

GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 14

No. 3

DID JESUS CHRIST REALLY LIVE?

Wayne Jackson

Bruno Baur (1809-1882), a German historian, was the most radical New Testament critic of his day. Rejected by his contemporary theologians, he became so bitter that he eventually denied the historical existence of Jesus, asserting that Christianity is “the misfortune of the world.” His views were rejected by the scholarship of his day. Later, however, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), somewhat influenced by Baur, would argue that a “Jesus” may have lived in Palestine in the first century, but if he did, he was so unlike the “Jesus” of the New Testament, that, for all practical purposes, one might conclude that the Christ of the Gospel records never lived in fact. Neither Baur nor Schweitzer exerted significant influence relative to the question of the historicity of Jesus.

Over the years even radical scholars have been forced to bow their heads in acknowledgment of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a central character in the biblical world twenty centuries ago. The French humanist Ernest Renan (1823-1892), no friend of Christianity, in his *Life of Jesus*, admitted that “all history is incomprehensible without him” and “to tear [Jesus'] name from this world, would be to shake it to its foundations.” In 1912, Professor Shirley Jackson Case, a liberal theologian at the University of Chicago—who denied the

supernatural elements in the Gospels—produced a book titled, *The Historicity of Jesus*. In the Preface he stated: “The main purpose of the present volume is to set forth the evidence for believing in the historical reality of Jesus' existence upon earth.” In 1922, Joseph Klausner, of Hebrew University, authored his controversial volume, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Though Klausner rejected Christ as divine, he nonetheless argued persuasively, based upon a number of ancient records, that Jesus was a *bona fide* historical character. But perhaps the most telling thing of all is the fact that *no ancient adversary of Christianity ever even disputed Jesus' existence!*

The case is so settled that Professor Bruce Metzger of Princeton University could say in 1965: “Today no competent scholar denies the historicity of Jesus.” Quite true. But this does not prevent some not-so-competent writers from disputing this fact.

A small group of atheists is attempting to resurrect Baur's theory that Jesus never lived. Their influence is so *nil* that one might be inclined to ignore them altogether—except for the fact that this circumstance affords an excellent opportunity to focus upon how these antagonists deal with the evidence of history. It has been recently argued, for example, that there is a score or more of
(Continued on page 19)



Volume 14 Number 3
July-September 1998

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

- Guy F. Hester
- M. W. Kiser
- John T. Polk, II
- Ivie Powell
- Allen Webster
- Ronnie Whittemore

EDITORS

- Bill Dillon
- Dennis Gulledege

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 880
Mountain Home, AR 72654-0880

Editorial

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Bill Dillon



The Christian religion demands supreme dedication. Down through the years mere handfuls of devoted disciples won great victories of faith. With hearts aflame for God and magnificently indifferent toward their own physical welfare, they preached and practiced the gospel of Christ. They sowed the seeds of faith across a heathen empire and burned their names into history. Neither heated flames nor dark dungeons, nor ravenous beasts in the arena could impede their progress. With courage and conviction they outlived, outfought and outdied their heathen contemporaries. Theirs was no superficial dedication; theirs was the victory that overcometh the world; the victory of faith! (1 John 5:4).

In the city of Rome is an ancient enclosure which descends into the dark, musty catacombs where lie the bones of the early Christian martyrs. Deep within the heart of the earth, mile upon mile of subterranean passages serve as a solemn reminder of the sterling devotion of those who "counted not their lives dear unto themselves." Here and there are chiseled in stone, the names of those who perished, along with some terms of endearment.

These saints of old time had an invincible faith as they were arrayed against the godless legions of Rome. They suffered. They bled. They died. Even today their blood cries out from the ground as an affirmation of the beauty of holiness and strength that comes from living by faith.

Let brethren, today, in every place, be mindful of the faith of our fathers. Their lives still speak to us across centuries of time. J. B. Phillips wrote: "Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved."

The challenge of Christ echoes in every church of Christ today: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). With our ears attuned to the call of dedication, let us answer as did Isaiah in the long ago: "Here am I; send me."—612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653

* * * * *

A minister without boldness is like a smooth file, a knife without an edge, a sentinel that is afraid to let off his gun. If men will be bold in sin, ministers must be bold to reprove.
—Gurnall

“THE MUSTARD SEED, THE LEAVEN” [Part 2]

(Matthew 13:31-33)

Dennis Gullede



In Matthew's account of this brief parable we read, "Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (13:33). As stated earlier, this parable

forms a couplet with the parable of the mustard seed. In them we have the same object viewed from different angles. In this respect these twin parables share a common character with the parable of the tares and the parable of the net (Matthew 13:24-30; 47-50), as well as the parable of the pearl of great price and the parable of the hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44-46).

The scope of the present parable is much like that of the former one. The other parable declared the fact that the kingdom of heaven would greatly increase. This parable shows how such is to be done. It is designed to show the prevailing power of the gospel in that it would be successful by degrees; silently, but thoroughly. Matthew Henry said, "...the preaching of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it."¹

As in the case of the parable of the mustard seed, it is believed by some that this "popular interpretation is on the side of mis-interpretation."² The basis for this objection appears to center upon the idea that there is a rigid uniformity in the symbolism of leaven in the Bible showing that it always refers to that which is evil, that is, a corrupting influence. Lockyer argues that the popular interpretation "...contradicts the whole symbolic use of *leaven* in Scripture."³ As we shall see, this contention is shortsighted.

Admittedly, leaven is most commonly

employed as an emblem of corruption in Scripture. For example, the Israelites were commanded to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a memorial immediately following the Passover (Exodus 12:15-28; 13:3-10). The idea was that they were to exclude from their lives all ungodliness (symbolized by leaven) forever (symbolized by seven days). The New Testament likewise uses leaven as a symbol of corruption and evil influence or false teaching (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

If there is an exception to the rule that leaven symbolizes corruption, it is found in two passages. First, in the case of the Old Testament sacrifice involving two wave-loaves: "They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord" (Leviticus 23:17). Second, in the present parable wherein Jesus employs leaven in a good sense (the making of bread) describing some aspect of the rule and reign of God among men. This suggests another quality of leaven, namely, its secretly penetrating and diffusive power. It is in this respect that it is emblematic of moral influence generally. Whether that influence is good or bad must be determined by the context. Therefore, the idea that the Bible *always* employs leaven in a bad sense should be revised to say that it finds both good and bad significance in Scriptural symbolism. Otherwise, we must admit that the leaven, as representing evil, would be a fitting description of the progress of the kingdom of Satan, but would be woefully inaccurate as a delineation of the kingdom of heaven. I feel safe, therefore, in concluding that the leaven here symbolizes the good, but aggressive, influence which Jesus Christ introduced into the world when he came to earth, which influence was perpetuated in the great commission.

(Continued on page 4)

The influential nature of the kingdom is emphasized. The kingdom of God was not characterized by brute force (John 18:36), nor by pomp (Luke 17:20-21). It is to be noted that Jesus said that “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). This statement justly coincides with the Lord’s analogy using leaven to describe the inward working of the kingdom of God. Being understood in this way, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven in several respects.

1. *The Ability To Work Inwardly.* Leaven is a commodity which God has designed to do its work inside a certain element. Jesus said that the leaven was that “which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal” (Matthew 13:33). The word “hid” in the King James and New King James versions conveys the idea of mixing the leaven into the flour. The suggestion is that leaven is powerless until it is put into that element conducive to its working.

The gospel of Christ works in just that way. It must find a home in the human heart. In this vein did David speak, when he wrote, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11). The Christians at Rome had “obeyed from the heart” that form of doctrine to which they were delivered (Romans 6:17).

It is only in this way that people generally will become more godly and Christians more Christ-like. Real and lasting change can only come inwardly, from the heart. People cannot be lifted up by mere external improvements. A person is not converted until his or her heart is changed.

2. *The Ability To Produce Change.* Leaven is a “change agent” in the purest sense of an otherwise corrupt expression. When leaven is added to the flour for making bread, the change it produces is very desirable for the end in view. The tasty product that comes from the oven is a compliment to the success of the leaven.

It is important to understand that the word *leaven* relates directly to our word *fermentation*. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* notes that “The Hebrew word *seor* has the radical sense of *effervescence* or *fermentation*...”⁴ Ordinary leaven consisted of a lump of old dough kept in a high state of

fermentation and mixed into a mass of dough prepared for baking. This corresponds to the practice of making sourdough bread.

When the gospel of Christ is introduced into the heart of a person, great changes take place. The change it produces is not one of substance, but one of nature. The dough looks the same, but the quality is different. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul reminded his readers that some of them *were* of such a character as never to inherit the kingdom of God: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (Vs. 11). When a person obeys the gospel of Christ he becomes a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). He has new thoughts (Philippians 4:8). He does new deeds (Ephesians 4:20-32). He has new ideas of work and service (Matthew 20:26-28). The leaven of the gospel has transformed his life.

A wonderful characteristic of the leavening power of the gospel is that it is always working in the heart of the recipient. We may not always know of the change being produced by the leaven. For that reason we must always take the long view when preaching the gospel. The results of a gospel meeting may not always be large nor immediate. Time will tell. It is always fascinating to observe how the leaven, once introduced into a youthful heart, does its work of producing growth and change as the years pass by. True to the characteristic of leaven, the gospel works silently and imperceptibly yet strong and persistently. Once the leaven of the gospel has been worked into the pliable human heart, the word of God will do its work and will not return to him void (Isaiah 55:10-11).

3. *The Aggressive Characteristic.* Leaven is a contagious property. Jesus said it would work in the meal “till it was all leavened” (Matthew 13:33). Like the woman in the parable who “took” the leaven, so the apostles and evangelists of the first century were employed in leavening souls with the gospel (Matthew 10:5ff; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:15). As the leaven was “hid in three measures of meal,” so it was that tender hearts received the message of the gospel (Mark 16:16;

(Continued on page 5)

THE SIN OF A BAD ATTITUDE

Bill Dillon

Men and women of God who would not think of gambling, drinking or committing an act of fleshly evil, may otherwise be guilty of a sour disposition with an envious, bitter or negative frame of mind. An individual may quote scripture, pray fervently and have an unblemished attendance record at worship services, yet, may possess such a critical and negative attitude about life that others actually wish to avoid him.

Are sins of the flesh less harmful than sins of the spirit? The sin of a bad attitude can cripple, if not kill, the progress of the Lord's church in any community.

Regardless of daily news, sorrowful circumstances or stormy weather, each of us has a duty to show ourselves true men and women of God and be of good cheer.

The Bible says:

"...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4)

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5).

Jesus also said; "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

May our faith in God cause us always to see all circumstances in as favorable a light as possible and let us have a happy readiness to go onward in life.

* * * * *

"BEGGED, BORROWED AND BEGOTTEN"

"A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent, without giving any sound." —John Calvin
"Zeal for the truth has become politically

incorrect...it is fashionable today to characterize anyone who is concerned with biblical doctrine as pharisaical. The biblical condemnation of the Pharisees; legalism has been misread as a denunciation of doctrinal precision." —John MacArthur

"It is shocking to reflect that a change in the weather has more effect on some men's lives than the dread alternative of heaven or hell."

— C. H. Spurgeon

* * * * *

THE MUSTARD SEED, THE LEAVEN

Continued from page 4

Acts 2:37, 41; 8:37-38; 16:14). As the leaven, thus hidden in the dough works there, so does the word of God which "...is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). And, as the leaven would work in the dough "till it was all leavened," the apostles would not rest until they had preached the gospel "to every creature under heaven" at that time (Colossians 1:23).

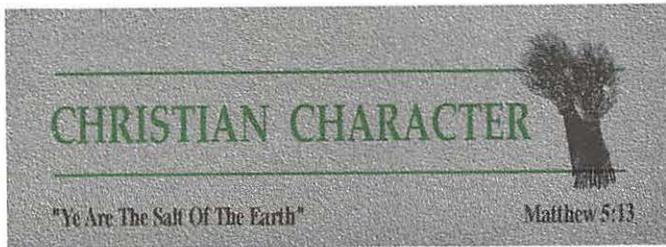
The early church, small in its beginnings, grew because of the contagious fire of evangelism. Some of the earliest disciples of Christ were brought to him by others (John 1:40-45). The number one mission of the church of Christ was, and is, to preach the soul-saving gospel of Christ. Thus, the kingdom of God grows and spreads through the contagious zeal of its advocates. —10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103.

¹Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible, Vol. V.* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), 191.

²Lockyer, 190.

³Ibid

⁴William Latham Bevan, "Leaven" in *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary Of The Bible, Vol. II* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 1620.



THE COMFORT ZONE

Ronnie Whittemore



The book of Job is a very profound and enlightening book. While this book is often regarded as a book about human suffering, its theme centers upon the majesty and greatness of God. The first chapter of the book explains, in a nutshell, the conflict between man and Satan.

The devil is described as “going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7). The apostle Peter described Satan in a similar way when he wrote that he was a “roaring lion” who “walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Job is described in the Bible as a man who was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed (turns away from) evil” (Job 1:1, 8). Satan, however, accused God of placing a hedge around Job. He claimed that Job served God only because God was good to him and blessed him. Satan's challenge was simple: If God allowed all of Job's blessings to be removed, then Job would no longer serve Him.

From our reading of the remainder of the first chapter as well as the rest of the book, we know that this was not the result. Job “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22). Although Job did not understand all of the things that occurred in his life, he refused to place the blame on God and continued to serve Him faithfully.

But what about this accusation from Satan? What about that “hedge”? As often is the case with false accusations, the one who makes the accusation is often guilty of the same. God does not build a hedge for man in which he is promised a

comfort zone that meets his desires. But Satan does! Satan has deceived men and women into being comfortable and satisfied with the things of this world so that they do not rely upon God nor His Word. Let's look at the evidence.

WHAT GOD PROMISES. Concerning this world and its possessions, God has promised physical necessities if we put the kingdom of God first (Matthew 6:33). God, however, has never promised wealth and prosperity. He has never promised the fulfillment of the American dream. He does not promise earthly peace and tranquility. No, God does not promise comfort on this earth. To the contrary, God warns His followers that there will be persecution, trials, tragedies and sufferings (2 Timothy 3:12). He demands sacrifice and selflessness. He cautions that families will turn against one another (Matthew 10:35). He reveals multiple examples in the Bible of the hardships which the faithful men and women of God endured as a direct result of following Him (Hebrews 11:32-40). God does not build a “hedge” around His people as Satan suggested.

However, God promises that He will “never leave nor forsake” the faithful and obedient (Hebrews 13:5-6). He promises to give them a “way of escape” from the temptations of life (1 Corinthians 10:13). He promises the reward of a better country (Hebrews 11:9), a better city (Hebrews 11:10) and a better rest (Hebrews 4:10-11). And God always keeps His promises because it is impossible for Him to lie (Titus 1:2).

HOW SATAN DECEIVES. On the other hand, Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He makes promises that he never keeps. He captures the minds of men by false philosophies (Colossians 2:8). He convinces them to believe lies. After all, he is a liar and the father of all lies (John 8:44). Consider what Satan proposes as he builds this “hedge” around man:

(1) *“Money will buy you happiness.”* The more love of money that Satan puts in one's heart, then the more money it will take to satisfy a person. The false philosophy is that man will never be satisfied with his wealth if he thinks that is what's important. Solomon wrote, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth

abundance with increase: this is also vanity” (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Wasn't that Jesus' challenge to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-22? While Paul instructed Christians to “be content” (Philippians 4:11), Satan deceives the world into thinking that man can never have enough.

(2) “*Broadmindedness will increase the number of your friends.*” Satan wants people to believe that tolerance and compromise is the way to gain friends and favors. Many people have learned (and some have not learned) that real friends, loyal friends, are not bought with a lack of principles. Many politicians, in the church and out of the church, tolerate error and sin, for the sake of gaining favor with people; however, man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7-8). Friends gained through tolerance and favors received through compromise will fade when real battles are waged and true loyalty is needed. The lip service of praise delivered at convenient times due to a man's broadmindedness cannot replace words of encouragement when needed in times of trouble. What seemed like respect turns out to be contempt when a man demonstrates that he is incapable of being consistent and does not possess true conviction. But Satan deceives many people into thinking that convenience is greater than conviction and flattery is greater than real friendship.

(3) “*Denominationalism offends no one and accepts all in matters of religion.*” The false concept of denominationalism does indeed provide a “comfort zone” in matters of religion. According to Satan's philosophy, no person has to be condemned. No family member has to feel guilty. No one has to read or study his Bible. There is no right. There is no wrong. Those are the conclusions reached when one holds to the world-view of denominationalism. Would God condemn good, moral people? Does God want people to be lost who are trying to worship Him in some way? God does not want my parents to be lost. He does not want my spouse to be lost. He does not want my children to be lost. And what better way can there be for them to be saved than for them to believe in God to “some” degree, and worship Him in “some” way, and believe “some” of His Word and be a part of “some” church. Oh how Satan has

made people to “feel” comfortable in “their” religion! Never mind what God commands concerning worship or salvation. After all, isn't it how man “feels” that really matters and how comfortable he is in his religion?

(4) “*No matter how man lives, God will save him.*” Is it not amazing how Satan deceives even the most wicked into thinking that they will be saved? How many times have you attended a funeral service of a man or woman who did not believe in God and did not follow the Lord and yet you heard the “preacher” talk about how the departed one was going to heaven? Satan says that all men will be saved and he deceives man into thinking that he will be saved. Man is comfortable when he does not have to face his own sins and shortcomings. Man is content when he does not have to follow the commandments of the Lord. Man is satisfied when he does not have to think about the awesome day of reckoning when he stands before the Lord and must give account of his life (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

Friend, why do you think that Satan uses such amusing commercials to advertise liquor and beer? Why do you think that Satan always pictures a handsome man with a drink in one hand and his other arm around a beautiful woman? He wants man to be comfortable in his sins. Since the days of Job, Satan has built a “hedge” around man. Just look at the citizens of the United States. What a hedge! We are so comfortable with sin! We tolerate the worst of national leaders. We openly embrace the sins of homosexuality. We anxiously turn our televisions on to see the vast amounts of human debris flood our living rooms through “talk shows” like Jerry Springer. We dress like the world, talk like the world, act like the world, and we are comfortable! Why? Satan has built a “hedge.” The economy is good; more people are giving lip service to religion of any kind; and we don't have to feel guilty about sin because Satan has provided us with enough “friends” who are broadminded enough to overlook sin and encourage us to live our lives the way that we want.

But friends, the Bible still reads that “the
(Continued on page 9)

THE ABSOLUTE STANDARD - IS IT “GONE WITH THE WIND”?

Tim Martin



My mom loved the movie *Gone With The Wind*. Even today, it is still hailed as one of the greatest movies of all time. But back in 1939 when it first came out, it enjoyed a different kind of notoriety. It was one of the first movies to use profanity.

And it was shocking! Most decent people decried the movie as “racy” and “lewd”; I would imagine that pulpits throughout the land were filled with criticism and condemnation of the film's producers for allowing the now famous line spoken by Clark Gable to make it into the final cut.

It would be a vast understatement to say that we have come a “long way baby” from those days of comparative innocence. Today, of course, TV shows and movies alike are replete with lewd references and sexual innuendo that ought to make us blush. Not to mention the vulgar language that is now commonplace in almost every show you choose to view. So we ask ourselves, “how did we get from there to here?” And the answer is that our shock factor has been moved. As one author put it, “Someone sneaked in and changed all the price tags”; things that used to be worthy are now worthless, and things that used to be looked down upon are now acceptable. And the change in these “values” has been so incremental that we can hardly believe the moral distance between the days of our childhood and the days of our adulthood. Indeed, it would have been hard to imagine how far we have fallen in just the past five years. And it is downright frightening to imagine where we are headed in the short years ahead.

There are probably many factors one could cite as responsible for society's downward moral spiral, but four come to my mind.

#1) Incrementalism—It is true that with most changes in our lives, it is difficult to point to a particular event or point in time when the change “began.” So we allow ourselves to be moved just an inch at a time, never really noticing the small distance we have traveled. And we are so busy navigating the river of life, we usually do not notice where we are until someone grabs us by the chin and lifts our head up to see. And sometimes we have moved so far from the starting point, we can't even see it; if we could, we would be shocked and amazed at how far we've traveled. After all, if the move from good to evil was one giant step, it would be easy to halt the negative progress. But it happens incrementally, a little at a time, and we glance up and all we see is the calm water around us, not realizing that the water's horizon looks suspiciously like the top side of a waterfall. We become the frog in the slowly boiling kettle, and we just continue to allow our conscience to be seared and scarred. In 1 Timothy 4:1-2, Paul warned the young preacher about those who would “depart from the truth” in the “latter times, giving heed to seducing spirits having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” Indeed these are the latter times. “Oh, that's not so bad” and “It's not hurting anyone” and “It's really none of my business” has become the guide to our lives, leading us down a very dangerous path indeed...and we just continue to sit and boil.

#2) Taking our eye off of God—this is a very close cousin to incrementalism. Since we are so busy “navigating life's river,” and sometimes need someone to lift our chin so that we may refocus on our goal, it is easy to understand the importance of keeping our eye on the goal. The Greek word used in the Bible for man is *anthropos*, which means “upward looking one.” Is it any wonder that man-kind, who was created with an instinctive need to look up and seek a

higher being, becomes lost and confused when he looks down and takes his eye off of that higher being. One of Satan's most powerful tools is that of distraction; the devil is most effective when he causes us to pay such attention to the "living of life" that we forget the One who gave us our life. In Revelation 2:4, Jesus himself warns the church at Ephesus that He "has somewhat against" them, because they had "left their first love." We must heed this warning today; for when we take our eyes off the true and living God, we are in danger of doing the very thing that the Ephesians were chastised for—leaving our first love!

#3) The sinner decides what is sin—how ludicrous, how arrogant that mankind has become a god unto himself. Why do we, as a society, presume to be wise enough to spiritually govern ourselves? The wisest man to ever walk the earth lamented in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." We prove ourselves foolish indeed when we decide that we know, better than our creator, what is good for us. Paul proclaimed in Romans 1:22, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." We further prove our foolishness by routinely enacting laws that are destructive to the basic principles of goodness and decency that are established in God's word. We have changed the language: we call lying "misrepresenting the truth"; we call it "spin" if you are a politician, no longer is a person a homosexual, he is "gay"; a person unfaithful to his spouse is no longer guilty of adultery, he is having an "affair." All of this in an effort to make ourselves comfortable with situations which ought to make us terribly uncomfortable. We should note with great concern Paul's warning to the Romans in chapter 1:24-32: "God also gave them up to uncleanness...who changed the truth into a lie..." Further: "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do things which are not fitting." Does this warning have application to us today? I fear the answer is yes.

#4) Defining Deviancy Down. That is the process by which we, as a society, come to the conclusion that right and wrong are not absolutes;

that what may be wrong and deviant for you may not necessarily be wrong and deviant for me. And since I cannot expect to hold you to any higher standard than that to which I hold myself, the definition of what is deviant is decided solely by the morals of the most lecherous person in our society. It's a very dangerous game of moral mathematics which finally finds its logical conclusion: Morality is determined by the least common denominator...that is, nobody in our society should be held to a moral standard any higher than the least moral among us. The letter to the Romans should serve as a wake-up call to all Christians. As society continues to seek the least moral common denominator and define deviancy down, may we never forget that God is the judge; that He and He alone has determined what is sin; and that we must follow His will if we are to claim the promise of eternal life. "All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory" (Romans 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

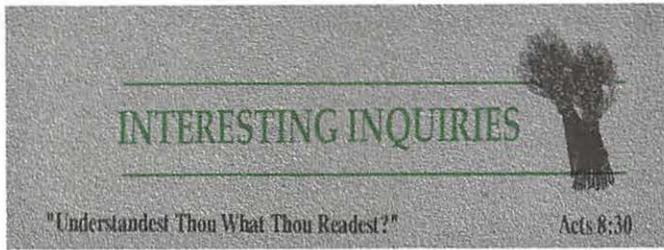
Is there an absolute standard, or is it gone with the wind? May we always recognize the Bible as that absolute standard, lest we be as children, "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Psalm 119:89 says, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." Isaiah 8:20 declares, "To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Editor's Note: Tim Martin is a deacon at the College and North Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

THE COMFORT ZONE

Continued from page 7

harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). There will be a day of accountability. God will have His say. His Word will be final. Will you be comfortable with the final result?—1001 E. Albany Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203



PARENTS, CHILDREN AND SELF-ESTEEM

John T. Polk, II



"In public, children either are unattended or cruelly scolded. Are parents doing their job today?"

Some are, but many don't seem to have a clue.

For the "clueless" in *National Care* (Feb./March, 1991), a magazine of the

National Foundation Life Insurance Company (NFL), "A Parent's Best Gift: Self-Esteem" defines "self-esteem" as "Appreciating my own worth and importance, and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" (p. 18). "Parents begin laying the foundation for self-confidence during a child's infancy. When infants find that their cries are responded to promptly and are offered encouraging words at early attempts to pick up objects and interact with people, they sense the world is stable, secure, and coherent, says Eric Turpin, M.D., associate professor of child psychiatry at the University of Washington" (p. 18-19). "At this age [3 and 4 - jtp,II], children with high self-esteem are not necessarily more competent than others, but their approach is different," says Susan Harter, Ph.D., a University of Denver professor of child psychiatry (p. 19). "Children who feel good about themselves tend to be open to new ideas and are eager to discover the wonder of life," says Patricia H. Berne, co-author of *Building Self-Esteem In Children*. "Children with low self-esteem, on the other hand, may

be submissive and unsure, though sometimes their feelings of inadequacy also can surface in bossy, aggressive behavior," she says. "Children high in self-esteem have two main convictions," according to Dorothy Corkill Briggs, author of *Your Child's Self-Esteem*. They know that they are **lovable**, that is, special simply because they exist. And they know they're **worthwhile** — important because they have something to offer others (p. 19). With these inner convictions, they can avoid many pitfalls of adolescents caused by peer pressure, i.e., truancy, drugs, pregnancy, grades, etc. - jtp,II.

Thoughtful tips are offered to parents who wish to cultivate such feelings in their youngsters [and within the brackets are verses that teach Christians the same principles].

1. "Create an atmosphere of trust."

Convey to your children that nothing that happens to them will be made worse by talking to you about it. No sin that may be committed cannot be forgiven as long as people will repent. (2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 12:31-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

2. "Heap praise."

It is hard for children to receive too much praise. Not flattery (1 Thessalonians 2:1-8) which is lying and destroys confidence in the flatterer, but recognition of true assets (Colossians 3:12-15; Philippians 1:3-10) which is simply seeing Christians as God sees them.

3. "Provide opportunities to learn."

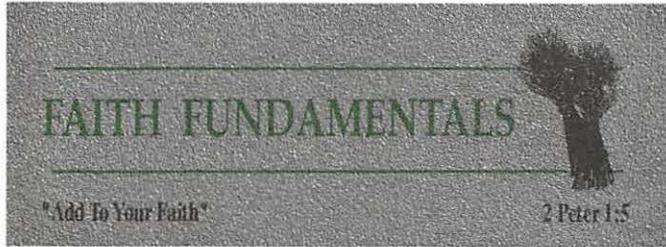
Let them help in the supermarket or prepare meals or repair around the house. A major failing of Bible Classes is not immediately applying what is learned to behavior that can be repeated. Jesus allowed the twelve to accompany His teaching tour (Luke 8:1), then sent them out to do likewise (Luke 9:1-6), only to return and learn even more (Luke 10:1-11).

4. "Provide opportunities to succeed."

Create situations in which failure is unlikely. So Jesus sent a leper (Matthew 8:1-4); palsied (Matthew 9:1-8); blind men (Matthew 9:27-31); and Peter (Matthew 17:24-27) with simple instructions to be followed.

5. "Acknowledge failure."

Reassure them
(Continued on page 12)



“MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE” (2 Peter 1:10)

Guy F. Hester



[This is the third of a four part series.] In our last article we called attention to the statement of the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:10-11, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We pointed out that the antecedent of “these things,” which Peter said if we do them we “shall never fall,” are the graces or virtues listed in the preceding verses: “virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.” In the preceding article we dealt with Virtue, Knowledge and Temperance.

We continue in this, the third part of the series, with patience, “In your faith (ASV) supply...patience.” That is, “Steadfastness under adversity.” “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”

(Hebrews 12:1-2). “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36). Perhaps of the eight graces the one that most are deficient in and causes more Christians to fall than any other is patience.

“In your faith supply...godliness.” This means that we have fear and respect for God almighty. Solomon said in the long ago, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When men come to fear God they will keep his commandments; thus, making their “calling and election sure.”

“In your faith supply...brotherly kindness.” Kindness and affection for the brethren. “And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Hatred and discord among brethren is one of the most despicable and abominable things in the sight of Almighty God who made us. “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19). Love of brethren is a badge of discipleship. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). If we would make our “calling and election sure” we must practice “brotherly kindness” in our lives.

“In your faith supply...love.” Love of God. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). It is not grievous or difficult to keep the commandments of God if we really love him. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). When we consider the great love that God had for us in giving His Son
(Continued on page12)

PARENTS, CHILDREN AND SELF-ESTEEM

Continued from page 10

that mistakes are normal. If they learn that failure is not the end of the world, they'll be more likely to turn their mistakes into lessons. Jesus was willing to forgive (Luke 7:36-50) one who was considered by others too corrupting to touch, and also taught, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe unto him through whom they do come!" (Luke 17:1).

6. "Allow your child to express strong feelings." Teach them healthy ways to channel feelings, and attach limits to their outbursts. Offer different perspectives. It is never right to curse God or those made in His image (James 3:8-12) or to harbor a lack of love toward any (Colossians 3:8-11), but one can "'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26). Keeping it in from day to day kills love.

7. "Correct, don't criticize." When needed, direct your remarks to their actions, not them, personally. This lets them know they are still worthy of love, though their behavior may be intolerable. Jesus condemned unbelief without attacking the individuals who held it in their hearts (Luke 17:11-19; 18:18-30; Mark 16:9-20).

8. "Avoid 'negative' labels." Children are not deaf. They hear their parent's remarks harping on their negative flaws, and these negative statements often become self-fulfilling prophecies. Children who are often told they are trouble-makers become trouble-makers. Jesus reserved labels for those who justly deserved them as adults (Matthew 23:1-39) and not for the children who came to Him (Mark 10:13-16).

9. "Set a good example." Children imitate based upon their observations. Show them what it is to be assertive, optimistic and to take pride in their accomplishments. There is no better example than Jesus (Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 2:21-24).

What we see, then, is how God treats us so that we may have a good attitude about ourselves in Christ (Romans 8:1-4) and therefore feel free to serve Him in love (2 Corinthians 4:1-18; 7:1; Galatians 5:7-15). Only by being a Christian (Acts

2:38) may we have proper self-esteem, but one must "not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). Let's make sure we have not been "flattered" into Hell. —125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

Continued from page 11

for us and calling us through the gospel into his election, it certainly should make it easy for us to love Him supremely. If we love God, we love the brethren (John 13:35). We even love our enemies "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you" (Luke 6:27).

We must love the less fortunate. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). That is one of the problems of anti-ism, a lack of love for those unable to care for themselves. One of the deciding factors at the judgment will be whether or not we demonstrated our love for Christ by loving those who needed our assistance (Matthew 25:31-46).

So we make our "calling and election sure" by adding all these qualities to our lives day by day. If we "do these things" we "shall never fall." The implication being that if we do not "do these things" we will fall. To keep from falling one must diligently add the Christian qualities itemized by Peter (2 Peter 1:5-11). To keep from falling one must be well established in present truth. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).—1101 Airport Circle, Jasper, AL 35504

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN? #1

Ivie Powell



All Bible believers accept the fact that parents are obligated to bring their children "...up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Few, so it seems, actually understand the tremendous responsibility that rests upon their shoulders when they bring children into the world. The refusal to provide for one's children spiritually as well as physically is clearly denounced by scripture: "But if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Indeed it is chilling to realize what parents teach or fail to teach their children may have a direct bearing on their eternal soul's well being! The greatest joy of a parent is set forth by John: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

The future of the Lord's church, to a great degree, depends on what our children are taught at home! As one looks back in history he quickly sees that the church, as well as the home, was strong because of not only what was taught from the pulpit and classroom, but what was taught at home. Today, many are so preoccupied with their jobs and the pleasures of life that they have abandoned their God-given role of properly training their children. Beloved, look at Mark 8:36-37 and ask yourself, "What shall it profit me, if I shall gain the whole world and lose my children?" What are you giving in exchange for your children? Mom, dad, turn off the television, lay aside the newspaper, magazine or book, cancel all appointments, call the family together, open up the Bible, and teach your children what the Bible teaches about:

THE CHURCH

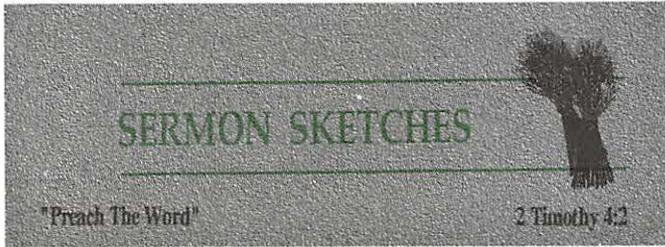
One of these days your children are going

to ask: "What's the difference in the church of Christ and the Baptist church, or the Methodist or Pentecostal church, etc.?" Are you going to tell them there is no difference; that there are "Christians" in all churches; that we are all going to heaven, but merely taking different directions, or, will you open the Bible and teach them the truth? Will you teach them that the Lord's church, the church of Christ, is not a denomination; that it was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, as is recorded in Acts 2; that there is only one church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4) and that all of the denominations do not make up the church; that Christ is the only head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23); that God has no children outside of His family, the church; that when one obeys the gospel as they did in Acts 2:37-38 that God adds them to the church wherein are the saved (Acts 2:47); that we cannot and must not fellowship the denominational world (Ephesians 5:11; 2 John 9-11); that one should never be ashamed of the only church one can read about in the Bible—the church of Christ (Romans 16:16); that one should love the church as Christ did (Ephesians 5:25)?

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

A young boy asked his mother if he had more than one mother or father. That which prompted his question was so many of his classmates having parents which had been married more than once. Divorce has lost its sting not only in our society but even in the church. Unscriptural divorces and re-marriages have become common place. So many pulpits are silent when it comes to God's teaching on marriage, divorce and re-marriage! We need to be reminded that God expects parents to teach the truth on any and all biblical subjects! Such would fall under the guidance of Ephesians 6:4. What exactly will you teach your children about marriage and divorce?

(Continued on Page 15)



TO BE A CHRISTIAN

(Acts 26:28)

M. W. Kiser



The name “Christian” is a divinely given name (Acts 11:26). We are encouraged to feel no shame in wearing it and standing for what it means (1 Peter 4:16). What considerations did Agrippa of old have to give to this matter when he stated

to Paul that he had almost persuaded him “to be a Christian?” Here are at least three serious questions that Agrippa had to think about.

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- A. From the standpoint of faith, a believer (John 20:30-31; Acts 16:31).
- B. From the standpoint of relationship, a child of God (John 1:13).
- C. From the standpoint of character, a saint. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).
- D. From the standpoint of fellowship, a friend (John 15:14-15; James 4:4).
- E. From the standpoint of conflict, a soldier (2 Timothy 2:3-4).
- F. From the standpoint of this world, a pilgrim and a stranger (1 Peter 2:11).
- G. From the standpoint of obligation, a follower of Christ (Matthew 10:38; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11:1) [meaning that we do as He did].
 1. When reviled, threatened not (1

- Peter 2:23; Romans 12:17-21).
2. Forgiving (Luke 23:34; Matthew 6:14-15).
3. Busy about the Father's business (Luke 2:49; Matthew 25:14-31).
4. Our first priority will be to do His will (Luke 22:42; Matthew 7:21-23).

II. WHAT DOES IT COST TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- A. The cost of being a Christian should always be considered (Luke 14:28-32).
- B. We know that it has cost dearly on the divine side
 1. It cost our heavenly Father His dear son (John 3:16).
 2. It cost Jesus His life (Matthew 20:28; Hebrews 2:9-10).
- C. It will cost us something as well to be a Christian.
 1. It is a matter of severance (Luke 14:33).
 2. It is a matter of self-denial (Matthew 16:24).
 3. It is a matter of sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).
 4. It is a matter of service (Galatians 5:6; Philippians 2:12).
 5. It is a matter of suffering (2 Timothy 3:12; Matthew 5:11; 1 Peter 4:16).

III. WHAT DOES IT PAY TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- A. This is a chief consideration of all undertakings in life.
- B. There are those who would have us believe it is not worth the price.
 1. The Devil. Being the “prince of this world” is a shaky job!
 2. The Wicked Reprobate. He thinks of this life only, presumptuously!
 3. The Hypocrite. They speak in terms of the “best of both worlds.”
 4. The Backslider. He has tried

and failed; and therefore forsakes it.

- C. It does not pay to remain lost! (Matthew 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- D. There is a most magnificent reward for being a Christian.
 - 1. It will be in heaven, not here on earth (Matthew 5:12).
 - 2. It will be worth suffering for (Romans 8:16-18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-5:2).
 - 3. It will be eternal and enduring (1 Peter 1:4).
 - 4. It will be far different from this life's experiences (Revelation 21:4).

“To be a Christian or not to be a Christian?”

These are the two questions we have come down to, and we must think about for the next few moments. To be a Christian you must “become” a Christian. In the book of Acts ample illustrations are given to show us how (Acts 2:38-41; 8:26-39; 10:47-48; 16:30-34; 22:16). To be almost persuaded is not enough. It will not make you an owner of a house, or a car; cause surgery to be performed for your health; or get you a college degree. Close is not close enough. Agrippa died a most miserable man because of “almost.” —P.O. Box 2511, Sylacauga, AL 35150-2481

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN

Continued from page 13

Will you teach them the permanency of marriage as set forth in Matthew 19:9; that God expects them to live with their mates until death with the exception of fornication, and even then they should strive to work out the problem and to keep the family intact? Will you teach your children that God will not accept unscriptural divorces and marriages; that baptism does not make an adulterous union holy? And will you teach your children that they should marry someone who will help them and their children to go to heaven? —1272 Bonham Street, Paris, TX 75460

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

Eva Johnson LaFayette, GA.....	25.00
Grover & Doris Dement Belton, TX.....	5.00
Parker & Joyce French Hazel KY.....	15.00
Bill & Joyce Jackson Harrison, AR.....	5.00
Walter & Eathel Buckley Maynard, AR.....	25.00
Charles & Lois Rose Norfolk, AR.....	20.00
Cecil & Letha Griffith Springdale, AR.....	10.00
Lizzie Payne Indianapolis, IN.....	5.00
Doris LaMar Deleware, OK.....	15.00
Ernest or Barbara Rich Casstown, OH.....	10.00
Wards Chapel Church of Christ Manchester, TN.....	25.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ Elizabeth, AR.....	50.00
Arlington Church of Christ McMinnville, TN.....	75.00
Mabelvale Church of Christ Mabelvale, AR.....	1000.00
Mountain Home Church of Christ Mountain Home, AR.....	1200.00

"It is ridiculous...to put Jesus Christ in the same category with other great religious teachers. Did Mohammed ever command the sea? Could Siddhartha Gautama Buddha raise the dead? Does anyone claim Confucius was without sin? None can be compared to Jesus Christ."—R.C. Sproul

“CHRISTIANITY GOES TO SCHOOL”

Allen Webster



God never meant for His children to put on their “religion” with their Sunday suits and high-heeled shoes. Christianity is not a one-hour-on-one-day-a-week activity. The Bible is not just a book on church parliamentary procedure. Christianity

is designed to go with us wherever we go. If we are at home, we are guided by what it says about family life. If we go to work, we go by what it says about service and honesty. When we are at play, our activities are determined by its pattern of modesty and morality.

The government may be trying to take the Bible out of schools, but that's one place it really needs to be. Young minds need some “higher” education [“For as the heavens are *higher* than the earth, so are my ways *higher* than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,” (Isaiah 55:9)] and not to be brought down to believe they are nothing more than a graduated monkey on evolution's tree. Their teaching, relationships, activities, and recreation need the light that only the Bible can shine. They need the friendship that only Christ can give. In short, Christianity needs to go to school with us!

WHEN YOU TAKE CHRISTIANITY TO SCHOOL

YOU'LL HAVE MORE FRIENDS. The high school and college years can be very lonely. Many young people struggle with making friends and maintaining friendships. They want friends; they just don't know how to get them. Believe it or not, the Bible can make you more likable. *To have a friend, one must be a friend:* “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly...” (Proverbs 18:24a). Thus, the first rule is, “Be friendly.” *Friends stick together:* “...there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (18:24b). The second rule is, “Stick by your friends. Don't run

out on them when they say or do something embarrassing.” *Friends look for ways to make each other better.* “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). The third rule is, “Always lift your friends up and not bring them down.” This is the kind of friendship David and Jonathan had. The Bible says, “...Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God” (1 Samuel 23:16).

YOUR GRADES WILL IMPROVE. Believe it or not, the Bible can help you get better grades! How? It improves your attitude and study habits. Instead of saying, “I can't,” you'll say, “I'll try.” Paul taught us: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Instead of half-hearted stabs at assignments, following the Bible will make a student give his best effort. The Good Book says: “...whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23), and, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

YOUR TEACHERS WILL LIKE YOU BETTER. Classrooms have become war zones in many schools. Teachers have to put up with things prison wardens should not have to. When “Christianity goes to school,” teachers have fewer problems. *They don't have to worry about cheating.* When Christians go to school, “cheat sheets,” stay home. A Christian will no more steal someone's answer than he would someone's money. “Let him that stole steal no more,” (Ephesians 4:28). *They don't have to deal with disrespect.* Teachers deserve respect because they are trying to help students prepare for life (Romans 13:1; cf. Galatians 4:1-2).

YOU WON'T END UP IN THE WRONG CROWD. Christians realize “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33) and they avoid bad company. A Christian realizes worldly people will pressure him to do worldly

(Continued on page 18)

WHAT DO YOU MEAN “IRREVERENT”?

Brooks Boyd



This preacher just experienced his oldest child's high school graduation. Part of that experience was her Baccalaureate service, described for us as a religious service and address to the graduating class. Surprisingly, a denominational singing group was invited to be part of the “service and address” at the local county high school. As each soloist sang their stanza of “To God be the Glory” to the accompaniment of an electronic keyboard, the director and other choir members would applaud excitedly as if cheering on their home football team. What was the cause of the applause? The singing of the name “God” in the soloist's song.

While this event may be equated to mere secular entertainment because it was not performed by our brethren in Christ, not done in a proper worship setting, there have been comparable situations among us. A youth rally in another southern state featured the local youth minister as the evening speaker. He entered the auditorium running and waving his hands as many of the local teens cheered him on, saying, “Go _____, go _____, go _____,” calling the young preacher's name each time. One area gospel preacher said that his youth group asked if they could leave at that point, themselves concluding, “That was irreverent.”

Jude's twenty-five verse epistle contains the word “ungodly” six times, four of those being found in verse fifteen. The basic message of the book of Jude, according to Kenneth Jones (1976) is “To warn Christians to the possibility of apostasy and to exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.” A quick reading of the book shows that the focus of Jude's writing was trouble being caused by men coming into the body of Christ, bent on doing harm to that body (verse 4). Those who bring

trouble to our Lord's church may be identified scripturally as ungodly people.

Most will probably think of overt acts of wickedness when pondering the word “ungodly,” but consulting some major reference works gives a slightly different insight. To “impious” and “ungodly,” *Vine* adds this thought about the Greek word, *asebes*: “without reverence for God, not merely irreligious, but acting in contravention of God's demands.” *Thayer* gives a similar range of meaning: “destitute of reverential awe towards God, contemning God, impious.” Added to these definitions is the fact that the Greek word under consideration is, in the Greek, simply the negative form of the root verb *sebomai* which is most often translated “worship” or “devout.” Hence, an ungodly person is one who does not have a worshipful mind. They are irreverent.

In evaluating modern trends in worship, some have little regard for the question of reverence, seemingly relegating this concern to “traditionalism,” or else not considering it at all (James S. Woodroof's comments in *The Church in Transition*, pages 73-77). When worship in truth (John 4:24) is changed to being “open to the invigorating presence of the Spirit's fresh breezes through our sometimes stuffy worship experiences” (Shelly & Harris, *The Second Incarnation*, 1992), then the focus shifts slightly in favor of the worshipper and the subjective instead of the Worshipped One and His will.

Surely, not all those who cry for “more freedom of expression in worship” do so out of godless desires. Some babes in Christ may honestly lack understanding of the full application of the authority principle set forth in Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (NKJV). But all who put personal preferences ahead of what the Head has authorized are doing dishonor to the Lord Jesus (See Colossians 1:18; 2:18-19).

(Continued on page 18)

CHRISTIANITY GOES TO SCHOOL

Continued from page 16

things, so he's careful not to put himself in a group that may cause him to compromise his faith. Paul wrote, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2). He has enough courage, conviction, and confidence to avoid the temptations to dance, drink, curse, vandalize, or commit fornication in order to have "friends." These activities lead to guilt, addiction, alienation, fines, and unwanted pregnancy—things that young people are not equipped to handle (who is?).

YOU'LL END UP TALKING ABOUT CHRIST.

It doesn't take a Christian long to get around to talking about His favorite subject—Jesus. Far from being ashamed of Him (Romans 1:16), they are proud when others find out they are members of His church (Matthew 16:18). "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father..." (Matthew 5:16). One of the last things Jesus ever said was, "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). School is a part of "the world" to which the Gospel must go. In most churches, young people bring more people to services, and ultimately to Christ, than any other group.

When it comes to Christianity, "One size fits all." And it's "daily wear," not special occasion. -P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IRREVERENT

Continued from page 17

What is reverence and why is it a valid concern for the issues of our day? While the word translated "reverence" in Hebrews 12:28 in the King James Version may have weaker textual attestation, the word rendered "godly fear" is quite strong. On this word (*eulabeias*), the conclusion of Denis W. Vinyard in *The Greek-English Dictionary of The Complete Biblical Library* seems significant:

Thus, in New Testament usage *eulabeia* as fear of God is not a dishonorable fear. It is not a fear that paralyzes man in the presence of grave danger, but rather prudent fear or attitude of circumspection and caution as man stands in reverent awe before his God.

First, reverence will keep the focus of our worship on the proper audience, God himself. Jesus reminded Satan: "For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10b, NKJV).

Second, reverence will make our standard of evaluation in worship what God would be pleased to receive, not what we prefer, find most enjoyable or, through survey and analysis deem most popular among "unchurched seekers." Jesus' recitation of Isaiah's words still find application here: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

Third, reverence will make worship from the heart fulfilling, regardless of the degree of emotional stir that results. Worship, as with all acts of obedience, finds reward merely in being from the heart and knowing that we have done what we have done for God, not for self.

So the next time current topics such as hand-clapping or choirs or solos in worship come up, why not suggest that we be those who seek to fulfill God's desire for his people of long ago: "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and their with children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29).—1 Chapel Hill Boulevard, Lake City, FL 32025

Repentance is a change of mind towards God and Christ, which results in a change of attitude and action; it is not merely sorrow for having done wrong, but a sorrow that makes the conduct a reversal of what has gone before.—George Soltau

DID JESUS CHRIST REALLY LIVE?

Continued from page 1

ancient writers who never alluded to Jesus Christ; thus, allegedly, he did not exist. Let us briefly focus upon this assertion.

First, no responsible researcher would dream of ignoring the vast depository of evidence for the historicity of Jesus in deference to the silence of a few writers who did not mention the great Teacher. This is poor logic indeed. There may be a variety of valid reasons which explain the silence of some writers. Remember this: Silence proves nothing—one way or the other. Even *The Encyclopedia of Unbelief* notes: "Silence on a topic does not in itself prove ignorance of it—unless the silence extends to matters obviously relevant to what the writer has chosen to discuss."

Second, a number of ancient writers (e.g., Josephus, Tacitus, Seutonius, Lucian) do mention Christ.

Third, some of the antique authors were removed, either by time or distance, from the events of Palestine, so that matters pertaining to that region were of no importance to them. Too, more often than not, their areas of interest did not concern religious movements.

Fourth, the fact is, more than five thousand copies (substantially whole, or in fragment) of ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament now have been collected—some of which extend to the very shadows of the first century. These clearly document the historicity of Jesus. Add to that the more than ten thousand ancient versions (translations of the Scriptures into other languages), and the evidence for Christ's historical existence is staggering.

Regardless of irresponsible claims to the contrary, therefore, those who revere Jesus Christ and his teaching may be absolutely assured that their faith has a solid historical basis. -P.O. Box 55265, Stockton, CA 95205

"If you believe what you like in the Bible, and reject what you dislike, it is not the Bible you believe but yourself."

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS
P.O. BOX 880
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 425-4330
Office Fax (870) 425-8118
E-Mail: church@centuryinter.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P.O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
Office Fax (501) 407-0072
E-Mail: mabelvale@cei.net

Dennis Gulledege, Evangelist

"The minister should preach as if he felt that although the congregation owns the church (building) and has bought the pews, they have not bought him. His soul is worth no more than any other man's, but he cannot be expected to sell it for a salary. The terms are by no means equal. If a member does not like the preaching he can go elsewhere and get another pew, but the preacher cannot get another soul." —Chapin

READERS' RESPONSE

Luke 10:26

"How Readest Thou?"

A KIND CONTRIBUTOR

I recently enjoyed the January-March issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* and was impressed with its contents. The thoughts and ideas of the brethren are important to me and I would ask that you place my name on your mailing list for future issues. Enclosed is a contribution to help in this good work. Doris LaMar, Delaware, OK.

HOW MUCH? HOW OFTEN?

Your address was given to me. They tell me you have a truthful publication called the *Gospel Gleaner*. I would be interested in a subscription. How much is this? How often is it published. Any information would be appreciated. [Note: *Gospel Gleaner* is free and is published quarterly—Editors]. Norma Woolbert, Marana, AZ.

DEALING WITH ERROR

Please add me to your mailing list to receive *Gospel Gleaner*. I hear that it is a very good publication dealing with error in the brotherhood. I understand that it is sent free of charge. Johnny McCaghren, Meriden, KS.

AMEN!

I would like to say "Amen" to your publication, *Gospel Gleaner*. We need more good sound teaching in the brotherhood today. If you would, please add my name to your mailing list. May God bless you in your endeavor to spread the gospel to this lost and dying world. I look forward to receiving your paper. Richard E. Morris, Kenton, OH.

ONE OF THE VERY BEST

Thank you so much for the nice bundle of *Gospel Gleaners* which we receive each month. However, over the years this congregation has decreased in attendance, due to most of the young couples going to Glendale Road congregation which is the largest or one of the largest churches in Kentucky. Other congregations around here have experienced the same thing. Therefore, we don't use all the copies of the paper, so you may be able to send them elsewhere. We need only 5 copies and surely would like to receive them. Your paper is one of the very best. Our contribution has gone down also so we can't send contributions. However, I'm enclosing a small personal check. I am now almost 73 years old and moved to Hazel about 3 years ago. Before that I preached for churches in Nashville mostly. I came here from the Mt. Carmel church in Athens, Al. It is a church of about 200. Parker French, Hazel, KY.

GG GOING INTO MISSION AREAS

I commend you and the staff of *Gospel Gleaner* for an outstanding publication. I have read the last two issues and find it to be one of the best I have seen in recent years. I moved here the weekend of your latest lectureship and was unable to attend. I would have loved it I am certain. I would have enjoyed visiting with Steve Rook and Ivie Powell again and to meet all the other brethren who were there. I look forward to next year and plan to attend. My wife, Lois, and I have recently moved to Norfolk, AR (near Mtn. Home) from Lincoln, Missouri where we spent the past 11 years. My reason for writing is to request *Gospel Gleaner* be sent to several congregations in West central Missouri. These are all mission points for the church and most of the men preaching there have limited resources. I wish I could afford to make a larger contribution for this but cannot at this time. Keep up the good work. Charles R. Rose, Norfolk, AR.

GOSPEL GLEANER
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mabelvale, AR
PERMIT NO. 4

GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 14

No. 4

“WHAT ARE YOU?”

Rob Whitacre

There have been several occasions while traveling or talking with those in the community when a person has asked, “What are you religiously?” This is not an uncommon question. It is one that opens the evangelistic door for Christians and allows our lights to shine (Matthew 5:14-16).

WHAT YOU DON'T SAY

There are a few answers that you do not want to give. First, don't tell them that you are a “church of Christ” or “church of Christ.” This implies that we are some type of denomination. These terms are never used in the Bible. Second, don't tell them that we are “church of Christ people” or that you are a member of the “Church of Christ church.” These terms cannot be found in the Bible. Peter said, “If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY

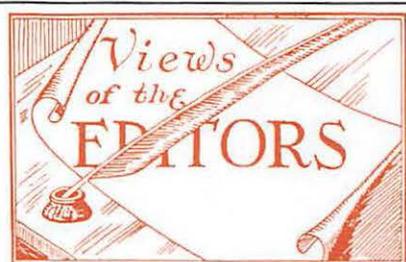
When I am asked this question I see a potential Bible study. A person may ask, “What are you religiously?” “I am a Christian” (1 Peter 4:16). Then they will ask, “No, I mean what are you? Are you a Methodist, Lutheran, Mormon, Catholic, or Baptist?” Then I say, “I am just a Christian.” Furthermore, they will ask out of frustration, “You don't understand what I am asking. Where do you attend church?” I then say,

“The Lord's church or the church Jesus built and paid for.” “No, no,” they respond, “What church do you belong to?” “I am just a Christian and only belong to Christ's church.” How can such a simple answer be so confusing?

WHY YOU NEED TO SAY IT

Now, what kind of answers do you give? Can you say, “I am just a Christian”? Was it not Paul who condemned human titles over God's people in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are some contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

Why not just be a Christian? Why not just be a member of Christ's church? I would exhort all religious people to leave those “churches” who use man-made names, titles, and doctrines. “The churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16).— P. O. Box 55, Poole, KY 42444



Volume 14 Number 4
October-December 1998

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

Guy F. Hester
M. W. Kiser
John T. Polk, II
Ivie Powell
Allen Webster
Ronnie Whittemore

EDITORS

Bill Dillon
Dennis Gullede

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 880
Mountain Home, AR 72654-0880

Editorial

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

Bill Dillon

Thomas B. Macaulay, the renowned English historian, is said to have made it a high aim of his life to get along happily with the people closely associated with him. The cheerful result was that he was known to have an unusually satisfying relationship in his home life and a large circle of cherished friendships. If we can learn from the example of Macaulay, we will take a giant step in the direction of solving one of the most perplexing problems which life presents.



What are some rules of the road to observe when trying to have a smooth ride in our relationships with others?

1. BE MAGNANIMOUS. In Genesis 13:7 we read of "a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle..." It is the Devil's business to constantly cause trouble and gender strife between brethren. Abraham and Lot got together on the problem and a solution was attained when Abraham offered his nephew Lot the first choice of the land. Abraham's beseeching words were, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8-9). Abraham, in essence, said, "You take what you want and I'll take what's left." The dissension was thus settled.

2. DIFFER WITHOUT BECOMING DISAGREEABLE. Paul and Barnabas were two of the best men who ever lived. Yet, they had a disagreement over whether young John Mark would accompany them on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-40). Even good men don't see everything alike.

The problem was resolved as the workers separated into two mutual efforts; resulting in the gospel being spread into more regions than before. God is so great that He can take men's differences and fulfill His divine purposes.

3. LEARN TO SPEAK TACTFULLY. Learning to speak tactfully means learning to mingle mercy along with the truth. Instead of saying someone is "stubborn" we might say they have "conviction." In many instances, the way we say a matter is as important as what we say. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Let us pray for wisdom to be able to say the right thing at the right time in the right way. May our hearts be understanding so that we will never thoughtlessly offend or hurt others by our speech; but that our words will become messengers of hope and healing.

(Continued on page 5)

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

Dennis Gullede



It is a leading fact of the gospel “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3). The death of Jesus Christ is an astonishing event productive of so many marvelous consequences. It cannot be too reverently pondered or too closely

examined.

Millions of men have died, but only one Christ has died. All men who have passed into “the valley of the shadow of death” have done so *because* of sin (Romans 5:12). Christ alone has died *for* sin (1 Peter 2:24).

The death of Jesus Christ upon the cross is not appreciated alike by all. To the world it is mere foolishness. Paul wrote, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Paul named the unbelievers: “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22). To the children of God, however, the message of the crucifixion of Christ is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). The crucified Christ constitutes the center of our preaching: “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

The evangelists give us their respective accounts of the crucifixion in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 19. We are certainly impressed with the brevity of the crucifixion accounts. What restraint the inspired writers must have exercised as they put pen to paper to describe history's most important death. For our consideration we have these words from the beloved physician, “And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33). Please note the

expression, “there they crucified Him.” Although brief, these words are very descriptive. This we shall reveal as we examine each word for its bearing upon the subject.

“THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM”

The name of the place where they crucified Christ was, in the Hebrew language, *Golgotha*, meaning, “Place of a Skull” (Matthew 27:33). The Greek form is *kranion*, denoting a skull. Our word is *Calvary*, from the Latin, *calvaria* (Luke 23:33). It is a rock ledge about thirty feet high bearing a striking resemblance to a human skull.

It was a conspicuous place. It was near the city of Jerusalem (John 19:20). It was also close to a busy thoroughfare into and out of the city, allowing passers-by to observe (Matthew 27:39).

It was an appropriate place, being outside the gates of Jerusalem. The reason it was appropriate is because sin offerings of the Mosaic dispensation were made “outside the camp” (Exodus 29:14). Like the sacrificial victim Jesus suffered “outside the gate” (Hebrews 13:11-12).

“THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM”

The word “they” includes all who had a part in the crucifixion of Christ. This would include the Jews. They did not do the actual deed, but it was done to please them. They were murderers in heart, but not in deed. The blood, however, was on their wicked hands! (Acts 2:23). Also in the line-up were Judas Iscariot, Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. And actually carrying out the cruel deed were the Roman soldiers, led by a centurion.

In a sense, “they” includes all of us. It was human sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. John said, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”

(Continued on page 4)

(1 John 2:2). Let it be clarified, however, that we do not crucify him *like* they did unless we crucify him “afresh.” This we do by apostasy from the faith (Hebrews 6:6).

“THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM”

Death by crucifixion was not a custom of the Jews, but was a Roman mode of punishment. The “extreme punishment” enters Hellenic history at about the time of Alexander the Great, who borrowed it from the Persians. The Romans adopted it from the example of Carthage, where it was frequently employed. Rome, during times of war, crucified deserters, thieves and conquered rebels. In peacetime it was the punishment meted out frequently to slaves.

Crucifixion was above all things, a painful and humiliating form of execution. There was the preliminary scourging (Matthew 27:26). This was routinely done. In Hebrew law the number of strokes was limited to forty. The Pharisees reduced it to thirty-nine in the interest of not exceeding the law.

The victim was made to carry his own cross to the place of execution (John 19:17). What was the cross? The Bible refers to it as a “tree” (Acts 5:30) and a “cross” (Philippians 2:8). We envision an object in a † shape; solidly constructed of nicely smoothed and squared pieces of wood. If asked whether Scripture is responsible for presenting such an image we would have to answer “no.”

History has portrayed the Lord carrying a full cross on one shoulder with the post end dragging the ground. This is very likely an incorrect portrayal. Archaeology has revealed that the cross consisted of two pieces of wood. The *stipes* was a vertical pole permanently fixed into the ground at the place of execution [probably a *humilis*, a low cross of about seven feet high]. The *patibulum* was a horizontal beam affixed to the top of the *stipes*. Hollowing out a mortise in the middle of the *patibulum*, and fining down the top of

the *stipes* so as to form a tenon probably did this.

Actually, what was carried was the upper beam; the *patibulum*. If one doubts this because the word *cross* suggests intersecting beams, he should keep in mind that the Greek word for cross (*stauros*) “denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake” (W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vol. 1, p. 256*). This distinguished it from the cross-beam form of the cross which it later came to be.

After having been scourged, the beam was placed behind the condemned man's neck, then, strapped to his chest, outstretched arms and hands. Jesus made reference to this procedure to be used on Peter in John 21:18-19. The single beam would have weighed about 110 lbs. The entire cross likely weighed about 220 lbs. It would have required great effort to carry only the *patibulum*. The gospel accounts are silent as to how it was actually done. It is possible, however, that the *patibulum* rested on Jesus' shoulders, unbound by cords. There would seem to be no valid reason for binding Simon of Cyrene, a free man, who had simply been compelled to carry the Lord's cross (Luke 23:26). So-called “Christian” iconography has given us quite a different picture through the ages.

The Romans used two methods of crucifixion. One involved the use of nails and the other ropes, but they were used separately. We know that Jesus was nailed to the cross (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25). It is likely that Jesus was nailed to the *patibulum* on the ground. He was then placed with his back to the *stipes* and then lifted so that the crossbeam could be fixed to the stake. His legs may have been drawn up so that his knees protruded and his feet were nailed either separately with two nails or one above the other with a single nail.

Again, “Christian” iconography depicts the thieves as tied to their crosses while Jesus is nailed to his. Why? This may be attributed to Tertulian (150-220? AD) who believed that Christ alone was crucified in this fashion. Art has since then embedded this image into our heads, whether correct or not. The Bible is silent on the matter.

The one on this cross was not just another criminal, nor was he just a man. He was the Christ! Jesus Christ, the suffering one (Isaiah 53; Acts 8:35). Jesus Christ, the innocent one (Matthew 27:4). Jesus Christ, the just one (Matthew 27:19, 24). Jesus Christ, the reviled one (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus Christ, the son of God (Matthew 27:54).

The crucifixion of Christ is the greatest demonstration of the love of God for man (Romans 5:8). What else would cause the Lord to submit to what Cicero called “the most cruel and hideous of punishments”? It can only be divine love for sinful man. Oh, the cost of sin! Oh, the price of the church! Oh, the power of love!—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

Continued from page 2

4. OVERCOME ENVY AND HYPER-SENSITIVITY. The spirit of the elder brother is alive and well. It is a spirit to be pitied because its pernicious fruit is misery and unhappiness. The individual who never develops the capacity to rejoice in the abilities and accomplishments of others is doomed to be a figure of wretched loneliness who shuts himself out from much of the joy of life and ever remains his own worst enemy.

In Roman 12:15 we are told to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

5. BE FREE WITH PRAISE AND APPRECIATION. In John 12, Mary's worthy deed of anointing the Lord's feet with precious ointment received more than its share of criticism. Her action received the harsh condemnation of Judas, but, in this instance as in many others, the critic revealed a lot about himself (John 12:6).

Most people need far more appreciation than they actually receive. There has seldom ever been a shortage of critics to point out our mistakes, but there will always be a scarcity of exhorters to praise our strengths. Pray for a sympathetic heart

to be kind and caring. We can give renewed enthusiasm to the workers in the Kingdom whose hearts have been bruised by the unfairness of others.

From the days of Cain and Abel until now, there have always been discords among brethren. The ways and preferences of others may not be our ways and preferences; so we must try, as much as possible, without sacrificing scriptural standards or compromising gospel truths, to be at peace among ourselves. Proverbs 20:3 says, “It is honorable for a man to cease from strife, since any fool can start a quarrel.”—612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS
P.O. BOX 880
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 425-4330

Office Fax (870) 425-8118

E-Mail: church@centuryinter.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

GOSPEL GLEANER GOES CYBERSPACE

In mid October the elders at the Mabelvale church of Christ decided to build a web sight for the congregation here. Among the tools available on the web page is the current issue of *Gospel Gleaner*. We will also archive some back issues as time progresses. Other tools include our local bulletin, a page of Bible questions and answers, many articles for teenagers, eventually a Bible course, and several other items. Please check it out and let us know what you think, then share the address with others. www.cei.net/~mabelval
E-mail: mabelval@cei.net —Dan Cates

HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VIEW CHRISTMAS?

Allen Webster



The American “Christmas Season” is filled with many enjoyable and worthwhile customs. It is a happy time of year. The attitudes that are especially noticeable—love, good will, peace, joy, giving—are what God intended for men to

exhibit year around. The exchanging of gifts, laughter, and love rekindles our spirits and strengthens our families. Everybody but Scrooge loves Christmas.

We often hear that “Jesus is the reason for the season” and “let’s put Christ back in Christmas.” Christians ask, “How should I celebrate Christmas?” or “Should I celebrate it at all?” Since we should be “...ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh” (1 Peter 3:15), this topic deserves consideration. What does the Bible say about Christmas?

CHRISTIANS MAY ENJOY THIS SEASON AS A NATIONAL HOLIDAY. Christians do not have to cease to be happy in Jesus at “Christmas” just to be different from others. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). He also wrote, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice” (Romans 12:15). This would include Christmas as much as any other day. There is not enough happiness in the world anyway. We may give and receive gifts as easily on this day as any other. This is a good time to teach our children that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Christians observe many non-religious holidays (e.g., July 4, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Valentine’s Day), and can celebrate “Christmas” in this sense (unless it violates the conscience, Romans 14:23). This falls into the area of Christian liberty (Romans 14:3-6). Since our jobs give us time off, it’s a blessing for our homes. If there was ever a need for strengthening families, it

is now. It gives parents time to teach children and spouses time to strengthen relationships (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 5:25-29; 6:4).

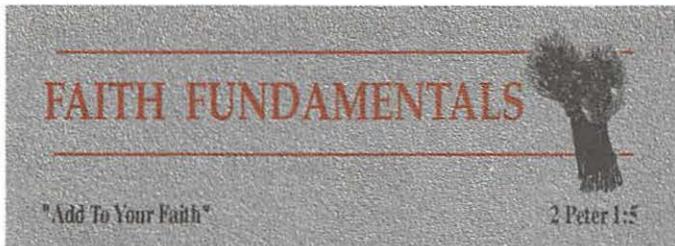
CHRISTIANS MUST NOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AS A HOLY DAY. The word *Christmas* is not found in the Bible. It originated with the Catholic church (“Christ Mass”) to commemorate Christ’s birth and was first practiced in the Fourth Century. It was not practiced by Christians in Bible times. There is no command, example or implication that one should celebrate Christmas in the Bible (Cf., Revelation 22:18-19). In fact the opposite is the case.

Paul addressed this issue (in principle) with the Galatian church: “Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor on you in vain” (4:10-11). The Colossian church faced those who wanted them to celebrate religious days and were told, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (2:16-17).

God expects Christians to strictly follow the Bible (“observe all things that I have commanded,” Matthew 28:20; “speak as the oracles of God...,” 1 Peter 4:11; not “go beyond what is written,” 2 John 9; Colossians 3:17). Therefore, we observe only one religious holiday—Sunday (Acts 20:7). God set this day apart to memorialize, not His Son’s *birth*, but His *death* (1 Corinthians 11:20-24). Christians rejoice in this “unspeakable gift” fifty-two times a year!

People cannot actually celebrate Christ’s birth anyway because God did not reveal the birth date (perhaps because He knew people would celebrate it). Before the fourth century AD, there were three guesses as to His birth (January 6; March 25, and December 25). December 25 was

(Continued on page 18)



“MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE” (2 Peter 1:10)

Guy F. Hester



[This is the fourth and concluding article in the series, “Make Your Calling And Election Sure.”] The apostle Peter admonished in 2 Peter 1:5-11, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to

virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

In the previous articles we have noted the “graces” that must be added to our lives in order to “make our calling and election sure.” We have discussed the terms “virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love” that Peter said, “In your faith supply...”

As pointed out in our last article, we make

our “calling and election sure” by adding **ALL** these qualities on a day by day basis to our lives, and “If we do these things we shall never fall.” To keep from falling, the Christian must be diligent in adding these qualities to his life. This means that one must be well established in “present truth.” “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12).

The Christians in Galatia were led to believe and accept a perverted gospel. Paul said to them, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9). The acceptance of a perverted (changed) gospel resulted in their fall from grace. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). They were hindered in running the Christian race. Paul said, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

One must have hope or expectation of the “abundant entrance.” “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11).

There is wonderful power in the hope of eternal life which the faithful Christian has. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Romans 8:24). Hope anchors the soul in heaven. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 6:19-20).

(Continued on page 18)

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN? #2

Ivie Powell



The responsibility of bringing up our children “...in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) cannot be over emphasized! The inspired words of the servant of old are ever applicable: “And these words, which I

command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Mom, dad, is the spiritual training of your children top priority on your heart? If you do not properly teach your children someone else will, and they may or may not teach them the truth! Have you ever opened the Bible, and studied such subjects as worship; how should we view the Bible; entertainment and recreation; one's language; Biblical language verses denominational languages; abortion; creation; homosexuality; and elders with your children? If not, then please permit me to give a few suggestions on these timely subjects in this issue and others to follow.

THE IMPORTANCE & PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIP

Children love to study the Bible and attend services of the Lord's church. While their hearts are young and tender, infuse into them the importance and privilege of worshipping God with the saints. The highest privilege one has is being a child of God and worshipping and serving our heavenly Father. Not only does worship include possessing the right attitude, but following the pattern God has set forth in His holy word. Worship involves something one does and is an act of divine adoration. Acceptable worship is not based upon merely being honest and sincere. Nor is acceptable worship based on human tradition, or one's likes and dislikes, but upon God's

instructions: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Explain to your children that one may be honest and sincere as were the Athenians (Acts 17:23), but be lacking in truth. Also one may have all of the prescribed avenues of acceptable worship, and be lacking in sincerity. That according to God's word one must not only be sincere in his worship, but that one's worship must be according to God's instructions. Anything else is vain and useless!

Emphasize that all acceptable worship is to “...be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). God never intended for worship to be of a carnival type of atmosphere: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

As Christians gather to worship God, there are five acts or avenues set forth in God's word which constitute acceptable worship: teaching (Acts 2:42); singing [without the use of instrumental music (Ephesians 5:19)]; prayer (Romans 12:12); the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7); and giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). These five avenues of worship are the only ones that are authorized of God. Choruses, solos, dramatic presentations, and hand clapping are not only out of order, but are completely without Biblical authorization (Colossians 3:17)! Man does not have the right to add to nor subtract from God's word. To do so is to bring God's wrath (Revelation 22:18-19).

Mom, dad, let your children know how important assembling with the saints is by taking your children with you to every service. Remember, your example will speak volumes to the attentive eyes of your children!

HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THE BIBLE?

We should teach our children that the Bible is the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), and
(Continued on page 18)

TO CLAP OR NOT TO CLAP

Owen D. Olbricht

Shakespeare wrote the famous soliloquy for Hamlet, "To be or not to be? that is the question." In the same vein we might ask, "To clap or not to clap? that is the question." Such a question may seem out of place by some because of a growing acceptance of this and other practices.

Are there principles that should control our behavior in our assemblies? Are we left to our own preferences in how we are to conduct ourselves when we are in gatherings of the saints?

JESUS' PRINCIPLES

In the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus revealed a principle that should govern our activities when in the presence of others. When we give our alms, we are not to call attention to our gifts (Matthew 6:1-3). We are not to put ourselves on display when we say our prayers (Matthew 6:5-6). If we fast, we are not to do anything in order to impress others that we are fasting (Matthew 6:16-18).

The principle behind Jesus' statements is that we are not to act in order to be seen of men. Any display that calls attention to our righteous acts may cause men to praise us, but such acts are not acceptable to God.

OUR PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

One gauge of the intention of our acts is to consider how we act when we are not in the presence of others. What do we do when we are alone with God in our private devotions? Do we put pious expressions on our faces or engage in various bodily movements when alone like we do when in the presence of others?

A young man while sitting in the pew sang with an expressionless face and looked bored as he sang. This all changed when he stood before the congregation and led singing. His face seemed to glow and he sang with enthusiasm. What made the difference?

How many people who clap, raise their hands, or engage in other such activities do so

when by themselves? If they do these things only in public, would this not indicate that such activities are done to be seen of men instead of to be seen of God. The heart is what God sees, not facial expressions and physical movements.

Spirituality is not what is displayed to impress men but rather is what is expressed to God from the heart.

TRANSFER OF PRACTICE

Activities practiced in society can easily find their way into the church. Some argue that such activities as clapping and other physical movements are only natural ways of expressing what is in the heart. This does not necessarily follow. These activities are not innate, but are developed and are transferred as habit patterns from one setting to another.

The same principle applies to children in worship. If they stomp their feet, clap their hands, swing their arms, march, and do other things, why would they not want to do the same when they become adults? If they do these things as children, what reasoning would tell them that doing so as adults is wrong? We must admit that they enter into such physical activities with more zest and excitement than when engaged in simple worship activities. Have we helped them if all they find in physical actions is emotional excitement devoid of spiritual worship?

The fact that we feel like doing these things because of continual practice outside worship does not mean that God desires them in our worship to Him. We have physical urges that are right in the right place and at the right time, but have no place in our worship to God. God has not told us to worship according to our natural inclinations, but He has told us to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

The only aspects of worship we can be sure are pleasing to God are those revealed in the word
(Continued on page 19)

INTERESTING INQUIRIES

"Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?"

Acts 8:30



WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT THE CLINTON-LEWINSKI AFFAIR?

John T. Polk, II



"Why is such a 'big deal' made of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair, since it's only about sex in the Oval Office and not over how he runs the country?"

It's a "big deal" because it marks the erosion of America's morals. Samuel

Adams wrote a friend in 1775, "He who is void of virtuous attachments in private life is, or very soon will be, void of all regard for his country." (*Human Events*, p. 8, Vol. 54, No. 36, September 25, 1998). An adulterous affair with Donna Rice caused Gary Hart to withdraw from presidential campaigning in 1988, but by 1992, Bill Clinton falsely denied his Gennifer Flowers affair, devoted a staff member to "bimbo eruptions," became the first U.S. president to set up a personal legal defense fund, and flaunted his disregard for truth regarding his immorality. For eight months of 1998 the U.S. Government, media, and public opinion have been sated with his Monica Lewinsky adultery, and all the school children he put on Internet can read its salacious details.

God's Law of marriage (and sex) is higher than any law or lawbreaker of any land. God made heterosexual, monogamous, lifetime marriage the only "safe sex" (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-9; Romans 7:1-3). Marriage is to be honored in every house—even the White House (Hebrews

13:4)! Whether adulterers are Henry Hyde, Jimmy Swaggert, Thomas Jefferson, or William Jefferson Clinton, they are never right or justified.

Clinton's contortive definition of "sex" caused comedian Jay Leno to declare he and his wife "have never had sex yet." "Parse sex" according to Galatians 5:19-21, and outside of marriage, sex is sin whether in: a car or the "Titanic," a dorm room or prom, the Oval Office or governor's mansion, youth or adulthood:

1. Adultery, "unlawful sexual intercourse," including: the lust (Matthew 5:28), the act (John 8:3-4), [lit. "caught stealing sex"], and unscriptural re-marriages (Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18).

2. Fornication, "giving one's body for the lust of another," should be: avoided (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), unless married (1 Corinthians 7:2), and when listed with "adultery" includes all sexual activity leading to and unspecified by the term "adultery."

3. Uncleaness, "actions without good moral purpose." These are done by those who: pervert sex (Romans 1:18, 24-32), have no conscience (Ephesians 4:19), and reject God's gospel call (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

4. Lewdness, "shamelessness and unbridled lust." William Barclay notes that Lightfoot said this sin "shocks public decency" then adds such a one "does not care what people say or think so long as he [or she-jtpII] can gratify his evil desires...[and] who is lost to shame." (pp 60-61, *New Testament Words*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964).

5. And The Like, "resembling." This phrase picks up the crumbs that fall from the "spin-meisters" table of orgy.

Add to these **#6. Touch**, "long, lingering, sexual contact" is only for those married to each other (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). This encompasses terms like: foreplay, petting, necking, fondling, stroking, feeling, spooning, or whatever it may be called in current vernacular. There is no government legislation, Supreme Court, or executive officer who is above God's law or who is

(Continued on page 19)

THEY WERE OFFENDED

Dave Smith

Concern over how the truth should be presented has caused some to take the more “watered down” approach in teaching and preaching the gospel. Such efforts have changed the declaration in Ephesians 4:15 from “Speaking the truth in love” to “speaking in love,” omitting truth and failing to, as Paul put it, “declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). The reasoning has been that if we offend someone by what the truth has to say, we will lose them. Therefore, the solution is to “sugar coat” things to appease the listener. Our Lord and Master had such an instance of offense. How did He deal with it?

In Matthew 15 Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites because they placed their manmade traditions above the commandments of God (verses 1-9). When the Lord's disciples informed Him “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying” (verse 12), note that He used this opportunity to teach His disciples (and any scribes and Pharisees within earshot) two important lessons. First of all, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (verse 13). The tradition bound doctrines of the Pharisees and scribes were unacceptable to God; they were vain worship. The only worship which pleases God is that which is in accordance with His commands, a worship that is “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

Secondly, He tells His disciples to “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (verse 14). Was Jesus telling them to “Let them alone” in an effort not to offend them? To the contrary. We are obligated to teach the truth no matter if it is unpopular. Brother J.W. McGarvey explained this verse in the following manner: “Let them alone, not in the way of ceasing to expose their errors, but in the sense of making no effort to appease them. The disciples were to be regardless of them as Jesus was, making no change in either the matter or manner

of discourse for their sake. Sometimes the best way to move men is to be totally indifferent to them; and when men stand opposed to the truth from corrupt motives, the only possible chance to do them good is to offend them, for when you please them you only confirm them in their wicked ways” (J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, p. 136).

Lest we get the wrong idea, we should never intentionally seek to offend anyone. But we must realize that even when we preach and teach the word of truth as given in God's inspired word, some will be offended by it. The task for us, then, is to maintain our allegiance to that truth and not alter it to appease the ears of our listeners (2 Timothy 4:2-4).—1665 Jamestown Road, Cobden, IL 62920

WHAT I COULD DO IF I REALLY WANTED TO

If I wanted to, I could make this church the most wide awake and working church in all the world.

If I wanted to, I could visit members who are sick or shut-in and find other ways of helping them.

If I wanted to, I could attend Bible classes regularly and encourage others to do the same.

If I wanted to, I could show more devotion in worship and receive much more good from the services myself.

If I wanted to, I could profit more from the sermon by not resenting the truth when it reveals some of my weaknesses.

If I wanted to, I could tell others about Christ and His church and lead them to Him.

Of course, all this depends on what I want to do. I could be an honored servant of the greatest of all kings. I have the ability—if I really want.—

Mountain Home Messenger

SERMON SKETCHES

"Preach The Word"

2 Timothy 4:2

CLEAN FOR A LITTLE WHILE

(2 Peter 2:20)

M. W. Kiser



Some well known lines say, "Tis better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all." It is not true. It does not hold good. To have loved a great truth, high principle, and Jesus Christ, and to leave them is the shipwreck of the soul.

This very text proves the little saying is false. This has certainly never been a favorite text for sermons. There are those who question whether these words apply to the "new converts" or the "false teachers." I think we will see that the point being made is the same when one goes back on the Lord.

I. A GREAT BLESSING. "ESCAPED..."

- A. To have been rescued from the defilement of the world is a great blessing for which to be most thankful (Colossians 1:12-13).
- B. It is most important because until then we are in bondage (John 8:34; Romans 6:16). Just like Israel down in Egypt.
- C. It is only possible through a knowledge of Jesus (John 8:32; Romans 6:17-18).

II. A GREAT MISHAP. "ENTANGLED..."

- A. Note the use of the word "again." This is a going back, a backsliding. It can happen (James 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians

10:13; Jude 3).

1. Robertson sees in this the idea of being entwined and involved; but also that of being noosed or fettered.
 2. It is like fishes being caught in a net.
- B. How does such a thing happen?
1. Lies in the name of religion (Matthew 7:15-18; 2 Peter 2:18). Eloquent; sidestep repentance; go after those who are immature!
 2. Loved ones who don't care for religion (Joshua 23:12-13; 2 Chronicles 15:16; Luke 15:30).
 3. Lust of our own flesh to be popular, or accepted, or just not to be rejected (John 12:43; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Galatians 2:13).
- C. How can it be avoided? Here is a five point program.
1. By knowing the truth (John 8:32).
 2. By repenting of wrong (2 Timothy 2:25-26).
 3. By watching and praying (Luke 21:34-36).
 4. By doing good (2 Timothy 2:4; Romans 12:21).
 5. By resisting the devil (James 4:7; Hebrews 12:4).
- ### III. A GREAT CURSE. "END..."
- A. Worse because the subject has greater guilt. He is "overcome," i.e., enslaved; subdued (Matthew 12:43-45).
 - B. Worse because the perpetrator has a greater crime, "after" (2 Peter 20-21); It is like the "after" in Hebrews 10:26.
 - C. Worse because the victim has a greater hopelessness.
 1. Once was lost, but then it could be repaired!
 2. Now he is lost, but it cannot be repaired (1 Timothy 1:19-20).

There remains two classes of people. Those who are entangled; and those who have escaped. In which of these classes are you today? It was Bunyan who said, "They fall deepest into hell who fall backward into hell. None so near heaven as those who are convicted of sin, nor so near hell as those who have quenched convictions." Among the prisoners taken captive at Waterloo was a Highland piper. Napoleon asked him to play one of the martial songs on his bagpipe; and it was done to the great delight of the general. "Play a march." It was done. "Play a retreat." "Na, na," said the Highlander, "I never learned to play a retreat." May we never learn to play a retreat in the Lord's army!—P.O. Box 2597, Sylacauga, AL 35150

HOMOSEXUALITY

Gary Colley

Homosexuality, which is a selected, chosen, sinful practice ("life-style"), simply means "eroticism for one of the same sex" (*Webster*) This abominable practice is gaining in popularity and has done so since the so-called "sexual revolution." Though we love and sympathize with families who are involved, we still cannot in any way condone this transgression of God's will. Pretending it is alright does not make it correct. To uphold it is not to anyone's glory, but one's shame! Now it is claimed that those who are practicing the sin "just cannot help it" and "perhaps" were just born to be a participant of this "sickness" and should have "equal rights" with upright, moral, and law-abiding citizens. May it be plainly stated that:

(1) The Bible clearly condemns homosexuality as sin (Genesis 13:13; 18:20; 19:4-5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:21-24, 26-29, 32).

(2) The Bible never condemns sickness, but shows compassion toward the sick (Matthew 25:34-36); therefore, homosexuality, which is condemned in the Bible, cannot be classified as "sickness."

(3) Those who have allowed themselves to be overcome, to practice such sin, have clearly not sought the promised "way of escape" from sin (1 Corinthians 10:12-13); and without repentance, God says He will give them up "to uncleanness, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (Romans 1:24).—102 Edison Street, McMinnville, TN 37110

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

Mary Ruth Jenkins Chattanooga, TN.....	20.00
Leslie & Audrey Pegg McMinnville, TN.....	20.00
Millard & Isabelle Armstrong Beechmont, KY.....	30.00
Dolph & Zane Heavener Walnut, MS.....	10.00
Walter & Eathel Buckley Maynard, AR.....	25.00
Mr. & Mrs. James Burney McMinnville, TN.....	35.00
Alma Church of Christ Alma, GA.....	50.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ Elizabeth, AR.....	50.00
Arlington Church of Christ McMinnville, TN.....	75.00
Mabelvale Church of Christ Mabelvale, AR.....	1000.00
Mountain Home Church of Christ Mountain Home, AR.....	1200.00

Silence often makes sense. Silence is an argument difficult to answer.

A small stone in the shoe makes the journey difficult.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Ye Are The Salt Of The Earth"

Matthew 5:13



"SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES"

Ronnie Whittemore



The apostle whom Jesus loved penned these inspired words, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). In Hebrews 11:1, faith is

described as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The great author, Emerson, once wrote, "All that I have seen causes me to trust God for all that I have not seen." Faith is more than just a mere "step" in the plan of salvation. Faith is that substance, conviction, evidence which motivates Christians. It is described as the foundation or basis of Christianity (2 Peter 1:5). Faith is acquired through the word of God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

In the Bible, one reads of many great heroes of the faith. In Hebrews 11, faithful men and women of God are depicted as people of action. They understood that faith was more than mere lip service in acknowledging that God exists. They knew that "God meant what He said and said what He meant." Their faith could accurately be described as "believing what God said" and acting upon what He said.

TRY THIS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE. An excellent spiritual exercise can be used in Hebrews 11 to clarify what faith is, or perhaps, more accurately, what faith does. Each example in this great chapter begins with the words, "by faith"

or "through faith" and follows with the name of a faithful person and what he or she did. In verse four, "By faith Abel offered unto God..." In verse five, "By faith Enoch...pleased God..." In verse seven, "By faith Noah...moved with fear, prepared an ark..." In verse eight, "By faith, Abraham...obeyed, and he went out..." This chapter illustrates for us the kind of faith that saves. As described in James 2, the faith of the Bible is a working faith, an active faith, an obedient faith. It is sometimes said that "the faith that saves is the faith that obeys."

MARVEL AT THE TREMENDOUS FAITH IN BIBLE TIMES. The patriarchs, kings, judges and prophets mentioned by name and by implication in Hebrews 11 bring to the reader's remembrance acts of courage, boldness, compassion and obedience. Specifically mentioned by name and event are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Joseph, Moses and Rahab. While chapters in the Old Testament are devoted to their acts of faith, the inspired New Testament writer uses the reader's frame of references, and in a short verse or two reminds us of their great faith and the kind of faith it was.

And what a marvelous and powerful way in which the Holy Spirit guided Paul to pen these words toward the end of the chapter in which only names are mentioned without deeds, but the deeds are implied, and mentioned deeds in which names are implied: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and

goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:32-38)

BELIEVE AND ENDURE. Have you ever wondered what these faithful men and women of the Bible had in common? Besides being faithful, they endured. They fought the daily battles. They waged and won the war against Satan. They fought temptations, persecutions, trials, hardships and the storms of life. Like Job of old, they were patient; they endured.

Brethren, this is the challenge for all of us. Like the patriarchs in the wilderness or desert, we face the difficulties of life. Like Moses, we must decide to follow Christ or the world, reproaches or riches (Hebrews 11:24-26). We must face the lions and bears as David. We must avoid temptations like Joseph. We must fight the battles in the trenches with an army of other Christians at our side like Gideon, or fight the enemy alone like Samson. Sometimes we face violence like the Lord. But we must persevere and fight on.

FOCUS, FIGHT, AND PERSEVERE. But why do we keep fighting? Why do we keep believing in God? More specifically, why do we keep believing what God says? The key is not found in Hebrews 11. The answer is found in the beginning of the following chapter. Paul wrote, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

First, we are told to keep fighting because we have a “great cloud of witnesses” surrounding us. Imagine that! While we battle Satan on a daily basis, the faithful men and women of Hebrews 11 are standing by our side. They serve as great examples. They are cheering for our success. They are holding up our hands as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses (Exodus 17:11-12).

Second, we are to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” That weight could be described as any sin that would keep us from following God, but specifically, the inspired writer meant unbelief. Unbelief is “not believing what God says.” Unbelief is a “faith” that will not work. It is a “faith” that is not active or obedient.

Third, we are to run the race with patience. We must endure the storms of life, the trials and the temptations. We must remember that our war against Satan is made up of daily battles. We do not have to wage and win our war of a lifetime in one day. But we must be faithful and persevere one day at a time.

Finally, we have Jesus as our supreme example. Paul wrote that we should look unto “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Jesus’ faith is described as an active, obedient and working faith. He endured the cross and despised its shame. But Jesus focused on His work and obeyed the Will of the heavenly Father. This also is our task.

Brethren, we sometimes sing the hymn, *Faith Is The Victory* and the conclusion of the first stanza reads, “Faith is the victory, we know, that overcomes the world.” The men and women of Hebrews 11 believed those sentiments. Christians of this century must have the same conviction and the same measure of faith. “Lord increase our faith” (Luke 17:5).—1001 E. Albany Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203

A NEW ONLINE JOURNAL

In January 1999, a new journal called *Gospel Gazette* will debut as a monthly Internet publication. The editors will be Paul Hoover and Louis Rushmore. The address will be www.gospelgazette.com

The theme for the first issue will be *Jesus Christ*. Several editors of gospel papers have been asked to submit articles. We are happy that *Gospel Gleaner* is included among those publications.
—Dennis Gullledge

THE REVELATION OF CHARACTER

Ron Bryant

In the course of life, the strengths and weaknesses of our character are revealed. In truth, the revelation of our character flows out of the well-spring of our experiences. Those things about which we are anxious tell much about us. Those things we crave and pursue speak loudly of our true self. The way we respond to temptations and difficulties is a demonstration of the person that we are.

One of the apostles, one who companied with Jesus and knew him well in the ebb and flow of his ministry, reflected upon the character of Jesus and expressed his view. He wrote, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He writes in other places of the depth and extent of his knowledge of Jesus (cf., 1 John 1:1-5). He emphasizes that which was "beheld." He describes Jesus as "full of grace and truth." Jesus was "full of grace;" gracious of spirit, in attitude, in actions. The Gospels detail the effect his graciousness had upon his followers, ruling as a calming and transforming force in their lives. It is to be observed that Jesus' ministry was characterized by a calmness and a gentleness that was appealing to the common folks and especially to little children (cf., Matthew 19:13-14). It has been noted that one of the clearest tests of character is to be seen in how little children regard a person, and Jesus passes this test with perfection. In everything, but especially under stress, Jesus is gracious, his words are with ease and grace.

"Truth" is also the mark of his person. Jesus is authentic. Reality is the realm of his existence. All that he said and did is ruled by genuineness. He is real in his sentiments, his compassion, his rejoicing, his sorrow. His life is holy and his words are truth. His whole life is ruled by truth, and he himself is the embodiment of truth. There was never a more real person than Jesus.

And there is more. In the life of Jesus there

is the complete revelation of all of the perfect virtues, and they are all in perfect harmony and balance. He was not a man of extremes. It is compelling to note the perfect blend of the noble qualities in Jesus. Grace, or graciousness, by itself might tend to become mere sentimentality. Truth by itself might tend to become rigid and harsh. Yet, when grace is ruled and strengthened by truth, and when truth is ruled and strengthened by grace, the perfect balance of character and of life is observed. In Jesus these two virtues are perfectly wed and are in perfect balance and are perfectly consistent. His whole life is marked by the embrace of all the good elements which mark mankind; there is no element missing; there is no element exaggerated. His noble character is worthy of praise and embrace.—5225 East Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85018

"The process of growing old is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter!"

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P.O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
Office Fax (501) 407-0072
E-Mail: mabelval@cei.net

Dennis Gulledege, Evangelist

IT IS EASIER TO BE A CRITIC THAN TO BE A SUCCESS

Gerald Cowan

THE POINT:

THIS MAY NOT BE GOOD POETRY, BUT IT DOES MAKE A POINT.

I don't like guys
Who compromise
And subsidize
And patronize
The little guys
Who criticize
The other guys
Whose enterprise
Has made them rise
Above the guys
Who are not wise,
But criticize
And minimize
And just despise
All other guys,
And try to cut them
down to size.

Anyone can be a critic, but it does not always ring true. Much moral indignation is simply jealousy disguised with a halo. Before using a caustic tongue to cut someone down to size, try to remember that such a tongue is not a credit but a liability to its owner. Read Ephesians 4:15 and 29 for a reminder that the tongue should be used for positive, uplifting, and constructive speech: "Speaking the truth in love...that which is good for edifying" (Ephesians

4:15 and 29). See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 for a definition of love—what it is and is not, what it does and does not.

How should one react when the criticism he receives is harsh, unkind, or unfair? When Jack Dempsey was knocked out of the ring by Firpo, he climbed back in and said, "Hey, is that all the harder you can hit?"

The mark of true greatness is not in one's ability to "give back as good as he gets" in the way of insults. When a certain rude man said to another, "I'll soon cut you down to my size," the other answered smugly, "Friend, the world doesn't need two men as small and insignificant as you." True greatness can ignore unkind and undeserved insults. It can learn from both positive and negative criticism.

Who is likely to be most criticized? It will be those who dare to try great things, those who care deeply and are willing to "be at risk" in a great and worthwhile cause. The higher one

stands, the more the lesser guys will criticize and try to cut him down to their inferior size.

Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; a man who knows great enthusiasms as well as great devotions, one who spends himself in a worthy cause, one who in the end knows the triumphs of high achievement. And if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place will not be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

One man who tries, even though he fails, is worth more than a dozen or a thousand other men who never try at all. A failure may eventually succeed, if he keeps on trying. Just to keep on trying is a kind of success. But one who doesn't try at all is the worst kind of failure and is the one most likely to criticize others.—P.O. Box 52, Marion, IL 62959

DIVIDED WE STAND?

Dennis Gullede

One of the advantages of reading a denominational magazine like *Christianity Today* is that you can easily identify the source of many errors in the church today. The current fascination with ecumenism among us is certainly traceable to the thinking of "evangelical scholars" rather than the teaching of the Bible.

An article by Bruce Shelley entitled, "Denominations – Divided We Stand"? (9/7/98) defends denominationalism as being the very thing "to make unity in the church possible" (p. 90). How can there possibly be unity in such division? You have heard of "unity-in-diversity": "Apparently it is possible to find our unity in Christ and the gospel even though we agree to disagree over some finer points of doctrine and traditional practices" (p. 90). According to Mr. Shelley and the misguided brethren today who

(Continued on page 19)

HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VIEW CHRISTMAS?

Continued from page 6

ordered as the day in AD 357 by Liberius, Bishop of Rome (*Britannica Encyclopedia*). *World Book Encyclopedia* says that day was chosen probably "...because the feast of the sun, or winter solstice, was a familiar Roman feast celebrating the victory of light over darkness." (Thus Christmas began as a Catholic compromise with paganism). The evidence points to an autumn, or perhaps spring, date because shepherds are not in the fields from mid-October until mid-March in Palestine (cf., Luke 2:8). Albert Barnes (Presbyterian) notes that Judean shepherds take flocks to the mountains in winter and only during summer months would they spend the nights with their flocks. It does not really matter when He was born, only *that* He was born (Matthew 1:21-25).

To pursue men's traditions is to make worship vain. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Jesus spoke of those who make "...the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13). It is wrong to celebrate religious days not authorized in the New Testament.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD AVOID LEAVING THE WRONG IMPRESSION WITH THE WORLD. Since influence is so important in converting the lost (1 Peter 3:1-2), it behooves each Christian to guard his carefully (Romans 14:21). During this time of year we should avoid giving the impression that we celebrate a religious holiday. Going about singing religious songs may be understood by us, but does it leave the impression that we are celebrating Christ's birthday? Cards sent with religious scenes also leave the impression, so we should choose cards without religious connotations. Nativity scenes, obviously, should not be placed in our yards or houses. "Christmas plays" should also be avoided for the same reason. We should try to avoid the "religious" part of Christmas.

Go ahead, enjoy this festive time of year! Be thankful to God for all your blessings and joys,

but be careful not to compromise the truth.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

Continued from page 7

The possibility of apostasy is not the same as probability of apostasy! One certainly needs to be aware of the fact that he can fall and take heed. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Why would Paul have sounded this warning if it were not possible to fall anyway?

One can and he must make his "calling and election sure."—1101 Airport Circle, Jasper, AL 35504

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN?

Continued from page 8

is the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), and completely supplies man with all his spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:17; 2 Peter 1:3). Because it came from God, the Bible is without error and we will be judged by it (John 12:48). To spiritually grow one must diligently study the holy scriptures daily (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 2:2). God's word is authoritative, and whatever we do religiously must have God's approval (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). We should also instill in the hearts of our children that innovations will bring condemnation to their soul (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19). Furthermore, one must love God and His inspired word (John 14:15), and if one does not love and receive God's truth he will perish (2 Thessalonians 2:10).—1272 Bonham Street, Paris, TX 75460

PREACHER'S POINT

"Let us trust in God and do the right; let us stand up for Jesus and battle for his cause; never wavering when and where truth divine or sacred principle is involved."

—T. B. Larimore (1843-1929)

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT THE CLINTON-LEWINSKI AFFAIR?

Continued from page 10)

empowered to change it!

For seven months of 1998, Clinton lied publicly and under oath about this Lewinsky affair, and used his wife, cabinet, political party members, publicly-funded lawyers, willfully-blinded media, and mis-guided public to defend him in his lie! “A lying tongue” and “a false witness who speaks lies” are twenty-eight percent of everything “the Lord hates” (Proverbs 6:16-19). The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44), thus if policy or practice of government personnel is lying then government is of the devil! If not—why not? If Americans with no respect for God elect legislators who enact laws without respect for God, and cannot deal with a President who disrespects God's laws of marriage and truth—then America is an ungodly nation! If not—why not?

Moral authority for any government to exist is determined by God's authority. “There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil” (Romans 13:1-3), then governments that are a terror to good and not to evil have no authority from God to exist! (Cf. 1 Peter 2:11-14). God rules over all nations (2 Chronicles 20:5-6; Psalm 22:28; 47:8; Isaiah 37:15-20; John 19:10-11; Acts 12:20-24), and this should be recognized. America was founded upon “self-evident truths” based upon the Bible. If these truths are no longer “evident” then there must be a re-emphasis on the Bible for this country to exist. The “Clinton Crisis” has revealed the national conviction, conscience, community, and convention, and it doesn't bode well. The vilest king to date, Ahab, despised God's “independent counsel” of the day, Elijah (1 Kings 16:30-33; 18:17-18). Saul denied his sin with lies until the truth was forced on him, then his “confession” was rejected by God (1 Samuel 15:10-16:1). Ungodly, impenitent, wicked, and proud men reject the truth (John 3:19-21).

Bill Clinton rejects “separation of church

and state,” for he “preached” his politics in the pulpit of the New Psalmist Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland on November 1, 1998. *It is time for pulpits of the land to put the fear of God back on Capitol Hill, ring out the Bible truth on sin, salvation, and every word God has spoken, and return to righteous ways!* Read these verses (Jeremiah 5:12-13; 6:19; Acts 10:34-35) and maybe you, too, will see the “big deal.”—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

TO CLAP OR NOT TO CLAP

Continued from page 9

of truth (John 4:24). Any other activities are shaky, to say the least, if God has not revealed we are to do them.

CONCLUSION

Activities in the assemblies of the saints that are not taught in God's word have no place in the worship of God. If these activities are disturbing to other worshippers who are sincerely seeking to carefully follow what God has taught, they are wrong. All of us should include in our worship those things God has revealed He wants in worship to Him. If we do otherwise, we are not worshipping in spirit and truth (John 4:24).—305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120

DIVIDED WE STAND?

Continued from page 17

follow his line of thinking, denominationalism is not wrong, but sectarianism is, and if you claim to know that there is but one way of truth, then, you are sectarian.

Some of our brethren have bought into this desperation argument even though it flatly contradicts Scripture. Jesus prayed for the unity (not unity-in-diversity) of his disciples (John 17:20-21). Jesus said, “a house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Paul condemned division in 1 Corinthians 1:10. Paul taught that there is but one church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Was Paul sectarian? If not, then, why is one so who agrees with Paul?

READERS' RESPONSE

"How Readest Thou?"

Luke 10:26

LEARNED ABOUT GG ON INTERNET

I would like to receive your monthly publication. I received this information on the Internet, on the Alkire Road church of Christ Home Page, which is the congregation that I grew up in. James D. Mollette, Pleasant Hill, OH.

FAVORABLY IMPRESSED

I have read a couple of issues of your *Gospel Gleaner* and have been favorably impressed as to the soundness and kind way in which the material is presented. If you would please place my name on your mailing list, I would deeply appreciate it. Gary L. Seegraves, Springfield, OH.

APPRECIATED SOUNDNESS

Please honor our request and send us your *Gospel Gleaner*. We have read one copy and appreciated the sound truths in it. Enclosed is a small token to help with the mailing and printing. The Grover Dements, Belton, TX.

GG RECOMMENDED

In May of this year I began my first full time work with the church in Miami, OK. Being new to preaching I have a great need for sound resources which might aid me in this work. Your publication has been recommended as just such a resource. I would greatly appreciate being added to your mailing list. Please send me any information as to your subscription policy, as I would be more than happy to pay for this

privilege. Below is my mailing address. Thank you, and God bless you in this work you have undertaken. James Love, Miami, OK.

AMEN

We have read our first *Gospel Gleaner* and both of us enjoyed all the articles in Volume 14, No. 1. Every article was good, very good. We especially say "Amen" to the article "The Glory of Preaching." Such a forthright article plus the phrase "The Gospel Gleaner is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity," we say Amen to that focus too. We would appreciate being added to your mailing list. We are members of the Lord's Church in Owensboro, KY. It saddens us to say that neither of the four local congregations here are focused toward restoring New Testament Christianity. We say "thanks" to the views of the Editors and Staff Writers of this publication. Our prayers are with your views. Please keep up the good writings. Jay & Pat Norris, Philpot, KY.

GOING INTO THE MISSION FIELD

I send you greetings from the Lord's church here in Dillon. We are a small congregation deep in a mission field. Would you please place me on your mailing list to receive your publication. David Ferneyhough, Dillon, SC.

GG IN AFRICA

I saw your publication the *Gospel Gleaner* some few weeks ago, that was my first time. but I loved it so much because of the type of articles that are published. I had Volume 14, Number 1. I wish I can even get some old issues. I want to appeal to you that if it is possible you put my name on your mailing list. If it is still possible I want to request four extra copies for the preachers who work with me in this area of Ghana. Thank you and may God bless you in this good work. Paul Adom, Somanya, Ghana.

GOSPEL GLEANER
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mabelvale, AR
PERMIT NO. 4