

The Sword AND Staff

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



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

THE CHRISTIANITY of the first century in the beginning as it came directly from God through Christ and His apostles is regarded by all to have been in the fountainhead of its purity. Simply stated, it came into being as a direct result of the Great Commission being carried out; it was produced by men responding to what was preached and taught. The end product and fruit was most beautiful and greatly to be desired. In fact, it finally changed the

THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE FIRST CENTURY

course of human history, as well as the eternal destiny of souls. What a contrast it was to that many times powerless thing which passes itself off as Christianity today!

It is our desire to trace the Christianity of the first century to its source and drink from its fountainhead of purity.

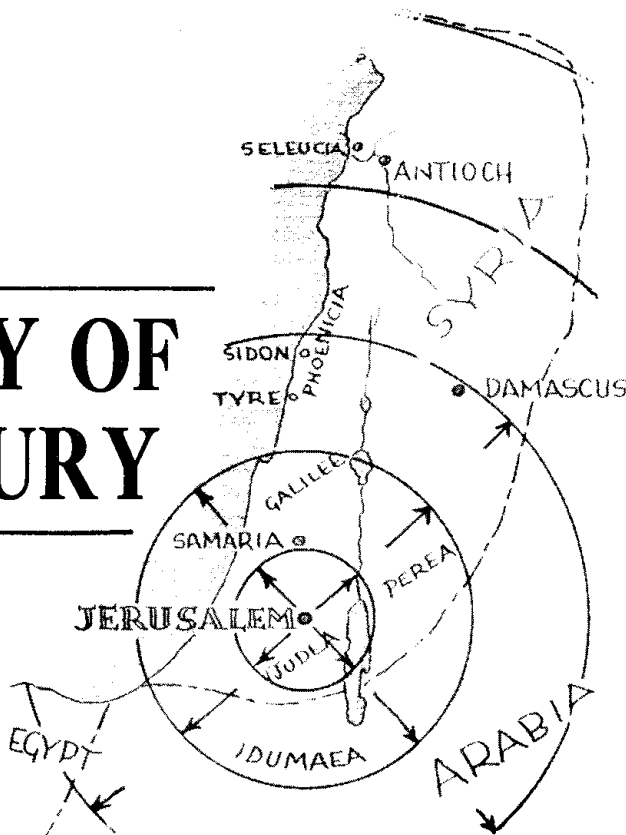
What was the Christianity of the first century really like?

I. IT WAS UNDENOMINATIONAL IN NATURE.

This is what Christ had in mind.

Judaism had its denominationalism or sectarianism. There were two major denominations, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were as far-reaching as Catholics and Protestants in their differences (and there was also a lesser religious party known as the Essenes). Modern so-called Christianity is plagued and paralyzed by denominationalism, and its potential for good is greatly neutralized.

This is not Christ's plan! The Great Commission envisioned the one gospel being preached to one world, and all of saved humanity being united in one body in Christ. Had not Jesus said in John 10:16b, "... and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"? Ephesians 2:16 tells us that we have been reconciled "unto God in one body by the cross." (There is only one body, Ephesians 4:4). All of this is in keeping with Christ's prayer in John 17:20-22. God's over-all plan simply stated is: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in



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

one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:10).

The execution of the Great Commission showed the universal, undenominational nature of Christianity.

The resurrected and glorified Lord had given this far-reaching commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19,20). The good news of salvation was to be carried to "all nations" (Greek *ethnos* from which comes our Eng-

(Continued on Page 3)

THE SWORD AND STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mount Airy, N. C. 27030 U. S. A.

INFORMATION:

- We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts along are definitely needed in order for us to continue this ministry of love. You may use the date of entry affixed beside your name and address as a reminder and point of reference in sending an offering (perhaps annually). Make your checks out to **CHURCH IN MOUNT AIRY**. Frequency of publication is determined by your financial backing. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed materials is considered as an offering).

Proverbially
SPEAKING...

PILLS and POT will make your life go to pot (and send your soul to HELL).

"Blessed are they who have nothing to say and don't."

Rock 'n' roll "music" is to the drug scene what hymns are to the church.

"What one is today is more important than what he used to be."

When God is left out of the picture, it seems that man becomes unduly pre-occupied with GETTING and (the act of) BEGETTING.

"What is intended as a little white lie often ends up as a double feature in technicolor."

One thing that some modern children learn at their mother's knee is to look out for hot cigarette ashes.

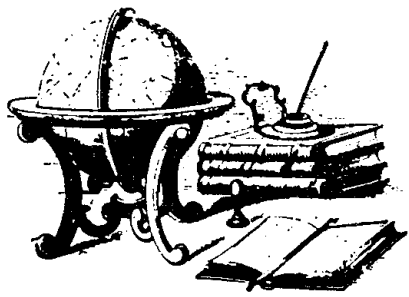
"It takes a person who is wide awake to make his dreams come true."

It is very risky to drive in a fog—especially in a mental or spiritual fog.

"Knowledge is proud that she has learned so much; wisdom is humble that she knows no more."

The person who kills time murders opportunities.

"Wear your learning, like your watch, in your private pocket, and do not pull it out merely to show that you have it."



EDITORIAL
COMMENTS...

THE GREATEST STUDY YOU WILL EVER MAKE

THE PERSON who has spent little time studying the gospel accounts of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) is in for a delightful treat when he sets his sights in this direction. The vigor with which these accounts is presented ("Behold," "straightway," "forthwith," etc.) is matched only by the interest that is generated. Even as the writers continually state, you will be "amazed" (*existamai*, literally be standing out of yourself) by the wonderful things you will be reading about the Son of God. The presentation of the material is very much like a fountain gushing up and sending its refreshing spray in all directions at once. It is much like someone excitedly telling a story with spontaneous emphasis upon outstanding events rather than having intention of always putting them in exact sequence. We must keep this in mind when studying the gospel accounts. Over-all chronological sequence is there, but sometimes the approach is more of a topical nature (or a blend of both).

Matthew, written for a Jewish reading audience, traces the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham (and the genealogy, for legal purposes, seems to be that of Joseph's side, although in reality he was not the actual father of Jesus. Mark omits genealogy, and we are introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist in the wilderness with the baptism of Jesus. We are at once ushered into a position to view the active ministry of Jesus (which rapidly ensues). Luke traces the genealogy of all the way back to Adam (no doubt, this genealogy being that of Mary, the fleshly line of the Saviour of men). In profound inspired reflection, John begins his account with Jesus being the Word with God (and God) from eternity.

The first three "gospels" (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are fittingly called the SYNOPTIC ("seen together") GOSPELS (and gospel means "good news"). They approach the life of Christ in much the same way. Then John, written late in the first century, fills in some gaps of information not found in the others. A Bible principle is that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is to be established. In the four gospels we have this plus one. We get a three-dimensional view of the life of Christ, then from mount Scopus (John) we get another impressive perspective of the mighty Son of God.

It is as John testified that these things were "written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31). And we assure you that with an intensified study of the life of Christ you will never be the same again. □



THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE FIRST CENTURY

(Continued from Page 1)

lish word ethnic). All of the peoples of the world (Mark 16:15, 16), all the far-flung ethnic groups of mankind, were to be the glad recipients of the gospel.

And the book of Acts shows this unfolding in a mighty way. They were to begin in Jerusalem, sounding out to Judaea and Samaria, and finally "unto the uttermost part of the world" (Acts 1:8). When Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, he appended his statement by saying, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39). Then Acts 3:25, 26 has Peter quoting Genesis 12 (where it speaks of Abraham's descendants): "And in thy seed (Christ) shall all kindred of the earth be blessed." Although the Jewish Christians had to be supernaturally shaken from their parochial moors (Acts 10 & 11), they soon moved on out to the larger Gentile world with the gospel. Earlier when the church was persecuted, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Later when Paul and Silas came preaching in Macedonian Greece (Thessalonica), it was said, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6). Even later in reference to the spread of the gospel, Paul would write, "Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10:18).

The gospel of Jesus Christ was undenominational and designed for all men. It was not to be cramped by a narrow sectarian outlook. The great success of the first century Christianity is reflected in this hymn that we sing:

"Like a mighty army

*Moves the church of God; -
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod;
We are not divided,
All one body we;
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity..."*

Churches of the New Testament were undenominational.

The churches of the early New Testament era were decidedly undenominational. (And the word "DENOMINATION" means that which has been divided off, separated, and named, i. e., DE + NOMINATE). Let us hurriedly skim through the New Testament books, especially the epistles of Paul (for illustrative purposes), and you will see what we mean. Paul, in writing to the Roman Christians, said, "The churches of Christ salute (greet) you" (Romans 16:16). "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth" reads I Corinthians 1:2. Galatians 1:2 says, "Unto the churches of Galatia." And note that I Thessalonians 1:1 and II Thessalonians 1:1 say, "Unto the church of the Thessalonians." Take notice that church is spelled with a little "c," and these expressions are not used as wooden, artificial denominational labels, separating one group from the other. Human names and even Scriptural designations were not used by Paul as denominational banners behind which sectarian groups could rally their narrow cause. They were simply thankful to be humble Christians. They dare not divert the church from the purity and universality of its purpose and outreach.

II. IT WAS CHRIST-CENTERED IN CONTENT.

If anything stands out about the Christianity of the first century, it is that it was Christ-centered in content.

This was true in the preaching

The Great Commission had said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the GOSPEL to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In a "nutshell" I Corinthians 15:1-4 tells us what the gospel ("good news") is, and it is Jesus Christ. Listen. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ *died* for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was *buried*, and that he *arose* again the third day according to the scriptures." Because of this we have no problem in understanding why Paul said what he did in I Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Christ is the good news of salvation from sin for all. "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). And because he lives we too shall live beyond the grave (I Corinthians 15:20, 54-58).

They believed and obeyed the gospel in becoming a Christian, in embracing Christianity.

(Continued on Next Page)

THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE FIRST CENTURY

(Continued from Last Page)

Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that *believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Gentile)." Men personally believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in their hearts (Romans 10:9,10), but that is not all. Paul declared earlier in Romans, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have *obeyed* from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (6:17). Technically speaking, this is called "obeying the gospel" in Romans 10:16; II Thessalonians 1:8; I Peter 4:17 (and elsewhere, "obedience to the faith"—Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; 16:26). One believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; then he obeys it. How? He dies to sin in repentance, he is buried with Christ in the waters of baptism as the old man of sin is put away, then he is raised with Christ to "walk in newness of life" (READ Romans 6:1-6). That is why when Philip preached Jesus unto the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35-39) that he responded by saying, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" In preaching Jesus you preach about his death, burial, and resurrection and then how the sinner must obey his death, burial, and resurrection (as well as believe). The Ethiopian ended up being baptized and going on his way rejoicing.

Their obedience was Christ-centered in living the Christian life.

Coming up from the waters of baptism (Colossians 2:12), Paul admonished the Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ, who is our life...Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness..." (Colossians 3:1-4). It was even as Paul himself personally testified, "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). Therefore, Paul instructed the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). In I John 2:6 John in essence said the same thing, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." So their lives were centered and engulfed in the very life of Christ (and may ours likewise be).

The very existence of the church itself was visualized as the continuing body of Christ upon the earth as they were in spiritual union with him and embodied his teachings. Ephesians 1:22b and 23 tell us that Christ is "head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

What tremendous thoughts! What a great life to live! Such was the Christianity of the first century.

III. IT WAS FAR-REACHING IN ITS IMPACT.

The Christianity of the first century was revolutionary, but by its very nature it was so radical that it could change lives and society without producing a revolution (as we think of the word today). And it did!

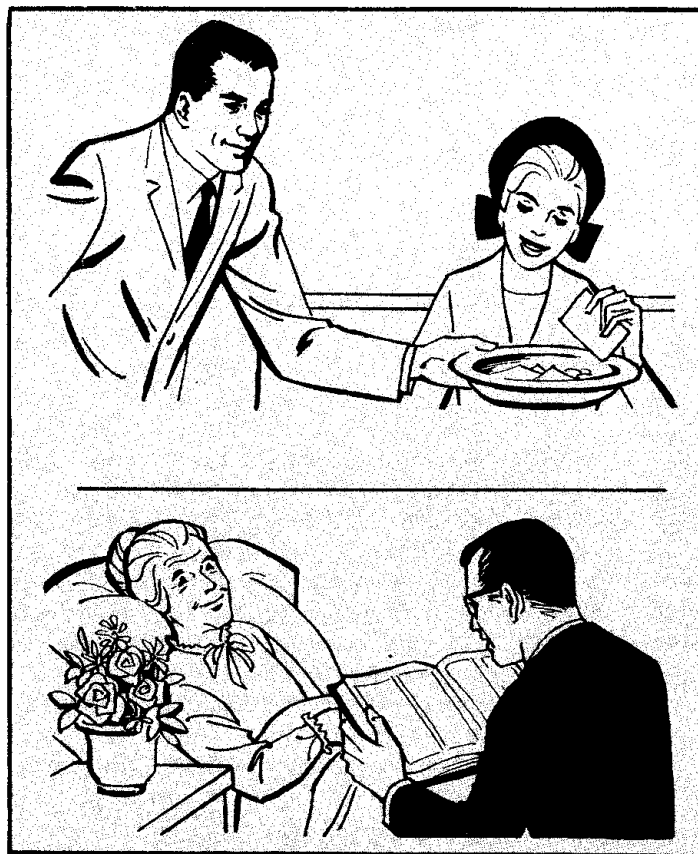
A New Man

The teachings of the Lord Jesus, like found in the sermon on the mount, can only be put into practice by a new man (and that by God's grace). The unconverted world will say that Christianity is not practical. And it is not to them, for did not Jesus say, "Except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)? If a person truly surrenders his life to Christ he knows that what Paul said is true, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a newcreature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." A radical change of life style was evident among the first century Christians, when Paul said, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9b-11).

What an impact Christianity bore to change such men (and it can do the same thing today)!

Genuine Love

In the Roman Empire love was not one of the things that stood out (to say the least). The most popular national amusement involved the gladiators. In their society a very large segment were slaves. Human life was cheap. Then



when they did speak of love, they knew not whereof they spoke. It was more like the eros kind (even as today). Then Jesus made his appearance in the course of human history. He told his disciples, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He gave his life for a sin-sick and dying world (John 3:16), as well as teaching about true love. He also said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35).

This is the fire that the Lord lit and not man (how unlike the natural man). Peter told about it when he said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:22,23). John said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14). The chief fruit of the Holy Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22).

There is nothing like genuine, unfeigned, unselfish love. When you see it, you know that you have seen the real thing. This kind of love rolled back the brutality of paganism, and man being no more than an animal, to the dignity and beauty that comes from God alone.

Purity

The Roman Empire was a world polluted and corrupted to the core. Men had forgotten how to blush. To the Christians who resided in Corinth, a city noted for its carnality, Paul admonished, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17,18). Peter likewise admonishes the follower of Christ "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (I Peter 4:2-4). For a person to practice holiness would be a marked difference from the world. In a world that's rotten and putrid morally speaking they were (and we are) the salt of the earth.

Relationships

Christianity has much to do with relationships. Jesus taught, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." (Matthew 7:12). As we know, this is commonly called the "golden rule." Ephesians 5:21 reads, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The writer Paul continues here to show the different human relationships (husband/wife; children/parents; servants/master) where we are to submit one to another (it's not just a one way street). Paul also in Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do

it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Now...that is all-inclusive; that is far-reaching. If all these principles just noticed were put into practice, think of the implications. What respect! What dignity! Talk about a revolution of improvement in human relations in every realm and walk of life! The world could see that we meant business in our religion, and perhaps we could re-enact the Christianity of the first century (the real thing)

Other Worldly

One thing about the early Christians, "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (even as the patriarchs of old). "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16). It is even as Paul said, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1,2). John had the same thing in mind when he said, "Love not the world..." (I John 2:15-17). The Thessalonians were looking forward to the second coming of Christ (I Thessalonians 1:10). Everything about this earth has the taint of sin and death upon it. Corruption is on every hand. There are too many heartaches and shortcomings. But in the "world" to come this will be no more. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). This blessed assurance made them endure the most severe persecutions and hardships. Things would get better. They knew that they were "more than conquerors" through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Explicit Trust

The Christianity of the first century was more than abstract thought and empty formality. The impact of its reality can be seen in the explicit trust produced in the lives of its adherents. They firmly believed that they fitted into the plan of the God of eternity. Paul said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). More than once this apostle said that he would do thus and so "if the Lord will" (I Corinthians 4:19; etc.). May we, too, have more explicit trust into taking God into consideration in all that we say and do (James 4:13-16).

CONCLUSION: This consideration of the Christianity of the first century has been brief and somewhat incomplete. However, some very important Scriptures and an outline of thought has been called to your attention. Review this. It is our desire to drink from the fountainhead of Christianity in all its purity and be one with the early church. Too many times today it is not a matter of Christianity being tried and found wanting, but still wanting to be tried. Let's try it! It's from God, and it's real! □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"He who will not learn but from himself
has a fool for a teacher."

PARALLEL LOGIC

SEVERAL YEARS AGO in a Hyde Park crowd a dirty-faced cynic listening at a religious open air meeting, shouted, "Christianity has been here for two thousand years and look at the state of the world!" Whereupon someone replied, "Yes, and water has been here over six thousand years and look at the state of your face!"—Selected □

TRUTH IN LOVE

MUCH is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it; and should so love people that he will not withhold from them even unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people. We frequently fool ourselves; we think we do thus and so to spare the feelings of others, when it is our own feelings that prompt us.

"Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (II Timothy 4:2).—Selected □

“Where’s the Beef?”

WE ARE SURE that some, if not all people, have heard of the commercial that’s going around concerning “where’s the beef?” The commercial goes something like this: A group of elderly women are standing at a fast food counter. The firm they are at must be noted for big sandwiches. However, when the sandwich is ordered and brought to the customer, the customer lifts up the gigantic bun to find a scrawny, little hamburger! After viewing the unusual sight of a gigantic size bun with a midget hamburger on it, the person next to the one ordering blurts out, “Where’s the beef?”

On the surface, this may sound and be funny, but when we stop and think about the example behind this commercial, it reminds us of a lot of so-called “churches.” No doubt we all know of some congregation, that on the outside looks huge, gigantic, enormous. But once we get inside that congregation, though there may be 200, 400, 500 people attending, after listening to the sermons and the lessons, we turn to our wife or husband and ask the question: “Where’s the beef?”

The trouble with a lot of congregations is that THERE IS NO BEEF! There may be a great number of people attending, but no meat in the sermons! Usually this is the way they pack people in. If you don’t use (BEEF) in sermons, the people won’t get their toes stepped on, thus they won’t get mad, thus they will be content to stay where they are.

Preacher, when you are finished with your messages, do the elders ask: “Where’s the beef?” Do the deacons ask, “Where’s the beef?” Do the people as they are going out of the church building ask, “Where’s the beef?” If so your sermons are on the “lean” side. You are leaning toward pay power, prestige, and popularity!

The way to “beef up” our messages is to put more book-chapter-and-verse in them. The Word of God only will bring

about salvation! Why give someone less than what they need? Might we determine right now not to be like that hamburger. Let us not have a big surface look without having the beef within to back it up!—JOHN D. ADAMS □

THE RUMOR MILL, THE RUMOR MILL

LET ME TELL you a story ‘bout a local enterprise; there’s one in every town, no matter what it’s size. It doesn’t turn a profit or bring in any revenue. It’s good for one thing, that’s the damage it will do. It’s called the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill. If it can be twisted, you can be sure that it will cause there ain’t nothing sacred at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill.

The people that work there are all volunteers. The only qualification is a mouth and two big ears. If a story’s not clear enough, that’s okay. They’ll just doctor it up and then send it on its way. It doesn’t matter who’s involved, or who it’s going to hurt. As long as folks are listening, they’ll keep shoveling dirt at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill. If it can be twisted you can be sure that it will cause there ain’t nothing sacred at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill.

Manufacturing lies, where the truth is disguised, where reputations are crushed, where nothing is hushed. If it can be twisted, you can be sure that it will at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill.

Now listen my children, to this warning I make. You’ve got a lot to lose, there’s a lot here at stake. The Bible clearly states you’re going to reap what you sow. And you’ll be shown mercy by the mercy you show. So shut your mouth and ask your friends to kindly do the same, or you’ll wind up the victim with no one else to blame at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill. If it can be twisted, you can be sure it will at the Rumor Mill, the Rumor Mill.

—Submitted by P. R. Bushongski—

THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH



RELIGIOUS...

but Lost!



TO SOME PEOPLE this title may seem to be a contradiction of terms. Doesn't God want people to be "religious"? If one is "religious," is he not right with God and safe from God's judgment? In answer, we must say that, although the Christian will want to practice "pure and undefiled religion" (James 1:27), *religion in itself* is insufficient to save anyone. In fact, undoubtedly most "religious" people will be eternally lost in hell. This is a frank statement but altogether true, however shocking it may seem.

The Bible records the account of numerous "religious" people who were in a state of separation from God. The Pharisees were surely religious, but apparently most were bound for Gehenna fire (Matthew 23:15,33). Cornelius was a devout man who feared God, gave charity to the poor, prayed to God continually, and had a good reputation (Acts 10:1-4, 22), but he was lost in sin (Acts 11:14; 10:43). The Ethiopian traveled hundreds of miles to worship in Jerusalem, yet he was lost (Acts 8:27-39).

Saul of Tarsus was zealous and righteous, sincerely seeking to observe the regulations of the law (Philippians 3:4-6; Galatians 1:14), but he also was lost (I Timothy 1:12-16). The people of Athens were "very religious in all respects" but they too were lost in their sins (Acts 17:22-23, 30-32).

Today there are hundreds of millions of "religious" people on the earth. Some pray five times a day, facing Mecca (the Moslems). Others carry out prescribed ceremonies and rites seeking to add favorable karma to their merit (the Hindus). Still others follow the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path" (the Buddhists). Yet with all of these religious acts of devotion, they are "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and WITHOUT GOD in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). RELIGIOUS but LOST!

Is the same not true of those who PROFESS to follow Christ but have departed from His true and perfect way? In the first century some preached "another Jesus" and

a "different gospel" (II Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-8). Some taught "strange doctrines," "different doctrines," and "varied and strange teachings" (I Timothy 1:3; 6:3; Hebrews 13:9). Surely many of these who perverted the truth and went astray from the Way were "religious" in character and in deed, but they did not know Christ and He did not know them (cf. Matthew 7:21-23).

A serious danger confronts the "religious" person. He may actually be deluded and deceived, but he seeks to convince himself that everything is all right. The religious person stimulates himself by going to "high-powered" meetings, perhaps "speaking in an unknown tongue," reading religiously mystical and devotional literature, fasting, or listening to big-name speakers—yet he is still far from the kingdom.

Because of his religious commitment, the person may go to all the "church meetings," go door-to-door "witnessing," spend much time in prayer, take special religious training courses, even enroll in a Bible college or theological seminary—all of which effectively convinces him that he is right and his cause is likewise right. He thus SUBJECTIVELY believes himself to be "safe and sure," but OBJECTIVELY he is still lost in sin.

Imagine a monk living in a medieval monastery some eight centuries ago. Day after day he severely disciplines his body. He deprives himself of food or subsists on bread and water. He spends long vigils of prayer in his lonely, cold, bare cell. He has vowed to remain silent, speaking not one word. He owns nothing and is under total subjection to his superiors. Is this not the height of religious devotion?

But THINK AGAIN. The monk has retreated from the world, manifesting a selfish lack of love for others and disobeying Christ's command to take the gospel to others (Mark 16:15). He is devoted to the adoration (worship) of Mary who is thought of as a mediator, a mere human saved from sin (Acts 10:25-26; I Timothy 2:5; Luke 1:47). He prays to "saints" (often false teachers of a former day). He regularly celebrates the "mass" (a re-sacrifice of Christ) who has been sacrificed in death once-for-all (Hebrews 9:26; 10:10). He pledges allegiance to a so-called "Pope," the epitome of pride and false teaching (cf. Romans 16:17,18; I Timothy 4:1-3). He is fanatically loyal to a false, seim-pagan, apostate religious institution, thereby neglecting the simplicity of the primitive community of Christ. He accepts the idea of a ritualistic sprinkling of "holy water," that supposedly regenerates an infant, rather than an adult response of faith embodied in a water burial of baptism (cf. Romans 6:3-4). He believes in a salvation by meritorious works rather than a salvation by grace through faith based on Christ's finished saving work. RELIGIOUS—but LOST.

Surely we can see that it is entirely possible for one to be religious—VERY religious—and yet be *utterly lost*. This should give each of us cause to seriously ponder our own live and experiences. Our religious commitment and religious activities cannot save us! (In some cases they may only increase our guilt before God.)

God alone saves and He does so through the mediation of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ saves by virtue of His sacrificial work at Calvary. Only those who humbly acknowledge their unworthiness and their inability to save themselves can receive the salvation offered by unmerited grace. Only those who turn away from their own religious works of

(Continued on Next Page)

RELIGIOUS...BUT LOST!

(Continued from Last Page)

self-salvation, from the false doctrines, practices and traditions of men, and turn to the true and right way of God can receive the blessing of God. Paul learned quite dramatically that although he THOUGHT he was right with God because of his religious fervor, in fact he was NOT right. He was completely wrong and opposed to the truth of God (cf. Acts 23:1; 26:9).

There will be many who face God in the judgment who THOUGHT they were "offering service to God" in life, but who actually were opposing His will (John 16:2). There will be those who claim to prophesy, exorcise demons, and perform many miracles in Christ's name who will be rejected (Matthew 7:21-23).

Let this be a timely warning to not rely upon our works of religious devotion or our "churchianity." Let us not place our confidence in our subjective feelings, our "spiritual intuition," or "inner voices." There is danger in all of these.

In an entirely different context, but applicable to this present point, we might say of such subjective feelings: "Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed... on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it" (Isaiah 36:6). Let us not be destroyed by relying (leaning) on the "staff" of religious devotion. Rather, let us rely on God Himself and place our entire confidence in His objective, authoritative, eternal revelation—His written Word. Beware of being "religious," but lost! —R. Holderman

THE ABSENT TEACHER

IN 1915, Leon Trotsky attended Sunday school with a friend in Chicago. The teacher did not arrive to teach the class that morning and, unfortunately, had not notified anyone of his intention to be absent. Leon Trotsky walked away from Sunday school class, as far as it is known, never attended another one. A few months later, he returned to his native Russia and in 1917 led the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia which brought the Communist regime to power.

Sunday school teachers do make a difference by their concern or by their unconcern for outreach, by what they do or will not do. I hope that each of us will do a far greater work for the Lord and His Church today than we did yesterday—and a far greater work tomorrow than we did today (Galatians 6:10).—The Christian Connection

"OVERCOME WITH THE HONOR"

AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST in China rushed to the home of an old Chinese Christian who had died. Her family greeted him with these words: "We are sorry that you were not in time to see her alive, but the King commanded her presence at 4 a.m., and of course, she gladly obeyed. We are all overcome with the honor." Instead of the world's sorrow there was a hushed sense of awe in that poor home, and they spoke only of "her exceeding weight of glory." What a lesson for all Christian mourners!—Selected

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOU ARE GOING TOO FAST

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, newspapers told how a new Navy jet fighter shot itself down. Flying at supersonic speed, it ran into cannon shells it had fired only a few seconds before. The jet was traveling too fast!

You are also traveling too fast—

- if you don't have time to worship God in regular church services,
- if you don't have time to read the Bible,
- if you don't have time to pray.

If you're neglecting any of these, you're probably traveling too fast to hear the sound of God's voice. You can't tell whether you are in the center of His will. Better slow down before, like the jet, you shoot yourself down.

—Via THE BUILDER

WE CAN'T ASK GOD—

- for help if we are not making an effort;
- for strength if we have strength we are not using;
- for prosperity if we prove we cannot be trusted with it;
- for faith when we are afraid to act on what we already know;
- for forgiveness if we already are hating someone;
- for guidance if we are ignoring the guidance we now have.—SELECTED





The Letter

THAT WAS NEVER ANSWERED

THE LETTER THAT WAS NEVER ANSWERED (Now over ten years later, and the letter still goes unanswered):

THE SWORD AND STAFF is a religious paper devoted to the restoration of simple, undenominational, New Testament Christianity and does not cater to any denominational position. The Scriptures are simply taken at their face value and expounded as such. In the course of the paper being published, samples are sent out. A sample copy fell into the hands of the Baptist minister whose letter appears first below. The second letter was written by the editor of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. The whole discussion hinges around an article that appeared in the sample paper which was received. Simply stated, the article concluded that ACTS 2:38 meant what it said. The Baptist minister disagreed with this. We will let the readers judge as to which letter presents the truth of God.

ACTS 2:38

"Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost (Spirit)."

"IF your BAPTISM is essential for Salvation or remission of Sins, then the man who performs the Baptism is just as essential in God's Plan of Salvation as Jesus Christ. Since a person can't baptize themselves, having to depend on another to do it for them or to them, the one performing the rite is co-equal with Jesus Christ, meaning that the Bible is not true and Romans 5:9 should have said, Justified by His blood and water Baptism; Ephesians 1:7—Redemption through His blood and water Baptism; Ephesians 2:14 should have said, We are made nigh by the blood of Christ and water Baptism; Colossians 1:14 should have read, Redemption through His blood and water Baptism; Hebrews 9:22 should read, Without shedding of blood and water Baptism is no remission of sins. I Peter 1:19 should have read, With the precious blood of Christ and water Baptism. Revelation 7:14 should have said, And have washed their robes and made white in the blood of the Lamb and wa-

ter Baptism. Revelation 12:11 should have read, And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and water Baptism (HOGWASH!).

"Mr. Gibbons, What you need is to get saved by Grace through faith, and that not of yourself, but the gift of God, Not of Works (baptism, etc.). Do me a favor and take our name off your mailing list. I'll stand on God's Word."

**Rev. Lee O. Meadows
MIDWAY BAPTIST CHURCH
819 N. Franklin Road
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030**

DEAR MR. MEADOWS:

It will not be necessary for me to remove your name from our mailing list. It was never added. What you received was a sample copy as it was so marked.

In reference to your "letter," in all honesty, sincerity, and humility, I believe your reasoning has jumped the track somewhere. You have rather pointedly expressed your position (and I get the impression, with contempt). If you

will take the time to read this, in all kindness I wish to express my humble understanding. We need a little less heat and a little more light. Trying to defend unscriptural denominational positions usually produces a lot of heat (controversy) but not much light.

I gathered from your writing three things that stand out in your opposition to the idea that baptism is for the remission of sins. (1) If baptism is essential, that involves another person in a man's salvation (you said that would make him equal with Christ). (2) If baptism is essential, that means the various N.T. writers should have said so every time they mentioned the blood (justified by the blood and baptism, etc.) (3) You negate Acts 2:38 and say that baptism could not be essential because it is a work. If you will be kind enough to read it, I will now comment on these things.

(1) You implied that baptism could not be for the remission of sins because it would involve someone else in another's salvation (someone to baptize him), thus making him equal to Christ. Now Mr. Meadows, do you really believe that? Paul said (and you did say you would stand on God's Word), "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). Do you get the picture? It ties a lot of knots in your argument. God has ordained to save the world by the "foolishness of preaching." Who does the preaching? MAN, of course. That involves another person in a man's salvation. Paul further said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. 4:7).

(2) You said Romans 5:9 should have said, "Justified by His blood and water baptism" (as well as the other references) if baptism is for the remission of sins. Now Mr. Meadows, are you ready for the conclusion of your "logic"? The N.T. mentions many things as saving us (having to do with our salvation), I hereby list a few. We are saved by GRACE (Eph. 2:5), JESUS (Matt. 1:21), BLOOD (Rom. 5:9), THE NAME OF CHRIST (Acts 4:12), GOSPEL (I Cor. 15:1-4), LOVE OF THE TRUTH (II Thess. 2:10), SAVE YOURSELVES (Acts 2:40), FAITH (Acts 16:31), REPENTANCE (Acts 17:30), CONFESSION (Rom. 10:9,10), BAPTISM (I Pet. 3:21), CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD (Rom. 10:13), LIFE OF CHRIST (Rom. 5:10), THE WORD (Jas. 1:21), WORKS (Jas. 2:14,17,20,24,26), DOC-

(Continued on Next Page)

THE LETTER NEVER ANSWERED
(Continued from Last Page)

TRINE (1 Tim. 4:16), HOPE (Rom. 8:24), and ENDURING TO THE END (Matt. 24:13). Just because we don't find every one of these things mentioned in a single verse does not mean the ones omitted are excluded from being essential to salvation. All Scripture must be taken if we are really going to stand on God's Word, and the Bible must be understood in the light of itself. Your kind of argument would contend that if faith were essential, Rom. 5:9 would have to read, "Justified by His blood and faith." We are not ready for such an illogical conclusion, are we?

We are saved by the grace of God (unmerited favor), but I believe we must accept Christ before we can be saved, don't you? Otherwise, it would be a matter of universalism (everyone would be saved as they are) or predestination. I believe that man is a responsible, free-moral agent before God, don't you? I don't believe that man is a machine or robot.

Having truly trusted and genuinely repented of our sins, we must be baptized for the remission of sins—to get our sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Romans 6 teaches that we are baptized into the death of Christ. Rev. 1:5 states, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." If we are baptized to get our sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and the blood of Christ is the only thing that washes sins away, then the blood of Christ, spiritually speaking, is applied in the obedience of baptism. We are baptized into his death to get the benefits of his death. Then Paul says in Romans 6:5, "For IF we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

MR. MEADOWS, have you been baptized for the remission of your sins?

(3) Finally, you relegate baptism to a position of human works (not I), thus discarding it as a part of the plan of salvation. Evidently you have Eph. 2:8, 9, in mind. I am enclosing a booklet *Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered* which deals with this under one point. Please read pages 4 and 5. I trust that you will.

QUOTATION FROM BOOKLET

Others quote Ephesians 2:8, 9, trying to sidetrack baptism by calling it a work, and salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." Here is the full quotation. "For by grace are ye

saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast."

Here we see the two "sides" of salvation—"For by GRACE are ye saved through FAITH." The word GRACE means unmerited favor; here especially on the part of God toward man. We don't deserve salvation but God has offered it to us. So, everything associated with God may be summed up under grace. Then, there is man's side—"through FAITH." Man's whole relationship to God is based on faith. Faith is the mainspring of every action. The inspired writer didn't say "faith only," but he did say faith. This correctly sums up man's side of his dealings with God.

Now the "rub" supposedly comes when it says, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." This is applied by those who deny baptism as they pinpoint it as a work.

Well, what is the answer to this objection to baptism?

The answer is rather simple, as truth is many times. There are two kinds of works mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures, (1) Works of human merit, and (2) Works of faith. Works of human merit greatly characterized the Law of Moses. By this no man had really been justified, according to Paul

(Galatians 2:16). The Law of Moses was very much like a firing squad: The wages of sin is death; all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and the soul that sinneth, it shall die. There was no escape. Man's goodness could not counteract his bad side to tip the scales in his favor. Death awaited. But the kind of works taught in the New Testament are works of faith. We are justified by faith as the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins, but it must be an obedient faith. The New Testament knows nothing of the common denominational doctrine of "faith only." James in chapter 2 of his very practical epistle, having reference to works of faith, says that faith without works is dead. The only time the expression "faith only" is found in the New Testament is to deny the doctrine of *faith only*. Listen to James 2:24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and NOT BY FAITH ONLY."

Good works of human merit can never take away sin or undo the past. It is conceivable that a person could reform and live a good moral life above reproach, approaching above sin, then die and go to hell. His heretofore unforgiven sins would still be upon him. Good works of human merit cannot take away your past sins. Only the blood of

"WHICH WAY IS THE WIND BLOWING?"

...O, by the way, can you tell me—I'd really like to know
which way the wind is blowing
and the way that I should go?
For you see, I'd direct my footsteps by its force and will
that I might walk an easier pathway,
unmolested and all down hill.

Answering wind's whistle, the faithless wander its winding way;
like beasts they are beckoned, bound,
and held at bay.
Every wind of doctrine, any faithless cause
can find plenty who will follow,
thoughtless of God's way and righteous laws.

Pray, be as an oak, steadfast, refusing to bend;
for it's the fallen leaf that faileth
and shares in Satan's futile end.
Withstand this world's wisdom, its whining and its woe;
Stand up! Be counted faithful;
One day to feel Heavenly breezes blow.

"...Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..."—1 Corinthians 15:58.

—BY BOB WICKLINE, 5204 U.S. 50, HILLSBORO, OHIO 45133

Christ can do this, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Now, how in the world can people who object to baptism apply the "works" argument against it? Baptism is not a work of human merit or righteousness, it is a work of faith. We believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Then we identify our belief in this truth by a personal death to sin, a burial and a resurrection in baptism. Listen to Colossians 2:12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the *faith of the operation of God*, who hath raised him from the dead." And, what about Titus 3:5? "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38 is a parallel Scripture to this. He tells us that baptism is not a work of righteousness.

In fact, baptism is anything but a work of human righteousness, lest any man should boast. According to Acts

2:38 (22:16; Col. 2:11,12), we are baptized for the remission of sins—to get our sins washed away. Does human works do that? No, only the blood of Jesus. So, baptism is not a work of man, but it is God at work as the merits of the blood of Christ are spiritually applied for the sinner then. (*End of quotation*).

You concluded your letter, signing your name "REV. Lee O. Meadows" (after saying, "I'll stand on God's Word"). Without being unduly critical, where is God's Word for this pretentious title, "REVEREND"? The apostles never once used it. In fact, in Paul's letters he calls himself a "bond servant." Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees about such vainglorious titles (Matthew 23:6-12). Holy and reverend is God's name—not man's (Ps. 111:9).

And where is God's Word for the name "BAPTIST" Church? (I speak in humility). The New Testament says that in "all things" Christ is to have

the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). Party names are condemned as sinful along with the party spirit (denominationalism) (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-5). Who purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28)? Is he not worthy of all the glory?

MR. MEADOWS, much of the content of your "letter" was once my convictions, but a deeper study of God's Word changed them. It is altogether possible that you have not thought about some of these things. Regardless what one may say, these Scriptures are still in the Bible—we will face them in the Judgment. We had better believe and preach them now.

Sincerely,
James E. Gibbons
P. O. Box 147
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

(NOTE: This material is being printed in leaflet form and will be available from THE SWORD AND STAFF at 3¢ a copy for your distributive use).

A LESSON FROM THE LOWLY MOSQUITO

OFF THE WEST COAST of Florida 3.2 kilometers is the island of "Seahorse Key." It is a virtual paradise for mosquitoes...heavily timbered, swampy, warm and damp. In 1968 scientists began releasing thousands of amorous male mosquitoes upon the island. The influx of new mosquitoes averaged 13,200 per day. At the end of the experiment 96% of the mosquito population had been annihilated.

The secret of this amazing statagem is a sterile mosquito. Scientists produced and released insects that were normal in every way...except that they could not reproduce. In the second generation of the experiment the ratio of sterile males was 3 to 1. In the fifth and sixth generations it was 100 to 1. Except for the arrival of new wild mosquitoes migrating to the island, these insects would have been completely destroyed. In the last two generations studied reduction in fertile egg rafts was 99.4% - 99.8% effective.

NOW LET'S TRY TO RELATE THESE TRUTHS TO CHRISTIANITY. Statistics indicate that 95% of those with their names on church rolls never win a soul to Christ! A community of mosquitoes with this alarming sterility rate would be close to extinction. The church could be, unless the "rank and file" of the disciples begin to lead others to Christ. Except for the gospel seed being sown by "wild mosquitoes" (maverick believers who do not know any better than to share their faith), the Lord's church would long since have vanished.

The late Jim Rutherford once remarked, "The devil wouldn't mind if you baptized a thousand people...provided they behaved like everyone else." As a matter of conjecture, the devil may even prefer that people become "Christians"...provided that they can not or will not produce! WHAT A DIABOLICALLY CLEVER WAY OF ANNIHILAT-

ING CHRISTIANITY. Scientists at Seahorse Key were trying on an exceedingly tiny scale the same plan that Satan is working on a worldwide scale.

While this devastating concept is still fresh on our minds, let us refocus on the words of Jesus: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit (God) taketh away" (John 15:2). Dead timber only cumpers the ground. Withered branches that demand attention but produce no fruit are a liability. Any living organism which does not reproduce itself is on the precipice of extinction. A Christian who can not, or will not, win to Christ other people is so abnormal that his very existence is a threat to the future of God's program. God's grace may withhold judgment for several years to allow development and cultivation, as in the case of the barren fig tree (read Luke 13:6-9)...but the poison of sterility cannot continue in the Garden of God!

Divine wisdom, justice, and love demand that those who GO WIN...that those who GO TELL...that those who lead to Christ GO LEAD TO CHRIST.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned...Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:4-7,8).

—Boyce Mouton

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

A LITTLE less impatience with those we deem too slow.

A little less of arrogance because of all we know.

A little more humility, seeing our worth is slight.

We are such trivial candles compared to stars at night!

A little more forgiving and swifter to be kind.

A little more desirous the word of praise to find.

The word of praise to utter and make a heart rejoice.

A little more careful to speak with gentle voice.

A little more true eagerness to understand each other.

A little more real striving to help a ship-wrecked brother.

A little more high courage to each task that must be done.

These be our resolutions—and God help everyone!

—Selected

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TWO DRINKS THAT EVENING

ON THE LAST DAY of Lincoln's life, the great emancipator said: "We have cleared up a colossal job. Slavery is abolished. After reconstruction the next great question will be the overthrow and suppression of the legalized liquor traffic."

That evening, Mr. Booth stopped in a saloon, had a drink of liquor to nerve himself for his planned tragedy. That night Lincoln's bodyguard left the theater for a drink of liquor in the same saloon. While he was away, Booth shot Lincoln. Those two drinks were costly in American history. Liquor is one of the greatest enemies of mankind.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

OH YES, YOU WILL!

A CYNICAL SAGE muses, "Nothing is sure but death and taxes." We all nod and smile wisely, but is that true?

Well, even certain death seems distant and unreal—at least for me. Not even a host of funerals have changed it. It is other folk who die. I just cannot visualize myself as guest of honor instead of guest speaker at a funeral. Yet, "...it is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). Only two men in all history have been excepted—Enoch and Elijah. I will join ranks with the dying. Oh yes, I will!

"There is nothing after death. At death, everything will be finished. I will never return from the grave." Oh yes, you will! "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28). The empty tomb of Jesus guarantees his power and promise. You may not believe it or understand it. You may wish it were not so. Resurrection offers no consolation to the wicked but alas, you will return—yes, you will! Resurrection is as sure as dying!

"You will not convince me. I will never believe that stuff about God and the Bible." Oh yes, you will! No atheist will stand at the last day. All will be confirmed believers. You have taunted and ridiculed, asking for a tangible demonstration of God. You will get it. On that

day you will behold the majesty of His presence and hear His voice. Oh yes, you will believe then, sadly, if He says depart!

"I will never believe a man will be lost just because he does not believe in Jesus and do exactly as the Bible says." Oh yes, you will! You should already know it. Jesus plainly said, "If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins and whither I go ye cannot come" (John 8:21,22). He also said, "Not everyone...but he that doeth the will of my Father" will enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21). You will believe it at the judgment. Oh yes, you will! But it will be too late then.

"Listen! Nobody tells me what to do. I will bow to none." Oh yes, you will! God seeks by persuasion and by incentive to get you to willingly submit to Him (Philippians 2:13). You can rebel and defy Him today, but you will eventually submit. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). That includes you! When He calls you to judgment, you will come. When He says, "Depart into everlasting fire," you will surely obey. Oh yes, you will!

"Nobody will ever know." You are wrong. "...Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). "...All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Every word, every deed, even the most private thought must be accounted for. Oh yes, you will face them!

God does not forget the righteous nor their labor of love (Hebrews 6:10). The "exceeding great and precious promises" will be kept (II Peter 1:4). When He comes again we will receive our crown (II Timothy 4:8). Oh yes, we will!—J.Fitch

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"THANK YOU" TO AN ATHEIST

MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR, who is billed as the world's greatest infidel and atheist, spoke at a college in Ohio. About 350 students and faculty gathered to hear her views on religion. In her speech she proceeded to take religion apart. "She lambasted the clergy and all church officers. She harassed all believing students and professors, and she harangued the foolish thinkers who believed what they read. She made a laughing stock of those who trusted in prayer and mocked the citizens of America as stupid to believe in anything religious."

As the meeting was about to break up, from the back of the auditorium came a tiny voice of a smaller-than-usual college girl. She spoke quietly, and her voice was filled with compassion. She said, "Mrs. O'Hair, I am so happy you came to speak to all of us here at our college tonight. We have listened with attention to your tirade on our beliefs. We thank you for showing all of us what an atheist is. We express gratitude for your challenge to our faith. We appreciate your concern for us, but now in turn we must be ever grateful for your visit because now and forever we have been strengthened in our Christian beliefs by listening to you tonight. We really feel sorry for you. I thank you because I know you have strengthened my faith in our church, in our religion, and in our faith."

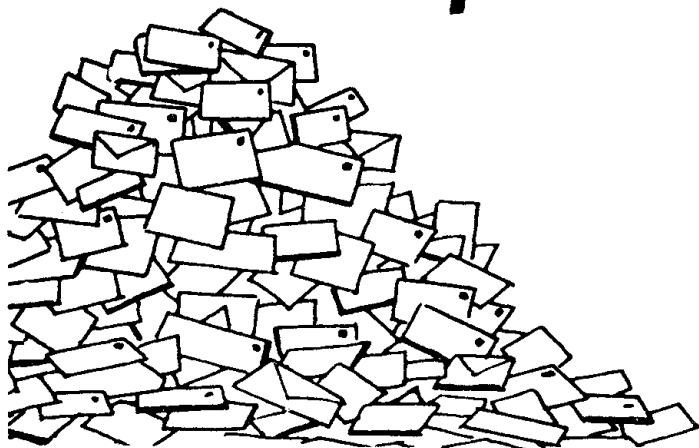
The speaker of the evening was flabbergasted. It seems it was the first time she couldn't say anything. The applause for the young girl's response was deafening.

—Selected

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

READERS'

... Response



GHANA (AFRICA):

■ "It gives me much joy and pleasure to write to you today. By the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I came across one of your very interesting and inspiring magazines entitled, 'OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD' by James E. Gibbons. Fortunately for me and through the Lord's guidance, I saw your address on the last page of the said pamphlet. My joy has known no bounds since I read that magazine.

"Having been impressed by the contents of 'Our Great and Glorious God' and having been further enlightened on the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and as an ardent follower of His teachings, I shall be extremely grateful if you will let me know how I can receive future copies of the magazine that you publish and any other literature that will be of help to me and my pupils with whom I hold Sunday classes.

"I look forward to hearing favorably from you at your earliest convenience. Wishing you God's blessings in all your deliberations."

NEW HAMPSHIRE:

■ "In your volume 22 you showed New Testament organization and organization practiced today. While you only gave the operation of the 'board,' I wish you had deleted this section. No where do I find this as Scriptural. You stated the Elders and Deacons have the same function. I believe the Elders are the overseers of the church and the Deacons carry out the Elders wishes. If they have the same function, why divided them by names?

"I read not too long ago where a church had a ratio of 10 Elders and 25 Deacons. The Deacons had the power and voted to fire the minister.

"I wouldn't show this to a prospective member where I was trying to get him into the family of God.

"I also never heard of a woman in the pulpit conducting revival meetings..."

"I think a reprint with corrections should be made... Your comments would be appreciated."

(EDITOR'S COMMENT: The boxed in study, page 7, you referred to in the last issue, reprinted from 25 years before, listed on the left what is found in the New Testament and

on the right what is many times found practiced today. Our purpose was to draw attention and to stimulate thought on getting back to the simplicity of the original organization. It seems that you did not get hold of the concluding remarks in the box at the bottom of the page and confused the two columns. Please look it over again).

FLORIDA:

■ "Here is 10 dollars for THE SWORD AND STAFF. It's the best magazine I have ever read. It helps me grow spiritually."

VIRGINIA:

■ "Thanks for continuing to send THE SWORD and STAFF although I am late in sending my check. You always come up with such excellent material. I'm glad the Lord has blessed you with this gift."

■ "THE SWORD AND STAFF is the best publication ever. I have been enriched by it over the years and it is better than ever. The last two issues were extremely good..."

OHIO:

■ "I know I'm late, but I want to give you a little more fuel to help keep the light of the Gospel burning. And just as God told Moses in Deut. 4, you shall not diminish ought from my Word, our prayerful encouragement to you and the staff, is not to diminish ought from the faithful and strong stand you are taking with the Word in THE SWORD AND STAFF..."

■ "I don't know how I got on your mailing list, but I'm thankful I am. I enjoy so much your fine paper. I'm sending you a check to help pay for the many lessons you have sent my way."

■ "Enclosed is a check for all the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I want to put them in our church library. This is really a worthwhile paper."

■ "Please keep sending me THE SWORD AND STAFF as we enjoy it very much. I drop most all other mail to get it read first..."

■ "Our whole family appreciates and truly enjoys your magazine. Forgive us for not writing sooner, and bless you for not taking us off your mailing list..."

ILLINOIS:

■ "Please drop my name from your mailing list..."

IOWA:

■ "I enjoy your paper very much. It's contents are true to the Bible and the different types of articles makes it very interesting..."

NEBRASKA:

■ "Please drop me from your mailing list..."

OREGON:

■ "I certainly enjoy the articles in your magazine. You are just as hard on phony Christians as you are on sinners. That's the way it should be. God bless you." □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

WHAT SILVER CAN DO

ONE DAY a miser came to a preacher. The preacher took him by the hand and led him to the window. "Look out there," he said, and the miser looked into the street. "What do you see?"

"People," answered the miser.

Again the preacher took him by the hand and this time led him to a mirror. "What do you see now?" he asked. "Myself," answered the miser.

The preacher said, "Behold, in the window there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and as soon as the silver is added you cease to see others, but only yourself." —*The Reminder* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WHEN SILENCE IS NOT "GOLDEN"

THERE IS an old adage to the effect that "silence is golden." Much has been written—most of it true—concerning the evils of the tongue and the care that should be exercised with reference to our speech. There is probably no subject more frequently discussed in the word of God than this. On the other hand, grievous wrong is often done by saying nothing when something ought to be said. Another familiar saying is "silence gives consent." Silence is often the refuge of the coward and the compromiser. It is quite often an effective means in perpetuating a vicious lie. Many an individual, who would not think of voicing a vicious falsehood about his neighbor, will give consent to and assist in perpetuating such a lie by silence when a word from him could have corrected and stopped the matter. Many permit Satan's lies to triumph over God's truth by their silence at vital moments. Well did Robert Louis Stevenson write: "The cruellest lies are often told in silence."

—*James W. Adams*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "AVERAGE"

"AVERAGE" is the top of the bottom, the best of the worst, the bottom of the top, the worst of the best. Which of these are you? "Average" means being run-of-the-mill, mediocre, insignificant, nonentity. It is the lazy person's cop-out; it's lacking the guts to take a stand in life; it's living by default.

Being "average" is to take up space for no purpose; to take the trip through life, but never to pay the fare; to return no interest in God's investment in you. Being "average" is to pass one's life away with time, rather than to pass one's time away with life. It's to kill time, rather than to work it to death.

To be "average" is to be forgotten once you pass from this life. The successful are remembered for their contributions, the failures are remembered because they tried; but the "average," the silent majority, is just forgotten. To be "average" is to commit a great crime against self, humanity, and God.

A sad epitaph is: Here lies Mr. and/or Mrs. "Average"; here lies the remains of what might have been except for their concept of just being "average."

You aren't "average"... or are you? —*Christian Light* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A LIFE FULL OF JUNK

MANY YEARS AGO a newspaper described the death of an eccentric character who owned a large house, and every room in it was packed from floor to ceiling with junk.

When the neighbors discovered that the man was dead, they summoned policemen. The officers of the law had difficulty in getting to the body which lay on a rough pallet in a narrow space in one of the junk-filled rooms; they struggled to get to the man and struggled again to get him out.

The worldly-wise smiled in derision and lofty conceit at the folly of the man who had devoted his life to the collecting and housing of worthless rubbish, and yet many of those who scored him as a fool had been, in the main, guilty of the same kind of folly. They had filled the days and months and years of life with the accumulations of gilded trash. They had wasted all the glorious passions and possibilities of life in this futile business. They had vied with their neighbors in packing the basement, the rooms upstairs, every nook and cubby hole of the great House of Life with the debris and rubbish of the street.

But at the end of their days they will be dismayed to find that they have bartered life, all its incalculable values and kingdoms, for junk. This mistake will be irretrievable. Jesus had often knocked at the door, but the house was so full of junk that there was no room for him. Life is almost ended now for many such as these, and they all have gamered in wood, hay, stubble and the dust of the street.

—*THE LIGHT*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PROFANITY

IT IS NO mark of a gentleman to swear. The most worthless and vile, the refuse of mankind, the drunkard and the prostitute, swear as well as the best dressed and educated "gentleman." No particular endowments are requisite to give a finish to the art of cursing. The basest and meanest of mankind swear with as much tact and skill as the most refined; and he who wishes to degrade himself to the very lowest of pollution and shame should learn to be a common swearer. Any man has talent enough to learn to curse God and imprecate perdition on himself and his fellowman.

Profane swearing never did any man any good. No man is the richer or wiser or happier for it. It helps no one's education or manners. It commends no one to any society. It is disgusting to the refined, abominable to the good, insulting to those with whom we associate, degrading to the mind, unprofitable, needless, and injurious to society... and wantonly to profane His name, to call His vengeance down, to curse Him and to invoke His vengeance is perhaps of all offenses the most awful in the sight of God.

—*SELECTED*

INTERESTING INFORMATION

—DNA: Genetic message the size of an aspirin would hold total genetic message for all alive in the world!

—That it would take all the combined wealth of the United States, Great Britain and France to devise and construct a computer that would equal the brain of one 6-year-old child. —*Copied* □

“The Way of Peace



They Have Not Known”

YES, that is exactly what it says in Romans 3:17, “The way of peace they have not known.” This is very obvious in our own times. With all the fanfare of peace symbols, treaties, conferences, summits, and such like things, one would think that there would be less war. But we still have wars and rumors of war, just as Christ prophesied. WHY?

Do you have peace? Christ promised peace. “Peace I leave with you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

WHAT PEACE?

The peace which God gives through Christ is a personal matter. To whom would such verses as II Thessalonians 3:16 apply? “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.” Does the Lord give peace to just anyone? “And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” (II Kings 9:22). We are willing to pose the same question—HOW CAN IT BE PEACE, when the way of peace is ignored?

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:20, 21). What peace is there for the lost soul who knows not Christ as his Lord? Every lost sinner is miserable, always promising himself that he will “do better.” There is always that gnawing sense that the Bible is true, and that hell awaits at the end of such an existence. But, Christ can and does give peace to those who obey Him.

What peace is there in being a backslider? “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts” (Jeremiah 2:19). That verse pictures the very opposite of peace!

What peace is there in being a troublemaker? “Draw me not away with the wicked, and the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in

their hearts” (Psalms 28:3).

One point we do want to get across in this short message—Christ can and DOES give peace to those who obey Him.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST CAN BE YOURS

It was prophesied that Christ would bring peace. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end...” (Isaiah 9:7). At Christ’s birth, the angels announced “peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

The book of Colossians is directed to “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ” (Colossians 1:2). In Colossians 3:15 we read, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

Philippians 4:17 is directed to Christians: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). PEACE is to be found in a right relationship with Christ.

Perhaps you object, and think that if these things be true, how come there isn’t more peace on earth. The trouble is, that some who appear to be spiritual really aren’t. “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). Also, some people won’t let you be at peace with them! “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). The devil is out to stir all the strife he can.

FOLLOW TRUE PEACE—NOT A FALSE PEACE

“Peace at any price” is NOT peace at all! “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalms 119:165). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3). “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:11).

Do you have the peace that passeth understanding? If not, begin now to put all of your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obey Him. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15. —HAROLD BUCKLES □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FINAL BIBLE LANDS TOUR—1987—PLANS

TO: The Sword & Staff, Box 147, Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030

GENTLEMEN:

Understanding this does not obligate me, I would like my name and address put in your files as one who is interested in being a part of the final Bible lands tour now planned. I understand that you will keep me informed as to the developments and plans more in detail, especially as the time draws near.

NAME

ADDRESS

Telephone

(Clip and Mail)



SOLID BIBLE-RELATED MATERIAL:

BELOW IS a listing of booklets, tracts, and materials published by **THE SWORD AND STAFF** and currently available from us. If something is not listed, that means it is now out of print. This material has been widely used. We believe that you will be pleased with the Scriptural soundness of each item. Place an order today. And while you are at it, order the bound volumes of **THE SWORD AND STAFF**. You have this timeless material of the back issues in more of a permanent form that way. More and more people are seeing the value and wisdom of doing this. (All money received in this way is regarded as an offering to help keep publishing this religious paper—the “price” is a suggested amount to send for an offering).

- ☐ *The Subject of the Holy Spirit Made Simple*—1 copy, 35¢; 1 to 99 copies, 25¢ each; 100 & above, 20¢ each.
- ☐ *Our Great and Glorious God*—25¢ each.
- ☐ *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*—6¢ each.
- ☐ *Obedying the Gospel Chart*—small size, 3¢ each; 11 by 17 size, 8¢ each.
- ☐ *The Meaning of Suffering in the Life of the Christian*—10¢ each.
- ☐ *Are Visions, Dreams, and Religious Experiences Proof of Salvation?*—7¢ each.
- ☐ *Every Sunday?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered*—8¢.
- ☐ *The Origin of Religious Misunderstanding and False Teaching*—4¢ each.
- ☐ *Once in Grace, Always in Grace*—4¢ each.
- ☐ *Are You Sanctified?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Is It Wrong for a Christian to Use Tobacco?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Lessons in Happiness from the Garden of Eden*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *A Question About the Sabbath*—2¢ each.
- ☐ Note: Variety of “free” material available when ordering other material (above).

- ☐ 1980-81-82 bound vol. of *The Sword and Staff*—\$4.75

CLIP AND MAIL

Gentlemen:

Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of **THE SWORD AND STAFF**.

Name.....

Address.....

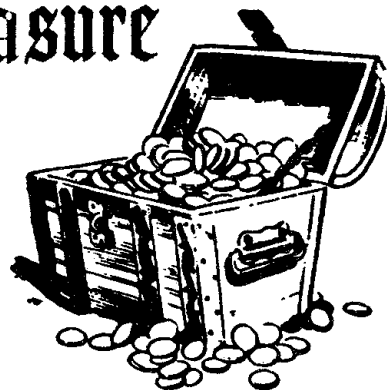
.....Zip.....

BOUND VOLUMES OF THE SWORD AND STAFF (Check for bound volumes order)

- ☐ 1971-72 bound vol. of *The Sword and Staff*—\$4.25
- ☐ 1973-74 bound vol. of *The Sword and Staff*—\$4.00
- ☐ 1975-76 bound vol. of *The Sword and Staff*—\$4.25
- ☐ 77-78-79 bound vol. of *The Sword and Staff*—\$4.50

Treasure

MANY who love the Word of God have discovered Treasure much to their liking when they bought the bound volumes of back issues of *The Sword and Staff*. Therein is to be found the much variegated treasure of sound gospel sermons, Bible expositions, Bible questions, poetry, and just good spiritual reading. If you like this issue of *The Sword and Staff*, you will likewise be thrilled with the volumes in book form. Notice those available and place your order for good reading. Make them a part of your library and your life. □



“FREE” MATERIAL AVAILABLE

NOTE: when placing an order for our other material, the following “free” leaflets are available in quantities at request:

- *Christianity Without Denominations.*
- *Getting Back to the Original Church.*
- *What Was the Early Church Really Like?*
- *How to Be Saved from Sin.*
- *I Saw Him Standing There (Or the Old Gospel Preacher)*
- *All Things Without Murmuring.*

HELP US GET THIS PAPER OUT MORE OFTEN
BY YOUR SUPPORT. THANKS.



THE SWORD AND STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, N. C. 27030
U.S.A.
Telephone: (919) 789-1044

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Mt. Airy, N.C.
Permit No. 25