

The Berea Baptist Banner

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Whole Number 289

Who Should Baptize?

By J. M. Pendleton

(1811 - 1891)

This is a strange question, in view of the fact, that the ordinance of baptism was instituted more than eighteen centuries ago, and has been observed in different parts of the world till now. It does seem wonderful that it is not a settled question outside of the realm of debate, but it is not. Conflicting opinions are held concerning it, and it appears to be destined to periodical, if not constant agitation. If I mistake not, there is as much interest in the subject now as at any former time.



J. M. Pendleton

It will probably be easier to show who should baptize, by first showing who should not baptize. This, then, indicates the plan I adopt:

The administration of baptism is not committed to the world. By the world, I mean men of the world, who

“mind earthly things,” who “have their portion in this life,” who are unregenerate and impenitent. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” –and that one of the ordinances of the Gospel should be

Continued on page 68

Duties of the Pastor and People

By Harold Harvey

(1937 - 2000)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Several duties for both pastor and people are defined in the Word of God. It is God by the Holy Spirit that joins together the pastor and people of the church. It is the opinion of some that a people without a pastor is a tragedy, but they see the situation only from the viewpoint of the people. It is my opinion that a pastor without a people is a tragedy. I am thankful that it has pleased the great God of the universe to provide my people with a pastor and that He has given me a group of people to pastor.



Harold Harvey

THE DUTIES OF THE PASTOR
“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (I Tim. 3:1). It is the duty of the pastor to oversee

Continued on page 63

The Parable of the Leaven

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 - 2002)

“Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measure of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33).

“And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Luke 13:20-21).

Christ Himself explained the first two parables and the seventh in Mat-

thew, chapter 13. But He did not explain the others. Since the three He did explain sets forth the kingdom of God in some stage, we can safely assume the other four do the same. We must interpret the four unexplained ones in accord with the three of which He did give the meaning.

Among expositors two general interpretations have been given. Out of respect for some great men of the past I shall give both views. John Gill in His commentary gives the two

Continued on page 62

Observations of a Young Minister

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

(Author's Note: This sermon was transcribed from a message the author preached on April 28, 2002 at the Indore Baptist Church in Indore, WV.)

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day....” (Acts 26:22).

Paul was here before King Agrippa. He was a bound prisoner who had appealed to Caesar. Before being sent to Rome, Festus brought him before Agrippa in order that the king might hear Paul's case. Paul is here “...witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts



Jeff Short

26:22). He would often preach from the Old Testament Scriptures, proving that Jesus was the Christ. The keynote of his message was the fact of Christ's resurrection preaching, “That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and

Continued on page 69

Comments on Clouds

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 - 2002)

“Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Doest thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? Doest thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37:14-16). We are all familiar with the clouds in the sky. We wonder at them, we marvel at their beauty. Their attractive features have inspired poets and moved writers of books and songs.

In this modern day we have learned much about the clouds. Scientists tell us clouds are a visible mass

of vapor suspended in the blue sky. They constantly change in size and shape. Weather forecasters study clouds very closely because clouds tell a great deal about coming weather conditions. More and more, we are coming to realize the great importance the clouds play in our life on planet Earth.



Milburn Cockrell

THE MAKER OF THE

Continued on page 63

“THOU HAST GIVEN A BANNER TO THEM THAT FEAR THEE, THAT IT MAY BE DISPLAYED BECAUSE OF THE TRUTH” (PSALMS 60:4).



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Parable of the Leaven

Continued from page 61

views of this parable.

I shall first briefly examine the view of those who hold to the post-millennial teaching. They make the meal the world. The leaven represents the gospel. The woman the preachers of the gospel. The result is that the whole world is converted to Christ. They say that Christianity, which started small in its beginning, will pervade the whole race of mankind. This view cannot be reconciled with Scriptures which indicate a departure from the faith as this age closes (II Tim. 3:1-5,13; 4:3), not a conversion to the faith. This view contradicts the teaching of the other parables which Christ gave the interpretation. In the Parable of the Sower there is nothing said about a time when all the bad soil would become good soil. In the Parable of the Tares there is no prediction of a time when all the tares become wheat. In the Parable of the Dragnet there is no mention of the bad fish all becoming good fish.

My interpretation of the first view

is different from many who hold to what is generally considered the first view. I am almost totally convinced the second view is the correct one. But like Gill, I shall give both as I see them.

THE FIRST INTERPRETATION

Leaven is a strange thing. It consists of the common green mould in an undeveloped state. In one way it corrupts, and in another it makes thing edible and wholesome. Most of us do not care for unleavened bread at our tables. Leaven has a good and bad sense. It is for destruction and construction, for decay and for growth, for death and life. Many old commentators (Gill, Keach, etc.) hold that leaven is used in this parable in a good sense. I see in this first interpretation the establishment of the kingdom of God in the soul of one of the elect. I see the meal representing the soul of one of God's elect. The leaven is the grace of God which brings salvation (Tit. 2:11). The woman is a type of the Holy Spirit. The three measure (about a bushel) pictures the work of the Spirit on man's body, soul, and spirit. The results are the kingdom of God is established in the heart.

First, the leaven introduced into the meal was a foreign substance. It was something materially different from the meal itself, and a living, active person put it in the meal—the woman. Even so it is with the grace of God in the heart of one of His elect. Grace is not natural to man's nature. Before a man can experience the grace of God in truth, it must be imparted to him by the Spirit of grace (Zech. 12:10). This new nature is from God and it is spiritual: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"** (John 3:6). This new birth fits a man for entrance into God's present spiritual kingdom on earth. **"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). **"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 14:17).

Second, leaven is of an active nature. It causes bread to rise; it is of a moving nature. As soon as leaven is introduced into the meal, a moving process begins. So it is with the grace of God in the soul. Saving grace is of a piercing, penetrating, and spreading nature. It pierces the heart (Acts 2:37), enlightens the understanding (Eph. 1:17-18), raises the affections (Col. 3:1-2), subdues the will (Ps. 110:3), and brings every thought into the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5). Darkness gives place to light (Acts 26:18) and confusion is turned into

order (II Cor. 4:3-6). A great change takes place in the soul of a man. **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"** (II Cor. 5:17). A man's soul passes from one kingdom to another: **"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"** (Col. 1:13).

Third, leaven is of an assimilating nature. It communicates its own nature to the meal. Leaven does not destroy the bread, but it alters its qualities. Likewise the grace of God does not destroy the faculties of the soul, but it communicates its own characteristics to the soul (Gal. 5:22-23). It warms the affection, causes the heart to burn within, and inspires zeal for God's glory.

The grace of God in regeneration makes a new kingdom in the soul, a new world in the heart. It imparts a new heart and a new spirit. It extinguishes the love of sin, and it limits its power over us. Grace sanctifies the understanding, filling it with spiritual knowledge. It exercises control over the judgment, bringing it under the power of divine truth. It purifies the affection and makes them spiritual and heavenly. It makes conscience to enjoy peace and quiet. It supplies the memory with chambers for meditation. This great renovation in man's soul is essential to entrance into the kingdom of Heaven: **"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt. 18:3).

Fourth, leaven works secretly and silently to altar the meal and to make changes in it. So the grace of God work secretly and silently in the soul to make it more like Jesus Christ: **"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"** (II Cor. 3:18). The kingdom of God in the soul does not come with a lot of outward show (Luke 17:20). While there are outward aspects to this growth in grace like prayer and praise to God, in the main the operation of grace in the soul is silent. It might be compared to the falling of the dew in the evening, or to the silent diffusion of the morning light of the sun.

Fifth, in the meal, which contains leaven, there is a gradual process. First one part is leavened and then another. So it is with the operation of the Spirit of grace in the heart. Pardon for sin and positional righteousness in Christ are instantaneous. But sanctification is necessarily gradual.

The lamb becomes a sheep. The babe in Christ becomes a young man, and then he becomes a full-grown man. There is fruit, more fruit and much fruit. The principle of grace in the heart grows more and more. It is like a building being raised up.

"Till the whole was leavened" (Matt. 13:33). This is true of the grace of God as it operates in the soul. It is the design of God to make the body, soul, and spirit all like the Lord Jesus Christ. God will bring Christian character to completion. First, He gives man a new spirit. Then He proceeds to convert the soul more and more into the image of Christ. At the return of Christ our body of humiliation will be made like the glorious body of our Lord. **"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"** (I Cor. 15:49).

The Spirit of grace works to establish the kingdom of grace in the heart of one of God's elect. First, there is spiritual life imparted so that a person may enter into the spiritual kingdom and understand it. Correct doctrinal views may be in the head, and good words in the mouth, but the seat of real salvation is found in the heart of man. **"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"** (Acts 8:37). **"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul"** (Acts 16:14). **"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"** (Rom. 10:10).

SOME PROBLEMS WITH THIS VIEW

1. It changes the general use of the symbolism of meal and leaven as seen in the Holy Scriptures. The above interpretation makes the meal and the leaven good. In the Bible the general rule is for meal to be good and leaven bad. One of the Old Testament offerings consisted of "meat" or "meal" (Ex. 29:40-41; 30:9; 40:29; Lev. 2:5,11-12; 6:14-23; 7:9-13,37; 23:13, 36-37; Num. 4:16; 5:15,18,25-26; 8:8; 15:3-16,24; 18:9; 28:5,9,12-13, 20-21, 26-31; 29:3-4,14). The meal offering exhibited Christ in His human perfections tested by suffering. The fine flour especially represented the sinless humanity of our Redeemer.

Throughout the Scriptures, leaven is a symbol of something evil or corrupting. It was strictly forbidden in the meat or meal offering: **"No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with**

Continued on page 63

Parable of the Leaven

Continued from page 62

leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire (Lev. 2:11). No leaven could be in the Passover bread: **“Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel”** (Ex. 12:15). One notable exception was the sin offering presented with two leavened loaves. But I hasten to point out that the leavened loaves symbolized the depraved nature of man (Lev. 7:13). In the language of irony, the Prophet Amos (4:4-5) told Israel to burn a thank offering with leaven in contempt of the law (Lev. 2:11).

In the New Testament leaven is also a symbol of evil. In Matthew 16:11 Christ used leaven as a symbol of false doctrine: **“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees”**(cf. Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1). Paul used leaven in a bad sense to the Galatians: **“A little leaven leaveth the whole lump”** (Gal. 5:9). The bread of the Lord’s Supper must contain no leaven, for leaven is a symbol of evil (I Cor. 5:6-8).

2. The hiding of the three measures of leaven in the meal suggests secrecy and craft. This reminds us of the work of Satan who came secretly and sowed the tares among the wheat while men slept.

3. The purpose of the leaven in bread is to make it acceptable to the taste of man. But the purpose of the grace of God is to make man more acceptable to God.

THE OTHER VIEW

I think it is more in line with the Scriptures to make the leaven false doctrine. The meal represents the kingdom of Heaven or Christendom, a good thing that has become corrupted by false doctrine. The woman who hid the leaven in the meal is typical of false teachers. The results are the universal corruption of Christendom at the close of this age.

The leaven is false doctrine, or the truth of God perverted by the wisdom of men. According to the Bible, **“the truth of God”** can be changed **“into a lie”**(Rom. 1:25). It is possible for false teachers to **“corrupt the word of God”** (II Cor. 2:17). Some men are guilty of wrongly dividing the Word of God (II Tim. 2:15). Men have it in their power to wrest, or twist,

the Word of God (II Pet. 3:16). By fair speech some are able to distort the Word of God to make it say things the Lord never intended. This is often done to obtain followers and funds for some new religious movement or cult.

The meal represents Christendom, a good thing corrupted by the leaven of false teaching. This was foretold in the Bible. Jesus said: **“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many”** (Matt. 24:11). Paul warned the Ephesian elders at Miletus: **“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”** (Acts 20:29-30). **“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”** (II Pet. 2:1-3). John wrote: **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out in the world”** (I John 4:1).

These false teachers which arose in the New Testament period eventually gave rise to the scarlet whore, or the false church: **“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”** (Rev. 17:4-5). In the parable of Christ the woman **“took”** (not “received”) the leaven and hid it in the meal. False teachers creep **“in**

unawares” (Jude 4). Peter said that they **“privily shall bring in damnable heresies”** (II Pet. 2:1). Christ spoke of wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). Like Satan who sowed the tares among the wheat while men slept, these religious charlatans cunningly and secretly bring in more and more error, and less and less truth. They keep adding error to truth until the whole lump is leavened.

The Babylonian Whore slowly began to bring in error into the churches. There came baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. Then came Mariolatry, indulgences, purgatory, and saint and image worship. This was followed by transubstantiation and the bloody inquisition. In our day the Babylonian Whore has leavened nearly all Christendom. The harlot daughters (Protestantism) are now in the process of going back home to mama. Only a few scattered true churches remain on this earth, and at the rapture they will be removed. At the rapture the Restraint will be removed (II Thess. 2:7-8), and then all Christendom will be leavened. The professed churches left behind will become the very kingdom of Antichrist (II Thess. 2). **“. . .and all the world wondered after the beast”** (Rev. 13:3).

Examine the creeds of the Protestant harlot daughters of the Babylonian Whore. They all have a few things in common: infant baptism and baptism as a sacrament for the remission of sins. The apple did not fall far from the tree. **“As is the mother, so is her daughter”** (Ezek. 16:44).

CONCLUSION

1. How completely the influence of the Roman Catholic Church has leavened the whole lump of Christendom, with the exception of a few scattered churches, can be seen by a wayfaring man or even a fool. It has leavened the Philippines, Mexico, South America, and Europe. There is the architecture, sculpture, and painting, on every hand.

This Scarlet Whore has influenced laws in nations. She has intruded into births, marriages, and deaths of people. She has caused a breach between children and parents, and even husbands and wives. Into the inmost

hearts of men and women creeps the confessional—a leaven of malice and wickedness. Beware of the teachings of the Babylonian Whore!

2. Heresy is a spreading and corrupting thing. It is a germ which experiences habitual growth. There is in Christendom a fungus of fermentation, a disease that is spreading the seeds of death. The mystery of iniquity was already at work in Paul’s day (II Thess. 2:7). Peter complained of **“false teachers”** (II Pet. 2:1), and John of **“many antichrists”** (I John 2:18, 4:3). Christ referred to **“that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess”** who seduced His servants in the church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:20).

3. We live in a time when New Testament churches, destined to be the virgin bride of Christ, are corrupting themselves by false doctrine. This age will end with many Baptist churches in a state of apostasy (Rev. 3:17-18). There are but very few churches left on earth where the hungry child of God can go and receive pure bread.

4. It is surprising that a woman is connected with the spread of heresy. Think of the many Scriptures which prohibit them from being teachers in the church (I Cor. 14:34-35; I Tim. 2:11-12). “It is most significant that the leading false cults in Christendom were originated by women. Modern Spiritualism was started in Boston, U.S.A., in 1848 by the Fox sisters. Seventh Day Adventism was founded by Mrs. White. Christian Science was organized by Mrs. Eddy. Theosophy was devised by Madame Blavatsky, and is now engineered by Mrs. Besant” (*The Prophetic Parables of Matthew Thirteen* by A. W. Pink, p. 50). Aimee McPherson was the founder of the Four Square Gospel Church.

Comments on Clouds

Continued from page 61

CLOUDS

These water droplets on high do not exist by mere chance. Nor do they move about the heavens by blind fate. Like the earth and the rest of the universe, the clouds are formed and fashioned by the most high God. Psalms 147:7-8 says: **“. . .our God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.”** In Proverbs 8:28 Divine Wisdom speaks of a time when God **“established the clouds above.”** The clouds darken the sky and intercept the beams of the sun. **“With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt”**

Continued on page 64

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DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	1494	16,000 AM

Comments on Clouds

Continued from page 63

(Job 36:32). A wise Creator has ordained that all these things be so.

Truly our God has favored this island earth in the sea of the universe. Our planet has clouds, but not too many. The planet Venus is covered entirely with a deep blanket of clouds, which seldom if ever break apart. Here on Earth we average one-half open sky when no clouds interfere with our sun's works. Why is this the case? Did blind unguided chance cause this? Maybe evolution? No! The Lord God made this adjustment in nature. It is our God who **"scattereth his bright cloud"** (Job 37:11).

THE CONTROLLER OF THE CLOUDS

The size and shape of a cloud is determined by the God of Providence. He determines how they move about in the sky. They are at all times under His absolute control. **"Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud"** (Isa. 19:1). The Lord controls the clouds like a rider on a horse controls the movements of the animal. By His sovereign will He makes some fleecy masses, some feathery streamers far in the upper air, and some dull gray or black sheets which promise rain. He causes the warm air masses to come into contact with cold air masses by which clouds are formed. He can spread them out (Job 26:9) or scatter them at His pleasure (Job 37:11).

The psalmist tells us that the Lord **"maketh the clouds his chariot"** (Ps. 104:3). The great men of the earth ride in their Cadillacs and Yachts. Our God is pleased to make the clouds His chariot. In these He rides smoothly, strongly and swiftly. As He thus rides the circuit of Heaven He is out of the reach of human opposition. From this lofty carriage He looks down upon the children of men.

The clouds of Heaven demonstrate Jehovah's strength: **"Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds"** (Ps. 68:34). Nothing demonstrates the irresistible power of God more than a cloudburst. In a storm there is thunder and lightning. Such a cloudburst cannot be checked or curtailed by human agencies. An electric storm destroys country homes and city homes. Lightning can split the strongest oak tree or cleave the most solid rock. Those who are prone to question the power and sovereignty of God would do well to watch closely the next thunderstorm. Such an observation should be enough to convince them it is folly to contend with God.

RAIN AND CLOUDS

Job wrote: **"He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them"** (Job 26:8). In this statement Job, by Divine inspiration, revealed some scientific knowledge, which was not known until thousands of years after his time. We know today the clouds are collections of vapors. They contain vapor, which ascends from the earth and is held in suspension when in small particles in the clouds. When these small particles form masses as large as drops, the air will no longer sustain them, and they fall to the earth.

We might say that the clouds are God's reservoirs above the earth. Out of these He sends rain upon the earth. **"Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly"** (Job 36:26-28). Thousands of years before the birth of Christ, Elihu understood that water evaporated and ascended to the clouds. It was held there for a time, and then it descended again in the form of a gentle rain or the mist of a morning dew. Judges 5:4 mentions how **"the clouds"** drop **"water."**

A RAINBOW IN THE CLOUDS

The sign of the Noahic Covenant is the rainbow in the clouds: **"And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh"** (Gen. 9:12-15).

Oh, the wonder and beauty of a rainbow! From amid the lowering and vapory clouds, there suddenly emerges the fairest of all of nature's sights, the many-colored arch, spanning the sky, and reflecting the beams of the sun. This is proof of God's faithfulness to the children of men. It demonstrates that He is still keeping the Noahic Covenant. Despite dark clouds in the sky and the prospect of rain, and even sometimes a local flood, God will never again send another flood.

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD

After the King of Egypt permitted

the Israelite slaves to leave Egypt, they camped in the edge of the wilderness (Ex. 13:20). Then Exodus 13:21-22 declares: **"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."**

In ancient warfare fire and smoke signals were used by the commanders to show that they were present. Even so, the cloud upon Israel was a token of Jehovah's presence. It was to the Israelites the visible body of the invisible God (Ps. 78:14; Neh. 9:12). The wind could not scatter the cloud, for God was in it. This cloud regulated all the movements of Israel (Num. 9:17-23).

Some have supposed the cloud was a type of the Holy Spirit; others look upon it as no more than a symbol of God's guidance and protection. This may very well be. However, I believe the cloud was a type of Christ. It especially set forth the two natures of Christ. The cloud, His veiled flesh; the fire, His Godhead (Rev. 10:1). The cloud of Christ's human nature was a veil of the light and fire of His Divine nature. Like the human body of Jesus Christ, the cloud had a common appearance, but there was a great mystery about it. **"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh"** (I Tim. 3:16). As God spoke from the cloud (Ps. 99:7; Num. 12:5), even so God spoke by Christ, the Word of God. As the cloud was for a covering (Ps. 105:39), likewise Christ is the covering for our sins (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6-8).

ON MOUNT SINAI

In the third month after Israel's departure from the land of Egypt, they camped at Mount Sinai. **"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. . . . And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai. . ."** (Ex. 19:16, 20).

Behold in these words the Theophany of Sinai. The Israelites had been many years among Egyptian idolaters. Some of them were deeply infested with idolatry. God wanted the Israelites to realize He was a Spirit and that He must be worshipped in spirit and truth. To have adopted any outward form may have prompted the people to reproduce it and to worship it. Hence He covered the mountain with a thick cloud to prove His presence, yet in the cloud

MARK OF THE BEAST

Look at your name on the front page of this month's paper. If you see the mark 08-03, so detestable to a Baptist, wash it out by renewal of greenbacks. If not your paper will stop next month. We are not able to credit. It is not a good plan.



there was no outward form the Israelites could make into an object of worship. While they saw no manner of similitude (Deut. 4:11-12), they were convinced God was in the cloud.

ON THE MERCY SEAT

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat" (Lev. 16:2). Some make this cloud the smoke of the incense, which the high priest burnt on his yearly entrance into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. They say this is the cloud, which covered the Mercy Seat. Others say it was the cloud of glory, but that it only rested over the Mercy Seat at appointed times.

I feel it is best to not make this cloud the smoke of incense. The plain sense of the words points to the Shechinah—the Divine Majesty, the cloud of glory, the inaccessible Light—upon the Mercy Seat. It was not merely there occasionally, but it was there at all times. This being the case, it was dangerous to enter the Most Holy Place any time except by Divine orders.

THE TEMPLE AND TABERNACLE

When the construction of the Tabernacle was completed, **"a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle"** (Ex. 40:34-35). This was the cloud, which had guided them from Succoth that cast its fleecy enfolding glory upon the new structure. Simultaneously, a light of surpassing glory—the Divine Shechinah—shone from within the Tabernacle itself. So great was the light that Moses could not enter into the tent of the congregation.

After the completion of the Temple by Solomon the same thing happened again: **"And it came to pass, when**

Continued on page 65

Comments on Clouds

Continued from page 64

the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (I Kings 8:10-11). Ezekiel saw this cloud of glory depart from the Temple (Ezek. 10:1-4, 18-19; 11:22-23) in fulfillment of prophecy (Deut. 31:17; Hos. 9:12). There was no Shechinah in the Temple in the days of Christ (Matt. 23:38). This glory will return to fill the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 43:2; Dan. 9:24).

ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Once upon a time Jesus chose the inner circle of Peter, James, and John to be special witnesses of His glorification. This event probably happened either on Mount Tabor in Galilee, or on one of the spurs of Mount Hermon. Jesus has just a few days before promised some of His disciples: **"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"** (Matt. 16:28).

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1-5).

On the mount a bright cloud diffused or spread itself around them. Clouds are sometimes dark, but this one was full of light. It was not a watery cloud either. Rather, it was the Shechinah-cloud, the pavilion of the manifestation of God's presence. This was like the cloudy pillar, which went before Israel in the wilderness, which appeared on Mount Sinai, and which dwelt continually in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple. When the disciples saw it they were prepared to hear the voice of Jehovah, and they were not disappointed. Peter relates of this time: **"For he received from God the Father**

honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (II Pet. 1:17-18).

This was a most glorious event, a pictorial preview, of the Son of Man coming in His Millennial Kingdom. Jesus is the center of the picture. In the coming kingdom He is to be the King of kings. Moses represents those who have a part in the first resurrection. Elijah, who went up to Heaven without death, is a picture of living believers who shall be translated and caught up to meet Christ in the air. Peter, James, and John represent the Jews who will pass into the kingdom as an earthly people, having been converted and gathered unto Palestine when Christ comes to the Mount of Olives. The multitudes at the foot of the mountain represent the Gentile nations to whom the blessing is to come through Israel.

CHRIST ASCENDED IN CLOUDS

While upon the Mount of Olives Jesus told His disciples about the advent of the Holy Spirit to empower the church (Acts 1:8). **"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"** (Acts 1:9-11).

Here we see Christ ascending up on high. He is not being snatched away like Elijah in a chariot of fire, but He is rising to Heaven in the chariot of a cloud. This cloud was the visible symbol of God's presence—the Shechinah of the Old Testament so frequently mentioned—the cloud, which overshadowed the disciples and Christ on the mount of transfiguration.

The two men, which stood by, told the disciples that this same Jesus would one day return from heaven in the same manner. **"In like manner"** means He will come in the clouds of Heaven. When Christ returns to the Mount of Olives He will come with clouds and every eye shall see Him. Christ is not said to come in clouds at the secret Rapture (I Thess. 4:14-18). At the Rapture the translated saints are to be **"caught up together with them** (the resurrected saints) **in the**

clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:17).

TO RETURN WITH CLOUDS

The seven-year tribulation period is a time of both physical and spiritual darkness. When the Prince of Darkness rules in the person of the Man of Sin, his kingdom shall be **"full of darkness"** (Rev. 16:10). Joel describes the coming tribulation as **"A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains"** (Joel 2:2). Zephaniah describes it as **"a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness"** (Zeph. 1:15).

These clouds of thick darkness shall give place to clouds of bright light and Divine glory when Jesus Christ returns to earth to rule and reign in His kingdom. **"And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . ."** (Dan. 7:13). **"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"** (Matt. 24:30; cf. 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62). **"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him"** (Rev. 1:7).

Oh, marvelous coming day when Christ comes in the Shechinah-cloud to give light to a dark world and to overthrow the kingdom of darkness! The Judge of all the earth is to come riding in His cloud-chariot (Ps. 104:3) and in His cloud-robe (Rev. 10:1). John describes His return in these words: **"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped"** (Rev. 14:14-16). When the world was destroyed by water the judgment came from the clouds of Heaven. The future judgment of this world is to come from a returning Christ, sitting upon a cloud from Heaven.

CLOUDS OF SORROW AND SIN

Clouds not only come over the sky of nature, but the sky of our lives. There are days in the Christian life when there are clouds of adversity, of sorrow, of

sickness, and of bereavement. But let us remember these clouds come over us only by God's permission. The God who controls the clouds of Heaven also controls the dark clouds, which come over our lives. Let us also remember that dark clouds may contain a bright blessing.

*Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercies, and will break
In blessing on your head.*

Sin in its nature and consequence is like a thick cloud, which hides earth from Heaven by shutting out the sun (Isa. 59:2). Like thick dark clouds threaten a storm, even so our sins threaten God's rain of wrath (Ps. 11:6). Then as the wind drives away a thick cloud, leaving the sky clear and serene, so God causes the sins of the penitent to disappear and removes the storm of His anger. **"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee"** (Isa. 44:22).

Any person who knows that God has blotted out his sins as a thick cloud should seek to join the church, which Jesus built. It is his solemn and serious obligation to submit to a complete immersion in water. He is to be baptized unto Christ in the watery grave even as the Israelites **"were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"** (I Cor. 10:2). In a New Testament church he can be taught what His obligations are to Christ and His church.

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 2-3-2003 to 2-28-2003

Beginning Balance	\$1,758.86
RECEIPTS	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
John Otis, Agra, KS	100.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Berea B. C., West Point, TN	50.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA	200.00
Anonymous	180.00
Dividing check	200.00
.....	1,155.00
TOTAL	2,913.86
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	890.00
Tape Production	180.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,070.00
.....	\$1,843.86
Bank charge	-10.00
BALANCE	\$1,833.86

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,733.32
RECEIPT	
Total	1,733.32
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
Total Expenditures	160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,573.32

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The post office charges
us \$.70 for each
undeliverable address.**

Duties of Pastor/People

Continued from page 61

every function of the church. He is to be an example to the flock. He is to feed and protect the flock. The only way that he will properly and effectively perform these duties; he must relentlessly serve by love for the Lord and his people. I want to consider three duties of the pastor.

PATTERN FOR THE SAINTS

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8). We should never ask our people to do anything

if we are not willing to do the same. Paul said to Timothy, **"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"** (I Tim. 4:12). He admonishes Timothy to be an example of the believers in word (careful in speech). A pastor should never use speech unbecoming to a Christian. Some would dare to excuse themselves by offering a flimsy excuse, that I lost my temper. I have heard preachers tell shady jokes that were very distasteful to their listeners and the Lord. He should be an example in conversation, or his conduct, behavior, course of life. He should be an example in faith, stand firm, and manifest confidence in, and adherence to God, and His Word. Faith should be manifested in his teaching, his spirit and the whole of his ministry. Last, but by no means least, he must be an example of the believers in purity toward the opposite sex, and in all affections and relations. He is to be a shining example.

The Apostle Peter said, **"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock"** (I Peter 5:3). He is to be an ensample by neither lording against or over the church. Some pastors are a poor example because they drive instead of lead; therefore, the rule becomes dictatorial. The pastor must love his flock enough to willingly take the oversight, not by constraint,

nor for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (cheerful).

The apostle Paul gives an example for all pastors to follow in I Thess. 2:1-12. He was an example under persecution and although he was shamefully treated, he was faithful and didn't quit. He didn't resort to gimmicks or tricks, or deceit like many preachers today for he was not trying to please men but God. He had the proper motives; therefore, he didn't use flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness, for his ministry wasn't motivated by selfish motives and the seeking of glory for himself. His main purpose was to give them the gospel at all cost, and he was willing to die for the cause of the gospel. He was willing to preach the gospel and not be chargeable to any of them. Would we pastor a church that couldn't support us? He

describes his godly behavior by three words: holy, justly and unblameable. He concludes this message of Scripture by stating the purpose for being a godly example, **"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."** When a pastor has met these qualifications, then and only then can he demand of his people to be followers of them, **"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"** (I Cor. 11:1).

PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of he ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

This duty places upon pastors the responsibility of instructing and building up in the faith. We are to instruct and build up all of our people in the

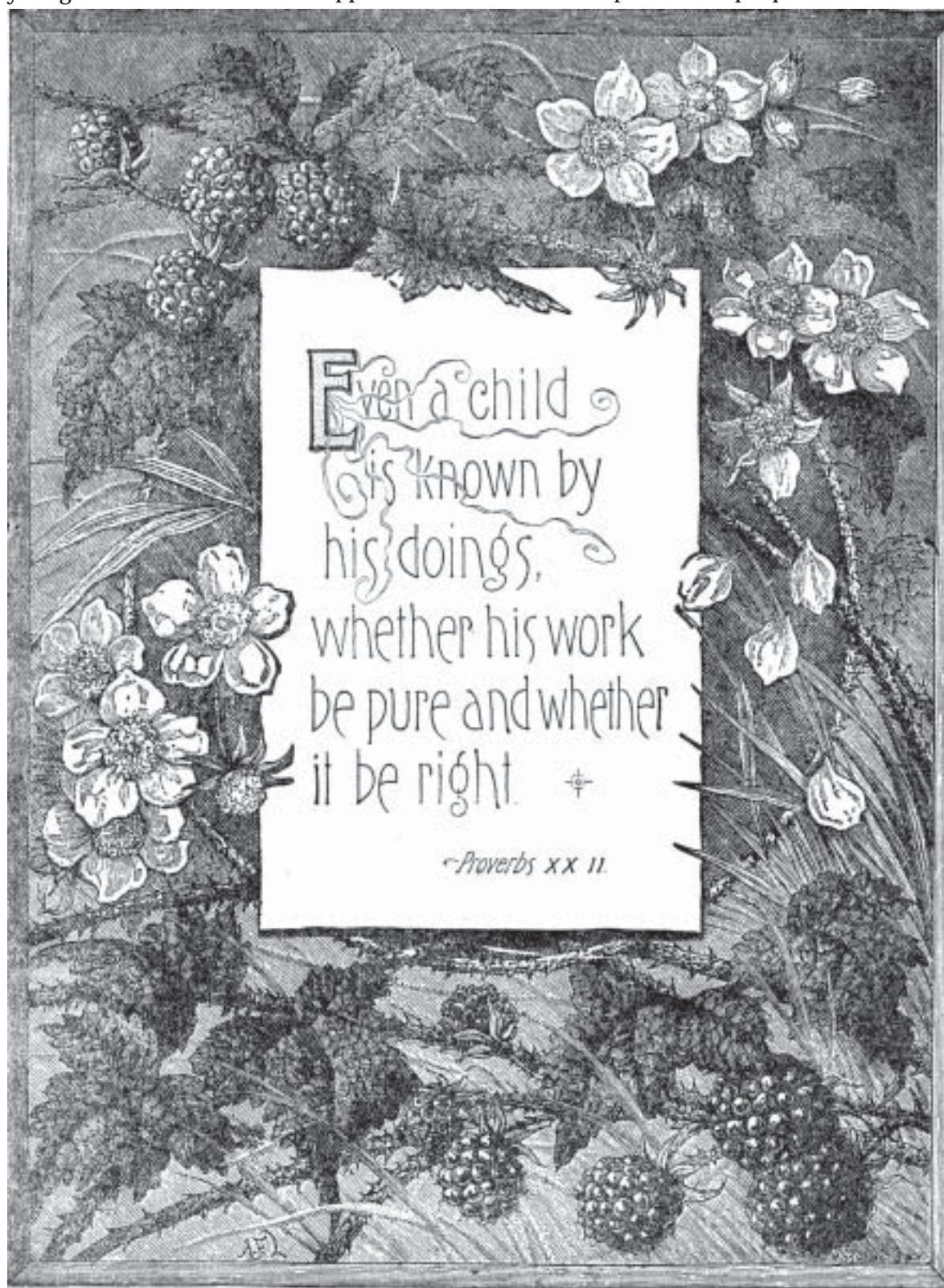
truths of God's Word. Jesus gives us an example in John 21:15-17. He says, **"Feed my lambs"** for this is the primary purpose of the pastor. The apostle Peter said, **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby"** (I Peter 2:2). The lambs (babes) must be fed the milk of the Word so that they can grow.

Jesus said the second time, **"Feed my sheep."** It is the responsibility of the pastor to shepherd the sheep. We are to feed and lead them in the truths of God's Word. The Lord says to Peter the third time, **"Feed my sheep."** The verb feed is the same as in verse 15, and if lambs mean weak, immature Christians then the Word sheep denotes people more advanced spiritually. The apostle Paul talks about the mature Christian, **"But strong meat**

belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). The pastor must realize that he is responsible to feed both the babes and the mature Christians.

Paul speaking to the elders at Ephesus said, **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28). The responsibility for the flock is upon the pastor. The Holy Spirit has placed him over the people, and he is to instruct them in the Word of God. He must be apt to teach and to supervise the work of the church in general. It is an awesome responsibility for the Lord Jesus. Christ hath purchased His church with His own blood. We are instructed how to perform this awesome responsibility. Paul said to Timothy, **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"** (II Tim. 4:2). Much patience and longsuffering is needed with the doctrine. It is necessary to reprove and rebuke but let it be done with much care and love.

We should willingly perform the duties of a God-called pastor. Peter said, **"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,**



Continued on page 67

Duties of Pastor/People

Continued from page 66

not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (I Peter 5:2). Feeding the flock includes watching over, guiding and protecting and it is the same word as in John 21:16 which means to comfort, reprove and guide. We are to take the oversight of the flock that God has given us. When the pastor will not take this God-given duty then another church member will. It may be a deacon or a teacher, and I have seen women that tried to control the church. We are not to interfere with another pastor's flock, for we will be accountable for the flock that God has given us, not another. When a pastor leaves a church and goes to another, he should not interfere in his former pastorate, regardless of the circumstances. It is usually in the best interest of a church and their present pastor for a former pastor to move or attend another church. Pastors will have to give an account, **"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"** (I Cor. 4:1-2).

PROTECTION OF THE SAINTS

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

We are to protect our flock from false teachers and preachers. Some preachers are interested in themselves (only), and they will not spare the flock. They are glory-seekers and will make merchandise of the flock for lucre is their primary interest. We are warned in the Word of God concerning these false ones. Titus said, **"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake"** (Titus 1:10-11).

We are to protect the flock from the false doctrine of works for salvation, the universal church heresy, no sin but a doctrinal sin and the priesthood of the church. There are many other false doctrines today, but these creep into our Baptist churches unnoticed by many. They are the product of false prophets, **"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's**

clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:15-16). The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the Word regardless of the circumstances, and he warned of the time to come when people would have itching ears and turn from the truth to fables. He admonished him to make full proof of his ministry (II Tim. 4:3-5).

We are to protect the flock from themselves. They will learn to their own understanding rather than listen to God's man with God's message. When this happens, they become unfaithful and hold to false ideas of their own rather than Bible truths. We make full proof of our ministry when we become a pattern for the saints and are interested in the perfection and protection of the saints.

II. DUTIES OF THE PEOPLE

The Lord has invested authority in his people (churches), therefore, they have a tremendous responsibility. There is much misunderstanding concerning the duties of his people. I want to call your attention to three duties of the people.

DUTY IN REGARD TO THE PULPIT

Each flock is responsible to fill the pulpit with God's man of the hour. He is the person that will be their overseer (Acts 20:28), and he must be a person that will rule well (Heb. 13:7); therefore, it is an awesome responsibility for a church to call a pastor to fill their pulpit. I have taught the churches, that I have been privileged to pastor, three things to remember when calling a pastor: don't panic, don't politic, do pray.

A church should seek God's man for the time. The Lord raised up specific men during the time of the patriarchs and prophets, and he has specific preachers for each of His churches today. It is important for a church to remember that they need a spiritual leader. I have heard churches say that they were better off without a pastor. Something is wrong with any church that makes such a statement. Every New Testament Baptist church needs a spiritual leader and the Lord has a pastor for every one of His churches. No two pastors are alike for God uses each for a specific purpose.

The authority rests with the church, not deacons or a pulpit committee, when calling a pastor. A church should exercise this authority under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The church has the authority to call the pastor and the authority to dismiss him. Church authority can be abused for the Lord never intended for His churches to dismiss their pastor be-

cause of some personal differences or his strong stand for the truth. I believe that Baptist churches sometimes are guilty of exercising church authority by the leadership of the devil rather than the Lord.

After the church has filled the pulpit with God's man, let the pastor be the pastor. I have not pastored a church, that sometime in the course of that pastorate, someone would try to play the role of the Holy Spirit and dictate to me. The majority of Baptist churches don't want a pastor for it is evident that they want a puppet. A church should depend on their pastor to fill the pulpit for special services, conferences, revivals, and in his absence. He is your spiritual leader and remember you called him by church authority under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Many churches say by their actions that they made a mistake when calling their present pastor. The pastor becomes a member of the church, but he is not just another church member, for you have placed him in a God given position. He is called of God and added to the church to be pastor. Our Baptist churches have suffered much harm because of lay members who loveth to have the preeminence as Diotrephes (III John 9).

DUTY IN REGARD TO THE PASTOR

"He gave some. . . pastors" (Eph. 4:11).

To some churches He gives preachers and to some He gives pastors. A church should realize the human limitations of their pastor. They shouldn't be looking for faults to criticize him. Every church has someone or a group that is down on the pastor. They say: he is too young or he is too old, he is too active, or he doesn't do enough, he has too many children or he doesn't have children, he uses notes or he doesn't use notes, he is too deep or he is not deep, he is too offensive, he is a compromiser, he is hurting our church and ought to leave, he always preaches on tithing, he is too materialistic, he won't let others preach or he has too many guest speakers, or we pay him more than he is worth. Some of the above charges could be true of your pastor, but instead of criticizing and complaining, you should pray for him.

He should be released from some of the extra responsibilities that you have placed upon him. Carry your part of the load. **"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word"** (Acts 6:3-4). Remember

three things about your pastor: He is a man, he is a man sent from God, he is a man sent to preach the Word of God. The apostle John said, **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light"** (John 1:6-8). Your pastor is not a superman, and every pastor doesn't have the same gifts or abilities. Every pastor has some strong points and weak points.

It is your duty as a church to support your pastor. You are to provide for his material needs. It should be the practice of every church to review annually the salary and benefits of the pastor. The apostle Paul said, **"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward"** (I Tim. 5:17-18). The pastor that rules well is worthy of double honor. I have never known of a church doing too much for their pastor. Another way to support your pastor is by respecting him. He is the man that God has given you and his position demands respect.

Some young people in our Baptist churches don't respect the pastor because of their parent's lack of respect for him. I have heard parents talk about their pastor before their children. They accuse him of being dishonest, a dictator, a liar, and call him the old buzzard. It is hard for me to have respect for a person that does not have any respect for the office of pastor. Paul said, **"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves"** (I Thess. 5:12-13). **"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation"** (Heb. 13:7). The pastor is to be esteemed very highly in love for his work's sake.

DUTY IN REGARD TO PROPAGATING THE TRUTH

It is the duty of the people to be propagators of the truth. Faithful people will be able to teach others. Paul said, **"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"** (II Tim. 2:2).

Continued on page 68

Duties of Pastor/People Who Should Baptize?

Continued from page 67

Much harm is done to the cause of truth because church members are unfaithful. It is almost impossible to propagate the truth by unfaithful church members. The people are to be faithful with their time, tithe and talent. **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”** (Heb. 10:25). It is a tremendous blessing for a people to assemble together as a church and to be able to support the work of the church with their tithes and offerings. They can exhort one another with their talents of teaching and singing.

The church must be the pillar and ground of the truth. The truth concerning regeneration, the local church, and the two church ordinances, baptism, and the Lord's supper, separation, priesthood of the believer, the doctrines of grace and the second coming, consisting of the rapture and revelation of Christ, the first and second resurrections, the judgment seat of Christ and the great white throne judgment, the tribulation, the thousand years reign of Christ, and then the eternal ages. It is the responsibility of the people to propagate these great and wonderful truths. They are to stand for the truth regardless of the price or pressure placed upon them by the world.

CONCLUSION

The Lord left His churches here in His absence to carry on His work. The work of the Lord is greatly hindered, sometimes by the pastor and sometimes by the people or both. He intended for His people to have pastors and His pastors to have people. They are to perform their God-given duties and even go beyond them if necessary. The motive for all their service is love. A love for the Lord and the truth of His Word. A love for the kind of church that He began during His personal ministry and the people added to this kind of a church. A love as a pastor for their people and a love as God's people for their pastor. Both the pastor and people are to be faithful in their duties regardless if one or the other neglects their duty.

Continued from page 61

placed in the custody of the world, transcends all rational belief. Baptism is administered **“in the name,”** that is, by the authority of Jesus Christ, and wicked men have no right to act in His name. **“But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee”** (Psa. 50:16-17).

Baptism, too, is the symbol of regeneration, expressive of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to a new life. What has an unregenerate man to do with baptism either as its subject or administrator? Surely I need not enlarge on this point, for no man of sane mind will seriously insist that the world has been made custodian of an ordinance appointed by Him whose **“kingdom is not of this world.”**

The administration of baptism is not committed to those who have not themselves been baptized. If any one, in opposition to this view, says that John the Baptist was not baptized, I of course reply that his was a special commission from Heaven, and that his case, in the point referred to, supplies no precedent. That it does not is seen, as clear as the light of day, in the fact that Jesus Himself was baptized before He made and baptized disciples, as we are taught in John 4:1-2. If Jesus did not administer baptism through His twelve disciples, also called apostles, till after His personal immersion in the Jordan, I ask in the audience of the whole human race, what authority has any unbaptized man to baptize other men?

Will it be said that there are good men among the unbaptized? I do not deny it. A good man, in the sense in which I now use the phrase, is a regenerate man, and Baptists, above all others, insist on regeneration as prior to baptism. They say with strongest emphasis that baptism should be administered to the regenerate alone. I concede, then, that men may be good, in the sense of being regenerate, who are not baptized, for they ought not otherwise to be baptized at all.

But does it follow that these men ought to baptize? Evidently not. I do not care, so far as this argument is concerned, how good they are. It cannot be incumbent on them to baptize (immerse) others, till they themselves have been baptized (immersed). I do not say that their baptism would of itself sufficiently

qualify them to administer baptism; but I do say that it is indispensable in the qualifications of a baptizer that he has himself been baptized.

Baptism has been called a thousand times “the initiatory ordinance.” No one, so far as I know, objects to this form of expression. What does it mean? Obviously that baptism is the ordinance by which persons are introduced into a visible church. It is the appointed rite of induction. Very well. Then it follows that no one is in a visible church of Christ who has not been baptized. Men may talk as much as they please about what they call the “invisible church”; but it, of course, has no organization and no ordinances. Even if it had, they would be as invisible as itself, and baptism is a visible ordinance.

It inducts into a visible church. Now can this ceremony of induction be performed by a person who is not himself in a visible church? Can one who is outside of a visible church put another who is outside inside of a visible church? I can understand how he who is inside can initiate him who is outside; but how one who is outside can initiate another who is outside, defies my comprehension. I am sure the possibility of the thing would be denied by “lodges” and “societies” technically so-called. I have no experimental acquaintance with these organizations; but I express the opinion that no one outside of a “Masonic Lodge” can initiate anyone into the Lodge. So of an “Odd Fellows’ Lodge,” and of various other “Societies.” The attempt of an outsider to do what can be done only by one within would excite thoughts concerning the propriety and necessity of lunatic asylums.

The view I oppose makes havoc of governmental analogies. For example, all civilized nations have some process of naturalization and citizenship. In our own nation the naturalization oath is indispensable. Who administers this oath? Not a foreigner surely, but a citizen appointed by the rightful authority. No man without citizenship, unless laboring under mental aberration, ever claimed the right to administer the oath of naturalization.

In view of these illustrative analogies may I not say that it is absurd to suppose that an unbaptized man can perform the right of initiation into a visible church? Pedobaptists will not object to this position. They say, as I do, that those who baptize must be first baptized. They, however, say that any one of several acts is baptism, while I affirm that there is but one baptismal act. But as this article is written specially for Baptists, I need not refer to Pedobaptists.

There are some Baptists who claim

for Pedobaptists what the latter do not claim for themselves—namely, the right as unbaptized persons to administer baptism. It is humiliating to know that the most striking specimens of spurious charity are to be found among those who wear the Baptist name. They believe, of course, that the subjects of baptism are regenerate persons, and that immersion alone is the act of baptism. Whether they believe in the old Baptist doctrine that a “visible church is a congregation of baptized believers,” etc., I will not undertake to say. If they do, they seem also to believe that a church may likewise be a congregation of unbaptized persons. That they believe this I will not affirm, for I do not positively know. I will say, however, that if they do, they are not more inconsistent than in believing that unbaptized men may baptize others. In this latter dogma inconsistency very nearly exhausts itself, and there remains but little more for it to do.

Let the reader look at the matter for a moment. Christ commands the Gospel to be preached, and for those who believe to be baptized. There are two prominent commands to those to whom the Gospel is addressed—believe and be baptized. Some believe and are baptized; others believe, but for reasons it is not my business to divine, they are not baptized. Still, it is said, that their personal non-compliance with the command to be baptized, is no bar to their legitimate administration of baptism to others! Surely this theory must break down under the weight of its own absurdity.

There is another view which should not pass unnoticed. It is, in substance, this—that God calls Pedobaptists to preach, and that in the call to preach is involved authority to baptize. It is said, sometimes, that Saul of Tarsus was called to preach before his baptism, etc. However, this may have been with Saul, it is historically true that he did not preach till he had been baptized; and I do not see why baptism should not precede preaching now as well as in apostolic times.

What about the call of Pedobaptists to preach as involving authority to baptize? Many absurd things have been said concerning the call to the ministry, —but there is doubtless such a thing. This is not the place to attempt its definition. Every man is not called to preach who thinks he is, or whose partial friends think he is. How is it to be known that a man is called to preach? Some say that the success attending his labors is the proof. This is not a satisfactory view; for success is often apparent and not real.

I know of no better way of deciding

Continued on page 69



Who Should Baptize?

Continued from page 68

that a man is called to preach, than the old-fashioned Baptist way, namely—that a church of which a brother is a member shall decide the point. If it is said that a church is not infallible, I reply, even so; and, therefore, the churches are liable to make mistakes. But, after all, the church to which a brother belongs, is the best judge of his ministerial qualifications—can best decide whether he comes up to the scriptural standard given in the first epistle to Timothy. The call of God must be recognized by the church. Unless this is done, there is danger of the greatest disorder and confusion.

Hence, Baptist churches, as a rule, have ever exercised their authority in recognizing God's call to any of the members to preach and to administer the ordinances. This has been their plan, and I know of no better plan. Now it strikes me as very singular, that any Baptist should admit the right of Pedobaptists to administer baptism when the right is not believed to be in a Baptist till it is conferred by the church of which he is a member. Why this capricious discrimination in favor of Pedobaptists and against Baptists? Why practically say that an unbaptized man may do what a baptized man is not allowed to do till his church gives him authority?

Will it be said that "Pedobaptist churches" have given their ministers authority to baptize? What does this amount to? "Pedobaptist churches" so-called, are not scriptural churches. There is, there can be, no ecclesiastical connection between Baptists and Pedobaptists. The Baptist who does not understand this, does not know why he is a Baptist.

If there are not fundamental differences between Baptists and Pedobaptists on what may be called emphatically "the church question," Baptists have no right and title to denominational existence. But if there are fundamental differences and if Baptists hold the New Testament view of a regenerate church membership, and of the ordinances of the Gospel, then their denominational existence is a great necessity; for it is essential to the purity of church life and the integrity of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

Having indicated who should not baptize, I shall attempt to show who should baptize. Before I refer to the scriptural argument, I will present what has been, as I think, the general views of Baptists, I go back to the Confession of Faith, put forth in London in the year 1689, by the

"ministers and messengers of, and concerned for, upwards of one hundred baptized congregations in England and Wales," etc. There was a previous Confession in 1643, but as only "seven congregations" were concerned in it, I make no special reference to it. The moral influence of the Confession of 1689, in the making of which such men as Hansard Knollys, William Kiffin, Benjamin Keach, Andrews Gifford and others took part, is far greater than that of the Confession of 1643.

But the supreme reason for referring to the Confession of 1689 is, it was adopted by the first Baptist Association in America, and is in this country called the "Philadelphia Confession of Faith." I suppose it may be said that all the Baptist Associations of the United States have a historical connection with the Philadelphia Association. One thing is certain, namely, that while the utterance of the Philadelphia Confession in the quotation I am about to make, is not authoritative, it may be regarded as the best exponent of the Baptist view of the matter referred to. I make this statement because it has been recently intimated that there is scarcely a Baptist in New England who holds the view advocated in this article. If this be so, I have only to say that New England has, in this particular, apostatized from the Baptist faith, and so much the worse for New England.

The extracts I make from the Confession of 1689, now the Philadelphia Confession, are these:

"A particular church gathered and completely organized, according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members: —and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so-called and gathered) for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power, or duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons.

"The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop, or elder, in the church, is that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself; and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of the hands of the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted therein; and of a deacon that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by prayer, and the like imposition of hands."

"Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be

continued in His church to the end of the world.

"These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified, and thereunto called according to the commission of Christ."

These extracts are made from chapters 26 and 28, and may be verified by a reference to CUTTING'S HISTORICAL VINDICATIONS, pp. 168, 171.

(Continued in the next issue)

Observations of a

Continued from page 61

to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23). He has been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. He has been preaching His death and His resurrection. He has also been preaching the hope that lies ahead.

Often when preaching, Paul would give some testimony of his experiences and especially of the time of his salvation. He would use his own personal experiences as illustrations, and then make appropriate application to his hearers. This style is seen throughout his epistles to the churches.

In the many years since Paul's days, preachers have used this method, some with greater and some with lesser success. I have read and personally heard many preachers that have given these types of accounts. They usually give some account of their life and experiences and some of the things they had seen and things that the Lord has been pleased to do through them. These messages have been a great encouragement to me.

At the very outset of this message, I say that I am attempting to do something the Lord has laid on my heart and is a little unusual. I am not simply trying to mimic others nor am I trying to set myself on any kind of a level comparable to the preacher brethren that have gone on before. I do not hold a candle to these brethren's life and work and I am not in any way suggesting it to be so. However, I do want to give some **"Observations of a Young Minister."**

I want to follow Paul's pattern and give something of my own experience and some observations that I have made in my life. I hope the Lord will use it and I give Him all the glory and all the credit for anything that has taken place. I have not accomplished much. I should have done a whole lot more, to this point in my life, but I give all the glory to God for what has been accomplished for His glory.

I was born in Charleston, West Virginia and grew up very near there in

a hollow named Campbell's Creek. I was born into a Christian home. I was probably no more than a few weeks old when I was in a church service. I was brought up in a home where God was feared, the Bible was read and respected, prayers were made, and the church was important. Around our home when it was time for the service, that is where you were and that is where you were expected to be. When the doors were open, was when we went to church. I was not raised believing in sovereign grace, as I do now. However, my parents are Christians and I thank God for them daily and especially when I see others that were not as blessed to be brought up in the same manner.

I was saved as a young boy of about 6 years old. I recall the time when the Lord saved me; of course, it is something that you never forget. I recall that how as a young boy I did not know much; I did not understand much. However, I do remember that I had a great sense and a weight of guilt that came upon me all at once. It is as if it just hit me. I was sitting there in a service on a Sunday night. As a kid, you are generally sitting in the seat writing on paper or doing different things. I recall that my attention was grabbed by something that was taking place. My father was singing. Singing is not exactly his gift and it was very rare to him singing solo. It caught my attention. Now I had heard him sing before, but this was different. He was singing, "He Touched Me." The Lord got a hold of me. I recall feeling that I was a sinner. It is hard to explain. I knew that if the Lord did not save me I had no hope. I was so fearful. I began to cry and I could not stop myself. I knew that I was going to Hell if the Lord did not save me.

Throughout the rest of the service, I was under this weight of guilt. After the service was over and many of the people had left, I was in the back corner with some family members and some other folks. I remember that it was right there in that very spot, the Lord saved me. I then prayed to the Lord and asked Him to forgive me of my sins. The Lord saved me and of course, I have never forgotten it. I thank Him for it.

Being saved at an early age is a wonderful blessing and sometimes a great temptation. I went for many years just like many other young kids and got into a lot of mischief, for which I would be ashamed. Early on, I had a great struggle within. I am not certain of the time, it probably started about the time that I was a young teenager and it continued until I was 25 years of age. I felt like

Continued on page 70

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If a church wants to send support to a national pastor/missionary in a foreign country, should this support be sent to him directly or through the local church of which he is a member? – Email, Overseas



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Under normal circumstances it is customary and expedient to send the support to the local church out of which the missionary is sent. However, there are circumstances overseas when it is expedient to wire the support to an account where the missionary or church can retrieve it. I feel more comfortable sending support to a church that keeps good records and will give a full accounting of the money that has been sent. Ultimately, how the money should be sent is up to the local church that is actually supporting the missionary/pastor.

TOM ROSS



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The New Testament clearly reveals that missionary work, whether local or foreign, was done through true churches, never by unscriptural mission boards or self appointed missionaries. It is an indisputable fact that Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). When we consider the ministry of Paul as a missionary it is evident that his support came from true churches (Phil. 4:15), and by his own labor (Acts 18:1-3; I Cor. 4:12).

Paul writes about his missionary work in Phil. 4:15 and says, "**Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.**" It seems that it would be no violation of scripture to believe

that other churches supported him at a later time. Whether we believe the support of other churches came through the Antioch church or were sent directly to Paul should not keep us from acknowledging it was church support.

It is my personal conviction that monetary support to a missionary be sent to the church sending him out. Several reasons can be given for holding this view. 1. Monetary support is channeled through the church that has authority over the missionary. 2. A more accurate and honest accounting can be given of the work the missionary is doing and of the amount of support he receives. 3. It is a good way of keeping down fraud and the misuse of monetary funds received by the missionary. Believe you me, most of the pastors I know have experienced difficulty with unscrupulous individuals who pose as missionaries but do not desire to be under the authority of any church. No money should ever be given to a man who will not put himself under the disciplinary action of a true church.

My recommendation is to send support through the local church of which the missionary is a member.

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God commanded Israel to bring their tithes and offerings into the storehouse (Mal. 3:10). In the New Testament, the Lord's church is called the house of God and is now God's storehouse (I Tim. 3:15). God's people are to bring their tithe and offerings and place them in the church. It is the church that has been given the authority to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). When the members give their tithe and all of their offerings to the church, the church is more able to do the work that God has given it to do. It is in the church that God receives His glory

(Eph. 3:21).

I believe that all church members are to bring both their tithe and their offerings and place them in the church. The support of each missionary should then be paid from the treasury of the church.

DAVID O'NEAL



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I know of no Scripture that dictates how a church should support a native missionary-pastor. The only criterion for a church supporting missionaries is that it be done by the authority of the church sending the offering. The church sending the offering may choose whether to send their offering directly to the missionary or to the church the missionary pastors.

It has been the practice of the churches I have pastored to support missionaries not churches, but we send our offerings to the churches who authorize or sponsor the missionary because they are responsible as to the credibility of the missionary and to see that the offerings are used to carry on the mission work.

I do not believe sending the offering directly to the native missionary-pastor would be wrong scripturally if it was the desire of the church sending the offering, because after all the sending church is an autonomous body and does not have the authority to usurp authority over another church nor does another church have the right to usurp authority over the sending church.

I believe such matters should be left to the discretion of the sending church cooperating with the church and the missionary-pastor.

GARNER SMITH



Observations of a

Continued from page 69

that the Lord had something for me to do; something certainly more than what I was doing. I would just deny it and dismiss it and I would have some peace for a time.

For the course of my life, and especially my younger days, I have many regrets. I see a lot of time that I wasted. I see a lot of time where I was just involved in foolish things and not concerned so much about the Lord. I was involved and taken up with the foolish things of the day. I wasted a lot of time that I could have been putting to a lot greater use to serve God. I did not have a good testimony. I had not chosen a good name rather than silver or gold. I felt that I would have plenty of time later to get serious with the things of God; for the time I just wanted to enjoy life. I lament the great folly of my youth. I sorrow and repent to have been such a reproach upon my Savior. I do not have any satisfaction of these times. I sorrow that I was such a bad influence on many. I pray that these days shall ever be a beacon in my memory that these things will "**not be once named**" in the days that I have now to serve the Lord.

As I got closer to a senior in high school, I began to study some things on the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of His sovereign grace. I had never really heard of them up to that point in my life. It was some time there and into my early 20's that the Lord was working with me. He began to show me these great truths and the things concerning his church.

Around that time, I was married to my wife, which was a tremendous blessing from God. I look back and see that I believe Satan tried to hinder us. I am amazed at the graciousness of God concerning us. I believe beyond any doubt that it was the will of God for us to be together. I believe that God intended that and that he brought us together. There are many stories I could go into about our history and how we crossed paths, but for sake of time, I will not. God was working in all that and I am thankful for it.

In the year 1998, we had been attending the Heritage Landmark Baptist Church in Given, WV for over a year. I was beginning to learn many things. We joined the church and we were baptized into the church in September of 1998 just about 2 weeks after our first child was born. We continued there in the church, working in the church, studying, and learning. The struggle within was the greatest

Continued on page 72

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Can a true New Testament Church be Scriptural and not have the name Baptist? - Kentucky



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In the very earliest times of the churches of the New Testament it was not necessary that a name be attached to identify the true churches. Jesus called the first one "my church" (Matt. 16:18). In the epistles we find churches called "the church of God" or "the churches of Christ" to denote divine ownership (I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16). Other churches were identified by their location, such as the church at Antioch, the church at Jerusalem, the churches of Galatia and the seven churches in Asia.

Most Baptist scholars speak of, or have written about, people in ancient times who were called by various names such as the Anabaptists who held to the doctrines of the people called Baptist today. Due to the departure from the true churches John describes in I John 2:18-19 it became necessary to adopt names that would distinguish true churches from the Romish church and her future daughters, and the cults, which would arise.

Personally, I cannot understand why any church would think of abandoning the name "Baptist" unless they desire to depart from the doctrines, which have distinguished Baptist people through the years.

It is sad to see many who are called Baptists becoming so liberal in their theology that they have departed from sound teaching on grace and the Lord's church, but this should never cause us to be ashamed of our Baptist forefathers who stood firm in the apostolic teaching. Being convinced that sound Baptist churches of today hold to the same practices and teaching of the church Jesus organized we can proudly defend the name "Baptist."

I suppose if one insists on holding to technicality it could be said that a group could preach the distinctive doctrines of the Baptists without using the name—but why one without the other? In our day when some who

were once called Baptists have chosen to call their congregation a "Worship Assembly," "Community Church," "Vision Center" or such like designations, is it for the purpose of standing for truth and contending for the faith, or is it to become more like the charismatic movement in order to build mega churches who cater to the flesh?

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The Lord called his followers "disciples"; and when they met as an organization, they were called an "ekklesia" which correctly translated is "assembly." The first name given to the followers of Christ was "Christians" which was given either by the pagans or Jews (Acts 11:26). They have been given several names by their enemies such as Montanists, Novationists, Donatists, Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, etc., and Ana-Baptist. Some time at the beginning of the sixteenth century all other names were dropped and they were known as Ana-Baptist" or rebaptizers. Then the "Ana" was dropped, and they were called "Baptist." The disciples of Christ never gave themselves a name but eventually accepted the name Baptist.

I believe that John was called "the Baptist" because he was sent by God with the authority to baptize. The only one who can administer Scriptural baptism is one with proper authority. The Lord and all of the first members of His church were baptized by one who had authority from Heaven. Christ gave this authority to His church (Matt. 28:18-20). They were to make disciples and baptize them. This makes them Baptizers or Baptists. When a Scriptural church baptizes, they are rightly called Baptists. It would be highly unlikely for a church that was organized by the authority of a true church not to be called by the name Baptist. However, the name does not make the church. If a church

has been organized scripturally, keeping the ordinances pure, and teaching the truth of God's Word, they could still be a New Testament Church and not use the name Baptist.

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The name Baptist should identify a true Baptist church, yet we all know that there are many churches named Baptist that are as different in doctrine and practice as daylight and dark, and so the name Baptist really doesn't mean very much to the world today.

I believe the name Baptist is a biblical name and started with John the Baptist preparing the material or members for the first New Testament Baptist church and organized by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry on the earth (John 1:6, 33; Luke 1:17; Acts 1:22; Mark 3:13-19; I Cor. 12:28). That being the case it seems only reasonable to me that true biblical churches would want to be identified with that kind of doctrine, practice, and name.

I realize that there have been groups in past history that believed and practiced what Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark Baptists believe and practice today that went by other names besides Baptist. Many of these bore names given them by their enemies but some were labeled by names because of their leaders but I would be suspect of any that claim to be true Baptists today that would not be identified by the name Baptist.


I know of no good reasons, scripturally or other wise, why true Bible believing and practicing Baptist churches would not want to bear the name Baptist.

I believe the name Baptist is a biblical name and proves to be a worthy name by the death of millions martyred because of that name and the doctrines they believed and practiced. I feel it would be a betrayal of the faithful stand for the truth of

those martyred saints and the Head of the Lord's church today to refuse to bear the name Baptist.

I personally could not fellowship in church capacity with a church today who would refuse to be identified with the name Baptist.

GARNER SMITH



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I cherish the name "Baptist" and wear it as a badge of honor and truth. There are many "Baptist" churches so called in America that are removing the name from their signs because of the perceived stigma that it raises in the minds of some. They are attempting to be more contemporary and less offensive in an effort to supposedly reach more people. I would certainly question the validity of a "Baptist" church in America that refuses to wear the name. First, I would question their integrity and honesty. If you are a Baptist church why wouldn't you want people to know it? Are you trying to trick people into coming to your church under false pretense? Second, the name Baptist has served as a moniker that scriptural churches in America have gone by throughout their history here. Why change now and for what reason?

With all of the above said, there have been true churches through the ages that did not wear the name Baptist in other countries. The Montanists, Donatists, Waldenses, Paulicians, Bogimils, and others were given nicknames by their persecutors and identified them with their leaders. They were the Lord's churches in doctrine and practice, however they went by a variety of names.

This is a difficult question because there are churches that wear the name "Baptist" who are no more Baptist than the pope of Rome. I wish such churches would remove the name Baptist. May all true Baptists wear the title with dignity by preaching the truth and proclaiming the saving message of the Gospel with a burning zeal! Thank you Lord for making me a Baptist!

TOM ROSS



Observations of a

Continued from page 70

that it had ever been. I can recall being near despair and praying; asking God to tell me what He wanted me to do. I had a very heavy burden. The Lord was pleased to call me to preach in June of 1999. I do not mean to imply that the Lord was calling me to preach all those years. I do believe that He was working on me and preparing me in ways for His ministry.

I made that call known and I still do not understand it. I still do not understand why God selects some of the people that He does. All I can say is that I believe he called me and I made that known in June of 1999. I just could not do anything else, even if I wanted to. I still feel that burden to preach His Word today. I began preaching there in the church some time after they had licensed me to preach. I would preach at the church there and go to some other churches.

In February 2001, the Indore Baptist Church called me as pastor. I was ordained in March of the same year and I have been here since that time. I have been pastoring this church a little over a year and have been preaching just about 3 years. This is where I am and how I got here. I have tried to give a short version. I feel like that my life is just like the life of all of God's children; it is a testimony of God's grace to an unworthy sinner.

I want to continue with the thoughts Paul had, "**Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day...**" I want to share some observations, some things that I have noticed some things that I have learned in the time that I have been alive, which has not been very long by a lot of standards. I am generally not one that sits around and reflects on the things of the past. I recall as a young boy at home many people coming around. Dad was one that was always fixing something. God has given him a great ability in mechanical things. He can fix anything that moves. Therefore, people were always bringing around their cars and things that needed fixed. I recall some of the things that they would say to me. One thing I heard a lot was, "You need to enjoy these days, because they are the best times of your life." In some respects, maybe I could see their point. However, I disagreed with that statement then and I disagree with it now. I do not believe that those days of childhood were the best days of my life. They were good days. I do not live in the past. I believe that the best days of my life are yet ahead. I really believe that. I enjoyed those days, I do not

deny it, and I have enjoyed every stage of life that I have gone through to this point. I enjoy very much my life right now. If God allows as He has done in the past and I believe that He is going to be gracious out in the future, I intend to enjoy what is yet ahead. I am not one that sits around, lives, and reflects in the days of the past.

The types of reflections that I am giving are really somewhat unusual for me. Lately, I have been reading Bro. Cockrell's book on "Death and the Hereafter." This has probably caused me to reflect on things a little more than I normally do. Now, I want to reflect on a few things that I have seen and I have learned.

1. In the first place, I have observed that the world has waxed worse and worse. The Bible said that it would be that way. It says, "**But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse...**" (2 Tim. 3:13). There is a noticeable difference in the wickedness of men even from the time that I was a young child until today. I can see things now that I believe when I was a young child in a community it would more or less have been a shame. A person would have been an outcast.

It seems like today that the wickedness of men, in many cases, is celebrated in the world and in society. They are raised up and elevated, they are brought to the forefront, and wickedness has become more brazen and bolder. People are in open defiance toward God and open defiance of His Word. They walk in that way and men are sinners. I do not believe that they are necessarily greater sinners than they were in times past, but I do believe that they wax worse and worse. I am amazed when I think that God is restraining the wickedness on the earth today and yet it is as bad as it really is. Sometimes we look at the things that are going on and we realize that this world is waxing worse and worse. Solomon said, "**...there is no new thing under the sun**" (Ecc. 1:9). However, I do believe that men come up with different ways all the time to manifest the wickedness that is in their heart. All the time there is some different avenue that is found for displaying and making a show of their wickedness. I believe that this world is waxing worse and worse and I believe that it will continue to do so, just as the scriptures testify.

It has been noticeable and something I have observed. As I read the writings of godly men that have lived in past centuries and different times from today, I notice in their writing that the world has continued to grow worse and worse. If it was true in their day then how much more is it true today? Paul said that they were waxing worse and worse in his day. We believe it is truer

today and we believe that these events are leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world has grown wicked, in one place the prophet Isaiah said that people were pulling sin to them as a cart on a rope (Isa. 5:18). He was saying not only were people sinning, they were openly sinning and proud of their sins and they will go to great lengths to do wickedness. We see that in this day and time. Men will put themselves out of the way to sin against God.

2. In the second place, I have observed that this world continues to get busier and busier. I was reading something A.W. Pink wrote in the early 1900's and he was commenting that in his day the world was getting busier and busier and faster and faster. He was not the only one, we can go back farther than him and men will testify to the same. The world continues to move faster and faster. Why do I bring that up? I notice that as we get busier and busier, the things of God get pushed aside. Our Christian service is what suffers. I have seen it especially as a curse among Christians. They will get busier and busier in the world and obviously, you find a place where you cannot do everything, something has to be cut. What is cut? The service of God is trimmed.

I have been amazed, and all down through my life I have seen it repeatedly, that people get busier and busier and they have so many things to do that they just cannot make it to the church service. They do not have time. I have known many that have young children and they will have their children in the boy or girl scouts, soccer, tee-ball, gymnastics, karate, band, horse back riding, basketball, and many other things, and they can run back and forth every evening to this practice and that practice and to the plays and games but then they cannot come to church because that is just too much.

On the other hand, some cannot come to the church because the next day the kids have to get up and go to school. I believe that this is something that I have noticed, that the world gets busier and busier and Christians are caught up in it if they are not careful. They get busy with the world and they push the things of God aside. If you are not going to do the things of God today, when are you going to do them? Just when we think the pace of things cannot increase anymore, it does. Men keep pressing and pushing on. This has happened in my lifetime.

3. In the third place, I have observed that pride is a very terrible sin. It is something that is a great temptation to the young, saved and unsaved alike. Paul speaking to Timothy said, "**Flee also youthful lusts...**" (2 Tim. 2:22). Solomon wisely advised, "**Remember now thy creator in the days of thy**

youth..." (Ecc. 12:1). When our life and our health seem to be strong, we are greatly susceptible to pride. We begin to think that we are never going to grow old and have these aches and pains that the old folks get. They will kind of laugh at Grandma and Grandpa sitting there talking about their surgeries and their pills and they will get a good chuckle out of it. They go on thinking that I will never have to have anything like that. We think that we have all the time in the world. Pride is a terrible evil.

It is also especially evil and a temptation to young preachers. Something that Satan uses and uses mightily to tear down preachers is pride. As I have read the works of some of God's preachers that have gone on before, I noticed that they have made comment on it. They struggled with it. Robert Murray McCheyne was one that died at the age of 29 and one of the things he consistently refers to in his journal was the fight that he had against pride in his life. For young Christians, those that have been blessed and those that it seems have been given some sort of a special gift from God, it is very easy to get prideful and lifted up and think that we in ourselves are something. I mean if God has enable someone to sing or play an instrument, whatever gift that God has given you, it ought to be employed in His service. We also must realize that God has given it and it has come from Him. Paul asked the Corinthian church, "**For who maketh thee to differ from another...**" (1 Cor. 4:7)? Why would you glory if you have something more than another does? Who has given it to you? It is a ridiculous thing to think that we are something because of what that God has given us. Pride is ridiculous and preposterous when we think about it.

We see that it is a terrible evil and great temptation that comes upon us. We must fight against it and fight to overcome it in our life. Pride has a lot of the root of selfishness. The thinking of self, how that I'm important and I'm somebody, really being more concerned about taking care of ourselves and everybody else can just do whatever it is they want to do. Pride is something that hinders us and can ruin a Christian testimony very quickly. I have observed that pride is a terrible evil.

Pride is something Satan can use in many different ways to destroy. Pride can sometimes destroy friendships. It will destroy relationships. It will destroy churches. One church member will say, "I'm right and everybody else is wrong and you got to agree with me and it has got to be this way." Then, another church member says, "Well, I'm the one that's right and everybody else is wrong and you have to go along with me."

Continued on page 73

Observations of a

Continued from page 72

Then you will see before long the fellowship of a church and the unity in a church is destroyed and many times people will just be scattered. Pride is so destructive. It will destroy preachers. It will destroy homes. It will destroy marriages. A husband will say, "Well, I'm the head of the house and what I say goes and its going to be this way and it isn't going to be any other way." Sometimes a wife will say, "Well, I've got a mind and its going to be this way and it isn't going to be any other way." We see it destroy homes.

Pride is a terrible thing. It is greatly used of Satan in trying to destroy and hinder the work of God. I have seen it in my lifetime. I have observed that pride can destroy all the things I have just mentioned. Pride is a terrible sin that we need to fight against at all times and all costs. When you think about it, God's people, especially those that believe the truths of God in salvation, really should be the most humble people

on earth. God's grace is not something that should lift us up in pride; rather it should humble us. It is something that I began to see as I began to learn more about the Grace of God. I began to realize how much that God had done and how little and nothing that I had done. I began to realize more fully that it was not my merit and that I had not earned this salvation from God. I had not worked to get this salvation. I had not worked to keep this salvation. The Bible says that man is just a worm. He is just as the dust of the earth and just as the flower of the field. We begin to realize, we should keep in mind our position. Solomon said, "...when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear..." and to remember "...God is in heaven, and thou upon earth..." (Ecc. 5:1-2). I have seen pride enter and destroy repeatedly. It will hinder us in our work and testimony for God. I have observed pride being very destructive in this world. It is something we need to fight against as God's people.

(Continued in the next issue)



Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read. Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

PRISON FELLOWSHIP FACES LAWSUITS IN IOWA

NEWTON, Iowa (EP)—Prison Fellowship's faith-based rehabilitation program InnerChange is facing two lawsuits in Iowa. Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AUSCS) has filed suits claiming that InnerChange promotes religious favoritism.

The New York Times reported that inmates enrolled in the 18-month program are moved to a separate cellblock and take part in Bible study and mentoring classes. Prisoners in InnerChange also reportedly get access to large screen TVs and computers, keys to their cells and free phone calls.

"The program is one of the most egregious violations of church-state separation I've ever seen," said Barry W. Lynn, AUSCS executive director. "It literally merges religion and government. It is unconscionable for the government to give preferential treatment to prisoners based solely on their willingness to undergo religious conversion and indoctrination."

Representatives of Prison Fellowship say the lawsuit has no basis because government money is not used to fund the faith aspect of their programs. Government funding only

pays for things like vocational skills courses, substance abuse counseling and job placement.

Jerry Wilger, executive national director of the InnerChange program, said the lawsuits' claims were misleading. Wilger said inmates had keys because the cellblock that the Department of Corrections chose to house InnerChange participants had old wooden doors. He also said phone calls were free only in emergency situations, computers were used for educational purposes, and televisions were prohibited.

"While the program is open to inmates of all faiths or no faith, participants are fully apprised of the faith-centered nature of the program in advance of their participation," said Mark Earley, president of Prison Fellowship.

Similar programs are run by Prison Fellowship in Texas, Minnesota, and Kansas. InnerChange is a good example of the type of program President George W. Bush supports with his faith-based initiatives.

"In some ways, these lawsuits may be only trying to stymie President Bush's national faith-based initiative. . . Already they are seeking additional plaintiffs to join," said Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson.

"Sadly, President Bush sees nothing wrong

with an arrangement like this and indeed wants to spread it across all social services, affecting all Americans," said Lynn.

Colson defended InnerChange based on the program's reported success rate. Colson cited a recent study of the Texas InnerChange program, saying the re-offend rates for inmates who were involved in the program were only about 15 percent, while the average re-offend rates can average from 50 to 70 percent.

The two lawsuits were filed Feb. 12 in Federal Court. The first suit filed by Jerry D. Ashbarn, a Mormon inmate at the Newton Prison, claims the program is discriminatory. The second suit, which was filed on behalf of three relatives of Newton inmates, argues that every time the plaintiffs call the prison, they are helping finance a program they do not believe in. The lawsuit says that the State of Iowa pays for InnerChange by adding a charge to telephone calls to and from inmates.

The defendants in the suit are Prison Fellowship Ministries, InnerChange, the prison warden, the former and acting directors of the Iowa Department of Corrections and members of the board of corrections.

Colson said, "Join me in praying that God will stop the plans of our opponents, and that this case will decisively proclaim the need to bring this program to not just four states—but to all 50, so that we may give the greatest witness possible to the life-changing power of our Lord."

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ISSUES SCHOOL PRAYER GUIDELINES

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—The Department of Education has issued "guidance" on prayer in public schools. Religious and legal groups watching over church-state issues have responded with mixed reactions.

The seven-page prayer guide document reviews Supreme Court decisions relating to school policies on prayer and discusses the First Amendment ban on government-sponsored religious activity. The document also outlines what religious activities and practices are permissible within school walls.

The document, which will require schools to certify that they have no policy prohibiting constitutionally protected prayer, was issued as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Matt Staver, president of the Liberty Counsel, said, "Essentially the theme of these guidelines says that in places and in the manner in which students are able to engage in secular expression, they must be allowed to engage in religious expression." Staver said he expects groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union to challenge the document's principles.

The document reads, "Teachers and other public school officials may not lead their classes in prayer, devotional readings from the Bible or other religious activities."

The "guidance" document also says, "Among other things, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, the lunch

hour, or other noninstructional time in the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities."

The document also says it is permissible to form religious clubs and prayer groups to the same extent as other noncurricular activities by student groups. The department's statement will also affect teachers in public schools. While teachers are not allowed to encourage or lead prayer in their official capacities, they can take part in unofficial religious activities.

In a letter to school officials that accompanied the guidance document, Education Secretary Rod Paige said, "Public schools should not be hostile to the religious rights of their students and their families." The guidance document also says that schools with policies preventing protected prayer in schools will run the risk of losing funding they receive under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AUSCS) have questioned the legal implications of the document. "Federal courts have split over the legality of some religious activities in public schools, such as so-called 'student initiated prayer,' at public school events," said Barry Lynn, executive director of AUSCS. "Yet these guidelines flatly state that such activities are legal."

Other groups concerned with prayer in schools have praised the Education Department's decision. Tom Prichard, president of The Minnesota Family Council, said, "These guidelines will be very helpful to not only protect the religious liberty interests of students and teachers but also to let school officials know what is protected activity. We fully concur with the sentiments of Secretary Rod Paige."

PRO-LIFERS CELEBRATE TWO DECISIONS BY U.S. HIGH COURTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—Opponents of pro-life laws were disappointed with two decisions in U. S. courts this week.

The Supreme Court decided to let stand an Indiana state law that requires women considering abortion to undergo face-to-face counseling regarding the medical and emotional risks involved in the abortion procedure.

The statute was passed into law eight years ago but has not been put into effect due to appeals. The Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of the law on Monday, Feb. 24, meaning the law can now take effect.

Pro-choice advocates argued that the counseling would cause some women to forego the procedure or possibly postpone the abortion until later in a pregnancy when abortion can be more harmful to a woman's body. The Indiana law does not prohibit abortion, but simply requires counseling for the woman considering abortion and an 18-hour waiting period before the procedure can occur.

Kate Michelman of the pro-choice group NARAL Pro-choice America described the ruling as "an outrageous law that leaves many women without access to abortions, or certainly places heavy burden, an undue burden, on a woman's right to choose."

Continued on page 74

Outlines for Country Preachers

by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

I Cor. 4:20

The Corinthians were given to words. They delighted in eloquence; they were addicted to disputations. In the church at Corinth there were some loud talkers who questioned Paul's authority and sought to destroy his influence. They said he neither looked well, wrote well, or preached well. They said he would not come himself and face them in open debate because his visit had been delayed.

I. THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. The general meaning of the kingdom of God is the realm of the rule of God, the community over which God reigns, whether in this world or the world to come.
2. The kingdom in its present form is spiritual in the hearts of His people (Luke 17:21).
 - (1) It does not come with outward show (Luke 17:20).
 - (2) It is not of this world system (John 18:36).
 - (3) It is not carnal (Rom. 14:17).
 - (4) Being in it at present involves suffering (Acts 14:22; II Thess. 1:5; Rev. 1:9).
 - (5) It will be outward and universal in its future form (Ps. 2:6; Zech. 14:9; Matt. 25:31-34).
3. It is now in its mystery form (Matt. 13:11).
 - (1) In its greatest sense it is the realm of Christian profession, including both saved and lost (Matt. 13).
 - (2) In its strict sense it consists only of the saved. It has in it—
 - A. The born again (John 3:3,5; Eph. 5:5).
 - B. The converted (Matt. 18:3).
 - C. The translated (Col. 1:13).
 We are adopted into God's family, born into the kingdom and baptized into the church.
 - (3) While it is generally invisible in its mystery form, it is seen in visible form in local Baptist churches where the rule of God is acknowledged (Matt. 21:43; I Pet. 2:9; Heb. 12:28; Col. 1:13).
4. God reigns in the hearts of His people as well as in the church and Heaven.
5. This inward dominion in the hearts of His people is called the kingdom of God.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT IN WORD.

1. There is such a thing as the Word of the kingdom (Matt. 13:19). We must not take this to diminish the Word of God or the Christ of the Word (I Cor. 2:4).
2. The kingdom of God does not lie in mere human words, but in a character produced by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) There is spiritual power in the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 15:13; I Cor. 1:18; I Thess. 1:5; II Tim. 1:7).
 - (2) Christianity is not in mere externals of human talk, but in the inward activities of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - (3) It is not just faith that you espouse; it is a force you experience.
 - (4) It is not merely pretty words. It is not logic, but spiritual life.
3. Speech avails little if there is no spiritual power (II Tim. 3:5).
4. Christianity rests on testimony and teaching, but it can be weakened by pretended piety and evil speaking.
5. It is the power of the Spirit which turned the world upside down. It broke Jewish self-righteousness and Gentile idolatry—abased the proud and exalted the lowly—made the wise simple and the simple wise.
6. What was this great power of the Christian religion?
 - (1) It was the force of truth, the majesty of righteousness, the persuasiveness of love.
 - (2) It was the heart piercing energy of the Spirit, working with the Word of God. God gave the increase.
7. A kingdom cannot exist merely in word. A kingdom means a king and his dominion. It implies authority exercised and obedience rendered.
8. Some do not know this.
 - (1) They boast of the antiquity of their church and its creed.
 - (2) Profession does not put you in the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:21-23).

III. THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS POWER.

1. All natural and physical power comes from God (Rom. 13:1).
2. The power of God is in the church (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). It has the power to open and shut the kingdom of God (Matt. 18:15-18).
3. The power of the kingdom of God is the power of the Spirit, the power of truth, the power of goodness, the power of piety and love.
4. The most eloquent words do not guarantee the possession of a spiritual state, nor can they produce it in others.

5. The kingdom is not advanced by ecclesiastical systems or the means of Christian culture, but by the living source of truth and the silent sovereign power of the Spirit (Ps. 68:35; Zech. 4:6; Mark 9:1; I Cor. 2:4).
6. The preaching in the power of the Spirit will change men's hearts and mend their manners. The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.
 - (1) He is convinced he has something to say—that it is his mission to declare it.
 - (2) Such a preacher must be independent of the voice of the multitude and the scorn of his antagonists—-independent of all save God and conscience.
 - (3) God can use him to enlighten blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, soften hard hearts, and deliver from slavery to sin and Satan (Acts 26:16-18).
7. This power brings faith (Eph. 1:19), gives spiritual strength (Micah 3:8; Eph. 6:10), and keeps us saved (II Pet. 1:3-4; I Pet. 1:5).

CONCLUSION

1. The kingdom of God is not in words, but in character produced by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.
2. This power starts in the soul and pervades the whole man, changing beliefs, habits and principles (II Cor. 5:17).
3. Have you experienced the power of the kingdom of God (II Cor. 10:4-5; Heb. 6:5)?

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 73

Executive Director of the Indiana Right to Life Mike Fitcher supported the high court's ruling. He said, "For the first time, abortion providers in Indiana will be required to give women information about the risks [of abortion]."

According to the Indianapolis Star, fewer women had abortions in Mississippi and Utah after similar laws requiring face-to-face counseling became effective in those states.

A three-judge panel of the 9th U. S. Circuit of Appeals recently upheld another law supported by pro-lifers in Arizona. In a 2-1 decision, the panel decided to uphold Arizona's parental consent law – a statute that requires girls under 18 to have the consent of a parent or guardian to have an abortion.

Planned Parenthood had sued to block the law, which passed in 1999, because the organization argued that the law did not guarantee privacy to girls who sought a judge's approval for an abortion.

Judge Richard C. Taliman stated that the law did satisfy two constitutionally recognized rights of privacy—namely the right to make life decisions and the right to avoid disclosure of personal information.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY CALLS FOR BOYCOTT OF BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (EP)—Dr. James Dobson's organization Focus on the Family is calling for donors of United Way to exclude Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) from their charitable contributions to United Way. The call to boycott BBBSA is a result of United Way's decision to allow homosexuals as mentors to children involved in the program.

The announcement was made during a daily radio broadcast Feb. 20 by Bill Maier, vice president and psychologist in residence at Focus. Last July, BBBSA implemented a policy that bans discrimination against open homosexuals as volunteers and mentors of children across the nation.

"The national leadership of Big Brothers has received a landslide of criticism from parents, pro-family groups, members of Congress

and even now its local directors," said Maier. "But they stubbornly refuse to reconsider this ill-advised policy, choosing instead to appease homosexual pressure groups at the expense of the well-being of the children they serve."

During the broadcast, Maier also said, "Millions of United Way donors would be shocked to learn that their money is being used to match fatherless boys with homosexual men."

Founder and president of Focus on the Family James Dobson, said, "I have supported Big Brothers Big Sisters for years, but the well-being of children is too important to ignore. It is unfortunate that such a reputable organization has resorted to playing political games with America's children caught in the crosshairs. I hope that even now Big Brothers Big Sisters will reassess its dangerous policy."

Maier pointed to psychological research to assert that homosexual men are more likely to have psychiatric illness, to suffer from alcohol and drug abuse, to commit suicide and to have higher incidences of sexually transmitted disease.

"In fact, one gay organization recently did a poll in which they learned that one out of five gay men report being physically or sexually abused by their partner," said Maier. "But it appears that Big Brothers has chosen to ignore these facts in its zeal to pair impressionable children with homosexuals."

The Family Research Council (FRC) has issued a statement supporting the Focus on the Family decision. "The FRC joins our friends at Focus on the Family in urging pro-family Americans to withhold donations to the United Way unless they call the organization and request that no part of the donation go to BBBSA," the statement said. "Exposing vulnerable and impressionable young boys to homosexuality, not to mention the risks of potential abuse, is simply unconscionable."

EURO RULES FORCE CHURCH BODIES TO EMPLOY ATHEISTS

Thousands of religious schools, charities and organizations could face legal action if they refuse to employ atheists or sack staff who become Satanists under proposed Government regulations.

The laws, which are based on a European

Continued on page 75

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 74

Union directive and which have to be implemented by December, ban discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of religion, belief or sexual orientation.

But a report from the Christian Institute says the laws will restrict the freedom of religious organizations to employ solely staff who are practicing believers.

Christian groups are particularly angry that the Government has chosen to exempt political parties from the laws, so that the Labour Party will be able to continue its policy of employing only party members.

"While the Vegetarian Society can refuse to employ meat-eaters and the RSPCA can sack an executive who is found to have invested in the fur trade, churches which employ Christians could now face legal action for doing so," the institute said. "They could face the possibility of crippling legal actions just for following their beliefs."

Under the new regulations, all religious organizations, including schools, charities, parishes and mosques will need to have a very strong case to require recruits to share their beliefs.

The laws could, for example, prevent Christian bodies from refusing to employ practicing homosexuals or bisexuals on the grounds that sex outside marriage is against Christian teaching. Moreover, the regulations protect existing staff, so that if a youth worker employed by a Christian Church converts to Islam, but argues that he can still do the job, the Church cannot dismiss him.

Teachers in maintained schools escape the regulations on religion or belief, but not sexual orientation. Vergers, youth workers, evangelists, pastoral staff in parishes and caretakers could all be seriously affected, however.

In its report the institute said that the proposed regulations undermined religious freedom.

KENTUCKY BILL TO REPEAL CLERGY 'SILENT RIGHT'

A state legislator has outraged religious groups by introducing a bill that would abolish the right clergy now have to stay silent when they learn in a confessional that a child has been abused.

The legislation strikes at a central Christian tenet that is also written into state law, guaranteeing confidentiality when priests or ministers are acting as spiritual advisers.

"People are not going to violate their oath," said Nancy J Kemper, a Protestant minister. "They'll go to jail."

Kentucky already requires members of the public, including clergy, to notify civil authorities about child abuse if they learn about the wrongdoing outside of the confessional.

But Democratic Rep. Susan Westrom, a former therapist who worked with abused children, felt the law should go further. She said "horror stories" of sex abuse in the Roman Catholic Church and Jehovah's Witnesses led her to introduce the legislation.

Westrom said, "That just made my skin crawl." Under her proposal, the "clergy-penitent privilege" would be eliminated only in cases of child abuse or neglect.

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky said "Westrom's legislation violated the First Amendment right of religious freedom. A similar bill proposed last year in Connecticut failed. "This is not a victims' rights issue," said Scott Wegenast, the conference's lobbyist in Frankfurt. "It violates a tenet of our faith, the sacrament of penance, which is an absolutely confidential conversation between the penitent and a priest and it cannot be abridged."

Under church law, a priest who disclosed a confession could be ex-communicated, Wegenast said.

Kentucky has been hit especially hard by the sex abuse crisis that has battered the Catholic Church nationwide.

SEPTEMBER 11 VICTIMS FUND AWARDS LESBIAN PARTNER

A federal fund created to compensate victims of the September 11 attacks has awarded \$500,000 to the lesbian partner of a woman who died at the Pentagon.

Sheila Hein, 51, a civilian Army management analyst who died when a hijacked American Airlines jet slammed into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, was wearing a gold band given her by Peggy Neff, her partner of 18 years. Another, emerald ring that had been a gift from Neff, was missing from Hein's remains.

"It had been pulverized," Neff wrote in an affidavit filed with her federal claim.

"She was my entire world and my soul mate, my closest confidant and my best friend," Neff added.

Under Virginia laws, Neff was not eligible for state aid. But the head of a Department of Justice fund established after the attacks concluded that Neff was entitled to compensation.

Kenneth Feinberg, special master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, wrote on November 26 that Neff had accepted \$557,390.

ANCIENT HEBREW TABLET ECHOES BIBLE PASSAGE

Israeli geologists said Monday they have examined a stone tablet detailing repair plans for the Jewish Temple of King Solomon that, if authenticated, would be a rare piece of physical evidence confirming biblical narrative. The find—whose origin is murky—is about the size of a legal pad, with a 15-line inscription in ancient Hebrew that strongly resembles descriptions in the book of Kings.

The tablet could also strengthen Jewish claims to a disputed holy site in Jerusalem's Old City that is now home to two major mosques. Muslim clerics insist, despite overwhelming archaeological evidence, that no Jewish shrine ever stood at the site. That claim was made by Palestinian officials in failed negotiations with Israel in 2000 over who would be sovereign there.

The origin of the stone tablet is unclear, making it difficult to establish authenticity. The

Israeli daily *Haaretz* quoted an unidentified source as saying it was uncovered in recent years, during renovations carried out by the Muslim administrators of the mosque compound known to Muslims as the Haram as-Sharif, and to Jews as the Temple Mount.

From there, it reached a major antiquities collector in Jerusalem, *Haaretz* said. The Holy Land has a thriving trade in antiquities, often operating on the edge of the law.

The sandstone tablet has a 15-line inscription in ancient Hebrew that resembles descriptions in II Kings 12:1-6, 11-17, said Israel's Geological Survey, which examined the artifact. The words refer to King Joash, who ruled the area 2,800 years ago.

In it, the king tells priests to take "holy money. . .to buy quarry stones and timber and copper and labor to carry out the duty with faith." If the work is completed well, "the Lord will protect his people with blessing," reads the last sentence of the inscription.

The Jerusalem collector has declined to come forward, and David Zailer, a lawyer for the collector, would not say where the tablet was found or give any further details.

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN CLEARS THE U.S. SENATE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—In a major victory for pro-lifers, the U.S. Senate passed the partial-birth abortion ban Thursday, March 13. The bill passed the Senate by a 64-33 vote and is considered a major triumph for President Bush and the Republican party.

The bill will now go to the GOP-controlled House where it is expected to pass with ease this spring. In a prepared statement, Bush said, "Partial-birth abortion is an abhorrent procedure that offends human dignity, and I commend the Senate for passing legislation to ban it. Today's action is an important step toward building a culture of life in America."

In the days preceding the bill's passage, many feared the legislation would become watered down by proposed amendments that would strip the bill of its effectiveness. The only change to the bill that did pass was a non-binding vote in which the Senate went on record in favor of the 1973 Supreme Court ruling of *Roe v. Wade* supporting abortion rights. The bill's author and main supporter in the Senate, Sen. Rick Santorum, R.Pa., said that provision would be deleted from the bill that goes to President Bush's office.

Pro-choice supporters have made it clear that they plan a court challenge to the legislation. "This bill is unconstitutional," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. The specifics of the bill prohibit doctors from committing an "overt act" designed to kill a partially delivered fetus. The bill does include an exemption in cases where delivery of the child puts the mother's life at risk.

Sandy Rios, president of Concerned Women for America, said, "Who would have thought that a ban on such a harmful procedure. . .would have taken nearly a decade to enact into law? Thanks to the determined and tireless efforts of Senator Rick Santorum in the sometimes stubborn Senate, we are nearly there. Now there's nothing keeping this legis-

lation from the fast track to becoming law."

President Bush has already committed to signing the bill into law when it reaches his desk.

BUSH CITES FAITH IN PRESS CONFERENCE WHILE RELIGIOUS LEADERS DISAGREE ON WAR

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—In only his second press conference since election, President Bush answered questions for nearly an hour during prime time March 6. Although most questions asked of the president concerned his politics on war with Iraq, Bush did not shy away from questions about his faith.

Bush told the members of the press and the television audience that his faith guides and sustains him. He admitted proudly that he prays daily for guidance, wisdom, strength and peace. Praying for the safety of America's troops in the event of war was also a commitment Bush made during the press conference.

The president's faith has been a hot topic, leaving many to wonder how some religious leaders can support the war effort in Iraq while others so boldly oppose war. While Bush cited his faith as the source of his wisdom and a guide in his decisions, members of the National Council of Churches declared that their Bible says that war is not justified against Iraq.

Mark S. Hanson, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), in a report to the Conference of Bishops, criticized the White House on the war with Iraq. Hanson said that Bush has been unwilling to meet with a group of U.S. religious leaders on two separate requests about the possibility of war.

The first request, by a group of religious leaders mostly opposing the war, came through the National Council of Churches (NCC). Hanson said the president's staff declined, asking why Bush would want to meet with a group of people in opposition to his policies on war. The second request was independent of the NCC, and Hanson said he has received no response from White House officials yet.

"I'm very concerned because for us war is first and last a moral issue," said Hanson. "If the president severs himself from moral leaders in the society and hears and heeds only the voices that are advising him in terms of what is strategically the right military response, then I think we have essentially had our president turn his back on moral leaders, which I think we as religious leaders are in this country."

Hanson has pointed to ELCA social statements to "ground" his opposition of the war with Iraq and has publicly pushed for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Former President Jimmy Carter has also opposed war with Iraq, stating in a *New York Times* essay that this conflict does not meet the "just war" criteria. Carter is a Bap-

Continued on page 76

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 75
tist.

Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land disagrees with Hanson and Carter's position and has said that the "truly evil nature of Saddam Hussein's reign in Iraq" calls for the use of force. Land is the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and a leading religious advocate for the war with Iraq.

On March 4, Land appeared on ABC's "Nightline" and participated in a 90-minute discussion focusing on the nature of a "just war," a topic on which Land is considered to be an expert.

Land said, "What is it the Supreme Court justice said? He said, 'I can't define pornography, but I know it when I see it.' I know evil when I see it, and Saddam Hussein is evil." Land argued that force is sometimes necessary when you are "dealing with truly evil people."

Land's argument against giving Iraq more time to disarm is a comparison of Saddam's actions to that of an unfaithful husband. "The hundredth time that he breaks his marriage vows, he says, 'Honey, it will never happen again. I promise I'll do better.' And she takes him back again, and she believes him," said Land. "There comes a time after 12 years when enough is enough, and naiveté becomes criminal irresponsibility."

UNITED METHODIST JUDICIAL COUNCIL TO HEAR CASE OF LESBIAN PASTOR

SEATTLE, Wash. (EP)—The United Methodist Church's (UMC) highest court will hear the case of a lesbian pastor accused of violating church laws. Karen Dammann admitted to her bishop in 2001 that she was living in a "partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship."

Bishop Elias Galvan, of the Seattle area, filed charges citing that the relationship was in direct conflict with predetermined church law. The UMC says that homosexual activity is "incompatible with Christian teaching" and the church does not allow practicing homosexuals to be ordained.

"I continue to believe that God has called and continues to call to the ministry gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons. I do not believe the God of truth has called these persons to a life in the closet," said Dammann in a letter to the Advocate.

After having the charges dismissed by two lower courts, Galvan has decided to bring the case before the Judicial Council because of implications for the larger church body.

"This case hinges on several passages from the Book of Discipline that have never been tested and interpreted," said Galvan. "It is important to follow the process all the way to the Judicial Council to clarify

the meaning and application of these passages."

Galvan is head of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference, and Dammann remains a "clergy member in good standing" with the conference according to the United Methodist News Service.

Dammann is currently living with her partner and son in Amherst, Mass. The Judicial Council will hear the case when it meets April 26-27.

STATE DEPARTMENT LIST OMITTS WORLD'S WORST PERSECUTORS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—A U.S. State department report, which singles out nations that consistently violate human rights, including religious freedom, has some glaring omissions, declare watchdog groups.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent federal agency advising the Bush Administration and Congress, said it welcomed Secretary of State Colin Powell's redesignation of Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and Sudan as "countries of particular concern" (CPCs) in 2003 for severe religious freedom violations. The list is prepared annually in order to affect U.S. foreign policy regarding these nations.

However, the USCIRF said it is deeply disappointed that Secretary Powell did not designate India, Laos, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam as CPCs, all of which the commission recommended for designation in September 2002. The final State Department list remains as it was in 2001, even though egregious abuses persist or have increased in these other countries."

According to law; the Bush Administration has 90 days in which to identify policy measures for the CPC countries. "We are looking for the Administration to designate policy measures it will take to improve the situation," said USCIRF chair Felice D. Gaer. "In the past, the State Department has taken no additional policy action against CPCs, explicitly relying instead on pre-existing sanctions simply to meet requirements under the law. While this may be technically correct under the statute, it is indefensible as a matter of policy."

USCIRF said that there is ample evidence, even with the State department's own religious freedom reports, that India, Laos, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam also meet the legislative criteria to be named CPCs.

As noted in past years by the State department, religious freedom "does not exist" in Saudi Arabia. The government vigorously prohibits all forms of public religious expression other than the government's interpretation and presentation of Sunni Islam. Last year, numerous foreign Christian workers were detained, arrested, tortured, and subsequently deported.

"Other severe violations include torture and cruel and degrading treatment or pun-

ishment; prolonged detention without charges; and flagrant denials of the right to liberty and security of the person, including coercive measures directed against women and the extended jurisdiction of the religious police, who exercise their vague powers in ways that violate others' religious freedom," the USCIRF reported.

According to the non-profit International Association for Religious Freedom, Saudi Arabia is the only nation in the world that prohibits the public practice of any religion other than the form of Sunni Islam that the government supports.

A U.S. official told Agence France Press that Saudi Arabia would not be listed as a CPC, but the Administration planned to "press them" on religious freedom during 2003. "For three years, the commission has recommended Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Laos for CPC status because of their deplorable religious freedom violations, yet none has been named. . . We urge the department to continue to assess the religious freedom violations in these countries and make CPC designations throughout the year," said Gaer.

The nine independent Commissioners deliberate on their CPC recommendations throughout the year. On Sept. 25, 2002, the Commission met with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to discuss its recommendations. On Sept. 30, 2002, the USCIRF sent a letter with its recommendations to Secretary Powell.

Along with Saudi Arabia, other nations deserve to be on the CPC list for their deplorable conduct toward religious minorities. According to the USCIRF, Sudan is the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief. The decades old civil war in the country between the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south has killed over 2 million people. The USCIRF described the northern government's activity as "genocidal" and said there is evidence that it uses "forced starvation, abduction, enslavement, forcible displacement of civilians and aerial bombardment of civilians, including church property and humanitarian facilities" to defeat the south.

In Burma, the government persists in exercising strict control over all religious activities and imposing severe restrictions on certain religious practices. Members of the Burmese military have reportedly killed members of religious minorities or instigated violence by the Buddhist majority against them. Police and military personnel have failed to protect religious minorities during periods of violence.

"The plight of religious minorities in Burma is made worse by the widespread social tensions—encouraged by the regime—between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities there. Other severe violations of religious freedom have included forcible conscription of religious minorities as military porters and death for those who refuse," said a recent statement from USCIRF.

In nearby India, at least 1,000 Muslims were killed and more than 100,000 forced to flee their homes as a result of violence by Hindu mobs in Gujarat State after 58 Hindus were killed on a train in Godhra in 2002. USCIRF has evidence that Christians were victims in Gujarat as well when many churches were destroyed. The state government has failed to hold key violators accountable for these abuses.

Iran and Iraq were both cited by the commission for tolerating "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom." Iraq's government "has conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, arbitrary arrest, and protracted detention against the religious leaders and followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population."

As North Korea rushes in the direction of nuclear arms, it is still rushing away from religious freedom. The communist government led by dictator Kim Jong II "has a policy of actively discriminating against religious believers. The North Korean state severely represses public and private religious activities." The commission received reports that officials have arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes executed North Korean citizens who were found to have ties with overseas Christian evangelical groups operating across the border in China, as well as those who engaged in such unauthorized religious activities as public religious expression and persuasion. In North Korea, practicing religion is punishable by death.

China was added to the USCIRF because their government continues to confine, torture, imprison, and subject individuals to other forms of ill treatment on account of their religion or belief, including Protestant Christians, Roman Catholics, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, and others, such as members of Falun Gong, that the government has labeled "evil cults."

In 2002, the situation has gotten worse in China. "Official respect for religious freedom in China has diminished. Chinese government officials have continued to claim the right to control, monitor, and restrain religious practice in that country," the commission reported. "As part of China's crackdown on religious and spiritual believers, individuals have been charged with, or detained under suspicion of, offenses that essentially penalize them for manifesting freedoms of religion or belief, speech, association, or assembly. In addition, several prominent religious leaders have been detained, often on reportedly dubious criminal charges, such as rape and other sexual violence, or financial crimes."

In China, religious persecution has been traced all the way to the top. The crackdown against religious believers was authorized at the highest levels of government, according to reportedly official documents obtained by human rights non-governmental organizations.

Continued on page 77

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 76

Asian neighbors Laos and Vietnam, which were not listed as CPCs continue to arrest, detain, and imprison members of minority religions on account of their faith. In some instances, officials attempted to force Christians to renounce their faith. Commission members saw and heard evidence of such persecution during a visit to Laos in February 2002. A USCIRF delegation that visited Vietnam in March 2002 found that religious dissidents remain under house arrest or are imprisoned, including Father Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly, who was detained after submitting testimony to the commission in 2001.

The omission of Pakistan and Turkmenistan from the CPCs list was another glaring oversight, said human rights groups. Both nations fail to adequately protect Christian minority groups from sectarian violence and persecution. Abuse of the law in both nations has led to uncalled for arrests, imprisonment and torture of innocent people.

The U.S. needs to act to protect religious freedom around the world, said Joseph K. Grieboski, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute on Religion and Public Policy (IRPP). The Institute is another organization that monitors religious freedom in nations around the world and encourages the government to act.

"It is time to send the governments of these nations clear messages that they cannot persecute people of faith while the world stands silently by. It is time to acknowledge that India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam fit precisely the characteristics of a 'Country of Particular Concern' as defined by American law," said Grieboski. "To do anything less is a clear signal that they can continue their brutal subjugation of people of faith with impunity, while America watches and remains silent."

MASSACHUSETTS HIGH COURT TAKES ON HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE

BOSTON, Mass. (EP)—The Massachusetts Supreme Court began hearing a case on March 4 that conservative groups say could change the face of marriage in America. The argument in the case is whether or not homosexual couples should be allowed to marry legally under Massachusetts law.

"Marriage pre-dates the State of Massachusetts and it has an unchangeable definition: the union of one man and one woman," said Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council. "Any attempt by the court to modify that definition will send our nation on a path where fundamental institutions of our society no longer have definitions, and ultimately, no longer exist."

Seven homosexual couples are bringing

the lawsuit called Goodridge v. Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Julie and Hillary Goodridge, one of the lesbian couples suing, are members of the Unitarian Universalist Church and are pushing for full marital rights and recognition.

The *Washington Times* reported that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is perceived as liberal and is expected to favor the homosexual plaintiffs. Connor said he believes that if the court does grant marital rights to homosexual couples, gay and lesbian lobbyists will push to have the legislation imposed on all states.

Ron Crews, executive director of the Massachusetts Family Institute, says pro-family conservatives in the state are hopeful but worried. "Every time this issue has been taken before a legislative body or before the public in referendum, the public has strongly affirmed that marriage should be defined as between a man and a woman."

Matt Daniels, president of the Alliance for Marriage, said he believes that if homosexuals begin to win legal battles on the state level, eventually they will try to apply the rulings to all 50 states. He said the only way to preserve traditional marriage in the U.S. is to lobby Congress for a Federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would define marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

Daniels believes that the American public favors traditional definitions of marriage. "Our most recent polls continue to affirm that. Americans believe gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose, but they don't have a right to redefine marriage for our entire nation," said Daniels.

A decision in the case is not expected until sometime this summer. Many people believe the case will eventually make it to the U. S. Supreme Court.

"The Massachusetts court must recognize that its role is to determine the constitutionality of legislation, not to create legislation itself," said Connor. "If they mistakenly rule that there is a constitutional right for homosexuals to marry, where will that right end?"

MONUMENTAL PRO-LIFE VICTORY IN SUPREME COURT RICO DECISION

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—The U. S. Supreme Court awarded pro-life advocates, as well as other activists, a major victory in a 8-1 ruling Feb. 26 that a federal racketeering law cannot be applied to abortion protesters.

The majority vote reversed a lower court decision that ruled Joe Scheidler, an activist with Operation Rescue, as well as other pro-life activists, committed extortion and violated racketeering laws in their protests outside abortion clinics. Those involved in the legal battle were sued in 1986 by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Delaware and Wisconsin.

The law used in the suit is called the Racketeer and Influenced and Corrupt Or-

ganizations (RICO) Act. It was adopted in the '70s and was often used to prosecute gangsters and members of organized crime.

The basis of the high court's decision, according to Chief Justice William Rehnquist, was that the abortion protesters may have acted illegally in their method of action but never violated RICO because they never acquired any property in their protests, or committed extortion. The court's ruling also applies to any other peaceful protesters.

"The decision is a major victory for the pro-life movement and a major testament to the power of prayer," said Scheidler, national director of the Pro-Life Action League. "We wish to thank all the thousands of supporters around the world who have prayed for this victory over the past 17 years."

Pastor Flip Benham, director of Operation Save America (formerly Operation Rescue) said that although he believes the Supreme Court only made this decision to protect the rights of liberal groups, it will also keep the Gospel from being censored.

Jay Sekulow, counsel for Operation Rescue in the legal battle, said the court's decision was a "tremendous victory for those who engage in social protests. The decision removes a cloud that has been hanging over the pro-life movement for 15 years."

Planned Parenthood Federation of America and NOW still plan to use the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrance Act (FACE), a 1994 federal law that outlaws the use of force or the threat of force to interfere with a person seeking or providing an abortion, against pro-life activists.

NOW President Kim Gandy said the ruling was "shocking" and that the court "placed a higher value on tangible property than on women's liberty."

Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council, said that the war against abortion is far from over. "Watch for pro-abortion groups to protest this decision," Connor said. "The irony is that they will be exercising the very rights they seek to deny others. The hypocrisy is breathtaking."

Matthew Staver, president of the Liberty Counsel, said the Supreme Court's decision "breathed new life into the pro-life movement."

James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, said the ruling "should help thwart the abortion industry's efforts to silence and punish the free speech and loving outreach of Christian men and women."

Those involved in the 17-year struggle suffered great financial losses. "They can destroy and take our bank accounts. They can destroy and take our bodies, and they can park us in jail," said Benham, "but they cannot destroy the gospel of Christ, which has proven once and for all that abortion was never a political issue; it is a Gospel issue."

'PLEDGE' BAN APPROVED BY 9TH CIRCUIT

COURT; STAYED PENDING APPEAL TO SUPREME COURT

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (EP)—Last week, the San Francisco-based Ninth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted to uphold a ban against reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools. The decision was set to be implemented March 10, but was stayed March 5, pending an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The circuit court ruled in favor of removing the Pledge last June because it contained the words "under God." Members of the court were asked to reconsider the decision but maintained that they will not be swayed by public opinion. Judge Alfred T. Goodwin, writing for the court's majority, said the words "'under God' are a profession of religious belief, namely a belief in monotheism."

According to the Feb. 28 court ruling, the Pledge maintains its constitutionality but forced recitation would be illegal in the public schools of the nine states under the court's jurisdiction.

"The Ninth Circuit is, of course, legendary for lopsided rulings, as it is dominated by the kind of leftist, activist judges so much favored by... [those] who criticize President Bush's judicial nominees as 'outside the mainstream,'" said Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council. "If the Ninth Circuit were any further outside the American mainstream it would be in orbit somewhere beyond the solar system."

Forrest Turpen, executive director of the Christian Educators Association International, said the "nationwide outrage over this ruling was good indication that the court, unlike the public, fails to appreciate that the moral foundation of our nation is inextricably imbedded in our laws and should remain so."

The Elk Grove Unified School District, which was the original target of the lawsuit that eventually became a federal case, appealed the Pledge ruling to the Supreme Court. Michael Newdow, a Sacramento atheist, sued the district, claiming that his daughter should not be required to recite the Pledge in school.

District Superintendent Dave Gordon said, "We feel strongly that the words 'under God' do not push religion on children, but reflect this country's history."

Sekulow said that the 9th Circuit Court's rulings are overturned "more than any other appellate court in the country." If the Supreme Court does decide to hear the case, it likely won't be until June.

An on-line petition drive for a constitutional amendment to prevent the removal of the controversial phrase from the Pledge is "on fire" following the court's decision, according to the petition's organizer. Donald Wildmon, chairman of the American Family Association, which sponsors WePledge.com, said the court's decision inspired more than 100,000 more people to sign the petition.

The on-line petition, as of March 4, now

Continued on page 78

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 77

has 500,000 names, and a hard-copy version is claimed to have just as many signatures.

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES DIFFER ON BIBLICAL VIEWPOINT OF WAR IN IRAQ

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—Leaders of two church groups met last week to discuss whether the U.S. would be morally justified in going to war with Iraq. Ethicists from The National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) came to different conclusions.

Congressional legislative staff and members of the media, as well as national and international leaders of the NCC met in Washington, D.C., Feb. 27, to discuss their religious views on the potential war. "As people of faith, we are one in our concern about the rush to war. We are one in our opposition to thinking war is an option," said Bob Edgar, a United Methodist and General Secretary of the NCC.

Jim Winkler, staff head of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, said that Christians should come face-to-face with the choice between their willingness to participate in war and their faith in God and Jesus as the Prince of Peace. "The prevailing assumption in the U.S. government is that war with Iraq is inevitable. As a Christian, I find such sentiment to be unacceptable."

Winkler also stated his belief that no matter how bad Saddam Hussein is, the people of Iraq do not want America to take over as "their new dictator, viceroy or consul."

Bishop Manfred Kock, president of the Evangelical Church in Germany, said, "War is contrary to the will of God. All war brings distress to innocent people and often does not achieve its goal."

Ethicists and experts of the SBC came to a different conclusion during a meeting at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Feb. 26. The four panelists were Daniel Heimbach, professor of ethics at Southeastern and an authority on the doctrine of Just War; Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Mark Liederbach, an assistant professor of ethics at Southeastern; and David Jones, also a Southeastern assistant professor.

Baptist Press reported that the conclusion of the four panelists was that the U.S. would be morally justified in its war with Iraq. Heimbach, who served as a member of President George H. W. Bush's administration, said that war in some cases can be legitimized by the Bible. He quoted such texts as Romans 14:19, Proverbs 2:7-9 and Romans 13.

Heimbach argued that any conflict with Iraq under the current presidency would

be justified as a continuation of the earlier conflict because Iraq has never fully complied with the terms of their 1991 surrender agreement. "You can send inspectors back over. . .but if there's no deadline, then you have turned Just War into pacifism. War with Iraq is justified," he said.

At one point in the discussion, Land said, "The biblical standard is not peace at any price. The biblical standard is a just peace."

Lieberbach said that it is a Christian's responsibility to pray for a heart change in the Iraqi leaders. "That's how a Christian wages spiritual warfare," he said.

All panelists agreed that pacifism is not the only option for a Christian, pointing to the fact that it is not God's design for evil to rule on earth. "Because evil is real in the world, sometimes we have to fight as a last resort against evil," said Heimbach. Land added, "The resort to lethal force, authorized by a legitimate authority, is sometimes the price human beings have to pay for living in a moral universe."

THE BIG BIBLE CONTROVERSY

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley has found himself in a bit of political hot water.

No, he hasn't been secretly cavorting with a gullible young intern. He didn't willfully lie before a federal grand jury. Nor did he offer pardons to criminal high-dollar campaign donors.

So what is the terrible scandal that has caused Gov. Riley to find himself in his present dilemma?

He and his staff have been conducting weekly Bible study meetings in Mr. Riley's Capitol office.

The horror!

So incensed was Larry Darby, director of the Alabama chapter of American Atheists, when learning of this Bible study, he was quoted in wire reports of saying, "It's a form of Christian terrorism."

Let me get this straight. A man meets together with his personnel for fellowship, prayer and Bible study – all on a volunteer basis – and this is the equivalent of a terror campaign?

This is the ominous climate in which Christians often find themselves these days. The left preaches tolerance for everyone, but even the most rudimentary meeting of Christians is often deemed to be offensive.

You may recall that U. S. Attorney Gen. John Ashcroft, a dedicated Christian, also found himself in a similar predicament after it was revealed that he too conducts voluntary Bible studies in his office.

Gov. Riley, who is Southern Baptist, said he also attended Bible study classes at the U. S. Capitol when he was a U. S. representative. His chief of staff reported that no state business is discussed during the volunteer Bible studies.

But that doesn't matter. The fact that the Bible is opened and that prayers to the God of the Bible are whispered is enough to send anti-religious civil libertarians into a lather.

The fact is, however, that such criticisms are unfounded and they go against the de-

sires of our Founding Fathers.

I offer here a few examples to support this claim.

On March 28, 1787, when Dr. Benjamin Rush – a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the man considered "the father of modern medicine" – proposed his plan for public education in America, he wrote:

"Let the children who are sent to those schools be taught to read and write – (and) above all, let both sexes be carefully instructed in the principles and obligations of the Christian religion. This is the most essential part of education."

In 1791, Dr. Rush wrote a pamphlet titled, "A Defense of the Use of the Bible as a Schoolbook."

In 1787, as the Constitutional Convention met at Philadelphia to rewrite the Articles of Confederation, the great Benjamin Franklin arose and gave his famous speech on God governing in "the affairs of men."

In that beautiful oration, he said, "We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we shall become a reproach and a byword to future ages. . .I therefore beg to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business."

Consider also the first resolution of the Continental Congress. After receiving news that British troops had attacked Boston, on September 6, 1774, that resolution read: "Tuesday, September 6, 1774, Resolved, The Rev. Mr. Duche be desired to open the Congress tomorrow morning with prayers, at the Carpenter's Hall, at 9 o'clock." (The Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789, Washington, D.C.)

I wonder if Mr. Darby of the American Atheists would accuse our Founders of being "terrorists." As aggressively thoughtless as his type, such an accusation is no doubt on the horizon.

Government leaders who are Christians should be comforted and encouraged by the words of President George Washington. As he resigned his commission as general of the continental Army on December 23, 1783, he said, "I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last solemn act of my official life by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God and those who have the superintendence of them into His holy keeping."

I hope Gov. Riley, Attorney Gen. Ashcroft and every other Christian political leader in our nation will continue to boldly pray, read their Bibles and openly fellowship together.

Our Founders would surely say,

"Amen!"

(Jerry Falwell Ministries)

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP)—The Episcopal Church USA faces several challenges by homosexuals at the next General Convention, or national meeting, of the denomination, which will open in Minneapolis in August. Integrity, the organization of "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Episcopalians and our straight friends," is pushing for the adoption of resolutions authorizing the development of rites for the blessing of same-sex unions. In addition, the founder of Integrity, Dr. Louis Crew, an openly gay man and a retired professor of English from Rutgers University, has announced his candidacy for president of the House of Deputies of the General Convention. Finally, the Convention may have to accept or reject the election of an openly gay man to the episcopate, or House of Bishops. Canon Vicki Gene Robinson, Canon of the Ordinary of the New Hampshire diocese since 1988, is the divorced father of two children and is an openly gay relationship. He is the leading candidate for bishop in the diocese. Elections will be held in June. If elected, Robinson's election must be certified by the General Convention.

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP)—A prominent national Islamic civil rights and advocacy group has launched a yearlong "Islam in America" ad campaign designed to foster greater understanding and to counter what the group says is a rising tide of anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) kicked off the campaign with an ad headlined, "We're All Americans," in the New York Times Feb. 16. The ad features images of an African-American girl, an Asian man, and a man of European heritage asking the question, "Which one of us is a Muslim?" The response is, "We all are. . .we're American Muslims." The weekly ads each explaining an aspect of Islam, will be distributed by CAIR to Muslim communities around America for placement in local newspapers. "American Muslims must take on the task of defining their faith," said CAIR executive director Nihad Awad. He said the campaign was required because of the "anti-Islamic rhetoric of evangelical Christian and right-wing commentators" whose "religious and political agendas are in conflict with our nation's long-term interests."

TORONTO, Canada (EP)—The Canadian wing of the Jehovah's Witnesses is resisting disgruntled former members who want it to release data on known child molesters in its ranks. Three former Witnesses, two of them past victims of sexual abuse, want Canada's lawmakers to force the faith to let police probe alleged past cases of abuse. The Watch Tower Bible and

Continued on page 79

The Bible & Newspaper

Continued from page 78

Tract Society of Canada Ltd. Does keep a list of known abusers on file but will not give it to police, said spokesman Clive Thomas. Thomas said child welfare authorities are notified when abuse is suspected, as required by law, and they can notify police if necessary. But the Watch Tower itself isn't legally obligated to report known or suspected abusers.

LONDON, England (EP)—Anglican leaders around the world are condemning the U. S. going to war with Iraq unless sanctioned by the United Nations. Those criticizing U. S. foreign policy are American, English, Canadian and Australian leaders who are, for the most part, theologically and socially liberal. U. S. Presiding Bishop Frank went so far as to say that Americans and their lifestyles were to blame for the events of 9/11. The Presiding Bishop spoke out after the presidential State of the Union address. He urged the Bush administration to exhaust all diplomatic and multilateral initiatives as an alternative to a unilateral assault on Iraq. He strongly urged the President to act only in concert with the United Nations Security Council. The new archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, said in an interview recently that, as a Christian, he would find war unacceptable; and he asked whether military action was the best way of engaging with Iraq's fragile and desperate society. War is still "not justifiable," he says.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (EP)—The Nashville-Davidson Metro Council turned back activism by homosexuals several weeks ago when they rejected an ordinance that would give homosexual couples equal status with married couples in matters of housing in Nashville. Now, however, a new, revised version of the "anti-discrimination ordinance" is being filed. Council members close to the issue say the original intent of the legislation is dead because it is too controversial and too close to the August election. Twenty-two Council members are eligible to run for re-election. Incumbents say they don't want controversial issues lingering when their constituents go to the polls. The last time the Metro Council considered the homosexual rights proposal, local television viewing of the government channel in Nashville beat some major network programming.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (EP)—A group of Birmingham religious leaders from four denominations have written a letter urging the Alabama Legislature and Gov. Bob Riley to stop juvenile executions. "In the case of juveniles, the death penalty is excessive and immoral," said Bishop Henry N. Parsley, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. Parsley was among four Episcopal and Methodist bishops, a rabbi and a Lutheran minister who

asked the state to commute the sentences of the 14 men on death Row who committed their crimes as juveniles. They also asked the state to raise the minimum age of eligibility for the death sentence from 16 to 18. "The basis for executing children is not to be found in our faith," said United Methodist Bishop Robert E. Fannin, head of the North Alabama Conference.

KEY WEST, Fla. (EP)—Dan Skahen and Wayne Smith, residents of Key West, have been fighting Florida's ban on gay adoption in the courts for years. Two years ago, Smith and Skahen joined in a lawsuit to challenge the Florida statute that prohibits homosexuals from adopting children. Last August, a federal judge upheld the ban, by saying the state believes a heterosexual couple offers a better environment for a child. On March 4, the challenge to the ban on gay adoption went before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Miami. Attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union argued the case before three federal judges in an effort to overturn what they label an unconstitutional law that prohibits all gay people from adopting children. Currently 47 states recognize the right for gay couples to adopt children, and Utah and Mississippi allow gay individuals to adopt children. Florida has had a ban on homosexuals adopting children since 1977.

MEXICO CITY, Mexico (EP)—Catholic and government leaders in Mexico's Chiapas state are offering bounties for the deaths of Evangelical leaders there. According to Arturo Fabela Gutierrez, head of Mexico's National Confraternity of Evangelical Christian Churches, threats of this kind have been circulating around Chiapas for several years. When the murders do happen, local authorities look the other way. In some areas, local Catholics, who combine the religion with native and pagan culture and beliefs, have erected fences of wire and chain to keep Evangelicals out. The dispute between Evangelicals and traditionalist Catholics is more economic, ethnic and political than spiritual said some in the area.

NEW ORLEANS, La. (EP)—The state of Louisiana contends that sales tax exemptions for churches and other nonprofit religious groups is a state tax matter. Opponents contend the Legislature unconstitutionally endorsed religion by granting the exemptions. The issue goes before a federal appeals court in March. A year ago, U.S. District Judge Ginger Berrigan struck down the exemptions, saying they were given for a religious purpose, thus breaking constitutionally required separation of church and state. The state is appealing to a three-judge panel of the 5th U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. In 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that governments in church-state separation cases must show that their actions serve a secular purpose that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and do not encourage excessive government entanglement with religion.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (EP)—Members of a church whose pastor called a mandatory service beginning exactly at kickoff time on Super Bowl Sunday have voted to sack him. Members of the New Salem Missionary Baptist Church voted 67-10 to oust Stanley B. Hall Sr.

The pastor had filed an unsuccessful request for a temporary restraining order to stop the vote. According to the Birmingham News, the issue will now go before Jefferson County Circuit Judge Helen Shores Lee, who will determine if the vote will be legally binding. The controversy at the church began—and gained national attention—when Hall ordered all deacons and trustees of the church to attend a consecration service that started at kickoff time up Super Bowl Sunday, Jan. 26. According on Walker, the deacons and trustees were warned there would be consequences if they did not attend. When three deacons and three trustees didn't, Hall dismissed them.

HANOI, Vietnam (EP)—A fact-finding mission to Vietnam recently revealed that 415 of 417 churches in the northern part of that country have been closed. According to Washington-based International Christian Concern

(ICC) that sponsored the mission, only two churches remain open in the Lam Dong, Dac Lac, Gia Lai and Kon Tum provinces in the central highlands. The pastors and leaders in the Christian community of Vietnam describe facing two major problems. "The first problem is police interrogations," said a statement from ICC. "Pastors or leaders are issued a formal 'invitation' to appear at the police station for questioning. This harassment can last up to a day or two and is designed to make the pastors nervous so that they will stop their religious activities. . . . The second difficulty is the lack of privacy. Pastors are constantly followed." In addition, many leaders told ICC representatives that the church's greatest difficulties were that their church lacked a place to meet, and that the church parishioners were unable to openly witness to their faith. Confirmed reports establish the fact that the government continues to deny jobs to believers as well as cut off benefits to the elderly and disabled who are Christians. Some are even beaten to the point of requiring a doctor's care after converting. One pastor told ICC, "We do not pray that God changes the situation but that the church be strong to endure and stand. God is always faithful."

Mini Edition

By Joseph Harris
Chairman of Biblical Studies
Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel, Mississippi



AMERICA'S SOVEREIGNTY OR THE UN: IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE

After all we have experienced recently with the UN, the time is now to get out and reclaim our sovereignty as a nation. The UN, which could stand for Unamerican Nations, is composed of countries which all have their own personal agenda on the table. About the only time they are "united" is against America. . . and Israel. Since when does this great country of liberty, which is also the world's leading super power, have to get permission from ungodly and antigod nations to do that which we know to be right and expedient? There have been recent rumblings that Bill Clinton has his eye on the position of Secretary General of the UN. He would fit perfectly. He was the poorest excuse for a leader we ever had in office, but his global liberal views fit perfectly with the UN. Let's make sure we get out before he gets in.

The usual debate over war misses the point. Whether you are a "warmonger" or a "peace lily," the issue of authority is at stake. Does the UN grant the US the power to go to war or does the United States Congress (not the President) have that authority? The US Constitution, which by the way is much older than the UN, grants Congress this power. There is a problem with going to war by the power of the UN or the power of the President. Neither one is constitutional. The Constitution states that

only Congress can declare war. I'm not against war: we should just do it legitimately, or else rewrite the Constitution. Come to think of it, the Supreme Court has been doing this for years.

The UN is a pot of hypocrisy. The recent debacle of certain nations in charge of human rights violations and disarmament was an unfunny joke. And you can almost bet that any issue involving Israel will result in a resolution, which leaves Israel with the short end of the stick. It is rare to hear a representative from an Arab country speak on any issue affecting the Middle East without blaming Israel for all problems.

The UN will probably continue to exist. A logical deduction says that the UN is necessary for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in the last days. The UN provides a nucleus for the coming one world government, which would be perfect for hatching the antichrist of Revelation 13, who will then slither to power given to him by the dragon, who is none other than Satan. The UN will most probably be the vehicle he rides to world domination in order to cause **"all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads. . . ."** (13:16).

But until then, let's put national security back into the hands of the people of this country and say "Goodbye" to the UN. For straight talk on the US and the UN, go to www.thelibertycommittee.org and read articles by Rep. Ron Paul.



WORLD SCENE

By G. Russell Evans - Norfolk, Virginia

The Case Against Reparations of Slavery



It is not surprising that Johnnie Cochran and Jesse Jackson are the ones leading the charge for reparations of slavery. O. J. Simpson's lawyer, Johnnie Cochran became famous for defending the defenseless and Jesse Jackson became famous for a shakedown artist without peer.

Joining the group is Randall Robinson, Maxine Waters (D-CA), and John Conyers (D-MI) the leftist members of Congress and the probable Democratic presidential candidate, Al Sharpton.

Let's not forget the United Nations and the dozens of African and Arab nations who have been involved in the slave trade for centuries, some of whom support and actually harbor terrorists like Osama bin Laden.

EVERY ONE GETS A CUT

They believe the American taxpayers and taxpayers of other Western nations should begin sending *billions of dollars* to those living in Western nations claiming to be of African descent!

Never mind that the proposition would bankrupt the nation, and destroy American preposition as it appears. These are the facts.

The slave trade was run and operated by many of the same African and Arab nations that are now demanding you and I pay them billions of dollars in restitution. The record is appalling.

Some of these same nations still tolerate slave traders and terrorism in their own countries.

That America and other Western nations now being squeezed were the first in the world to outlaw and denounce slavery more than 100 years ago.

That American taxpayers have given literally trillions of dollars to black Americans in welfare and other government programs!

THE CLAIM

They claim that the American and European industry got rich on the backs of African-born slaves and their descendants. What's more they claim that every problem faced by black Americans is a direct result of a slave trade that has been dead for nearly 150 years!

Johnnie Cochran and Jesse Jackson want an apology first saying, "You must not only apologize with your lips. Repent, repair and remedy go together." They won't be happy until your tax dollars are being funneled into foreign treasuries, and of course, into their own bank accounts.

THE UNITED NATIONS GETS INTO THE ACT

The United Nations gets into the act

with the "U.N. World Conference Against Racism."

Fidel Castro is leading the parade of the anti-American communist, tyrants, drug lords and terrorists for the support of "Reparations."

Castro said, "After the purely formal slavery emancipation, African Americans were subjected during 100 years more to the harshest racial discrimination. . . Cuba speaks of reparations and supports this idea as an unavoidable moral duty to the victims of racism."

The U.S. government must crush this kind of reparation of slavery.

The Selous Foundation of Washington DC, is circulating a petition to Secretary of State Colin Powell in opposition to the posterous petition.

Mr. Powell is an African American and most likely to be branded "a racist." Any Columnist also will be branded as a racist who writes in opposition to the Reparation of Slavery.

(Captain Evans' columns are distributed by the American Educational League of Buena Park, CA).

(Donna Bateman, secretary, helped in preparation of this article).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, NC and Pastor Gene Kiger will be holding a revival meeting beginning on Wednesday April 9th thru Sunday April 13th. The services will be each evening at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday morning and afternoon. The ladies of the church will furnish Sunday's noon meal. Brother Joseph Wilson will be holding the meeting. Contact pastor Gene Kiger at (336) 377-9808 for information concerning this meeting.

The Home Missionary Baptist Church of Mt. Morris, MI will have their 25th Annual Bible Conference from April 15th thru 17th. The first service will begin on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. On Wednesday and Thursday, services will begin at 10:00

a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Supper will be served at 5:00 pm. On Tuesday supper will be served for all out of town guests and local pastors and their families. The noon and evening meals will be provided for everyone in the fellowship hall on Wednesday and Thursday. Contact Pastor Don Titus at (810) 686-6006 for more information.

The Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Texarkana, TX is looking for a pastor. The church can be contacted by mail at 1217 Dillon St., W.V., Texarkana, TX 75501 or call Brother Mollette at (903) 838-4928.

The Indore Baptist Church of Indore, W.Va. is without a pastor. Any qualified man that is currently not pastoring should contact Bro. Jerry Gould at 304-587-4178.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, Ala. will be having special services May 16th thru 18th. Service times are Friday night at 7:00 p.m., Saturday at 10:00 a.m. (with lunch following) and at 6:00 p.m., Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Speakers are Bro. Roy Mitchell and Bro. Raymond Spann. All are invited to attend. For more information contact Bro. Todd Bryant at 205-333-8449 or email toddbryant@juno.com.

The Charity Baptist Church, Gladstone, Mich. is without a pastor. They are a small work located in Northern Michigan. Anyone knowing of a qualified man should contact Brother Mark Blau at (906) 474-6721.

On March 19, 2003, Elder Emory Donald (E. D.) Strickland died at age eighty-seven. He was born December 20, 1915, on a farm three miles from Gordo, Alabama, in Pickens County. He was the last of nine children born to his parents.

Elder Strickland wrote articles for the Banner and served on the Forum from January 1983 until November 1992 when he resigned after suffering a stroke. He was a dear friend to the former pastor and editor, and those of us who knew him will surely miss him. Our sympathy goes out to Mrs. Strickland and the family.

Several years ago (in 1997) an article was published in the Banner about the life of Elder Strickland, at the end he gave



E. D. Strickland

this parting remark, "At my age, I've been there, done that, and can't remember!"

"... and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty" (1 Sam. 20:18).

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 2-3-2003 to 2-28-2003

Beginning Balance	\$5,368.61
RECEIPTS:	
A. D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	80.91
Berea B. B., Mantachie, MS	1,700.00
Berea M. B.C., Mansfield, OH	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN	150.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethesda B. C., Tarpon Springs, FL	50.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	90.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV	1,300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL	50.00
Central Avenue B. C., Tampa, FL	25.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	20.00
Faith B. C., Clarksville, TN	100.00
Faith B. C., Seffner, FL	50.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Gerald Price, Johnson City, TN	30.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. M., Marion, IL	25.00
Helen Milem, South Point, OH	100.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winton-Salem, NC	50.00
J. L. Sadler, Alford, FL	15.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL	50.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	25.00
Landmark S. G. B. C., Ft. Worth, TX	100.00
Larry Hedrick, Canyon Lake, TX	500.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	200.00
Letson Farrell, Long Beach, MS	100.00
Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	200.00
Meadow Branch B. C., Millport, AL	50.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
New Testament B. C., Leivasy, WV	25.00
Ocoonia M. B. C., Keokee, VA	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Aztec, NM	25.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	375.00
South Park M. B. C., Seattle, WA	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH	150.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Raleigh, NC	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	200.00
Wendel Beall, Cedarville, WV	80.00
Subscriptions	129.00
Dividing checks	325.00
Sub Total	\$7,679.91
TOTAL	\$13,048.52
EXPENDITURES:	
Wages	3,680.00
Printing	494.89
Postage	935.66
FICA taxes	244.81
Supplies	59.95
Dividing checks	325.00
Total Expenditures	5,740.31
.....	7,308.21
Bank charge July & August	-15.87
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,292.34

INDEX

Bible and the Newspaper	p. 73
Comments on Clouds by Milburn Cockrell	p. 61
Duties of the Pastor and People by Harold Harvey	p. 61
Forum	pp. 70 - 71
Mini Edition	p. 79
Observations of a Young Minister by Jeff Short	p. 61
The Parable of the Leaven by Milburn Cockrell	p. 61
The Power of the Kingdom by Milburn Cockrell (sermon outline)	p. 74
Who Should Baptize? by J. M. Pendleton	p. 61
World Scene: The Case Against Reparations of Slavery	p. 80