



GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 18

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UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY!

Wendell Winkler

Being a member of the Lord's church today does not depend, as some suggest, upon "church succession." If a farmer is growing corn in one state and desires to have a crop of corn in another state, it is not necessary that he have an unbroken chain of corn plants from one state to another. Instead, all that is necessary is for the farmer to take some corn seed from one state to the other and plant the same. The results? A crop of corn in both states!

In like manner, we do not have to trace the "unbroken chain" all the way back to the first century to make sure we are members of the Lord's church. Instead, all we need is the same seed in our day as was used in the first century. In Luke 8:11 and 1 Peter 1:21-25, we are told that "the seed is the word of God." If we will plant the same seed—the pure, simple, unadulterated gospel of Christ—in this century as in the first century—we will have the same results. One of God's immutable laws is that seed bears after its kind (Genesis 1:11-12). When the gospel was preached in the first century, it produced churches of Christ—Christians only. Christ was undenominational and anti-denominational. And so was/is His church!

Some might ask, "How can I know which church is the Lord's church—the church of which Peter and Paul were members some 2000 years ago—among so many churches today?" We all agree the church of the first century was the Lord's church, the church of which the apostles were members, the church that existed hundreds of years before any Catholic or Protestant denominations. If we can find

that same church today, it will still be the Lord's church, if not, why not?

But how will we know when we find it? First, we must study the Bible to ascertain the essential identifying features of the first century, New Testament church. Then we must search for the church today that has the same identifying marks. When we find this church, we will know that we have found the Lord's church—the church of which the apostles were members.

As we open the New Testament to ascertain the essential identifying marks of the first century church we observe:

The church was guided solely by the apostles' doctrine not having man-made creed, discipline, manual, catechism, confession of faith or suchlike (Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:27; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3; Galatians 1:6-9).

The church worshipped on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2), singing "acapella" (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), giving of their means (1 Corinthians 16:2), eating the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), praying (Acts 2:42), and preaching/teaching God's word (Acts 20:7).

The church was organized on a local, congregational, autonomous level having elders, deacons, preachers, and members (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1).

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Max R. Miller (1925-2001)

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

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We all make mistakes. Sometimes we are aware of our mistakes, and sometimes not. It is good to know of our mistakes and to correct them when we can.

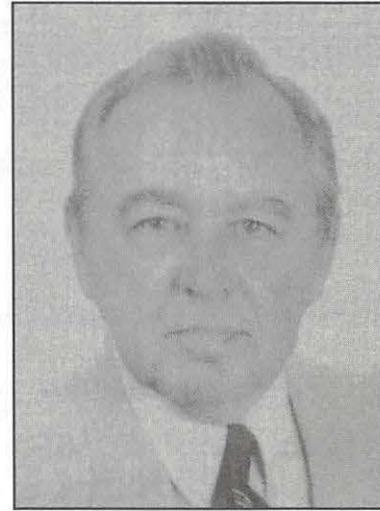
We, the church, have made a grievous mistake. It needs to be called to the attention of all and correction should be made. The mistake is great. It has prevented a multitude of souls from being converted to Christ. It is great because for it many of God's children have drifted away from Christ. For it, the church of the living God suffers shame, frustration, and is filled with controversy and discord. Anything of such destructive force and consequence is evil, sinful, and should be overcome.

The mistake? Some several years ago, in the sixties and seventies, we began to hear fervent exhortations that our preachers should attain a greater degree of education; that the day for "cornfield" preachers had come to an end. No longer could preachers of ordinary educational attainments expect to fill the pulpits of the land and have the ear of modern day audiences. To engage the modern educated mind of today's professionals, technicians, brilliant and sophisticated ranks of society, one must be of equal education and possess the same qualities of sophistication and grace. The theory was: the old style of plain, book, chapter and verse preaching must go the way of the flattop and crew cut hair styles. The modern generation must be challenged! We must stop answering questions people have ceased asking!

There began to be a change in the pulpit. The clamor was for young men who could communicate to young and aggressive minds in a style befitting of the day. The old Jerusalem gospel lost its place in many modern day churches. Testimonials, personal interest stories, current events, promotionals, current religious thought, and such, became the themes of the pulpit. We had moved into a modern day with a church ready to embrace every form of liberalism known to man.

All this was a form of self-flattery. We were tickling our own ears. We were snobbishly bragging on our own vain educational attainments. We were telling ourselves, "We are the sophisticates, we have arrived." This subtle and deceitful plea from the pew was welcomed by many in the pulpit. Not a few stood in the pulpit thrilled to think of themselves more as counselor and scholar than preacher. They were a cut above ordinary preachers "quoting Scripture like a parrot." Those clergymen (for, in fact, such they are) began to major in minors; it was their joy to "share a thought" more so than to "take a text."—And their patrons loved it so!

The theme of preaching has changed in these past years. Now, how to live peaceably with sin, how not to offend denominational friends, how to get along with one's conscience, how to pragmatically solve the problems of the day, all are the themes of our day.



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Fewer and fewer Bible Majors came from the Christian colleges. Few of the students who came from those colleges will (or can) preach the simple message of salvation to a world lost in sin. Such, seemingly, is beneath their dignity! The denominational seminary awaits their coming from which few go forth to preach, and of those who preach, to preach false doctrine. Of our own Christian colleges many of the Bible faculty would fit as well into denominational schools and not a few go on to their destiny there. Yes, we have made a mistake in courting the modern mind, appeasing guilt and sin, in compromising the gospel of truth. We bear the cancer and scars of compromise in the body of Christ.

Young moderns, middle age moderns, and whoever are not above the gospel of Christ. To the vain intellectuals and sophisticated moderns: the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Paul, at Corinth, addressed the same problem we address here, and said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). Man was never commissioned to preach anything other than the "old Jerusalem gospel" (Mark 16:15; Galatians 1:8-9).

But what about the modern, better educated generation in the church and in the world? What are their needs? The spiritual needs of man from Adam has not changed—today's world notwithstanding. The same needs of our frontier forefathers are our needs today. Man's unchanging needs are met in the gospel. The ways of sin is death, always. Man in sin needs a Savior. That Savior is revealed in Holy Scripture: His plan of salvation is recorded there and there alone. He, in his educated way, may open the book and, as Paul said, "when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ...as it is now revealed..." (Ephesians 3:1-5). He may also need a preacher who is able to communicate in good English, to develop his lessons in a disciplined manner, and make applications of the gospel to the modern times of our century.

There should be no rejection of education; none should seek to stigmatize the educated whether he be the preacher or the hearer. There must be a rejection of vanity

and conceit which, in reality, cries out, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10). Flattery is deceitful and sinful. Education, prosperity, or a modern age never shall bring man past the point where he will no longer need the simplicity of the gospel of Christ.

Kill the infection, heal the wound, and salve the scar. Let us return again to the Book-of-Books, to the gospel of Christ and to our Savior. We are not too good, too well educated, or too rich or wise to hear and obey the gospel of Christ. We made a mistake in "updating" our preaching. Now, let us go back to the preaching of the "Old Jerusalem gospel."—Defender (February 1984)

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

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Dennis Gulledge, Evangelist

THINK ABOUT IT
*From the mouths of children
comes words we should not have said.*
☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺
*The person who is wrapped up in himself
is considerable over-dressed.*





THE EVERLASTING ARMS

Guy F. Hester

“What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the everlasting arms; What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, Leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms; I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms.”

Never have the words of this grand old hymn by A. J. Showalter been so meaningful as they are now, in light of all the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the constant and ever present threat of terrorism, and the war against terrorists and terrorism. We have never before been in a war like the one we are now in. Every American is on the front lines and the enemy lurks everywhere, from the caves of Afghanistan to our mailbox at our front doors. Not one is safe, from the White House to the rural back roads of Alabama. That is, no one except those who are “leaning on the Everlasting Arms of the Almighty!

In the long ago Moses declared, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them: (Deuteronomy 33:27). The Psalmist penned these words, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). The Lord has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

THE EVERLASTING ARMS ARE THE ARMS OF SALVATION. It is the Everlasting Arms of God that brings everlasting salvation to man. This is far more important than being safe from the foe against which our nation is now at war. Our Lord said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). The Everlasting Arm of God, the nail pierced hands of Jesus reach down from heaven to

earth to redeem all who in simple trusting faith will take hold of it.

It is by the grace of God that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8-9). This amazing grace of God was made manifest through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on that cruel cross on Golgotha’s brow (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17). On that old rugged cross our savior shed His precious blood and became our sin-offering, sin-bearer, and substitute when we were so unworthy and undeserving. Because of that tremendous sacrifice, God can, and will pardon every sinner who will put his faith in Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and trust Him completely for salvation by repenting of every sin that he has committed and then obey His command to be immersed in water for the remission of sins. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

If we obey these simple conditions of the gospel, then in so doing, we take hold of the bloodstained hand of Jesus and the Everlasting Arms of God bring us salvation.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS OF GOD ARE THE ARMS OF STRENGTH. They support us and give us strength to live the Christian life and carry us safely through this life and into eternity with Him. Because He is omnipotent He is all-powerful. The arms of man are weak, but His everlasting Arms are strong. Because of this, we can say in the words of the Psalmist, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1). “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psalm 46:1-2).

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms of God, we can say in the triumphant language of the prophet Isaiah: “Hast thou not known? Has thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly

fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31). Man, in and of himself, is weak, but with and by the power and the providence of God he can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

THE EVERLASTING ARMS OF GOD ARE THE ARMS OF LOVE. The greatest description that is given of our heavenly Father in the Bible is given in three simple words: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). God loved the man whom He had created so much that when man sinned He immediately set in motion a plan to save us through the giving of His "only begotten Son" to die on the cross to make atonement for our sins. God hates our sins but He loves us in spite of our sins. He always has and always will. Therefore when we obey him, we can confidently say in the words of Paul recorded "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

In view of all this, how we ought to love, honor and serve our loving God! "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). Since this is His greatest command, that likewise makes it our greatest duty. If we love the Lord, we will reverence, respect, believe and obey Him; and seek in every detail of our lives to conform to His will.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS ARE THE ARMS OF SAFETY. For reasons of safety, we have seat belts in our cars, smoke and fire alarms in our homes and deadbolt locks on our doors. We came into this world with a need for a feeling of security. The little child feels safe in the arms of its mother. Just as a mother's arms represent security to the infant, so do the Arms of God represent

safety and security to us. No matter where we are, His Everlasting Arms are beneath us to hold us up and sustain us. Fanny J. Crosby expressed it in these words: "Safe in the arms of Jesus, Safe on His gentle breast, There by His love o'er shadowed, Sweetly my soul shall rest."

We read in Isaiah 33:2, "O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." In this day, when there is no real means of safety and security from the threat of terrorism, whether it be domestic or foreign, if we look to God and lean upon His Everlasting Arms, we will find the safety and security that our souls long for and can realize that, as Christians, we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

Let's fasten our seat belts when we ride in our cars, lock our doors at night, keep fresh batteries in our smoke alarms, but above all, let us flee for refuge to the Everlasting Arms of God, for there is safety, security and hope!

THE EVERLASTING ARMS ARE THE ARMS OF GUIDANCE. The little boy is not afraid of the dark so long as he is holding his father's hand. Neither is there anything in this life that we need to fear as long as we are holding the hand of our Heavenly Father. We may boldly say, as did David: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23). If we truly give our lives to God, He will lead us where we need to go. He may lead us by the still waters and green pastures; and, at other times, in the valleys of darkness, where the shadows and dangers lurk. But we are assured that the Good Shepherd will always lead us in the paths of righteousness. Wherever He leads us we ought to go. Our attitude

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A GOOD FISHERMAN

Allen Webster



Jesus used the “Fish Miracle” to tell the disciples that they would become “fishers of men” (Luke 5:1-11; cf. Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16). They liked fishing, and Jesus wanted them to continue, but to change the species. He says, in effect, “You have been catching minnows; I call you to catch men.”

“Catching people” seems a strange term for evangelism. We catch fish for our good (to sell or eat), not the good of the fish. But the word Jesus used means “to bring life to people” (Jeremiah 16:16-18; Amos 4:2). Christians fish for souls, not to hurt them by removing them from their element, but to save them by bringing them into a different element. It is like transferring fish from a contaminated lake where they are sure to die soon, to a lake of clear, fresh water where they will never die. We rescue people from the world’s deep waters of guilt and despair. We help them find God’s “water of life” (Revelation 21:6), including peace and contentment. Our motivation for “fishing” is not personal gain but love of souls (Hebrews 13:17; 2 Corinthians 12:14, 16). We want them to be in heaven with us.

A good fisherman possesses qualities that make him a good soul winner. Consider these:

A fisherman must go where the fish are. He cannot stay at home and watch fishing shows on the Sports Channel. He can’t just read magazines about fishing or spend his time looking at Wal-Mart fishing tackle. If he wants a “fish fry,” he must go to the lake and put his hook in the water! Likewise, we cannot just sit in our church buildings fellowshiping or in our homes watching TV and expect to save many souls. Jesus said, “Go” not “Wait” (Mark 16:15). We must talk to our friends about Christ and visit those who visit us. We must send out the message via television, radio, mailings, and the Internet.

A fisherman must be patient. If he is restless and quick to move, he will never catch many fish. A fisherman

is not guaranteed visible success. He may come home “empty-handed” (cf. John 21:3). We are not guaranteed immediate success as soul winners either, but we must not quit because the first friend we invite to services turns us down or the first Bible study we teach bears no fruit. We must not discontinue supporting missionaries because they don’t have many baptisms or stop having Gospel Meetings because only a few come. We have to work harder, pray harder, and be more patient.

A fisherman must work and persevere. He can’t sit in his favorite chair, watch television, drink a coke and catch fish. He must get his tackle together, change clothes, drive to the lake, unload the boat, and tend to a hundred details. Once there, he may get wet, but that’s all right. He has been wet a thousand times. Nobody said that it was going to be easy. Fishing is hard work. Real fishermen get up early and stay out late. They don’t quit when the weather changes. They don’t stop because they run out of bait. They think more of fishing than eating. They will let the sun blister their faces, and mosquitoes eat them alive, but they hang in there if the fish are biting. The good teacher must not be discouraged when nothing seems to happen when we “go fishing.” We may go days, weeks, and months without a nibble, and then a person becomes interested in the Word. One lady invited her neighbor to “church” forty-nine times (by actual count) before she went. She later became a Christian.

A fisherman must have courage. One must be brave to fish on large lakes and in the oceans because of the dangers of storms and drowning. A Breton fisherman prayer says, “Lord have mercy upon me; my boat is so little and Thy sea is so great.” A fisherman risks his life to face the sea’s fury. Paul said, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Our brothers and sisters through the ages have died for their faith. We may not risk our lives, but we do take risks to fish for Jesus. We risk ridicule, embarrassment, and hurt feelings to share the Gospel (cf. Galatians 1:10).

A fisherman must have an eye for the right moment. He knows there are good times and bad times to fish. He knows where the fish are. He knows what kind of fish bite when, and the bait they like. He knows what bait to use in spring and what bait to use in fall. He

makes it look easy to those sitting on the bank, but a lifetime of knowledge goes into it. Fish are crafty, and a fisherman has to use his wits. The good teacher chooses his moments carefully. He watches for ways to turn the conversation toward spiritual things as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman (John 4). At times our friends will welcome the truth, and at times they will be too busy with other things or even resent it.

A fisherman fits the bait to the fish and varies his methods. One fish will rise to one kind of bait and another to another. Three methods of fishing were used in Jesus' day. There was (1) *fishing by hook and line*. The disciples in Luke were (2) *fishing with a casting net (amphiblestron)*. This net was circular and might be nine feet across. It was cast into the water from the land, or while wading in the shallows. Lead pellets weighted the circumference so it sank quickly to surround the fish, and it was drawn up quickly before the fish knew what was happening. There was also (3) *fishing with a drag net (sagene)*, which was pulled behind a boat, or better, between two boats. We must use different approaches to win souls to Jesus. Paul said, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

A fisherman must keep himself out of sight. If he shows his presence, even his shadow, the fish will likely be scared off. A Christian also tries to keep himself out of sight so that the sinner can more clearly focus on Jesus. We do not preach ourselves, but Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5).

A fisherman must have faith. Normally a fisherman does not see fish in the water. He prepares his line and casts the bait on faith that there is a fish there. He's not always successful. He casts over and over again whether he gets a strike or not. If one place prove unproductive, he moves to another. He repeats his casts endlessly. He seems content if he takes one fish every hundred casts. So it is with a soul winner.

The Savior's hook is a cross. Do you have it "in the water?"—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

THE EVERLASTING ARMS Continued from page 5

should be, "Where He leads me I will follow. I'll go with Him all the way." What a blessing to say in the words of that immortal hymn: "He leadeth me; O blessed thought! O words with heav'nly comfort fraught! What e're I do, where'er I be. Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

THE EVERLASTING ARMS OF GOD ARE THE ARMS OF REST. We are exhorted to "rest in the Lord" (Psalm 37:7). Solomon said, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people" (1 Kings 8:56). "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm 116:7). "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psalm 132:14).

Amid all the ugly, hateful, tragedies of New York City, Washington, D.C., the war, and the constant threat of terrorism, the heartaches and vicissitudes of life, we may go to the Everlasting Arms of God and find rest, peace, strength and comfort. What a wonderful privilege and blessing to know that regardless of the sufferings of this life we will be able to finally lay all of our burdens down and enter with Him into that eternal rest in heaven.

The Everlasting Arms of God will save all of those who will believe on His Son, Jesus, repent of their sins, confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins. In doing this you will be saved and find God's Everlasting Arms to be your source of refuge, strength, security, guidance and hope in all the varying circumstances of life. Then if you remain faithful as a Christian, His Everlasting Arms will reach out and receive you into the heavenly rest that remains for the people of God. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

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DO WE ALL BELIEVE IN THE SAME GOD?

John T. Polk II



"Why is there so much fussing between different religions? Don't we all believe in the same God?"

No, not only do we not believe "in the same god" we do not all believe the same about the One God! Therefore, one's fundamental belief about

God creates religious differences which cannot be overlooked.

Item: "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:19-20). Demons are not right just because they believe what is considered a cardinal doctrine by Muslims, Jews, Oneness denominations, Catholics, and Christians, that "There is one God." Such "faith only" does not obey the works God requires in the gospel.

Item: Jews in Jesus' day thought because they believed "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4) they were forbidden to accept Jesus as "the only begotten of the Father" and they crucified Him for claiming otherwise (John 1:14; Cf. Mark 14:60-64). The Jewish faith cannot be right, for their misunderstanding about the "One God" does not permit them to accept Jesus as the Christ and be saved by His gospel.

Item: Idolatrous people may believe "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11) but fail to believe in the true God and His Son (Acts 14:12-18).

The "Jehovah God" of the Hebrew Old Testament is also the "Father" of Jesus Christ of the New Testament.

The God of Moses, Who faced him in the burning bush on Horeb, identified Himself with: "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:1-6). He then for the first time

revealed His name as "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' Moreover God said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations'" (Exodus 3:12-15). The God of Moses and Elijah selected Jesus as "The Prophet" to be heard finally (2 Peter 1:16-19; Cf. Matthew 17:1-9).

The God of Creation is never without proof for His existence: "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). The creation of matter from nothing (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 3:4; 11:3) and the magnificent order and design by which the creation operates (Psalm 19:1-6; Isaiah 45:18; Romans 1:20-21) are an ever-present, overwhelming argument for His existence. Truly, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 53:1).

Though He is "one God" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), the "godhead, a.k.a. "deity, divinity" is shared by "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). The Jews, thinking His claim "I and My Father are one" to be blasphemous, sought to stone Jesus to death. But Jesus pointed to His miracles ("works") to substantiate His claim to be "the Son of God" (John 10:30-39). Truly only "Antichrist" doctrine would deny the godhead included at least "the Father and the Son" and that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" as the Scriptures teach (1 John 2:22; 4:1-3).

Five Proofs That Jesus Is The Christ Of God:

1. Jesus' witness of Himself is certainly true as "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going' (John 8:14). However, God provided "outside sources" of testimony about Jesus Christ, "I am One who bears witness of

Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me" (John 8:18). Also, in John 5:31-47, Jesus sets forth four other witnesses as being:

2. John the Baptist (John 5:33-34) whose testimony pointed to Jesus and not himself (John 1:19-37). Though it was substantiated by no miracle (John 10:41), yet "the people counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14:1-5);
3. Jesus' miracles (John 5:36) proved His claims to be God's Son were absolutely true (John 3:2; 7:28-31; 20:30-31), thus He should have been believed because of his "works" (John 10:25, 37-38);
4. The Father, Himself (John 5:37-38) with angelic declarations (Luke 2:8-15; Matthew 28:1-7) and direct statements from Heaven (Matthew 3:13-17; 17:1-6);
5. The [Old Testament] Scriptures (John 5:39-40) clearly pointed forward to Jesus Christ (John 5:45-47; Luke 24:44-45; Acts 3:22-24). One who studies the Old and New Testament Scriptures and fails to see Jesus as the Christ and as King of His Kingdom now misses God's purpose of Scripture!

Which "God" Do You Worship?

Muslims cannot confess their God without adding "Muhammad is His prophet." **Jews** cannot confess their God without denying anyone as "Christ;" **Hindus** cannot confess which is their God apart from some circumstance in life; **Catholics** cannot confess God without also adding Mary, the pope and their cardinals in lieu of Christ; **"Oneness" denominations** cannot confess God without denying that God's Son died on the cross for anyone; denominations cannot confess the God of the Bible without adding mythology and traditions over and above plain Scripture; **idolaters and evolutionists** cannot confess the God of creation without making creation the "god;" and **the ungodly and sinners** demand to be considered saved without ever calling upon God! Christians are those who confess faith in God through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Muslims and Jews are disputing over their right to claim Abraham as their "father" when it is as Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works

of Abraham" (John 8:39). They both reject Jesus as Christ, but Abraham would not have done so (John 8:40). Abraham is father neither to Muslim nor Jew, but himself followed the promise of God which eventually led to Jesus Christ before he was either circumcised or responsible for the birth of Ishmael (Cf. Genesis 15:6-17:27; Romans 4:1-13). God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled through Jesus Christ and now Muslim, Jew, Catholic, denominational, idolaters and evolutionists, the ungodly and sinner, "oneness," and Hindu must be saved by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:15-29).

Let the God of Creation Who is revealed in the Bible speak: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5). This Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Let all appeal to the right God by calling upon the name of the right Lord in the right way.—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Continued from front page

The church was designated "the church" (Colossians 1:18), "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

The church was entered as a result of people becoming saved upon their believing, repenting, and being baptized (Acts 2:36-47).

Yes, this was the church of the first century, as it existed then, of which Peter and Paul were members. This same church exists today where the pure seed of the gospel is sown in "good and honest hearts." You become a Christian and a member of this church when you believe and obey as men and women of the first century did, wearing only the name of Christ. This is undenominational Christianity!—2704 Battlement Drive, N.E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

There is no real excellence in all this world
that can be separated from right living.

—Selected



DID THE CHURCH OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY HAVE ALL THE BIBLE?

Max R. Miller (1925-2001)



Throughout the New Testament Age men and religious institutions have claimed to have received continuing revelations from God. Calvinist, Pentecostal sects, charismatics, Popes and papists all claim the

New Testament was not completed in the first century. Evidence of continuing revelation, so as to their claims, is that God still speaks to and through them. They are the continuing modern organs for God's communication to man.

Research of the literary evidence of the Holy Scriptures will show that God did make revelations to men through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. The New Testament claims this for itself (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3). It will also show that God completed His revelations to man by the close of the first century. The apostle John, on Patmos Isle, was the last to receive revelation of Holy Scripture.

Recognized scholars, both of the church and otherwise, have researched this issue and given to the world the benefit of their able and decisive works. One is invited to consider the collected research information below.

1. The Old Testament was completed before the time of Christ. Christ and His disciples were thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Old Testament. Hardly will anyone argue otherwise. The New Testament was incomplete in the time of Christ.
2. The Council of Carthage, A.D. 397 was the first of the councils to define the catalogue of Scriptures. This catalogue lists all the books of the Old Testament, and then gives the New Testament books in the following order: "Four books of the Gospels, one book of Acts of Apostles, thirteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul, one of the same to the Hebrews, two Epistles of the Apostle

Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Judas, one book of the Apocalypse of John." It concludes "We have received from our fathers that these are to be read in the churches."

3. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria from A. D. 326 to 373 in an Epistle addressed to those under his jurisdiction lists "the true books of the whole Bible, those of the New Testament being the same that we now receive." He declares that these books have been "delivered to the fathers" by those who were "eye witnesses and ministers of the word," and that he had learned this "from the beginning."
4. Cyril (315-386), Bishop of Jerusalem. In his Catachetical lectures, lists all the books which are to be read as the inspired Scriptures, and it agrees precisely with ours except that he omits Revelation.
5. Eusebius (270-340), known as the Father of Ecclesiastical History, was Bishop at Caesarea. He was forty-five years old when Cyril was born, and fifty-six when Athanasius was Bishop of Alexandria: his testimony, therefore, reaches back about a half century earlier than that of our last two witnesses. Eusebius mentioned every one contained in our New Testament (*Ecclesiastical History*, iii, 25). The force of this evidence depends not merely on the personal knowledge of Eusebius, which reaches back into the last quarter of the third century, but still more upon the fact that he gleaned all the Christian literature which had come down to his age.
6. Origen (185-254), of Alexandria. He names the books of the Old Testament and in a homily on the book of Joshua he names those of the New Testament as we now have them. (*Homily on Joshua*, vii. 1. Quoted and translated by Westcott, *Canon of New Testament*, p. 358).
7. Clement of Alexandria (165-220), in his most important works, which bear the Greek title Hypotuposes (Outlines), gives all the canonical Scriptures not

omitting the disputed books, viz., Jude and some of the other general epistles. Where Clement did not make a formal catalogue of the books in question, he did what was equivalent; he gave explanations more or less elaborate on them all.

8. Tertullian (c. 160—c. 240), a contemporary of Origen and Clement. His personal knowledge of the New Testament books extended through the last quarter of the second century. He left no formal catalogue, but his extant writings contain statements concerning the gospels and Paul's epistle that are equivalent to a catalogue, and he mentions all other books except 2 Peter, James, and 2, 3 John.
9. Muratorian Canon. The earliest formal catalogue of the New Testament books now extant, is that of a document called the Muratorian Canon. The manuscript of this document was found in 1740 in an old library in Milan. The manuscript belongs to the seventh or eighth century, and is a Latin translation of a Greek original. It claims to have been composed by a contemporary of Pius, Bishop of Rome, who died in the year 157, and it is not therefore of later date than A.D. 170. It contains all the books of the New Testament except 1, 2 Peter, 1 John, James and Hebrews. As these important Epistles are absent while 2, 3 John, and Philemon, far less important, are present, it is more probable that the former have been lost from it than that they were originally omitted. My use of the words "less important" does not mean of lesser inspiration, but a personal letter of little doctrinal content.
10. Marcion, who came from Pontus to Rome about the year 140 and was then a teacher of great notoriety. He approved a number of the books and rejected several of them also. However, directly and indirectly he acknowledges the existence of the New Testament books, and his knowledge reached back into the first quarter of the second century.
11. Summary. Marcion, the author of the Muratorian Canon, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen, unitedly mention by name all the books of the New Testament. They are the earliest group of writers who do so, and they all lived within the second century, spanning with the personal knowledge the whole of this century from the beginning of its second quarter to its close. They declare that these books had been handed down "from the fathers," "from the ancients," "from the apostles," and they speak from Rome, from Africa, from Egypt, and from Palestine. The age of a single man may have overlapped the early days of the latest of the five and the latter part of the life of the apostle John. (Notes 1 through 11 from *Evidences of Christianity*, J. W. McGarvey, Guide Printing & Publishing Co., Cincinnati, 1886 p. 59-76).
12. The Peshito contained all the books of the New Testament, except 2 Peter, 2, 3 John, Jude and Revelation. In speaking of the Peshito Thomas H. Horne says: "There is every reason to believe that it was made, if not in the first century, at least in the beginning of the second century." (*Horne's Introduction to the Studies of the Scriptures*, 2:203).
13. Ignatius, in his epistle to the church of Philadelphia, written about A. D. 107, speaks of the Gospels and of the Apostles, in terms that evidently imply a collection of the historical and epistolary writings of the New Testament (*Reason and Revelation*, Robert Milligan, R. W. Carroll & Co. Pub. Cincinnati, 1868p. 197f.).
14. The influence of the incomplete Canon of Marcion (c.140), which was being widely accepted threatened to destroy the authority of the other inspired books. It became necessary to collect all the books that were recognized as inspired and to preserve them in their integrity.
15. The recognition in some parts, primarily in the East, of the First Epistle of Clement, the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermes as canonical or semi-canonical, gave further impetus to the settling of the limits of the Canon. The church came to feel the need to exclude all the books that had no right in the Canon.
16. The edict of Diocletian (in 303) that all sacred books be destroyed by fire.
(Notes 14, 15, 16 from *Introduction To The New Testament*, Henry C. Theissen. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids: 1943 p. 9).
"From the close of the second century the history
(Continued on page 13)



HAVING COMMON GOALS BINDS US TOGETHER IN LOVE AND UNITY

H. A. Dobbs

In the first paragraph of the second chapter of the Galatian letter there is some amazing information—amazing in the light of experience in later years and in the light of a slight knowledge of human behavior. In the forefront of this paragraph the apostle Paul tells us of how he went up to the city of Jerusalem and reported the good success that he had enjoyed in fourteen years of labor among the Gentiles. Undoubtedly, the brethren in Judea had heard of the good work that Paul was doing in the name of the Lord. Verily, Paul's life and works had risen like a burning meteor flashing across the pagan part of the world. The church was on the march among the Gentiles and a large part of the credit for the triumph of truth in that area of the world was due to this ambassador to the Gentiles.

Think for a minute of how the brethren in Judea might have reacted to the success story of the apostle Paul. They might have said, as did some Judaizing teachers in Paul's day, "Who is Paul? Was he one of the twelve? Did he walk with us when our Master lived on earth? Nay, verily, Paul is as one born out of due season, and besides all this, before his conversion he persecuted the church of God relentlessly." Or to put the same thought in language that has been used in these modern times, they might have said, "Who is Paul? A Johnny-come-lately, a young upstart, a lesser light, etc., etc., ad nauseum." Instead of this attitude of envy and jealousy that they might have evidenced and that seems to be so common in our day, the record tells us "and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do" (Galatians 2:9-10).

These were big men who had thoroughly caught the spirit of Christ. Paul says of them that they were reputed to be pillars and, earlier, that they seemed to be "some-

what" in the church and that they were men of repute. Notice that these great men demonstrated this greatness by encouraging and commending both Paul and Barnabas instead of displaying a spirit of littleness by criticizing and complaining. True greatness resides in the ability to rejoice in the success of others and to be humble in the face of one's own success—to be complimentary and encouraging when another accomplishes that which we were not able to do. Jealousy and envy have long been the bane of the Lord's people and at times it has gotten so bad that it could be only compared to a running sore on the fair body of Christ. This green-eyed monster "makes the whole head sick and the whole heart faint." When this condition develops in the church it reminds one of Isaiah's graphic description of corrupt Israel, "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil."

In addition to this thought, another great lesson can be learned from Galatians 2:9-10. Notice that these great men in the church proposed to their colleague, Paul, that he should "remember the poor" and Paul says, "which very thing I was also zealous to do." Evidently, the poor that they would have Paul remember were the destitute in Judea. These people were poor because of persecution—because they were Christians and who would neither employ them nor do business with them. As a result of this bitter prejudice they suffered physical want. Paul promoted this benevolent project diligently. The work of gathering funds to relieve needy saints in Jerusalem and her environs might be called a brotherhood project. As a result of promoting this brotherhood project, unity and understanding were achieved. A great common goal will help to unite people. In the case under consideration, the Jews loved the Gentiles because from them they received sustenance. On the other hand, the Gentiles loved the Jews because they were sacrificing to provide for them. Someone has said, "If

you want people to love you get them to do something for you." The end result, then, of this first century brotherhood benevolent project was unity.

When we today eliminate jealousy and envy and have great common goals toward which to work we will be bound together in love and unity. There is no greater work than preaching the gospel of Christ to the lost and providing for the needy. As we join our hands together, cooperating in the great work that our Master has given us to do, rising above petty and little things, the church of God will be victorious and inflict a fatal blow to all her enemies. The church today, like the church in Paul's day, is on the march. Of course, there will be some in our day, just as there were in Paul's day, who will try to stand in the way of the church and prevent this forward march. Our attitude must be the very same as the attitude of the apostle Paul, who said of these opposers, "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5). —*The Spiritual Sword*, (July 1958).

EDITOR'S NOTE: *When The Spiritual Sword magazine began in 1958 it was committed to addressing the errors of liberalism and anti-ism in the church. The paper was especially concerned with the creed making of various brethren in the realm of church cooperation and orphan homes. Of particular alarm was the dividing of churches, alienation of brethren and the hindrance of good works that came in the wake of the anti-cooperation controversy of the 1940's and '50's. It was the policy of The Spiritual Sword to uphold truth and oppose error—not persons.*

To me, this article by brother Dobbs in the July 1958 issue was especially good for those times. It breathed the spirit of good will toward all brethren in those tumultuous times. It promoted healing and the binding up of wounds among embattled brethren in their own civil war of words. The article is also timely today. The Lord's church forty-four years later still needs to emphasize the common goals that bind us in Jesus Christ. —Dennis Gullledge

DID THE CHURCH...HAVE ALL THE BIBLE Continued from page 11

of the Canon is simple, and its proof clear. It is allowed even by those who have reduced the genuine Apostolic works to the narrow limits, that from the time of Irenaeus the New Testament was composed essentially of the same books which we receive at the present, and that they were regarded with the same reverence as is now shown to them. (*On The Canon of the New Testament*, B. F. Westcott. p. 6).

"All the Fathers at the close of the second century agree in appealing to the testimony of antiquity as proving the authenticity of the books which they used as Christian Scriptures. And the appeal was made at a time when it was easy to try its worth." (Westcott p. 314 as given by Theissen p. 9).

There were a number of justifiable reasons for the early gathering of the books of the New Testament, to include those that were canonical, and eliminate those that were not.

Many of those who could give personal testimony to the divine revelations of God, who had received them themselves or had heard inspired apostles and prophets speak them, were dying out. It was not safe to trust to memory and oral transmission the things spoken by the Holy Spirit inspired apostles and prophets. Write it down, collect them in one body! Christianity was spreading unto the uttermost part of the world. The world needed a written message of the books that were truly inspired of God. —

THE HOLY BIBLE

Though the cover is worn, and the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears:
Yet more precious than gold is this book worn and old,
That can shatter and scatter my fears.

—*The Reminder*



ARE ALIEN SINNERS TO PRAY FOR SALVATION?

M. W. Kiser

Many unsaved people are urged to pray for salvation. It is the popular notion among the denominations to "pray the sinners prayer." Thus, the question. We need to define the main and important terms for our

discussion: (a) Sinner: the alien, one not a child of God. No doubt that the erring Christian should pray (Acts 8:22; James 5:14-16; Matthew 6:12). (b) Salvation: from past sins, those, which separated us from God. To arrive at an answer, let us notice now four things pertaining to aliens; and prayer.

I. SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

- A. According to God's will (1 John 5:14-15; John 15:7). Some prayers contradict it.
- B. Obedience to God's word (Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9). Some want to do all the talking.

II. THE LAW OF PARDON AUTHORIZED BY JESUS.

- A. Mark 16:15-16. No mention of prayer.
- B. Matthew 28:18-20. Again, He did not mention prayer. We must wonder and ask why!
- C. Luke 24:46-47. Once again, no mention of prayer. The subject of salvation.

III. THE EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION.

- A. Pentecost (Acts 2:37-38). Not told to pray. But to repent and be baptized.
- B. Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:30-31). Not told to pray. But, to believe.
- C. Cornelius (Acts 10:3-6, 31, 47-48; 11:14).
 - 1. As a Gentile he demonstrated a desire to know and obey God.

- 2. His prayer was a reminder to God of His promise to the Gentiles.
- 3. His prayers did not save Him (11:14).
- D. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11; 22:10, 16; Romans 10:13; 1 Peter 3:21).
 - 1. He wanted to know and obey the will of God. He thought he was already saved.
 - 2. It was by his obedience he would "call on the name of the Lord."
 - 3. He was not told to pray, but to obey!

IV. FOR WHAT SHOULD A SINNER PRAY? (If they were at the mourners' bench, what would they ask for?)

- A. For God to love them? (John 3:16).
- B. For light to guide them? (Psalm 119:105, 130).
- C. For the Holy Spirit? (Acts 5:42).
- D. For Christ to come to them? (Matthew 11:28-30).
- E. For God to be willing to save them? (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).
- F. For converting power? (Psalm 19:7; Romans 1:16).
- G. For God to be reconciled to them? 2 Corinthians 5:19) Men have certainly reversed this!
- H. For faith? (Romans 10:17).
- I. For God to accept them? (Acts 10:35).
- J. For pardon or salvation? (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Isaiah 55:6-7). Will already stated.

I find where Christians are to pray for aliens (2 Corinthians 5:20; Romans 10:1). There is absolutely no indication that this would be for their actual salvation; but rather that the word might reach them that they might be saved. This mourners bench, praying through, sinners

prayer system of salvation is not found in the Bible; for that reason we would not tell you to try it, rather we would tell you what the apostles told inquiring sinners. Have you been praying for the Lord to save you? It just might be the providence of God that has worked things for you to be here this morning that you might know the way of salvation. If you are sincere, you will not reject His word. Will you do it now? —104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

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

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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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@centurytel.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

WHAT IS BROTHERLY LOVE?

Author Unknown

- It's **silence** when your words would hurt,
- It's **patience** when your brother is curt,
- It's **deafness** when some gossip flows,
- It's **compassion** for a brother's woes,
- It's **courage** when misfortune falls,
- It's **firmness** when one's duty calls,
- It's **willingness** to help another,
- It's **trusting** and especially a brother
- It's **restitution** made when due,
- It's **forgiving** when asked of you.

**CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING
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FARTHER DOWN THE SLIPPERY SLOPE WE GO

Brad Harrub

On October 13, just thirty-three short days after the World Trade Center tragedy, America lost eight more precious innocent souls. It was not until Sunday, November 25, 2001 that scientists at Advanced Cell Technology, Inc. announced they had created human embryos through a process known as nuclear transfer (cloning). [This is the same group of scientists who reported in the May 22, 1998 issue of *Science* that they had created a “transgenic” cow/human hybrid embryo.] In discussing their latest endeavor to clone humans, Dr. Michael West, president and CEO of the company, remarked: “I don’t think this is safe yet for human reproduction” (see CNN, 2001), and he then stressed that he does not support cloning to create human beings as a means of reproduction. However, his overall goals are not as altruistic as they might first appear. While Dr. West and his colleagues do not support human cloning as a means of human reproduction, they have absolutely no problem creating human embryos through cloning in order to extract the precious stem cells of which those embryos are composed. West argued: “There are people out there, people we all care for, who are suffering and dying and need therapies now” (CNN, 2001).

Playing on the emotions of individuals, Dr. West coldly remarked: “We’re talking about making human cellular life, not a human life.” He argued: “A human life, we know scientifically, begins upwards, even into two weeks...” And so, hidden under the guise of what many refer to as “therapeutic cloning,” America has found yet another way to destroy innocent life. Proverbs 6:16-17 states: “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.” Who is more innocent than the unborn? Make no doubt about it, this latest declaration has taken us a significant step closer toward human cloning, and a significant step farther away from God and His Word. Creating human life for the sole purpose of later destroying it to obtain stem cells is immoral and evil.

The Advanced Cell Technology study involved eight eggs, two of which divided to form early embryos. One egg progressed to the six-cell stage before it eventually stopped dividing. Were these embryos human life or merely cells? The prophet Isaiah confirmed it this way: “Harken ye people from afar; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made

mention of my name... And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant... (49:1, 5). Jehovah not only viewed Isaiah as a person prior to his birth, but also called him by name. Additionally, the Lord, speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, stated: “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee...” (1:5). James observed in the book that bears his name: “The body without the spirit is dead” (2:26). If the body apart from the spirit is dead, then the opposite of that statement also must be true, in that if the body is living, then the spirit or soul must be present. It is obvious from the texts that God does not consider life to begin at birth, but rather at conception. Thus, upon conception, when that full compliment of chromosomes is actively metabolizing and living, God already has placed within that living embryo a soul. Therefore we must analyze all new scientific technology with this truth in mind even when diseases such as Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s tear at the very roots of our own families.

Is it any wonder that we have young people growing up today with no future plans, and who see no value in their existence? Children around our country watch as we kill our unborn young through medical research and abortion. They watch as we prematurely terminate the lives of our elderly through euthanasia, and they listen to news reports that describe how gunfire was exchanged over a pair of tennis shoes. Add to all of this that our children have been receiving a steady diet of evolution that we are here by accident and originated from ape-like creatures and you begin to understand why teens place such little value on human life, and why we have tragic school shootings.

In today’s world, there is a growing tendency to ignore the divine principle that life is God-given (Acts 17:28), and to view human life as that which may be destroyed at will. We need to reaffirm that human life, as a gift from God, is sacred! Should Christians make this an issue of moral and ethical concern, or should we as one man said, “Leave it so that discarding laboratory-grown embryos is a matter solely between a doctor and his plumber?” Can we afford to sit idly by and do nothing? James wrote: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin? (4:17).—Brad is the *Director of the Department of Scientific Information* at Apologetics Press, Inc., 230 Landmark Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

MAX R. MILLER MEMORIAL SECTION

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IN REMEMBRANCE

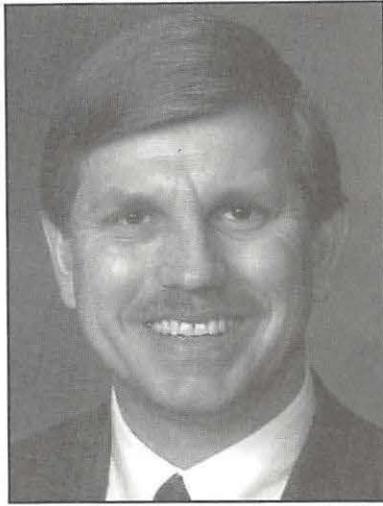
On December 18, 2001 one of the truly great gospel preachers in the Lord's church today entered the eternal realms. Many of us feel a deep sense of loss with the death of Max Robert Miller. The funeral for brother Miller was in Munford, Tennessee, with interment in his hometown of Bruceton, Tennessee. Max Miller was 76 years old when he died. His wife of 52 years, Lillian Miller; two daughters, Melinda Beaty and Martha Miller; one son, Grady Miller; two sisters, Lou Nell Elkins and Jane Miller, and four grandchildren survive him.

Max Miller was a Navy veteran of World War II. He worked in the railway mail service after the war. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, graduating in 1963. He preached for churches of Christ in North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida. He held gospel meetings in many states. He conducted a daily radio program and was active in prison ministry. Miller had preached for the church in Gilt Edge, Tennessee for fourteen years prior to his death. He was once director of West Tennessee Children's Home and the Bellview Preacher Training School in Pensacola, Florida. Max Miller was a faithful Christian, wonderful preacher, excellent writer, an editor of many religious journals through the years, and a loyal friend to many.

Those of us who were affectionately known as his "boys" were privileged to speak at his funeral service on December 21, 2001. Those who spoke at the funeral service were Ernest Underwood, Bill Dillon and John T. Polk. II. M. W. Kiser and Dennis Gullede spoke at the graveside. It is with pleasure that I have requested these individuals, along with Grady Miller, to contribute to this *Gospel Gleaner* memorial to Max R. Miller.—Dennis Gullede, Editor.

MAX R. MILLER AS AN ENCOURAGER OF YOUNG PREACHERS

Dennis Gullledge



Every young gospel preacher should have the help and encouragement of older evangelists. As Paul took young Timothy “under his wing” and nurtured him in the faith, so should the older preachers guide their younger counterparts today. Max Miller was a great encouragement to me throughout all the years of my preaching life.

I first became acquainted with brother Miller when I was a student at Freed-Hardeman College [now, University] in the mid-1970’s. At that time I was doing part time preaching for both the Pleasant View and McMahan churches in Cannon county, Tennessee. Max Miller was preaching in Woodbury, Tennessee at that time. I was just beginning as a preacher and we began a friendship that lasted until the day he died.

When I moved to Jackson, Tennessee in 1977 brother Miller was preaching in nearby Trenton. I was continuing my education at Freed-Hardeman College and worshipping at what was then the Central church of Christ [now, Campbell Street]. In 1978 I began working as an assistant to James W. Boyd at Central. Max Miller had preached at Central a few years prior to my experience there. He and his wife Lillian would drop by my office for periodic visits. I began my graduate work with what was then the Alabama Christian School of Religion [now, Southern Christian University] in 1979 in the cluster program that was held at the Trenton church building. I will never forget the time when Max Miller, James Boyd and Robert R. Taylor, Jr., permitted a young and “green” gospel preacher to accompany them on a trip to Memphis to hear Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in a gospel meeting shortly before the great man passed away. I thought then that I was in good company to have such friends, and I still do.

When I was ready for my first full time located work in 1980, and knowing my interest in going to Georgia, Max Miller helped me locate a good work.

Through his acquaintance with Howard Swann, then of Hazelhurst, Georgia, I went to preach at a mission work in Milledgeville, Georgia. We stayed there for nine years. All through those years Max Miller was a constant source of encouragement. His counsel helped me through some difficult times. He came to Milledgeville to hold a gospel meeting for us in 1987.

Being a student of Restoration history brother Miller knew that I was compiling an index to Walter Scott’s *Evangelist* and *Christian* (1832-1842). Max Miller encouraged me to send my work in to College Press for publication. I had little faith that they would be interested in my work, but I acted on his advice and it was published in conjunction with David I. McWhirter’s index in 1983. Years later, at my invitation Max Miller graciously penned the forward to my book *Women of the Word* (1991).

In the years (1981-1985), when I had loads of youthful ambition as a writer, Max Miller gave me a regular column in his paper *Spirit of Truth*. In 1984 Max Miller invited me to speak on Bellview Preacher Training School lectureship. When *First Century Christian* was revived in 1989 he asked me to serve on the board of directors. Upon Roy J. Hearn’s retirement as editor of FCC in 1994 he asked that I serve as Associate Editor, which I did for seven years. Before becoming editor of *Gospel Gleaner* I invited Max Miller to write a regular column for us in the area of church history. He was reluctant to have his name added to any list of writers. Thankfully, he agreed. Many of our readers have complimented his scholarly articles. In the summer of 2000 Max Miller invited me to preach in a series of gospel meetings at the Gilt Edge church of Christ, where he did his final local work of fourteen years.

Few men have encouraged me as much as Max Miller. He has helped me in more ways than I can recount. He told me not long ago that I was no longer a young preacher. Even so, Max Miller remained a constant source of encouragement to me. Whatever good I have been able to accomplish in the Kingdom of Christ in the past quarter century, I attribute in large measure to my association with Max Miller. I know that many other young preachers have felt the same. —10820 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

MAX R. MILLER AS A BIBLE STUDENT

M. W. Kiser



Batsell Barrett Baxter wrote in the monumental work, *The Heart of the Yale Lectures*: “Preaching has as its objective the lifting of mankind from a lower to a higher plane. The truth of God is most effective in accomplishing this task when it comes through the personality of a consecrated man of God. A man may assume that he is ‘called to preach’ when his natural

qualifications are such as are needed by a minister, when he feels certain that God desires him as a public proclaimer of the gospel, and when he himself desires to preach to such a degree that he would never be quite conscience-free should he decline the opportunity to preach.” Max R. Miller was called to preach the gospel of Christ. He possessed the qualifications to the highest standard a man could have them, and with his body, soul, and mind he gave himself to his calling.

A paragraph from an article he wrote in 1995 entitled “There is Something About Preaching” reflects both his feeling about the work as well as the importance he placed upon the study of the Bible. “There are reasons why attitudes toward preaching have fallen to such low esteem in our modern world. Poor preaching, unbiblical and nonbiblical preaching, ‘talks’ that are passed off in the name of preaching, poorly prepared sermons, preachers who have lost their dedication to preaching, preachers who have become ‘disenchanted’ with preaching, lack of Biblical knowledge, loss of fervor and love for souls of mankind.” Every sermon that he preached, every class that he taught, and every article he wrote reflected the fact that he was a student of the Bible.

There are several words that describe the kind of student he was:

(1) He was a **constant** student. The study of the Bible was not something sporadic with him. He did not maintain an “office,” but rather a “study.” Anytime you would visit in his study, it was very evident that he was busy with the word of God. A visit in his home would always be met with

hospitality and you could always observe about his chair reference books, brotherhood periodicals lying open, books with markers stuck in them, good light, pen, pencil, notepad, and his Bible.

(2) He was a **sound** student. He knew and practiced the rules of hermeneutics and argumentation. He was dedicated to the restoration principle. In 1994 he wrote, “It is no little thing to tamper with the word of God, to substitute creeds and doctrines of men for it. One must become as jealous for the word of God as God is himself. Let us be true and faithful to His word.”

(3) He was an **honest** student. He gave credit where credit was due. He was not happy with plagiarism. He knew when a work had been copied or an instructor was taking credit for a student’s work.

(4) He was a **balanced** student. While he knew “issues” and could deal with them in a very pointed and exact way, he was not “issue oriented” in his study. His many articles on restoration history; his various published studies covering the deep questions of theology; and his sermons reveal a man who knew much because he studied much about many things.

(5) He was a **sharing** student. That which he studied and researched he was willing to share with others. From his study came sermon outlines, introductory outlines, theological and doctrinal studies; and reflective conversation that always edified.

(6) He was a **serious** student. He maintained a good library of worthwhile books. One might pull a book from his shelf at random, and find in its margin notations indicating his familiarity with the subject beyond what the author had to say. His time was not spent with shallow devotionals and denominational trash.

(7) He was a **lifetime** student. At age 76, his desk reflected a man still at work. I rank the last sermon I heard him deliver just a few weeks before his passing as one of his best.

Max R. Miller studied to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, and one who rightly divided the word of truth. We will remain ever inspired by his high ideal of preaching and his devotion to the study of the Bible.—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

MAX R. MILLER AS A LOVER OF TRUTH

John T. Polk, II



It was a personal epiphany to see Max Miller's love of the truth. In his conversations, he was *nota bene*, for he carefully weighed and measured every verbal response before it was uttered. He mastered history to substantiate its verities. In his writings, he cited Scripture as foundation for every sermon he preached. His

printed sermon outlines were under the heading, *Book, Chapter & Verse Sermons*. His influence helped name a publication *First Century Christian* ensuring its readers of its fundamental reliance upon actual Scriptural teaching. Every conversation with or sermon from him came through the strictures of Scriptural truth and reality of experience. Many claim scholarship because they possess "letters" with little regard for truth; however, Max was a true scholar who possessed truth with little regard for "letters." One had not to be around Max long to know that his Scripture studies, were readily referenced and his life's experiences were easily adduced, and all of these were conveyed with impeccable English. He firmly believed that truth, precisely stated, was its own best defense.

Bible words translated by the English words "truth, faith and trust" describe qualities in Max.

In the Hebrew Old Testament:

Aman refers to "nourish up" and "be firm and established" (Proverbs 11:13). No matter what the discussion, Max had a strengthening word to add. Like Tychicus, he would "know your circumstances and comfort your hearts" (Colossians 4:7-8).

Itsev meant "purposefully, with intent" (Daniel 6:12). Max treated God's word with the respect it deserved, more so than men treated "the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

Emeth referred to "right" and a form, *emmunah* used in Habakkuk 2:4, meant "faithfulness" "the just shall live by his faith" [fullness] (Habakkuk 2:4). Max adhered

to truth, and was faithful to his lovely wife, Lillian; devoted to his children, Melinda, Grady, and Martha and his grandchildren; steadfast in his proclamation of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8); and loyal to churches of Christ. He never gave up on these and always believed they were worth his best attention.

Yachal meant "to hope, to rely upon" in Job 13:15, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Those who knew him best never thought Max could conceive of any experience that would keep him from trusting in God. Max trusted God: in his Pacific naval battles of World War II; throughout the hardships of preacher preparation at Freed-Hardeman College, while married with children; vicissitudes of brethren in his preaching career; heart surgeries and hospitalizations; and "in perils among false brethren" (2 Corinthians 11:26).

Chasah describes "fleeing for refuge" and translated "trust" in Psalm 118:8: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." This, the exact middle verse of the English Bible guided Max. No "issue," paper, school, or label (e.g. "liberal," "conservative," ad nauseum) ever meant more to him than God's truth. Max loved truth, loved those who loved truth, and pitied those who did not.

In The Greek New Testament:

Pistos meant "trustworthy, faithful" and describes Moses (Hebrews 3:5), Jesus (Hebrews 2:17), Paul (1 Timothy 1:12), Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21). Certainly, Max Miller's work in the Lord includes him as one of the "faithful men who" [was, JTPII] "able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Aletheia denotes "what is truth in any matter" thus, "the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21). In any controversy, those with opinions opposing Max needed a second look at their own position before proceeding further. He was not infallible, but he persistently leaned on the One Who is!

Truly, Max Miller remained *semper fidelis*.

This writer is grateful to have been the recipient of Max's friendship for forty years, and can testify that he lived by the conclusion of his article titled, "The Restoration Movement": "Our work today is much the same as those of earlier years of the Restoration. We must still contend for the truth" (Continued on page 21)

MAX R. MILLER AS A GOSPEL PREACHER

Ernest Underwood



I had the pleasure of meeting Max Miller in 1964 when he and his family moved to Covington, Tennessee to work there. That meeting resulted in a lifelong friendship, a friendship in which there was never a harsh word spoken between us.

My first impression of him was that there was a common-sense man, and

a man who possessed great dignity. That dignity, as I came to learn, was because of his deep love for his work of preaching, and his great respect for the Word of God. Max believed that people could understand the Bible, and always considered it an honor and privilege to be a gospel preacher, one who was able to assist others in their learning of that Word. In his work as a preacher he at all times respected the dignity of those whom he taught. When he and I worked together many years ago in teaching the inmates at Fort Pillow Prison, never once did I know him to exhibit a lack of respect for the learners.

Unlike so many today, brother Miller was not a “dirt digger.” He cared little for the practice. He was more interested in giving a helping hand than cutting off the hand that requested help. He was one who refused to hold grudges. Maligned he might be, but his attitude was that his critic would have to stand in judgment of God, and that would be enough.

His appearance in the pulpit was, likewise, an expression of his belief in the dignity of preaching. He was not a person of fads. He believed that one’s appearance in the pulpit should cause the hearer to respect the word, which was spoken by the preacher. Thus, he never dressed in some flashy or mod manner. Usually a dark suit. Unlike some today, he would never have appeared in the “designer” fashions of the day. One was always impressed with the fact that he was in his position to bring glory to his Lord, not to himself.

As a preacher Max believed that he must always be able to sustain the things which he taught. As a result, he researched his subjects well. He believed that one who stood before others and proclaimed the gospel, should have something to say, not just have to say something. I remember at a certain lectureship that one of the speakers made flippant remarks about a certain character of the Bible. Max followed this speaker, and oh, what a difference. His lesson showed his deep respect for the character about which he was teaching, and there were no off-color or flippant remarks. His humility in the pulpit was evident to all who heard him. His was not a false humility, but one which showed that he was ever conscious of the One whom he served.

One of the great delights of Max and his good wife, Lillian, was to have fellow preachers at their home. For those thus privileged, we know the richness of the conversations involving those things spiritual. Many a preacher has gone from their home with a better knowledge of and insight into God’s word. Though he loved his fellow preachers, there was no compromise with them or others where God’s word was concerned. He demanded of others a “book, chapter, and verse” in the things they taught, and demanded no less of himself.

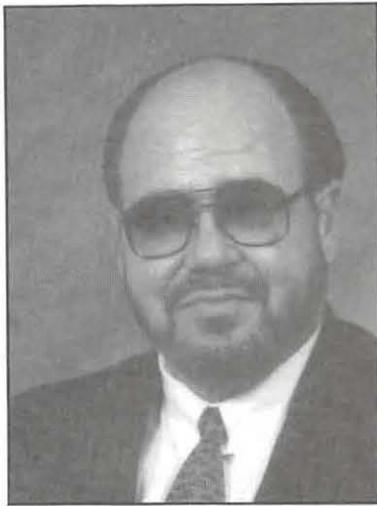
Much more could be written, but perhaps it will suffice to say that in the opinion of this writer Max Miller was one of the great preachers of his generation. His influence will live on in those of us who loved him, and who loved the same thing which he loved—God’s Word.—408 E. Main Avenue, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

Max Miller As A Lover Of Truth Continued from page 21

“as it is in Jesus” (*Gospel Gleaner*, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 15). We reluctantly now add his grave in Bruceton, Tennessee to future journeys among Restoration greats. He awaits the last world-wide declaration of truth when Jesus comes (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), for which he was prepared. He has graduated magna cum laude.—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

MAX R. MILLER AS A FRIEND

Bill Dillon



It was twenty-six years ago that I first made the acquaintance of Max R. Miller. I was a deacon for the Trenton Church of Christ in Trenton, Tennessee and Max had just moved in as the new preacher.

Max's influence was, from the beginning, the spirit of a Christian gentleman. One was always invited to the

Miller's house for discussion on biblical matters. It is no exaggeration to say I learned more about preaching from Max R. Miller than any college class ever taken.

Discussion with Max would often last into the early hours of the morning or as long as the cheese and crackers and coffee held out. Two or three hours with Max were pure gold in terms of learning about church history, restoration biographies, and practical principles regarding the lives of men. Max's wisdom about preaching and how preachers should strive to get along with their brethren was invaluable and still is. These were the lessons which meant most to me, as a deacon in the Lord's body. Eventually I was encouraged to get into preaching on a full time basis and did so in 1978.

Max was the model preacher that all good men could follow. He was not pre-occupied with worldly wisdom or wealth. He believed that the wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt and there is no peace to the wicked (Isaiah 57:20-21). Max was confident, and conveyed it to others, that the paltry pleasures and tinsel trinkets of earth are nothing to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed to the sons of God.

Max believed that when you preach, you preach for life, not until you purchase property at the lake, or inherit a fortune. Preachers, like everyone else, are dependent upon God for support. No matter, who you are, God is the ground you walk on (Psalms 42:1-2, 5).

Max was always equal to the occasion. When he spoke it was about the glory of being a preacher. Max had

no time for anyone who didn't appreciate what good gospel preaching could do for the world. If you were a friend of Max Miller you had to think in terms of the "high view" of preaching.

Over a course of time due to my association with Max Miller I too felt the pull to preach the gospel. Max was a friend of every gospel preacher. You could call him day or night and you would find help with any problem you were having. Max was known to give, at will, books to young struggling preachers who came to visit him.

In times of grief, almost too great to bear, Max's friendship was felt by his giving advice on how to press on when those closest to you had departed to be with the Lord.

Max was a Christian man of genuine sympathy and sorrow. His life will be grafted upon the earthly lives of all whose life and ministry he touched. With Max, your sorrow became God's peace.

Every man has enemies; even Jesus had His sworn detractors. To be Max's enemy you had to be dishonest, selfish and be ready to recoil when the truth was attacked. Max had no place or use for such individuals.

I will not be asinine and suggest that Max was divine or attribute to him the writing of a book of the Bible (divine inspiration). Max was not a perfect man but he was God's man, and the best friend a preacher could hope to meet. By God's grace we look forward to meeting him again in the great beyond. —704 Arkansas Avenue, Mountain Home, AR 72653-2202

"This is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal."

—William Penn

MAX R. MILLER AS A FAMILY MAN

Grady Miller



Had I known Max Robert Miller only from reading his articles, bulletins, books and lectures, my faith would be stronger and my work more fruitful in the vineyard of the Lord.

Had I known him only from his years of preaching the gospel on the radio, or his tireless labors in reaching the lost at Fort Pillow State Prison

in Tennessee, I would be grateful for his emphasis on lifting up Jesus through the teaching of His word.

Had I known Max Miller only as my “local preacher,” privileged to sit at his feet year after year, seeing him give his best efforts to building up the church of Christ, I would honor him for his complete devotion to the Kingdom of God.

Had I known him only as a fellow-preacher in the next county or across town, I would forever value his friendship, support and encouragement in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I will ever be thankful I called Max Robert Miller my earthly father. He was my first, last, and best example of my Heavenly father. Every day I am proud to be his son.

He gave a lifetime devotion to God, the church, the Bible, the gospel, his family and his country. Others could say and do what they would with other, less important concerns. Max Miller gave his heart and life to the most important issues of life.

All who knew him bear witness to his devotion to family. He survived his own father more than fifty years, his mother thirty years. He always spoke of them in the most touching, tender manner. His sisters, Lou Nell Elkins and Jane Ann Miller, both of Bruceton, Tennessee, were in his daily prayers until he went to be with his Lord.

Even loving and devoted husbands sometimes joke and poke fun at their wives. Such good-natured kidding isn't taken too seriously. But Max Miller never joined in the fun. Lillian Marie was his sweetheart. His wallet, his study, his desktop were tributes to her love and affection.

As I leaf through his books I continue to find notes that he wrote to her, love notes he received from her. They celebrated fifty-two anniversaries together. His greatest regret was having to leave her.

His children have an aching in their hearts and a hole in their lives. He truly raised us in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Melinda Beaty of Livingston, Tennessee was his firstborn. He honored me with the name of his own daddy. Martha Miller of Nashville was his baby. For the rest of our lives we will long to hear the phone ring just once more, to hear him say “Nina Gail,” “Grady Boy” and “Mop.”

He took special delight in Darleen Hinson of Hohenwald, Tennessee. He often told me that I had picked out a winner, and that Lillian Marie and Darleen were “1” and “1A” sweethearts.

His four grandchildren were old enough at his passing to realize how special Max Miller was, and how precious they were to him. Amie Miller Sharp of Tampa, Florida was “No. 1.” He called her that even when there were no others, a not-so-subtle hint that he was looking for others to follow. Natalie Miller Whaley of Nashville, Anna Marie Beaty of Livingston and Taryn Alayna Miller of Colorado Springs each found his lap to be the perfect place to share a nap, to listen as he talked about far-away places, great men and great ideas. He was a walking, talking Bible. He gave them an unforgettable example of living faith, red-white-and-blue patriotism, personal dignity, complete love and unembarrassed affection.

He welcomed, after some scrutiny, Tim Sharp and Michael Whaley into the close circle of his family. He lavished as much pride in the boys who married his granddaughters as he did upon his children.

Holidays, vacations and visits back home will never be the same again. Dad's love, unflinching support, and wise counsel were a constant in our lives. He and Mother taught us to love the Lord. They gave us strength to stand, the spirit to serve, a Cause to live for and a Faith to die by.

Max Robert Miller was, and will ever remain, the patriarch of our family. He will live in us the rest of our lives.

And then we will be together, again.—745 Riverview Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80916



A WONDERFUL GOSPEL PAPER

I love the *Gleaner*. I have sent a lot of names to you and they all thank me for the paper and say it is a wonderful gospel paper. May God bless you all. Zoe Sims, Jasper, AL.

EXCELLENT PAPER

Thanks so much for your excellent paper. Mrs. Lucille Krantz, Ashland City, TN.

DEFENDING & TEACHING THE GOSPEL IN NIGERIA

Thank God for your life, and for the good work of defending and teaching the undiluted gospel of Christ. Though a student for now but would ask you to permit me to start to pick some talented and devoted Christians that may help me to see that *Gospel Gleaner* publication has its branch here in Nigeria it is true that the world of God has the power to convict aliens but it cannot be so unless the users is first convicted, (sic). When a friend and a brother in Christ lend me a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* for a week, I was convicted and thank God it was during holidays, my family and some neighbors were also convicted. Through the convincing topics treated there in please permit me to mention at least four topics: (1) A Sinners Prayer; (2) Neither Catholic, Nor Protestant, Nor Jew, Nor... (3) Are We Required To Go To Church? (4) Can One Be Saved Outside The Church. In conclusion, may I plead that myself and family be enrolled in your mailing list. Please keep us abreast always my family address: sis Glory Ndukwu, Church of Christ, Lagos, Nigeria.

IMPRESSED WITH GG

As you know, I am really impressed with the *Gospel Gleaner* and consider it one of the strongest papers in the brotherhood and an outstanding effort of the Mabelvale congregation. I would

love to contribute in some way and am offering the following lessons for your consideration. They're among some "favorites" that I've used in the past. Don't know whether you can use them or not...but they are examples of some of my outlines/lessons. Alan Caudle, Maumelle, AR.

ACCESSES GG ON THE WEB

Thank you for sending GG. Very good publication. In the recent edition, I noted you now put it on your website. With that in mind, please delete me from your mailing list. I receive several periodicals and as I have done with *Fulton County Gospel News* and *Seek The Old Paths*, I find that accessing online allows me to read the periodical and print off articles as needed for my files rather than file the entire periodical which takes up quite a bit of space. Plus, I am certain that the mailing costs are staggering. While my one copy may not make a great difference, this will allow you to send it to someone who is without internet access. I continually look forward to reading GG on the web. Thank you for your efforts. Jeff Archey, Twoarcheys@aol.com.

PASSES GG ON TO OTHERS

Enclosed is a check in support of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I enjoy reading it and pass it on to others. Keep up the good work. Virgil Lindley, Corning, AR.

DONATION TO HELP

Please accept the enclosed donation to help in the publishing of *Gospel Gleaner*. I appreciate receiving it. Jimmy L. Clark, Grand Prairie, TX.

ENJOYS OUR PUBLICATION

I enjoy your publication greatly and would like to be added to your mailing list. Thanks in advance. Joel Harris, Pecos, TX.

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Volume 18

No.2

GOD'S RX FOR DEPRESSION

Neal Pollard



Please understand that clinical depression is a very real malady. Just this past week, researchers in Chicago released a study indicating that treatment for depression “soared from 1.7 million to 6.3 million between 1987 and 1997.” Research reveals that as many as five percent (or 14 million) of the U.S. population “could benefit from treatment for depression” (*Rich-*

mond Times Dispatch, 1/9/02, A-9). A variety of factors, including the body or brain’s chemistry and even mental illness, can be the root cause of depression for so many. For these, medication and therapy are certainly prescriptive means of defeating this grey monster. However, the depression people often feel has underlying emotional and spiritual causes. In such circumstances, the Great Physician (cf. Mark 2:17) can “heal the brokenhearted...” (Luke 4:18). Consider God’s prescription for depression.

Find Some One To Serve. A sure way to improve mental health is to turn our focus upon service. Is it not odd that Paul, a man imprisoned for his faith and who confesses having poured himself out in sacrifice and service, could say, “I joy, and rejoice...” (Philippians 2:17). This flies in the face of the world’s conventional wisdom. Expending precious time and energy on someone else brings joy and happiness. That is antonymous to depression. Look for ways to encourage others, to brighten and cheer the sick,

the unfaithful, or those you know in adverse circumstances. When you do, your efforts will have a double effect. You will be helping not only the struggler, but also yourself.

Find Some Time To Meditate. Many of the people with whom I speak who are suffering from depression admit to being distant from God. They typically do not read and study the Bible regularly, nor do they consistently pray to Him. When doing both more faithfully is suggested, they often discount or dismiss the value of both in aiding their state of mind. Yet, “the proof is in the pudding.” Diligent Bible students are given promises and reassurances of God’s help and power that they see fulfilled in their daily lives. Comfort and peace are side effects of regular Bible reading. Through prayer, one gets the sense that there is One who is listening, who sympathizes and who cares. Faithful prayer coupled with faithful living yields confidence and coping ability. Meditation works! Delight follows meditation (Psalm 119:15-16). Strength follows meditation (Psalm 119:27-28). Depression may be defeated by saying, with our deeds, what David wrote, “Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; as for me, I shall be glad in the Lord” (Psalm 104:34, NASB).

Find Some Thing To Eliminate. It may be doubt. All doubt, including self-doubt, ultimately points to a lack of faith in God. We may doubt that our circumstances will improve. We may doubt our own abilities. We may doubt

(Continued on page 5)

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

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A visitor to our website recently wrote in a question about the appropriateness of applauding at baptisms, what the Bible says about the matter and whether or not the elders of the congregation where it was occurring should do anything about it. Of course, the New Testament has nothing to say about what should or should not take place at a person's baptism into Christ. The New Testament does show that following his immersion into Christ the Ethiopian eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). What he did in the act of rejoicing we are not told.

Baptism brings the penitent believer to the blood of Jesus Christ wherein the Lamb of God forgives his/her past sins. Paul said, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Also, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). If one were going to applaud a person's baptism into Christ it would seem just as appropriate to applaud the crucifixion of Christ. Certainly, we thank God for the wonderful sacrifice of his only begotten Son (John 3:16), without whose shed blood we could not have the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22-26). Yet, that great act of divine love that is able to make grown men cry is not something to be demeaned by raucous applause!

Since the New Testament lends no support to the practice, either by direct statement, command, example or inference, the common practice is to go to the Old Testament passages where it is mentioned (Psalm 47:1, 98:8). These verses, however, have nothing to do with activities in the New Testament church. The attempt to justify hand clapping in worship or at baptisms by the use of these passages is to grossly mishandle the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15). If one has no respect for the New Testament as a pattern for Christianity (and many do not), then, sanction for the practice is sought in the idea that it is just a way of showing appreciation, like saying "Amen." The word "amen" is not an expression of appreciation. Saying "amen" is a vocal means of showing understanding affirming the truthfulness of God's word in the worship assembly (1 Corinthians 14:16). The saying of "amen" has New Testament example behind it, which cannot be said for hand clapping. In the New Testament the word "amen" is found 126 times.

Surely, this growing problem in some congregations is a matter that should be dealt with by the elders (bishops, shepherds, overseers) of the local church. It is their work to oversee the flock that is among them (Acts 20:28). Elders that are true shepherds will see that the problem is eliminated in the churches. Why should overseers permit that which has no New Testament command, example or inference to disrupt the peace and unity of the local church?—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103





Anyone who is remotely familiar with the teaching of the Bible knows that drunkenness is sinful. And the New Testament makes it very clear that the drunkard cannot expect to be in heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21). But exactly what is drunkenness? That is where the controversy lies. Must one be “passed out” to be drunk? staggering? unable to walk a

white line? legally intoxicated with .10 alcohol blood level (the California criterion)? Just where is the line to be drawn? The educated, sincere child of God knows exactly where to draw the line. He draws it before the first drink! He totally abstains from beverage alcohol.

There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that there is no safe level of drinking alcoholic beverages. First, there is the health factor. Albert Q. Maisel wrote: “Until quite recently, almost all researchers believed that such occasional imbibers suffered no permanent ill effects from their drinking. Physiologists were convinced that even when such moderate drinkers did get ‘high,’ their slurred speech and slowed up reaction evidenced only a transitory effect upon their brains and nervous systems. Now, however, strong evidence indicates that there is no guarantee of a ‘safe’ level of drinking, no absolute threshold below which alcohol fails to damage or destroy groups of cells in the brain and other vital organs” (*Reader’s Digest*, June 1970—Emp. WJ). The author further observes that with the very first drink, alcohol is absorbed through your tongue and gums and is on the way to your brain.

Some years back, *Listen Magazine* published a diagram of the human brain showing the various areas of the brain as they are affected by different levels of alcohol. That chart revealed that the brain’s frontal lobe, which is the “reasoning” and “self-control” center, begins to be affected by as little as .01 alcohol blood level. An officer of the California Highway informed this writer that .01 percent is approximately one half a shot of whiskey for an average size man.

A pamphlet published by the American Automobile Association entitled *Sportsmanlike Driving* (5th edition), states that: “The effects of alcohol begin with the first

drink”. It further says that: “The first effects are impairment of judgment and reason and weakening of self-control and normal inhibitions.” Journalist Coleman McCarthy, writing in the *Washington Post* a few years back, declared: “Many social drinkers particularly those with a sophisticated self-image, laugh off the effects of alcohol. Yet even one mild drink hampers both intelligence and efficiency.”

Further there is the matter of how beverage alcohol brings havoc to society in general. Drunkenness is a factor in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries each year. Automobile wrecks, murders, fights, rapes, dissolution of the home, loss of work, higher taxes (to take care of many of the foregoing problems), and a variety of ills follow in the wake of this great evil.

The Bible has much to say about the effects that are attendant to the drinking problem. Drunkenness is connected with poverty (Proverbs 23:21), physical ailment (Isaiah 19:14), faulty judgment (Isaiah 28:7), deception (Proverbs 20:1), lawlessness (Proverbs 31:5), addiction (Proverbs 23:35b), etc.

Yes, the imbibing of alcoholic beverages is a great evil and the Christian will “abstain” (that does not mean “use in moderation”) from “every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).—PO Box 55265, Stockton, CA 95205

A NOTE TO OUR READERS: THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE!

Obviously you have noticed that we were late in getting out our first two issues of *Gospel Gleaner* for 2002. We apologize for the delay, but we want you to know that we are not intentionally dragging our feet! One reason for our tardiness is that at the first of the year we revised the appearance of the paper which required the working out of a few “bugs” as our printer has gone digital.

Also, we are in the process of learning the new Quark computer program upon which we are now preparing *Gospel Gleaner*. Along with the wonderful improvements it brings, it also comes at the cost of the time and effort necessary to learn the program. Please be patient with us. We will soon be back on schedule, we pray!—*Dennis Gullede, Editor.*



GLOBAL WARMING

Guy F. Hester



Environmentalists are very concerned about "global warming" and, perhaps, rightfully so. Even President George W. Bush recently said that the evidence shows that humans are greatly contributing to the problem of global warming. Personally I am concerned about our environment, however, I am not an alarmist! I do not lie awake at night worrying about the "ozone layer," the "green house effect," the ice caps at the North Pole melting, etc.

However, there is a global warming that I am very concerned about. That is the global warming that the apostle Peter talks about in 2 Peter chapter three: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:10-14).

In view of this "Global Warming" when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," Peter asks a very thought provoking and important question: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" As we seriously consider this question in light of its setting, or context, it should have a very sobering effect upon each of us.

STEADFAST PERSONS

Steadfastness is one of the conditions of every successful endeavor. Bankruptcy would soon be the end of a merchant who opened his place of business at a different time each day. A fruit tree moved every week from place to place will bear no fruit and will eventually wilt and die. A Christian who spends his time jumping in and out – hot and cold – will bear no fruit and will eventually wither up and die spiritually. There must be steadfastness.

The Jerusalem church, our model, was a growing church because it was steadfast. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). No wonder that the record goes on to say, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). The apostle Paul was an example of steadfastness. He wrote, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Then, he continues, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). The same inspired apostle exhorted the Corinthian Christians to steadfastness. He said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Then, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). Therefore, in view of this "Global Warming" (burning) we should be steadfast persons.

PRAYERFUL PERSONS

Things are accomplished through prayer that cannot be accomplished any other way. What a friend Christians have in prayer but how little use so many of us

make of it. Prayer is a beautiful and lofty expression of trust, submission and union with God.

Christians are told: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6); "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2); "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

Christ wants us to be strong in prayer and to that end He gave us the model prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-11, not to be memorized and repeated, but as a model. "After this manner therefore pray ye." If we knew this globe on which we live would "melt of fervent heat" before tomorrow, would we not be praying persons!

FORGIVING PERSONS

Just as long as men sin there will be the need to forgive one another. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13). The Lord forgives us just as we forgive others (Matthew 6:12). His forgiveness is full and complete and so must ours be. To say, "I forgive but I won't forget" is not genuine forgiveness. We must forgive and forget as God does. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). We must not be strained in our willingness to forgive by the number of offences even if "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). Let us be sure that there is not a lacking of forgiveness on our part when this old world is burned up.

SOUL WINNING PERSONS

Only in being soul winners can we be like Christ because He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). The great commission commands us to be soul winners (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). The "golden

rule" requires a genuine concern for the souls of others (Matthew 7:12). When this old world is wrapped in flames will there be souls lost because we were not concerned enough to try to save them?—E-mail: g.hester@juno.com

GOD'S RX FOR DEPRESSION

Continued from front page

God's existence or ability to help. Such negative thinking must be reprogrammed. Remember, the Christian "can" (Philippians 4:13). It may be dread. Fear of future events, of social, economic, or emotional stress, or of interpersonal conflict all cause feelings of anxiety. Jesus says, "Don't do this!" (Matthew 6:25ff). Again, faith and trust in God is imperative. It may be disobedience to God. It is hard for one who believes in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit to feel good about willfully continuing in a life of sin. Depression many times results. The solution is not killing the conscience, but amputating the sin problem. Guilt is a first cousin of depression, and guilt is a spiritual consequence of sinning. Failure to do what we know we should and committing what we know we should not causes all kinds of turmoil, including depression (cf. Romans 7:19-24).

Many years ago a young Midwestern lawyer suffered from such deep depression that his friends thought it best to keep all knives and razors out of his reach. He questioned his life's calling and the prudence of even attempting to follow it through. During this time he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not." But somehow, from somewhere, Abraham Lincoln received the encouragement he needed, and the achievements of his life thoroughly vindicated his bout with discouragement (*Today In The Word*, MBI, December, 1989, p. 20).

So far as we know, Mr. Lincoln was not a Christian. Thus, those of us locked in the dungeon beneath the castle of despair (Saying credited to Charles Spurgeon) have the key to the door of depression. His name is Christ (John 14:27)!—6856 Cold Harbor Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

AN EMPTY BUCKET FOR ONE DYING OF THIRST

Allen Webster



We joke about short sermons. You may have heard the one about the minister who preached a very short sermon. He explained, “My dog got into my office and chewed up some of my notes.” At the close of the service a visitor asked, “If your dog ever has pups, please let my preacher have one of them.”

More and more churches of our day are receiving less and less Gospel nowadays. In some places, it has become unpopular to give a “thus saith the Lord.” Some say that “citing Biblical references in sermons hinders the presentation of the preacher.” We have to wonder about a sermon that Biblical references hinder! Personal interest stories, testimonials, current religious thought, jokes, and contemporary events have replaced simple Bible preaching.

As the beloved late Franklin Camp said, “Preachers of the past filled their sermons with Scripture. But one may hear sermons today with no Scripture or only one passage...[A] sermon without Scripture is like an empty bucket for one dying of thirst.” The Bible says, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Why should sermons be filled with Scripture?

First, it helps hearers learn the Bible. Each is able to “search the Scriptures” (Acts 17:11), by following along. When Abraham spoke from another world, he said: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). Today we have Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, so let’s “let them hear them!” Paul told a young preacher, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13). Thus one of preaching’s purposes is teaching. If people do not hear the Bible in church services, where are they going to learn it? It was taken out of schools, the government forbids reference to it, and the media makes fun of it. “How shall they hear without a preacher” (Romans 10:14)?

Second, it helps avoid misapplication (2 Peter 3:16). Error is often undetectable when disguised in a few familiar-sounding biblical words or phrases severed from

their original context. When honest truth-seekers are given opportunity to investigate, the “truth sets men free” (John 8:32). Faithful preachers have nothing to hide; they even desire that listeners check on them. Since each person is responsible for working out his “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), preachers help by pointing others to Jesus (John 1:37) and His Word (Hebrews 4:12). Remember, “A mist in the pulpit does create a fog in the pew.”

Third, it shows respect for Biblical authority (Colossians 3:17). Hearers are reminded that the preacher is not speaking “of himself” (John 7:16; 8:28; 14:10), or asserting his own ideas (1 Peter 4:11; cf. 1:20-21), but rather permitting God to speak for Himself (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Fourth, it follows the Biblical precedent. Jesus “found the place where it was written” (Luke 4:16-17) before beginning to preach, and often said, “It is written” (Matthew 4:4-10) while preaching. Peter’s sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2) had quotations from Joel 2:28-30, Psalm 16:8-11, 101:1, and 2 Samuel 7:11-12. Because the apostles used the Scriptures, they were as invincible as a tidal wave—nothing could stop them!

Fifth, it gives the preacher an unending supply of interesting material. “The Bible as it is fits man as he is,” the pioneer preachers were fond of saying (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Preaching straight from the Bible helps both the hearers and the preacher stay focused on something worthwhile.

One young man was considering becoming a preacher so his preacher gave him the opportunity to deliver a sermon. The young man was petrified but knew this was what he needed to do if he was going to be a preacher. He spent weeks preparing his message so that he could follow his preacher’s example and preach without notes. When his big day arrived, he was terribly nervous but confident he had adequately prepared. Unfortunately, his nerves got the best of him when he approached the pulpit. Panic set in, and he forgot everything he had hoped to say. After several moments of awkward silence, his quivering voice came over the sound system with these words: “This morning only God and I knew what I was going to say. Now only God knows” [Adapted from a

story told by Herb Walker]. Let's take the people to God's Word, so everybody is on the same page.

Sixth, it makes for healthy Christians and congregations (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14). A church with a weak diet will soon have weak members susceptible to the spiritual diseases of worldliness and liberalism. Several years ago a reader of the *British Weekly* wrote a letter to the editor as follows: "Dear Sir! I notice that ministers seem to set a great deal of importance on their sermons and spend a great deal of time in preparing them. I have been attending services quite regularly for the past thirty years and during that time, if I estimate correctly, I have listened to no less than three thousands sermons. But, to my consternation, I discover I cannot remember a single one of them. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else? Sincerely..."

The letter kicked up quite an editorial storm of angry responses for weeks. The pros and cons of sermons were tossed back and forth until, finally, one letter ended the debate. This letter said, "My Dear Sir: I have been married for thirty years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals—mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them I would have starved to death long ago. Sincerely..."

Seventh, it fulfills the purpose of preaching (2 Timothy 4:2). As spiritual farmers, preachers "sow the word" (Luke 8:11; Acts 20:32). The power to save men is not in money (Acts 3:6), men (Acts 4:13), or popularity (Acts 28:20); it is only in the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 12:9; John 8:32; Ephesians 6:17). How can we expect to harvest souls if we leave the seeds in the bag?

Across the front of many communion tables are the words: "This Do in Remembrance of Me." In the early days of the Restoration Movement, it was not uncommon to see inscribed across pulpits the exhortation, "Preach the Word."

Remember, when Elymus tried to withhold the truth from Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:8), a "bad thing" occurred.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE CHURCH?

Why are churches of Christ no longer growing as fast as they once did?

Why do we hear frequently of churches dividing, elders resigning, and preachers quitting?

Whatever happened to distinctive, Christ-centered, "book, chapter, and verse" preaching?

Is the church changing doctrinally?

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CATHOLIC CONFSSIONAL PREDATORS

John T. Polk II



What is wrong with the Roman Catholic Church? Where did they go wrong?

When they departed from the Word of God to establish their own traditions. But it is not with joy that we point this out, for wisdom says, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and he turn away His wrath from him (Proverbs 24:17-18, NKJV). Indeed, no religion remains pristine in practice, for even among the disciples, Jesus had Judas (Matthew 26:21-25), Paul had Alexander the coppersmith (2 Timothy 4:14-15), and the early church faced antichrists (1 John 2:18-19; 4:1-6). Truly, such public turmoil as that created by sexual-predator-priests should give each religion pause for self-examination.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BEFORE CATHOLICISM. The Roman Catholic Church, however, is in a dilemma that will not be corrected! One cannot point to the priests as abusers of their system when their entire system is an abuse and affront to the religion of Jesus Christ! It is not "a few bad priests" but the entire priest/confessional structure that is corrupt.

The New Testament is completely inspired by God (1 Corinthians 14:37). It is infallible, not some church (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit Himself, not some "church council" determined which books belonged together as Scripture (1 John 4:1; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:15-16). The church of Christ is built upon Jesus Christ as the Truth (Matthew 16:13-20; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2:1-2; 3:11; Acts 2:22-47). Those who obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ should follow no other (Mark 16:15-16; John 6:44-45, 63; 8:23-30; 10:1-8; Colossians 3:15-18).

NEW TESTAMENT WARNINGS OF IMPENDING APOSTASY.

Jesus warned of perversion in doctrine: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but

inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-20). Changing the New Testament doctrine into anything else is digression and apostasy. To disguise it as though it were taught by Jesus Christ or His Apostles only makes it devilishly confusing for Christians (Galatians 1:6-10; 5:1-15).

Paul echoed this when he wrote, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:12-15). Changed doctrine leads astray and cannot save. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-4). Any religious or political doctrine is apostate that makes marriage a blight, establishes regulations concerning "unholy foods," or in any other way ignores, contradicts, or slants teaching away from the Bible!

Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31). Changing this plurality of elders over one local flock to anything else creates apostate church governments. Surely systems with popes, cardinals, area-wide bishops, regional presbyters, parish priests or denominational pastors, qualify for the word "apostate,"

since none of it is taught in the Word of God.

WHY CATHOLICISM WILL NEVER CHANGE. In adding apostate traditions, Roman Catholicism has added “auricular confession” wherein all Catholics are required to confess every detail of every sin to “the church,” represented by parish priests. Such confessionals not only have no historical reference before A.D. 1215, but are against Scriptural principles.

Jesus said a “private room” confession is for God to hear, not men: “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6). Since there is “one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5), God never commands regular confession of all personal sins to anyone not directly involved with those sins (Cf. Mark 11:25-26). It is only after repeated refusals to repent that personal sins must be told to “the church” a.k.a. “the assembly” (Matthew 18:15-17). The Catholic Church twists Jesus’ teaching to mean that confessing personal sins to an individual (“priest”) is confession to “the church” and that all sins are considered “against the church.”

Pharisaical hypocrisy is the root doctrine behind confession booths: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known” (Luke 12:1-3). There is no surreptitious doctrine or practice in the church of Christ. Any doctrine that gives any human(s) power and control over the innermost thoughts and desires of another is of the Devil, for it relegates the intimacies due only to God to a fallible person (Cf. 1 Peter 5:6-7). This inherent perverseness of power was questioned in the early centuries as Roman Catholicism developed. Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century: “It is not necessary that anyone should witness your confession. Recognize your iniquities and let God alone, without anyone knowing, hear your confession. I exhort and entreat you to confess your sins to God. I do not tell you to reveal them to men, God alone sees your confession.”

Scribes spoke the truth when they asked, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus’ response was, “But

that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (Mark 2:5-12). [1] Only God can forgive sins, Cf. Isaiah 43:24-25. Every person or church who claims to be able to “forgive sin” has arrogated a right of Deity. If Jesus was not Deity He was a blasphemer; if He was Deity, then He must be accepted as God’s Son (John 5:16-19). Without miracles to prove otherwise, no church saves, so the church of Christ is made up of those saved by Jesus Christ. [2] This miracle was God’s endorsement of Jesus’ claim to forgive sins. There is no church since the 1st century that can (or has) demonstrate(d) miraculous power by the Holy Spirit. Confirmatory miracles ceased with the completion of the New Testament in the 1st century (Jude 3). [3] No Apostle or Christian ever claimed to forgive sins, but preached Jesus as the Forgiver, Cf. Acts 2:36-38; 8:22; 10:43. [4] No one has seen “anything like this” since. No Catholic priest can perform the first miracle to prove he can “forgive sin.” Not in Catholic, Protestant, Millennialist, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Evolutionist, nor any other religion have miracles accompanied its claims to save. No religious system other than Jesus Christ’s can save (Hebrews 9:23-28)!

In the year 2000, the Catholic “pope” confessed his church’s sins against Jews, other “Christian faiths,” women, the poor and various ethnic and racial groups. As of this writing, evidently the “pope” doesn’t feel he must confess the sins of predator/priests who use confessionals to find their next “weak” victim, or of cardinals and bishops who have sought to hide those sins committed against young boys! It is obvious the “pope” must not think Catholicism has sinned in this manner.

We urge everyone to come to Christ. Why not leave “the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:20-23).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

“OH, MY GOD!”

Grady Miller



Hardly a day goes by that we do not hear somebody exclaim, “Oh My God!” Whether at work or school, the bank, supermarket, or even the church parking lot, this expression is heard again and again. Television, no doubt, is the chief offender, with nearly every game show, soap opera, situation comedy, prime time drama

and movie featuring the phrase. There is even an art in saying “Oh, My God!” just right. The trick seems to be to say it, not loud or quick, but to draw it out and let the “God” trail off. This is a sure fire device, guaranteed to get a laugh and spice up one’s dialogue.

“Oh, My God!” has become a faddish and clever saying. It is used to register alarm, surprise, delight, dismay, sarcasm, and almost every kind of response. Some people, including us, find the phrase offensive. And some, we are sure, cannot imagine why. Why does it grate so upon our ears?

It will profit us to consider the faith and devotion manifested by men and women from the long ago; several of these are singled out and presented as examples for Christians today (Hebrews 11). Their insistence on reverence and humility while addressing Deity—and even when talking about Jehovah—stands in marked contrast to the casual and offhand manner prevalent today. Abraham, for example, approached God with these words: “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27). Jacob marked each place that the Lord spoke to him with a stone or an altar, recognizing that even the plot of ground was sacred because the Lord had revealed Himself there (cf. Genesis 28:17). It is impossible to imagine the patriarchs of old referring to God in a flippant and casual manner.

Although we are not under the Law of Moses today (John 1:17), we worship and serve the same God revealed to the Hebrew fathers. The lawgiver of Israel, Moses, was instructed to take off his shoes in the presence of God because “the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Moses was so overwhelmed by the knowledge that he stood before God that he “hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (verse 6). This posture of godly fear and awe was shown by Peter before Jesus

(Luke 5:8) and the apostle John on Patmos (Revelation 1:17).

The first three of the Ten Commandments given to Israel concern the manner in which His people were to esteem Jehovah God. They were not to have any other god before Him, and were not to build an image or likeness of Deity to rival His own majesty. And, “thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). The word “vain” is translated from a Hebrew word meaning “to be waste” and signifies “that which is empty, vain and nugatory, for which there is no occasion.” Israel was forbidden to “swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God” (Leviticus 19:12). God’s people were taught that the name of the Lord God was holy and not to be made common!

The Jews sought to protect and preserve the sacredness of God’s name. Indeed, in the centuries before the birth of Jesus they decided to stop pronouncing it altogether lest its usage become common and ordinary. When the Scriptures were read the word *adonai* (“Lord”) was substituted for the Hebrew tetragram YHWH (Yahweh, or Jehovah). The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (280-130 B.C.) rendered the sacred name *kurios* (“Lord”). The original pronunciation of YHWH is unknown. While we may lament this casualty of Jewish zealousness, we must admire the veneration God’s people held for even the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Ought Christians today, who are to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28), show less respect and regard for our Heavenly Father?

“Oh, My God!” is unquestionably and unmistakably offensive. It is a trivial and vulgar use of His holy and reverend name (Psalm 111:9). “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name” (Psalm 29:2). His name is far too holy to be invoked at the sight of a messy room or foolish behavior. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psalm 34:3).

“Oh, My God!” goes beyond such ditties as “Goodness!” or “Gracious!” or “Gee!” and other euphemisms whose divine connection may not be realized until their obscure origin and etymology is looked up in a reference dictionary. “Oh, My God!” is not a euphemism at all! Unlike “Gosh!” or “Golly!” no effort is made to

disguise the reference to God. If "Oh, My God!" is not a vain usage of God's name, what in the world is?

Our speech reflects our innermost thoughts and attitudes. Let us not be guilty of showing an empty and low regard for the Most High, however popular and acceptable "Oh, My God!" may be.

"And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezekiel 44:23).—1402 West Pikes Peak Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80904

REVERENCE GOD'S NAME

This excellent article was taken from *The Gleaner*, bulletin of the church in Greenfield, TN (Feb. 19, 1987). It is still as timely and important today as ever.

It is wrong to use God's holy name in a careless, loose or flippant manner (Psalm 111:9). The vulgar use of God's Holy name as discussed in brother Miller's article is a problem, even among young people in the Lord's church. Let us honor God's name in word and in deed.—*Editor*

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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist

ARE YOU PECULIAR?

Bob Bauer

Individuals who have no religious background or interest may often look at Christians as peculiar. This is not entirely untrue. God declares through the apostle Peter that Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9, KJV). The question is, are God and the ungodly referring to the same thing when calling us peculiar?

When the ungodly refer to us as being peculiar they are usually implying that we are different. That is not totally without merit for we should be different than those who have no religious background or interest. We should look differently in that our dress is always modest (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4). We should act differently in that we should treat others as we desire to be treated and not as they treat us (Matthew 7:12), and we should be living godly lives (Titus 2:12). We should talk differently in that our words are not words of profanity, gossip, or backbiting but words that are "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6), of a goodly influence and preserving nature.

However, when God calls us "peculiar" he means something somewhat different. The word translated "peculiar" in the King James Version literally means purchased possession (cf. Ephesians 1:13-14). How are Christians purchased possessions? Mark 16:16 teaches that a baptized believer shall be saved. Acts 2:47 teaches that the saved make up the church of our Lord and Acts 20:28 teaches that Christ purchased the church with His blood. Therefore, since a baptized believer is added by the Lord to the church and the church was purchased by Christ's blood, then Christians are purchased possessions. When God refers to us a peculiar people He is referring to those who are owned by him. Thus Paul's referring to himself as a bondservant (slave) of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:1) and Peter referring to the brethren as bondservants of God (1 Peter 2:16) can also carry the idea of being God's purchased possessions, His slaves.

Paul states that as a "peculiar people" we are to be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Good works are those that glorify God, that draw ourselves and others closer to God, and that would help us overcome

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THE KIND OF PREACHING NEEDED TODAY

H. Leo Boles (1874-1946)



The kind of preaching that we need today is just the kind that Jesus and the apostles gave to the world. The churches of Christ were established and guided in their work and worship in the first century by the preaching that we have recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. Churches were established by this kind of preaching

in cities, villages and countries. They were developed and fulfilled their mission under the guidance of the instruction given us in the New Testament. They were successful then under such preaching, and can be today under such preaching. In fact, no church can fulfill its mission on earth and glorify God, except it follow the instruction given the early churches. Just what is needed for churches today may be found in what was needed for the churches then. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles and evangelists in giving to the churches then what was needed.

The public preaching today and the public teaching today must be plain, positive, direct and Scriptural. All public preaching and teaching of the gospel should be done in humility and reverence for God's truth, and should be given in kindness and in earnestness. No hypocrite can preach the truth of God with the power and persuasion that should ever accompany the preaching of the gospel. Mere generalities and negative preaching will not meet the requirements of this age or any other age. The history of all successful gospel preachers bears witness that they were in earnest and clothed in humility in proclaiming the gospel to the lost and in edifying the saints of God. This age needs, and the churches of Christ should demand, that the simple truths and principles of the New Testament be preached. Neither the world nor the church needs rhetorical sentimentalities nor oratorical sermonettes. The preaching should be direct and should meet the needs of the hearers. There should be no rehash of slavish repetition of the sermons of some famous evangelist or preacher of

worldly renown. The preacher should be "hidden behind the cross," and his sermons should come from his heart and life as he has drawn them from the New Testament teaching. The churches do not need sanctified dullness, nor very learned dissertations, nor scientific smatterings, nor elocutionary artifices. No church can thrive spiritually upon such food, and truly no sinner can be converted to Christ by such preaching.

Not only should the preaching be simple and direct and positive, but it should instruct, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. The preacher should "preach the word: be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). The preacher should adjust his own life with the truth of God, and then his reproofs and exhortations will have greater force. No one need think that he can preach the gospel as it was done in the first century without rebuking sin. The preacher who is afraid to rebuke sin in the spirit of Christ is unworthy to be called a "preacher of the gospel." The preacher who is too cowardly to rebuke sin as God's Book does is unworthy to be classed as a preacher of the gospel. *The public preacher and teacher of the gospel must rebuke sin.* This should be done in love and gentleness, but it should be done with firmness and positiveness. The world needs such bold and heroic preaching as will rebuke sin even in high places, and all who are guilty of public and popular sins. Much preaching today is done in such generalities and is so pointless and timid that it has lost its power. Nothing will stir the churches and shake the world but *positive preaching*. When preaching is not antagonistic to sin and is popular with the world, we may know that it will accomplish but little good. There should be no timid apology offered for the rebuking of sin in the world or in the church. The power and majesty and holiness of the truth of God demand that it be preached in such a way as to rebuke elders, preachers, the wealthy, the poor, and every class that may be guilty of sin. No preacher can preach the gospel as it should be preached unless he

preaches because his heart is in the work, and not “for filthy lucre’s sake, but of a ready mind.”

There is need at the present time for preaching that will correct all the evils in the church and point sinners “to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” The preaching needed today should encourage the cultivation of personal holiness and consecration to God. It should encourage all church members to be earnest, prayerful students of the Bible and willing to sacrifice and serve in the name of Christ as opportunity is offered them. The preaching that is needed today should stimulate liberal giving and freewill offering to support the work of the church. No preacher of the gospel should hold back the stern and stubborn truths of the gospel which teach God’s people to be liberal with their means and to “honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase” (Proverbs 3:9). The preaching needed today should teach God’s people to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. If such preaching is done, there will be a revival in church activities and a larger increase in additions to the church.—*Gospel Advocate*, March 31, 1932, page 402. (Photo from *Gospel Advocate* “Centennial Volume,” Gospel Advocate Company, 1956. Used by permission)

“THE BIBLE DOES NOT CONDEMN IT”

Robert L. Moss

The Bible enables us to know what is right and what is wrong. It is written so that “the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). Yet there are those who falsely assume that some things are right based upon the grounds that the Bible does not state that it is wrong.

One must understand that all wrong acts are not individually named in the scriptures. The following are some examples of how the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches by command, as seen in Matthew 28:18ff when the Lord gave the commission. The Bible teaches by direct statement, as is seen in the Lord’s words concerning salvation in Mark 16:16. The Bible teaches by example, as is seen

concerning the partaking of the Lord’s Supper by the church (Acts 20:7). The Bible uses the law of exclusion in teaching. Every passage in the New Testament dealing with the church and its music says sing. This then excludes any and all other types of music. The Bible teaches by implication. The Bible does not state that Lot went down into Egypt, yet we know that Lot went down into Egypt. It is a necessary inference drawn from the fact that the Bible states that Lot came up out of Egypt (Genesis 13:1). Remember man cannot infer what God has not implied.

The Bible indeed is a book that contains commands, instructions, etc., yet one must realize that it is a book of principles. Let us note for example, Galatians 5:19-21. This passage tells us of the “works of the flesh.” A list is given naming such works. The passage also states that those who “do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” At the end of the list of the works of the flesh the Bible has the words “and such like.” We can know from this that the list is not complete in listing every work of the flesh. How then can one know what else is considered a work of the flesh? The answer is; one must study the Bible, become a spiritually minded person (1 Corinthians 2:14-16) and properly apply the principles that are found therein.

We must not fail to recognize how the Bible teaches as well as what it teaches. Let us seek diligently to rightly divide God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Whatever time is necessary, whatever we have to give up in this life, it is most necessary that we learn what God’s will is for us as revealed in His Word.—1037 West South Street, Neosho, MO 64850-2093

ARE YOU PECULIAR?
Continued from page 11

wickedness.

The Christian should be peculiar in that he is different from the ungodly. He is peculiar in that He has been bought by the blood of Christ. He must be peculiar in that he is zealous in doing good. The question to ask ourselves is “Am I peculiar?”—125 NW Ave D, Belle Glade, FL 33430





THE SHORTEST ROAD TO HELL

Hebrews 2:1-3

M. W. Kiser



Our Saviour taught that there not only is a hell; but that the majority of mankind travels upon the broad way leading to destruction. The way of the transgressor is hard; and even false teachers labor hard for their causes. This text has the easiest answer to the question, "What must I do to be lost?" Here we see:

I. THE UNSPEAKABLE POSSESSION. "...so great salvation..."

- A. There have been other "salvations" in the past: Noah and the Israelites.
- B. This salvation pertains to the deliverance of the soul from sin.
 - 1. From the penalty of sin. Once looking at hell, now heaven!
 - 2. From the power of sin. Once a servant of sin, now (Romans 6:17-18).
 - 3. From the presence of sin. Now...but then! (Revelation 21:3-4, 21).
- C. Five reasons why it is "so great:"
 - 1. Perfect in it's revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2).
 - 2. Universal in it's scope (Mark 16:15-16).
 - 3. Dear in it's cost (Philippians 2:5-9; Matthew 26:28).
 - 4. Eternal in it's nature (Hebrews 5:8-9).
 - 5. Powerful in it's effect (Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 8:12).

II. THE UNDESIRABLE POSSIBILITY. "...if we neglect..."

- A. Neglect brings about the same results as wilful disobedience. Compare the fate as follows (Hebrews 2:2; 10:26; Matthew 25:30, 41; Revelation 20:14f; 21:8).

B. Five ways in which the great salvation can be neglected:

- 1. Some neglect to secure it (Acts 24:25; 2:37-41).
- 2. Some neglect to strengthen it (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:32).
- 3. Some neglect to support it (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- 4. Some neglect to show it (Matthew 5:13-16).
- 5. Some neglect to share it (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15).

C. Why would anyone neglect such a wonderful thing as salvation?

- 1. They have underestimated its worth.
- 2. They have disregarded their personal need.
- 3. They are indifferent toward the whole subject of salvation.
- 4. They have a strong love for the world.
- 5. They think they have plenty of time left to consider the matter.

III. THE UNRECKONABLE PROBLEM. "How shall we escape...?"

- A. Others did not escape who neglected much less! (Hebrews 2:2; 10:26).
- B. I know of no answer to this question in nature or the Bible!!!
 - 1. Some have suggested univeralism.
 - 2. Some have come up with a "no hell" theory.
 - 3. Some believe there will surely be a "second chance."
 - 4. Some teach "reincarnation."
 - 5. Some evidently think they can talk their way out! (Matthew 7:21-23).
- C. Now, what do you say? How will You escape

if You neglect it?

1. How do you expect to escape the wages of sin? (Romans 6:23).
2. How do you expect to escape the effect of a hardened heart?
3. How do you expect to escape having sinned against light?
4. How do you expect to escape death and the judgment? (Hebrews 9:27).
5. How do you expect to escape the torments of hell? (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

There are several questions we cannot answer. How deep is the bottomless pit? How wide is space? How long is eternity? But this one is most personal! Neglect is more serious than rejection. Those who reject may think about it more; but those who reject are letting opportunity slip on by —104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

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THE SHEPHERD OF THE PSALM

William Boyd



Shortly after the bombing of the World Trade Center the president addressed the nation from the White House and quoted from the Twenty-third Psalm, "Though I go through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." It is well that he did so because the Twenty-third Psalm is one of the best known and most loved pieces of religious literature in all the world. A. G. Freed said, "For lofty sentiment, sublime thought, and striking imagery this psalm is unsurpassed. The authorized version of this psalm, given to us in the Golden Age of English Literature, will live as long as the English tongue is spoken."¹

This is the Psalm of the Shepherd. There is much in the Bible about shepherds. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds. Jacob stood before Pharaoh and said, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers" (Genesis 47:3). Moses was a shepherd on the back side of the wilderness for forty years. On the night of our Lord's birth angels appeared and sang to shepherds. When Samuel sought David to anoint him king his father said, "behold, he keepeth the sheep" (1 Samuel 16:11). It was this David, "the sweet singer of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1), who wrote this Psalm.

David was a prophet (Acts 2:30) and he wrote many things about his coming Lord. Nathan was a prophet and he said to David, "When thy days be fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12). Ezekiel was a prophet and he said to Israel, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23). Matthew was an apostle and in the first verse of the New Testament he wrote of "Jesus Christ, the son of David" (Matthew 1:1).

The New Testament affirms that the son of David is the good shepherd. Every statement concerning the shepherd in the Twenty-third Psalm has its equivalent in the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ. If space would permit I could provide chapter and verse to prove it. In

Hebrews 13:20 Jesus is called, "that great shepherd of the sheep." In 1 Peter 5:4, he is "the chief Shepherd." In 1 Peter 2:25 he is, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Jesus himself said in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd."

The New Testament also affirms that the church of Christ is his flock. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Our Lord told us there is "one fold, and one shepherd," (John 10:16); therefore there is one church. To be in the one fold, you must be in the one church. The last two verses of the Twenty-third Psalm takes us from the sheep fold to a seat at a table of blessings in the house of God, and there too we see God's church (Consider Ephesians 1:3; 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15; John 14:1-3).

The Twenty-third Psalm continues to bring solace and strength to all who read it for assurance of God's loving care, but more specifically, to the readers of the New Testament, the Twenty-third Psalm describes the relationship between Christ and the members of his church. "My sheep hear my voice," the savior said, "and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).—12900 Southridge Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212

ENDNOTES

¹Freed, Arvy Glenn, *Sermons, Chapel Talks And Debates*, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, Tennessee, 1950 ("The Shepherd Hymn" page 129)

DON'T SMOKE - DON'T DRINK

In the movie *John Q*, the character played by Denzel Washington is about to sacrifice himself so that his son might live. As John Q is telling his dying young son what he expects of him he said, "Don't smoke." I was waiting for him to say, "Don't drink." He didn't say it.

The twin vices of smoking and drinking (alcoholic beverages) were once commonly condemned in the same breath. Nowadays, smoking is cursed by the politically correct. They are right to condemn smoking but are inconsistent with their silence on deadly and sinful alcohol. Please read Wayne Jackson's article on page 3.—*Editor*