

# The Sword AND Staff

*"Preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2) • "Feed the Flock" (I Peter 5:2)*

## "To Whom Shall We Go?"

*"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"*

*—(JOHN 6:66-69)—*



By **JAMES E. GIBBONS** — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
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**THE READING** of the entire sixth chapter of John will give you a full background and put this Scripture in context. Jesus had just preached a most unusual sermon on "the bread of life." The day before, that sermon was preceded by some unusual excitement when he had miraculously fed 5,000 on the northeastern slopes of the Sea of Galilee. From purely a physical point of view the people were so profoundly impressed that they wanted to make Jesus their king. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15). Unlike many would present him today, Jesus did not aspire to be an earthly king (in fact, he later would say

before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" John 18:36). Later that night Jesus joined his disciples on their boat headed back to Capernaum, having astonished them by walking on the water to them. Now back home in Capernaum the next day in the synagogue he taught and preached on "the bread of life," a follow-up to his feeding of the 5,000 (which had so captured their imagination). His synagogue audience was astonished at what he told them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed... This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever." "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth (makes alive); the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." His words sounded like cannibalism to them, having taken him literally. How repulsive! If what I say disturbs you, he said, how will you react when you see me ascend back to heaven (the bread that came down from heaven will go back to heaven, and their hopes of an earthly kingdom would go unfulfilled)? Then he makes it plain (contrary to how some would understand verse 63), "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." In other

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## THE SWORD AND STAFF

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## Proverbially SPEAKING...

*THE ONLY thing that Truth has to fear is fear itself (fear on the part of its weak-kneed proponents and adherents who are afraid to present the truth and then stand behind it).*

"As a spark falls into the sea and does not harm the sea, so harm may be done to a loving soul and is soon quenched without disturbing that soul."

*If God raised up Jesus from the dead no doubt he can raise up men in the hour of need and at the same time raise their support!*

"A certain amount of opposition is a great deal of help to a man; kites rise against, and not with, the wind."

*"Failure" is not necessarily defeat—it's just another wrong way of doing something eliminated: keep on trying!*

"Church growth is not the purpose of the church; it is the result of the church fulfilling its purpose."

*Too many preachers "beat around the bush" a lot but never "tree" anything.*

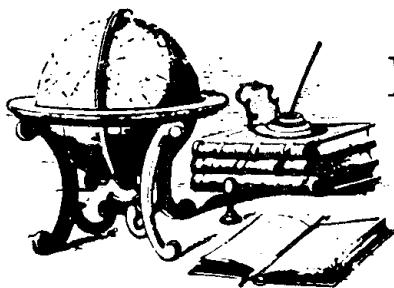
"One-half the trouble of this life can be traced to saying 'yes' too quickly and not saying 'no' soon enough."

*In covetousness our eyes are gotten off the Creator and become unduly preoccupied with the created.*

"There is one thing worse than division, and that is unity in error."

*To live the Christian life at least two things are necessary, desire and surrender.*

*"It is better to do than to stew."*



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

### "IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE PROVIDED"

■ *"And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh (THE-LORD-WILL-PROVIDE); as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen (provided)" (Genesis 22:14).*

ABRAHAM HAD just experienced an awful ordeal and a great trial of faith. From the human angle, there was a great danger that Abraham might have an inordinate affection and attachment to the son of his old age who had been so long awaited. This great man of God who had trusted the LORD so explicitly in the past had now been put to the ultimate test (as far as he was concerned): he had been called upon to offer the very son of promise as a sacrifice to God. Abraham arose early that morning. Leaving his desert home in the area of Beersheba, he made his journey a little north to the land of Moriah as directed by God. Accompanying him were his son Isaac (now pretty much a man), two of his young servants, and a donkey laden with wood. In the three days it took them to get to Mount Moriah, no doubt many soul-searching and disturbing thoughts crowded the mind of this old man. As they approached their destination, the young men were left waiting while Abraham and Isaac went a little farther to the appointed place. Abraham's last words to them were, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you." (Truly a great statement of faith in light of the radical nature of the command that had been given to him). Isaac, who was now carrying the wood (but not knowing the whole story), asked his father about the offering. Where was the animal that would be needed for the sacrifice? Still withholding the intelligence of his awful mission, Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." They now arrived at the dreaded place. We are not furnished the private details, but he now binds his beloved son and he is laid on the wood of the altar. As Abraham reached out and took the knife to slay his son, being human, no doubt the thoughts were many that overwhelmed and saturated his mind. Could he have thought, Why? Why? Why must it all end like this? After all my hopes and expectations now my son ends up as a bloody sacrifice. . . the son that is so precious and dear to me! Why does God require such an awful thing? How unlike the Jehovah God that I know! But, no, Abraham did not question God or God's motives. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, he believed that God could and would raise Isaac from the dead. In his heart he had sacrificed Isaac.

But he did not have to do the dreadful deed. God's purpose had been accomplished. "And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind

him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." Because of all of this Abraham called the place Jehovahjireth (the LORD will provide). Hundreds of years later when Moses wrote all of this down in the book of Genesis, a saying (almost proverbial) was still in circulation among the children of Israel, "IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE PROVIDED." Right at the crux of his most trying experience the LORD provided a way out. He provided the answer. Abraham was told why he had been called upon to do this. A lamb (ram) was provided for the sacrifice. His son lived.

Abraham was not the only one in the Bible who experienced a trying of his faith, and it still happens today. At some time or other in our lives (perhaps many times) each of us has gone through our "mount of the Lord" experience. Our faith has been tested and tried. God may not have directly sent or caused that which came into our lives, but He let it happen. Then after it happened, He used it. How we responded is another story. The elder James wrote (and may we listen), "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (varied and diversified trials); knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptations: for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:2-5,12). What a hard command to obey (to have such an attitude), but let us try to face up to the challenge when the trials come. Remember: IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE PROVIDED. James says to pray for wisdom to understand our trials (perhaps to see God's purpose and to get the spiritual lesson from them—not to begrudgingly suffer as unbelievers). Then he says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptations: for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life. . ."

Whether your "mount of the Lord" experience is in the form of trials of suffering or outright temptations to sin, remember the words of the apostle Paul, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). Trust God and look for His provision. "In the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

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EDITORIAL

By-Ways

ECCLESIASTICISM AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

A LETTER that I received back in the summer tends to confirm what I have always believed. When we get away from the local church (and its simplicity), we are at the same time getting away from the Bible

and will continue to get further away from the Bible in other areas. The letter began, "Brother, I just returned from the N. A. C. C. (NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CONVENTION) in Indiana—what a joke that thing was. The so-called executive committee of the N. A. C. C. decided that it is alright to have women deacons, elders, and preachers. I ask who are they anyway? Those so-called 'Christian Churches' and their convention in no way represent the church of Christ where I preach. . ."

(What is said here may be denied, and it has been, but our correspondent was so disturbingly impressed, and distressed, so as to write this after hearing women speakers put the Word of God on the torture rake, II Peter 3:16, accepting and trying to justify such a position with the apparent approval of the "executive committee" for them to say what they said. Coming from a convention that has denominational speakers, speakers of varied hue, and women speakers, it is not hard to believe this—and with the *Christian Standard* reporting the ordination of women. Is this convention, as has been claimed in the past, a preaching convention of the "old paths" or is it Mar's Hill all over again, Acts 17:19-21? The Bible says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," and, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." Read on, as the very existence of such a convention is Scripturally questioned.)

Now, let us back up a little further to enlarge our perspective. Before me I have a quotation from the N.A.C.C. paper dated September, 1956 (written, no doubt, by a well-meaning person). It reads, "The Convention will not leave the 'old paths' to fight or quarrel with anyone, but it will constructively present the

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LIGHT THAT CANDLE

Bedecked and adorned in darkened glory,  
Though gilded in gold and garnished in pine,  
No candle has purpose, and much less beauty,  
Whose lovely light does not shine.  
  
Yea, what sight appears more dim and hopeless  
Than that sad candle displayed unlit,  
Whose soul is denied its joy and radiance,  
Whose worthy witness is deemed unfit?  
  
Now, some would say, "Save that candle—  
There's no need to waste its light."  
Friend, no candle is ever so wasted,  
As that candle which never gives us light.  
  
Pray, light that candle of God's pure light,  
Gloriously aglow in thine own bright face;  
For all ye candles surely shine for Jesus,  
To dispell the darkness with His truth and grace.  
  
O Yes, light that candle and let it shine  
Bright and on fire that all may see  
That His light can always conquer darkness,  
When by faith we let its flame burn free.

—By Bob Wickline  
2553 Moore Road  
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**EDITORIAL *By-Ways***

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things that need to be stressed in this hour, and *any man not in sympathy with the procedure of this gathering will be manifesting in no uncertain manner the fact that he is out of step with the great Restoration Movement.*" Also, before me is a form letter dated April 18, 1985 with the caption "NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CONVENTION" at the top. One excerpt from it says, "We have no records of your congregation sponsoring this great convention, and it is so worthwhile, making a great contribution to *unity of our brotherhood.*"

Beloved, in all kindness, there is something wrong somewhere in the underlying concepts behind everything quoted here. The basic error is what we call ecclesiasticism (whether this is intended or not). Ecclesiasticism (as we use the term here) is religious authority that has been assumed by man but not given by God (especially in the organizational and functional life of the church). The organization of the church we read about in the New Testament is strictly local and autonomous. It speaks of "churches of Christ" as local, independent entities (organizationally speaking). Consequently we read about the "church of God which is at Corinth" (I Corinthians 1:2), etc. As we have written before, the church, corporately speaking (and Scripturally speaking), does not exist beyond the bounds of the local church (as an organization). No man, or group of men, have the authority to claim to speak for those local churches, set up a rally or convention, or anything, beyond reference to the local church (in other words, prefix it with an area, regional, or national name). It gives the impression, whether intended or not, that they have the authority to speak for or represent the churches in such a capacity. Obviously it is a presumptuous usurpation. If not an official, there is a quasi-official position assumed in the eyes of the brethren and certainly such an impression is made on the world. Hence, it would appear that a person was out of step with the brotherhood if he did not support such organizations and gatherings. And, as implied in the last quotation above, you are not doing your part in contributing to "the unity of our brotherhood."

(In passing, it is needful that something be said about "CHRISTIAN UNITY." Simply and Scripturally stated, "Christian" unity is accomplished when we are united with Christ in baptism—when we become Christians. The gospel calls us into one body—Colossians 3:15. I Corinthians 12:13 reads, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY. . ." Yes, if we have been Scripturally converted we have been added—you can't join it—by the ONE LORD to his ONE CHURCH that was started on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2—Acts 2:38,41,47. Thereby being united with Christ, and with every other Christian who is in the body, we are thereafter commanded to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"—Ephesians 4:3. This is done in the context of the undenominational local church as we are faithful Christians. In reference to Christians elsewhere, and everywhere, we are commanded to "love the brotherhood," I Peter 2:17, not

organize it. That kind of unity is denominational unity. All efforts to by-pass the local church (or speak for it in some way) will defeat the kind of unity taught in the Scriptures. It will hasten the day of a full return to denominationalism and forever retard and postpone the restoration of the church of Christ among men. This I believe, and I think history continually bears it out. But will we ever learn?!).

The extreme cases of ecclesiasticism are seen in the pope of Rome and denominational systems copying Rome (it seems that men left to themselves eventually gravitate back to Rome). The Disciples denomination with their state secretaries is a scaled down version of this. Even when men speak of the Carolina Lectureship (or South Carolina Lectureship), the language is tainted with the coloration of ecclesiasticism. Men have stepped beyond the bounds of the local church. The perimeter of the local church constitutes the bounds of acceptable ecclesiastical authority (and that within Scriptural limits). We cannot speak for anyone beyond this (or imply that we are representing them). To attempt to do so is to be pretentious, presumptuous, and even preposterous.

And while we are on the subject of ecclesiasticism (perhaps unpleasant to some, but we speak in all kindness and humility of mind as a lover of truth and men), another area captures our attention, that of religious publications. Before me I have a religious paper from the Philippines, *Sulo ng Kristian* (and what we are talking about is not limited to the Philippines). The edition is for November-December, 1985. In this issue page 24, we read, "The *Sulo*, which has been *the official publication* of the independent Churches of Christ in the Philippines. . ." Now I am not being unduly critical, but something needs to be said here (please accept these words with kindness). Can undenominational Christians and local undenominational churches have an official publication in any country? The word "official" comes from office. Scripturally speaking, what office is there in the church whereby one could exercise himself in such an official capacity for churches or over churches? It would seem to this unworthy writer that in order to have an official publication, we would have to have accepted the status of being a denomination (or at least have a denominational mentality). That is denominational language. New Testament churches have no official religious publication.

So much for all of these thoughts. *Kindly* accept them for what they are worth.—*J.E.G.* □

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**LOOK WELL TO THIS DAY**

*Yesterday is already a dream, and  
Tomorrow is only a vision;  
But today, well lived, makes every  
Yesterday a dream of happiness  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope  
Look well, therefore, to this day.*

—Selected

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# “To Whom Shall We Go?”

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words, “my words (teachings) are spiritual and spiritually life-giving (the teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood is not to be taken literally). (And, yes, some are really off base when they try to make this verse mean the Word is the Holy Spirit in trying to deny the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer).

That is the context of John 6:66-69, the Scripture given at the beginning of this article. These “hard sayings” prompted many of the disciples of Jesus to follow him no more. That was when Jesus questioned the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” And that was one time Simon Peter responded with the right answer (not only right, but monumental), “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”—what a question! Perhaps by asking this question in several different ways we can even call more attention to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

## I. “TO WHOM SHALL WE GO” FOR AUTHORITY IN RELIGION?

We are living in a world today that is adrift as far as authority in religion is concerned. The situation is confused (especially with some trying to discredit the Bible and with subjectivism permeating our society). It seems that many want to be “bound” by nothing. It is very much as in the days of the judges in the Old Testament times: “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Some would make a move in the right direction by going to the Bible. However, a problem is presented when they make no distinction in approaching the Bible. This is very elementary, but some would go to the Old Testament Scriptures as freely as to the New Testament for Christian teaching. Can we go to the Old Testament for authority in religion? The answer obviously is “no” today. Paul wrote that “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that (the) faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24,25). As to when the authority of the “schoolmaster” ended (as far as being over us is concerned), Paul further wrote: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). As a man’s last will and testament goes into effect with his death, so the New Testament came into force (its authority over us) when Jesus died on the old rugged cross (Hebrews 9:15-17). We do not go back before the cross for that which is to govern us today (although those Scriptures have illustrative and practical purposes, Romans 15:4). The law had a “shadow of good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1), but not the actual reality. That is found in Christ and the New Testament.

“To whom shall we go” then for authority in religion? Obviously and emphatically, the answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything before him was preparatory (and not final). “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). God took the time to prepare mankind for the Saviour and to prove many things to man, but now the promised One has come. Even while Jesus walked upon this earth as one of us he had power (authority) within himself. One time being questioned about his apparent use of authority to forgive (or heal), he said, “Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (authority) to forgive sins” (Mark 2:9, 10). When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John (with Moses and Elijah representatively appearing with him), the disciples were made to realize his ultimate authority by the voice of God which came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). After the death (notice paragraph before) and glorious resurrection of Jesus, he declared, “All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Matthew 28:18). With such authority he is now sitting “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3). He is the promised Messiah and now reigns with all authority in his kingdom the church (Acts 2:29-36). The Word of his authority is asserted through the New Testament Scriptures. They are Holy Spirit inspired, and Jesus promised his apostles, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (Spirit), whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). Again: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . .” (John 16:13). He came and did this (along with the inspired prophets, Ephesians 3:3-5). Consequently, we have been given “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3). The Christ and his all-sufficient Word constitute our only authority in religion (II Timothy 3:16,17). One day we will be judged by that Word (John 12:48).

In spite of the Lord’s declaration that he had “all authority” in religious matters, some would go to other supposed sources. How presumptuous and pretentious are the claims of the pope of Rome and the whole Catholic system. The authority is in the “church” and not in the Bible. The accumulated tradition coming from the “church” carries more weight than the Bible. Then the so-called Protestants have their creed books and traditions of men in addition to the Bible. Jesus locked horns with the traditionalists of his day when he said that scribes and Pharisees “made the commandment of God of none effect” by their traditions (Matthew 15:1-9). Then he said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” The same is true today of those who would bypass the authority of Christ to fulfill their own ambitions in ecclesiasticism or to follow the traditions of

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# “To Whom Shall We Go?”

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men. Papists, denominationalists, and usurpers of every stripe, beware!

“To whom shall we go” for authority in religion? To the only one who has it, the LORD JESUS CHRIST (the Son of God). We gladly and humbly bow our knees to him.

## II. “TO WHOM SHALL WE GO” IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE?

As human beings we do have our troubles in the course of living. Job could unquestionably bear witness to this. “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Troubles come sooner or later for “into each life some rain must fall.” The question is how we will handle these troubles, to whom shall we turn, or where will we go for help when they do come.

Some have been taught the doctrine of self-reliance. That is great and good up to a certain point. Even Paul taught in Galatians 6:5, “For every man shall bear his own burden,” and in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” But a deeper study of Galatians will show that he had reference to the lesser problems in ordinary living, and his self-reliance in Philippians is coupled with the strength of Christ. In fact, Proverbs 28:26 reads, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely shall be delivered.” Then backing up to Proverbs 3:4,5, we find that it says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Here is wisdom indeed and assurance in the time of trouble.

It is good to know that in the time of trouble we have brothers and sisters in Christ, and as such we have been taught, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). This would seem to be just the opposite of what is taught in verse 5, but this is a stronger Greek word, emphasizing a heavier load (a load that has become a burden). Yes, being members of the body of Christ, it is great to know: “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (I Corinthians 12:26). But in spite of all of this man is not always reliable. To ancient Israel who made an alliance with Egypt in view of impending national trouble, God said, “Lo, thou trusteth in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him” (Isaiah 36:6). The Psalmist said, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Psalms 118:8,9). Brothers and sisters in Christ at times have failed to be available during times of trouble. Even parents and relatives were not there. However, the Psalmist said, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up” (Psalms 27:10).

“To whom shall we go” in the time of trouble?

Harken to these great words found in Psalms 46:1-3, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” And what a comfort men have found in the twenty-third Psalm through the ages. Then we can almost feel the emotion of the inviting words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” We are further admonished as to the availability of this same Jesus as our faithful high priest in heaven, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16). And the apostle Peter encourages us to be “casting all our care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Peter 5:7).

Isn’t it wonderful to know that we don’t have to face our troubles in life all alone. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are there, but best of all is the Lord Jesus himself who invites us to come to him.

## III. “TO WHOM SHALL WE GO” TO ADDRESS THE SIN PROBLEM?

Having considered where to go in the time of trouble (as Christians), that brings to mind another serious





problem. "To whom shall we go" to address the sin problem? We may not be aware of it, but all of our human troubles, ills, and sorrows are to be understood in the larger context of the sin problem (directly or indirectly, since the fall of man, sin is the cause of it all). We live in and are part of a sin-sick and dying world that has sadly missed the mark, and it seems to be not getting any better. Sin-enslaved lives, shipwrecked lives, and (yes) heartaches abound (as man seeks illusive happiness in the wrong way). What a mess many have made out of it. Our learned men would categorize impersonally our problems as sociological, or even dismiss irregular behavior altogether as acceptable alternate lifestyles, but that is not even recognizing the problem, let alone addressing it—only compounding it. And if each of us would be honest, we must confess our own shortcomings (*transgressions*) and personal guilt.

Obviously, then, we cannot turn to self to solve the sin problem. The whole history of the human race is against such a position. Some have self-righteously attempted to do this, thinking that their good would somehow outweigh their bad (and that they would stand justified before God). But, never forget it, sin is so bad that one sin made the human race a dying race. Isaiah, in his day, graphically portrayed the tastelessness of sin when he wrote, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). (He pictures them in their sins as leperous, Leviticus 13:45, and their consequent righteousness as "filthy rags," literally meaning "like a garment stained with menstruous discharge"). The extensiveness of this enormity is declared in Ecclesiastes 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." The apostle Paul puts his New Testament stamp on that by saying, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Some would hopefully look to the collective efforts of the human race to solve the world's problems (which really is the old sin problem). There is man with his systems of human government, which in a measure restrain outrageously overt sins (crime), but this doesn't get at (or attempt to get at) the heart of the problem. Man in his "great" intellectual systems of philosophy surely could solve the problem, but, no. The Greeks of the Gentile world in Paul's day were renowned for their worldly wisdom, but the apostle wrote, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22). The remainder of that chapter in Romans shows how grossly steeped in sin they became (very depraved). Even the intellectual process is a work of the flesh when it is divorced from God. (Pride and sin always take over). Jeremiah, away back in his day, declared, "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). That is God's evaluation.

How thankful (eternally grateful!) we are that God through grace decided to enter the picture. Paul wrote, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). What man did not do and

## EARTHEN CONFINEMENTS SHATTERED



could not do, God through His Son has done (Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 4:12). Jesus became one of us (John 1). He partook of our nature but not of our sin. Therefore, because of this, God "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). When we heartily accept him through trust, repentance and immersion into him (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Hebrews 10:19-25), we are thereby forgiven and declared righteous before God (even though our "sins be as scarlet"). How great to know that God said "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). Yes, we have been forgiven, and also He has "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into" a different relationship (Colossians 1:13). With a new power within, and a new life to be lived within the context of God's grace, there is no reason why we cannot get the victory over sin. How wonderful to know that we are accepted in God's sight. And as personal problems are solved it will add to the solution of larger problems in our society and in the world.

## IV. "TO WHOM SHALL WE GO" FOR ETERNAL LIFE?

"For the wages of sin is death. . ." (Romans 6:23a). To examine the sin problem (in the light of the Bible) is to be made intensely aware that it is irrevocably interwoven with this matter of death. Initially the disobedience (sin) of Adam and Eve brought death into the world. If they hadn't sinned, it seems that life of almost endless duration (even in their physical bodies) would have been theirs. They lost this Paradise on

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# "To Whom Shall We Go?"

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earth (and along with it this perpetual life). Thereafter it would be a state remorsefully remembered and tearfully longed for. In suffering and anguish, Job cried out, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14a). In this remorseful mood the Psalmist wrote of the brevity of life: "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Psalms 39:5,6). The writer of Ecclesiastes urged his younger readers to, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. . ." Then he vividly spoke of the infirmities in growing old, followed ultimately by death. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7).

Yes, there is that which cries out in each of us to live. How in anguish we bemoan the loss of Eden. We were made to live, not die. How wonderful to know now that as the sin problem has been dealt with, so has this matter of death. Reading all of Romans 6:23, it says, "For the wages of sin is death, *but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" We no longer live in the dread of darkness and the shadows. God's intelligence about it "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10). Peter's response to Jesus in John 6 was well founded when Jesus asked if they would also go away. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Later Jesus would say to Martha in Bethany before raising Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Still later on he would dramatize this by his own resurrection from the dead (after giving his life's blood on the cross for our sins). This would be the very heart and hope of the gospel (I Corinthians 15). Because he lives we too shall live.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of sin is death; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:55-58).

"TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?" This question can never be answered any better than it was by Simon Peter. Let us never hesitate to go to Jesus for we "believe and are sure that" he is the "Christ, the Son of the living God." AMEN. □

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"GOD IS LOVE"

# AIDS: Grim Prospects

A National Academy of Sciences report predicts 'catastrophe' if the disease is not checked

■ As of November 1986, 15,000 Americans had died of AIDS or AIDS-related diseases, 27,000 had been diagnosed as suffering from AIDS and 1.5 million Americans were estimated to be carrying the AIDS virus—in most cases, without knowing it.

■ By 1991, 270,000 Americans will have been diagnosed as having AIDS, the death toll will have risen to 54,000 a year and the virus, in all probability, will have spread to between 5 million and 10 million persons. How many of those 5 million to 10 million Americans will eventually die of AIDS? Perhaps half—but no one really knows.—from *NEWSWEEK* □

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## QUIZ OVER Mountains of the Bible

1. With the subsiding of the Great Flood upon what mountains did the ark of Noah rest?
2. Upon what mountain did Abraham experience a great trial of faith as he was called upon to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice?
3. Mount Seir was another name for what country?
4. From what mountain did God give Moses the ten commandments and the Law?
5. What was another name for the mountain where Moses received the Law?
6. Upon what mountain did Aaron die and was buried?
7. From what mountain did Moses view the promised land and then die?
8. What mountain was the mount of cursing where part of Israel assembled under Joshua to hear the curses that would be theirs if they disobeyed God?
9. What mountain was the mount of blessing where part of Israel assembled at the same time to hear blessings that would be theirs if they obeyed God?
10. What tall mountain near Lebanon, many times covered with snow, was located in the north of Israel?
11. Upon what prominent mountain did the prophetess Deborah and Barak rally the forces of Israel to defeat their oppressors?
12. Upon what mountain was Jonathan killed and king Saul mortally wounded by the Philistines?
13. Mount Zion was another name applied to what important city of Israel?
14. Upon what mountain did the prophet Elijah have a showdown with the false prophets of Baal?
15. What tribe of Israel many times had its name prefixed with "mount" in the Old Testament Scriptures?
16. From what mountain did the Lord Jesus ascend back to heaven (and also experience an awful ordeal in prayer)?

**NOTE:** Answers to these questions are found elsewhere in this issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF. In checking the answers, study the Scriptures that are given (as this will be very worthwhile in increasing your Bible knowledge). Pinpointing the mountains on a Bible map would also be helpful to you. □



# Two Important and Related Bible Studies

## 1. Getting ROMANS CHAPTER 14 in Perspective

TO BE CORRECTLY understood all Scripture must be understood in the light of its context (setting). There is the immediate context and the larger context of the rest of the New Testament (or even the whole Bible at times). Question marks are raised when we read the 14th chapter of Romans (*read it now*), then read other parts of the New Testament like the book of Galatians. And especially are our questions compounded when we realize the book of Romans and Galatians were written about the same time.

The 14th chapter of Romans obviously is talking about Christians with Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. In embracing Christianity, Jewish people carried over many unwarranted scruples and hang-ups involving their former religion. Their consciences were guided by Jewish distinctions and pagan associations, the latter having more of a moral basis to it. Gentile Christians had no problems in eating any kind of meat, it seems (in fact, that is the New Testament position—I Timothy 4:4, etc.), but the Jewish Christians were more restrictive, some eating only vegetables. The question of ceremonially unclean meats still plagued them. Then Paul said, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. . ." Some individual Christians of Jewish descent were regarding Jewish holy days. Although Jew and Gentile seemingly held divergent views, they were not to be judgmental or despise one another. The judgment was to be left in the hands of God.

Much of this would seem to be at variance with what we read in the book of Galatians. Through the influence of Judaizers the Galatians were brought back to things Jewish, even practicing circumcision and "esteeming one day above another" (keeping Jewish holy days). Paul sharply rebukes them for the course they have taken, although on the surface Romans 14 would seem to frown on doing this, and he said, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:10,11). Galatians 1:8 and 5:4 go two steps further.

How are we to understand and explain all of this? How does Romans 14 fit in with the larger context of the New Testament (and especially Galatians)?

Perhaps the key to understanding Romans 14 is found in Romans 14:1 and 15:2. Romans 14:1 reads, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." The word *WEAK* (in the faith) means "being not strong." The person holding the Jewish position was not on solid ground. He is called weak, and it is worded in such a way as to imply that he is expected to become strong. In the meantime such

were to be received as brothers and sisters because Christ had received them, and his grace would take care of them while they were becoming strong.

Coupling Romans 15:2 with this verse, we read, "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." They were to go along with the weak brother with his Jewish hang-ups, be considerate of his feelings, "for his good to edification." That is the key; that is the whole point. As they were dealing with an individual brother on an individual basis, they were to do this, with the view of helping him become "built up" (i. e., his "edification"), eventually being made strong. They were to help him over the rough places until he could come to the larger Christian view of things. This was not something imposed on the whole church because only individuals were entering into the abstinence and the observing of days, etc.

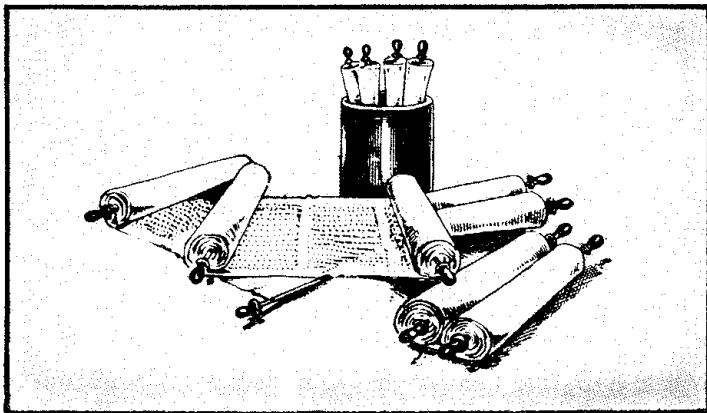
That is the difference between Romans and Galatians. In Galatia whole churches had accepted the Jewish position. It was being taught as the doctrine of the church, and men were looking to the law of Moses for justification (Galatians 5:4). It was not a matter of individuals struggling with hang-ups, but of whole churches accepting a sectarian position. That is the difference between the situation in Rome and the one in Galatia. To go along with churches now steeped in Judaism was not for their "good to edification." They were not in a context where they could be helped, and it would confirm them in their error. They had turned from the grace, which alone was sustaining the weak ones in Romans 14, and they were claiming justification in what the Romans were looking upon as hang-ups. There is quite a difference.

Keep these thoughts in mind in dealing with modern day situations which may be parallel to this. Remember this involved individuals in a local church situation. Let us help the weak brother or sister on toward maturity, but at the same time may we not let the church fall into apostasy. We make a grave mistake if we use Romans 14 as a catch-all and a cloak to cover all kinds divergences and innovations when we have no intentions of teaching the people better. We have the Great Commission and God's completed revelation (read the second study)—it must be taught!—*J.E.G.* □

## 2. Knowing in Part and Prophesying in Part Until the Perfect Came

READ I CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, and consider this in the light of its larger context of chapters 12, 13, and 14. Especially let us look at verses 9 and 10 in  
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## Two Important and Related Bible Studies (Continued from Last Page)



chapter 13. "For we know in *part*, and we prophesy in *part*. But when that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is in *part* shall be done away."

This Scripture is quite revealing in the light of what our Lord said in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..." Earlier Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (Spirit), whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

At the time the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians they knew "in part," and they prophesied "in part," and they were looking to the time when that which was "perfect" would come so the "in part" situation would be done away. The word "PART" here means just what it says: a part, or a portion, in contrast and in relationship to the whole or that which is complete. In reference to the Greek word translated "PERFECT," the *Analytical Greek Lexicon* defines it as "complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited," and it gives I Corinthians 13:10 as an example of this usage.

But what about the *knowing* in part and *prophesying* in part? Paul, in Ephesians 3:2-5, speaks of the "mystery... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of man, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." We make a mistake if we think of the gift of prophecy only in terms of foretelling the future. Here it means to forth-tell the truth of God by direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So, Paul is saying, the Holy Spirit was in the process of guiding them into all truth. They did not receive the revelation of all the New Testament truths at once, but in "parts" along (you might say). Their knowledge was not complete, but the time was coming when this could be possible as far as God's revelation was concerned. As we pointed out, when the "perfect" (that which was "complete, entire, as opposed to what is limited," I Corinthians 13:10) was come, the in part situation would be "done away." When the Holy Spirit finished guiding the inspired men into all truth, and it was written down, this was accomplished.

Thereafter the supernatural spiritual gifts, which

were transferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Hebrews 2:3,4; Acts 8:18; Acts 19:6), were no longer needed. They came to an end. Paul had said, "... whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (I Corinthians 13:8). He makes a parallel of their situation in the early church to that of a child: "When I was a child, I *spake* as a child, I *understood* as a child, I *thought* as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (13:11). (Everything could be known and seen a lot clearer with the completed revelation of God—13:12; James 1:21-25; Hebrews 4:12,13; II Corinthians 3:18).

(It is naive to think that we have the spiritual gifts today. Some say we do, especially emphasizing the "tongues"—however, in the New Testament this was the gift of speaking in another human language theretofore unlearned by the person speaking, Acts 2:8; not some jibber-jabber. If we can have one of these spiritual gifts today, we can have all of them in the church. And the most important was the gift of prophecy, receiving and preaching God's truth in PLAIN language by direct divine revelation. If this is true, the Bible is not a completed or a closed book, and it could be added to by those who supposedly had the gift. Yes... and we have much confusion today!).

Now let us notice some ways in which the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, and how they knew in part and prophesied in part until that which was perfect came.

Even as God gave Moses his basic law, yet some things had to be spelled out more in detail along (Leviticus 24:10-23). This is especially true in the present age as people were making the transition from the Old Testament, which was but a shadow (Hebrews 10:1), to the reality of the New Testament religion. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, and they preached the truth. However, sometimes they didn't fully comprehend what they were saying, nor realize all its implications. It took several years for them to get around to putting it into practice.

A good illustration of this is the Great Commission. The Lord had said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And,

### ANSWERS TO "QUIZ OVER MOUNTAINS IN THE BIBLE"

1. Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4).
2. Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:1-14; II Chronicles 3:1).
3. Mount Seir (Genesis 36:8,9).
4. Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:4,29,30; Leviticus 26:46).
5. Mount Horeb (Deuteronomy 5:1-21).
6. Mount Hor (Numbers 20:22-29; 33:37-41).
7. Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 32:49-52; 34:1-6).
8. Mount Ebal (Deut. 11:29; 27:11-30:20; Joshua 8:30-35).
9. Mount Gerizim (Deut. 11:29; 27:11-30:20; Josh. 8:30-35).
10. Mount Hermon (Joshua 11:15-17).
11. Mount Tabor (Judges 4:4-14; Jeremiah 46:18).
12. Mount Gilboa (I Samuel 31:1-6; II Samuel 21:12).
13. Mount Zion (II Samuel 5:7; I Kings 8:1; II Kings 19:31; Psalms 48).
14. Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:17-45).
15. Mount Ephraim (II Chronicles 15:8; 17:2).
16. Mount Olivet (Mt. of Olives) (Luke 22:39-46; Acts 1:9-12).

as Matthew reads, it was to be taken to "all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The day the church was fully established among men (Acts 2; Mark 9) people were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins for salvation. Then Peter declared, "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). We know that those who were "afar off" refers to the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-17).

We are made to wonder what the apostles actually thought Jesus meant in the Great Commission. It seems that Peter did not get the full import of what the Holy Spirit guided him to say on the day of Pentecost. For about eight years or so they stayed in close to Jerusalem and preached the gospel just to the Jews. It took the special prodding of God and the great demonstration of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius before they would move on out and preach to the Gentiles. It took a persecution before they "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8).

Although they accepted Christ for salvation, the Jewish Christians had many hang-ups in making the complete transition to simple New Testament Christianity. They thought in terms of the temple, Jewish customs, and days. Perhaps the break in clarity and finality was not fully realized until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans. In the meantime, God led them step by step as these truths were "sinking in." Peter's vision, which led him to the house of the Gentile Cornelius, also taught him that God no longer made distinctions of clean and unclean animals (Acts 10). Then a few years later, the "council" at Jerusalem concluded that the Gentiles didn't have to be circumcised or keep the customs of the Jews (Acts 15). However, it was another thing with the Jewish Christians. Their clear-cut break was much longer in coming.

During this period of knowing in part and prophesying in part, we find Peter and John going to the temple at the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). Later in Asia Minor Paul had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews which were in those quarters" (Acts 16:3). We see that Paul had "shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow" (Acts 18:18). To the Ephesians he said, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem" (Acts 18:21). In Acts 20:6 Luke mentions their departure from a certain place "after the days of unleavened bread" (the Passover). In the same chapter it is said that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the "day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16). Acts 21:20-30 shows some of their problems and indecision in relationship to the Law of Moses.

But, God was leading them into all truth. By the time the New Testament Scriptures were concluded, there is no question mark about these things. Even in the stage of knowing in part, Jewish concepts were looked upon more as hang-ups (Romans 14); especially by Paul as he considered them in relationship to the Gentiles. Although some were still doing things Jewish, they could not connect justification to them. It was more of a matter of individual hang-ups. When such hang-ups were imposed on whole churches as their doctrine

(especially among the Gentiles), they were regarded as being in an apostate condition (Galatians).

Yes, the apostle Paul wrote to the early Christians, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (James used this same Greek word for perfect when he wished his readers in their trials to be "*perfect and entire, wanting nothing*," James 1:4, thus illustrating its meaning). We have the full, final, and completed revelation of God. It is "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." What advantages we have today! We have all of God's truth that he intended for us. Let us be faithful and diligent in studying that which God has taken the trouble and time to give us. We are a highly blessed people.—

—J. Gibbons

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# TRUTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

**OVER TOWARD** the end of the New Testament Scriptures you will find two great and outstanding little books, II and III John. As you make a study of one and then the other, you will find that they very much compliment one another. They show different sides of the same picture.

Most people remember John for what he had to say about love. Some even call him the great apostle of love. That is well and good, but he had a whole lot to say about truth also (perhaps he didn't separate the two). His love was not the fuzzy, wishy-washy, empty (though many times sentimental) kind many times espoused by compromisers today. He "greatly rejoiced" that people followed the TRUTH. In fact, he said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4).

To carry this a step further, let us back up one. The Psalmist wrote long ago, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. . . Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:97,104). Of the Lord Jesus himself we read, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:9). John, the apostle of love, relayed the message of this same Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia. In this message we find that he HATED the doctrines and deeds of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6,15). If you really love truth and right, you will hate every false way. A great love produces a great hatred. This is simply the other side of the same coin (LOVE/HATE).

With that behind us as a backdrop to what we are saying, let us get back to II and III John.

In II John we find John writing to "the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." Some think this is actually a Christian sister with the Greek for "elect lady" signifying her name. Others think John is talking about a church. Regardless, these Christians were confronted with false teachers, "For many false deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not

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# TRUTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

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that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (verse 7). They were warned, “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (verse 8). Then he made this strong assertion, “Whosoever transgresseth (goes beyond), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (verse 9). The expression “*doctrine of Christ*” is capable of two explanations (and applications), (1) Christ’s doctrine (having reference to what he taught, his teachings), and (2) doctrine about Christ himself, his person. Either way it is true (the first includes the second, and the second includes the first).

Then he continued, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (verses 10, 11). To receive these false teachers and bid them “God speed” was to be “partaker” of their evil deeds (teaching a false doctrine is an evil deed). *To receive them* means to receive them in the capacity as a religious teacher, and “*into your house*” may refer to your home (read on) or the building that houses the assembly of the church (notice Revelation 2:20, “I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants. . .”). A background to this thought may actually be found in what Jesus himself said when he sent his disciples out during his earthly ministry. “And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them” (Luke 9:4,5). Jesus further said, “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give a drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matthew 10:40-42). Therefore, it is easy for us to see why John said we would be “partaker of his evil deeds” if we received the false teacher and bid him “God speed” (the word translated “*God speed*” means rejoice, and was used as a word of greeting in meeting people and bidding them farewell—thus implying our best wishes, sympathy, and cordiality being with the false teacher). (Some who like to emphasize John’s love, fault him here, and part company with him).

If II John teaches that we are partaker (share in guilt) with the false teacher if we receive him (in the sense pointed out) into our house, III John teaches that we share in the good works of the faithful teacher, being “fellowhelpers to the truth” (III John 8). “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt

do well: Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles (heathen). We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (III John 5-8). John is talking about faithful traveling evangelists. They were to be received, given an audience, and sent on their way. That made the brethren “fellowhelpers” (i.e., “partakers”—II John 11) with them in what they were doing. This is the positive side of the negative picture presented in II John. In III John they were having problems with a certain usurper in the church, Diotrephes (who loved to have the preeminence), who would not receive these traveling evangelists or the apostle John himself—“neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (III John 9,10).

Beloved, all of this is very plain. Why supposed New Testament churches would practice otherwise, I don’t know. What is taught here does not fit in with the modern mentality of the world and religious circles. It offers no comfort (only guilt) to compromisers who would join endeavors with denominational false teachers, ministerial associations, and having guest speakers of the said stripe. The church of Jesus Christ is not a forum but “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15). The modern mind seems to be bankrupt in accepting, appreciating, and loving ultimate truth.

Nonetheless truth and relationships are important.

—J. Gibbons

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## While the Father Slept

**THERE IS A STORY** that a father once took his little girl out into a meadow. It was a hot day, and he lay down under a beautiful tree to enjoy everything. The little child ran about gathering flowers and brought them to her father, saying, “Pretty! Pretty!” Soon the father fell asleep, and the child wandered away. When he awoke, his first thought was, “Where is my child?!” He shouted at the top of his voice, but all that he heard was his voice echoing back. Running to a nearby hill, he looked around frantically, but she was not to be found. Then, he looked over a nearby cliff, and there upon the jagged rocks and thorny bushes below he saw the mangled body of his beloved little girl. Ever after, he accused himself of killing his little child, because while he was asleep, his little girl wandered over the precipice.

How many fathers and mothers are now sleeping while their children wander over cliffs and are falling into sins of every kind? (What a world we live in today!). Now is the time to train children in Christian principles, next year may be way too late (it will!). What a tragic day it will be for you, if you should awaken from your spiritual indifference to find that while you were sleeping, your child wandered far away! □

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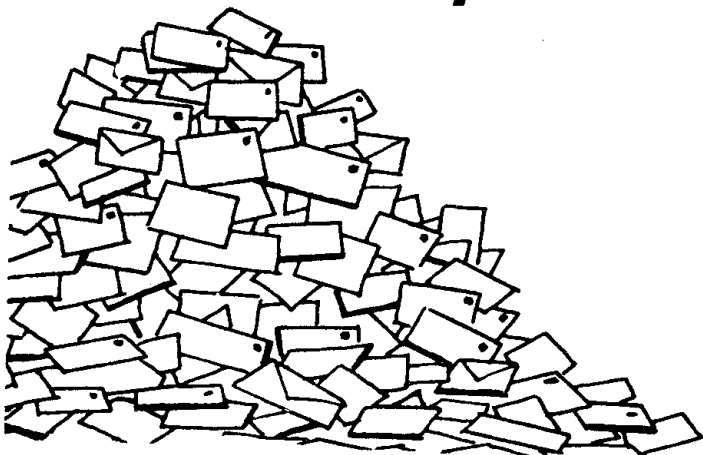
**LOVE: “Rejoiceth not in iniquity,  
but rejoiceth in the truth”**

—I Corinthians 13:6

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# READERS'

## ... Response



### OHIO:

■ "A friend recently mailed a copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* (vol. 24, no. 3) to me. The letter in your 'Readers Response' column from Ohio was completely false... I am serving on the executive committee of the North American Christian Convention and I do not know how the person who wrote to you could possibly say that the 'executive committee of the NACC decided that it is alright to have women deacons, elders, and preachers.' No such decision was made—nor would ever be made, because this group does not attempt to make decisions like that. All they do is plan the next convention.

"If you would send me the name and address of your correspondent, I would like to write him and inform him of the facts..."

■ "I was really sorry to read in your publication that the executive committee of the NACC 'decided that it is alright to have women deacons, elders, and preachers.'

"This is not so. It has never been discussed. Not in an executive committee. Not during the convention committee planning meeting. Not during the convention business meeting.

"You have hurt us by publishing an untruth, and you have not advanced the cause of our Lord and His church.

"You have an excellent paper, and I hope that you have a wide readership. 'Preaching the Word' and 'Feeding the Flock' are noble goals, high standards, worthy of every effort. May God grant you every blessing as you serve Him."

### EDITOR'S REPLY:

"I have been away this past weekend and consequently am only now getting your letter answered.

"As I wrote to Sam Stone who wanted the address of the person who wrote the said letter, 'You said that you would like to write him and 'inform him of the facts.' That is well and good, but I have a suggestion that is even better. Why don't you call him and ask him why he got such an impression. People just don't come 'out of the blue' with statements like that for no apparent reason. Would you do this, please?"

"Aside from the 'executive committee,' the essence of what was claimed about women preachers, elders, and deacons was taught at the convention (regardless of what else was said that might have given the impression that it was of the 'executive committee' or not). The people responsible for the convention hurt themselves in allowing it. The Bible says, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil,' and 'Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' Does the convention have no guide lines or control over whether the truth is presented or not

(and by whom)? You are not beyond criticism. In fact, you have publicly invited it.

"As a former denominationalist unreservedly (but humbly) committed to undenominational Christianity (the only kind), this is my impression.

"May the God of all truth be glorified in all things."

### CORRESPONDENT'S ANSWER:

(Larry Jackson to 1986 N.A.C.C. President)

"My questions to you are these: Do you know who is speaking at each of the sessions of the N.A.C.C.? And, do you know who presides over each session? Do you or the Executive Committee make decisions on who presides and who speaks at the sessions?"

"If you answer 'yes' to the above questions, then you knew Bruce Miller would preside over the session entitled 'Women as Leaders Today'. Now let me quote you, Mr. Meade, from your letter to me, 'you have been most unfair to spread such untrue information which you did not verify in anyway'. Mr. Meade, the session in which Mr. Miller presided over is where I get my information and verification. The following are quotes from Mr. Miller in his introduction: 'This is not a time or place for discussion whether women should take leadership roles in the church, we have established that'. Who is the 'we' Mr. Miller referred to? Mr. Miller goes on to say 'by two hundred years of activity' and 'in the planning state of this program by the N.A.C.C. Planning Committee we have already arrived at that place in our thinking'. Mr. Meade, in a letter from Sam Stone he states the Executive Committee plans the convention. Mr. Meade, since Mr. Miller is on the committee of the N.A.C.C. and did say 'the N.A.C.C. Planning Committee already has arrived at that place in our thinking'. Mr. Meade, that thinking is the N.A.C.C. Planning Committee has approved women as leaders today. Mr. Miller, in the session he presided over, made it quite clear he was talking about women as preachers, elders, and deacons. (And this Mr. Miller, former president of Minnesota Bible College, said that his father and family were baptized by a woman minister and that his daughter was a minister—Editor).

"Then, in the session 'Women As Leaders In New Testament' Dorothy Keister, speaker—let me quote her, 'I bowed my head and gave thanks for the men on the Executive Committee of the N.A.C.C. They believe there are women as leaders in the New Testament'. And on page nine of her manuscript, she twists the word of God to suit her position. She says (explaining Paul—editor), 'I am not presently permitting women to teach' (I Tim. 2:12). Now Mr. Meade, you and I both know Paul did not say, 'I am not presently permitting'. Paul said, 'I do not allow'. She also states 'women functioned as apostles'. Remember, Mr. Meade, it was the Executive Committee she thanked for her being there.

"Mr. Meade, you said 'no action was taken'. Someone took action somewhere writing the plans of this convention. And by allowing these people to speak you are the ones who have been unfair, not to me, but to God's Word."

### ARKANSAS:

■ "Thank you so very much for your true-to-the-gospel publication. It's refreshing in this day of 'many undesirable winds' to have a publication such as yours now going to all the 'Restoration' churches. Keep up the good work. . . May God bless you with strength, health, wisdom and faith to continue your good work."

### DELAWARE:

■ "I have just finished reading your last *SWORD AND STAFF* paper. Praise God!! for servants of Christ, as you all

(Continued on Next Page)

**READERS' RESPONSE...**

*(Continued from Last Page)*  
*are doing, in your publishing this paper...*

**NEVADA:**

■ *"I love every word of your writing, so good for me. I do pray you work will expand greatly. Please accept the small contribution enclosed. God bless you, your family, and staff."*

**GHANA:**

■ *"I have read through a copy of your magazine THE SWORD AND STAFF with great admiration. I will be very much grateful if you could put my address on your mailing list so that I could also be fed by such spiritual food. I am also interested in the following booklet and tracts..."*

**PHILIPPINES:**

■ *"...Your articles are interesting and very enlightening. May God give you more wisdom, strength, and courage in preaching His gospel."*

★★★★★★

**The Power of One**

**RECENTLY** in a political advertisement urging people to vote the following information was presented:

In the 1980 presidential election in the United States, approximately 22.1% of the eligible voters supported President Carter, 27.4% supported Governor Reagan, and a predominant 46.0% reflected their feelings by staying home.

Many no-voters, by way of explanation, suggested that one vote doesn't count. We offer the following evidence to the contrary.

**IN THE YEAR:**

\* 1645—One vote gave Oliver Cromwell the control of England.

\* 1649—One vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.

\* 1776—One vote gave America the English language instead of German.

\* Thomas Jefferson and John Q. Adams were elected President by one vote in the Electoral College.

\* 1839—One vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts.

\* 1845—One vote brought Texas into the Union. As a matter of fact, California, Oregon, and Washington were each admitted by 1-vote margins.

\* 1868—One vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment.

\* 1876—One vote gave Rutherford Hayes the presidency of the United States, and this vote was cast by a Congressman from Indiana who had himself won his own election by only 1 vote.

\* 1876—One vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic.

\* 1923—One vote gave Adolph Hitler leadership of the Nazi party.

\* 1960—One vote per precinct elected John Kennedy President of the United States.

Never underestimate the power of one.

And, religiously speaking, you are important. The church is made up of many individual members just like you. Each one is very precious in God's sight and

very important in his/her contribution to the function of the body and the ongoing of the kingdom of heaven. It is simply amazing what God can do with just one person if that person will fully devote himself to His cause.

As someone has said:

*"I'm only one, but I am one."*

*I can't do everything, but I can do something.*

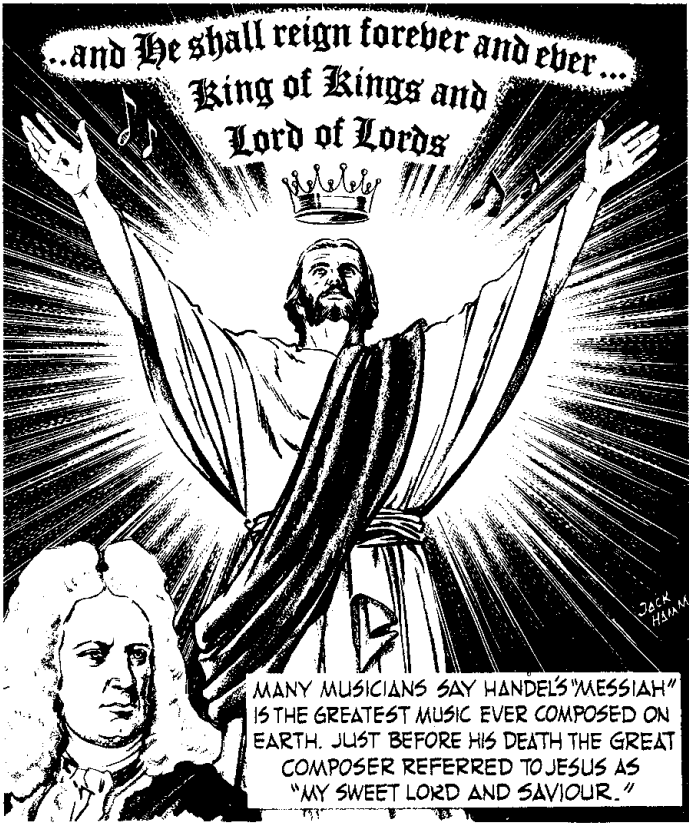
*What I can do, I ought to do,*

*And What I ought to do, with the help of God, I will do!"*

□

★★★★★★

**ETERNAL ORATORIO**



★★★★★★

**The Proud and Haughty**

**"EVERY ONE** that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5).

The proud and haughty are abominable to God. In naming the things hated by the Lord, Solomon lists first: "A proud look" (Proverbs 6:17). "The pride of life" is as much "of the world" as is "the lust of the flesh" (I John 2:16).

Pride and haughtiness pave the way for destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Their own powers cannot secure them against God. Though the proud may seek to strengthen themselves by alliances and confederacies with others of like disposition, they shall not escape the righteous judgment of God! For God's Word says, "...though hand join in hand, he shall not go unpunished."

Frail, puny and sinful human beings will do well to heed the warning. —P. Keller

□

★★★★★★



# Baptism?

IS water baptism essential for the forgiveness of sins? Is it possible to be a Christian before or apart from baptism? Is there salvation without baptism? Is water baptism valid, even though the person baptized intellectually rejects the Biblical purpose of baptism?

Is baptism necessary so that your sins may be forgiven? According to the inspired apostle Peter, the answer is yes (Acts 2:38), "Then Peter said unto them, Let each one of you repent and be immersed, in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to the remission of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The question is, would the three thousand who responded to Peter's message have been added to the church had they made this statement, "Peter, we have already said the sinner's prayer, our sins are now forgiven, but we will be baptized as an example of our faith"? Is that valid baptism?

Is it likely that one may be a Christian before or apart from baptism? The apostle Paul states that we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), "For as many of you as have been immersed into Christ, have put on Christ." What if the Galatians would have responded as such, "Paul, our relatives are all good Christians, and they were not immersed; you can not tell me that this is the only way one becomes a Christian. Yes, we were all immersed, but it certainly had no bearing on us putting on Christ"? Is that valid baptism?

Is there salvation apart from baptism? Jesus said no (Mark 16:16), "He who has believed, and has been immersed, will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." What do you imagine would have been the reaction of Jesus, had the eleven replied in the following manner, "We were saved the minute we believed in you, Jesus; water baptism has no part in salvation; however, we will preach baptism as an act of obedience"? Is that valid baptism?

Is immersion for the wrong reason a valid baptism? Most Christians would agree that water baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sin, however some would be willing to accept believers who were immersed unscripturally as brothers in Christ; yet, no one would seriously consider one who would deny faith and repentance as essential, as being in a saved state. If we can safely say, that we were baptized, but it had nothing to do with our salvation, why then, can we not assert that we repented, but that it had no bearing on receiving remission of sin? Can we not also say, that believing in Jesus is apart from salvation because we were saved by grace alone?

If we have to be intellectually correct concerning the necessity of faith and repentance for the remission of sin, then does it not logically follow we should be re-immersed in situations where persons were baptized for the wrong reason?

We must either be saved according to God's Word or free to choose our own plan. Which will it be? It can not be multiple choice salvation.—**S.P. Finnell** □

(Scripture from: THE BETTER VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by Chester Estes)

★★★★★★

# Lenski on I Peter 3:1-4

"WHEN a heathen husband sees that by conversion his wife is changed from vanity, love of display, and other feminine vices to the true beauty of a new spirit, he must surely be drawn to a religion that is able to produce such wonders of grace."

—**R.C.H. Lenski**

★★★★★★

## How to Become Miserable

1. Think only of yourself.
2. Talk primarily about yourself.
3. Use "I" in your conversation as much as possible.
4. Consider yourself more important than others.
5. Be jealous and envious.
6. Be sensitive to any slighting remarks or treatment.
7. Feel neglected.
8. Do as little as possible for others.
9. Shirk your duty if you can.
10. Sulk if people are not grateful for your favors.
11. Insist on attention, consideration and respect.
12. Trust no one.
13. Be suspicious of all people at all times.
14. Never forget criticism.
15. Never forgive.
16. Demand agreement with your view on everything.
17. Always watch for faults in others.
18. Grumble and complain whenever possible.
19. Be argumentative.
20. Frown a lot.

□

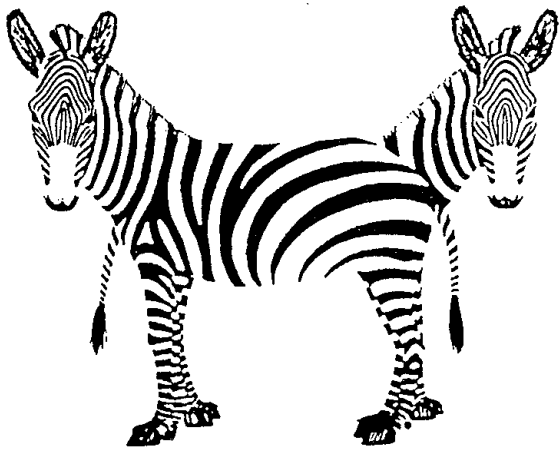
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## Condemned Like a Criminal

**MANKIND** is like a criminal who has been condemned. We see this poor wretched convict in his cell. He has broken the law; he's doomed. It is only a matter of time until he will be executed. He has a visitor—along comes the *moralist*. Looking through the bars of the cell, he says to the poor fellow who will soon go to the electric chair, "Be good!" The convict looks at him with disgust, "Be good. . . what good will that do me now?" Then comes the *philosopher* to the cell, looks through the bars, and says to the convict, "You see that opening up there? If you stand in the right place and keep your eyes fixed up there, you will see the beauty of the sunlight by day and the stars by night." The convict replies, "That's a very nice observation, sir, good advice; but it's not going to get me out of the electric chair!" Then the *evangelist* with a spirited step comes walking down the corridors of the jail. As he excitedly peers through the bars he says to the convict, "You are free! The LORD has paid the penalty of your crimes. Now go out and with joyful gratitude to Him keep the law that you have broken, and practice the morals of a good citizen."—**Selected** □

★★★★★★

**JESUS only asks one thing of you: YOU.**



# Confused About Which Way to Go?

GO BACK TO THE BIBLE AND THE LOCAL  
UNDENOMINATIONAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH  
AND YOU WILL BE RIGHT ON COURSE.

★★★★★★

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE:

BELOW is a listing of booklets, tracts, and materials published by *The Sword and Staff* and currently available from us. The "price" is a suggested offering to submit when making an order to help us continue this endeavor. Thanks.

- ☐ *Our Great and Glorious God*—25¢ each.
- ☐ *The Subject of the Holy Spirit Made Simple*—1 copy, 35¢; 1 to 99 copies, 25¢ each; 100 or more, 20¢ each.
- ☐ *Ojections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered*—8¢ each.
- ☐ *Obeying the Gospel Chart*—8¢ each.
- ☐ *Meaning of Suffering in the Life of a Christian*—10¢ each.
- ☐ *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*—6¢ each.
- ☐ *The Origin of Religious Misunderstanding and False Teaching*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Are Visions, Dreams, and Religious Experiences Proof of Salvation?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *The Letter That Was Never Answered*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *"Easter" Every Sunday*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Getting Informed About Rock Music*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Is It Wrong for a Christian to Use Tobacco?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Are You Sanctified?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Every Sunday?*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *Sequel to "Every Sunday"*—3¢ each.
- ☐ *A Question About the Sabbath*—2¢ each.

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(Clip and Mail)

Gentlemen:  
Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of *The Sword and Staff*. ☐ New; ☐ Renew.

Name: .....  
Address (with zip): .....

(Check for bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*)

- ☐ 1975-76 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.25
- ☐ 77-78-79 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.50
- ☐ 80-81-82 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.75
- ☐ 1983-84 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.95

# Treasure

MANY WHO love the Word of God have discovered Treasure much to their liking when they bought the bound volumes of the 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 still available (while they are available), and place your order for good reading. Make them a part of your library and your life.



★★★★★★

## Bulletin:

- **FREE:** Much needed booklet, *God's Organization for the Church* (one copy or in numbers); also, assorted leaflets and plaques of importance.
- **SAMPLES:** If by accident you receive a duplicate copy of *The Sword and Staff* this time, pass it on—extra samples are being sent out.—Editor

★★★★★★

—HELP US REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE AND CHURCHES WITH THIS PUBLICATION—Thanks!

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