

The Sword AND Staff

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

When Faith Takes Hold in Evangelism

■ By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive—Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030



The Empty Tomb

■ *"AND JESUS came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit): 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 (age)" (MATTHEW 28:18-20).*

■ *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned" (MARK 16:15,16).*

tidings and assimilating them into their lives).

What about Christianity distinguishes it from all other religions of the world that it should call what it preaches and teaches the gospel (good news)? Although its standards are unsurpassed, it is not morality alone for is not the Jewish religion based on the Ten Commandments (and haven't the Mohammedians borrowed many of the Old Testament concepts)? And other religions are not totally void of some good. Having a founder within itself is not enough to make Christianity distinct either (unless there is something especially distinctive about the founder), for other religions of the world have their founders (although human). The distinctive element will be discovered in a closer examination of that which is called the gospel. Although morality is a must in true religion, it within itself has proved ineffective in cementing man's relationship to the God who made him for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The heart of the matter is found in I Corinthians 15:1-4. The apostle Paul defines the gospel as the good news concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was preceded by a sinless and perfect life (which man had theretofore been unable to accomplish). Although Christ was sinless (and because he was sinless), he died on the old rugged cross for the sins of the world. He was buried in the tomb, but the third day he came forth victorious over sin, death, and the grave;

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I. OPTIMISM WILL PREVAIL AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE.

When faith takes hold in evangelism, optimism will prevail among God's people (after all faith is a positive and not a negative force).

The word "gospel" itself is alive with the feeling and thought of optimism. It literally means good news, glad tidings, or the glad message that is full of optimism. Our word "evangelism" has its roots in the Greek word for gospel, *euangelion*. The word for "preach the gospel" (in the New Testament) is *euangelizo* from which our "evangelize" is derived. Evangelize means to herald forth the news that is full of gladness, and our acquired meaning in the word includes the successful results of doing this (people gladly receiving the glad

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Proverbially SPEAKING...

"THE PROOF of the pudding is in the eating" (try some).

"Live simply so that others may simply live" (both physically and spiritually).

To belittle is to be little (people who belittle really show how little they really are).

"The most difficult part of getting to the top of the ladder is getting through the crowd at the bottom."

When faithful gospel preaching and writing stirs honest minds and emotions, good comes from it—but when minds are not thus stirred, only the emotions, it causes negative commotions.

"Some men can credit their success to the fact that they did not have the advantages others had."

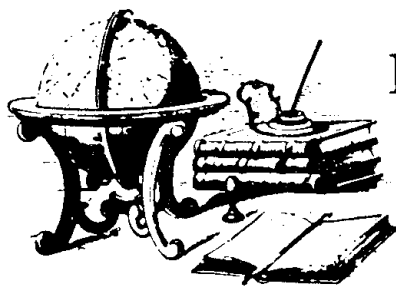
"Unity in diversity" which does not seriously take into consideration doctrine is but a slight modification of the old "it matters not what you believe just so you are sincere" line.

"Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there."

Sound preaching must have more than sound to it (and abrasive preaching is not necessarily strong preaching—it may be just a weak human being venting his insecurities).

Jesus did not come to save us IN our sins but FROM our sins (Matthew 1:21).

Temper gets us into trouble; pride keeps us there.



EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

"IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE"

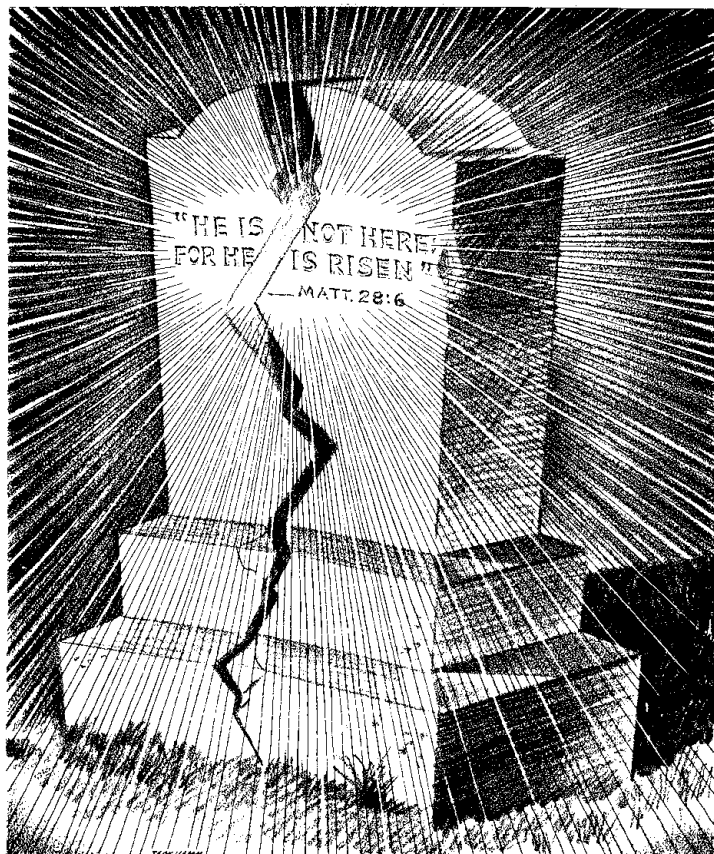
I CORINTHIANS 15:51-53 is a most interesting, provocative, remarkable and reassuring section of Scripture (in an equally great chapter on the resurrection). It reads: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

In the language of the New Testament a mystery is not that which cannot be understood, but that which has not been revealed yet. Paul now adds to their knowledge some amazing and theretofore undisclosed information involving the resurrection from the dead. When the last trumpet summons all to appear before God, the resurrection will therewith take place. The new information is that not only will all of the departed brothers and sisters who have ever lived be raised, but the living Christians will be likewise changed (at the same time) into their eternal bodies. Immortality will be theirs (ours).

The amazing thing about it all is how fast it will take place: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." We get our modern word "atom" from the Greek word translated "moment." *Atomos* ("moment") literally means, uncut, that which cannot be cut in two or divided, indivisible. (Thus, the word was used of the smallest particle of matter, which was called an atom with the thought that it could not be divided—although we have lived to see the atom split). What is so astounding about what Paul says here is that all of the resurrected and changed saints will be made that way instantaneously. So fast will it happen that a moment of time cannot be reckoned. Before you have time to "bat" your eye, time will be no more. The physical eye in the process of "twinkling" will drop the scales of mortality, will cease to exist, and the body that will last forever will come into being. Just like that! How utterly fantastic!

Oh how puny, beggarly, and limited are our concepts of God! We are convinced that it has never entered the mind of finite man as to just how wonderful, awesome, and mighty God is (He is the boundless Almighty God, *El Shaddai*, of eternity). Just think! "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" we will be changed into bodies that will last forever; it will happen to every saint who has ever lived and is alive. And to think there are those who believe in "theistic evolution." They believe through the process that involved millions upon millions of years God brought mankind into being through evolution. Nonsense! Besides what it says in the first two chapters of Genesis, if the LORD God can make eternal bodies (yes, bodies that will be around forever) in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye," how

utterly unthinkable that it took Him millions upon millions of years to make the first man and woman in their physical bodies. (Truly, HOW GREAT THOU ART!). □



EDITORIAL *Byways*

A REALIZATION OF AN AWFUL REALITY

I WAS on my way home from visiting the Burn Center of the University of Virginia hospital in Charlottesville. C.W. ("Witten") Leonard (a good friend and brother in the Lord), along with a fellow-worker, had been severely injured in an explosion and fire at the Lumber Company where they worked in Galax. Brother Leonard, because no other means could be found, took the burning clothes off his fellow-worker with his bare hands. I was leaving the hospital where they had been flown for emergency treatment and hospitalization. Other burn victims were there. I will never forget what I saw. One could not help but think of hell. I kept thinking, sin must really be an awful thing for God to have a place like hell; and, how we need to be serious about this matter of serving the God who made us.

Although we seldom hear anything about it (except in a curse word, and not from our polished, men-pleasing, modern-day clergymen who consider it too "crude"), or see anything in print on the subject, hell is definitely one of the teachings of the Bible (both heaven and hell are taught as a reality). Although some are unaware of it, the Lord Jesus Christ said more about hell than any other person in the Bible.

Being God, He knew and could tell the fate of unrepentant sinners without hesitation. (And that is why He came into the world: *to save us*. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus himself said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" Luke 19:10).

Jesus used the word *gehenna* and *hades* in speaking of that which was beyond (both Greek words are rendered as "hell" in the older versions). Once while on a Bible lands tour we were riding on the tour bus on the outskirts of the southwestern side of Jerusalem when our Israeli guide Zvi somewhat astounded everyone by saying, "You are now in hell." What he had reference to was *Gehenna*, the word used by Jesus to describe the place of final punishment. *Gehenna* really means valley of Hinnom. In the Old Testament period when Israel fell into idolatry, this valley was the place where they at times offered their children as human sacrifices in the fire to the god Molech (II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; etc.). Josiah put a stop to this in his time of reformation (II Kings 23:10). This valley was regarded as a detestable place, defiled and polluted. And as time went by, we are told, it became a place of disposing refuse (even a place of burning in this respect). It is easy for us to see how this term "Gehenna" came to be used to refer to the place of final disposal and punishment of the wicked. This is the way Jesus used it time and time again. For example in Mark 9:47,48 he speaks of the possibility of being cast into "hell (*gehenna*) fire; Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Hades (literally, the unseen) was the other word used by Jesus, and both the righteous and the wicked are pictured as entering into this realm (even Jesus himself in his death, Luke 23:46; Acts 2:31). Some have erroneously played upon this word "hell" (as in the older translations representing the word *hades*), saying that the grave is all there is to hell (i.e., the J.W.'s).

Then others would not go quite so far. However, they dogmatically assert that in hell fire the wicked are totally annihilated, completely destroyed, done away with forever. They quote such Scriptures as Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to *destroy* both soul and body in hell." They strongly point to the word "destroy" (Greek: *apollumi*) to make their point. But a careful study of this word,

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ALWAYS THERE

*Every time I go to church
And do more than visit
So when at last I'm carried in
The Lord won't have to ask,
"Who is it?"*

EDITORIAL *Byways*

(Continued from Last Page)

the varied contexts in which it is used, and the various ways it is translated will remove such dogma. Notice (KJV): translated “perish” (Luke 5:37; II Peter 3:6); “destroy” (Mark 1:24); “lose” (Luke 15:4,8,9); “lost” (Matthew 10:6; 15:24; Luke 15:24,32; John 6:12); “will be marred” (Mark 2:22); “die” (John 18:14). Here we have skin bottles and the world destroyed (*apollumi*), but still in existence. Demons talk in terms of being destroyed (yet they are going to be around forever). Coins and sheep that have had this happen to them are still around (found), as well as the son that returned home. The fact that the word is translated “will be marred” in reference to the skin wine bottles defuses dogmatic thought of annihilation. Then in one place it is rendered to “die.” We conclude that the Greek word, like our English word destroy, is capable of a wide variety of meanings (and annihilation would not be excluded at times). To annihilate is to destroy, but to destroy is not always to annihilate. As someone has said (pertaining to this word in the New Testament), the idea in the word is not necessarily extinction, but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.

The episode of the demon crying out to Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum should help us “*nail down*” the meaning of *apollumi* as applied to destroy and eternal punishment. He cried out, “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to **destroy** us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). On another occasion the unclean spirits (demons) who possessed the Gadarene demoniacs likewise cried out to Jesus, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29). In one place the demons speak of being destroyed and in another of being tormented. What were they talking about? The picture is beginning to unfold. In Matthew 25:31-46 the second coming of Christ and the day of judgment is upon us. Men are divided as sheep and goats. Verse 41 reads, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Then verse 46 sums it up, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal.” Here we have the condemned sinners being discharged to the place of “everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels*.” As well as lost humanity, the devil and his angels (demons) will be there (in fact, it was originally prepare for them, as they well know). It is called “everlasting fire” and “everlasting punishment.” Therefore, when the demon (and demons) asked if Jesus had come to destroy (or torment) them before “the time,” they were not talking about annihilation. In Revelation 20:10 we read, “And *the devil* that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Then we have the One sitting on the great white throne judging the earth, and the chapter concludes, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revela-

tion 20:15) (having the same fate with the devil and his angels).

It is not a very attractive, lovely, or comforting picture, is it? Oh, how disturbing and dreadful! But sin is not a pretty picture either. Few of us (if any) really know or understand just how awful sin is. We have never experienced the awesomeness of the absolute perfection and holiness of God. Nothing polluted or defiled can come before Him. Too many times, perhaps for our own selfish purposes, we have made God over into the likeness of our own sinful selves. He is so spinelessly doting and “loving” that He will overlook all sin. What a pushover! Then how devastating to the cause and purity of true religion are these funeral “parsons” who never fail to get anyone through the “Pearly Gates.” Everybody goes to heaven. Evidently hell has gone out of business. But, alas, sin is just as awful as it ever was, and it appears this old world is getting more wicked every day! Let us snap out of the insipid thoughts of today! If we do not believe in the awfulness of sin and the reality of hell, we will have a hard time even appreciating the grace of God (let alone being saved). We are saved from the wrath of God through the love and grace of God when we submit ourselves to His will.

Yes, there are many things about hell we do not understand, but (never forget it) the reality of such a place is taught in the Bible. What a sobering thought! Where is hell? At the end of an ungodly and Godless life! “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (II Corinthians 5:10,11a).—*J. Gibbons*

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Are You Faithful?

WE SPEAK often about “faithfulness.” One asks of another, “Is he faithful?” Are you a faithful follower of Jesus? A quiz has been devised to determine if you apply the same standards to your religion as in other areas of your life.

If your car starts one out of three times, do you consider it “faithful”?

If your paper carrier skips the Monday and Thursday editions, would they be “missed”?

If you fail to come to work two or three days a month, would your boss call you “faithful”?

If your refrigerator quits for a day now and then, do you excuse it and say, “Oh, well, it works most of the time”?

If your water heater greets you with cold water one or two mornings a week, would it be “faithful”?

If you miss a couple of mortgage payments in a year’s time, would your mortgage holder say, “Oh well, ten out of twelve isn’t bad”?

If you miss worship once or twice a month, are you faithful?

And what about the following (as someone has added):

If your boss paid you once or twice a month when he was suppose to pay you weekly, would you call him “faithful”?

If you give with no regard for how you’ve prospered, are you “faithful”?

Are we consistent in our standards in all areas of life (including our religion)? What about it now?—

—Adapted

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yes, he came forth to die no more. He is called the “first fruits” of them who slept, implying our resurrection too. Because he lives, we too shall live. All of humanity has the opportunity to experience the glorious resurrection and eternal life (if they will but accept it).

The glory of Christ’s resurrection, and just how wonderful the good news was initially, is not understood or fully appreciated without viewing it before the extended backdrop of a despairing world lost in sin and humanity universally experiencing death. Think of all the countless numbers who had gone through this grim experience since the time of Adam (think of the heartaches, the misery, the hopelessness) (now one has broken that chain!). And we cannot begin to appreciate the resurrection of Christ without being aware of some of the dreadful details of the awful ordeal that went before, how he drank that bitter cup. Think of how he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemene, the betrayal, the dispersal and despair of his disciples, the mock trials, the heartless scourgings, the crown of thorns, the total humiliation of it all, and the crucifixion (the most heartless act of all); and, yes, his pitiful and

plaintive cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken men?”—it appeared to any onlooker that all was lost. The one who had come to seek and save the lost, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world, the one they thought would redeem Israel—where was he now? He saved others, let him save himself. (But the darkest hour comes right before the dawn, we are told). Yes, in fear and utter despair the would-be disciples had fled—it was left to a secret disciple and some women to bury the battered and lifeless body of Jesus. After the silent interlude of the sabbath, the women returned to the borrowed tomb to finish the work of embalming. What they saw and heard was totally unexpected. One trauma of unbounded proportions is followed by another.

Before an open tomb the women were confronted by a magnificent, unearthly visitor (“His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,” Matthew 28:3). Needless to say, they were overcome with great fear, but the angelic being said unto them, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead: and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you” (Matthew 28:5-7). Then we read, “And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.” The excitement experienced by Peter and John in their footrace to the tomb to see what had happened (John 20) was but a fitting and stirring prelude to the increasing tempo that was to follow.

To summarize the resurrection appearances of Jesus, we quote B. W. Johnson. “The appearances were: 1. To Mary Magdalene alone (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18), near Jerusalem—Sunday, April 9. 2. To the women returning from the sepulcher (Matthew 28:9,10). 3. To Simon Peter alone (Luke 24:34). 4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24:13), etc. 5. To the apostles at Jerusalem, excepting Thomas, who was absent (John 20:19). These all the same day. 6. To the apostles at Jerusalem a second time, when Thomas was present (John 20:26,29)—Sunday, one week later. 7. At the Sea of Tiberias, when seven disciples were fishing (John 21:1). 8. To the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16). 9. To above five hundred brethren at once (I Corinthians 15:6), in Galilee, near the time of the last. It is possible that these two are identical. 10. To James alone (I Corinthians 15:7). 11. To all the apostles on Mt. Olivet at his ascension (Luke 24:51)—Thursday, May 18. 12. We may add to these that he was seen by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3), and by John on Patmos (Revelation 1:13).”

Jesus Christ was no longer dead, but alive forever more! He really was who he said he was. What faith, boundless optimism, and far reaching results this good news brought! Fearful, timid, and unbelieving Galileans become **BOLD SPOKESMEN** for Christ (and could not be silenced), fearing neither Jewish or Roman powers, scourgings, or death itself! The solid cer-

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tainty of their message, the total conviction of the reality of Christ's resurrection (and consequently their own), and their unquestioned realization that they were God's ordained spokesmen to bear witness of this to the whole world gave them such boldness and optimism that they feared no one. That rugged fisherman from Galilee, who before had denied Jesus and been ignobly dispersed with the rest of the disciples, publicly declared (right in Jerusalem) with unflinching boldness and total certainty on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Read further of their boldness in Acts 4:10-12. When threatened by the great council of the Jews for what they were preaching, we read, "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20). No wonder 3000 were added to their number on the day of Pentecost. No wonder do we read that their number soon became 5000, not counting women and children. No wonder do we read that they were accused of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). No wonder do we read that the Lord added to their number daily. No wonder (in the light of the truth of the resurrection) the apostle would later exclaim, "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 15:58). They didn't wring their hands and say, "Look what the world is coming to," but rather, "Look what is coming to the world!"

During the early days of this country (U.S.A.) there was much talk about the "manifest destiny" of the United States. What a great land even lay beyond the frontier of the original thirteen colonies: the virgin fields and forests, the wooded wonderlands, the natural waterways, the untapped resources. Part of the continent was claimed by other countries. But with "manifest destiny" in their mind, optimism prevailed as the pioneers moved west and new territories were annexed and settled. A great country was envisioned as extending from sea to shining sea. In view of the situation, the French called Andrew Jackson the Napoleon of the woods. After Florida became part of this country, it was then said that Cuba belonged to the United States like a boot belongs on a foot (but this was never realized).

The church of Jesus Christ has a manifest destiny in this world. This is clearly seen in prophecy. Didn't Isaiah say in Isaiah 9:6,7, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from

THEY GO HAND IN HAND



henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"? Also consider Isaiah 11:9,10. And what about the Second Psalm? Plainly this is talking about Christ (read all of it). "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (verse 7b) speaks of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:33). Then verses 8 and 9 read, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen (the nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (all of this in prophetic language, it seems, has reference to evangelism, conversion, and surrender to Christ, Matthew 21:42-44, after which he will reign in the people's lives as The Prince of Peace). And didn't Daniel tell about a stone that was cut out without hands which smote the image of world powers and "filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34,35)? Yes, on the day of the establishment of the church among men Peter made it plain that Jesus had been raised from the dead to sit upon the throne of David (Acts 2:30,31). The manifest destiny of that kingdom was to encompass the world.

The great commission the Lord Jesus gave his disciples on the peak of his resurrection glory shows the manifest destiny of the church. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16). "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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 28:18b-

20). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)—that is why the gospel must be preached to all. The world (all nations) is lost. The gospel ("glad tidings") is to be taken where ever man is found. The church has its commission and manifest destiny spelled out. Not only were the original ones who received that great commission to go, part of the commission said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He had just commanded them to go, preach, and baptize. This was part of all things commanded, so they in turn would have to teach their converts to go, preach, and baptize (and teach others to observe all things). This unending cycle would insure that the good news would be carried throughout the world unto the end of the world. And the Lord had said, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)" (the blest assurance of divine assistance and the time frame of the commission made evident, "unto the end of the world"). The manifest destiny of the church pointed to a world to be won to Christ and ultimately the destination of heaven. The kingdom of heaven would finally end up there (I Corinthians 15:24).

When faith takes hold in evangelism, optimism will prevail among the people of God. It can't help but prevail. The message that we preach is exciting good news that produces abounding faith and optimism. All of the promises of God in Christ are yea, yea and amen (II Corinthians 1:20). The gates of hell will not and cannot prevail against the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18). The manifest destiny of the church is in the other direction. Even as the body of Jesus could not be kept in the tomb, what we stand for cannot be kept behind four walls (neither in the confines of our heart). It cannot be contained and will eventually break forth and compel us to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. The manifest destiny of the church is world evangelism.

II. THE LOCAL CHURCH WILL REALIZE ITS GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY.

When faith takes hold in evangelism, the local church will realize its God-given responsibility of evangelizing the world (and do something about it).

We have just noticed the great commission given by our Lord. This commission could very well be called the charter of the church. It was not just for the apostles alone for it was to be carried out "unto the end of the world (age)" (and all of the apostles died in the first century). The apostles were to go, preach, baptize, and teach men to observe all things Christ had commanded. As we have just pointed out, this teaching of their converts to observe all things Christ had commanded would of necessity involve teaching them what they had just been commanded: *go, preach, baptize, teach men to observe all things commanded*. This unending cycle would make the church self-perpetuating as it filled the world. The first preaching of the apostles under this commission in Acts 2 got the church going (established), and the ball has been in its court ever since. When we fail to carry out the great commission, we are failing to live by our charter, and cannot claim

the promise of Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Everything is conditional.

Paul charged the church at Corinth, "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 15:58). "The work of the Lord" takes in many things, but the main thrust and heart of it all is what Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). And Paul put a big exclamation mark on this by saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15). And didn't this same Paul say that it was by the church the manifold wisdom of God was made known (Ephesians 3:10), and that the church was the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15)? The book of Revelation ends by saying, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

As the apostles were the official eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, it was left to them to get the "ball rolling." Before ascending back to heaven, the Lord had reminded them, "But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost (Spirit) is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2 the church was established. Through the leadership of the apostles Jerusalem was filled with the gospel. One victory right after another is recorded. Providential happenings resulted in the gospel being carried to other regions. Then the great spearhead of world evangelism made its thrust from the church at Antioch in Syria. From here Paul and other workers were sent out to evangelize the Mediterranean world. Each new church in turn was seen evangelizing its immediate area and elsewhere.

Let us point out, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ exists (Scripturally speaking) in an organized sense and in an unorganized sense in this world. The Lord used the apostles in getting the church going among men, and as they were led into all truth (as Jesus promised, John 16:13), we find local, independent, autonomous churches coming into being (Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; etc.). In an organizational sense the local unit was all there was to it. However, individually every Christian was to be doing the work of the Lord where ever he found himself. In different cases the local church sent men out from their midst to evangelize the world. So, whether from the organizational viewpoint or that of individuals in the unorganized sense, the church was out to win the world to Christ.

The burden and driving compulsion of men who worked in this exciting endeavor (such as the apostle Paul) finds expression many times in their writings. Hear the apostle Paul. "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14,15).

(Continued on Next Page)

When Faith Takes Hold in Evangelism *(Continued from Last Page)*

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:16). "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . For the love of Christ constraineth me; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (II Corinthians 5:11a,14). "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

How wonderful when the Lord's church realizes its divinely appointed purpose in this world! But what happens when the local church fails to recognize, let alone accept, its God-given responsibility?

It is quite simple. God moves on. In the great commission the Lord had made a promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." A closer look at this will show that this promise is conditional. The "if" is implied. *If* we are going to the lost, *if* we are faithfully preaching the gospel, *if* we are baptizing (immersing) people into Christ, and *if* we are teaching them to observe all things Christ commanded—only then can we claim the promise, "Lo, I am with you." The Lord is not with us if we are not abiding by the great commission, the charter of the church. God moves on.

History bears this out. Jerusalem was a center of beehive activity and evangelism in the middle of the first century. The first few chapters of Acts bear testimony to this. How the church got off to a great start! But as time went by, we know how the Judaizers corrupted the truth. Their mission in all of its exciting purity and simplicity was forgotten. God moved on. Antioch in Syria became the center of Christian activity during the second half of the first century. Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas and, no doubt, others were sent out from here to evangelize the world. There were many occasions of great rejoicing. But with the passing of time, we understand, the evils of a pagan city corrupted and paralyzed the church. It forgot its mission. God moved on. Other places were great centers of evangelism. No doubt, Ephesus was one of them. However, we read in Revelation 2:4,5, "...I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." And eventually this did happen. God moved on.

As God moves on the church degenerates and continues to degenerate into something less than itself, and before long it will cease to be a church of Christ. At first it may be sort of a religious club, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Timothy 3:5). The churches may think of themselves as the keepers of the (musty) traditions of the Christian religion (with many accumulated ones). And finally they may come to think of themselves as more of a social organization and community cultural center. There is

nothing distinctive about what they stand for; they are just another civic organization.

Still, in the midst of this, a few sincere souls may have the feeling that the church is not fulfilling its divinely appointed purpose in the world. The local church is not getting the job done so other organizations are brought into being to fill the need (i.e., missionary societies, evangelizing organizations, etc.). God's agency is operationally defunct and now is bypassed in man's efforts to somehow fulfill the great commission.

Then at the same time within the local church men may try to get things going again by "gimmicks, goodies, and gumdrops." The church and members are not doing their part, so shortcut methods are resorted to in order to build up the church. Shortcut methods, although many times bringing in large numbers, only re-

(Continued on Page 10)

HAVE YOU THOUGHT?

Have you ever stopped to wonder
What this life is all about?
Why you're here and where you're going
When your lease on time runs out?
Maybe you've been far too busy,
Trying hard to reach your goal;
Would you let me ask you kindly,
Have you thought about your soul?
You may reach the highest portals,
And your dreams may all come true;
Wealth and fame may be your portion,
And success may shine on you.
All your friends may sing your praises,
Not a care on you may roll;
What about the great tomorrow—
Have you thought about your soul?
Don't forget your days are numbered,
Though you may be ridin' high;
But like all of us poor mortals,
Someday you'll just up and die.
Your success and fame and glory
Won't be worth the bell they toll;
Let me ask you just one question,
Have you thought about your soul?
If you've never thought it over,
Spend a little time today;
There is nothing more important
That will ever come your way
Than the joy of sins forgiven,
And to know you've been made whole
In the name of Christ the Saviour.
Have you thought about your soul?

—Selected



LETTER SENT TO HEADS OF TV NETWORKS (CBS, NBC, ABC NETWORKS)

CBS, Inc.
Mr. Thomas Wyman, Chrm.
51 West 52nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Mr. Wyman:

For some time now I have really wondered what the heads of the various television networks thought about the increasing volume of negative things that are being said (from many and varied quarters) about the alleged negative influence of television upon our society today. Some are saying that Judeo-Christian morality is under attack. Still others, who are not particularly governed by moral concern, blame television as a heavy contributor to many of our social ills. Increasingly I am brought face to face with these charges in newspapers, magazines, and other sources. Again, as I said, it made me wonder about your reaction to such serious indictments. Do you accept responsibility, or do you operate on the basis of responsibility to the public in these matters?

The following is from the *Winston-Salem Journal* (November 24, 1986), and it appeared in a column called "Health Watch" by Eleanor Flagler. The title of the article and most of the article follows.

DOCTOR LINKS TV TO BAD IDEAS

IF DR. WILLIAM DIETZ had his way, another well-loved product would carry this label: "Warning—Television viewing may be hazardous to your health."

Dietz, the chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' subcommittee on children and television, said that television is hazardous because too many parents have no control over its use and no idea what its underlying messages are.

The average child watches three to five hours daily—15,000 hours by the time he is 18, compared to 11,000 hours spent in classroom.

But the lessons TV teaches children are not those that promote a long, happy life, Dietz said. According to research, the tube instructs kids:

—To be aggressive toward others and to accept violence. Dietz said that it would be hard not to get this message: The average child sees 18,000 televised murders, robberies and beatings during his youth.

—That eating fatty, sugary foods is healthful. This message is driven home by 20,000 commercials yearly.

—That drugs, booze and cigarettes are a good way to deal with tensions and problems.

—And that sex, while exciting, carries with it no responsibilities or worries.

Dietz, of Boston, said that research directly links television viewing with obesity and aggression. The more your child watches, the fatter he will be and the more aggressive he becomes. Television viewing is also strongly linked with drug and alcohol use and abuse, use of tobacco products and early teenage sexuality and pregnancy.

As a result, the academy, along with the major consumer group on the issue, Action for Children's Television, recommends limitations on television viewing. . .

"TEEN-AGERS AND SEX"

To further make you aware of what is being written about television, I make reference to another article that appeared in the *Winston-Salem Journal* (September 17, 1986). The article, beginning on page 1 under the caption "TEEN-AGERS AND SEX," concerned unwanted pregnancies. Quotations were given from Frances L. Bogle, the executive director of Planned Parenthood of the Triad (local) and from Faye Wattleton, the president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (national).

The article said, "Each year 1.1 million teen-agers become pregnant, according to Planned Parenthood. That is 11 percent of all teens, ages 15 to 19. More than 80 percent of these pregnancies are unintended." Finally the article gets around to teenage impressions of sex on television. "Ms. Bogle said she was most surprised to find that many teenagers say that television realistically portrays sex and its consequences. She said the average television viewer is exposed to 9,000 episodes of actual or suggested sexual intercourse or sexual innuendo each year, most of which takes place between unmarried couples." "It portrays sex as glamorous, as what chic and sophisticated people do," she said. "They never get pregnant or sexually transmitted diseases. . . It's tying up all these feelings that in order to be cool and sophisticated, you have to be sexually active. There is no talk of sexual responsibility." Then the article reads, "Ms. Wattleton said that Planned Parenthood will continue opposing what she calls television's unbalanced depiction of sex. . ."

"SEX ON TV"

Some words equally pointed are found in *Entertainment Week* (January 24, 1987), the auxiliary publication which comes with the *Winston-Salem Journal* on Saturday. The article is on page 16 and is entitled, "SEX ON TV." The very first words read, "An official of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America said that a report released by the National Research Council in December about the country's teenage pregnancy problems supported the group's complaints that network television programs promote sexual activity among teenagers." Further in the article we read, "The council's report said that a million teens become pregnant each year, and the country's burden for taking care of these young mothers and children was about \$16.6 billion in federal support last year. The council is

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When Faith Takes Hold in Evangelism (Continued from Page 8)

sult in shortcut results as far as God is concerned. The great commission is the key to what God wants accomplished. It brings about true results in conversion, spirituality, and self-perpetuation for the church.

When faith takes hold in evangelism, the local church will realize its God-given responsibility of evangelizing the world (and do something about it). Stopgap methods don't get the job done.

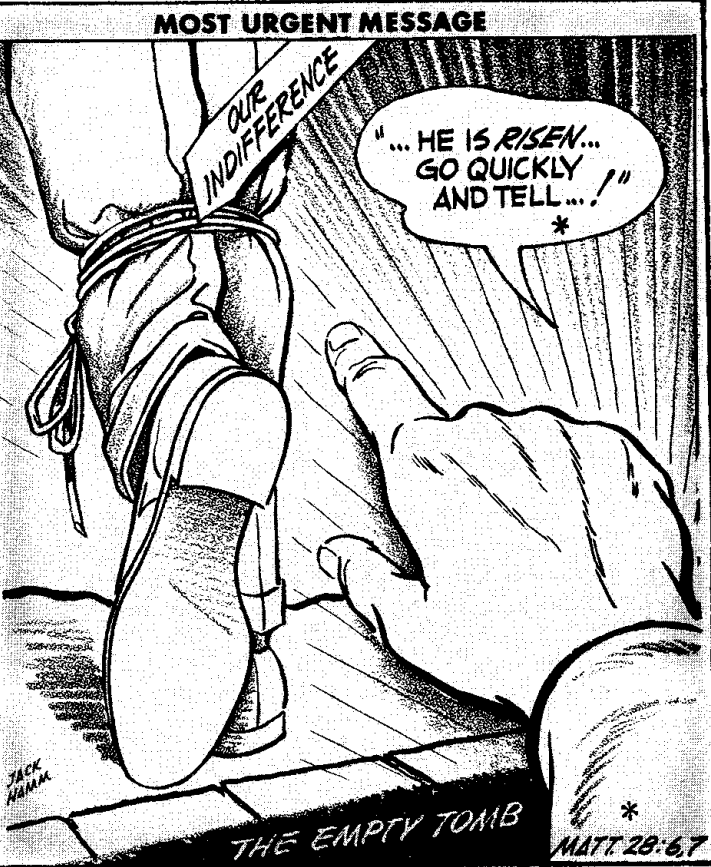
III. EVERY CHRISTIAN WILL BE A SOUL-WINNER.

When faith takes hold in evangelism, every Christian will be a soul-winner. This has already been stated and implied, but let us look at it more specifically.

In church circles today we have gotten used to thinking in terms of the clergy system, but this is not what the Word of God teaches. The Scriptures teach the priesthood of believers, and that all Christians are to be actively involved in the work of Christ. (In the final sense, there is no such thing as an inactive church member). Peter wrote that Christians were a "royal priesthood...to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5,9). Revelation 1:6 tells us that Jesus Christ "hath made us kings and priests (a kingdom of priests) unto God..." The reason we have leaders in the church is not to be clergymen who do all the work of the church, but contrariwise. Listen to Ephesians 4:11,12,16. "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (NKJV). The Hebrew writer rebuked his readers with these words: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12). We are to "exhort one another" (Hebrews 3:13), and "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24,25). In putting on the Christian armor, every Christian is to have his "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Beloved, no man can do for you what God personally wants you to do).

What we have just written was very true in the early church. The Lord had charged them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), and in Colossians 1:23 we read of "the hope of the gospel...which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." How marvelous! And they didn't get the job done by paying someone else to do it for them. The empty tomb, the reality and vitality of what they believed, prompted them to speak. Of man's words Jesus said, "For out of the abundance (overflowing) of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

Paul said in II Corinthians 4:13, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." A heart full of the wonderful news of the resurrection and hope cannot be kept quiet. Acts 8:4 is to be understood in this light: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the



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SPEAKING OUT
(Continued from Last Page)

the research agency of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering." Then a paragraph toward the close of the write-up says, "Planned Parenthood is not alone in its criticism of how television handles sexual topics. March Kelly, the media director of the Center of Population Options, a different group that addresses primarily the problems of teenage pregnancy, also complained that television historically has done a poor job in dealing with sexual topics."

THEREFORE, you see, not only are Bible-believing fundamentalist groups concerned and disturbed about what they believe television is doing to our society, but other groups that are in no sense of the word religious (they do not have a moral ax, as such, to grind).

Again, I sincerely ask you, what do you think about all of these things that are being written and said about the negative influence of television? Do you feel any sense of responsibility?

Sincerely yours,
James E. Gibbons

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word.” Instead of persecution stopping the church, the scattering resulted in new churches springing up in other places.

And what about us today? How many professed Christians really feel any personal responsibility toward the lost? We can live and work with people day in and day out and never mention the Lord Jesus Christ to them (or it even enter our minds to do so). As someone has said: “We are too much like the Arctic River—frozen at the mouth” (or would we describe the situation better to say that we have cold and frozen hearts?). The reality and vitality of our religion has escaped us. And if every Christian would really start being a soul-winner (and the priesthood of believers was actually put into practice), chances are “THE preacher” would feel greatly intimidated; we would have a bad situation on our hands.

But when faith takes hold in evangelism, talking to others about Christ will be natural and not a forced exercise. Every Christian will be a soul-winner. (We ask, if someone left you a million dollars, would you have a hard time telling your friends and loved ones about it? Or, if a loved one you saw die and buried was seen miraculously alive, would you have any problem telling others about it?).

BELOVED, seriously reconsider what has been written in this article. When faith takes hold in evangelism, (1) optimism will prevail among God’s people; (2) the local church will realize its God-given responsibility; and (3) every Christian will be a soul-winner. But a living faith is the key. Do we really believe what we profess? It is something to get excited about!

Lord, can I dare sit idly by
And watch the millions Christless die;
Doing nothing to save the lost,
Afraid of what might be the cost;
Like Peter, warming at the fire—
Sheltering under the church’s spire?

Dare I sit and waste the years,
Sharing thy low, tender plea,
“Take up thy cross, and follow me”;
While thy footprints leave crimson stains
In city streets and country lanes,
As thou dost carry thy cross anew,
Seeking the lost as I should do?

O Lord, forgive, I weep in shame,
I love thee truly, in thy name,
I turn my back upon the past
To wholly follow thee at last!—*Selected*

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Some Thoughts on Giving

STILL, as of old, man of himself is priced. For 30 pieces Judas sold himself, not Christ.

A Christian once prayed, “Father, help me to have the strength to give 10 percent of my income until I learn to give as I have been prospered.”

It is easy to lose interest in the church when we have so little invested in it.

The lad who gave all his loaves and fishes didn’t

have to do without his dinner.

Giving is not just a way of raising *money*! It is God’s way of raising *men*!

It’s easy to know when to stop giving to the Lord. Just give until he stops giving to you.

If a man must go to jail for robbing another man, where should a man go who robs God?

Send the gospel. Take away the dollar sign and see how it’s impeded!

You can’t outgive God! Have you ever tried?

An average of 3% giving will never enable the gospel to be preached to 100% of the world.

There is not anything more **UNLIKE** God than selfishness.

When we spend our money for any purpose, we are lending ourselves to that purpose.—*Selected* □

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How to Use Religious Tracts

1. They are being used as back-up material for Bible calls.
2. They are being sent overseas to students enrolled in Bible correspondence courses.
3. They are being used in newcomer programs.
4. They are being placed in tract racks for visitors to pick up.
5. They are being used to decorate booths at county and state fairs and are being offered to those who visit the booths.
6. They are being inserted in church bulletins to get a message to all members at once.
7. They are being used in preparing to teach a class.
8. They are being placed in doctor’s and dentist’s offices for those in waiting rooms to read.
9. They are being offered to bus riders in bus programs.
10. They are being used as helps in sermon preparation.
11. They are being mailed to prospects.
12. They are being used as handy supplementary material during counselling sessions.
13. They are being handed to friends.
14. They are being read to study further on a specific subject or question.
15. They are being sent along with personal letters and greeting cards.
16. They are being used as back-up material with correspondence courses when students send in questions.
17. They are being placed in holders in bus stations and shopping malls for the casually interested to pick up.
18. They are being offered on radio and television programs to interested listeners and viewers.
19. They are being handed out door-to-door along with a brochure advertizing a gospel meeting.—*Selected*

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Human, Divine, and Devilish!

TO ERR is human, and to forgive is divine, but to continue in sin is devilish!

In Love With Life

If you don't like life, it's the way you're living.
A little less taking, and a little more giving.
A little less hating, a little more loving.
A little more helping, not so much shoving.
A little more smiling, and not so much strife,
And soon you'll be in love with life!—*Selected*

Think on These Things

YOU CAN NOT successfully combat error by condoning it, going along with it, closing your eyes to it and pretending it does not exist.

The more you learn to love the Lord, the more you learn to hate sin.

Life is like a stone. Whether it grinds a man down or polishes him to a nice finish depends on what kind of stuff he is made of.

It is not wise to tell everything you know, but it is wise to know everything you tell.

The time to teach obedience to authority is in the playpen, not the state pen.

If you do not have the time to help your children find the right way of life, somebody with more time will help them find the wrong way.

Too many modern fathers seem more concerned about their golf swing than their offspring.

The time to protect against the electric chair is while the child is still in the highchair.

Invest in eternity. The dividends are out of this world.—*The Gospel Message* □

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“Every Member” Working

WE MUST work “while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). We must go about “always abounding in the work of the Lord,” knowing that our “labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58). We are workmen (II Timothy 2:15). The Lord says, “A doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:25).

We must be impressed with the fact that the Lord's church is more than a worshipping society. It is rather a vineyard (Matthew 20:1), concerning which the Lord is saying, “Son, go work today in my vineyard” (Matthew 21:28).

The Lord is still inquiring, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” (Matthew 20:6).

1. Why? When the scope is so spacious! (Matthew 13:38; 28:19).

2. Why? When the servants are so scarce! (Matthew 9:37,38).

3. Why? When the society is so sinful! (I John 5:19).

4. Why? When the seed sown is so supreme! (Matthew 13:23; I Peter 1:22-25).

5. Why? When the Savior is so sufficient! (II Timothy 1:10-12).

6. Why? When the serving is so satisfying! (Psalms 126:5,6).

Therefore, let us avoid cultivating the atmosphere of,

“This church is filled with willing people. Half of them are willing to work and the other half are willing to let them.” We must have the “whole,” not the “half” working!

Too, let us avoid excusing ourselves and salving our consciences by saying, “No one gives me anything to do.” The Lord has given you something to do, plenty to do (Mark 16:15; Galatians 6:10). Every congregation of the Lord stands in constant need of ready and willing workers. Volunteers are needed. Teachers are needed in Bible classes. Cottage meeting teachers are needed. Visitation workers are needed.

Furthermore, let us avoid when asked to do something responding by saying, “I don't know how.” How did you learn to fix a leaking water faucet? How did you learn to change the thermostat in your automobile? How did you learn to bake a cake? By doing! The same is true in working for Christ. Also, we are assured of the help of God just for the asking (James 1:5-7).

And, let us avoid sitting on the sideline criticizing while others are out working and playing the game. When asked what her son played on the football team, one woman responded, “I really don't know. But I think he plays drawback.” In the local church let's not play drawback. You know a horse can't pull while kicking, nor can he kick while pulling. A little boy had his dog hitched to the lawnmower. As he barked at a passerby, the little boy apologized, saying, “Don't mind him any, mister; he just barking to keep from working.”

Let us all get in the game! A certain team had a boy on it that had great potential. But, he had never meant much to the team. One day the coach, trying to feel the boy out, called him over during a given game. He said, “John, I want to know what you would do in this situation. Suppose our team had only time to run one play and we were behind one touchdown and we were on the one yard line. What would you do?” John thought for a moment and then said, “Well, I really don't know, but I imagine that I would move farther down on the bench so I could get a better view.” This tells us why John had never reached his full potential. He was not throwing himself into the game. He was content sitting on the sideline. Let us cease sitting on the sideline in the local church.—*Winkler* □

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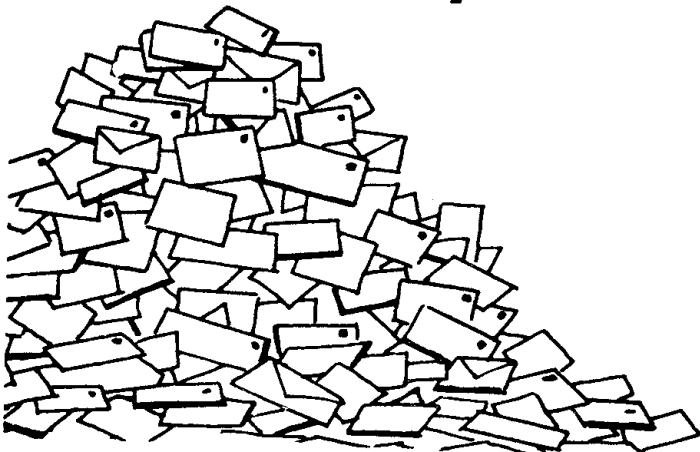
I Attend the Sunday Evening Assemblies Because:

1. I want to go and I am wanted.
2. I need to go and I am needed.
3. I had rather be there than anywhere else.
4. My children are watching me, and will follow my example.
5. My soul is strengthened by the teaching.
6. My heart is warmed by the spiritual songs as I praise Him above.
7. I am better prepared to meet in discussion those who do not understand the Truth.
8. I hunger and thirst after righteousness.—*Selected*

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READERS'

... Response



CANADA:

■ "Greetings in the most precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"We are a newly established congregation, just three years old. And we thought that your materials would be of great help for the spiritual growth of our individual members..."

"Thank you for your cooperation."

PUERTO RICO:

■ "I appreciate your paper very much and find it refreshing and edifying. In an age where there is such a 'fog' covering the true faith, it is good to see the truth of God still remains. I am reminded that in the early days of the church many groups and sects arose which have disappeared but the church of God remains..."

FLORIDA:

■ "...Two questions:

1. Why have I always been taught in the church of Christ that Jesus and the early church used unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper, when...Scriptures clearly show that they did use a loaf (ARTOS, 'leavened bread')? 2. When did unleavened bread (AZUMOS) begin to be substituted for the loaf (ARTOS), so that today we use unleavened instead of leavened bread at the Table?"

(Editor's reply: "...Perhaps the thought of just unleavened bread being used in the Lord's supper has its foundation in such Scriptures as Exodus 12:15; 13:6,7; Deuteronomy 16:4; etc. By God's directive no leavened bread was to be found in the house during the time of the Passover. The Lord's supper was instituted during the Passover. Therefore, it seems to be implied that only unleavened bread could have been used in the Lord's supper.

"From my study I find that during this period of history ARTOS was the only Greek word used for bread. Therefore, of necessity it would have to include all bread.

"It seems that AZUMOS, 'unleavened bread,' was used as a technical term tied in with the Passover feast (used exclusively in reference to that). Because of the set use of the word it would seem to be inappropriate and misleading to use it any other way. It would simply bring to mind the Passover.

"These are my thoughts."

DELAWARE:

■ "THE SWORD AND STAFF is a great, edifying paper. Praise God! for servants who publish a paper that loves the Word of God, prints sound gospel sermons, and stands fast

for the Bible alone; and the Lord's Church and Name. . . We want to put a copy in each elder, deacon, and teacher's hand in this congregation. . ."

NEW JERSEY:

■ "My wife and I very much enjoy your publication and anxiously await each issue. We became aware of THE SWORD AND STAFF from my sister and brother-in-law, who taught and baptized us, and they became aware of it from their friends who taught and baptized them. While there is no substitute for reading the only inspired Word of GOD, your articles really help us to understand the Word more perfectly and apply it in our lives.

"Now we would like to share THE SWORD AND STAFF with some friends and relatives we have baptized (isn't it great how this true Christianity works, 'faithful men who shall be able to teach others also')! . .

"Thanks again and keep 'em comin'! In Christian love and may God bless you and your work."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "I really appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF and can't hardly wait to get hold of a copy. It is great to know that someone is taking a stand for the truth. . .

"I would like to order...copies per printing of THE SWORD AND STAFF per printing for our congregation. If you have some left of the last issue I would like to get that one too. . .

"May God bless you and the work you are doing."

MICHIGAN:

■ "Keep up the good work, I really enjoyed the last SWORD AND STAFF. But I always enjoy everyone of them. Many times people like myself don't take time to let you know just how much THE SWORD AND STAFF helps in the trials of our faith. But know there are many of us out here who don't write often enough but are thankful. Accept my apologies."

OHIO:

■ (From the Director of the North American Christian Convention): "re: a quotation in THE SWORD AND STAFF that 'The so-called executive committee of the N.A.C.C. decided that it is alright to have women deacons, elders, and preachers.'

"The statement is in error.

"The matter in question arises from remarks by a presider at a session in Indianapolis. Unfortunately, he spoke as if his views represented those of the convention committee. . .

"Neither the executive committee nor the convention committee has ever discussed, to my knowledge, this, and it certainly has never been voted upon. . .

"THE SWORD AND STAFF came, and I appreciate your sending it. I might say again that presidors, preachers, workshop leaders and anyone else who sings, or speaks at the NACC does so as an individual and not in any official representative capacity."

Editor's Note: It is admitted then that there were grounds for getting the impression from a committee member who presided that this was the position of the NACC (and some of the women speakers actually said they were a "clergy-person"—whatever that is) as was written in a letter received and appearing under "Readers' Response."

And what is the last sentence above suppose to mean (the sentence: "I might say again that presidors, preachers, workshop leaders and anyone else who sings, or speaks at the NACC does so as an individual and not in any official capacity"), and how does it fit in with what the Bible teaches (and with responsibility and accountability)? In the framework of the local church there is no question of accountability and

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS' RESPONSE. . .

(Continued from Last Page)

responsibility (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:5-11; Hebrews 13:17).

■ *"I received the sample copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Enjoyed it very much. Thank God there are some who are not ashamed to Preach the Word. . ."*

■ *"Everyone at the church of Christ in. . .praises the magazine as a breath of fresh air in the midst of a compromising religious world. May God be glorified."*

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■ *"Enclosed is a gift of appreciation you so deserve in the printing of your publication, THE SWORD AND STAFF. We gain much from it and look forward to each printing. Keep up the good work for our Lord."*

■ *"I think your paper is super, thoughtful, to the point and right on!..."*

■ *"Please discontinue my subscription."*

MISSOURI:

■ *"We have received THE SWORD AND STAFF for many years and enjoy every paper very much. The messages are truly from God's Word and teach without holiness no man shall see the Lord. . ."*

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■ *"I recently received a sample copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I enjoyed it very much. I appreciate your straight-forward message. . ."*

LOUISIANA:

■ *"Words can't express how much THE SWORD AND STAFF has helped me in learning and coming to the light of the truth. And may God ever bless you all who are patiently being a workman for the Lord, rightly dividing the Word of truth."*

WASHINGTON:

■ *"I am very impressed with your sample of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Here is my subscription. Thank you very much."*

■ *"Please drop these two names from your mailing list."*

(Note: Thanks to the correspondent in Minnesota for the pack of sugar, but it might have been good if he had eaten some of it before he wrote his letter. Sometimes we don't practice what we preach.—Editor) □

★★★★★★

What Is Prejudice?

IT IS the lock on the door of the closed mind. It is the ignorance we usually mistake for reason. It is the first enemy of information and progress. It is intellectual astigmatism. It is a perfect combination of conceit and ignorance. Prejudice never saved a soul nor settled any question in the light of truth and justice. It is the defense of the devil, shell of a petrified mind, and ceiling on understanding.

Prejudice is the adjunct of a weak and wicked cause.

It is that which prevents a person from investigating the teachings of the Word of God to see if what he has practiced in religion is in God's Book. Prejudice is that which causes one to attack the person doing the preaching when Scriptural arguments cannot be given in answer. In fact, when one manifests a prejudiced attitude he is admitting defeat in logical reasoning, but still refuses to pay heed to anything different from what he already holds.

It is that which will keep many persons from obedience to the gospel of Christ. We plead with you to lay aside all prejudice and study with us all of the Book of God. Then let us do Bible things in Bible ways; call Bible things by Bible names; and be content with a "thus saith the Lord." If we were all to use the Bible only as our standard of religion, division that results from not doing this would cease and unity prevail which is that which our Lord so fervently prayed for (John 17:20,21). Let us lay aside all of our prejudices and study the Word of God with an open mind.

—Selected

★★★★★★

GOD IS

THERE ARE people today who question the existence of God. This is not peculiar to this age since there have been those from every age who have done the same. But the age in which we are living seems to have had an effect on certain people. We are living in a soft, materialistic, pleasure bent, power hungry age. Independence and self-reliance are emphasized in our society. Although there is nothing wrong in these things as such, nevertheless, they sometimes remove from the lives of individuals a dependence upon God. While people are in need they look toward God. When the need has been satisfied, they look away from God to themselves. They say, "Look at what we have done." Saul while he was "little" in his own sight had a great dependence upon Jehovah (I Samuel 15:17). When he became mighty he no longer trusted in God's way but depended upon his own way (I Samuel 15:18-24). When this country was in the midst of struggles and persecutions dependence upon God was evident. Now that she has become a mighty force in the world the trust and dependence is fast turning to disbelief. At one time the people of this country believed fervently in prayer but more and more are becoming convinced that power is greater. God was at one time the center of life but now self is pushing God toward the very rim of life. The reason why many people do not believe in God is that they do not want to believe. Their way is not God's way, therefore, God must go from their life.

There are usually two statements that are made by people who either never believed in God or who have lost their faith in God. (1) They say, "If there is a God, why are things in such a terrible condition?" or they will say, (2) "If there is a God, why do all the bad things as sickness, family problems, death, etc., happened to me?" These questions to them seem unanswerable, so they conclude that there is no God.

In reality, the first and second questions are the same but in different words. The reason the world and

the lives of men are in such a terrible state is not because there is no God but because sin is in the world. Wars are fought between husbands and wives, parents and children, and nation and nation because “ye lust and have not” (James 4:2). Man wants his way and his way he will have even if he has to fight for it. War is inevitable with such thinking. Wars of today cannot be blamed upon God but must be blamed upon those who are following the “wiles of the devil.”

Sickness and death are due to sin. Not necessarily because of our own sin but because sin is in the world. Where sin is will also be found sickness, disease, and death (Romans 5:12). If there had been no sin in the world there would have been no disease, sickness or death. These are present and so is sin. Instead of blaming God for this why not blame the devil? After all, it was through him that sin came (John 8:44; James 1:13-15).

Yes, *GOD is!* If you do not believe it now soon you will. Then it will be too late. For, if you wait until death to find out for sure that God is you will never have the opportunity to receive forgiveness for the sins you have committed. The evidence of God is in all of creation and if you would slow down, sit down, and meditate upon this you would never say, “There is no God.” God through David said that only a “fool” would say such in his heart (Psalms 14:1). Don be foolish—*GOD is* (Acts 17:24-28; Hebrews 11:6).—*Adapted* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Indications of a Backslidden Condition

1. When you are satisfied with your own spiritual growth as it is (II Peter 3:18).
2. When there is loss of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, spiritual things of God.
3. When you think the Bible is a dry and dead old book.
4. When you would rather watch TV than read the Bible, pray, or speak to souls (who needs a TV anyway?).
5. When we earn and spend our money primarily for ourselves (Colossians 3:17).
6. When it takes a lot of preaching and urging to get you to do what is just and right.
7. When you pray without a real burden on your heart (personal or private prayer tells).
8. When we are ashamed of Jesus in the presence of sinners (Matthew 10:32,33; means to speak boldly).
9. When we teach or preach without seeking God’s help; sounding brass and a clanging cymbal.
10. When we are not desperately concerned over the lost and unsaved condition of our friends and neighbors; cease trying to reach them.
11. When one loses the vision of what he can do for Christ.
12. When we would rather work on the Lord’s day than be in the house of the Lord.
13. When we would rather hunt, fish, golf, travel, picnic or loaf than be in the Lord’s house.
14. When the mid-week services do not seem really essential and vital.

15. When others are showing deeper concern for our souls than we do.
16. When it is easier to see the shortcomings of others than in ourselves.
17. When we do not enjoy and love to be with spiritual people and speak on spiritual subjects with them.
18. When we are afraid that sound gospel preaching is going to “drive someone away” (yes, love must be involved in preaching, but the congregation must obey it).
19. When we do not like preaching that “unsettles us” by convicting us in our consciences (no other kind of preaching will get the job done).
20. When you can partake of the Lord’s supper and not be thinking about his death for us (his suffering).
21. When you desire to short-change God in your giving of time, talent or tithes and offerings.
22. When you can sing godly songs without thinking of the message, do not intend to do anything about it anyway.
23. When you want the church to be more socially-minded and less spiritual-minded.
24. When you have a hard time keeping your mind on what is being read in the Bible, what is discussed in the Bible class or hearing the sermon.
25. When secular and profane writings appeal more to you than does Christian literature.
26. When some brother becomes obnoxious to us because of his or her spiritual fervency and zeal.
27. When you do not fear your own temptations: “Flee idolatry,” “Resist the devil.”
28. When you see little sins cropping out and you are not alarmed.
29. When you find an excuse for not doing what you know you should do.
30. When the most pleasing and enjoyable part of the services is the closing song and prayer.—*Selected*

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Spurgeon and the Bookworm

C.H. SPURGEON on one occasion went into Scotland and stopped at a wayside inn. There he picked up an old worm eaten Bible.

He held it up between himself and the sun, and there was just one place that he could see the light clear through. One worm had begun at Genesis and eaten right through to Revelation.

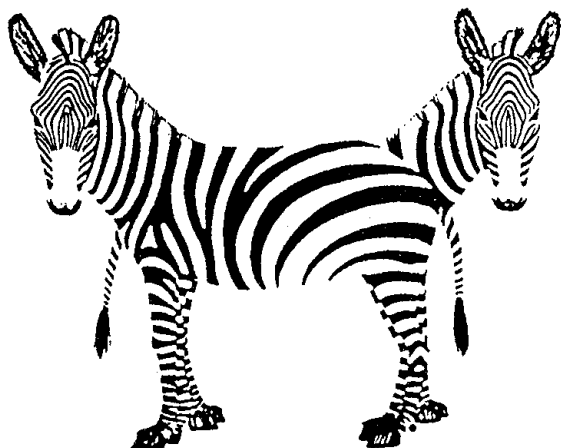
Mr. Spurgeon said, “Lord, make me a bookworm like that!”

Oh, that we all could just eat into the Bible a little section at a time! But if you study it word by word, you will be enriched. Word studies of the Bible are like picking up pearls and diamonds.—*Selected* □

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IF the church is a divine institution, and it is, then what you believe and do about it is not a matter of human opinion.

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Confused About Which Way to Go?

GO BACK TO THE BIBLE AND THE LOCAL
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AND YOU WILL BE RIGHT ON COURSE.

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- **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

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

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