, grievances, resentments, antagonisms, and hard feelings that can eat away at the Christian’s soul and destroy not only his joy but also his effectiveness. Too many of us have joined the masses of humanity who are up to their chins in self-pity over the pommeling they have received from life. We can hang a halo over our misery but it won’t stick.

—Pulpit Helps

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**THE BIBLE  
There It Stands!**

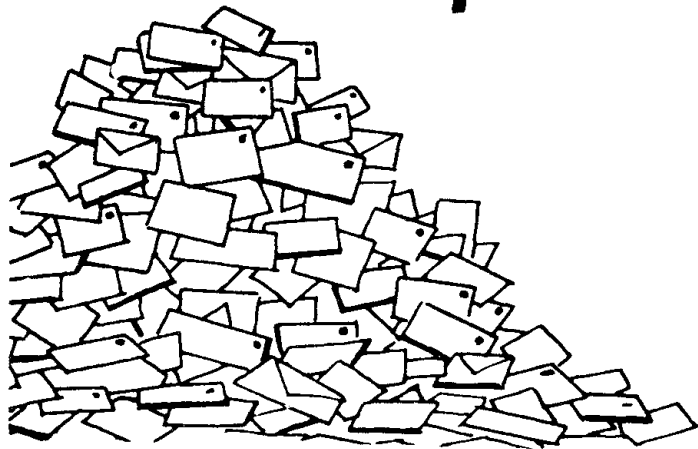


- CENTURY follows century—There it stands.
- Empires rise and fall and are forgotten—There it stands.
- Dynasty succeeds dynasty—There it stands.
- Kings are crowned and uncrowned—There it stands.
- Despised and torn to pieces—There it stands.
- Storms of hate swirl about it—There it stands.
- Atheists rail against it—There it stands.
- Agnostics smile cynically—There it stands.
- Profane prayerless punsters caricature it—There it stands.
- Higher critics deny its claim of inspiration—There it stands.
- Thunderbolts of wrath smite—There it stands.
- An anvil that has broken a million hammers—There it stands.
- The flames are kindled about it—There it stands.
- The arrows of hate are discharged against it—There it stands.
- Radicalism rants and raves against it—There it stands.
- Fogs of sophistry conceal it temporarily — There it stands.
- The tooth of time gnaws but makes no dent in it—There it stands.
- Infidels predict its abandonment—There it stands.
- Modernism tries to explain it away—There it stands. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# READERS'

## ... Response



### NIGERIA (WEST AFRICA):

■ “Christian greetings in the sweet and precious name of our dear Saviour Jesus Christ. Praise God, He is the light of our Hope! . . . I just can’t find words to express how much your magazine *THE SWORD AND STAFF* means to us. We appreciate the book very much and the inspiring messages in the magazine. It fills my heart with holy fire as I praise God all day long. They are like oil to my bones and honey to my taste. Oh-o-o the unsearchable riches of His grace! They are more than tongue can tell. Please renew my name on your mailing list. . . Please mail all different kinds of your papers, books and tracts to us. Would you send some of your New King James Version of the Bible to us? Pray for me, dear saints, that I may continue in this high and holy way. I praise God for your own lives, too, and how the Lord is prospering and using you in these last days to bless the hearts of men and comfort the mourning. May the dear Lord bless and keep you and bless the effort of this work, that this glorious gospel may reach the unreached throughout earth’s remotest boundary. Amen.

“The Lord has done many things for us through you and your prayers. Please continue with us this year, even until Jesus comes for us who know Him as Our Lord, Saviour, King and all and all. He is our Redeemer, and He gives us many promises as in Hebrews 13:5; etc. . . .

“We are still in desperate need of you or anyone among your circle to visit us. . . .”

### VIRGINIA:

■ “I look forward to continue to receive your publication. It is one of the few that I have seen that takes a Scriptural stand on church organization.”

■ “Please delete my name from your mailing list immediately. Thank you.”

### OHIO:

■ “I am glad you gave us the facts concerning the financial situation. Here is a small check to help out in this matter. Your magazine is tops. I have not found anything contrary to the Scriptures. . . .”

■ “We so enjoy the magazine and know all too well many

do not want to hear the *PURE WORD* of God. We are praying that you will be able to continue for a long time. Your articles have given us the hope back that we can become like-minded (if we turn only to Christ). Your articles have also strengthened us in our personal growth and have made us realize how little we know. Pray also for us and our small congregation. . . .”

■ “Please take our name off the mailing list. Blessings.”

### MICHIGAN:

■ “It is refreshing to be able to receive a publication (*THE SWORD AND STAFF*) pertinent to New Testament Christianity, unbiased and impartial. I especially appreciated your declaration of independence (Vol. 21, No. 4). Sectarian Christian Church (also Church of Christ) publications seem to be top-heavy on selling (persuading) their traditional practices. . . .”

### ILLINOIS:

■ “I thank God for a paper like *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Keep up the good work and God bless you.”

### IOWA:

■ “We receive *THE SWORD AND STAFF*; enjoy reading the fine articles in it. We appreciate your stand, and want to help with publishing your paper. We want to keep it coming.

“May God bless you in your work for Him.”

### MISSOURI:

■ “I’ve been enjoying each issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for the past 15 years. Enclosed is a gift to help defray the expenses of publishing it. I hope you’ll be able to continue printing *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. May God bless you and yours. God’s Word and plan are still for us today.”

### TEXAS:

■ “Just a note to let you know that I appreciate your efforts to present the gospel through *THE SWORD & STAFF*. It is a very good periodical well worthy of the support of those who cherish a thus sayeth the Lord for what we preach practice.

“Let me encourage you to keep on keeping on in respect to the paper. Somehow, the Lord will see to its continuation as long as you take the stand you now take for the truth.

“Enclosed is my contribution to help as far as it will go. I share your concern for the direction many brethren are taking toward a social posture in the church. It is deplorable, and only the united efforts of faithful brethren will stem the tide toward a similar apostasy such as took place with the Disciple of Christ Group.

“May God bless you in your work.”

### CALIFORNIA:

■ “Enclosed find a donation for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Really appreciate the consistent stand over the years. Pray you can continue to send out the good news.” □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## HOW HAPPINESS IS

HAPPINESS goes out from the heart before it comes in. It never by any chance stays home. You can harvest it for the common good, but you cannot store it for your individual use. You can lend it, but cannot borrow it. You can earn it, but cannot buy it. You can spend it, but you cannot accumulate it. A man must contribute to the stock of human joys before he can participate in its profits. To seek happiness without giving it is a futile quest, and all our longings for it, if we have not learned to give it to others, are empty bottles in the wine cellar of the soul. Happiness never really was any good in this world but to give away.

—Author Unknown

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## IT TAKES COURAGE

TO LIVE according to our convictions.

To be what you are and not pretend to be what you are not.

To say "No" squarely and firmly when those around you say "Yes."

To refuse to do a thing which is wrong, although others do it, or it is customary and is done in trade.

To stay home evenings and try to improve yourself when your comrades spend their evenings having a good time.

To remain in honest poverty while others grow rich by questionable methods which you could easily use yourself.

To refrain from gossip when others about you delight in it.

To stand up for an absent person who is being abused.

Not to bend the knee to popular prejudice, but stand firmly erect while others are bowing and fawning for praise and power. —Selected

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## FILL THE SPACES

SELECT a large box, and place in it as many cannon balls as it will hold, and it is, after a fashion, full; but it will hold more if smaller matters be found. Bring a quantity of marbles; very many of these may be packed in the spaces between the larger globes; the box is now full, but still only in a sense; it will contain more yet. There are interstices in abundance, into which you may shake a considerable quantity of small shot, and now the chest is filled beyond all question; but yet there is room. You cannot put in another shot or marble, much less another ball; but you will find that several pounds of sand will slide down between the larger materials, and, even then between granules of sand, if you empty yonder jug, there will be space for all the water, and for the same quantity several times repeated. Where there is no space for the great, there may be room for the little; where the little cannot enter, the less can make its way; and where the less is shut out, the least of all may find ample room. So, where time is, as we say, fully occupied, there must be stray moments, occasional intervals, and snatches, which might hold a vast amount of little usefulness in the course of months and years. What a wealth of minor good, as we think it to be, might be shaken down into the interstices of ten years' work, which might prove to be as precious in result by the grace of God as the greater works of the same period. —Spurgeon

## TIME:

*When as a child I laughed and wept; time crept;  
When as a youth I laughed and talked, time walked;  
When I became a full-grown man, time ran;  
When older still I daily grew, time flew;  
Soon I shall find in traveling on, time gone!—Selected.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL

ONCE while "Raccoon" John Smith, a gospel preacher of a century ago, was speaking on the plainness of the gospel in contrast with the complicated systems of men, a note was handed to him from someone in the audience. It read: "If the gospel is so very plain why do you have to labor so very hard to get people to understand it?" Mr. Smith replied, "I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had good soil, and the best of seed, and the sowing was easy, I never got top nor root till I took my axe, hoe and briar knife and cleared the ground. The Lord knows I do not esteem it hard to preach the gospel to those prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice and cut out men's systems and clear away sectarian trash that cumbers the hearts and minds of the people."

The problem "Raccoon" John Smith faced many years ago is still with us today. Honest and sincere people allow preachers to instill in their hearts so many things for which there is not one iota of Bible authority, and then the truth can find no place to lodge in them. Religious division in our own time could be wiped out over night if every accountable individual would determine to believe and practice nothing unless book, chapter and verse could be given to sustain it. We plead with our readers always to demand proof from God's Word. —Selected

## How To Detect An Evil Report

Five questions to ask *before* listening to a carrier:

1. "What is your reason for telling me?"  
Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem.
2. "Where did you get your information?"  
Refusal to identify the source of information is a sure signal of an evil report.
3. "Have you gone to those directly involved?"  
Spirituality is not measured by how well we expose an offender, but by how effectively we restore an offender (Galatians 6:1).
4. "Have you personally checked out all of the facts?"  
Even "facts" become distorted when not balanced with other facts or when given with negative motives.
5. "Can I quote you if I check this out?"  
Those who give evil reports often claim that they are "misquoted." This is because their words and overriding impressions are reported.

—Bill Gothard



# Company of Drunks and Fools



AMONG THE WORST BORES in the Western world are reformed drunks. I gave up drinking more than a dozen years ago. This didn't make me feel morally superior. If asked, I would talk about going dry but I was determined to preach no sermons.

I confess that my feelings have begun to change. Drinking and drunks now fill me with loathing.

Increasingly, I see close friends—human beings of intelligence, wit and style—reduced to slobbering fools by liquor. I've seen friends ruin their marriages, brutalize their children, destroy their careers. I've also had to help bury a few people who allowed booze to take them into eternity.

In the past few weeks (3/23/83), two ghastly episodes have underlined for me the horror that goes with alcohol. In New Bedford, Mass., a 21-year-old woman was beaten and repeatedly raped by a gang of drunks in a bar. There were at least 15 onlookers; they did nothing to prevent her violation. All were drunk or drinking.

In New York, four teenage boys were killed when a car driven by a fifth kid smashed into a concrete wall at 90 mph. They were all under the legal drinking age of 19; nevertheless, they had managed to spend a long night drinking in a public bar. The driver was charged with four counts of manslaughter. His worst punishment may be that he lived.

This year more than 25,000 Americans will die in auto accidents caused by alcohol. Studies indicate that alcohol is a factor in 86% of our homicides, 83% of our fatal fires, 72% of robberies, 52% of wife-beatings, 38% of cases of child abuse. We can never be certain how many on-the-job accidents are caused by drinking, how many drownings, how many suicides.

This is bizarre. We live in a culture that certifies alcohol as an acceptable drug but places marijuana smokers in jail.

Presidents and statesmen toast each other with the wet drug. It's advertized on radio and TV. But when the mellow moments are over, there are our kids, smashing themselves into eternity with the same drug.

For every beer commercial showing all those he-men getting ready to drink, we should show footage of destroyed teenagers, their bodies broken and bleeding, beer cans filling what's left of the backseat. For every high-fashion couple toasting each other, show men and women puking on their shoes, falling over tables, sliding away into violence.

If cigarette advertizing could be banned from TV, so

should commercials for alcohol. Cigarette smokers usually kill only themselves. Drunks get in their cars and kill strangers.

At night now, driving along any American road, you (may) come across these vomiting slaughters, slowly weaving from lane to lane, or racing in confused fury to the grave at 90 mph.

They don't know the rest of us exist and, what's more, they don't care. They are criminal narcissists, careening around until they kill others and themselves. We should begin immediately to remind ourselves that when we drink we are entering the company of killers and fools.

—Pete Hamill  
CHARLOTTE OBSERVER (newspaper)

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## ATTENTION SOLELY ON CHRIST

IN LEONARDO DA VINCI'S famous painting of *The Last Supper*, our Lord's hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story.

Da Vinci dedicated three years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect.

The friend's praise was unbounded. "The cup in Jesus' hand," he said, "is especially beautiful." Disappointed, at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. "Nothing," Da Vinci explained, "must distract from the figure of Christ."

Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The left hand was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the right hand, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly.

This exemplifies our Lord's relation to us, sealed by His sacrifice and His Victory. He commands. He blesses. He invites but He also asks our love. When Da Vinci renounced all the labor he had put into creating the cup, he saved his work from a jarring flaw. He attained a perfect harmony in theme, as well as in composition and color. Viewing the result, we surely have cause to be grateful to the unknown friend of Da Vinci who admired the cup. □

—Selected

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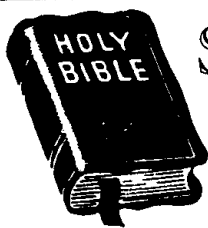
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