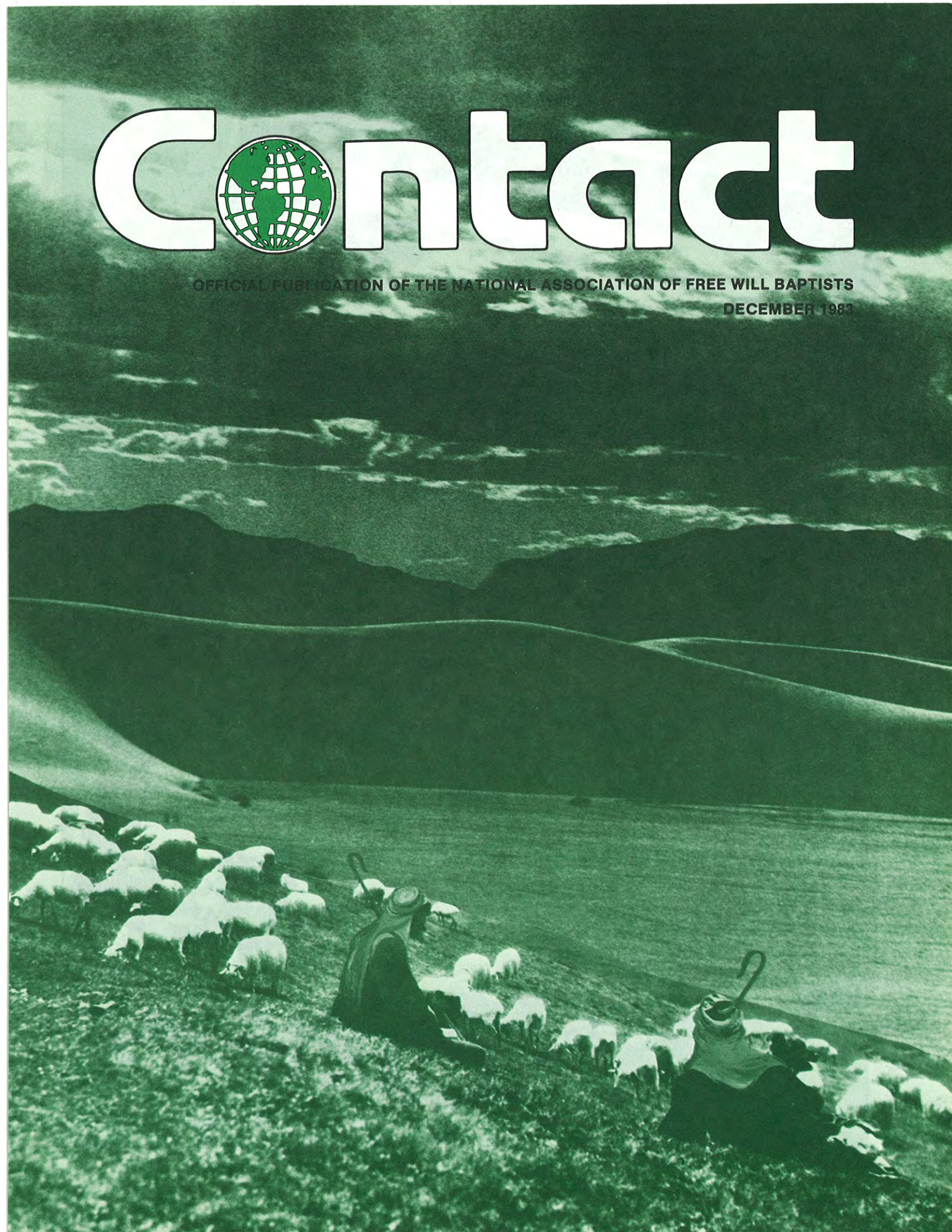


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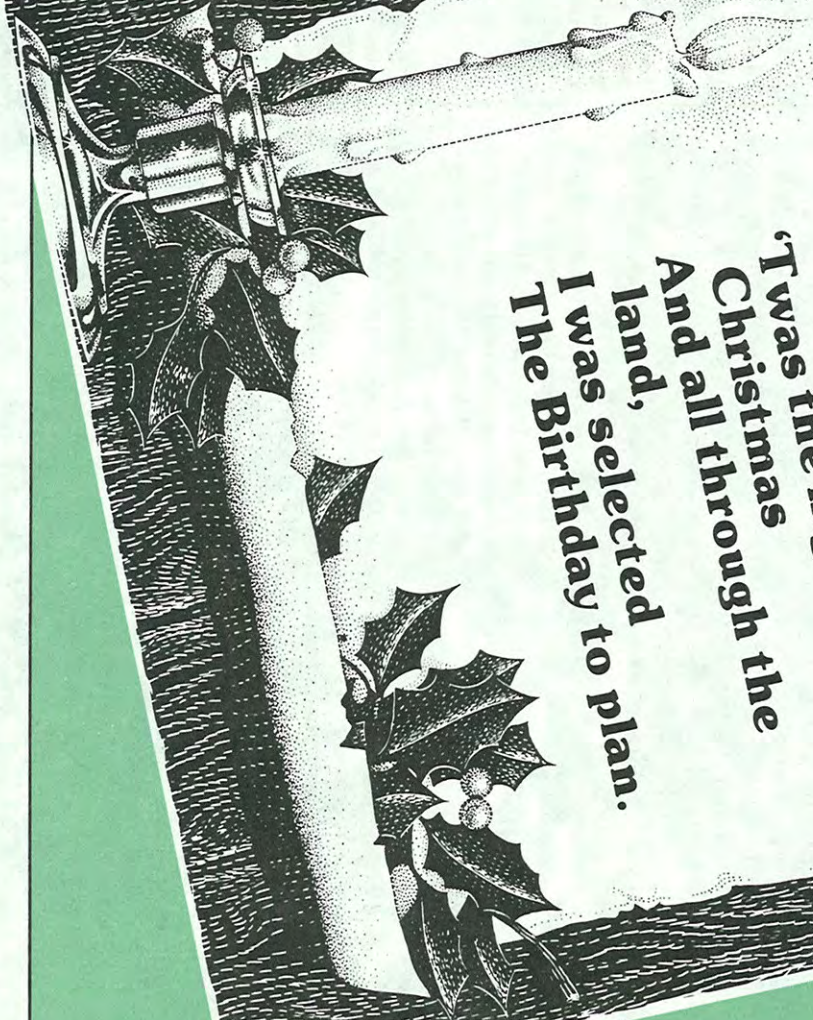
DECEMBER 1983



You Are . . . Cordially Invited

To: A Birthday Party
For: Jesus
When: December 1983

'Twas the night before
Christmas
And all through the
land,
I was selected
The Birthday to plan.



By Kathy Tippet Henderson

The world is your guest and the job of celebrating Christ's birthday is yours. Perhaps the guest list is a bit long so you cut it down to just your city. Or better yet, plan on just your church. If you could, how would you choose to commemorate the Nativity?

Personally, I like birthday parties—with all the trimmings. Brightly colored invitations, balloons, party hats, noise makers, candles, gifts . . . the works! Jesus must have too, for even His humble birth carried with it elements of joy, amid poverty and danger.

What grander announcement than that proclaimed by heavenly couriers? What brighter lights than the star? What gifts arrayed like gold, frankincense, and myrrh?

Granted, commercialization has warped the celebration. I choose to omit that. The hustle and bustle often rush us right past the Savior in our quest to see Him. But can't we have the joy and festivity of His birthday, yet direct it toward Him?

I acknowledge the beauty of a Christmas tree and meaningful Christian traditions. They hold a warmth for and bind families. These choices really come down to personal motives and can be as pure or pagan as the heart. Traditions, however, that have become vain or dishonor Jesus, I choose to omit, also.

Family Devotion

Now, on with the party plans! First, I would mandate that families be together on this special holiday. Each family would be requested to include somebody who had nobody . . . sort of an extended family. Mary, Joseph and Jesus made room in their humble dwelling for visitors.

Then, the head of each home would read Luke 2, the Christmas story, the first chapter in our Lord's life.

And, lest we keep our eyes on the Babe, he would read Luke 23 and 24, and show us the crucified and risen Savior to complete the story.

He would lead the family in devotion. That's not a devotional—we hear plenty of those all year. Webster defines devotion as "piety, devoutness, religious worship, prayers, loyalty, faithfulness, deep affection."

That's a tall order and may call for rededication of lives. Only folks who know and love the Lord could be leaders in true devotion.

Listen to the aged Simeon lead in devotion: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all the people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Then see Anna follow in devotion (Luke 2:36-38).

Gift Giving

Next on the agenda would be the gifts. What kind of birthday would we have with no gifts? Exchanging gifts is fine but instead of store-bought presents this year, everyone would give gifts of love to each other.

Several years ago our family began a tradition with this idea in mind. Each member draws a name a few weeks before Christmas. As much as lieth within us, the names are kept secret, and it is your job to do as many kind deeds for that person as possible without getting caught. For every act done, you get to place a piece of straw in our homemade manger.

Mornings I would find my bed made before I could get to it, or toothpaste on my brush. Closets and jewelry boxes would be mysteriously cleaned and scattered clothing neatly hung in place. At the end of the week we reveal names and draw again.

By Christmas we are ready to place Jesus on a full, soft bed of hay, built on acts of love. He approves. He said so. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). Even a cup of cold water counts.

Within the gift-giving section is another part of the plan. We mustn't forget our gifts directly to Him.

One of our most precious commodities is time. Knowing this, last Christmas my two older children decided to give the Lord a gift of themselves in service.



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CORDIALLY INVITED (From Page 3)

Along with their tithes and offering they slipped a note into the offering plate:

I would like to give four hours of my time next week to help clean the church, as my gift to Christ.

Kimberly and Kent Henderson

Now who wouldn't like to have his house cleaned gratis? It was a triple blessing. Not only was God pleased, but the children received unexpected joy in giving. Kent beamed over "his" clean carpet that next Sunday, and Kimberly admired clean cabinets in a kitchen she'd hardly noticed before.

The third blessing? Just ask our maintenance man. He loves those kind of gifts!

Priceless Presents

Of course our faithful attendance to worship services and monetary giving is important. But if "He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the wealth in every mine," then even our gifts of time and money may seem puny.

What could we give Him that's of

real value . . . something He really wants and doesn't already have?

*What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a Shepherd,
I would bring Him a lamb.*

*If I were a wise man,
I would do my part.
But what can I give Him?
Give Him my heart.*

Christina G. Rossetti

That's it. The perfect gift! It's just what He needs. "The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

He can't get it for Himself. "I beseech you . . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice . . ." (Romans 12:1). If you're saved then bring Him the heart of another. Lead someone to Christ this season.

If every believer brought just one soul to Him, what a joyous celebration we would have here and in heaven. ". . . joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth . . ." (Luke 15:7).

Last Christmas I prayed to be used in leading a soul to Him during the holidays. This was to be my special gift to Him. My husband and I were in

several homes, even shared the gospel but no decision was made.

The last evening before school started back, I was feeling disappointed at my empty package, when my youngest, Katy, came to me and expressed a desire to be saved. "Go wash the pizza off your face and hands and we'll talk about it," I suggested, thinking if her little four-year-old heart is sincere, she'll remember. It was and she did.

Sitting in my lap, she presented the plan of salvation to me as I questioned her. My gift to Him proved to be His best to me as my daughter became my sister.

Sometimes we flit all over Judea and the uttermost parts looking for just the right gift, when all the while the treasure is right here in our Jerusalem.

In giving this gift to Him we are doubly blessed. The gift goes both ways. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15).

With Christ as the focal point of your celebration, your very best Christmas may well be the one He gives back to you. ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Kathy Tippet Henderson is a free lance writer who resides in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is a member of First Free Will Baptist Church, Raleigh.



On Jordan's West Bank

By Floyd Wolfenbarger

What if it happened today?

A baby is born in a refugee camp on Jordan's West Bank. The cry of a new child in such crowded huddles of poverty barely could raise an eyebrow.

The tale of Bedouin shepherds about a strange light in the sky and the angel's song would be dismissed by the reality of artillery tracers and whistling rockets. After all, what's so hard about demythologizing a Bedouin fable?

A half-dozen or so astrologers might suggest that a significant birth occurred. But who would pay attention? The only interest most people have in astrology is whether an Aquarius should marry a Virgo.

In our cynical humanistic society. Christ would not be rejected so much as ignored. Humanism hasn't declared war on Christ; it simply claims to have outgrown any need for Him.

The birth of Christ amid such obscurity nearly 2000 years ago gives new significance to all life. Jesus wasn't born last night, but thousands of babies were. Many of them into the same kind of obscurity.

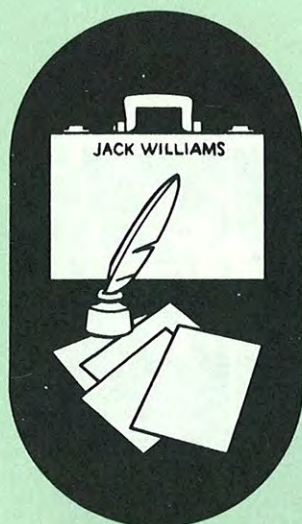
Humanism means that mankind can now ignore God. Christianity means that God will not ignore mankind.

Because Christ was born in the anonymity of human squalor, He sees every birth of every child no matter how obscure, and gives to it value, meaning, and purpose. The Son of God was born a common man so that common men might be born the sons of God.

All this in the obscurity of a stable on Jordan's West Bank! ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Floyd Wolfenbarger pastors First Free Will Baptist Church, Russellville, Arkansas.

Briefcase



The Christmas Editorial

Christmas in America

means that something bigger than unemployment statistics captures national attention.

It means that people who seldom go to church send cheery cards covered with Bible quotations and manger scenes to friends who also rarely attend church, and neither party thinks the other pushy or religious overmuch.

Christmas is a time when, in spite of the normal media focus on crime and criminals, newspapers carry front-page stories of strangers helping strangers, families being reunited, of an unemployed father being offered a job by some company because of the "spirit of the season."

Christmas is a national

safety valve that lets Americans admit to themselves and others that they can rise above stereotyped materialism and selfishness. A time when something wrings generosity from the toady, a smile from the office grump, and tugs at the string of human decency in the most coarse.

Christmas seems to encourage unofficial moratoriums on looking for the worst in others. Grudges are laid aside, hatchets buried, and neglected friendships glow with new warmth.

You think it's all a sham, a front? I don't. I believe it's mankind's yearly struggle out of despair to declare that there's something more noble than muddy schemes, something better than scandal and disgrace.

In fact, that's exactly what Christmas is all about. That at a point in history when the finest minds talk only of doomsday—a star appears.

That when men are burdened with leaders who have no answers to the great questions of the day—a child is born.

That when bitter enemies gather in anger and point weapons of death at one another—suddenly, a light shines and a song drifts across the darkened hills, "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

That when old men face aching loneliness in declining years, shut away from relatives and dreams of youth, with few who care about them and fewer who listen—a voice in their midst blesses God and asks to die in peace because "mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

That while many hoard from their neighbors and hide their gifts from friends—some kneel before one they call "King" and in his name pour out gold and frankincense and myrrh.

That when women toss aside their virtue and desecrate their bodies to please evil men—a girl steps forward to repeat the hallowed words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Yes, that's Christmas. One shining moment when eternity bursts within us and we rush to tell the untold, "We have found Him . . . Jesus of Nazareth!" ▲

Christmas editorials in monthly magazines usually get written during that time of year when there are no wise men on church lawns, just after the kids return to school.

Which means that most Christmas editorials slide off the typewriter in early September with the temperature outside puffing to stay below 95 degrees.

That's two months before K-Mart plays the first carol for early-bird holiday shoppers and (if he's lucky) about 12 weeks before Mom reminds Dad to haul last year's tree down from the attic.

However, columnists learn to feel right at home with Easter in January, Fourth of July in May, Thanksgiving in August, and Christmas editorials in September.

Personally, I'd much rather write Christmas editorials than what I used to do in September—pick cotton. By hand. Dragging a nine-foot sack.

God's Gift



**Of
Gifts**

By Vernie H. Hersey

Christmas Day, 1864. General Sherman presented a city to President Abraham Lincoln. He wrote to Mr. Lincoln: "I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah."

Louisa May Alcott in 1853 put the first copy of her first published book, *Flower Fables*, in her mother's Christmas stocking.

In 1236 the King of France sent a Christmas gift to Henry III of England—a live elephant.

William the Conqueror on Christmas Day, 1067, gave most of the loot his men plundered from Britain, including the ensign of the Saxon ruler, to the Pope.

The Original Gift

Historians write of numerous such unusual gifts, and even today people pride themselves in giving the different gift. However, nearly 2,000 years ago, God gave the original Christmas gift—His Son, Jesus Christ.

The gift of God's Son was unique. In fact, He is the only unique gift ever given. For truly the gift of God's Son was one of a kind—unparalleled, indescribable, perfect, with no like or equal.

Neither before nor since has such a gift been given—a Godman, the only visible form of the invisible Living God.

The Man-Made Imitations

Mankind has tried to duplicate the gift of God's Son. Some of Buddha's disciples declared him to be a unique gift to humanity, a godman sent to earth.

However, in 483 B.C. Buddha died at the age of 80. History remembers him only as a great teacher but with no power over his own destiny. Conquered by death, he left his followers searching for eternal life through the vain hope of reincarnation.

For centuries the emperors of Japan

masqueraded as godmen, claiming direct lineage to the sun goddess. But after World War II, when the Americans forced the Japanese government to withdraw support of Shintoism as a state religion, the ruling emperor was forced to deny his divinity. His worshippers were left desolate, their godmen exposed as deceivers.

Even in their fantasies, men failed to fashion a perfect god or godman. The Greek, Roman and Norse myths reveal man's attempt to create imaginary gods who came to earth and took personal interest in the affairs of mankind.

But the human nature of those who spun the tales tainted their mythical gods. Each fantasy ended with the imaginary gods taking on characteristics of their creators, succumbing to jealousy, cruelty, vengeance and immorality.

The Incomparable Christ

Both the myths of men's minds and the counterfeit gods fall ridiculously short compared to Jesus. God's Son proved Himself to be the real Godman, living a perfect life on earth, overcoming evil, conquering death and rising triumphant from the grave, winning for mortal man eternal life with the Eternal God.

Such a gift as God's Son is unparalleled in the history of the world. There is no counterpart, no person or thing resembling Him closely enough to draw a true parallel. For in that one gift of a Savior is an unnumbered quantity of gifts that no human language can justly and fairly describe or enumerate.

The Innumerable Gifts

Christ is a gift of gifts. It is as though there is one large gift—Christ—and in accepting Him we find even another gift; accepting that gift we find even another; and, after accepting a vast array of gifts within Him, we glimpse into the future to see innumerable gifts yet to be received.

For in the gift of our Savior we find the gift of forgiveness of sins; within forgiveness, redemption; within redemption, justification; within justification, new life; the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit; peace; adoption; eternal life; the hope of the resurrection . . .

And, even after receiving innumerable gifts within the gift of our Savior we discover with Isaiah and Paul "things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him" (I Corinthians 2:9 NASB).

Then, looking into eternity we anticipate with Peter the "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven" for us (I Peter 1:4). Truly Christ has no like or equal, real or imagined!

The Inexhaustible Supply

There could be only one possessor of the first copy of Louisa May Alcott's book. Abraham Lincoln received the gift of Savannah only in token. Even if he had wanted possession, he could have owned it only as others agreed he had legal ownership to it. The loot of an army given to the Pope could easily have been taken by another even stronger than William the Conqueror.


But, Jesus, the Gift of Gifts, may be received and possessed in His entirety by any and every person who believes. This gift never diminishes nor weakens nor is used up nor can be taken away by an enemy or stronger one.

Only Almighty God could create such a gift. No wonder angels heralded His birth and a multitude of the heavenly host praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest!"

No wonder the host John saw in a vision proclaimed Jesus Christ "worthy" and to Him be "honor and glory and dominion forever and ever!" (Luke 2:13, 14; Revelation 5:13).

We marvel and bow before Him. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift . . . Him who fills all in all!" (II Corinthians 9:15; Ephesians 1:23). ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Vernie H. Hersey is a free lance writer who resides in Nashville, Tennessee. She is a member of Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church, Antioch, Tennessee.



Single Parenting—Accentuating The Positive

The fact is, there are presently divorced people in our churches, and the future will see some of our Christian couples end their marriages with divorce. While we seek to strengthen marriage and build strong, Christian homes, we must also minister to those whose marriages are broken, whose homes are disrupted, and whose lives are in pain because of divorce.

Too frequently the church has addressed the problem of divorce simply by denouncing it: "Divorce is wrong!" And then we have virtually ignored divorced persons, perhaps because we are unsure just what to do with them.

At worst, divorced people experience outright rejection by fellow Christians. At best, they feel uncomfortable and "different" among their Christian family. They no longer fit in.

One woman writes, "When I sit with my children in church, it seems as if there is a big sign over our pew which says: NO HUSBAND! NO FATHER!"

And instead of finding the help and healing they need, many divorced people become church dropouts, seeking for answers in another direction.

People With Problems

One of the most problematic results of divorce is the matter of single par-

New Crisis For The 80's

Today's church is confronted with a new challenge, a new dimension, a new opportunity for ministry: the divorced person, the single parent.

In 1980 there were 6,000 marriages performed daily in the United States. Daily, also, were 2,000 divorces. Trends indicate this 30 percent divorce rate will increase to 50 percent or more in the next few years.

In the 1970's 20 percent of all children were living in single-parent homes. As more marriages end in divorce, it is estimated that nearly half of all babies born in the 1980's will live with only one of their parents before they are 18 years old.

It is no longer possible for the church to ignore the presence of divorced persons in our congregations. They are here. The issue is not whether Christian people should divorce. God's perfect plan for marriage is clear. But it is equally clear that imperfect people come short of God's perfect plan.

By Larry Montgomery

Shock, denial, fear, anger, guilt—No, I'm not describing the grief process following a loved one's death. I'm describing the very real pain of one whose marriage has just ended in divorce.

A recently divorced Christian mother cried out, "Why do I feel so alone?" Another described her experience of becoming a single parent through divorce "like giving birth to a barbed wire fence—extremely painful."

When people are hurting—for whatever reason—the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a unique opportunity to apply God's healing balm.

enting. Raising children is difficult, even in a two-parent home, and to have total responsibility of both father and mother roles thrust upon the newly divorced person is overwhelming.

Adding to the difficulty of being a single parent is the fact that children who have lost one of their parents (through death, divorce or desertion) are three times as likely to experience emotional problems as children raised in a two-parent home.

The divorced person and the single-parent family need help. Where shall they receive it?

A Biblical Perspective

Does the church have a responsibility to minister to the needs of the single parent and to the children who are unwilling victims of divorce?

The Lord promises special blessing to those who care for the fatherless (Deuteronomy 14:29), and the scripture tells us that pure, undefiled religion is to visit the fatherless (James 1:27). Because divorce has robbed them of resident father or mother, many children are, for all practical purposes, fatherless, and in need of the attention of loving Christians.

Are not the "hands which hang down," "the feeble knees," and "that which is lame" (Hebrews 12:12, 13) descriptive of those who have been wounded in a broken marriage?

Are we not commanded to "weep with those who weep"? (Romans 12:15). Of course the church is obligated to minister to this special group of people!

The Practical Side

This particular dimension of ministry for the church should not be viewed as an unpleasant, but necessary task, but rather as a special opportunity to touch lives for Jesus Christ. Divorce demands changes for those whose lives it touches. Why shouldn't those changes be toward Christian commitment?

Under a church's loving care, the disintegration of the past can become building blocks for devotion to Christ. Lives made vulnerable to sinful influences by divorce are at the same time especially susceptible to the claims of a loving God and His gospel of peace.

The cults do not hesitate to take advantage of the divorced person, single parent's special need. Should the church of the Lord Jesus Christ stand idly by? Love demands that we recognize the need, respond with compassion, and reach out with loving service.

Availability

Now, on a practical level, what can the church do to minister to divorced persons and to single-parent families?

First, it is important to help them deal realistically with their grief and trauma. We would not ignore the person who has lost a family member in death. Nor should we ignore those who have experienced a similar loss through divorce.

The compassionate church can help them deal with the shock, grief, anger and guilt that accompany divorce. Death, illness, and all the "honorable" misfortunes of life are brought to the altar of the church, and likewise the congregation's voice should be raised to heaven in behalf of those who experience the pain of divorce.

Acceptance

Single parents and their children need to know that they are loved and accepted in the church fellowship. They have already experienced the rejection of a mate or parent, and to also feel rejected by their church is demoralizing. The church which embraces them warmly has a unique opportunity to help them develop spiritually.

Help in dealing with the trauma of divorce and this sense of acceptance in the church cannot be administered through a church program. It must be given by sensitive, caring pastors and church members through personal contact.

A sympathetic, listening ear is invaluable in bringing emotional and spiritual healing. Friendly, positive counsel can set the single-parent family unit in the right direction as they build new lives.

Strategic Planning

Many churches offer classes or groups designed for the needs of this

special group. The fellowship and sharing with other single parents in such a group can give help and understanding in dealing with their unique family problems.

In other churches an occasional seminar or lecture on single parenting by a qualified person has been proven beneficial. Referral to Christian-oriented singles groups in the community is often appropriate. In fact, the church may invite such a group to use the church facilities for its meetings and activities.

A selection of appropriate books and tapes for the divorced person, single parent could be provided in the church library. The men's group of the church should make a special point to include fatherless boys in the church's Father-Son activities.

And caring families could include the children of broken marriages in various family activities. Contact with the two-parent family life will help such children's emotional development.

Do Something!

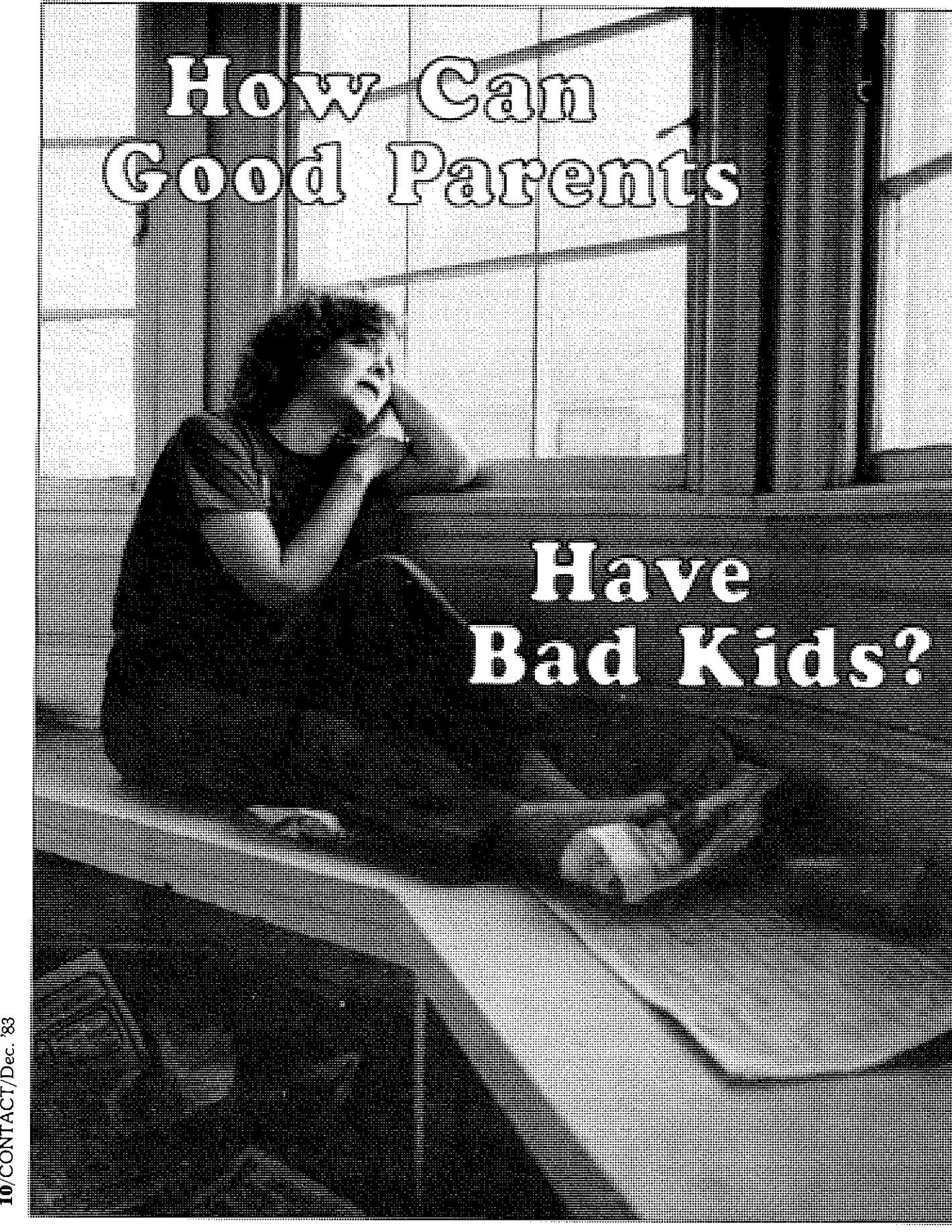
Almost anything which the church attempts in ministering to the divorced person, single parent is worthwhile. Any approach or activity with a spiritual dimension that expresses loving concern for the single-parent family unit is appropriate for the church to undertake.

However, we must be careful to avoid pushing these into specialized groups and activities while failing to include them in all the regular church programs.

We promised in our Free Will Baptist church covenant to "watch over one another in love . . . to be careful of one another's happiness . . . and seek to strengthen the weak." Such a promise obligates us to minister to the divorced persons and single-parent families in our churches.

For, after all, they are people of extreme worth in the sight of God. They are an undeniable part of our Christian family. In fact, "they are us."

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Larry Montgomery pastors Hollywood Free Will Baptist Church, Hollywood, Florida. He is a graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College and Oklahoma State University. He formerly pastored in Oklahoma, Georgia, and Illinois. ▲



**How Can
Good Parents**

**Have
Bad Kids?**

By Bill Jones

Unfortunately, many have. Eli's sons were too immoral to follow in their father's footsteps. Even Samuel's sons turned out bad. David, a man after God's own heart, had a son he loved dearly, but who rebelled against his father and even tried to kill him.

When a Christian couple tell how their son or daughter has chosen the wild life, it is especially sad. But it does happen.

Most cases defy the old cliches (like: families that pray together, stay together). For many of these families have prayed together, from the time the children were small until after they got on drugs, alcohol or some other equally ruinous lifestyle.

This is not to say that every Christian home can expect some of their children to stray into sin on a permanent basis. In fact, the great majority of children raised in Christian homes do follow in the moral footsteps of their parents.

But the question remains, why do not all of them do so? What are the influences that determine a child's choices in life? A library of books have been written in response to this question, but a reminder may be in order for all of us.

The Environment

Environment is one thing that goes far in forming a child's lifestyle. It is not the only thing, but it is tremendously important. Solomon recognized this truth 3000 years ago when he suggested that starting a child right was to be the determining influence the rest of his life.

Parents can and should provide a place where love, security, acceptance and discipline are things that every child can count on. It has been proven from an abundant number of resources that these things are far more important than finances, great houses and much land.

A child brought up in the midst of trust and respect has a far better chance than one brought up in the midst of suspicion and bitterness.

The Personality

Personality is another influence that determines a child's choices. This is inherited, and some are more responsive to certain types of training than others. If parents fail to recognize this fact, then raising their child can be a long and frustrating experience.

Most social scientists recognize four different types of personality: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic.

Beverly LaHaye, in her book, *Developing Your Child's Temperament*, treats these in detail with a lot of understanding. Most children are a combination of these traits and will respond to parents who recognize their needs and relate to them in a reasonable way.

The Will

The determining factor however, is the child's will. God has decreed that each person determines his own destiny. It is the only way that each person becomes responsible to God.

No parent determines what their child eventually does. The parents can and do exert a certain influence for good and bad on their children—but only the child can determine what he will become.

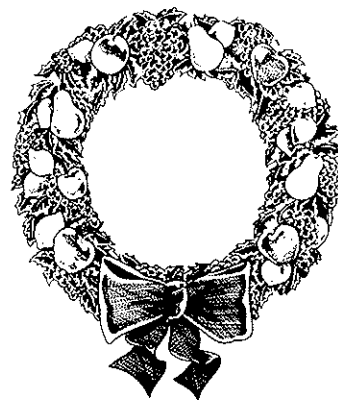
This is illustrated in families where parents are evil, yet their children choose to be Christian. We weep when good parents have children who do not follow in their footsteps. But when parents have done everything they can do in providing correct environment and training geared to the child's personality, they can only pray and trust that the child will choose the right. They do not have a guarantee.

God desires that everyone be a Christian. He has done everything He can do and not break His decree that man exercise freedom of the will. Many of His creatures are perverse enough to despise His goodness and love, to live lives that are contrary to His design.

God no doubt still loves these people and wishes they were different, but He does not feel guilty in what has happened. Neither should parents who have done their best! ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Bill M. Jones pastors Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas. He is chairman of the Foreign Missions Board.

Merry



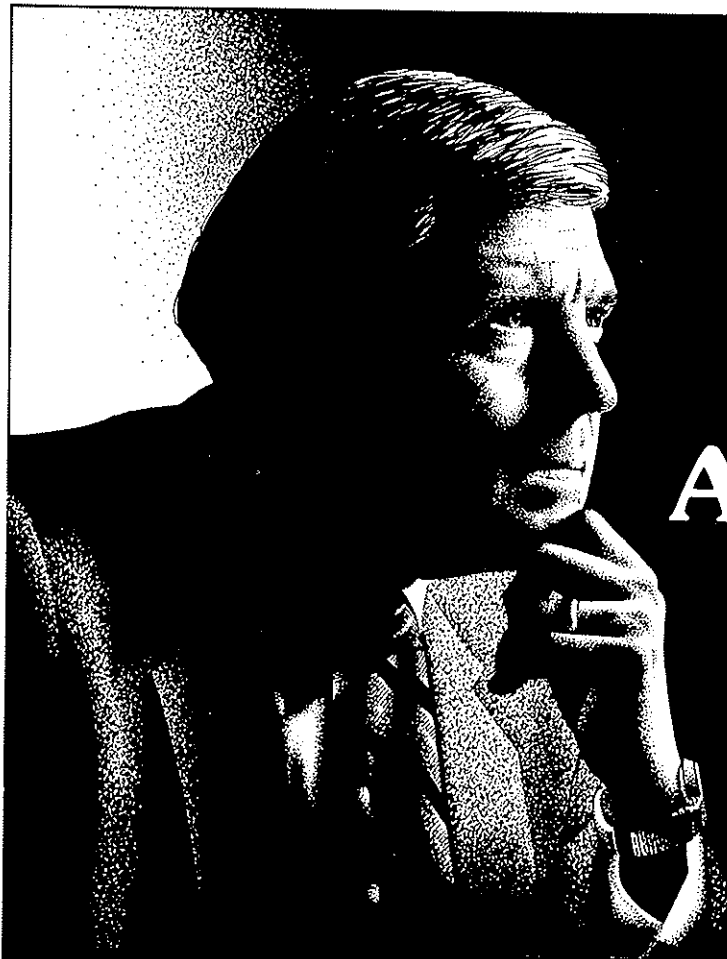
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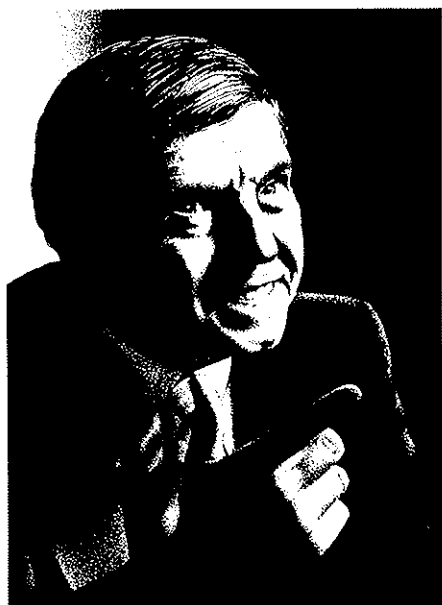
Pastoral Authority—

A Different Perspective

By Jim Mullen

Jesus told His disciples in Mark 10:42-45 that the Gentiles enjoyed exercising authority and lordship over their fellow man. This was a type of rule to which they were accustomed. (It is a type of rule that many churches have become accustomed to also.)

Jesus' message is that there is another way to express authority, a better way. The way He describes is to become a servant rather than a lord. The indication in verse 45 is that this is the way Jesus chose to express His own personal authority. It is clear that we are to follow His example.



This will not lead to diminished authority from the pulpit, but rather increased authority. The burden rests upon the individual pastor to gain this position of authority by being a servant. This will engender respect from the people. This respect is the natural result that follows the wise use of influence coupled with living a loving, exemplary life before the people.

The world is all too well acquainted with an authority structure that demands adherence. For the church to do any less than Jesus describes in this passage deprives the world of observing life that is any different than that which it already lives by.

Make no mistake—the affairs of the church should be governed in a different manner than the world governs its affairs.

The world puts one man above another, and this is as it should be. These, for the most part, are fallen, sinful men without Christ as their Savior. There needs to be authority of one person over another to avoid mass confusion with no final authority recognized. The world simply could not function without the authority structure of man over man.

Jesus' point to Christians is that we are different from the world and should act and govern differently. We have ignored His teaching in this area and borrowed from the world the same authority structure that it employs.

This has caused us to ignore the principle of servanthood that Jesus desired us to employ. And as a result of using the world's authority structure, we find some pastors lording it over the brethren and enjoying it.

Surely the words "... but so shall it not be among you ..." have some meaning for us today. In today's church we have accepted the idea that the pastor is the final authority in all matters of practice as well as doctrine. He is also "the boss" over the administration of every aspect of the church.

For years we have pointed out with alarm the error of the power that the Pope holds over the Roman Catholic Church. If a pope over the whole church is wrong, then placing a pope in the individual church is also wrong.

The scriptures indicate that there was concern on the part of the apostles to avoid developing absolute authority figures. In II Corinthians 1:24, Paul points out that even though he is an apostle, he did not come to have dominion over them but rather to be a helper of their joy.

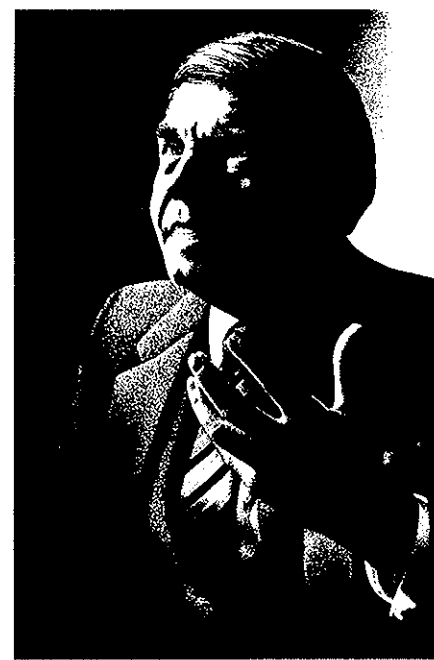


Joy is a characteristic that seems to be lacking in many churches today. Maybe we have erred by majoring in dominion and minoring in being helpers of joy.

Peter concurs with Paul's teaching by stating in I Peter 5:3 that we are not to be lords over God's heritage but rather we are to be examples to the flock.

There is to be leadership and authority within the church. However, sometimes pastors act as if Jesus established the church and then left for heaven, giving them sole responsibility for running His church.

Jesus still wants to manage the affairs of the church that He died to empower. Pastors, along with spiritual leaders of the church, have responsibility to seek the mind of God even in making day-to-day decisions in His church. After all, the ultimate authority in the church is still Jesus Christ.



Hebrews 13:17 is sometimes used to defend excessive pastoral authority. However, the instruction to obey those that have rule gives no permission to put people under law who have been given the freedom to live under grace. It is a tremendous motivation for leaders to live the life of servanthood to such a degree that it will be a delight for other people to follow the leadership.

To try to lord it over people and rule by "divine decree" from the pulpit will ultimately cause resentment and a feeling of bondage. This produces a life lived under law rather than grace, unhappiness rather than joy.

To follow this description of true leadership may cause radical change in some places, but after all, the church is not called to be conformed to the world. This is the time that we should seriously consider Jesus' words: "... so shall it not be among you ..."

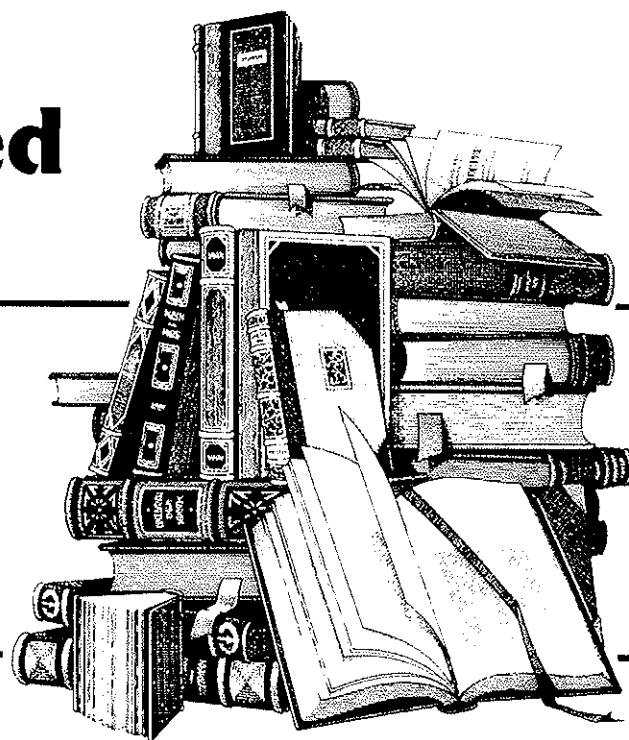
ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Jim Mullen pastors First Free Will Baptist Church, Garland, Texas. ▲

Ten Books That Influenced Me Most . . .

Several months ago we asked two retired ministers, a minister's wife, and two pastors to send us a list of the 10 books that influenced them most.

We only placed one restriction on them—the list of 10 books had to *exclude* the Bible. The reason is, we assumed the Bible would be first on every list if we didn't.

The result is 50 books (or sets of books) from five viewpoints that influenced some very nice people. If you're still in the market for some Christmas shopping, you may wish to select one or more of the volumes as a gift.



Reverend Ralph L. Staten
Retired Minister, Age 72
Knoxville, Tennessee

1. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*
By James Strong
2. *Halley's Bible Handbook*
By Henry H. Halley
3. *A Harmony of the Gospels*
By A. T. Robertson
4. *Clarke's Commentary* (6 Volumes)
By Adam Clarke
5. *Dictionary of the Bible*
By James Hastings
6. *Handfuls on Purpose*
By James Smith and Robert Lee
7. *Systematic Theology*
By J. J. Butler and Ransom Dunn
8. *Brief History of the Liberal Baptist People*
By G. W. Million and G. A. Barrett

9. *The Christian Church and Its Institutions*
By A. D. Williams
10. *God's Prophetic Word*
By Foy E. Wallace



Reverend William J. Mishler
Retired Minister, Age 67
Johnston City, Illinois

1. *How To Work for Christ*
By R. A. Torrey
2. *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*
By F. N. Peloubet
3. *The Pastor in Profile*
By Adolph Bedsole
4. *Unger's Bible Handbook*
By Merrill F. Unger
5. *Cruden's Complete Concordance*
6. *Pastoral Theology*
By A. Vinet
7. *The Christian Pastor*
By Wayne E. Oates

8. *H. A. Ironside Commentaries on the Bible*
By H. A. Ironside
9. *A Minister's Obstacles*
By Ralph G. Turnbull
10. *Irwin's Bible Commentary*
By C. H. Irwin



June R. Critcher, Minister's Wife
Nashville, Tennessee

1. *In the Arena of Faith*
By Erich Sauer
2. *Praise and Worship in Earth as in Heaven*
By Anne Murchison
3. *The Practice of the Presence of God*
By Brother Lawrence
4. *Alone with God*
By Campbell McAlpine
5. *The Pursuit of God*
By A. W. Tozer
6. *Destined for the Throne*
By Paul E. Billheimer
7. *Celebration of Discipline*
By Richard J. Foster
8. *Improving Your Serve*
By Charles R. Swindoll
9. *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman*
By Anne Ortlund
10. *The God You Can Know*
By Dan DeHaan



Reverend Floyd Wolfenbarger, Pastor
First Free Will Baptist Church
Russellville, Arkansas

1. *Purity of Heart*
By Soren Kierkegaard

2. *The Suffering Savior*
By F. W. Krummacher
3. *Trial and Death of Jesus*
By James Stalker
4. *The Keswick Week* (published annually)
By H. S. Stevenson
5. *How To Develop Deep Unity in the Marriage Relationship*
By Wayne Mack
6. *George Morrison Library* (7 volumes)
By George H. Morrison
7. *Our Lord Prays for His Own*
By Marcus Rainsford
8. *Man's Search for Meaning*
By Viktor Frankle
9. *God Tells the Man Who Cares*
By A. W. Tozer
10. *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*
By William Law



Reverend Randy Cox, Pastor
First Free Will Baptist Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

1. *Prayer—Asking and Receiving*
By John R. Rice
2. *Born Crucified*
By L. E. Maxwell
3. *Hearts Afire*
By Vance Havner
4. *Why Revival Tarries*
By Leonard Ravenhill
5. *Through Gates of Splendor*
By Elizabeth Elliot
6. *How to Carry Out God's Stewardship Plan*
By Truman Dollar
7. *The Hyles Church Manual*
By Jack Hyles
8. *The Book of the Revelation*
By Lehman Strauss
9. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*
By W. H. Griffith Thomas
10. *The Pastor In Profile*
By Adolph Bedsole



FREE WILL BAPTIST

newsfront

KENTUCKY CONGREGATION BURNS \$35,000 MORTGAGE

GLASGOW, KY—Burning the 15-year-old mortgage highlighted homecoming services at First Free Will Baptist Church, Glasgow, in September, according to Pastor Tim Hall.

Former pastors Eugene Workman (1964-1966) and William Johnson (1971-1976) assisted Reverend Hall during the special services. Johnson preached the homecoming message.

The church had secured a \$35,000 bond program in 1968 through Executive Church Bonds. Although final payment on the bond program was completed earlier this year, the congregation waited until homecoming activities to commemorate the milestone.

Plans are underway to erect a two-story educational unit. The church was organized 20 years ago, and called Eugene Workman as first pastor.

Under Workman's leadership, the church secured a two-acre tract in a developing subdivision in 1965. The building was completed in 1969 while George Crisp was pastor.

Membership stands at 179, with an average Sunday School attendance of 150.



Tim Hall (L.), Eugene Workman and William Johnson

'TRIBUTE TO DEACONS' KEYS FOUNDERS' DAY FESTIVITIES IN ARKANSAS

RUSSELLVILLE, AR—First Free Will Baptist Church, Russellville, celebrated its second annual Founders' Day in September with a special tribute to deacons, according to Pastor Floyd Wolfenbarger.

Three former deacons who have since entered the ministry, returned to preach during the 1983 Founders' Day activities. The three—Reverends Clarence E. Campbell, Henry Brown, and Tommy Brashears, preached as well as paid tribute to Reverend W. S.

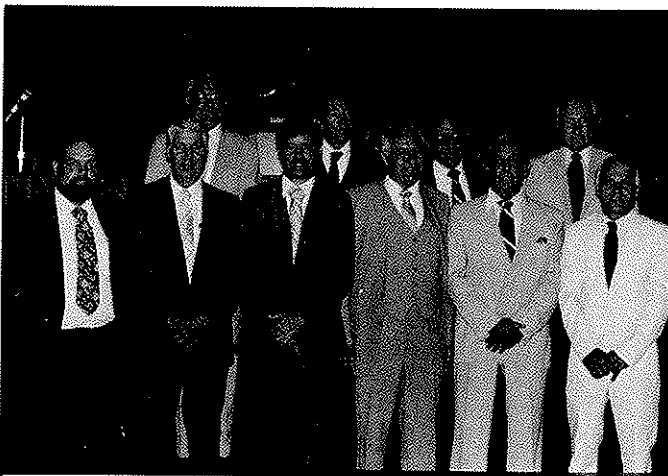
Isbell (92), the founding pastor.

Dr. Vernon Whaley, Free Will Baptist Bible College professor, provided special music and conducted the choir to highlight the services. He had worked with the choir for much of the previous week in a "choir revival."

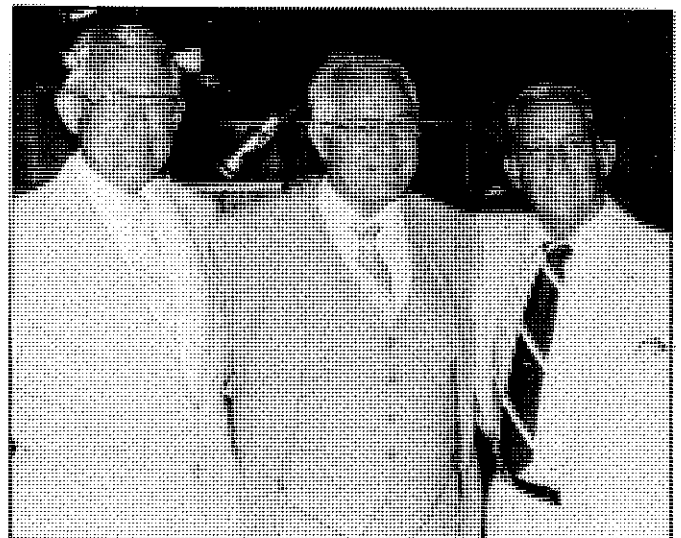
The grandson of a former deacon responded to the challenge of the services and committed himself to the gospel ministry. John David Harris preached his first sermon the following week.

The church gave \$10,000 in the Founders' Day offering. The offering was designated to debt retirement; during the past year the church reduced its debt from \$76,000 to \$13,500.

The church was started September 7, 1949, in a tent. After spending two winters in the tent, they built their first building. The current building was completed in October, 1976.



Front Row (L to R): Jay Griffin, Bob Trusty, Collins Lane, Clarence Campbell, Tommy Brashear, Russell Thomas; Back Row (L to R): Henry Brown, Duane Williams, Ted Henry, O. A. Mabry.



(L.) Henry Brown, Clarence Campbell, Tommy Brashear

GEORGIA CHURCH CONDUCTS HERITAGE REVIVAL

ALBANY, GA—First Free Will Baptist Church celebrated 32 years in the city of Albany with a six-day heritage revival September 26-October 2, according to Pastor Steven R. Hasty.

Five ministers, including two former pastors, spoke during the church-wide meetings. Pastor Hasty and the members prepared a 37-page historical resume for the occasion.

Free Will Baptist Executive Secretary Melvin Worthington, a former pastor, preached twice on the subjects, "Free Will Baptists Today" and "Free Will Baptists Tomorrow."

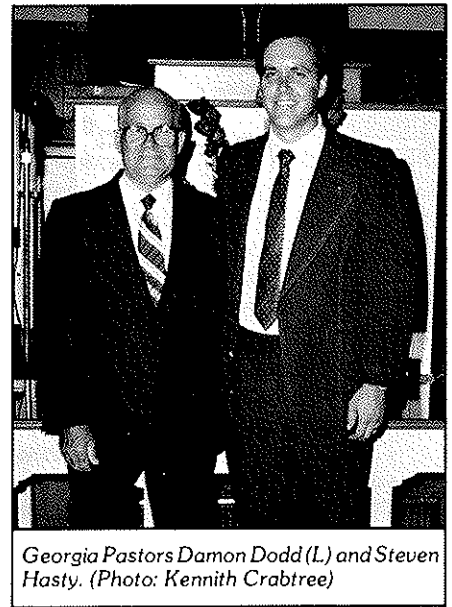
Former Free Will Baptist Bible College President L. C. Johnson spoke on "Free Will Baptists—The Last 40 Years." North Carolina pastor George Lee, also a former pastor at First Church, spoke on "The Church in

Our Community."

Georgia ministers Damon Dodd and Ralph Lightsey completed the heritage revival series by speaking on "Georgia Free Will Baptists—The Last 40 Years" and "Georgia's Religious Heritage" respectively.

First FWB Church was organized in 1951. Nine ministers have pastored the church during the past three decades: Adam Scott, H. L. Knighton, W. S. Driggers, George Lee, Charles Hollingshead, Melvin Worthington, Eddie Riddick, Fred Warner, and current Pastor Steven Hasty.

The church began in an enthusiastic two-week tent revival in August 1951 with Reverend Damon Dodd preaching. Seventeen charter members joined the church during the organizational meeting in September of that year.



Georgia Pastors Damon Dodd (L.) and Steven Hasty. (Photo: Kenneth Crabtree)

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLIES IMPROVED

NASHVILLE, TN—Two adult publications, *Bible Scholar* and *Bible Teacher*, have been remodeled and beefed up in content, according to Roger Reeds, general director of the Sunday School and Church Training Department.

The Bible Teacher and *Scholar* are now printed in double columns for ease of reading and to prevent eye fatigue. *The Bible Teacher* lists suggested aims for the teacher. The applications, illustrations, and conclusions are more relevant and helpful. In addition,

the scripture is printed preceding the exposition for easier understanding.

The lesson title and outline are arranged so that they may be cut from the book without destroying or separating any of the commentary.

The Bible Scholar, beginning with the Winter Quarter, 1983, has three suggested lesson aims for the student. One for the head, another for the heart, and the third for the hands. A practical application for each main

point of the lesson is set off by a screen.

Near the end of the quarterly is a review of the quarter's study. The review is in the form of questions, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true and false statements, etc.

A vocabulary and pronunciation guide is included which will list unusual or difficult words from the Bible passage under study. A brief definition of each word is given.

FWBBC STUDENTS' TREK FOR MISSIONS NETS \$2700

NASHVILLE, TN—Thirty-five Free Will Baptist Bible College students and faculty participated in a 10-mile walk-a-thon for foreign missions in September.

The group raised more than \$2,700 for foreign missionaries whose accounts were in the red. Participants tramped through the hilly terrain of Percy Warner Park.

Walk-a-Thon organizers recognized the top three fund raisers in a special chapel service—Marsha Howell, a junior from Wilson, NC; Paula Onica, a sophomore from Royal Oak, MI; and FWBBC Librarian Lorene Francen.



Tennessee Walk-a-Thon Coordinator Wallace Hayes with the top three fund raisers (L: Marsha Howell, Paula Onica and Lorene Francen).

newsfront

(continued)

INTERNAL REVENUE DELAYS RULING

NASHVILLE, TN—The Internal Revenue Service has delayed the application of Internal Revenue Ruling number 83-3 until December 31, 1984.

The Ruling states that a minister who includes real estate taxes and interest on a home mortgage to justify a parsonage allowance exclusion, may not deduct these items separately in the 1040 Form.

The Ruling was to have been effective June 30, 1983.

This delay applies for ministers who

owned and occupied their homes before January 3, 1983. Others, who bought homes after January 2, 1983, will not be allowed to deduct mortgage interest and real estate property taxes, if used to justify a parsonage allowance.

However, a limited deduction for mortgage interest and real estate property taxes is allowable if the minister actually spends more than the designated parsonage allowance.

Revenue Ruling 83-3 will apply to all

ministers starting in 1985, unless IRS extends the effective date or Congress rescinds the Ruling.

Ruling 83-3 does not change parsonage allowance or repeal Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code. Mortgage interest and real estate property taxes are still to be included in the parsonage allowance exclusion.

The Ruling is related only to the use of these two items as "deductions" on the 1040 Form.

SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES

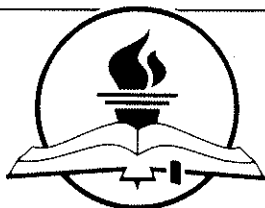
NASHVILLE, TN—Effective January 1, 1984, churches and other non-profit organizations will be required to withhold and pay social security (FICA) taxes on wages paid to non-ordained employees who earn \$50 or more a quarter.

By January 1, 1984, all churches with employees, part or full-time, other than ordained ministers, should have an Employer Identification Number from Internal Revenue Service. Application should be made on Form SS-4.

Along with the Employer Identification Number, IRS furnishes forms, reports and information on procedures for withholding and paying social security taxes.

Ordained ministers continue to be treated as "self-employed" by the IRS for social security purposes. However, the latest social security changes for 1984 require ministers to pay a net tax rate of 11.3 percent an increase of 1.95 over 1983 taxes. The gross tax rate is actually 14 percent but is reduced by a 2.7 percent tax credit for 1984.

As in past years, the church cannot pay social security taxes directly to the government for the minister. Most churches give money directly to the minister to cover all or part of his social security taxes. Money given for taxes is subject to both income and social security taxes.



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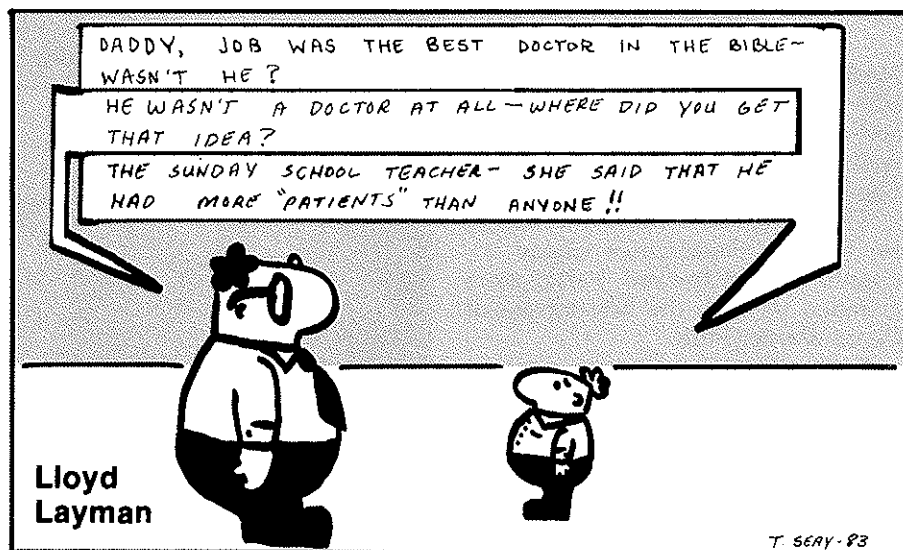
Entry Deadline—March 15,
1984

Registration Fee—\$10.00

Awards

Write For Rules Of Entry To:

Rev. Harrold D. Harrison, Writers'
Contest Director, P.O. Box 17306,
Nashville, Tennessee 37217



Currently . . .

The sanctuary at **Cofer's Chapel FWB Church, Nashville, TN**, was named the John L. Welch Auditorium on September 14, according to Pastor **Gene Outland**. This tribute was chosen by members as a memorial to Reverend Welch who served 46 years as pastor at Cofer's Chapel. In semi-retirement since 1962, Brother Welch was 94 when he died in July.

Pastor **Mircheal Jones** of **Shiloh FWB Church, Bratt, FL**, helped the congregation dedicate a new baptistry by baptizing three people. The church has also begun an extensive tape ministry.

Members of the **Fawn Grove FWB Church, Mantachie, MS**, completed a building and remodeling program in preparation for its 50th anniversary this fall. Pastor **Phil Davis** led the group in remodeling existing Sunday School rooms and fellowship hall in addition to building three new Sunday School rooms.

President **Bob Shockey** says the **Bethel Bible Institute** resumed its fall teaching program by scheduling institutes in five locations in Kentucky and West Virginia. Institute classes are being conducted in temporary locations since the Bethel Bible Institute trustees voted to sell the property near Paintsville, KY.

Canadian FWB pastor **Fred Hanson** was the only person present to voice opposition to a local restaurant's liquor license application in **Hartland, Canada**. Even though his effort to thwart the liquor trade was unsuccessful, Pastor Hanson said, "If this business feels it wants the liquor business, it apparently doesn't need my business." Hanson pastors **Upper Brighton FWB Church**.

The Puritan FWB Church, Hamden, OH, took a giant step of faith this fall by voting that Pastor **Arnold Pollard** assume full-time pastoral responsibilities at the church. Pastor Pollard has worked at the Kenworth Truck Company in Chillicothe, OH, for nine years in addition to keeping up his duties with the Puritan Church.

Members of **Victory Hill FWB Church, Norwood, MO**, conducted dedication services for a new building, according to pastor **Troy Burney**. Former pastor **John Williams** preached the dedicatory message. **Arthur Lund** gave a brief history of the church and a concise report concerning the construction project. Missouri State Executive Secretary **Clarence Burton** prayed the prayer of dedication.

Pastor **Ed Kennedy** reports 11 conversions and seven baptisms at **Island Road FWB Church, Grafton, OH**.

Members of **First FWB Church, Ardmore, OK**, made the final payment on the church parsonage and then surprised Pastor **Earl Scroggins** with a quarter of beef and a \$75 gift.

There were 10 conversions in a revival at **Pleasant Hill FWB Church, Delaware, OH**. **Lucien Baker** pastors.

And congratulations to **First FWB Church, Hartsville, SC**. The congregation has assumed full-time responsibilities for pastor **Rudy Woods** who has served the church for five years. **Chuck Felkel** presented the church with a new sign to celebrate the new beginning.

The Woman's Auxiliary at **First FWB Church, Moore, OK**, surprised Pastor **Dan Farmer** with a money tree that, at last count, had produced a crop of \$180.

Peace FWB Church, Spartanburg, SC, dedicated a 3200-square foot fellowship building, according to Pastor **Johnny Bullman**. The 60-day project was completed at a cost of \$38,000. The fellowship building is carpeted and also has central heat and air. Part of the dedication festivities included a five-hour live broadcast over the 100,000 watt Christian Radio Station, WAGI FM, Gaffney, SC.

The fifth annual convention of the Southeastern Association of Church Schools met October 3-5 at **Trinity FWB Church, Greenville, NC**.

Wildwood FWB Church, Nichols, SC, expects to be in a new building by the end of the year, according to Pastor **Larry Bell**. The group is nearing completion of a 2,050-square foot facility which includes three classrooms, two offices, and an auditorium. Construction began in May with the congregation doing the work.

Sixteen people stepped forward to become charter members of a new Free Will Baptist Church in **Bourbon, Missouri** on August 13. The group is led by acting pastor, **O. D. Matthews**.

A couple from Puerto Rico who were visiting in the Norfolk, Virginia area heard the radio broadcast of **Heritage FWB Church, Williamsburg, VA**. After hearing the Saturday broadcast, the couple accepted the invitation to attend Sunday services. They came, heard the message, responded to the invitation, and were saved. **Dennis Wiggs** pastors.

Members of **First FWB Church, Russellville, AR**, presented Pastor **Floyd Wolfenbarger** with a gift of \$100 during pastor appreciation day activities.

CONTACT welcomes THE ALABAMA FWB YOUTH DIGEST, a publication dedicated to the youth of Alabama and those who guide them.

Pastor **Joe Grimmett** reports 175 in attendance on Sunday evening at **First FWB Church, Tuscon, AZ**. He said this was 35 more than Sunday morning attendance.

The Vacation Bible School offering at **Chestnut Hill FWB Church, Big Island, VA**, was given to support Home Missionary **Vergel Maness**. **Herbert Bennett** pastors.

Raccoon FWB Church, Greenup, KY, reports 58 conversions and baptisms during two revival meetings this year. Members purchased a 14 x 70-foot mobile home for Pastor **Johnsey G. Collins III**.

After seven years as pastor at **Oak Grove FWB Church, Lake Village, AR**, **Paul Payne** has led in a growth surge that pushed attendance from an average of 33 to 180, with an additional 65 average in Junior Church worship. The church includes a bus ministry, jail ministry, and projects plans for the possible opening of a Christian school in 1984. The 6500-square foot church, valued at \$225,000 is debt free. ▲

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Green Tree Bible Study

Robert E. Picirilli

II Peter 3:1-9

Scoffers and the Day of the Lord

All along, Peter has been making passing references to the day of the Lord (1:19; 2:3, 9). Now he comes to the subject in earnest.

The Purpose of This Epistle is first mentioned briefly (vv. 1, 2). Peter desired that his readers have a written means of keeping in mind and memory the teachings of the prophets and the apostles (compare 1:13-15). As we shall see, he was thinking especially of teachings about the day of the Lord.

The Rise of Scoffers is promised (vv. 3, 4). "The promise of His coming" means His promised coming; this is the truth that will be mocked. Why? Because they "proceed after their own lusts." People who want to live in fleshly indulgence find it more comfortable to deny the coming of the Lord.

They find encouragement in noting that things haven't changed so far. "Our forefathers always talked of His coming, and they've all died," they laugh, "so where is He? Furthermore,

nothing's changed since creation! Why should we expect some strange intervention from heaven?"

The Facts Ignored are given (vv. 5-7). The mockers are wilfully ignoring two things: (1) that the former world, existing by the Word of God, perished in the flood; and (2) that the present world is likewise reserved, by the Word of God, for destruction—only this time by fire.

Note the contrast, literally, between "the then world" and "the now world." The former heavens and earth, created by the word of God (v. 5), perished in the flood (v. 6). The present heavens and earth will perish by fire in the day of the Lord.

This certainly appears to indicate that there were drastic changes in the order of the "cosmos" (Greek for "world" = *kosmos*) at the time of the flood—a point not considered in many modern scientific theories.

The Reason for Delay is stated (vv. 8, 9). Mockers might ask: Why, then, has He not returned? Peter gives us a two-fold answer. First, God's timing is not man's (v. 8; compare Ps. 90:4). What we might plan for a day might take a thousand years in His schedule,

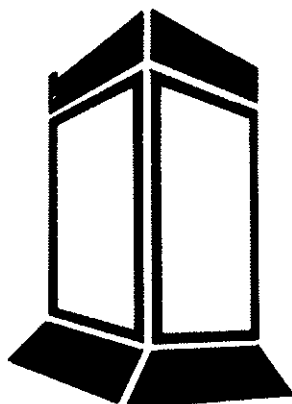
or vice-versa. God is not plagued by man's impatience or procrastination. Indeed, He can make a promise and take millennia to bring it to pass.

Second, the reason for the delay is God's longsuffering. Note that delay is not denied, only delay as *men* experience it. When *we* delay, it may mean we have forgotten or are unable to perform. Not so with God: Jesus tarrys because God does not desire that any perish.

Of course, this contradicts consistent Calvinism, where there are the non-elect whose salvation God has never desired. But if He desires that all be saved, why are some lost? Because, first, it is His will that they be free, personal, moral, responsible—and make their choices unforced by Him.

So He holds back the day of judgment yet a little longer, that men may have opportunity to repent. What folly, then, that the very ones He waits for include those who mock the promise of His coming, "despising the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering" (Rom. 2:4)!

Tarry or not, the day of the Lord will come (v. 10). We must not let the wait lull us into disbelief or indifference. ▲



The Free Will Baptist Pulpit

Larry Hampton, Manager, Editorial Division

Sunday School and Church Training Department

A Matter Of Priorities

Matthew 6:24-33

INTRODUCTION

O. J. Simpson met Jim Brown when O. J. was a little boy. He told the Cleveland Browns star he had all his records posted on his wall. Brown, used to being idolized, paid little attention to his youthful admirer's comments until he said, "I know all your records by heart. And, Mr. Brown, I'm going to beat every one of them."

He did, too. Football record books reveal the fulfillment of Simpson's prediction. For O. J. Simpson, football had priority. To be more precise, excelling in football was his top priority.

What has priority in your life? Every man must decide whether to live for God or mammon.

- I. To give first place to the things of this world is to sin against God.
 - A. To give first place to material things is to conform to the practices of the world (verse 32a).
 - B. Anxiety over material goods reveals a lack of faith (verse 30).
 - C. Failure to serve Christ indicates hatred for Him (verse 24).
- II. Christ demands first place in one's life.
 - A. One is to pay constant attention to spiritual matters (verse 33a).
 - B. In seeking God's kingdom, one is to seek the character of its King (verse 33b).

III. Faith in Jesus Christ leaves no room for doubt concerning His providential care.

- A. God has commanded believers not to be anxious about physical needs (verses 25, 31).
- B. God knows His children's needs (verse 32b).
- C. As God cares for His other creations, so also will He care for us (verses 26, 28, 30).
- D. Believers have God's promise that He will meet their needs (verse 33).

CONCLUSION

There was once a ruler who offered to grant a young man any wish he might make. His was not an easy choice for he wanted many things. Finally, he realized how to gain the position and prestige he sought. He rightly perceived that if he asked to have the princess for his wife all these things would be his. Therefore, the young man wisely requested the king's daughter as his bride.

You too have a decision to make. You can choose to give priority to worldly goods or Christ's kingdom. To choose Christ's kingdom is to assume His character and to enjoy His provision of all your needs. You cannot serve God and mammon. One must have priority—which will it be? ▲



ON LITTLE LANES

BY DONNA MAYO

Forgiving and For Giving

Lights twinkled, carols blared from loud speakers, store windows decked with elves and reindeer—the city was dressed for Christmas. Mrs. Lane hurried along with other last-minute shoppers.

"I've never been so late with my Christmas shopping," she thought. "I can't believe that tomorrow is Christmas Eve."

Mrs. Lane made her last purchase and hurried toward the parking lot. She was about to unlock the car when she felt a tug at her arm. She turned to see a boy dashing off with her purse.

"Come back here!" she yelled and started after him. She chased the boy down one block and was turning into an alley when she ran headlong into a policeman, holding the squirming culprit.

"Let me go! Let me go!" yelled the boy.

"I'll let you go," said the policeman firmly, "if you promise not to run off."

The youngster quieted down, hung his head and said, "You aren't going to put me in jail are you?"

"No, Son," answered the kind officer. "We just want to ask you a few questions. First of all," he said, looking at Mrs. Lane, "is this your purse?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Lane panting. "Thank you."

"And now," said the policeman turning to the boy, "I'm Officer Glen Ellis. What is your name, young man?"

"Tim," he answered quietly. "Timothy Russell."

Mrs. Lane took a good look at the boy who snatched her purse. His pants and shirt were worn and faded. Long arms dangled from a sweater, his only protection from the December cold. Tim was thin as a scarecrow, and he had huge, sad brown eyes.

"How old are you, Tim?" continued Officer Ellis.

"Twelve," he answered, his eyes on the pavement.

Mrs. Lane's heart went out to the boy when she realized he was only a few years older than her twins. "This could be Marty," she thought.

"Officer, couldn't we continue this somewhere else?" asked Mrs. Lane as

she took off her coat and draped it over the boy's shoulders. "Tim is shivering with cold."

"Of course," said the policeman and ushered them to his car. "We'll dash down to the station house and get this settled."

At the police station Mrs. Lane called home and asked her husband to meet her there. Officer Ellis tried to get more information from Tim, but he wasn't too talkative.

"Look, Tim," said the policeman, "we're trying to help you. But if you don't tell us where you live, we'll have to keep you here."

"OK," Tim sighed. "I guess I'd rather spend Christmas at the orphanage than in jail."

"I should have known," said Officer Ellis. "You're the runaway from the home for boys. We got that call two days ago."

"You've been gone two days?" said Mrs. Lane alarmed. "Where did you sleep? What did you eat?"

"I managed," said Tim trying not to show how tired, hungry, and scared he was.

Officer Ellis gave Tim a cup of hot chocolate and said, "I'll call the home."

We'll have to take you back there. That is, if you don't want to press charges, Mrs. Lane."

"Oh no," answered Mrs. Lane. "I might have done the same thing if I hadn't eaten in two days."

"You were lucky, Tim, to pick such a forgiving victim. Next time you may not be so lucky," said the policeman.

"There won't be a next time, Sir," said Tim meekly. "I knew it was wrong. I was just hungry."

Mrs. Lane saw big tears in Tim's eyes as Officer Ellis picked up the phone to call the orphanage. "Wait a minute, Officer. Does Tim have to go back to the orphanage? Couldn't he spend the holidays with us?" offered Mrs. Lane.

Tim's mouth dropped open in surprise. "You mean you'd let me go home with you for Christmas after what I did?"

"Yes, I forgive you," said Mrs. Lane kindly.

Just then Mr. Lane rushed into the room. "Laura, are you all right? What are you doing here?"

Mrs. Lane told the story and finished by saying, "I just hate to send him back to the orphanage to spend Christmas all by himself."

"It is sad, Honey, but Christmas is for families. Do you think it would be fair to our kids? Besides, he might be a bad influence," whispered Mr. Lane.

"We'll just have to be a good influence on him," answered Mrs. Lane. "Our kids need to learn that Christmas is for sharing."

"You're right," said Mr. Lane. "Let's head for home."

At home the children welcomed Tim. In no time, they were playing like old friends. Before bedtime the family gathered for devotions. "Read the Christmas story again, Daddy," pleaded Megan.

"OK," said Mr. Lane. There was a special warmth in the air as, once again, the children were caught up in the beauty of the familiar story.

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

"You see, kids, Christmas is really for giving," explained Mr. Lane. "The

Wise Men gave Jesus gifts, and, of course, God gave the greatest gift when He gave Jesus to all of us to be our Savior. It is fun to get, but if you really want to be happy you have to give."

After prayer the children went to bed. It seemed he had only been asleep a short while when Tim was awakened by Marty. "Get up," said Marty shaking him. "Are you ready for Christmas Eve?"

"I reckon so," said Tim fearing that the day would be like any other. But the breakfast of pancakes and bacon was just the beginning of a special day.

The children helped Mrs. Lane decorate Christmas cookies, they played Christmas records on the stereo, and the weather even cooperated by spitting snowflakes for them to catch on their tongues. And then there were still presents to take from secret hiding places and wrap.

Marty took Tim into his room and locked the door safely behind him. "Let me show you the neat set of screwdrivers Megan and I got Daddy for Christmas," he said.

Tim admired the screwdrivers while Marty began wrapping them in red and green paper. "And look at this necklace I got for Mama. Do you think she'll like it?" continued Marty.

"Sure," said Tim without much enthusiasm.

"Hey, what's the matter?" asked Marty, noticing Tim's disappointment. "Are you afraid you won't get anything for Christmas?"

"No, that's not it," said Tim quickly. "I've already had enough Christmas by just being here. I just wish I could give some too."

"Don't worry about that," said Marty passing it off. "Nobody expects you to."

But Tim did worry about it. He wanted to do something for these folks who had been so good to him.

Tim walked to the kitchen where Mrs. Lane was cooking turkey dinner. "Whew," she said pouring herself a cup of coffee, "I need a break. No," she laughed, "what I really need is a maid."

"Don't you like to cook, Mrs. Lane?" asked Tim.

"Yes, I do enjoy it. It's the clean-up that I could do without."

Tim's eyes brightened. "You've just given me a great idea," he said.

"Thanks." He bounded off to Marty's room. Mrs. Lane watched him go with a puzzled look on her face.

Tim got construction paper, scissors, and glue out of Marty's desk. For over an hour he worked on Christmas cards and gifts for each member of the Lane family. His gifts were kind acts he could do for them.

He wrote them on slips of paper, like I.O.U.'s and put them inside the cards. He would polish shoes for Mr. Lane, read stories to Jeff, clean Megan's room, and wash dishes for Mrs. Lane. Now what for Marty? "I know," said Tim, "we'll play football all day."

The next morning Megan was up first. "Merry Christmas!" she called. "Everybody up," she said as she went to wake Jeff.

At last they all gathered around the Christmas tree. The kids tore into packages with glee.

"Look at Tim," whispered Mrs. Lane to her husband. "He's so excited with those last minute gifts we found."

"Wow, thanks," he said as he opened a box with a heavy warm jacket in it. "Now, I have something for all of you." Tim handed out his cards. The room was quiet while everybody read their cards. It was clear that they were all touched by Tim's simple deed.

A tear came to Mrs. Lane's eye as she read her card: "I'm going to wash all the dishes while I'm here. Thank you for the best Christmas I can remember. Merry Christmas!"

"Tim, you didn't have to do this," she said.

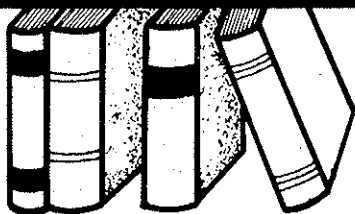
"I know," smiled Tim, "but I wanted to give you something for all you've done for me. And I didn't have anything else to give."

"You gave yourself, Tim, and that's the best gift of all," said Mr. Lane.

Mrs. Lane looked at the little orphan and her heart was warmed as she remembered those sad eyes that were now twinkling brighter than the lights on the tree.

Tim had discovered the real meaning of Christmas—joy truly is found in giving. ▲

Top Shelf



Thomas Marberry



F. F. Bruce, *New International Greek Testament Commentary, Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982, 305 pp., hardback, \$15.95).

The writings of F. F. Bruce, one of the leading evangelical scholars of the English-speaking world, reflect both a high view of the authority of scripture and a high level of scholarship. In my opinion, this volume is his finest contribution to the field of New Testament studies.

Bruce deals effectively in his introductory chapter with difficulties one must confront in the study of Galatians. For example, we are not completely sure what geographical area Paul had in mind when he used the term "Galatia."

He could have meant the area located in the northern part of the Roman province of Galatia; this area

had been known as "Galatia" for several centuries.

It is also possible that Paul used the term to describe the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia, the area commonly known as Phrygia and Lycaonia. Bruce prefers the southern view.

Bruce believes that Galatians is the earliest of Paul's letters. In his view, the letter was written to oppose a particular group within the church known as "Judaizers." The Judaizers taught that salvation included more than simple faith in Christ; it also required obedience to certain aspects of the Jewish law, especially circumcision.

Such an approach was exactly opposite of the gospel which Paul preached. When he saw the churches of Galatia being destroyed by this false teaching, Paul could not keep silent.

This volume is a commentary based on the original Greek text of Galatians. The purpose of a commentary is to

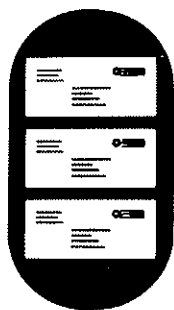
explain, and Bruce does this in a most attractive way.

He does an excellent job explaining the meanings of Greek terms and expressions which are used in the book. At this point, Bruce's great command of both classical and Hellenistic Greek is readily apparent.

Bruce also explains terms and expressions found in Galatians in light of social customs which were found both among Jewish and Gentile peoples in the first century. This type explanation helps us to see how first-century Christians would have understood the message of the book.

This volume is a significant contribution to the study of Galatians. It is not, however, a simple book. It is written for the serious student.

In order to use this book profitably, the reader needs some facilities with Greek and some awareness of current issues in the field of New Testament studies. For the reader who has these tools, this book is a gem. ▲



OUR READERS COMMENT

GO TELL MY SISTERS

I have read the October issue from cover to cover, and I think this issue to be super.

I am enclosing my check for \$5.00 and am asking that you mail a copy of this issue to each of my two sisters.

Carl L. Brown
Lake Butler, Florida

READER DISAGREES WITH 'BIBLE TRANSLATIONS' ARTICLE

I just finished reading the October article "The American Translations" by Marvin Beculhimer. It seems to me he knows just enough about Bibles to make him dangerous.

He recommended about every one as being good. He just missed the Jehovah Witness *New World Translation* and *The Book of Mormon*. I don't know why he didn't recommend them; they are as good or better than some of the ones he did endorse.

I have about six or eight translations in my study, but I wouldn't recommend most of them to anyone. I have never found one that improves on the *King James*. I recommend that my congregation use only the *King James*.

I can't imagine anything that would cause more confusion than trying to teach or preach to a congregation with 14 different translations of Bibles.

Reverend Dale Vanderburg, Pastor
Blanchard Free Will Baptist Church
Blanchard, Oklahoma

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Arizona	.00	.00	.00	.00	340.62
Arkansas	.00	4,163.36	4,163.36	4,115.78	32,128.51
California	.00	1,022.76	1,022.76	732.34	9,378.71
Florida	.00	1,175.93	1,175.93	1,509.95	14,173.12
Georgia	2,877.82	676.67	3,554.49	2,500.52	31,025.03
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	275.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	261.46
Illinois	.00	.00	.00	.00	65,462.11
Indiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	222.38
Iowa	.00	179.50	179.50	.00	258.45
Kansas	.00	412.65	412.65	.00	2,717.62
Kentucky	.00	750.00	750.00	200.00	3,698.29
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Texas	3,716.78	6.00	3,722.78	60.00	35,322.48
Virginia	.00	92.30	92.30	.00	977.86
West Virginia	11,088.67	52.31	11,140.98	.00	24,696.63
Totals	\$40,081.62	\$29,724.88	\$69,806.50	\$53,531.69	\$605,468.16

DISBURSEMENTS:

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Totals	\$40,081.62	\$29,724.88	\$69,806.50	\$53,531.69	\$605,468.16

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—Compiled by CONTACT Staff

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Flack, Edith	May, 12
Forlines, Jack	August, 17
Forlines, Leroy	January, 6
Fowler, Loretta	April, 29
Fry, Malcolm	February, 16
Hall, Paul F.	April, 11
Hampton, Charles	October, 16
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Hanson, Fred	September, 20
Hasty, Steven	August, 10
Henderson, Kathy Tippet	January, 2;
	December, 2
Hersey, Herman	October, 8
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Jones, Bill	December, 10
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McAllister, James	August, 16
McLain, Winnie	July, 10
Miley, Lorene	September, 15
Miller, L. Joe	January, 13
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Montgomery, Larry	December, 8
Moody, Eddie	November, 18
Morgan, Robert	August, 13
Mullen, Jim	December, 12
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Riggs, Raymond	March, 8
Schoenhals, G. Roger	July 13;
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Scott, Ben	July, 8

Slaughter, Frank	March, 18
Staten, Ralph	December, 14
Thomas, Pat	November, 8
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Wangerin, Walter, Jr.	March, 2
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Willis, Homer	June, 6
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NEWSFRONT

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Breeden, Frank	August, 20
Brown, A. B.	August, 20
Cariker, Connie	March 23;
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Carter, Mike	September, 27
Collins, Lester	October, 21
Crews, Jerry	June, 20
Criswell, Mike	August, 23
Dodd, Damon	November, 21
Dwyer, Danny	August, 20
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Bible College Graduates 73	August, 21
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Convocation Launches FWBBC	
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Accrediting Association	June, 23
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FWBBC Welcome Days Attract
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FWB Pension Benefits Top
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*Season's
Greetings*

**To Our CONTACT Subscribers
—CONTACT STAFF**



THE SECRETARY SPEAKS

By Melvin Worthington

The Way It Was



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Free Will Baptists

Christmas for the Christian is a time to focus on the birth of Jesus Christ. A time to remember how He took upon Himself our nature and became a man.

The birth of Jesus Christ is a mystery. Some sparkling truths surround this great event. Bishop Ryle suggests, "Let us be content to believe with reverence, and not speculate about matters which we cannot understand. Enough for us to know, that with Him who made the world nothing is impossible."

Long before Jesus was born, history was rushing toward Bethlehem. Isaiah confirmed the promise, proclaiming, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14). Micah named the town where the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2).

This is the way it was.

The Partners

Matthew 1:18-19 *Describes the Parents* of Jesus Christ. This account of the Nativity gives particular attention to Joseph. Mary and Joseph were betrothed, yet they had not come together as husband and wife. The arrangement was binding and could only be broken by a bill of divorce.

Matthew further *Denotes the Problem*. Before the betrothal was consummated, Mary became pregnant.

Maclaren said, "The shock to

Joseph of the sudden discovery, crashing in on him after he was bound to Mary, and in what would else have been the sweet interval of love and longing 'before they came together,' is delicately and unconsciously brought out in verse 18. 'She was found'—how much remembrance of the sudden disclosure, blinding and startling as a lightning flash, lives in the world! And how the agony of perplexity as to the right thing to do in such a cruel dilemma."

Matthew Discloses the Procedure. Joseph chose to deal with his perplexing problem; he refused to run from the embarrassment.

Joseph was crushed. Mary was apparently guilty of adultery. Should Joseph demand her death? He did nothing rashly, but waited patiently and perhaps placed the matter before the Lord. He finally decided to put her away quietly, to give her a bill of divorce.

Again Maclaren writes, "As a 'just man' and 'her husband,' Joseph owed it to righteousness and to himself not to ignore his betrothed's condition; but as her husband, how could he put her, who was still dear to him, to public shame, some of which would cloud his own name. To 'put her away' was the only course possible, though it rack his soul, and to do it 'privily' was the last gift that his wounded love could give her."

The Pronouncement

As Joseph thought about his problem, an angel appeared to him in a

dream. Joseph's patience was rewarded. God spoke to him regarding that which anguished his heart and he was at once relieved from all his fears.

The angel declared the *truth* about Mary's pregnancy (Matthew 1:20-21). Mary had not been unfaithful to Joseph. She would bring forth a son whose name would be Jesus. He would save His people from their sins.

The *testimony* regarding Mary's pregnancy was established in the scriptures (Matthew 1:22-23). The birth of Jesus Christ was predicted by the prophet Isaiah. Jesus, the son of Mary, would be a perfect man as well as perfect God, and perfect God as well as perfect man. In fact, His very name, Emmanuel, means "God with us."

The Peace

Joseph responded to the message of the Lord's angel by obedience. He took Mary as his wife, but he knew her not until she gave birth to Jesus.

Christmas is when we are reminded that God sent his son to "save his people from their sins." But this is not all. It also reminds us that God is with us.

What wonderful news! Let us rejoice and be glad, for this is the way it was when Jesus was born. ▲

THE SECRETARY'S SCHEDULE

Dec. 5-6	Executive Committee Nashville, TN
Dec. 7-9	Leadership Conference Nashville, TN
Dec. 27-Jan. 4	Bible Lands Tours

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