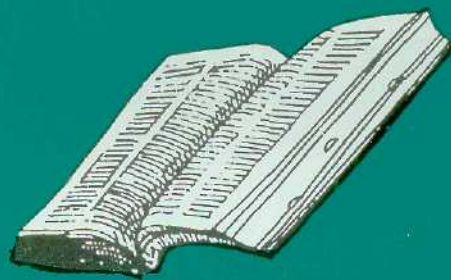


Gospel Truths



"Love . . . rejoices in the truth"
1 Corinthians 13:6

Volume II Number 12

December 1991

An Apple of Discord

by Earl E. Robertson

THE body of Christ is essentially one. This is true because "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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" (Ephesians 4:4-6). And it is incumbent of each disciple to make a practice of "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Though there are many members composing the body of Christ, yet, there is only one body (I Corinthians 12:13,20). Orders controlling bodily function stems from the head. Christ is absolute head of the church which is His body (Ephesians 1:20-23). Rule producing accord resides altogether in Christ, for God gave it to Him. The Christian, wearing the blessed name of Christ, must ever hold Him as head, that is, apprehending in a true and practical way His being over all things to the church (Colossians 2:19).



Unity among the followers of Christ is both desirable and possible. Unity is pleasant (Psalms 133:1). Jesus prayed that His followers, believers on Him through apostolic words, would be one, even as the Father and Son are one (John 17:17-21). Unbelievers of this divine process assure us that it is impossible to have unity on a doctrinal basis. The truth, however, is that there never has been unity among God's people on any basis but doctrine -- truth. We walk by the same rule (Galatians 6:16; Philippians 3:16); we walk by faith (II Corinthians 5:7). Separate the Christian from divine revelation and he then becomes a law unto himself -- every man walks in his own way. It becomes a case of the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14). Without revelation one is hopelessly lost (Jeremiah 10:23).

As noted above, the body of Christ is a collection of members, and these members must function as one (I

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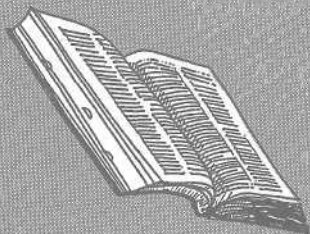
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Gospel Truths



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I Corinthians 13:6

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**VOLUME II
NUMBER 12
DECEMBER 1991**

EDITORIAL



J. T. Smith, Editor

P. O. Box 906087 • Tulsa, Oklahoma 74112

Editorial Potpourri

A Good Year

THIS has been a good year for *Gospel Truths*. As we mentioned in our 1990 December issue, we had grown from 730 at the beginning of 1990 to almost 1400 at the close of the year. Now, thanks to you our readers who have continued to give us support and have encouraged others to subscribe, at the close of 1991 we have reached the 2,000 mark. We believe we have a good Magazine and we are continually trying to improve it with balance in our material. We realize there is still much room for improvement and we are working on it. Hopefully 1992 will be the best year yet.

"The Magazine Looks Good"

This is a comment we receive from many, many readers regarding the physical makeup and printing of the Magazine. One brother recently said, "Smith, I'll have to give you credit, you have one of the best looking papers published by brethren." However as I told him, Harold and all the people at **Cave Country Printing** in Horse Cave, Kentucky, are responsible for the good looks. They do an outstanding job. We are happy to recommend them to anyone who has printing to be done about which they are meticulous. As you can observe from looking at any issue of *Gospel Truths*, these people take pride in their work.

A Labor Of Love

There is so much work to getting *Gospel Truths* in the mail that it would take half of my time if I had to do all the work myself. However I have three good helpers. Dudley Ross Spears types the manuscripts that are sent to him, and sends them to me via modem. Earl Robertson sees that the camera ready copy gets to the printers, picks it up when it is printed, puts on all the address labels, ties all the bundles, puts them in the proper mail sacks and mails them (I get tired just thinking about all of it). Ken Leach puts all of the news items together. Our thanks to him for his efforts. We are hoping to get more news in our next year's editions. Last but not least, (well she certainly is in size as compared to me and the other three heavy weights just mentioned) my lovely wife of almost 43 years, Brown, takes care of all the bookkeeping that relates to the Magazine. Yet not a single one of us gets any remuneration from our labors. Every dime goes back into the paper and the equipment (computers, printers, programs, printing, mailing, mailing invoices, phone bills, etc.). My sincere appreciation to all who assist in these efforts. However I know they are not just doing it for me. It is truly a labor of love on all our parts. If just one soul can be helped in reaching heaven, it will be worth all the effort.

To Those Who Have Contributed Articles

Of course, without good articles there would be no Magazine. Not only do many brethren contribute articles, but they also work diligently to help us gain subscriptions. To all of you I want to simply say, Thank You! Keep up the good work.

(A special word of thanks to Bill Robinson, Jr. who spent so many hours

this past year in order to produce the excellent articles as he reviewed Homer Hailey's book on divorce and remarriage).

Also, if you are interested in sending an article, try to keep it to about 4 or 5 pages, double spaced, with about an inch margin all around. We would like to have fresh material that has not been sent to other periodicals. (That does not apply to news items). If it is to be typed, please send it to Dudley Ross Spears at the address given on the inside front cover. If it is on a computer disk, send it to the editor stating what word processor you are using.

Bound Volumes

It was my decision from the outset to have a bound volume every two years. Thus this is the year for our bound volume which will include 1990 and 1991. The price will be \$20.00 each plus postage. Several orders have already been received. If you would like to order yours now, as soon as they are completed we will mail them to you. There will only be 75 available, so order now. First come - first serve.

Problems

It seems that almost every year we have a new crop of problems among brethren. Though we detest such we know that the devil is always at work to deceive as many as he possibly can.

However, the past year has seemingly brought no new problems. The old ones seems to have been intensified. Though the question of whether or not we should fellowship those who teach false doctrine on the question of divorce and remarriage (as first introduced in Christianity Magazine by brother Ed Harrell), has subsided for the present, the questions of divorce and remarriage continue to rage. If all goes as planned, opportunities will be given to all who wish to study these subjects further. Although this is being written before the debate that I am to have with Olan Hicks in Tucson this month (November), it is our plans to publish the debate in book form. Also there is to be another such discussion between me and brother Hicks next year. And propositions have already been signed for two discussions between brethren to affirm and deny. Or they have made the propositions so ridiculous that no one would be willing to affirm them. They "crow" about the fact that no one has the courage to debate them. It has nothing to do with courage. It is a matter of them overestimating the stupidity of their opponents.

Every year brings new challenges, opportunities and problems. It is our prayer that whatever confronts us in the coming year we will have the strength, wisdom and courage to face and deal with it according to God's Word. We solicit your prayers to that end.

From Brown and me, we wish for you and yours a safe and happy holiday season and hope that you will prosper even as your soul prospers in the coming year.

May God help us all to work harder in the coming year to have unity, to strengthen Christians and to bring lost souls to Christ.

Continued From Front Page

Corinthians 1:10); Ephesians 4:16). They can and will perform as one when the head is respected; this is togetherness, accord (Romans 15:6; Acts 2:46; 4:24). **Attitude Toward Rightful Rule**

Israel responded to Jeremiah's appeal to walk in the old paths, saying, "We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). Paul wrote the Galatians, saying, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (Galatians 5:7). Overt outbursts of rebellion displays attitudes. The wrong attitude toward God produces idolatry, moral perverseness, spiritual high-handedness, and congregational apostasy. Faithfulness in God's house exists only wherein God's Will is revered (cf. Hebrew: 3:5-11). When Almighty God establishes through revelation His intent, and Christians respect such, the right and acceptable attitude obtains; however, when one flaunts His revelation, he is not only impudent and contemptuous but is cause for discord in the body. Abel served God on the basis of revelation, but Cain his brother served by philosophy (Genesis 4: 1-7; Hebrews 11:4).

Churches have apostatized and the Lord removed the candlesticks -- churches (Revelation 1:20; 2:5). Apostasies form in a number of ways. Sometimes brethren become so enamored with intellectualism they unwittingly follow their new leader, but the process takes them away from Christ and splits the body. A split-off has been formed and it claims to be the true church! Sometimes brethren are emotionally charged by the programs and processes of the denominations, and they become very obtrusive in their efforts to have and to do the same in the church. Their efforts destroy accord and produce discord.

Our history has been fraught with many burdening and aggravating digressions, and the efforts of our older brethren to stem the floods of these hellish movements have been courageous and worthy. Digression nearly always creates problematical and dominate emotional appeal. The organ in the worship is a good example. When Jesus built the church it had no organ or any other mechanical instrument of music on which to worship God. Saints were instructed to sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). The heart is the direct object of the verb sing; the instrument (heart) is named. Sing is music, and it is the kind of music the Lord requires. Play is another kind, unauthorized by the Lord, and is therefore rejected.

With regard to organs in worship and human societies through which the churches would work, J.S. Lamar condescendingly wrote, "As we look back upon this period, we are amazed to note the pettiness and trivialities which the Disciples of Christ were forced, by these self-appointed leaders, seriously and gravely to consider. It really seemed that Christ had died to prevent the formation of Missionary Societies and to keep organs out of the churches!" *Memoirs of Isaac Everett*, Volume 2, page 4. Again, he wrote, "And

then pianos and organs began to be introduced into parlors, and to the accompaniment of these, pious young gentlemen and ladies would sing the songs of Zion, and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. They *felt*, they were *conscious*, they *knew*, that such accompaniments were helpful and not hurtful to them; and if helpful in the parlor, why not in the Sunday-school? and why not in the church? Even among the older people, many began to favor this; some were neutral; some were opposed. But here and there, where the public sentiment decidedly predominated in its favor, a melodeon or organ was introduced tentatively into the Sunday-school, to see how it would work; and when it became manifest that good rather than evil resulted -- that singing was improved, that the young people were held in the church, and that the instrument, instead of being a substitute for the worship, was simply an aid to the worshiper; first one church and then another began to use it in the worship. Thus, naturally, and as a matter of course, the practice began to be common, coming on, not as the result of pride or vanity or worldliness — as many really supposed - but as the inevitable consequence of growth and culture." *Ibid.*, page 25.

The attitudes of the brethren toward God, Scripture, and brethren who earnestly opposed this innovation appears to have been, "We will use the organ regardless." As Lamar wrote, "... these lachrymose wailings had but little effect." Cry all you wish; we will force the organ in! You say there is no Scripture for it, but we feel "culture" justifies its use. Brother James L. Long, a long time elder in the church at Shelbyville, Kentucky, upon learning some within the congregation over which he served as an elder were putting the organ in, wrote, "When we heard how they were working the wires, we immediately got up a remonstrance and protest as follows:

"Whereas, a certain portion of the Church of Christ in Shelbyville, Ky., appears determined to introduce an organ into the worship; and,

"Whereas, it has been the fruitful source of division and discord, wherever it has been placed in our churches; and,

"Whereas, we know it will bring discord and division at this place; and,

"Whereas, it contravenes the spirit, and obvious meaning of the following Scriptures of Divine truth, (several Scriptures cited, EER)...

"For the above reasons and considerations we, the undersigned members of the Church of Christ at this place, do enter our solemn protest against the introduction of an organ into the worship, and we entreat and beseech our brethren to give this matter a prayerful consideration before they thrust in an apple of discord to alienate and divide the body of Christ. (Twenty two (22) names were affixed to this plea, EER).

Brother Long continued: "The organ party paid no attention to our protest, but went on to carry out their purpose." *A Short History of the Long Family*, by J.L. Long, 1898, pages

70-73. The trouble came in 1889 in that church, said brother Long. *Ibid.*, page 65. Brother Long said, "The church of Christ had always been opposed to instrumental music in the worship and in harmony with the Word of God could not be otherwise." True as this statement is, brethren through recent history have "thrust in an apple of discord" to the splitting of the church. More recently the apples have come by the bushels!

We have some record of stated desires for the instrument in the worship as early as 1851. It was in that year that Campbell wrote in his *Harbinger*, "To all spiritually minded Christians, such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert." The truth is, however, no church of the Lord ever used one because the Lord authorized it! Willard E. Fortune said, "The introduction of the organ into the worship of the church was the occasion of a bitter controversy, and was one of the main causes of division which finally came. It is impossible to state when instrumental music was first used in the worship of a Christian Church." *The Disciples in Kentucky*, page 372. We notice the historian's "the introduction ...": Man introduced it, not the Lord. It was then and shall forevermore be "an apple of discord."

The Sponsoring church form of cooperation and church supported Boards styled Orphan Homes are two more "apples of discord," too.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" ((Psalm 133:1).

514 South Green Street, Glasgow, KY 42141 **GT**

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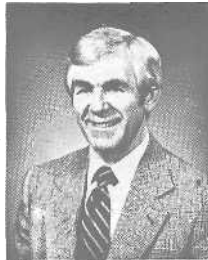
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town!

by Dudley Ross Spears

EVEN before Halloween the halls of the Shopping Centers and Malls are being decked with holly because Christmas will be here before you know it. Around the world, this holiday will be celebrated, allegedly as an honor to the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet, sociologists tell us in unison that there will be more domestic violence, more alcoholic related injuries and death, more money spent uselessly, more infidelity by marital partners, than at any other time of the year. The annual office party, which is usually nothing more than a "drinking party," furnishes the stage for many adulterous relationships to be spawned. The drinking begins, the party gets rolling along rapidly, and at the end, dozens of drunk and half-drunk people stagger toward an automobile, ignition keys in hand. Is this really the way and the time to celebrate the birth of Jesus? There is no biblical basis for the "Christmas" celebration. It did not originate with the Lord or His apostles. The only day which honors anything about Jesus is Sunday, the Lord's Day. It is the day Christians meet to remember His death and suffering (I Corinthians 11:26). The bread and the cup of the feast are the elements of the communion or participation of saints in the body of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16). Outside of this feast, there is nothing in the New Testament authorizing celebrations, masses, or special days. Christmas is more pagan than biblical. An apostate Christian, Liberius, called "Bishop of Rome," decided that December 25 would be an appropriate date on which to celebrate a special "mass" in honor of the birth of Jesus Christ. The Romans had celebrated a Mithraic feast to the Sun-god. The Roman Saturnalia, another pagan festival marked by extremely wild revelry and licentious abandon, began near the middle of December and lasted till the new year. It honored the gods the Romans associated with the planet Saturn. Liberius apparently felt that it was a good time to attract people away from the pagan practice of honoring the winter solstice to a day honoring the birth of Christ. Christmas surely is not even hinted at in the Bible.

Christmas is an English word that means literally, "Christ Mass." A "mass" is a religious celebration in Roman Catholic and some Anglican churches in which the prayers and rituals are regarded as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Why should one day in the year be set

aside to remember the birth of Christ, or to have special ceremonies in which there is a vain attempt to duplicate the once for all time sacrifice of Christ? Christmas is not biblical; it is a combination of paganism and Catholicism.



For Christians, this poses a problem. Should we celebrate the holiday called "Christmas?" The answer to the question depends on what is meant by celebrate. If by "celebrate Christmas," there is any kind of religious significance attached to the day, the answer is no. If by "celebrate Christmas," is meant no more than celebrating the 4th of July, then the answer is yes. There is nothing wrong with national customs, holidays, celebrations, or festivals. Christmas is declared as a civil holiday. Banks and schools close. Factories and businesses shut down. Mostly, only such businesses as emergency services, convenient stores, and a few others remain open on Christmas Day. It would be pretty difficult not to celebrate it in some fashion. As long as the religious and pagan elements are not included, and as long as people act decently, there is no harm in exchanging gifts, and getting together as families and friends.

This posture toward this holiday can be a useful tool. From now till December 25, the phones in the offices of buildings where Christians meet will be ringing with an appeal such as, "Do you give out Christmas baskets?" My stock answer is, "No, we do not observe this as an activity of this congregation," or some similar such response. If the person doesn't immediately hang up, you may have an opportunity to explain why, and then a few other things — possibly. It is a little difficult to explain, however, when someone says, "Well, I noticed a Christmas Tree in the lobby of _____ church of Christ." My response has to be that I am ever more grateful that the Lord gave independence and autonomy to each local church.

No special cantatas or Christmas celebration will be held by faithful local congregations of the Lord's people. They will meet to observe the Lord's Supper, study the Bible together, pray together, sing together, and give of their means together — just like they do the other Sundays in the year. If anything special is done, possibly it would be an excellent idea to concentrate on what the Bible teaches about self-control, over-indulgence, and revelry. **GT**

Masonry A False Religion

by A.C. Grider (1912-1990)

My opposition Weak At First. Ever since I obeyed the gospel, several years ago, I have heard brethren discuss the merits and demerits of Freemasonry. Some brethren opposed it and were apparently sincere in their opposition. Other brethren, some in the lodge and some out, favored it and were also apparently sincere in their contentions.

It had been argued that Christians could not be Masons because Masonry was another religious institution. But Masons steadfastly denied that Masonry was a religious institution. It seemed that if it could be proven that Masonry was a religious institution our brethren would hasten to get out of it.

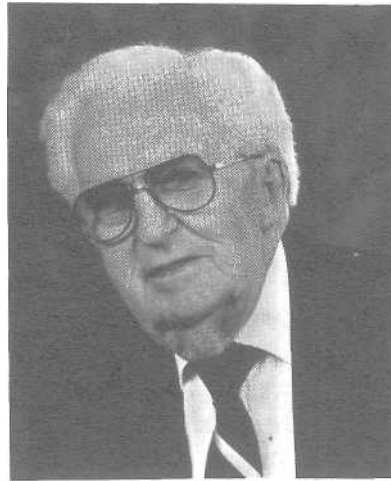
Personally, I was convinced that the Masonic Lodge was no place for a Christian. But I couldn't *prove* it was a religious institution. Hence, I did not make a big fight against membership in it. But when the congregation where I preached began to be troubled by the question, I knew I had to find out about it. Consequently I went to the **Masonic Home Journal** (by telephone) and found that the following books "fairly represented" Masonic teaching:

1. **The Kentucky Monitor** — by Henry Pirtle.

2. **Morals and Dogma** - by Albert Pike.

3. **Encyclopedia of Freemasonry** - by Albert G. Mackey.

In addition to talking by phone to the **Masonic Home Journal**, I wrote a letter to the **Grand Lodge of Kentucky**, in Louisville, and specifically asked if these three works fairly represented Masonic teaching. The Grand Secretary of the Lodge answered and I have the letter. He declared that these works not only fairly represented Masonic teaching, but that they were "standard and recommended."



From these three works (four books, the Encyclopedia is a two-volume set) which fairly represented Masonry, which are standard and recommended, I received the greatest shock of my life. I learned, among other things, that:

1. The Masonic Lodge is a religious institution.
2. The Masonic Lodge is opened for religious purposes.
3. The Masonic Lodge has religious ceremonies.
4. Masonry produces a religious faith.
5. Masons engage in religious worship.
6. Masonry is a religion.
7. Masonry is worship.
8. Masonry fits one for immortal nature.
9. The Masonic Lodge will lead to heaven.
10. Masonry builds a spiritual temple.
11. The Masonic Lodge has a redeemer, a High Priest, a Creed, an Altar, a Decalogue and a Crucifix.
12. Masons practice baptism, eat the Lord's Supper, Burn Incense, and keep Easter.

All of this and more too! And the

information comes not from a prejudiced preacher, nor from a man who has left the lodge, nor from an enemy of the Masons, nor from anybody's opinion or think so.

This information comes from books which the **Masonic Home Journal** and the **Grand Lodge of Kentucky** say are standard and recommended. They tell us these books fairly represent Masonic teaching. They tell us these books do not misrepresent Masonic teaching. No honest man will deny that the 12 things listed above are true.

Quotations From These Works

The Kentucky Monitor, page 28:

"Masonry is a religious institution."

Page 213 "Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion."

Page 526 "Masonry is a worship."

Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

Volume I, page 50. -(I will paraphrase this item. ACG) The Masonic altar is for religious uses. It identifies Masonry as a religious institution. It is a part of a really religious worship. NOTE: Though I paraphrased this item because of its length, the terms "religious use," "religious institution," and "really religious worship" are the words of the author and not mine. ACG.

Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

Volume II.
Page 253 "Freemasonry claims to be a religion."

Page 618 "Masonry is 'eminently a religious institution'."

Page 619 "Masonry, then, is, indeed, a religious institution."

Page 782 The theocratic philosophy of Freemasonry "will produce an active religious faith and lead in the end to 'a building not made with hands, eternal in the heaven'."

Look at that last statement again.

Continued Bottom Next Page

Looking For Life in All the Wrong Places

by James Fox



OW many of us have tried at one time or another to work our way through a maze? Those of us who have tried to work this type of puzzle know that it involves a trial-and-error process. We often make the wrong turn and finish up at a dead end. Life is like that for many. It is a series of wrong turns; dead ends which leave people bewildered and confused.

Men have described life in a variety of ways. Life has been called a nightmare between two nothings and a predicament that precedes death. Someone suggested, "life is a foreign language which all men mispronounce." A scientist wrote that life is a cosmic accident that will someday degenerate back into the void from which it came. A materialist called life a series of possessions that merely fluctuates with time. These statements about life give a clear indication that many people in our world have not discovered it. But where is life to be found?

Some Seek Life in Pleasure. Solomon sought life in the pursuit and enjoyment of

pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:1). Solomon said, *"Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure"* (Ecclesiastes 3:10, RSV). There are two distinctive ways in which Solomon sought meaning for his life in pleasure. First, he did so by trying liquor (Ecclesiastes 2:3, RSV). However there is no indication that Solomon drank to the degree of becoming an alcoholic. Yet, he sought meaning for life in pleasure as he filled his body with wine.

Another way in which Solomon sought meaning in pleasure was through lust. Sex, which God gave to be the servant of love, became the master of his life. The Bible tells us that Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (I Kings 11:1-3).

Pleasure, or having a good time, has become the religion of America. One beer commercial states, "You only go around once in life, so you must get all the gusto you can." The golden rule of this new religion is, "If it feels good, do it."

But pleasure cannot give meaning to life. Solomon who lived for the good times, came to say, *"Pleasure does you no good"* (Ecclesiastes 2:2, TEV). The man who said, "I will cheer my body with wine," came to say "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). The person living in pleasure is said to be "dead" while living (I Timothy 5:6). To be sure there is pleasure in sin (Hebrews 11:25, RSV). The fact is they are not permanent or lasting, they are transitory and fleeting.

The greatest pleasure of all comes from a life relation-

Continued From Page 6

Masonry produces faith!! And Masonry will lead to heaven!! Not only is Masonry a religious institution, it is a *false* religion! I am fully persuaded that one *must* come out of the Masonic Lodge to be saved!

Just One Question Remains to be Answered

Having established, by authentic Masonic Books, that Masonry is as religion, one question remains to be answered. Why do sincere Christians (in the Blue Lodge -- first 3 degrees, ACG) deny and continue to deny that Masonry is a religion? The answers come from **Morals and Dogma** and is as startling as anything I have ever read. Hear it from **page 819**. "The Blue Degrees are but the outer court or portice of the Temple. Part of the symbols are displayed there to the initiate, but he is *intentionally misled by false interpretations*. It is not intended that he shall understand them, but it is intended that he shall imagine he understands them. But their true explication is reserved for the Adepts, the princes of Masonry. (Emphasis mind, ACG.)

"It is well enough for the mass of those called Masons, to imagine that all is contained in the Blue Degrees; and *whoso*

attempts to undeceive them will labor in vain..." (Emphasis mind, ACG.) There you have it. The Blue Degree Masons (which includes most church of Christ Masons) are *misled* and *deceived* and only *imagine* they understand Masonry. The "higher-ups" in the Lodge boast that these people are *so completely* misled and deceived that we will labor in vain if we attempt to "undeceive them." I disagree with them. I believe I can undeceive *all* honest Christians. I don't believe an honest Christian will stay in the Masonic Lodge when he sees it is a religious institution. If he does he had no business in the church in the first place!!!

Brethren, it is not enough to say, "I'll still shake hands with you." It is not enough to say, "I have heard that before," or "I will not let Grider make up my mind." It is not enough to say, "I'll not take Grider's word for it."

This is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of being saved or lost. I didn't know it before, but *I do know it now!!!* No man can possibly be saved and go to heaven in the Masonic Lodge. It is *a false*, even a *blasphemous* religious institution. Come out of her, my brethren. I am concerned about you. I love you.

GT

ship with our Lord (Psalm 16:11). Pleasure, instead of being the goal of life, is the product of a good life.

Others Seek Meaning For Life In Possessions.

Material possessions are essential for living. The tragedy is that these and all they represent have become goals of life rather than the means of living life. During the presidential campaign of 1976, one college student told a reporter, "I'm voting for _____; he is the candidate who will help me make the most money." The tragedy is that people have become obsessed with the material side of life to the neglect of the spiritual. The first question asked by individuals, businesses, governments, and even churches which are faced with decisions is not, "Should it be done?" or "Is it right?" More often the first question asked is, "How much does it cost?"

Possessions, though essential in life, do not have the power to give life meaning. Solomon decided that the accumulation of wealth was a "striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:11, RSV). To base life upon material goods is to base life upon nothing, and to gain possessions is to have nothing. Life does not consist in the abundance of things which one possesses (Luke 12:15).

Life is Found in God's Son.

Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10; 14:6). The reason many fail to have life is their refusal to come to him (John 5:40, RSV). Life is not found in pleasure or possessions, but in Jesus Christ. He died to provide it and lives to give it.

Solomon, who sought life in all the wrong places and practices, came to a realization that life was found only in the Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:1-3). Solomon pleads for men to remember the Lord and serve Him in the freshness of their youth, for a real life is found in Him and Him alone.

The life Jesus Christ gives is "divine" because it is the life of God Himself experienced by obedient faith, resulting in one becoming a child of God (John 3:16; 1:12; Galatians 3:26,27).

The life Jesus Christ gives is "durable." There are so many things which are here today and gone tomorrow. But life in Christ is a lasting life (John 10:27-29). Paul, the apostle, wrote of the durability of life in Christ (Romans 8:38-39). To be sure, the life Christ provides is eternal.

To millions, life seems to be a cruel joke. It is a maze of wrong turns and disappointing dead ends. Millions search for meaning in the pursuit of fleeting and momentary pleasures, and the accumulation of possessions, and other such empty exercises. All the while, Jesus stands and says, "*I am the life*" (John 14:6).

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“I Despise My Life”

by Olen Holderby



HOUGH I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life" (Job 9:21).

This statement is in the midst of Job's reply to the speech of Bildad the Shuhite. We must keep in mind Job's suffering, and the efforts of his three friends to explain that suffering. Chapter 8 gives Bildad's speech; while chapters 9-10 record Job's reply. Job points out the extreme unlikeliness of man's being able to answer God (9:3), and that no one can really prosper by hardening himself against God (9:4). Then he speaks of the great power and wisdom of God, and of God being able to do what He pleases without man being able to alter His action (9:5ff).

Job considers arguing his case with God; but he is at a loss for arguments with such wise and powerful opponent. Even if God should hear his concern, Job's own limitations precludes his knowing how to answer God. Further, he feels that his own mouth would condemn him. However, Job cannot accept responsibility for his suffering condition and, at the same time, be honest with himself. He thinks himself to be innocent, "I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life" (NKJ). What does Job mean by saying, "I despise my life?"

Some have suggested that Job was saying that he despised his past life; while others have said that Job was declaring that his life was not worth striving for with God. To me, it seems more likely that Job was drawing a contrast between self-importance and the importance of God's plans for him. Perhaps the NIV is plainer for verse 21, "Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life." If this be accurate, the verse appears to offer some good lessons for us today.

1. **We Do Not Argue With God.** How well this is taught in the New Testament, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His Will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? (Romans 9:19-20). Whatever God says, on any subject, settles the matter on that subject. Will a man argue with God?

2. **The Relative Insignificance Of Our Life As Compared With The Plans Of God For Us.** This, too, is well taught in the New Testament, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it

unto life eternal."

(John 12:25). Luke 14:26; Matthew 16:24-25, and Luke 10:16, all reflect very pointedly on this thought. How is it that the creature who receives life from the Mighty God, argue with the Giver over the use of that life?

Webster defines "despise" as "Feel contempt for," and offers as synonyms: abhor, disdain, scorn, look down, etc. Vine says that it means, "To make of no account, to regard as nothing." One very important question is in order. In contrast with the plans of God for you, can you say, *I Despise My Own Life?*

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Is "The Faith" Worth The Fight?

by James W. Shear

WE have but to view the sad condition of our great nation to understand the destructiveness of the pacifist philosophy. Many of us have fought and many died to defend the liberties of which we are being robbed daily as a result of this philosophy. Armed with this philosophy, liberal politicians have made it clear that they will go to any extent to destroy our nation.

Ironically, the pacifist will fight vigorously, if not honorably, to promote his philosophy. He has made much gain and deceived many. As a nation, we have become so hypocritically good that we fear our enemies will criticize us if we stand firm against the forces of evil. The "rights" of criminals are often respected above the rights of their victims. We cannot bear to punish, lest we be accused of mistreating the poor thief, rapists, murderer or mugger who lurks in the shadows for the next victim.

Criminals are often called "sick" and society is blamed for their ungodly deeds. How often have you read or heard on some news report that we are all guilty for their crimes? Sickening isn't it? Surely it is!

Sadder still, this philosophy has found its way into the church of the Lord and it has lost none of its destructive force. It will weaken and destroy all who give it lodging in their hearts.

Many have developed such a delicate constitution that they cannot bear to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) and cannot bear those who do. Often they consider themselves endowed with superior wisdom which they believe to be so evidently lacking in those who "earnestly contend." They will never concede that those who "contend" have the right attitude. One young intellectual got quit a few "amens" when he publicly longed for the day when no one would be known for any *controversial* stand.

Shame on us that Satan has gained so much ground in our generation. That he has cannot be denied by any who will take a casual glance. Some, however, have shut their eyes and stopped their ears to the warning signs.

When there are those who cringe to think that error will be specified and uprooted — *when* Christ is rooted out by the possessive "MY" and the nominative "I"—*when* sermons are pretty words but have the substance of cotton candy - *when* preachers give a watered down, sweet and witty performance for a few days and we call it a "gospel meeting" — *when* preachers do not know the difference in preaching and performing — *when* the audience does not

know the difference in the two and applauds that which was supposed to be a gospel sermon - *when* not one word is uttered to discourage the applause as if it were in order -- and *when* we had rather a preacher tickle our ears than to preach that which is needed, Satan is having a field day!

And there is more. *When* preacher will not expose error for fear it will hurt them — *when* preachers are judged and rejected because they have been on the firing line for the cause of Christ - *when* preachers are more interested in holding meetings than exposing obvious error - *when* we decide we have had too much negative and now we must have all positive preaching -- *when* preachers are trying to out "scholar" one another -- and *when* we can understand perfectly Mark 16:16 but have difficulty understanding Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9, we can know that Satan is in the camp.

Satan has had much success in taking the simple things and making them complicated, the most beautiful truths and making them ridiculous, the most understandable words and making them profound and hiding the obvious in obscurity. Our minds can become muddled, our judgments can become distorted and our values confused if we let him have his way with us.

The pacifist philosophy offers a false hope and false security. While the pacifist is feeling that all is right with God and man, error is getting entrenched to tear down and destroy.

The religious pacifist has to take a partial view of Christ and isolate that part from the whole. This is how denominations are formed. To avoid this we must study to get a complete picture of Christ and His teaching. The "Beatitudes" (Matthew 5:1-12) are wonderful but they are only a small part. The rest of the "Sermon on the Mount" is vital but, even here we should not specialize in the *positive* and ignore the *negative*. Our view of Christ will broaden as we see Him cleanse the temple (Matthew 21:12-13) and denounce the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-39).

This is by no means the sum total. We must go beyond His personal ministry to get a better understanding. His teaching, which we understand to be "the faith" (Jude 3), sheds more light on Him and on that which He expects of His disciples.

Men, who were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), recorded the truth that we might know (I John 1:1-4). We do not have to be ignorant concerning God's view on *the faith* or *the fight*.

Paul's admonished Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all

long-suffering and doctrine..." (II Timothy 4:2-4). And again; "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (I Timothy 6:12). To the church at Corinth, he wrote: "We were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears" (II Corinthians 7:5). In his final days on earth, he wrote: "I have *fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..." (II Timothy 4:6-8). He stated that our weapons are not carnal (II Corinthians 10:4-6) and that the truth is to be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:14-15), but we must "fight the good fight of faith" to "lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:12).

Speaking the truth in love is compatible with pressing a point and exposing false doctrine (Matthew 15:1-20; 23:1-39). It does not eliminate disputing and persuading (Acts 19:9; 14:3; 9:29), nor earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 3). It does not prohibit, but demands, the marking of "them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine..." (Romans 16:17-18). It simply states the attitude of heart we are to have as we fight, earnestly contend, dispute, persuade and mark those who cause division contrary to the doctrine of Christ. Controversy and love, not only can, but must walk hand in hand.

It is easy to forget the liberties we have enjoyed in our lifetime where not gained without a fight. But, without a fight, we can lose them. It is also easy to forget that if godly men and women had not stood firm and fought "the good fight of faith," many would not know the truth today.

When Israel, in the Old Testament, departed from the Lord, it affected not only them, but their children for generations. The same thing can be said of us and our children if we do not consider the faith worth the fight. The consequences are too far reaching for us not to fight.

The pacifist has made "controversy" a dirty word. To brand one as a controversialist in the political arena can mean political assassination. In the church it can be as devastating.

The religious pacifist likes to give the impression that he patterns his actions, or lack of action, after Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ cannot fit into the mold the pacifist has fashioned for Him. Contrary to the thinking of many, Christ was one of the world's greatest *controversialists*.

In his book, **Christian, Contend For Thy Cause**," J. D. Bales quotes from an introduction to another book titled **"Jesus As a Controversialist,"** by B. J. Radford. Radford wrote: "Perusal of this little volume will create the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was a constant, persistent, strenuous and aggressive controversialist, and will help us to understand the bitterness of the intolerance of Scribes and Pharisees, and all those whose error and vices He so constantly controverted and exposed. The author helps us to an instructive view of the wide range and varied methods of the controversies which Jesus took up with the propagators of error. He allowed no

theories, systems or customs which have to do with human life or destiny to go unchallenged. Nor was there anything languid in His manner or method of attack.

"No one will be a controversialist of any kind who does not have a clear appreciation of the value of truth, and of his own responsibility in maintaining and propagating it. No one will be more than a languid controversialist who cares more for tolerance than for truth. Only he who feels the infinite life-giving value of truth, and the fatal folly of error, coupled with a deep sense of his responsibility and duty in view of their irrepressible conflict, will be such a controversialist as was Jesus Christ. He could at any moment have allayed the spirit of intolerance which hounded him, and have stayed the hand of persecution which at last nailed him to the cross, if He had consented to 'a conspiracy of silence.' When Pilate suggested a way of escape by compromising the truth, Jesus answered, with the cross only a few hours ahead, 'For this cause I came into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth.'

"The only antidote for evil is good, and the only antidote for error is truth. The world is so crowded with evil and error that he who would advance good and truth must be both a reformer and a controversialist. Peter and John and the rest, understood this and would not be forced into silence by any threats or punishments. Bearing witness to the truth in this error-ridden world is a business of strenuous belligerency: not of 'dignified silence' or 'masterly inactivity'."

The religious pacifist sees no difference in "fight(ing) the good fight of faith" and "looking for a fight." He sees no difference in "contending for the faith" and being "contentious." Therefore, those who "fight the good fight of faith," "earnestly contend," "dispute," "reprove," and "rebuke," as did Paul and the others will never meet with the approval of the pacifist. To him, there is not right way to do these things which are commanded.

No doubt many mistakes have been made in efforts to "earnestly contend for the faith." That does not mean that it is a mistake to "earnestly contend." The greatest mistake we can make is to be forced into a dignified silence while Satan takes over and has his way with us.

The *crown of righteousness* can only be claimed by those *who fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith*. Those who do this can die in hope (II Timothy 4:5-7). *The hope* should make *the faith worth the fight*.

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The Christian Experience - Loneliness Part 3

by B. Clint Price



WHEN the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." - Genesis 2:18.

As autonomous Churches of Christ we have wistfully sought an answer for why many congregations decline in number, and sometimes in commitment to spiritual growth and integrity. I have heard such answers as laziness, uncaring, indifferent, cold, unloving, careless, and worldly given as reasons. There was a time that I subscribed to some if not all of these "reasons." I no longer accept these as the universal answers. I am convinced that a portion of the problem is loneliness, primarily because the natural byproduct of loneliness is discouragement; and discouragement, at its' best, is the seed bed of indifference. I further believe churches are not idle and unfruitful because they are determined to be such. We must not deceive ourselves by believing that we, or any true body of God's people, would resolutely seek to share in the reward of the Ephesian church (Revelation 2:4,5). The problem of indifference has a far deeper root than mere apathy. Correct the problem of loneliness and the plague of indifference and apathy will be well on its' way to a natural death. In this brief study of loneliness I have attempted to outline the most prominent causes and remedies of this growing Christian problem. Loneliness, we know, brings an abundance of sorrow to its' sufferers, and many of God's people have unknowingly succumbed to its' ravages. This is testified to by the declining attendance figures at gospel meetings, Bible classes and midweek assemblies. But why would a lonely Christian avoid an assembly where loneliness could be dispelled? What does loneliness do to people? What signs should I look for to? Without a doubt the uniqueness of each person will cause it to be disclosed in different ways. But some combination of the following will likely be seen or felt. First is isolation. Isolation from others will often suggest loneliness. This is often followed by futile attempts to reach out for contact with others. As our creator, Jehovah knew that man could not flourish without companionship (perhaps this is one reason we assemble [Hebrews 10:25]). In community with others we are open to encouragement, correction, identification and companionship. This is vital to the health and well being of one's faith (1 Corinthians 12:2-25). Being among people, (i.e., close friends, brethren, or family) does not insure against loneliness. There must be an interaction of

which I am a part. Participation in Bible classes, visiting the sick, an active spiritual interest in something or someone other than myself is a God directed remedy for the ravages of loneliness (1 Corinthians 15:58). If you are withdrawn or withdrawing from activity with others you may be suffering the plague of loneliness.



Second is a sense of worthlessness. A feeling of worthlessness can be a sign as well as a cause of loneliness. Failure in relationships or in activities promotes and feeds loneliness. An inability to associate actively with others brings a sense of worthlessness and fosters a withdrawal into discouragement, self-centeredness, a belief that no one understands. Without a reckless sense of importance (which by the way is often confused with value) we must remember that it took the death of Jesus to make the Christian community possible. There is a vast difference between "importance" and "worth." I am not so important that the world cannot continue without me, but, on the other hand I am of great value to the community of God's people (Matthew 6:26).

Third is a sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness often leads to despair and evens thoughts of self-destruction. When loneliness is too great suicide becomes a "way out." Although we have no difficulty in recognizing the eternal consequences of such an irrational act, still, suicide is real among God's people. Christians are increasingly turning to chemical answers (prescription or otherwise) to escape the sense of loneliness and despair. They seem to be saying "things will never get better." Perhaps too much is expected from the world, and perhaps we expect more from God's people than even Jesus expects. The true answer to loneliness is in the "things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18); and in "whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, {even} our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Finally there are those who lash out in violence. Supported by recent research an author suggests that "further investigations will bear out this tentative conclusion: very lonely people, who get angry rather than depressed, will be prone to express their frustration in destructive ways. I do not think it is mere coincidence that we are witnessing an unequalled rise in violence and at the same time loneliness is so pervasive and intense." Apparently loneliness can be expressed in violence and delinquency, which become a

Continued Bottom Next Page

and idolatry occurred. The king was so carried away that he commanded the golden vessels out of God's temple to be brought and used to serve the wine in.

The mood suddenly changed from one of revelry to fear as a man's hand, and only the hand, wrote on the wall (verse 5). Belshazzar is so frightened that "his knees knocked" (verse 6). The mysterious writing inside the palace and the Medes and Persians on the outside was too much. What did this writing mean?

Belshazzar called the wise men and promised that the interpreter of the writing would be given gifts and the third position (after he and his father) of the kingdom. Once again the wise men were unable to help a king (cf. 2:11-12;4:7,18).

At this time, the queen, possibly one of Nebuchadnezzar's wives, came into the king's presence. She reminded him of how Daniel had helped Nebuchadnezzar under similar circumstances (verses 10-12). Daniel was brought in and offered gifts and the third position in the kingdom if he could interpret the writing. Although Daniel was not interested in the gifts, he agreed to help with the writing (verse 17).

Daniel began by showing that Jehovah had given Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom that ruled the world. He became proud and God had to humble him. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men and ate grass like an ox. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar realized that Jehovah ruled in the kingdoms of men (verse 21).

"But you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this" (verse 22). In other words, "Belshazzar, you are not half the man Nebuchadnezzar was. The people do not tremble at your name (verse 19), and yet, you have 'lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven' (verse 23) by drinking out of the (holy) vessels." "And you have praised the gods of silver and gold..." (verse 23). These sins caused God to send the hand. God's message is this. "Your kingdom is finished, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting, and your kingdom will fall to the Medes and Persians (verses 26-28). Notice: Daniel interprets these **nouns** as the **verbs** "number, weigh, and divide." The nouns literally mean "a mina, a shekel, and a half-shekel" respectively. (See *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, #2945a and NKJV margin, Daniel 5:25).

We are not told Belshazzar's reaction, but, true to his promise, Daniel was clothed with purple, given a golden chain, and promoted to the third ruler of the kingdom. (Could the king have thought that this might appease Daniel's God?) Nevertheless, the Medes and Persians entered the city that night and took the city without a fight, although Belshazzar himself was killed (verse 30). Even the fortified walls of Babylon could not provide protection against the sentence of God.

(Note: The identity of Darius the Mede is uncertain. Gobryas (Ugbaru), a Babylonian general and governor of Gutium, defected to Cyrus and was responsible for Babylon's

capture (October 12). But he died just three weeks later (November 6). A better possibility is Gubaru (Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*). Ugbaru is known to have ruled Babylon for fourteen years. He fits Daniel's description of Darius.)

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courses were baptized by Paul and Eric Biyela. David Ngonyama has begun teaching in Empangeni while also training to drive heavy trucks. Sibusiso Manzini, a high school teacher, has begun driving and recently helped with he preaching at Esikhawini. Helen is teaching a ladies class on Saturday nights. In August the Eshowe congregation averaged 38 in Attendance at Sunday morning services.

SOUTH AFRICAN REPORT FROM DAN HUDDLESTON:

"We are over \$1,800 in the hole. Help us, please. We have sold one personal item of value to eat this month. Anything else that we could sell would have to be replaced (of course, one loses half the cost). So, we leave it in the hands of the Lord as well as in yours. I'm reluctant to beg for more help because you brethren have all been so wonderful to help us. Our work here would not be possible at all without your help. We love you all and keep you in our prayers. Remember us and keep us in your hearts and prayers."

REQUEST FOR BOOKS:

Do you have books written by faithful brethren which you can donate? If so please send them to Jonathan Sapitula, 139 Buligay Street, Brooks Point, Palawan, 5305 Republic of Philippines. More information about brother Sapitula can be received by calling Vernon Love at (813) 533-3563.

FIELD REPORT: RAY MADRIGAL IN PADUCAH, KY

During the weeks of July 28 through August 4, I had the blessed opportunity to preach a series of Gospel Meetings in Guadalajara, Mexico. The series was unique in that special classes were arranged for the young people on the subjects of atheism, denominationalism, authority, evidences, courtship, marriage and divorce. The special sessions were 90 minutes each day in addition to the regularly scheduled gospel meeting. Young people from all over the country (Monterrey, Matamoros, Linares, etc.) traveled to Guadalajara to participate in these classes and to enjoy the fellowship of other

NEWS FROM LARRY DEVORE, MEDINA, OHIO

There have been two baptized, one restored and two withdrawn from since the last report. I recently held a meeting at the Capitol church in Madison, Wisconsin where my son-in-law Craig Meyer is the evangelist. James Hahn will conduct our Fall meeting in Medina, October 21 -27.

NEWS FROM PAUL WILLIAMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

There were two baptized at the tent meeting at Esikhawini. The Topes arrive to assist in the work and the Beckleys leave for the states. The work fund is short of funds so if you have planned to send help, please do so. We are looking forward to seeing you on our 1992 trip to the U.S. Remember, August-October is when we are planning to be there.

NEWS FROM MIKE HUGHES, PLANO, ILLINOIS

December will mark 6 months since we moved to work with the brethren here at Piano. We have baptized one and enrolled 20 in our correspondence course. We are printing a bulletin and running a column in the local newspaper plus we have just finished a workbook on Leviticus. If you know of any we might contact in our area for Bible studies or that might need a visit please feel free to call on us(708) 552-8735

DEBATE IN SALEM, INDIANA

Steve Smith and Gerald Tackett will debate the "Once Saved, Always Saved" issue on December 7th. More information can be obtained by contacting Steve on (812) 883-3346 or 2033.

DEBATE IN ARKANSAS

Wayne Greeson and Buddy Loooper will debate the "Number of Persons In The Godhead" and the "Time of Miraculous Gifts" on December 2,3,5 and 6th. For more information call (501)879-2097 or 2036.

SUPPORT NEEDED:

TERRY PARTAIN needs support for the Spanish work in Miami, Florida.....if you can help or desire more information contact Terry at (813) 347-7572.

JOHN W. PITMAN makes an urgent appeal for support from Louisa, Kentucky.....he can be contacted at P. O. Box 9, Louisa 41230.

RAY VOTAW writes that **DAVID AND JOANNE BECKLEY** need assistance is raising funds for their trip to the states. If you can help please call (806) 792-6853.

THE WILLIAMES IN SOUTH AFRICA:

Two brothers who had studied correspondence

Christians. If you know the geographical relationship of these Mexican cities, you will appreciate the great sacrifices these young people made to be able to attend the meeting. In most cases, they had to endure a 21 hour bus ride one-way. Many had to take a week off (without pay) in order to attend this series of Bible studies. Typical housing arrangements included 10 or more people sharing a single bathroom and blankets on the floor for sleeping. I mentioned a few of these details because they are unusual or different for these Mexican Christians, but because they serve as a reminder of how materially blessed we are in the USA.

On the other hand, the spiritual riches of the saints in Mexico are evident. If the love, joy, harmony, unity and spiritual maturity of the Guadalajara congregation is any indication, the state of the church in Mexico is full of hope and prosperity. Much of this spiritual strength can be attributed to the work of Apolos Rodriquez, the local preacher at Guadalajara. Although he is not engaged in secular work, he still continues to preach regularly and to minister to the needs of the congregation. He is to be commended for his work's sake.

On the final night of the meeting, four (4) people were baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. If the series served to spur these sinners on to obey the gospel, it was a great success. For my part, I know that I received far more blessings than I gave. My God be praised for His unspeakable gift!

Plea For Assistance: Efrain Perez

Efrain Perez called today for Barcelona to say that he will have open heart mitro valve surgery October 9th. Fortunately he has

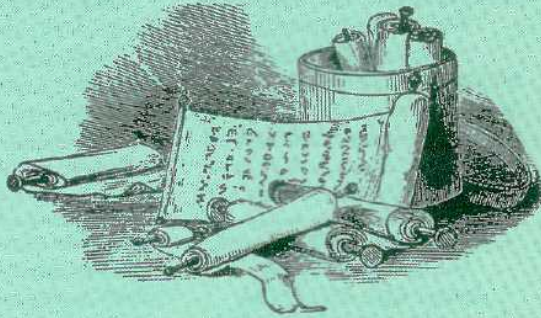
insurance which will pay for everything but the valve. He asked me to arrange a loan for \$5,000 to cover that. He hates to ask brethren for more money because they have been so generous with him already. But I want to let you know. You may send money to me to be forwarded to him or mail to his account #36-102-076 to the Bank of Danville, Box 930, Danville, KY 40422. And you may write him at Apartodo 27026, 08080 Barcelona, Spain.

(Report submitted by Philip Morgan, 2108 N. 7th Avenue, Pheonix, AZ).

Bound Volume

As we announced in our editorial, our bound volume which will include Volumes I & II, 1990 -1991 should be ready sometime in January 1992. If you have not already ordered yours, be sure and do so. There will only be 75 copies available. The price will be \$20.00 each, Plus postage. Send your order in today! Yours will be mailed as soon as we receive them on a first come first serve basis.

Study Your Bible Daily!



Writings From Yesteryear

“Harness To Fit The Horse”

In a recent meeting in Greggton, Texas, brother Foy E. Wallace made a particularly apt illustration relative to church government. The illustration -- and for that matter, the whole sermon that went with it -- should be given wide circulation.

Pointing out the fact that a working horse needs a harness that fits -- brother Wallace suggested that the Lord has given us a pattern of New Testament government (harness) consisting of elders (bishops, pastors, overseers) in every church (Acts 14:23) and has prescribed the “size” of this harness - “elders which are among you:” elders only to a flock to which they can be example (1 Peter 5:1-3). Since the Lord did not contemplate a church organization any larger than the single congregation, He gave a harness just big enough to fit that need.

It is only when brethren begin to organize something larger than a local church, having functions that go beyond the authorized functions of a single congregation, that they find it necessary to invent human harness, human schemes of government and organization, to fit the “oversized” horse. Brethren, let’s do some serious thinking about this.

by Robert F. Turner - Taken From
The Preceptor, May 1957