

TRUTH

The Abundant Life

Walton Weaver

A brother once defined life as the time between birth and death. In more precise terms he said it is “the series of experiences in the existence of a human being.”

Defined in this way time becomes one of the most important things a person possesses. Benjamin Franklin asked, “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.”

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.
— Henry W. Longfellow

What should a man live for? Our choices become important not only because we are dealing with our immortal souls, but because time for every man is so short; life is brief at best. The brevity of life is what led James to ask, “What is your life?” (Jas. 4:14). Man does not know what will happen tomorrow. Will he live and be able to do this or that? James says man does not know, so he ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that” (Jas. 4:15). Man must use his time now, and he must use it wisely (Eph. 5:15), to prepare for eternity.

The person in the world does not live “in view of eternity.” His life is on a different plain than that of the Christian. Those who would be Jesus’ disciples are challenged to consider, “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (Matt. 6:25). The obvious answer to those who have considered this matter “in view of eternity” is, “yes,” life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Life has a deeper meaning than “things”; we do more than “eat, and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32), because we know that at the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven we shall be raised (1 Cor. 15:35-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18), and after this the judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). In view of the resurrection and the judgment, life is more than food and clothing. We must do more with life than make a living; we must make something of our lives.

Christians are ordinary people living extraordinary lives. The Christian must never think that God is looking for him to be “average”; the word God uses to describe our lives is the word “abundant.”

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Those who have the abundant life are living

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*“And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free”
(John 8:32).*

Vol. XLVI
No. 15
August 1, 2002



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— Subscription Rates —

\$22.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$24.00

— Bulk Rates —

\$1.50 per subscription per month

Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis001@cs.com. All business matters should be addressed to O.C. Birdwell, Jr. who serves as Executive Vice-President for the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He is available by phone at 1-800-633-3216 or by mail at P.O. Box 858, Athens, AL 35611.

Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

A Movement Gathers Steam

Mike Willis

Recently the report came that the 2002 edition of the *Royal Palm*, the yearly annual at Florida College, is dedicated to Shane Scott, former teacher at Florida College. As our readers may remember, brother Scott was the focus of considerable attention in the last couple of years because he took a non-literal interpretation of the creation account. (One keeps asking himself why long periods of time are important for the days of creation in the thinking of brother Scott and those who agree with him. What is occurring during these millions of years that is so necessary? Are the long periods of time necessary for some evolutionary process to occur? If not, why are the long periods of time necessary?) When made aware of brother Scott's position on creation, the Bible faculty at Florida College rose to his defense, stating that brother Scott's position on creation did not warrant terminating him as a teacher. Despite brethren's alarm, Florida College used brother Scott as a teacher in 2000-01. For whatever reason, the college chose not to renew his contract for 2001-02. However, the student body for 2001-02 chose to dedicate the annual to brother Scott. Brother Harry Osborne reported on the dedication of the year book as follows:



Please excuse this general post, but it is the most efficient way to convey a message I believe to be of interest to you. If you would like to send it to others, please feel free to do so. The purpose of this post is two-fold: (a) to state the facts concerning an event at Florida College and (b) to relate a word of caution about incorrect implications which could come from the event.

First, the yearbook at Florida College, the *Royal Palm*, was unveiled last Thursday in chapel. It was dedicated to Shane Scott. That dedication was chosen by the students who produce the annual, not the administration of the school. To the best of my knowledge, Colly Caldwell was totally surprised and blindsided by the choice. So was Buddy Payne. The college advisor for the *Royal Palm* is Fred Thompson and he did not share with Colly or Buddy the choice of the dedication until the annual had already been printed, as I understand it. When the dedication was made, a few faculty members and staff personnel silently walked out of the auditorium. The students at Florida College greeted the dedication to Shane with excitement as it was reported to me.

Second, my repeated point that Colly and Buddy did not make this decision or agree with it was made for a reason. It would be easy to hear the news of the dedication and assume that the college was showing tacit support for Shane.

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Whose Land Is It?

Connie W. Adams

The foreign policy of the United States toward Israel ever since the time of Woodrow Wilson has been Zionism — the notion that Israel as a nation is entitled to Palestine by divine right. This policy has been furthered by dispensationalists and premillennialists who believe that the land promises God made to Abraham have yet to be fulfilled. They connect these promises with events associated with the coming of the Lord and the establishment of an earthly kingdom of Christ centered in Jerusalem. The popular press has bought into the idea that the land is theirs by divine right.

The Promise to Abraham

God promised Abraham that he would make a great nation out of him and that he would give to that nation the land of Canaan as their possession “from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18). This promise was to be kept after their bondage in Egypt when “the iniquity of the Amorite was full” (Gen. 15:13-16). Moses delivered them from their bondage and upon his death Joshua led the people into the land of promise. Before he died he called the elders together and spoke of how the land had been divided by lot to the different tribes and concluded by saying, “There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Josh. 21:45). He warned them against intermarriage with the nations and against idolatry and promised them that if they turned aside to worship other gods they would “perish from off the good land which the Lord your God hath given you” (Josh. 23:11-16).

Some have contended that while God in a sense gave them the land, that the larger land promise (from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates) was never fulfilled. But Solomon reigned over land with those very dimensions, land which had been subdued during the reign of his father, David. “And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 9:26). The land promise was fulfilled.

Keeping the Land Conditional

Joshua made clear that, by turning away from God, they would “perish” or “be destroyed from off the land which God had given them.” The people promised to cleave to the Lord but soon forgot. After the generation of Joshua, there arose a generation which “knew not the Lord.” They drifted toward the gods of the nations around them. After Solomon died, the kingdom divided with ten tribes going after Jeroboam and two tribes loyal to Rehoboam. So then we had the kingdoms of Israel (ten tribes) and the kingdom of Judah (two tribes). Israel quickly plunged into idolatry. God sent prophets to warn

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them and call them to repentance. When all that failed, God allowed the Assyrians to conquer Samaria and subjugate the people and scatter them over the Assyrian Empire. A little over one hundred years later, Judah was conquered by the Babylonians and the 70 years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (25:11; 29:10) came to pass. They did not meet the conditions and God scattered them from the land as he had warned. That fulfilled the second land promise.

The Return of a Remnant

Jeremiah said, “For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jer. 29:10). There were other promises in Isaiah and Ezekiel of the return of “a remnant.” God never did promise to bring all the people back, only a remnant. When the New Testament period began and down to this day, Jews are scattered over the globe. But after the 70 years ended of which Jeremiah wrote, God stirred up the heart of Cyrus of Persia (which had by then conquered the Babylonians) to let the people who wanted to do so, return to their land and rebuild the temple. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all dealt with the remnant who returned to the land. The Old Testament history ends with them in the land. It is out of that remnant that Jesus was born to “bless all nations” (Gen. 12:3)

Folks, that exhausts the land promises. Every one was fulfilled and there are no more land promises to be fulfilled at some future time. With the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the divine judgment was pronounced upon the nation which rejected its own Messiah and now the people of Israel have no more claim to the land than anyone else. The peace and security of the world would be greatly served if our leaders and other world leaders would stop clinging to the mistaken idea that Israel is still entitled to that land by divine decree and stop catering to the dispensationalists.

The world would be a more peaceful place. No, I don’t believe Palestinians should blow up Israelis. Yes, I believe that they have a right to defend themselves. But whatever happens in that land as to who controls it, just remember that none of that has anything to do with Bible prophesy. Every promise God made about the nation of Israel and the land of Palestine, he has kept. The restoration prophesies were fulfilled in the returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. In fact the first four verses of Ezra say,

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it in writing, saying Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is at Jerusalem. and whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).

Jesus Christ is the hope of Israel. The gospel is “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16-17). Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles so that all might have peace in him (Eph. 2:14-17). That is how nations beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:2-4). Until that is learned, violence will continue.

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The Creation Account: Literal or Non-Literal?

Harry Osborne

The only way Israel could have understood the creation account was as a sequential series of events occurring on literal, consecutive days. Any other view would have denied the inspired commentary of the creation account as given by Moses.

While denying the animate creation evolved from amoeba to man, some “non-institutional” brethren now teach that the inanimate creation evolved from a God-guided “Big Bang” over billions of years. They affirm that the Earth came into being a few billion years later after a cooling and condensing process following the “Big Bang.” They say the newly formed Earth took a few billion more years to cool off, clear its atmosphere and reach “stability” (their choice of words, not mine).

They affirm that all of these natural changes over billions of years were necessary before the Earth was ready for the next action by God. According to their view, God acted, then the Earth took long periods to “stabilize” through changes explained more by naturalism than by miraculous power, and the process repeated for billions of years.

These brethren also maintain that life was set in place intermittently over vast stretches of time rather than between days three and six as taught in Scripture (Gen. 1:9-31). Finally, after billions of years and much closer to our *end* of time than the *beginning of creation*, these brethren affirm that God created man.

The purpose of this article is to

seek the divine commentary of God’s word as it declares how God intended the creation account to be understood. Was it to be taken *literally* (as factual history) or *non-literally* (as a fictional, literary device)?

Exodus 20:9-11

Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God . . . for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

This passage is unambiguous. The inspired writer affirms it was not merely the living things of the Earth that were created in six days, but also the heavens, the earth and the sea. How should “day” be defined in this passage? As millions or billions of years? The seven days of the beginning week are presented as parallel to the seven days of a normal week for the Israelites. The kind of “day” in which God acted in creation is the same kind of “day” he hallowed. Did God hallow a period of millions or billions of years as a figurative sabbath? No, he hallowed a regular, literal day — the last in a series of seven consecutive, literal days. Without the creation narrative there is no explanation for the week as a measurement of time or the sabbath as a day of rest.

Redefining the days of creation to mean millions of years undermines both of these teachings.

The only way Israel could have understood the creation account was as a *sequential* series of events occurring on *literal, consecutive days*. Any other view would have denied the inspired commentary of the creation account as given by Moses. If one “interprets” the days as non-sequential, non-consecutive and non-literal days, he does violence to the text and denies the plain statements of God. There simply is no room for the “Big Bang” theory in God’s commentary of the creation account.

Exodus 31:15-17

Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Jehovah: whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death... for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Again, the beginning week is parallel as being the same in type and length as that experienced by Israel. Did it matter if they “interpreted” it as non-literal? Absolutely! An Israelite who interpreted the days as non-literal and failed to rest on the literal seventh day was put to death. The life of the original recipients depended upon a literal interpretation of the *days* under consideration.

Notice also *what* the text says was “made” in that period: “in six days Jehovah made *heaven and earth*.” God’s commentary on Genesis 1 and 2 denies that the Earth and our universe were formed billions of years before the time life was created. Scripture affirms the Earth and our universe were made in six days. Any theory that affirms the Earth, planets, sun and stars were formed by billions of years of cosmic or stellar evolution ~~conflicting with the God’s word~~ is in direct

Psalm 33:6-9

By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: He layeth up the deeps in store-houses. Let all the earth fear Jehovah: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

God’s power as manifested in creation is the focus of this passage. When God *spoke*, it was *done* and *stood fast*. How could this passage be harmonized with an interpretation of the creation account which holds that God spoke to begin a process that took millions or billions or years to “stabilize” into the form ultimately reached? It cannot! God commanded the creation of the world by speaking it into existence (Ps. 148:1-5). In affirming the creative power of the Son, he is called “the Word,” not the Bang, but “the Word” (John 1:1-3). Why? Because the world was created by means of him speaking it into instantaneous existence in fully matured form. If it actually took billions of years for the heavens and Earth to stabilize after God spoke, the passage gives a false confidence in the power of God’s word. Those so affirming are actually denying the truth and accuracy of inspired Scripture.

Yet, some of our brethren now tell us that when God spoke into existence the heavens and the Earth, he actually caused the “Big Bang” to take place 15 to 20 billion years ago which finally resulted in the formation of the Earth some 4.5 billion years ago. The Psalmist said, “For He spake, and it was *done*: He commanded and it *stood fast*.” Yet some brethren would have it read, “For He spake, and it was *begun*: He commanded and it *started to stabilize*.” Can you see the difference between: he spoke “and it was *done*” and he spoke “and it was *begun*”? If so, then you understand the difference between the word of God and the word

If we speak as the oracles of God,

where do we find the passage that affirms the “Big Bang” (1 Pet. 4:11)? When one adds the “Big Bang” to the creation account, has he not gone onward beyond the doctrine of Christ and failed to bring the true doctrine (2 John 9-11)?

Hebrews 4:3

For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, “As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest:” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Clearly, the inspired writer of Hebrews agreed with the inspired psalmist in noting that the creative works of God were “*finished from the foundation of the world*.” Such could not have been said if God began the work of creating the physical Earth at the foundation of the world, but finally finished that work billions of years thereafter. There is a vast difference between “finished from the foundation of the world” and “finished after billions of years of natural change (evolution).”

Mark 10:6 and Matthew 19:4-6

In answering a question asked by the Pharisees about the lawful cause for putting away, Jesus referred them back to the origin of marriage with Adam and Eve. Jesus affirmed, “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female” (Matt. 19:4, KJV). Some of our brethren claim this refers to the beginning of marriage or of man, coming billions of years after the beginning of creation. However, the parallel account of Mark 10:6 answers that quibble by saying, “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.”

If our non-literal advocates are correct, man and woman were brought on the scene much closer to our *end* of time than the *beginning*. Again, the interpretation forced on the Bible by these brethren does not harmonize with other biblical references back to creation. Bert Thompson made the

following point in commenting on the same passage:

In this context, there is additional information that should be considered as well. For example, concerning Adam and Eve, Jesus declared: “But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them” (Mark 10:6; cf. Matthew 19:4). Christ thus dates the first humans from the creation week. The Greek word for “beginning” is *arche*, and is used of “absolute, denoting the beginning of the world and of its history, the beginning of creation.” The word in the Greek for “creation” is *ktiseos*, and denotes “the sum-total of what God has created” (Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Dictionary of New Testament Greek*, 113, 114, 381, emp. in orig.).

Unquestionably, then, Jesus placed the first humans at the dawn of creation. To reject this truth, one must contend that: (a) Christ knew the Universe was in existence billions of years before man, but, accommodating himself to the ignorance of his age, deliberately misrepresented the situation; or (b) The Lord, living in pre-scientific times, was uninformed about the matter (despite the fact that he was there as Creator — Colossians 1:16). Either of these allegations is blasphemous (Thompson, *Creation Compromises* 179).

Conclusion

Other passages could be addressed regarding the issue as well. However, these are sufficient to show that the biblical writers looking back on the creation account took it as a literal statement that God created heaven, earth and all therein in six literal, consecutive days with man’s creation taking place in that beginning week. The Bible record leaves no room for the “Big Bang” followed by billions of years.

When the advocates of such theories are pressed as to what they believe happened in those billions of years, their true nature emerges. *They advocate an evolutionary explanation for the Earth and our physical universe.* They seek to avoid the word “evolution” and cry, “Misrepresentation!” when so accused. Yet, they are defending evolutionary changes over those billions of years they add to the Bible account. If no evolution took place in those billions of years,

why do they want them? Why not call such a view what it is — *theistic evolution*? Yet, those so affirming say they do not believe in “theistic evolution,” but in “progressive creationism.”

This writer is not the only one to state the correlation between “theistic evolution” and “progressive creationism.” In the following excerpt from *Creation Compromises* (193), Bert Thompson, a well-respected voice on apologetics among institutional brethren, made the same point and quoted Richard Niessen, an evangelical, who concurred:

Is progressive creationism theistic evolution? Both call in God to start creation. Both accept evolution (in varying amounts). Both accept the validity of the geologic age system. Both postulate an old Earth. Where is the difference, except that progressive creationism allows God “a little more to do in the system”? Both systems put God (*theos*) and evolution together. By any other standard that’s *theistic evolution*. As Niessen has noted:

It is currently fashionable for theistic evolutionists to go by the name “Progressive Creationists” in order to avoid the popular resentment in Christian circles against evolution and its non-theistic orientation. In practice, however, both views are essentially the same. The difference merely concerns the amount of God’s intervention within the evolutionary process (16).



The “Big Bang” theory and billions of years of natural change to “stabilize” the Earth just do not mesh with the creation account. The Scripture affirms that God created “heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” as a fully functional and matured system in six literal, consecutive days at “the beginning of creation.” Who will you believe?

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Jesus expects us to serve him all the time. If one serves only when it is convenient and pleasant, he has not denied himself; neither is he the Lord's disciple.

The Meaning of Discipleship

Richie Thetford

Before we can ever hope to be an effective Christian, husband, father, or leader in the Lord's church we must understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. A disciple is defined as "a pupil or follower of any teacher or school; a follower of Jesus" (Webster). A Christian learns that he must forsake everything and every person and put Christ *first* in his life. To forsake is to "Give up; renounce; to leave; abandon; desert" (Webster). Those unwilling to do so, will not enter into heaven and will never become the leader and servant that Jesus wants them to be. When we grasp the true meaning of discipleship and the importance of *following Christ* then we will become an effective leader and servant in his kingdom.

Many are not able to grasp the true meaning of discipleship and as a result find themselves trying to serve God and at the same time trying to conform to society. Let us understand the truth of Jesus' words as he said: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt 6:24).

Jesus Calls Us

Jesus appeals to all mankind to come unto him. His words are tender and sweet as he pleads "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). As a result of this invitation, many follow him, seeking to become his disciples. Jesus warns that one cannot be his disciples *unless* he first counts the cost. He must take a stand for Jesus above all else! Notice from the following verses the cost one must pay to be a true disciple of Jesus:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came

not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:34-39).

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 16:24-25).

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:57-62).

One can see from these Scriptures that the Lord wanted all to follow him, but they first had to count the cost of doing so. If one is not willing to be *totally* committed to Jesus, he cannot be one of his disciples! By his own life, Jesus demonstrated what it meant to be a follower and to deny self (John 7:16; 17:4).

For over fifty years now the Lord's people have preached unity and practiced division. We did not, have not, and do not practice what we preach.

Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (9)

Bill Cavender

Each and every genuine and true, and/or pseudo and pretender preacher, proposing to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, that I know of, preaches *unity* of true believers in Jesus. This “unity” of believers is, and can be, accomplished only by true faith in and obedience to the word of God, which is the New Testament, God’s will for us today.

It is the desire and will of our Lord and Savior that all who believe in him be united. He said (in the upper room with his eleven apostles, less than twelve hours before he was crucified),

Neither pray I for these (the apostles) alone, but for them also (all believers for all time) which shall believe on me

through their word; That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

Approximately six months earlier he had said,

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one

A True Disciple Is One Who Continues in His Word

Jesus expects us to serve him all the time. If one serves only when it is convenient and pleasant, he has not denied himself; neither is he the Lord’s disciple. To be his disciple one must *remain* in his word. Jesus said: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Paul reveals that it was for this that Jesus died, so that those of us who “live” as a result of his death might stop living for our own pleasure, but for the pleasure of him who died on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:15). We are exhorted to continue in the faith and as a result will encounter tribulation; but all is worthwhile as we strive for the everlasting kingdom (Acts 14:22; Rev 2:10)!

A disciple of Christ will therefore study his Bible daily and desire to come to a full knowledge of the truth and his teacher. Are we like our teacher? If so, then be determined right now to follow Jesus. If we do, we can have peace through his word which says: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

10 Sunblest Ct., Fishers, Indiana 46038 Richie@Thetford-country.com

fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:14-18).

The Holy Spirit-guided apostles of Jesus understood this doctrine, this teaching regarding the *unity* of all true believers. Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but there ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” “For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” “Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 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. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:11; 12:13, 27; Gal. 3:26-29).

The apostle to the Gentiles further wrote:

But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off (Gentiles) are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both (Gentiles and Jews) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; And came and preached peace to you which were afar off (Gentiles), and to them that were nigh (Jews). For through him we both (Gentiles and Jews — and male and female, black and white, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, known and unknown, all races and classes of people, BC) have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:13-18).

He continued, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

Jesus is the head of this body of saved, cleansed, redeemed, and justified people, of every kindred, nation, tongue, and clime (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1:30; Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 14:6). “And gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18-24). “There is one body” which is the church, of which Jesus himself is the builder and the head (Eph. 4:4-6; Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 12:4-5). It is to this church, this body of saved and redeemed obedient believers, and this one alone, that God adds truly believing, penitent, immersed believers (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). There is *one* Savior, *one* revelator, *one* gospel, *one* baptism, *one* church, *one* hope, *one* God and Father who planned it all, is above all, and in all who believe (Eph. 4:4-6) .

All truly obedient believers, preachers, elders, deacons, brethren, will believe the above Scriptures. We will preach *unity* and we will practice *unity*. We will endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3). We will not introduce any doctrine, any opinion, any theory, any tidbit of our human wisdom into our preaching, among our brethren and amongst the lost to whom we preach, which will confuse, alienate, divide, becloud God’s truth, and engender strife. Only the original, pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ, preached and taught in its uniqueness, simplicity, plainness, and loveliness, will save the souls of sinners, build and root and ground them in faith, and produce the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” If we are going to do God’s work in a sinful world, we will have to do it God’s way, with God’s word. Nothing else will bring about the results for which our Lord prayed (John 17:20-21), and for which he died (Eph. 2:13-18). You cannot substitute for, nor improve upon, the message, means and methods of Jesus Christ and his apostles who went about doing good and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Every human “improvement” to God’s gospel and his ways of doing his work in the world is destined to utter and ultimate failure and disappointment. “If any man speak, let him, speak as the oracles of God. . . . Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth. . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. . . . But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 4:11; 1:22-25).

For over fifty years now the Lord’s people have preached unity and practiced division. We did not, have not, and do not practice what we preach. We have appealed to the sectarian and denominational religious world about us to give up their man-made, human doctrines, names, and churches, and embrace the New Testament as their guide, their rule of faith and practice, in all matters religious. This appeal is correct and scriptural, yet it has gone unheeded and little or no attention has been paid to us and to our pleas. There are reasons for this rejection: (1) We have so little contact with these vast numbers of people in error and they are unaware of us and what we say and teach. (2) They, for the most part, are not a “Bible-oriented” people, are not encouraged to read and study the Bible, and do

not realize that “unity of believers” is the will of God and the prayer of Jesus. (3) The vast majority of people in the world, and people claiming to believe in Jesus as Lord, are convinced that any doctrine, practice, worship, and church is approved of God, as long as the adherents are honest and sincere; (4) Most sincere religious people are governed by emotions, feelings, and imagined direct operations of the Spirit instead of the word of God and what the Spirit says in the Testament. (5) Most folks just do not care about their souls and about the will of God. They are satisfied with their religion, or no religion, not wanting to be bothered or concerned about what Jesus said and what we might earnestly desire to tell them. “Eternity” is not in their hearts (Eccl. 3:11). And the world would care even less about hearing us if they really knew us!

We, churches of Christ, have little impact in the vast present world of approximately six billion souls. I doubt, not (according to the number of congregations, and total membership in churches of Christ at present, throughout the world) that there is a religious body in existence which is more fractured, divided, and decimated than we are. In the fifties and sixties, there was this massive, wholesale, world-wide division among brethren and congregations over church support and maintenance of human institutions; divisions over the centralizing of funds of local churches into the control and oversight of “sponsoring churches” and centralized, regional and national elderships, and divisions over the “social gospel” with its so-called fellowship halls (kitchens and restaurant-type facilities), parties, playgrounds, baby and wedding showers, ball teams, family-life centers, bus ministries, youth ministers, youth programs, singles ministries, financial planning seminars, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*. One cannot identify such churches with those described in the New Testament, planted and organized by inspired apostles, as planned and purposed by the Almighty in his eternal purpose and wisdom (Eph. 3:8-12; Rom. 11:33-36).

In the meanwhile, two generations have arisen which know not Jehovah (Judg. 2:1015), nor the Lord’s churches as they used to be following the “restoration movement” and separation from the Disciples of Christ/Christian Church movement (due to the “American Christian Missionary Society” innovation, and the mechanical instruments of music in worship error) and immediately thereafter. The older generations who did all this mischief, with their “Where There Is No Pattern” foolishness, have passed on into eternity (and the few stragglers yet remaining are rapidly beating their funeral marches to the grave). The present generations accept, without questioning, what they have received from their forefathers. The “institutionalized” churches of Christ, the “sponsoring church elderships” and programs, and the “social gospel” with its many facets, *is* the kingdom of heaven, *is* the church of Christ, *is* what Jesus died for, and *is* what the apostles of Jesus Christ set in order, in the mindset of members now present in the institutionalized,

centralized, socialized churches of Christ.

The *Christian Chronicle* paper, now owned and published by Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is the un-official voice of the institutional, centralized, socialized churches of Christ. The *Chronicle* refers to these types and kinds of congregations as “the mainstream church of Christ.” Those of us who do not believe or practice this type and brand of “New Testament Christianity” are called “antis,” and the congregations of which we are members are “non-institutional churches.”

The latest issue of *The Christian Chronicle* (June 2002) begins a full-page article, “A Conversation With Ferrell Jenkins” (with an accompanying picture of brother Jenkins) by saying, “They meet in well-kept church buildings — the ones with no fellowship halls. They’re the non-institutional churches of Christ. Today they number about 2,000 churches with roughly 132,890 in attendance. To members of ‘institutional’ or ‘mainstream’ churches of Christ, these congregations are a source of confusion. ‘They don’t support missionaries’ or ‘They don’t believe in kitchens’ are common misunderstandings” (Erik Tryggstad, staff writer for *The Chronicle*). In my thinking, Tryggstad missed it by “a country mile” in several statements in this short, introductory paragraph.

In the *Christian Chronicle*, January 2002, there is a long article regarding the major division which occurred in the Madison, Tennessee Church of Christ in 2001. I plan to print this entire article from the *Chronicle* in my next essay in this series. Many observations can be made and lessons can be learned. In the course of this article, the writer, Lindy Adams, says that, “Since mid-August (2001), word of conflict in eleven congregations has been reported to the *Chronicle*. The discord is of several sorts, but often regards worship.” This division in “the largest congregation in churches of Christ” made headlines. and news articles in *The Nashville Tennessean* newspaper. It was on the Nashville television and radio stations news programs for some days. My point in writing about this will be that there are now, after fifty years, serious problems and major divisions in some of these churches which led the way forty to fifty years ago in driving out the “antis,” alienating the brethren, and promoting the human-wisdom programs of the money-minded promoters among us. Our brethren have been diligent over the centuries — in the first century, in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century, and now in the twenty-first century — in following the courses, patterns, and routes outlined and set down by digressives in any and every place, of preaching unity and practicing division. (To be continued)

1822 Center Point Rd., Tompkinsville, Kentucky 42167 caven-
derb@aol.com

All the good attitudes in the world will not form the proper basis (platform, foundation) for the unity of believers (John 17:20).

Unity in the Body of Christ:

A Study Of Ephesians 4:1-16

Joe R. Price

Ephesians 4:1-16 lays down the divine framework for unity in the body of Christ.

Urged to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,” Christians are under obligation to endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1, 3). To establish and guard unity in his body (the church, Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16), the Lord here reveals the attitudes (v. 2-3), basis (v. 4-6), gifts (v. 7-13) and objectives (v. 14-16) of unity. Where “the unity of the Spirit” exists the church is able to glorify God (Eph. 4:3; 3:21). Where division exists it is manifest that some, by their divisive attitudes and actions, are not approved in his sight (1 Cor. 11:19).

Unity’s Essential Attitudes

Proper attitudes must exist in our hearts for unity to thrive in the church. Pleas for unity are not enough. A desire for unity must be coupled with practical attitudes of the heart plus proper application of the same if we are to attain and maintain unity: “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). Let us briefly consider these five attitudes which promote unity among God’s people.

Lowliness. Unity is hindered when a humble opinion of one’s self is absent. A deep sense of one’s unworthiness translates into service rather than demanding that one be served. This enhances unity. Jesus taught and set the example of humble service (Matt. 23:11-12; 20:27-28). When Paul lived among the Ephesian brethren, he was “serving the Lord with all humility” (Acts 20:19).

Gentleness (meekness). A gentle spirit is one which is under control. It by no means suggests weakness or timidity. Instead, with strength under control, it is devoid of self-interest and directed toward the goodness of God and one’s fellows. The meek or gentle person is not occupied with self

or the disputes which arise from defending self. In order to maintain unity we must be “submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21). The meek person does so, not by surrendering principles of truth, but by surrendering self for the sake of truth and peace (Rom. 14:17).

Longsuffering. This attitude is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy. It is restraint in the face of provocation (2 Pet. 3:9). If any quality of heart must be expressed as we diligently keep the unity of the Spirit it is restraint in the face of provocation! Rather than retaliate in kind, longsuffering endures, not seeking revenge. Since we benefit from God’s longsuffering toward us, we must in turn show longsuffering toward each other as we live and work together in the Lord’s church.

Forbearance. The ability to hold up under the strain and stress of trials is at the heart of this word. “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure (forbear, jrp)” (1 Cor. 4:12). Forbearance overcomes quarrels about brethren: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13, KJV).

Love. Barclay defined love (*agape*) as “unconquerable benevolence, undefeatable goodwill.” It must be our motive and our character (1 Cor. 13:1-7). If we do not love our brother we cannot love God (1 John 4:20-21, 12). Peace holds us together in the Spirit’s unity as we love our neighbor as our self (Matt. 22:39).

These essential attitudes, when present, enable us to be effectively bound together in peace (Eph. 4:3). Without them, we will neither attain to nor maintain unity.

Unity's Essential Platform

Every generation of God's people desires unity. Our desire for unity must join with proper attitudes if we attain and "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). However, desire and attitude alone will not bring us to the "unity of the Spirit" for which we long. The Father and the Son were not only united in attitude of heart, they were also united in word and deed (John 17:21; 8:26-28; 12:48-50; 14:7-11). All the good attitudes in the world will not form the proper basis (platform, foundation) for the unity of believers (John 17:20). Attitudes can remain good and yet souls be lost (Acts 10:1-2; 11:14). We need something more. We need a definite standard upon which unity rests.

Therefore, we must couple the attitudes of unity with the only standard which provides an adequate and sufficient foundation for our unity (Eph. 4:2-3). This is exactly what the apostle does in Ephesians 4:4-6. This passage has been called God's "One-derful" plan for unity because it displays the singular, unique and wonderful platform of unity for God's people: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

One body. To be united with Christ one must be in his body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 2:47). In the church every Christian has a relationship with Christ, the head, and with fellow members of his body (Eph. 2:14, 3:6; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). Unity with Christ and his people will only be found in his church (not in denominations or any other human organization).

One Spirit. The Holy Spirit has revealed, inspired and confirmed "the word of truth, the gospel of (our) salvation" by which we enjoy life from the death of sin (Eph. 1:13; 2:18; Rom. 8:2). Failure to walk by the Spirit in the path of truth dooms any prospect for unity.

One hope. We have a common inheritance in Christ, a heavenly home (Eph. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). No other hope secures us and unites us as we walk by faith (Heb. 6:18-19; Col. 1:5-6).

One Lord. Great damage is done to the unity of God's people whenever the authority of our only Lord, Jesus Christ, is violated (1 Cor. 1:10-13). As we humbly yield to his will in our lives unity among us is guarded. Furthermore, in yielding, God is glorified rather than man (Col. 3:17).

One faith. The gospel of Christ, the "mystery" now revealed, is the revelation once for all delivered from God to man which saves our souls (Eph. 1:9; 3:1-13; Jude 3; Rom. 1:16-17; 16:25-26). Without the faith there is no genuine personal faith and hence, no true unity of the Spirit (Rom.

10:17; Gal. 1:11, 23).

One baptism. The water baptism commanded by Jesus, when believed and obeyed by sinners, "saves us" (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Any other baptism, for any other purpose, is not "in the name of the Lord Jesus" and only generates division (Acts 19:5).

One God. One God demands a common worship from all (John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 8:5-6). He will only be "in you all" if we all unite upon this solid platform of unity. It is a foundation designed by God. We know it is secure.

Unity's Essential Function

The human body functions when common commands and instructions are sent to and from the brain to the various parts of the body. Likewise, the body of Christ, his church, operates upon the commands and instructions given to us by the Lord (Col. 3:17). But how has he given us the tools for operating in unity? And why is unity among us so vital? Next, in Ephesians 4:7-16, the apostle answers these questions by taking up the function of unity and what Christ has given us to accomplish its work (Eph. 4:7-16).

Christ has given "gifts" to men which serve to establish and maintain unity in the body of Christ (4:7). These gifts are named in Ephesians 4:11: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." It is not the men themselves, but the functions they perform in the body of Christ, by which we achieve unity. These inspired (apostles and prophets) and uninspired (evangelists, pastors and teachers) "gifts" function in the body of Christ to help us "keep the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace" (4:3).

The word of God (which the inspired apostles and prophets announced, which evangelists proclaim, which pastors feed and which teachers instruct) is the means given us by Christ "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13). Christ has provided us with truth so we are equipped to work together in unity in the body of Christ, serving and edifying one another as we grow unto spiritual maturity.

The function of truth within the body of Christ is ongoing. There will always be many levels of spiritual development among Christians (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13-6:3). There will never be a time when the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers is not crucial to unity, service, maturity, and stability in the church.

Every Christian can "come to the unity of the faith" and mature into "the measure of the stature of the fullness of

God has revealed the way of salvation in his word. It can be found.

Searching For The Impossible (3)

Andy Alexander

In two previous articles we noticed several things that people search for in religion that are actually impossible searches. In other words, their search is in vain. They will not find the things they are searching for because they do not exist. We also pointed out that many think they have found what they are looking for because someone has falsely led them to believe they could find those things for which they were searching.

The only way to know we have truly found what we are searching for in religion is to prove it by the word of God (1 Thess. 5:21). Paul told the Christians in Rome, “May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar” (Rom. 3:4). The context of this statement deals with the question of Jews who did not believe what God had plainly revealed. We should verify the teaching ourselves and depend upon no one’s word, but God’s. “Beloved do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets

have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). This should be a sobering admonition.

The Bereans of old left us a noble example. “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Have we personally checked all the teaching we have heard through the years? Have we followed the admonition of Paul to the Corinthians? “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor. 13:5). Do not wait until Judgment Day and discover that your search was in vain, search the Scriptures now, “prove all things; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

**More Impossible Searches
A Non-controversial Or Non-offensive Way To**

Christ” as the church obeys the truth of the gospel which these “gifts” provide and promote (4:13). By following the pure and stable doctrine of Christ we will avoid being “tossed to and fro” by the winds of error and the deceit of men (4:14). We will thus “grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ” and the whole body will be united: “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (4:15-16).

The body of Christ is strong and effectively works when every Christian is actively contributing his part (4:16).

This is the intent and blessing of unity. We thank Christ for the gifts he has given us. May we use them wisely and be united in him.

*6204 Parkland Way, Ferndale, Washington 98248 joe@
bibleanswer.com*

Preach the Gospel. There are some in the Lord's church who believe the gospel can be preached effectively without offending anyone. One way that some attempt to preach without offense is to use less Scripture in their preaching. Personal stories, poems, jokes, and such like have been substituted for book, chapter, and verse lessons. Another technique used by those who would rather be popular with men than with God is to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative in their preaching and writing.

A preacher's goal should not be to offend someone, but when the gospel is preached, as it was in the first century some will be offended. No one could preach better than Jesus. Yet, he offended some. The people of Nazareth wanted to kill Jesus for speaking the truth from the Old Testament (Luke 4:6-30). Some were enraged at Jesus because he did a good deed on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11). He was practicing the truth and this caused controversy. He offended others by teaching the truth on hypocrisy (Matt. 15:1-14). Jesus' disciples even informed him that he had offended some, but Jesus did not apologize or take back what he had said (Matt. 15:1-14). Jesus also spoke the truth about his divine nature and this caused some who heard him to become so angry they tried to stone him (John 10:25-39).

The problem these people had was with the truth, not with the manner in which it was presented. It is the content of the gospel that upsets those who are not sincere in their search for the truth. John the Baptist was killed for what he said and not how he said it (Mark 6:18-19). Peter and John were arrested because of their teaching on the resurrection, not because of the way in which they presented it. It was the truth about the resurrection that offended the Sadducees and there was no way it could have been presented that would have pleased them (Acts 4:1-3).

Some people are offended today when the truth is presented on baptism. When we teach exactly what the Bible teaches, that baptism is essential for salvation and those not baptized for the remission of sins will be lost, this offends many in the denominational world (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). The same is true when the truth is preached on the one true church and the only acceptable way to worship God in his church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4; John 4:24). Those in denominational churches worshiping according to the teachings of men are offended when someone dare call them back to the Word of God (Matt. 15:8-12).

Some brethren are also offended by the truth. Especially when it exposes sin in their life, the life of a loved one, or the error being taught by a beloved teacher or preacher. Many are greatly offended at the Lord's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). They and their friends may be guilty of practicing error or teaching error on this subject, and they do resent this being exposed, so they seek to stone those who do expose the false teachers

and their errors.

The same is also true when it comes to the subject of fellowship. The Bible plainly teaches that Christians are not to have fellowship with those who teach false doctrines (Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9-11). Those who follow the teaching of truth and expose the false teacher offend some brethren. These offended brethren lie, misrepresent, and hurl verbal assaults at those who speak the truth in love on these subjects. Why do they seek to destroy these men? It is not because of the way in which the truth is presented, but it is the truth itself that offends them. Most likely they will not be honest enough to admit this.

We must follow the example of Jesus and preach the truth to all. Some will be offended, some will scoff, but others will appreciate it, and obey it to the salvation of their souls. Preaching the truth as Jesus, Peter, and Stephen did in the first century will cause hearts to be pricked (Acts 2:37; 7:54). It is the condition of the hearers' hearts that determines whether or not they will be offended. Searching for a way to preach the truth without offending all those who hear is an impossible search. We should be tactful and seek for a good way to present the gospel, but remember it is the truth that is offensive to some people, and not the way it is presented. Also, those offended will most likely never own up to this fact.

A Way To Make Christianity Fun

Another impossible search that some are attempting is to find a way to make Christianity fun. In this way it will be more appealing to the masses. Food, fun, and various forms of entertainment are offered. Christianity is pictured as an easy road to travel with little or no bumps along the way. Children are taught in vacation "Bible" schools that it is fun and exciting to be a Christian. Skits, clapping, and laughing are replacing sober Bible study and memorization of Scripture.

This is a far different picture than we get from the Word of God. According to the truth, Christianity is not popular and it is never presented as being fun. Jesus taught people to count the cost before making a decision to follow him (Luke 14:25-33). He taught about the possibility that even a man's family may turn on him and become his enemy (Matt. 10:32-39). Jesus also said that those in the world would hate his followers because his followers would expose the sin in the life of those in the world (John 15:19; 3:19). Does this sound fun?

The apostle Paul taught, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Paul prepared those he converted for a rough road. He instructed the Thessalonians "that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with

you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know” (1 Thess. 3:3-4.). Peter taught that Christians will be thought of as strange to those in the world because of their righteous living (1 Pet. 4:3-4). In reality, true Christianity is not popular and fun. It is the only way to heaven and Jesus taught that this way was a narrow and difficult way (Matt. 7:13-14).

Children need to be taught that the church is not a social club, and that church services are not a time for fun and games. They need to be taught that true joy and happiness are the result of humbly following God. Joy comes from being at peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1; Phil 4:7). The services of the church are times devoted to worship and praise God, to strengthen others and be strengthened (Heb. 10:23-25).

The church is composed of people who have been saved by the blood of Jesus and these people will be laughed at and thought peculiar by those in the world (Acts 2:47; 17:32). Maybe some children of Christians are lost to the world because they have been led to think that Christianity is fun and when they reach their teenage years they find out differently. We need to prepare those we teach to expect persecution and rejection by the world, and that this is the way to eternal life. Yes, searching for a way to make Christianity fun is a vain search and one that will end in disappointment.

The origin of these days can be traced to man, not God; therefore, these days are nothing more than vain attempts to honor God (Matt. 21:23-27; 7:21-23; 15:8-9). We do not say these things to offend, but to cause people to think. We honor God by obeying his will (Rom. 2:23). We prove our love for God by obeying his commandments, not inventing new ones that please us (1 John 5:5:3). God has revealed worship that will please and honor him (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 11:23-26; Eph. 5:19). Any addition, subtraction, or substitution from the divine standard will result in rejection and eternal loss (Gal. 1:6-9). Do not wait until the Judgment Day to discover the truth about these things (Matt. 7:22-23). Search the Scriptures and obey what God has revealed in his word.

Let’s not be so foolish as to search for things that cannot be found. God has revealed the way of salvation in his word. It can be found. Hear the word of God, believe it, confess your faith, repent of your sins, and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38). The Lord will add you to his church, and there worship him according to the truth he has revealed in his word (Acts 2:47; John 4:24; Col. 3:17). This is not an impossible search.

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In preaching, “Glittering Generalities” are mighty effective for easing the sting of truth, and keeping the preacher uninvolved, but not for setting forth the saving power of the gospel.

Never Preach in “Glittering Generalities”

W. R. Jones

One piece of wisdom I have given to young preachers who have sought advice is this: “Don’t preach in glittering generalities.”

One of the many remarkable things about the teaching of Jesus is seen in the fact that it was always simple and to the point. The same for the most part can also be said of Paul. In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul said, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God” (1 Cor. 2:1). Both Jesus and the inspired apostle demonstrated the importance of simplicity of speech. Sometime it is easy for preachers to preach in such “generalities” that no one knows for sure just what they are talking about. And sometimes worldly-minded members like it that way, because that kind of preaching really never bothers anyone. I might add that it also accomplishes very little, if anything. A preacher may impress his audience with a wonderfully worded speech, but if his lesson doesn’t teach and touch the hearts of his hearers, the time has been wasted.

This reminds me of the story about some people who came as visitors to hear a preacher, noted for his “excellency of words.” When the service had ended some friends inquired concerning their impression of the preacher and the lesson. Whereupon, one young fellow responded, “That must be the smartest man in the world. I never understood a thing he said.” This was meant to be a great compliment, but it was far from it. Lost and dying men today stand in need, not of high sounding lectures centered around the projects of men, but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Our pulpits should ring with the sound of truth, but is easy for the pulpit to become nothing more than a “promotional

podium” for pet projects and the monetary resources to support them

I am told the story of two candidates who had engaged in a very hot campaign for the office of governor. Most of the things in each man’s platform were identical. The incumbent had been content to plainly set forth his platform time and again. Meanwhile, his opponent had loosed quite a few implicating “glittering generalities,” making sure that he did not commit himself plainly and specifically to anything. He made it plain enough to do harm and vague enough to sound innocent. In the incumbent’s last campaign speech, he said, “The issue in this campaign is really very clear. When all the glittering terms are stripped of their glitter and my opponent’s speeches have been set out in their light, the one and only issue between us is this; I am governor of this state and he wants to be.”

In preaching, “Glittering Generalities” are mighty effective for easing the sting of truth, and keeping the preacher uninvolved, but not for setting forth the saving power of the gospel. There is an old East Texas saying which says, “You have to put the salve where the sore is.” Applying the remedy round about will not get the job done. As preachers we should desire to preach, and as members, we should desire to hear only the “truth of God” in all simplicity. Perhaps we would all do well to ask ourselves the following question: “What kind of spiritual food am I receiving where I worship?” As preachers we need to ask ourselves the question, what kind of diet am I offering my listeners? Our mission is to *reprove, rebuke, and exhort* with all longsuffering and doctrine. We would do well to remember, *you can’t make a strong church with a weak diet!*

**False religion and false rituals, in the name of false gods,
have created havoc and heartache.**

Religion is Not the Problem

Larry Ray Hafley

Skepticism scoffs at faith and lays the ills of the world at the feet of religion. The scoffing, scorning skeptic says that most of the world's wars are created by "religious" people contending for their god. Do away with the false concept of a divine being, rid people's minds of such ignorance, superstition, and blind devotion, and the world will be a safer, less volatile place.

For once, I agree, at least in part, with the skeptics! No, of course, we cannot deny the Creator of heaven and earth. However, false religion and false rituals, in the name of false gods, have created havoc and heartache. What about "the Crusades"? Weren't they fought by "Christians," by the authority of Christ? No, for Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). Did the religion of Christ create the cruelty of the Crusades? No, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:3, 4).

Where I preach I am constantly pushing for more in attendance. However, I must be careful that my quest for numbers does not influence me to present a "please everybody, watered down message." It is a great temptation to alter the lesson when you fully know that your lesson will hinder your desire for great numbers. But remember, "telling it like it is" will also win some lost folks to Christ and prepare them for eternity. We have but one choice: *preach the word in season and out.*

From The Messenger, Decker Prairie, Pinehurst, Texas

False priests, preachers, and prophets may have started wars and created human misery, but to condemn all religion because of impostors is parallel to the man who refuses all medical treatment because a "quack" doctor made him feel worse. A crooked lawyer must not be used to define the usefulness of worthy counsel.



True faith is not the problem. It is the solution, the only solution. The frightening belligerence of barbaric, religious men does not discredit God and godliness. Rather, it shows the need for truth and righteousness. A denial of God and his word does not solve the problems of this world. If God were eliminated from all faith and all Bibles were burned, there is not a single sordid, sinful thing that would be abolished. The darkness would only deepen. (And, if it did, why would it matter? If there be no God, there are no rules. So, why gripe and grumble? Why is it wrong to kill and to pillage and plunder *if* there be no God? If there is no God, I may kill you with as little concern as I would swat a mosquito.)

What these present, perilous times reveal is that we need more, not less, of "the words of truth and soberness." Yes, false religion has brought us mayhem, murder, and massacre. But, beneath the blood-stained banner of the Prince of Peace, it is his pure religion that alone can give us hope for our hearts and rest unto our souls.

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521



I wonder if we have the same concept that Nehemiah had who thought of God as the “great and awesome God” (Neh. 1:5; 4:11).

I Wonder

Donnie V. Rader

Sometimes I wonder. Do you ever wonder? By wonder I mean to question and think or ponder a matter. I sometimes wonder about many things. Quite often it is about the church, about what we are doing and what the future holds. I think of the past and contrast it to the present. I sometimes wonder how we got to where we are.

I wonder whether we fully appreciate the God we serve. I wonder if we have the same concept that Nehemiah had who thought of God as the “great and awesome God” (Neh. 1:5; 4:11). I wonder if we think often enough about his great power and might. I wonder if we stop to realize that he is the Almighty (Rev. 4:8). I wonder if we truly appreciate his work in creation (Gen. 1-2; Ps. 33:6-9), his wonders shown in the exodus (Exod. 11-13), his power demonstrated at Sinai (Exod. 19), and his victory displayed at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 17). I wonder if we had a better appreciation of *who* God is how different our lives and attitudes would be. Oh, how I do wonder at times.

I wonder if we really understand the implications of the golden rule. It says, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12). I wonder if we try as often or as much as we could to truly treat others the way we want to be treated. I wonder how often we reverse our thinking process. That is, I wonder if many of us ever look at how we *are* treating others and ask if that is the way we want to be treated. I wonder how different life would be if we tried harder to live by this principle. I wonder how different marriages would be if each mate treated the other the way they would want to be treated.

I wonder about the homes (families) among God’s people. I don’t have to wonder what the Bible says about families. Husbands are to love their wives like they love no other (Eph; 5:25-28). Wives are to love and reverence their

husbands (Eph. 5:33; Tit. 2:3-5). Husbands are to be leaders in the home (Eph. 5; 1 Tim. 3:4), leading with honor and esteem for the wife (1 Pet. 3:1-7). Wives are to willingly obey their husbands because of their fear of God (1 Pet. 3:1-6). But, now I wonder how many homes among God’s people are not what they ought to be. How many homes are really led by the wife? How many families is the love and consideration what it ought to be? How many families are not what they appear on the surface?

I wonder about our gospel meetings. I wonder how much more effective they could be if we tried. I wonder if we don’t think that all that needs to be done is plan a meeting, invite a preacher, and show up at most of the services and we will consequently reach the lost in the community. I wonder if we spent as much time thinking about who we could get to come and trying to get them there as we do in planning meals for the visiting preacher and who we will have with him, if we wouldn’t reach more of the lost. I wonder if we have lost focus of what a meeting is about? Don’t misunderstand. I’m not saying that having a meal, getting several together for lunch, and playing golf with the visiting preacher are wrong. In fact, I did all three of these during our recent meeting. I just wonder if we worked as hard at getting others to the meeting as in those areas how different it might be.

I wonder why we don’t accomplish more with all the tools we have. I think of the good that was done by the previous generations in preaching the gospel. I think about the hundreds and hundreds who were converted by men like A.C. Grider, W. Curtis Porter, Roy Cogdill, and others. They didn’t have computers, the Internet, e-mail, web pages, Power Point, desk-top publishing, or air conditioned buildings, etc. Brother Porter used a crayon (his word for chalk). Brother Grider used many hand painted cloth charts. Wow! Think of the tools we have today. I wonder why we

don't accomplish more. I wonder if it could be that we put too much trust in the tools and less in the gospel and in the work of just getting it done.

I wonder if the church were a business how it would survive. A great number of small businesses fail because of a lack of attention or they are not run properly. I have often wondered if we were a business, if we would sink. I wonder if any business could make it with the amount of attention we give to the local work. I wonder how many business could make it with the kind of planning and direction we often give to the church.

I wonder about those who are sick and cannot make the service. I wonder if all those who miss services because they are "sick" are always so sick that they can't come to services. I don't mean that people should attend when they are so sick they couldn't work or do anything else. If one is contagious, certainly it would be inconsiderate to others to come. I wonder if some are merely tired or have a headache or have a few pains. I wonder if those who hardly miss a service don't have the same problems and still attend. I wonder if those who are sick a lot on Sunday and Wednesday miss a lot of work or school on the days between.

I wonder what happened to using wisdom and good judgment. If wisdom or judgment were a person, I wonder if we should report him as a missing person at times. Some of the decisions we make, things we do and what we say shows that wisdom is not always with us. If we were to use

wisdom we would think things through a little better. We would think about how things appear. We would think about how our statements might come across and be interpreted. We would reconsider how we are being perceived.

I wonder about the many cases of traipsing in and out during services. I know that we all have occasions where we need to go out to the restroom. We all know that parents have to take children out to see to their needs. I also know that some have medical problems that they cannot help. What I wonder about is whether *all* those who make their way in and out during worship really have those problems. I wonder how many of those kids who repeatedly do that are just getting a drink of water. I wonder if some help from parents could reduce the number of such cases. I wonder if there would be a better time to go out or come back in than during the invitation song. One of the most serious times of a service is when we are hoping someone may respond to the invitation. Just as we make an appeal for obedience or correction and stand to sing some youngster will make his way out to the restroom (or water fountain) and make his way all the way down the aisle - sometimes to the very front row. I wonder if that is the best time for that.

I also wonder what people will think about this article. Sometimes I wonder about a lot of things. Do you ever wonder?

408 Dow Drive Shelbyville, Tennessee 37160 donnie@truthmagazine.com

The Big Bang

Paul K. Williams

A Reuters report was quoted this way in *The Mercury*, Durban, South Africa, 29 April 2002.

New theory is a Mind-bender

Washington — What if the big-bang theory is wrong? What if the universe never began and will never end, driven forever to expand in a series of monster explosions and contract every eon or so in a cosmic crunch?

Princeton University physicist Paul Steinhardt suggested just that in a report published this month that even he called "mind-bending."

The big-bang theory, accepted by many scientists for decades, holds that the universe was born some 14 billion years ago when an unimaginably small, dense entity blew up, sowing the seeds of every bit of matter and energy.

Soon after that first explosion, the universe expanded rapidly, in a phenomenon astronomers call inflation, and then continued to spread out at varying speeds until the present day, according to the big-bang theory. Under this theory, time would begin but never end.

But the model of the universe envisioned by Steinhardt and Neil Turok of Cambridge in the journal *Science* sees the big bang as merely a turning point on an infinite road:

“The Abundant Life” continued from front page abounding lives.

Abounding Love

Paul prayed that the love of the Philippians might “abound still more and more” (Phil. 1:9; cf. 1 Thess 3:12). The word abound means to exceed, to go over and above, beyond measure, to be superior, to overflow. When one abounds in love he has more than what is required. He exceeds the bare minimum. The amazing thing about these people is that Paul did not need to challenge them to have an abounding love; their love was already overflowing. It had been shown in their fellowship with Paul in the preaching of the gospel (v. 5; 4:15ff.). But even an abounding love may be increased or enlarged. So Paul prayed that their love may overflow “more and more”! These latter terms coupled with the word abound “conveys the idea of extreme and continually increasing abundance” (Plummer). Even abounding love must be continually making progress.

We are not left to guess as to how abounding love is to grow. It must be ever increasing in “knowledge and in all judgment.” Love is not blind. It is to be guided and controlled by spiritual knowledge. The word for “knowledge” is a word which means knowledge that is advanced, precise and full. Even this knowledge must be intelligently applied to life, so Paul adds the word “judgment,” which more precisely is “discernment” — the ability to “select, classify, and apply what is furnished by knowledge” (Vincent). Only those who are full-grown or mature are able to successfully do these things.

Paul wants Christians to abound more and more in love that they may reach the point in their knowledge and discernment where they will be able “to approve things that

an endless series of big bangs make the universe expand and an equally endless series of subsequent crunches make it contract. Accordingly, what scientists theorize as the dawn of time might, in fact, be “only a transition or a stage of evolution from a pre-existing phase to the present expanding phase.”

My question: What will brother Hill Roberts and others who accept the Big Bang theory do now? They accepted that theory because of “scientific evidence,” but eminent scientists are now substituting another theory. If the “scientific evidence” must be given greater weight than the clear statements of Genesis, where will our brethren go next?

P.O. Box 324, Eshowe 3815, South Africa paulw@netactive.co.za

are excellent” (v. 10). The ASV says “distinguish the things that differ.” The first word may mean either distinguish or approve, and the second word may mean excellent or differ. To distinguish would mean to prove, and of course there can be no approving without first proving. The Christian must prove things to be true, but he must also learn to approve things on the basis of their excellence, i.e., their superior quality. The matter of approving things that are excellent involves making the best choices between options; choosing the best over the better. While some things may be right in themselves, and not harmful to the Christian, they may not be best for him.

Abounding Work

The Christian who is enjoying the abundant life is also “abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Often love and work are coupled together. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father” (1 Thess. 1:3). As the motive, abounding love will result in abounding work. Just as love is to exceed the bare minimum, so work done by the Christian is to excel, overflow and abound. The abundant life does not produce as little work as one can get by with; it produces an abundance of good works.

The Christian who lives the abundant life puts forth his very best effort, doing as much as he possibly can for the Lord. There is so much work to be done and so few laborers to do it (Matt. 9:37-38). Too many Christians work only in spurts, but the verse says “always” abounding in the work of the Lord; and not a few are failing to abound or excel in that work.

This abounding work is “the work of the Lord.” It is not my work, or your work; it is the Lord’s work. This gives greater meaning to the thing we are doing. When we are

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by Irven Lee

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teaching that lost soul, encouraging that newborn Christian, or sitting with that sick person, we are doing the Lord's work. This is work he wants us to do. We must not become discouraged in doing this work, "knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." There are good results that will come from our labor, not only in this life, but especially in the next. What Paul has said about the resurrection gives us assurance that our abounding work will be rewarded.

Abounding Giving

When Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to give to help supply the needs for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, he gave the Macedonians, who first gave themselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:1-5), as an example of liberality to inspire them to "abound in this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7). He wanted them to go beyond the bare minimum, to exceed what would be required. That's what the Macedonians had done, and that's what all Christians should do. Our attitude is not, how little can I give and get by with it. The "diligence" of the Macedonians whose affliction, abundance of joy and deep poverty "abounded in the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2), is given to "test the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor. 8:8, 24). Notice how Paul brings love and abounding liberality in giving together, just as love and abounding work are tied together. Our love for the Lord should inspire us to "abound" (2 Cor. 8:7), be "liberal" (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11) and be "bountiful" (2 Cor. 9:6; cf. a different word in 2 Cor. 8:20, "abundance") in our giving.

In giving, just as in working, one will reap as he has sown. "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). When Christians give liberally, God who is able to make all grace abound toward us, will see to it that we "have an abundance for every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). We must never forget how much Jesus gave to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Conclusion

Jesus wants us to have the abundant life. The life he gives is life of abundant grace (Rom. 5:17, 20; Eph. 1:7-8), abundant love (Rom. 5:8-9), abundant joy (2 Cor. 8:2), and abundant peace (Phil. 4:7). Through him we are able to abound in love, in work, and in our giving. Are you enjoying the abundant life?

1820 Hairston Ave., Conway, Arkansas 72032



"... Gathers Steam" continued from page 2

However, I do not believe that would be either accurate or fair. Though I have had my differences with each of them, this is not an action for which they should be blamed. No matter what wrong I might believe they did in the past to me or others, it is not fair or right to lay this action at their feet. They simply had no choice in this matter. The action undermines them as well as undermining a respect for the truth.

The real alarm to be sounded about this episode is that a number of young people are about to leave Florida College with the idea that denying the literal interpretation of the creation account is the path to becoming a hero. Shane's initial termination and re-hiring followed the next year by the administration not renewing his contract seems to have been more a result of his insubordination to that administration than his doctrinal views. The defiance of authority has always been appealing to a sizable number of youth. However, the insubordination to the ultimate authority of Scripture has been assisted in this action. Those who had a part in writing the Open Letter are anathema to a majority of FC students. They see the effort as an attack on a beloved teacher which forced his departure. In their sympathy for Shane, they have come to look favorably on his views that the creation account of Genesis "cannot be literal" or that it makes no difference what we believe about such. Those students with those views will soon be in churches across the country and their concepts will have an impact wherever they go. We will have to deal with the views made popular by one they hold as a "martyr" for taking a stand against traditionalism. Among other things said in the dedication, the following was included:

He encouraged his students to look at God's word from all directions and motivated them to learn to search the Scriptures for answers to their questions.... Although he is no longer on the campus, his influence remains as does his spirit of love for those who stand for truth.

Thanks for hearing me out on this situation. If you disagree, I am open to your criticism. However, I wanted you to know that I do not think it is right to blame the FC leadership for this action. Let us stand with boldness for truth and against every false way, but let us do so with goodness and fairness (Rom. 12:21).

Brother Osborne's report that came to me via the internet is very careful not to blame the administration of Florida College inasmuch as this dedication obviously caught some of them by surprise.

Significant Points

There are several very significant points that strike me as I read this report. The idea that one can teach things contrary to God's revealed word on creation and still maintain the fellowship of God and his people should alarm brethren. In dedicating their annual, the student body sent out a message about what they believe and where they stand on the

issue of fellowshipping one who is teaching a non-literal day of creation. The fact that brother Scott teaches that the days of creation are long periods of time is judged to be unimportant.

Now these students who voted to dedicate this annual go to their respective parts of the country to take their concept of fellowship with them into the various local churches of which they are members. To them brother Scott is a hero and those who opposed his loose teaching on creation are dastardly villains to be feared.

A Watershed Event

As I watch the developments of the unity-in-diversity approach to fellowship, more and more I am convinced that the Homer Hailey incident in 1988-89 was a watershed event among brethren. Brother Hailey started teaching his long-held-private view that the law of Christ on divorce and remarriage does not apply to aliens. As a result of his teaching, the small church in Belen, New Mexico divided. When brethren sounded the alarm about brother Hailey teaching his views, Ed Harrell rose up in defense of brother Hailey. He wrote an article in November 1988 issue of *Christianity Magazine* (edited by Ed Harrell, Sewell Hall, Dee Bowman, Paul Earnhart, and Brent Lewis) entitled "Homer Hailey: False Teacher." In this article, brother Harrell wrote,

... Many congregations would not accept into their fellowship the divorced persons accepted by Hailey, and many would not invite him to preach because of the view that he holds. Other congregations would not accept women who worship uncovered. Other congregations are more flexible on both questions. There are now, and always have been, differences in the basis of local fellowship. It is perfectly proper that some congregations have not, and would not, invite Homer Hailey to preach because of the position that he holds on this subject. Others, rightly I believe, have decided to use him in spite of the difference (8).

Brother Harrell's editorial was followed by a series of sixteen articles to justify the position that the fellowship of Christ is broad enough to include those with differing moral and doctrinal beliefs and practices. He defended his teaching on the basis of the past practices of brethren in the American restoration movement and on the basis of Romans 14.

As a result of these articles brother Harrell and I met in an afternoon discussion on the campus of Florida College on February 5, 1991. Brother Harrell argued that brother Hailey's teaching what we both agreed is false doctrine on divorce and remarriage should not be a test of fellowship. He did not believe that brother Hailey was factious in his conduct but, if he were, he thought such a one should be marked. He justified his continued fellowship with brother Hailey on the grounds that the Scriptures were not sufficiently clear in its teaching on divorce and remarriage.

He said, "Each of these judgments is based on an admission that we regard the subject as sufficiently lacking in clarity to accept a brother who disagrees with us" (p. 10 of "Divorce and Fellowship," speech delivered at FC on February 5, 1991).

As a result of this discussion and his series of articles, brethren were given a new approach to unity in which the fellowship of the saints is extended to those who are teaching what we both agree is contrary to revealed Scripture. We asked then and we continue to ask today, "If that is true, what is the difference in extending or withholding fellowship with those who have similar disagreements with us regarding such things as premillennialism, institutionalism, instrumental music in worship, or baptism?" Once the door is open, there is no logical place to close it.

In brother Harrell's biography of brother Hailey, one clearly sees brother Harrell's concept of brother Hailey in this conflict: Hailey is presented by brother Harrell as a spiritual giant who walks off into the sunset wearing his white hat. Those who oppose his false teaching on divorce and remarriage are a cowardly bunch wearing the black hats because they challenged his teaching on divorce and remarriage! Though some have argued that brother Hailey's publishing his book on divorce and remarriage changed the situation, it did not change it enough to alter brother Harrell's portrayal of brother Hailey in the biography. (Some who have read brother Harrell's history see it as a thinly veiled polemic for his position on fellowship.)

Within a few years, the application that was first made for brethren to have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with brother Hailey in spite of his false teachings on divorce and remarriage has been extended to make a similar application to brother Shane Scott in spite of his non-literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation.

These incidents are evidence of a much more significant rending of the fellowship of God's people across the country. (a) There are two different approaches to preaching evident among brethren. One preaches the same old Jerusalem gospel; the other wants a more palatable gospel that is less offensive to our religious neighbors. Significantly, those sermons that emphasize the oneness of the church and its identifying characteristics are heard less and less among those who are moving toward a more palatable pulpit. (b) There are two different approaches on some moral issues. Not only is a looser doctrine tolerated on divorce and remarriage (as witnessed by the on-going and never-ending fellowship of those who are clearly identified as holding loose doctrines on divorce and remarriage), preaching on immodest dress, dancing, the immodest attire worn by cheerleaders and twirlers in the band, mixed swimming, social drinking, gambling, etc. is less often heard in the pulpits of those who want a more palatable gospel. (c) There

are two different approaches on false teaching. One group is unwilling to break fellowship with one who is teaching false doctrine unless they can prove that he is dishonest and insincere. The other group does not believe that the sincerity of the person protects the church from the damage that such a teacher can do to the church and therefore is unwilling to extend the right hand of fellowship to one who teaches false doctrine, even if they perceive that he may be honest and sincere.

The two different mindsets that exist among us are tearing apart the bonds of fellowship between brethren. In traveling to meetings across the country, I am witnessing how strained are the bonds of fellowship among us. As the two mindsets develop, churches have quit visiting each other's meetings (sometimes even quit announcing them). These tensions are created by churches receiving into their fellowship those whom others believe should not be fellowshiped. Brethren in larger cities where there are several churches are moving around to find a church more nearly aligned with their respective beliefs (those who are conservative congregate in one church; those who have a more liberal view are migrating to another). Those who are invited for meetings at the respective churches reflect the two different mindsets. Lectureships that are held around the country manifest the same division since those who are chosen to speak at the various lectureships all have the same mindset; those who have a different mindset are not invited to participate.

Indeed, the defense that was made of brother Hailey was a watershed event.

The Movement Gains Momentum

When I first started preaching, my brother Cecil was editing *Truth Magazine*. I heard him speak on the issues of church support of orphan homes and other human institutions, the sponsoring church, and church supported fellowship halls on a number of occasions. I remember him preaching a lesson on the sponsoring church in which he made direct application to the Herald of Truth organization. After giving a brief history of the Herald of Truth from its beginning until it was placed under the oversight of the Highland church in Abilene, Texas, he related that, at that time, approximately 2500 churches were sending contributions to the Highland church in Abilene to sponsor the Herald of Truth. He then made a statement which, as best I can remember, went like this: "Highland did not start the Herald of Truth; Highland does not pay for the Herald of Truth; and Highland could not *stop* the Herald of Truth." He correctly saw that what began as sponsoring church was part of a larger movement that was engulfing the churches. The sponsoring church was part of a movement that could not be stopped.

Let me suggest that the same is true among us. This

division that is occurring among us manifests that there are two different mindsets among us. If every editor of *Christianity Magazine* were to repudiate the sixteen-article series written by brother Harrell and start using his energies to oppose the spiritual mindset that has grown up from that, they could not stop it. We have two mindsets among us and there is not enough glue in Elmer's Glue Factory to hold brethren who have different mindsets together as one. When I witness what is happening among us, my heart feels like Jeremiah's heart must have felt when he preached to Judah. I wish that I could live in times more nearly like Pentecost than like those in the days of Jeremiah! But, like that prophet, one must have the faith to keep on preaching the truth, even if no one wants to hear and obey it! May God raise up hundreds with his indomitable spirit!

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis1@cs.com

Field Reports



Larry R. DeVore, P.O.Box 313, Medina, OH 44258: Since my last report, a former Catholic lady was baptized into Christ on April 14, 2002. May 19-24, 2002, Paul R. Blake of Georgetown, Pennsylvania, preached in a gospel meeting here on the theme of "The Home and Family." There was much interest and good attendance. Our next meeting will be October 13-18, 2002 with Earl E. Robertson.

Quips & Quotes



Bound Volumes of Truth Magazine Needed

The Christian Theological Seminary Library needs a set of bound volumes which will be placed in the library for use by students of restoration history. If you have all or part of a collection of bound volumes which you are willing to sell, please contact me at 317-272-6520. I will put you in contact with each other so that you can agree on a price suitable to both of you. Mike Willis.

Parsonage in Peril

"It began with a \$20,000 difference between what the IRS and megachurch pastor Rick Warren thought he could deduct for his parsonage. It could end with clergy and churches around the country spending an extra \$500 million a year in taxes. Warren, pastor of the 18,000-member Saddleback Community Church, deducted \$79,999 for his actual housing costs in 1995. The IRS challenged the deduction, saying the fair market value of the home was only \$59,479 (see "Give Us a [Tax] Break," 37).

"The dispute continued through the courts until appellate court judge Stephen Reinhardt dropped a bombshell March 5: 'It is possible that any tax deduction that Rev. Warren receives [for the parsonage] would constitute an unconstitutional windfall at the public's expense."

"When both sides in the dispute insisted that it was constitutional, the court turned to University of Southern California law professor Erwin Chemerinsky, who told the judges that such tax benefits amount to government endorsement of religion. (Warren and the IRS have until May 24 to file reply briefs.)

"The case has already gained the attention of Congress. Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-Maine) introduced legislation to protect the parsonage exemption, and the House unanimously approved this pre-emptive strike. 'Nearly every clergy member in every denomination relies on this tax benefit,' Ramstad said, adding that the court has hijacked the case" (Christianity Today [May 21, 2002], 16).

Update

"President Bush signed the Clergy Housing Clarification Act in May. The measure allows clergy to retain a tax break for the cost of housing. The Internal Revenue Service challenged the exemption, adopted in 1921, in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals" (Christianity Today [July 8, 2002], 13).

Briefs — North America

"In March the U.S. House of Representatives passed the BORN ALIVE INFANT PROTECTION ACT, written to protect infants still living after late-term abortions. The Senate is now considering the bill. In Virginia, Governor Mark Warner in April vetoed a revised ban passed by the legislature, saying it did not 'safeguard the women of Virginia as required by the Supreme Court.' Virginia was the first state to pass a revised ban on partial-birth abortions since the Supreme Court struck down bans adopted by 31 states" (Christianity Today [May 21, 2002], 21).

Is Male-Only Ordination Illegal?

"Susan Rockwell says she wanted to be a Roman Catholic priest, but church doctrine wouldn't allow it. She became a lawyer instead, and is now suing the church in federal court for violating her right to free expression and religion. She also says the federal government illegally subsidizes such discrimination by exempting the church from taxes. It sounds ridiculous, but she cites a legal precedent: the 1983 Supreme Court decision against Bob Jones University. The school, which then forbade interracial dating, lost its tax-exempt status because, the court said, the government has an over-riding, fundamental interest in eradicating discrimination" (Christianity Today [July 8,

2002], 9).

Banning Banns

"Recent battles over marriage have led several pastors to suggest greater separation between church and state in matrimonial issues. Some liberals say getting out of the 'marriage license signing business' would allow churches to bless homosexual unions. Some conservative separatists say the licenses give the state too much power and the couple too wide an exit. Now a conservative Anglican bishop is suggesting it's not the state that should get out of the marriage business, but the church. 'It would be much more honest of the church to say that we won't marry anybody, because doing so puts them in a position where they have said in the present of God, 'We take these vows until death us do part,'" Noel Jones, bishop of Sodor and Man on the Isle of Man, told The Daily Telegraph. 'I want to prevent couples from committing perjury at the altar. . . . We are hung up over the fact that we are a mixture of legal and clerical at the moment, and I want to separate the two.' Jones, known for his staunch opposition to women bishops, says churches could have blessing ceremonies for couples agreeing to lifelong commitments" (Christianity Today [July 8, 2002], 10).

ACLU Claims Abstinence Program is Religious

"The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit against the state of Louisiana for allegedly using federal grant money to promote religious messages in a state-run, abstinence-only sex education program. 'We're going to fight this to the hilt,' Dan Richey, the coordinator of the state program, told Christianity Today.

"The Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA) uses volunteers to teach sexual abstinence to seventh-graders. It also helps establish abstinence clubs in high schools across the state.

"The ACLU claims that Louisiana's misuse of federal grant money violates the constitutional ban on government advancement of religions.

"The lawsuit came as the House of Representatives debated reauthorizing the federal Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which includes funding for abstinence education. The ACLU filed its suit on May 9. One week later, the House voted to reauthorize the program. The Senate will take up the measure later this year.

"The original legislation granted \$50 million annually to states for abstinence education programs. Louisiana, with the ninth highest teenage pregnancy rate in the United States, has received \$1.6 million per year" (Christianity Today [July 8, 2002], 14).



