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Contact

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*Christmas
Memories—Yesterday.
Today*



The Facts About Christmas



By I. Bennie Turner

"Here comes Santa Claus," "Frosty, the Snowman," "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Up on the Housetop," "Santa Claus is coming to Town."

They're all cute, peppy little songs about a roly-poly, jovial dispenser of gifts to good little girls and boys, a melting snowman come to life, and a red-nosed reindeer who saves the day (or night) for Santa. They are pleasant pieces of fiction that in no way relate to the real meaning of Christmas.

These songs, and others like them, have been a part of Americana for many years. They're a vital part of American tradition and folklore, no more harmful than "Paul Bunyan" or "Brer Rabbit," if kept in the same perspective.

Tradition, that's all Santa, Frosty and Rudolph are. They're certainly not Christmas, at least not from the biblical perspective. They're not truth. When speaking of the real meaning of Christmas, we must separate fact from fiction, truth from tradition, reality from fantasy.



Almost all the things commonly associated with Christmas have their antecedents in an earlier custom and tradition of paganism adopted and adapted by Christians through the years as a part of their celebration.

The date itself, December 25, antedates Christmas hundreds of years when people worshipped the sun during the winter solstice. In the days immediately preceding and following December 22 (the shortest day of the year and the beginning of winter), the people, fearing the sun was going to forsake them during this time and its light go out, would kindle lights and fire to help the sun god relight his lamp. It was a time of feasting and rejoicing.

Jesus' birthday was at first ignored within the early church. When Christians did begin to celebrate it, because of the uncertain date, it was observed at various times. Finally, in 350 A.D., Pope Julius I set the probable date as December 25. Most Christians accepted this date, but those, such as the Armenians, who disliked a date so closely linked with pagan holidays, chose to observe Christmas on January 6, as they still do.

A decorated tree with special meaning existed long before the Christmas tree. At the winter solstice, for example, oak trees were decorated with golden apples and lighted candles by Druid priests. The apples ex-

pressed gratitude to the god Odin for providing fruits, and the candles burned in honor of the sun god Balder.

The origin of the first Christmas tree is only conjecture and legend, the most common, perhaps, being that one related to Martin Luther. It is said that in the 16th century, Martin Luther, inspired by the beauty of the tall evergreens against a starry sky, cut a fir tree, took it home and placed candles on its branches symbolizing the stars in the heavens above Bethlehem.

The Christmas greens and flowers, the candles and colored lights, even gift-giving, all date back to ancient customs of honoring and/or appeasing pagan gods.

Santa Claus riding through the sky is no new thing. Thousands of years before Christ, the Scandinavian god Odin rode through the world at mid-winter on his eight-footed horse Sleipner, bringing reward or punishment. This was just one of a number of gods who supposedly rode through the air to deliver their gifts.

All the aforementioned has been said to show just how the traditional, secular Christmas is so wrapped up in and adapted from pagan custom and fantasy, all of which we could dispense with and still enjoy Christmas—if we would—by concentrating on that sure truth of Christmas, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While the world at large celebrates Christmas from a purely materialistic, light-hearted perspective, we must be sure that we as Christians are not swallowed up in that same perspective. While we Christians may have our Christmas trees, our gifts, our big meals, our lights, our tinsel, our Christmas shopping, our wrapping paper and bows, we must never lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas.

The true meaning of Christmas is not found in mythological traditions or religious periodicals or encyclopedic commentaries, but in God's precious Word, in the second chapters of Matthew and Luke.

We need to read these accounts over and over again and as we do, rejoice in the fact that Christmas is not Santa Claus but the Son of God, born so long ago in that lowly manger in Bethlehem that we might be "blessed

with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

And yet, I wonder just how many Christians could really enjoy Christmas if it meant doing away with Santa Claus, Rudolph, the Christmas tree, ornaments, bright lights, the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping, the secular Christmas songs, the wrapping paper and the gifts given to each other.

I wonder how many could be content with the quiet and beauty and reverence of that first Christmas so many years ago experienced by those lowly and blessed shepherds "as they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" and "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" (Luke 2:16, 20).

I wonder how many would be content to join those wise men as they journeyed to where the young child was, "and when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

I wonder how many would be content simply to gather together on this Christmas day around a birthday cake, as it were, with 1985 candles, and the words "Happy Birthday, Jesus" and offer to Him our gifts wrapped in love and appreciation: gifts of commitment, faithfulness, devotion, steadfastness; to sing only the Christmas carols that speak of Him alone, and to testify of His redeeming grace.

This, to me, would be Christmas in its truest sense. ▲



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend I. Bennie Turner pastors Glennville Free Will Baptist Church, Glennville, Georgia.

Contents December 1985

- 2 The Facts About Christmas**
I. Bennie Turner
- 4 Making Christmas Memories**
Delilah Scott
- 5 Briefcase: The PSF Factor**
Jack Williams
- 6 Expand Your Family at Christmas**
Ivan Ryan
- 8 The Christmas Credit Cursel**
Howard Bass
- 10 The Dwarfed Walnut Tree and I**
Clary Adams
- 12 Reflecting The Stars**
Elwood McQuaid
- 15 A Mask of Unrighteousness**
Brian Cook
- 17 Free Will Baptist Newsfront**
- 18 The Free Will Baptist Pulpit**
J. B. Varney
- 19 Currently**
- 20 Top Shelf**
Thomas Marberry
- 20 Put Something Back**
Jo Hurst
- 22 Green Tree Bible Study**
Robert E. Picirilli
- 23 On Little Lanes**
Donna Mayo
- 24 What To Give Your Pastor For Christmas**
Floyd Wolfenbarger
- 25 Teen Scene**
- 26 Index**
- 30 News of the Religious Community**
- 31 The Shepherds' Story**
Melvin Worthington

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Making Christmas Memories

By Delilah Scott

Christmas season more than any other time of the year should be a celebration for the family. After all, nearly 2,000 years ago a young family started it all.

A young man under the silent sky guided his promised virgin wife in search of shelter. He made comfortable the only available delivery room, a stable, where she brought forth her firstborn and wrapped Him.

The head of the family, as God intended, was represented there in the husband-provider-protector. This protection included being open to God's direction, since it was Joseph who was later warned to flee to Egypt.

And all the while the mother was warming, feeding, comforting the child. Her spontaneous actions began the very first moment when she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes.

Christmas to a child is family. Not the things Mom and Dad get for the children, but the things they do for them.

These are the things I remember: the lights of the fire, the warmth of

extra covers, Mother's songs of her friend Jesus who was born on a silent night and whom she would see on that grand homecoming week.

How she cared for us, bundling us up before letting us go out in the weather with Dad to cut our Christmas tree. Her every energy seemed directed toward wrapping, protecting, warming her children against the harsh cold which would come.

I remember coming back into her warmth and to the aroma of turkey with all the trimmings mixed with the smell of fresh pine.

To this child no one else in all the world but my dad could have climbed that 30-foot tree near our house and cut out the top. The shape was of little importance. What lingers is the memory of Dad carrying it to the house and hoisting it in the living room.

I was reasonably sure no one else had a Dad like that, but totally convinced when he sat down beside us with our annual Christmas coconut, punctured it, drained it and let us sip the milk. He then cracked it for us and sliced it piece by piece till we had eaten it all.

I know now that it was not so much what we were eating as the quiet time he spent with us.

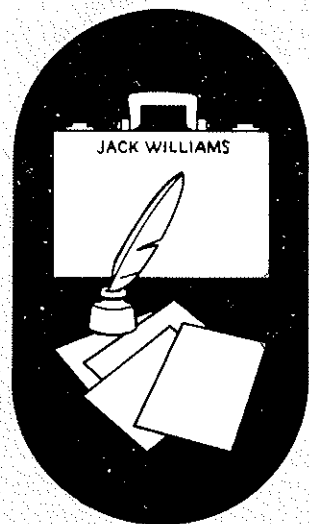
Then there were the chocolate drops, oranges, nuts, orange slices, gum drops and ribbon candy, and, of course, chocolate covered cherries. And no matter what we played or what we ate there was the cherished sound of Mother's singing coming from the kitchen.

Now I have my own family and more and more I see that happy Christmas memories are not measured by amounts, quantities or prices.

It is not the amount of money spent or gifts bought. It is not the amount of frantic rushing and running done. And it is not the amount of baking for the sake of baking or buying for the sake of buying.

Lasting Christmas memories are made by celebrating the beginning of a new family whose Child brought new life. And remembered because the celebration was shared with the family. ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Delilah Scott makes Christmas memories for her pastor-husband, Ron, and their three children in Huntington, West Virginia where he pastors Prince of Peace Free Will Baptist Church.



The PSF Factor

We were driving across town in heavy Monday afternoon traffic when she looked over at me and popped the question, "What musical instrument do you play?" Quick as a cat's whisker I snapped back, "I play second fiddle."

Playing second fiddle takes more talent than most people think. In fact, second fiddle may be the most important instrument in the band.

Everybody plays second fiddle sometime. Most of us spend the biggest part of our lives playing second fiddle, some impatiently waiting for the call to play first violin.

Leonard Bernstein, the famous orchestra conductor, was asked, "What is the most difficult instrument to play?" Bernstein replied, "Second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm, or second french horn or second flute, now that's a problem. And yet if no one plays second fiddle we have no harmony."

Great men earn the right to lead by playing second fiddle. Consider Moses—He was 80 years old before he moved to first violin.

Consider Elisha—Before he won his reputation as the man with a "double portion," for six years he "poured water on the hands of Elijah" (II Kings 3:11).

And what of Paul? He who would eventually write half the New Testament had just finished a three-year gig in the Arabian Desert when Barnabas fetched him from Tarsus to play second fiddle in an out-of-the-way place called Antioch.

Again, the point is, everybody plays second fiddle sometime.

While back-up ministries can be temporary, some people play second fiddle permanently. I suppose those of us who do that carry the rank of PSF—Permanent Second Fiddler.

It takes a special person to play permanent second fiddle. First, a psychological bridge must be crossed.

Even in Christian work, we're programmed to believe that the person who counts most is the point man or the lead singer or the guy who makes all the noise. Mind you, while we need the noise maker and the front man, there's a greater need for the encourager, the man who plays back-up.

Playing second fiddle does not mean that you're second best. But it does mean that at the moment you're probably doing what you do best. Learn to find fulfillment in it. The people in the background who play harmony always make the difference.

Encourage the man in charge. Guard the boss. Protect his reputation. Praise him and make him a better person. What a joy to help those who minister to thousands.

This concept works whether in a hamburger palace or a local church. The pastor may get more public attention, but what would he do if there were no Sunday School teachers reinforcing what he preached? No deacons to visit the sick? No trustees to oversee

the church property? No visitation workers to follow up on community needs?

The man who plays second fiddle should not view it as a springboard for something better. This may be the very best that God has for you. Reject the idea that you're only important if you're the pastor or the foreman or the editor or if . . . well, name whatever it is you think a person must do in order to be important.

The local church pastor or the state promotional officer must be confident that those who work at his side like their jobs, respect him as a leader and believe that they're doing God's will.

The man with a fragile ego plays a poor second fiddle. On the other hand, the leader with an inflated ego won't tolerate a good second fiddler around him lest he be upstaged.

Sometimes it's difficult to define exactly what playing second fiddle means. To one it means assistant Sunday School teacher in the Junior Boy's class. To another, assistant moderator of the National Association. For others it means second-string quarterback on the high school football team or understudy for lead in the senior play.

A good second fiddler is the kind of person we all want guarding our backs in life's dark alleys.

And remember one more thing, in Christian activity, everybody plays second fiddle to Jesus! He is the object of all our love and preaching and teaching and singing and writing. The rest of us—all the rest of us—are here to harmonize. ▲



Expand Your Family At Christmas

By Ivan Ryan

But, Dad, I thought this was going to be just for you and me," my 5-year-old daughter said. Little did I realize how special the short trip was to her when I invited her along for company.

The last minute changes that allowed someone to accompany us was welcome news to me, but to my daughter the idea was not a happy thought at all. Even though she quickly recovered from her slight case of jealousy, it serves as an example of how we can all act toward others, especially at Christmas, if we aren't careful.

Everyone knows that Christmas is family time. Even non-Christians recognize this and, regardless of social, financial or religious status, families congregate at Christmas. There are exceptions, but generally uncles and aunts, in-laws and outlaws, and cousins thrice removed assemble for the annual clan gathering.

The location is usually marked with cars in the front yard representing more people than the house could be expected to hold if each car had one person rather than the three to five who probably came. Take it from one who does his share of Christmas travel, this is common everywhere.

Those fortunate enough to have family togetherness need not fear. We are not trying to abolish such tradition. A better idea would be to *expand your family*, especially during the Christmas season. I'm not suggesting that we haul strangers to our family reunions. In some cases that would be much too cruel to the outsider.



There are, however, a number of pleasant ways for us to share ourselves and our family. No other season of the year provides the opportunities of hospitality and good deeds as does the Christmas season. Edgar A. Guest put into words what many of us would like to have our attitudes at Christmas reflect when he said:

A man is at his finest
towards the finish of the year;
He is almost what he should be
when Christmas season's here;

When it's Christmas man is bigger
and is better in his part;
He is keener for the service
that is prompted by the heart.

Unfortunately this is not true of every person and is only seasonal rhetoric for others. Certainly the idea of sharing friendship with those who lack friends and family is not one for December only, but we do have to start somewhere. While Christian concern and compassion is a 12-month commission, for most it's easier to convey these qualities during this special season.

Statistics reveal that emotional needs reach all-time highs during the holidays. Those who experience loneliness or depression have special needs this time of year.

The secular world capitalizes on the notion that everyone is having a jolly good time, spending an abundance of money, and enjoying a multitude of friends. When those already troubled attempt to cope with others' expectations, it only serves to intensify and multiply their problems.

Our world is filled with emotionally distressed people. The number in our society who are alone by choice, by death or by divorce increases annually. The stress of "getting along" for many of these is compounded with the flood of memories associated with the Christmas season. The church community cannot isolate itself from such needs.

As members of the Body of Christ it's our responsibility to seek those who need encouragement and companionship, and to present an open door to those who need help and are willing to take the first step toward developing a friendship. When we reach out to others, we soon realize

the reciprocal nature of such an act. On almost any block in any village, town or city are reasons why our families should expand at Christmas.

The birth of our Savior and every theological implication associated with the Incarnation cries out with reasons to share this message with a lonely world. It was, and is, an event for all people regardless of social, economic or age status.

The star served as a giant billboard announcing the coming of the Messiah. His arrival was noticed by the prominent as well as the obscure, the wealthy as well as the poor, the powerful as well as the weak. The birth of Christ brought joy to all. That message still brings joy.

The star has been replaced by the child of God. How can we be the light of the world unless we're willing to come out from under the bushel of self-interest and let our lights shine on others by including them in the true spirit and joy of the Christ of Christmas?

Remedies are needed where problems exist. It's important for us to realize that our closed attitude toward others now and throughout the year is a problem. It may be difficult to recognize and even more difficult to admit, but our attitude may be dangerously close at times to that of the man who prayed, "Dear Lord, bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife. Us four and no more. Amen."

While this is an exaggerated and perhaps even fabricated prayer, if we allow ourselves to think about it for a moment we might recognize a bit of our own attitude at Christmas.

We are naturally more comfortable with our circle of friends and family that we have enjoyed for years, to the exclusion of others. This is how cliques are formed in the church. Like cobwebs that in time become cables, our circle of friends and family can become so close-knit that it's virtually impossible for others to penetrate.

When this happens we unconsciously build barriers around ourselves. We may not sense those barriers, but for the one who needs the closeness of our friendship and is on the outside, it is all too real. Because this can happen, we must make a

conscious effort to offer others the closeness of Christian fellowship.

There may be a young couple newly married or who are away from the rest of their family. An elderly couple with no children nearby would appreciate the company of others. Many pastors' families or those of youth workers who are not always able to be near their relatives want to feel included in some family's planning.

Sharing a portion of ourselves with others is sure to bring about change. Attitudes will change. Like the son who watches his father's intellect and wisdom increase dramatically as he himself grows older, we have the opportunity to be enriched and perhaps even amazed at what we gain from the experience of opening our hearts and our homes to others.

"This Christmas is going to be different!" Have we not heard this or verbalized it ourselves? Am I mistaken or is it true that most of us possess a desire to reach out and make a positive impact on someone's life?

It's not enough that we acknowledge the need. We would do well to remember the verse, "If not me—Who? If not now—When?" This could be the season to expand your family.

Along with the traditional reading of the Christmas story from the Bible, another tradition at our house is the reading of "Mr. Harty Comes For Christmas".

The short story tells of a family who, amid uncertainties, entertain an elderly neighbor for Christmas dinner. After a rewarding afternoon of fellowship and sharing, as goodbyes are exchanged, the old man, with a note of appreciation, tells the family that they are the only ones who remembered him on this day.

How many Mr. Hartys might you know? ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Ivan Ryan pastors First Free Will Baptist Church, Hazel Park, Michigan.





The Christmas Credit Curse!

By Howard Bass

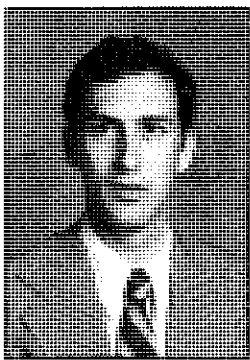
Only 99 more shopping days before Christmas, the advertisement screams. Biggest sale in our history! Prices will never be lower! Fantastic savings in every department! No money down! No payment until May 1st! Instant credit up to \$1,000! Lowest interest rates in town! Low, low monthly payments!

Such advertising gimmicks make us appreciate the wit of former boxing champion Joe Louis who reportedly said, "The hardest thing I've ever tried to do, next to picking up a safety razor with boxing gloves on, is to make those easy payments!"

Many Christian people who are ordinarily prudent shoppers become Christmas season spendthrifts. They pamper the flesh, spoil the children and wreak havoc in their homes by turning to ill advised credit purchasing to obtain what their children do not need and they cannot afford.

Someone has said, "Americans spend money they don't have to buy

ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Howard Bass pastors Wesconnett Free Will Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida.



things they don't need to impress people they don't like." I fear the same may be true of some Christians.

"But," we protest, "I don't want my children to grow up feeling deprived." That fear is usually more phobia than a statement of real danger. Few children recognize either poverty or deprivation except when it is made a regular topic of family discussion within the home.

Blessed is the child who, though his home be poor, has parents who do not poor-mouth in his presence.

A refresher course on the art of biblical contentment would be like a breath of heaven to many homes. Matthew Henry observes, "Though the home is a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison."

With Christmas just around the corner and last year's Christmas fling on the brink of being paid, we need some well-laid plans to avoid duplicating the credit-card syndrome of previous holiday seasons.

It's commonly said that "the only thing man learns from history is that man learns nothing from history." Tragically the same is far too often true about finances. The only thing many learn from staggering credit debts is that they have learned nothing from facing previous staggering credit debts.

Just as reformed alcoholics are some of the most likely candidates to return to alcoholism, so people who have faced heavy credit debts in the past often become victims to the yearly Christmas credit crunch.

People commonly query, "You surely do not believe it is wrong to buy on credit do you?" Fifty years ago it is likely the vast majority of Christians would have responded in the affirmative, but we are more "enlightened" today. We are sure that when Paul said "Owe no man anything . . ." in Romans 13:8, he meant to say that we should not incur more credit debts than we could reasonably expect to be able to repay in a lifetime of hard work.

While borrowing may not be wrong, to intentionally fail to repay that which is borrowed is a sign of wickedness. Psalm 37:21, "The wicked borroweth and payeth not again . . ."

I often tell people that credit is like a gun. It may not be wrong to possess it,

but it is certainly dangerous when mishandled!

Excessive debt leads to tension and frustration in the home, limited and irregular involvement in the church and scant and shoddy production on the job. Perhaps worst of all, it almost always stymies spiritual growth.

Credit is deceptive because it tends to increase one's ability to buy without increasing one's ability to pay. Many have been led to think like the lady who said, "I like credit cards much better than cash because they go so much farther." Or like the man who lamented, "We have to use credit; we don't make enough money to pay cash."

Our world has been so bombarded with credit promotion that the average American family spends \$400 a year more than it makes.

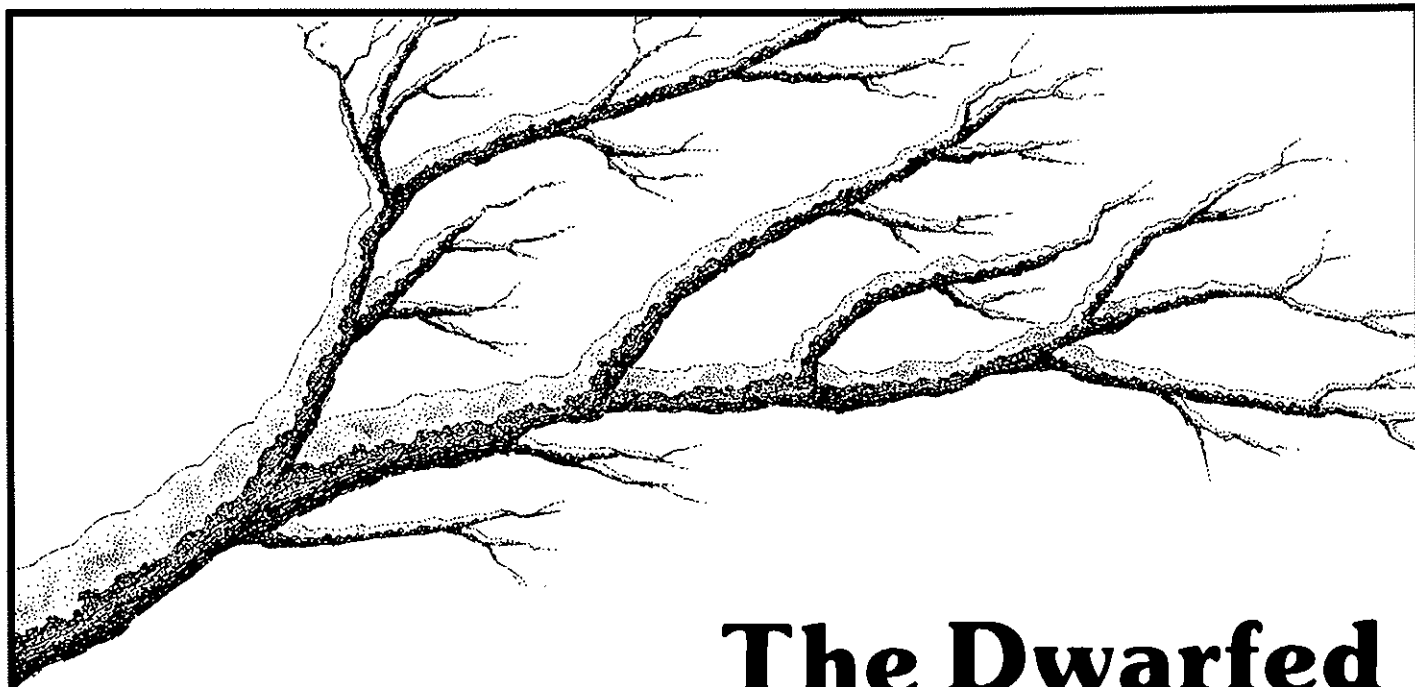
Beware! Most people who think they handle credit properly simply make enough money to handle it poorly and get by with it. During this Christmas season, try acting your wage! After all, faith is not living on borrowed money. Remember, if you can't afford it, you probably don't need it. ▲



Ten Cures for the Christmas Credit Curse

1. Establish a *specific and inflexible limit* on spending for each member of the family.
2. Keep accurate records of all monies spent for Christmas purchases.
3. Do not purchase anything on credit. Pay cash or use a free lay-a-way (Destroy credit cards).
4. Never buy impulsively. Compare prices in at least three stores before purchasing an item (Use reason not emotion).
5. Do not cater to the whims of children, pamper or spoil them by buying them too many or too expensive presents.
6. Make Christmas more of a spiritual affair and less of a commercial event.
7. Don't spend God's portion of your money on presents.
8. Remember: He who goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing.
9. Do not allow possessions to become an obsession.
10. The Bible never asks us to remember Jesus' birth but only His death till He comes!





The Dwarfed Walnut Tree and I

By Clary Adams

I passed it again today, as I have so many times during the past 35 years driving in and out of my yard. Today was different. It seemed to have a deep spiritual impact as I drove past it and on to Sunday School and church. Today it opened a whole new vista in my reflections, as its life may compare in many ways with my own.

During the year 1950 while my wife, my two sons and I were hunting and transplanting various kinds of shrubbery and trees from a thickly wooded hummock near the Altamaha River to our yard, I began my experience with the little walnut tree.

A sturdy well-shaped little walnut tree it was, with uniformly spaced limbs about 10 inches long at the top of its five-foot trunk. With tender care I freed it from the bamboo vines, briars and other brush, bringing all the root structure I could to enhance its chance for survival.

I selected a good spot away from other plants, with good soil for its transformed life to grow and spread its branches.

With regular watering and attention the little walnut tree seemed to establish well in its new setting and its potential looked good.

Disappointment

With the coming of spring the next year, the tree budded. But as time moved on it was soon evident that there was no new growth. The same little 10 to 12 inch limbs were there, just as when it was set there the year before.

Disappointed that my walnut tree was not growing toward the tall tree I had hoped it would be to shade the area and be fruitful and supply me with walnuts, I concluded that it would soon waste away and die.

And so it has gone on, year after year, for these 35 years. In spring its leaves bud forth and fall off in the fall, just as the year before; no new growth appears.

The other trees we planted that day back in 1950 have grown. The bay tree is a thing of majestic beauty; the

cedars large and shady; and the casino and dogwood with spring blossoms and red berries in the fall. But my little walnut tree has maintained its status quo. Its roots have not pushed deeper and outward to feed on the rich things God put there that, if sought out, would make it grow into a thing of beauty and service.

As it is, it stands, except for bark and limbs, scaly and cankered with age, exactly as it was 35 years ago, with not enough foliage for a mockingbird to build a nest in it—a silent testimonial to a wasted life.

Spiritual Roots

It was during 1950, about the time we transplanted the little walnut tree, that the Holy Spirit began to awaken me from a life of sin and darkness, and bring me into the light of His wonderful grace. My spiritual roots had pushed ever deeper into the quagmire of this satan-dominated world of corruption and evil.

As the blessed Holy Spirit began to draw me, my deeply entrenched roots of everything that is evil and alien to a holy God were shaken and dislodged from their moorings.

The weight of sin and power of conviction, because of my rebellion against a loving God, began to tug and tear the roots of my very existence, so that my spiritual body was consumed. I lost appetite for food and sleep as I saw myself dangling, with only the brittle and uncertain thread of life over a never-ending, burning hell.

While in this state I went to a revival meeting. As the preacher, seemingly just for me, vividly painted the wages of sin and an eternity in the regions of the damned, my entire root system of rebellion and rejection was shattered. I could hardly wait to rush to the altar. Unworthy though I was, I went to seek after and find if a holy and righteous God could and would accept an ugly and wasted piece of human junk, marred and scarred by the ravages of this sin-cursed world.

The Miracle

A miracle of divine love! I, with all the penitence of a doomed soul, began to confess my sins and seek His mercy. He burned them out to the roots' end.

I prayed, "Lord, you know I am tangled in alcohol drinking to the point of a near drunkard; have polluted and damaged my body, which I now so much want to be the temple of the living God, with life-destroying nicotine and cigarette tars; have blasphemed Your holy name and have wasted all these years as a servant to/of the devil . . ."

I made a covenant with my Savior. If He would blot out the ugliness in my life and forgive my transgressions, I would forsake my sins, turn in the opposite direction and walk with Him the balance of my days.

Miracles of miracles! The assurance came, "Son, be of good cheer, I have already signed My part of the covenant in My own life's blood on Calvary's cross; your sins are covered by that atoning blood, and if you will furnish the vessel I'll furnish the grace and you can live a victorious life."

Praise His wonderful name for the unspeakable love that flooded my being when the covenant was made. The heavy load lifted and "joy unspeakable and full of glory" filled my soul. To God be the praise, the credit and the glory, I have never from that moment until this, these 35 years, wanted or drunk a drop of booze, smoked a cigarette or one time used His name in vain.

The old roots of sin were destroyed and the new life of fellowship and love with my Savior and His people was grafted in. I had just turned 40 when I, by faith in the finished work on Calvary, reached up for the pardon that had already been made available and was there for me all the time just for the asking.

The wonders of God's grace! It has been said that "Life begins at 40," and I can witness from the depths of my heart, "Life of joy and peace did begin for me at 40."

As "old things passed away and all things became new," my spiritual roots pressed eagerly into the soul food so richly supplied in His infallible Word. I had a little Bible given to me at high school graduation. Although more than 20 years old, it showed very little sign of use, but as I began feasting on the spiritual manna and my spiritual roots burrowed deeper, through the endless treasures, the little Bible was soon well worn.

I have worn out several Bibles during these years, and have read most of

it many times, and each time it is just as rich and vibrant as the first time.

I cannot read long at a time now; my vision is blurred if I read long. My concentration is not what it once was. But I have prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to help bury the rich nuggets from His Word in my heart so that regardless of my fading physical condition I can still revel in those jewels of great price.

Trophies for Him

Now comes the hard part, as I pass the little walnut tree and meditate on its wasted and barren life. It is easy to dwell on the way I have sunk my spiritual roots into the solid rock of the fathomless love of a great Savior, so that the intake has been soul-nourishing and joyful.

But when I get to the limb spread, when I reach the testing time, have I, rooted all these years in good ground as the little walnut tree, reached my potential? Have I spread my limbs to reach those about me who wander in sin's dark night?

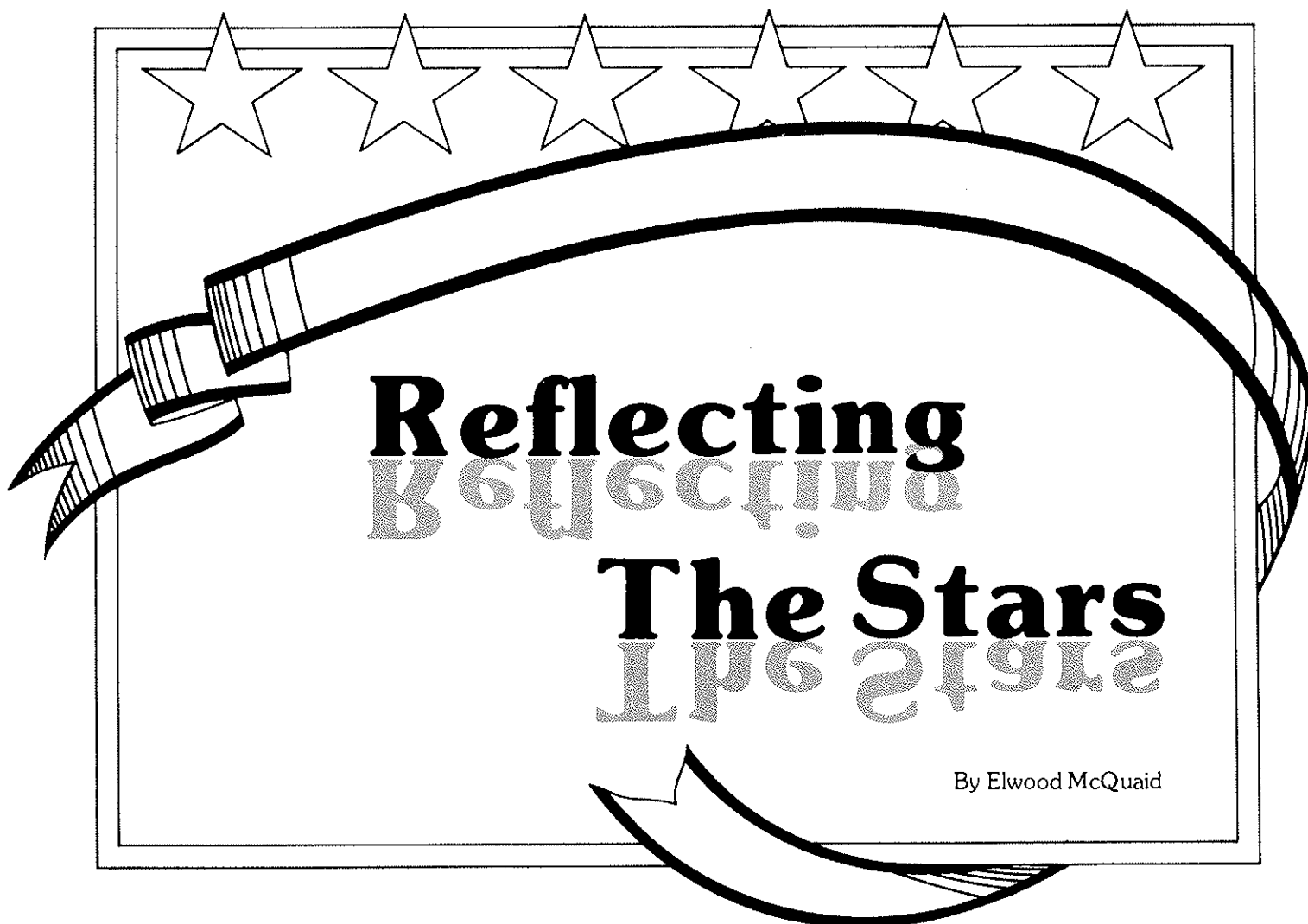
It is so vital to my own strength and spiritual growth that I share the good news with those who still have their roots and limbs tangled in the darkness of this sin-cursed world.

And so, as I drive on to Sunday School and church, I send forth a silent prayer: May the limbs of my spiritual tree not become fruitless and cankered with temporal things. May I wear whatever necessary involvement I have with this old sin-laden world as a loose fitting garment. And may that garment be dropped in a moment's notice when the cry is made, "The Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him."

And, oh! I do want so much to have at least a few trophies to lay at His precious feet.

In the meantime, I am challenged and encouraged by the Psalmist, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalm 92:12-14). ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Mr. Clary Adams is 75 years old and, according to his pastor, "a very active member of First Free Will Baptist Church, Jesup, Georgia."



It had been a rough day. After visiting a hospital 15 miles away, Pastor found he had missed a member who heard his voice across the hall. Recovery from surgery was assured; getting over being slighted was doubtful.

On top of this, Pastor learned that the couple he had counseled for countless hours were happily reconciled—and had decided to move their membership to another church. Because he now knew so much about them, they couldn't bear facing him every Sunday.

On the home front, his wife dutifully informed him that the most popular television preacher had just dissected the text he used last Sunday; they disagreed on every point. He stared at the cotton in the medicine cabinet—great plugs to muffle the coming onslaught of corrective phone calls. *Would a Kleenex box be able to hold the inevitable audio and video cassette tapes?*

The final blow fell when he began to open his mail. In the dim recesses of his battered consciousness, he wondered why last Sunday's offering fell \$1,500 under budget. Meanwhile, he opened a computer letter from the brother who had demolished a perfectly good sermon.

"URGENT! Would you please forward a generous offering from your congregation—and do all you can personally, dear brother. I'M COUNTING ON YOU!"

He tossed the letter onto the table. *Where did we put the bicarbonate?*

Pastors have problems. Among them are those brought by today's media plunderers.

To say that what comes from our radios, televisions, and mailboxes is a mixed bag is an understatement. Bane and blessing earmark our era, and sorting the good from the bad is seldom easy.

Blatant hucksters and exploiters plague the church and prey on spiritual innocence. Tremulous pleas for contributions to save the financial ships or to complete some garish monument foul the mail and airwaves with depressing regularity.

For most Christians, however, the spiritual benefits derived from God-honoring men and programs far outnumber the negative forces. Their collective ministries have brought a host of constructive elements to the church today. We are without question rich in biblical instruction and information for living the Christian life.

Many of these innovative communicators have become highly visible media personalities. Christians refer to them with the familiarity of a family friend.

The trouble comes when church members grant star status to those who have been a personal help and encouragement. When this happens,

every other minister—including the local pastor—tends to be measured against their favorite. The pastor never quite measures up.

To avoid pitting pastors against these personalities or comparing churches to media programs, we need to learn how to integrate helps from parachurch sources. This requires biblical sensitivity and a large measure of sanctified common sense.

Authority Source Phenomenon

As one travels around the country, one cannot help but note among congregations the influence of numerous authority sources. Chosen media personalities have become God's voice.

Many capable pastors leave their pulpits deeply disturbed and discouraged each week as they find themselves waylaid by members armed with booklets, tapes, or selected quotations from those "who really know the Word."

One pastor met with a couple who had been attending the church he served. As he stepped into the dining area, he noticed a large tape machine. Following prayer, the host switched on the recorder, and they ate their meal while listening to a message by a pastor from a distant city. Filled with a succession of catch phrases and distinctive "doctrinal" jargon, the sermon proved quite unintelligible until the host and hostess provided keys to understanding it.

After spending a long evening listening to tapes, the pastor headed home. His arms were filled with more reel-to-reel enlightenment from a man he didn't particularly care for and with whom he could certainly find vast areas of disagreement.

After investing a few months in an attempt to teach the preacher to speak the language of their revered teacher, this couple met failure and left the church. They then applied for long-distance membership in their mentor's church. Thereafter, they established a tape church and spent Sundays worshipping in their living room before a tape recorder.

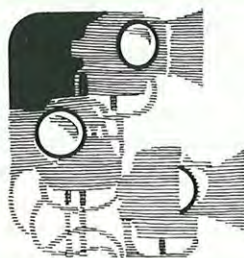
Seminar Syndrome

Specialty ministries have had significant influence among evangelicals for

some time. A plethora of seminars are currently offered to assist people with virtually every problem known to the Christian community. Some, however, don't seem to realize that every specialty seminar is, by its very nature, limited in what it's designed to accomplish.

Great problems are created when people begin to believe that the seminar or program that has helped them has all the answers. When pastors, teachers, or other believers cannot recite the seminar principles or use the jargon, they are viewed as uninformed, spiritually unfulfilled people who need to shape up.

Some would carry it a step further: "What this town needs," a preacher was told, "is a church based on the principles of that seminar."



After doing all the right things, they could not fill their churches to the rafters.

"Well," the pastor said, "keep me informed. I'll be interested to see what develops."

Patterned after the well-known seminar, the church started with grand designs for the future, but eventually died. Though well-intentioned, the founder had adopted the wrong source as his ultimate authority. The foundation for a church is not a seminar manual—no matter how helpful it may be for the individual. Seminars are created to complement and enhance biblically established churches, not to correct and replace them.

Superimage Problem

Comparisons are not only odious, but also grossly unfair, particularly when we measure local leaders against popular media personalities. Some seem to want their preachers to project that same sparkle television lights create.

Granted, the pastor who rushes to his pulpit on Wednesday night—after comforting the depressed, visiting the sick, and wrestling with church problems—may appear a bit wilted. But we need to be careful that we don't con-

tribute to breakdowns in effectiveness. That often happens in an environment that pressures a pastor to stop being himself in favor of duplicating an image.

Second-class Citizens

While some pastors are afflicted by an image problem, the same can be said of many churches.

Week after week people sit in their homes and watch or listen to religious programs. The repetition of "successes" entralls them, as testimonial, financial, physical, and ministerial victories are stock items in many programs. And some begin to think, *If I could only be over there, where God is doing something.*

This attitude often diminishes our estimate of what God can do where we are. We are tempted, therefore, to see our own churches as relatively insignificant. Oh yes, there are some victories, but problems persist that cannot be solved by the end of the hour or by switching channels.

One pastor, for example, saw that the modest auditorium in their small-town church was filled Sunday after Sunday. Everyone knew that something had to be done.

But each time expansion plans were discussed, one reluctant board member objected to the project in no uncertain terms. To avoid confrontation, the pastor and a majority of sensitive board members repeatedly shelved the issue.

When it was finally apparent that the matter must be dealt with, a friend of the resister posed a question: "Why is it," he said, "that every time I go to your house, I see things you have received from a TV preacher because you send him money? I can't understand why you help him build structures in another city, yet resist expansion here at home."

The man exploded.

"Well, if you want to know the truth," he said, "what that preacher and his church are doing is worth supporting. They're doing big things. We're not doing anything."

When this attitude wins the day, two avenues seem to surface. One is to make the local church, for all practical purposes, an extension of some "big" ministry. This is accomplished by covering bulletin boards with posters supporting that ministry, filling foyer tables with its literature, and hoping Pastor will sprinkle his messages with quotations from Dr. Successful. The congregation publicly identifies with every program or position taken by the leader church.

The other course of action is to reproduce in kind. While not becoming a functional subsidiary of another church, this congregation attempts to craft ministries "just like the big guys." It superimposes the model's methodology and often its promotional philosophy.

America's landscape is littered with the remains of churches that were established on before-the-fact promotional campaigns, which heralded their yet to be realized size and success. They had reasoned that what has succeeded in one locality will work anywhere, if done the same way. Too often, this is not the case. In fact, we have little evidence to suggest that God is interested in creating churches cloned in the images of admired institutions.

Their legacy offers ministerial drop-outs and humiliated Christians. After doing all the "right things," they could not fill their churches to the rafters. They feel they have failed God and their commission.

Success Without Substance

The pressure to reproduce in the image of a successful model can result in determination to create an unbiblical brand of success, bound up in pragmatism: "Big is best! If you're not biggest, you're not best!"

Although this reasoning is unworthy of Christians' endorsement, it has become acceptable. The methods are justified by the studied conclusion that

it doesn't matter what we are forced to do to get there, as long as we arrive.

"When we become big enough," some reason, "God can use us in a great way." Consequently, some ministries can enjoy the appearance of success without possessing spiritual substance.

Biblical Solutions

How can we avoid these pitfalls and yet glean God's best from all we have available? The answer is found in two simple propositions.

Enjoy the whole counsel of God. We must doggedly continue to expose ourselves to all of God's Word.

We all know people who seem to believe that the whole of Scripture is occupied with family life, physical well-being, mental health, nutritional admonitions, prophecy, or one doctrine. Whether pastor or layperson, such individuals soon become tedious and divisive. They generate others' hostility toward the personalities or positions they are promoting.

We can discover and maintain a biblically balanced life once we grasp the fact that God uses many threads to sew the fabric of mature Christianity. Thus, we should never be satisfied to hold isolated threads.

Every biblically constructive element can make some contribution to our total development, whether through a sermon, seminar, helps book, program or other means. It works with every other source to produce a whole Christian.

To settle on only one theme for the whole of one's life inevitably leads to heresy at worst, a spiritual imbalance at best. The local church, therefore, is indispensable. If the preaching and teaching ministries are essentially expositional, every issue and emphasis will be adequately addressed and properly positioned—with nothing out of balance.

For this reason, God has given gifted men and women to local churches (Eph. 4:11). Their Spirit-guided ministries are "to prepare God's people for the work of the service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13 NIV).

Recognize your uniqueness. Our Lord never intended for you or me to be anyone else. He made you to be you, me to be me. Consequently, each believer reflects the divine genius for creating the unique and diverse—each one differs in form and function. God then uses the disparate and singular to form unity, which is manifest by the church, yet never does He disturb our uniqueness.

Lately we have witnessed dedicated assaults on the uniqueness of individual believers. Some even feel that because they are not carbons of those they admire, they must be missing the mark.

Few things in the Christian life, however, are more rewarding than to live each day with a sense of wonder at what God is creating in each individual, to use him for His glory.

What is true of individuals is true of churches—God has placed your church in your community to accomplish His will where you are.

While we can be blessed, encouraged, instructed, and even inspired by what our brethren are experiencing, the yardstick by which we measure ourselves is God's Word and our relationship to His will where we are.

Likewise, each God-called, yielded pastor possesses attributes uniquely crafted, enabling him to apply himself in the place God has chosen for him. His labors, along with the ministry of those he shepherds, will produce the function of the Lord's unique church for that community.

There is a sense in which we can discover our uniqueness while finding rest in the Lord's work. We are not competitors with fellow saints; we are companions along the way. Wherever we are, therefore, we do not face the dilemma of being in superior or inferior situations. With our whole hearts, we do what He calls us to do, where He calls us to do it, and rest in Him for the rewards.

We are not called to reflect the stars, but to manifest the Son. ▲

This article appeared in MOODY MONTHLY, September 1985.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Elwood McQuaid is an extension staff conference speaker for Moody Bible Institute.

A Mask of Unrighteousness

By Brian Cook

Dressed from head to toe in men's preppy garb, I arrived on campus a few minutes before my first class that foggy September morning. I proudly sported a Florida suntan and wore all the other fashion symbols of the day: a pastel-blue, buttoned-down Oxford shirt; cuffed khaki slacks with crisply ironed pleats; and brown topsiders (worn without socks, of course).

I suppose one could have described me as the Southern epitome of a typical college freshman of 1980.

Hurriedly parking near the fine arts complex, I grabbed my heavy load of second-hand textbooks and bolted through the theatre building's front entrance hoping to find my name at the top of the cast list for the university's fall musical. I had auditioned the previous evening.

As I approached the glass-covered bulletin board in the hallway where the names of the fortunate thespians would be posted, I caught a glimpse of a Rhode Island coed whom I had been informed would choreograph the musical. Before I could say anything, she rushed toward me, hugged me and screamed with congratulatory delight in her Yankee accent, "You got the part!"

My chest heaved with pride at the good news. All my life I had wanted to be an actor, not just another John Doe playing second fiddle to the local drama teacher in a community playhouse but a dyed-in-the-wool "star."

My father owned a service station and my mother was an elementary school secretary, but I was determined to break out of the middle-class Alabama shell where most of my less ambitious friends would remain for the rest of their lives.

Egotistical as it sounds, my naive goal was to become a future Academy Award winner or a face on the cover of *PEOPLE* magazine. Others dreamed about celebrity status, but I had confidence that I was going to do it. Capturing the male lead in my first college production was the first step on my unending ladder of success. Or so I thought.

Pulling my thoughts down from the marquees of tomorrow and focusing on the rehearsal schedule, I saw that all selected actors were required to attend an initial script and musical score reading that afternoon at 3:00 in the college theatre.

I made it through the rest of the day with an inflated head and an extra bounce in my step. I counted the minutes until the read-through session when I would see the

entire script instead of bits and pieces like during tryouts.

I could barely concentrate on advanced algebraic equations in my morning math class, and the *Beowulf* lecture in British literature served only as a cultural distraction to interrupt my daydreams. How I wished my daily academic doldrums would end so I could discard the thoughts of overeducated professors and get on to what really mattered—my first rehearsal.

First rehearsals, or read-throughs, were always fun for me. From the time I had portrayed the Scarecrow in a community production of "The Wizard of Oz" until my characterization of the Jester in a junior college drama, first rehearsals had been a time to solidify new friendships with other cast members without having to bother with greasepaint and staging cues.

When rehearsal time finally arrived, I walked three blocks from a journalism workshop to my '72 Pinto, blue paint chips peeling off its hood, and happily tossed my textbooks on the driver's seat. Then I walked casually to the theatre's stage entrance, not wanting anyone to think I was too eager, while in my mind my feet were racing on stage to the circle of chairs set up for the cast.

Preliminary banter and costume fittings behind me, I took my place at the head of the circle while the director finally distributed the scripts.

"As you all know, this play is a comedy," he began. "What you may not have discerned from the excerpts read at auditions, however, is the overall plot. Basically, it centers around the escapades of a wiley robber who steals a country girl's virginity."

A comedy dealing with the loss of a girl's virginity? I temporarily felt as if my jaws were scraping the floor and my heart sinking like the Titanic. Nobody had said anything about this at auditions!

Sure, I knew that some of the scenes were a little off-color, but as we began reading the script, I slowly discovered that the whole thrust of the play was merely a bawdy satire in which premarital sex was considered "funny" and in which I was to play the role of what turned out to be a wandering rapist!

Although I was certainly not the model Christian, my upbringing in the church and my knowledge of the Bible created an overwhelming sense of guilt. I knew the serious emphasis the scripture placed on the wrongness of "fornication."



He wanted to be an actor, but he was a Christian first . . .

And there I sat, having won the role of a character who was glorified for his crafty aptitude at stealing a girl's innocence.

The thought flashed before me that my chance at pursuing my lifelong dream had boiled down to one thing—a choice between earthly applause and heavenly reward. I knew if I compromised my moral principles and surrendered my testimony in order to boost my theatrical credits, I'd be violating my trust in God. But if I wanted an acting career (at least on this campus), I'd have to change my staunch position.

After the read-through, the director, not yet knowing of my severe doubts concerning the role, gave me a videotape of a professional touring company's rendition of the same musical and asked me to view it that night in order to get a better understanding of the nature of the character I was to play. But I already knew that a videotape couldn't change my mind.

The tears flowed during the hour-long drive home. I couldn't believe that God was forcing me to abandon my goal because it conflicted with His Word. "Why, why, why?" was all I could ask as my bleary eyes watched the passing scenario of headlights and misty rain on the highway.

I guess I'd always ignored distasteful scenes and plots in the movies and television shows I watched as a kid. Nobody prepared me to face this kind of dilemma on a personal level. Although I realized that theatre has to depict both good and bad characters, I also knew that I was faced with an instance where the line between the two extremes was not drawn clearly enough.

Detecting my uneasiness at dinner, my mother tried to allay my fears with her usual Monday menu of steak and baked potatoes. A hearty meal had always seemed to calm my nerves before, but that night I could only twist my fork in the gravy and stare.

Retreating to my bedroom, I stayed awake half the night, searching the scriptures in a desperate, futile attempt to find a

MASK (from page 15)

passage that would justify my portrayal. But I knew that Christian friends and relatives would come to the play and lose respect for me if I kept the part.

Most of my problems in high school and adolescence were cut-and-dried, clear choices between right and wrong. Now, however, I was faced with an adult problem that dealt in shades of gray.

As I lay in bed, I knew that the Lord was allowing my conscience to be disturbed. None of the memorabilia I studied on the walls could take away the guilt I felt. Not the *Campus Life* poster I'd bought in junior high school, not the college pennants that hung over the bureau, not the collection of plaques and trophies I'd accumulated since elementary school.

Nothing could prevent my mind from wrestling with the decisive step I knew I had to take the next day. Somehow, I managed to get a few hours of sleep.

Before gathering my gear for the long drive to the university the following morning, I noticed that my Bible had been opened and a passage underlined by my mother.

I read, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). My selfish thoughts were brought into perspective, my decision made!

Even though I'd resolved my decision with the Lord, I still felt like a zombie on campus, going through the motions outwardly but numb on the inside.

The time for our second rehearsal drew nearer. During my last class, I prayed that God would give me strength to stand up to my director and the words to say which would explain my position. I felt like Moses when he asked God to send his brother in his place to speak to Pharaoh.

I trudged to the rehearsal, my previous enthusiasm replaced by a sense of loss. Other students that I passed on the sidewalk seemed too occupied with the fresh flowers and budding rose bushes that decorated the campus to give me a second thought. Everyone was oblivious to the churning dread I felt.

Approaching the theatre entrance, I struck up a conversation with two other cast members, both of whom had also expressed doubts about the content of the play. I informed them of my decision to give up the role, and they understood fully. However, I knew my confrontation with the adamant director would be a different experience altogether.

Safely inside the theatre, I sought out the director and found him talking to the actress who was to play opposite me.

"Excuse me," I said as I tapped him on the shoulder. "I have to give up the part of the robber. I'm a Christian, and my personal convictions won't allow me to play such a role." The words came out easier than I expected.

He tried to sway my opinions by arguing that the plot was all in the good spirit of the theatre and that theatre wasn't always intended to mirror reality. But it didn't matter, I knew the Lord was on my side.

Our heated discussion over, I gladly handed him my copy of the script and the videotape and confidently marched down the center aisle and out the front door, renewed by the peace of mind God had given me.

Even now, as I continue to struggle with the application of my convictions on a daily basis, I still have doubts concerning specific reasons why I abandoned my theatrical ambitions on a secular level. But each time those doubts enter my mind, God replaces the mask of unrighteousness I discarded years ago with a face of love that reflects a deeper insight into my influence on others. ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Brian Cook is a member of Eastside Free Will Baptist Church, Dothan, Alabama. He holds a bachelor's degree in communications studies from the University of Alabama in Birmingham. The incident he describes in the article happened at another institution.

Where and when did Free Will Baptists begin?

Who were our early leaders and what were they like?

How did our brothers of the last century react to issues like slavery and temperance?

Why are we celebrating a 50th anniversary when we have a 250 year history?

These and many other questions are answered in the pages of *The Free Will Baptists In America (1727-1984)*. Dr. William F. Davidson traces the denomination's roots from colonial days to the present time. This hardbound volume, containing over 450 pages, is filled with interesting and sometimes dramatic accounts.

This year Free Will Baptists are celebrating 50 years as a national association. To commemorate this anniversary a **special limited edition** of this history is being offered as a collector's item. Each volume is encased in a beautiful gold cover and is numbered. The purchaser's name will be recorded and a certificate of authenticity issued.

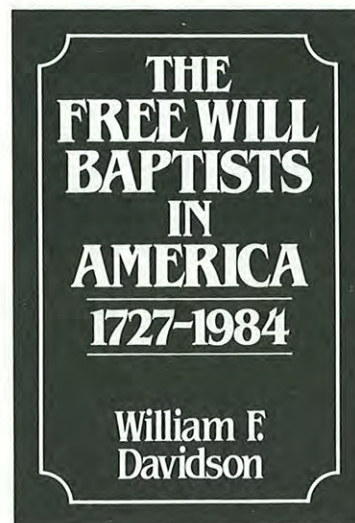
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FREE WILL BAPTIST

newsfront

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SET FOR DECEMBER 4-6

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist leaders from 20 states will meet in Nashville December 4-6 for the annual Leadership Conference, according to Executive Secretary Melvin Worthington.

Worthington said he expects the 1985 conference to attract more participants than previous years since denominational agencies are calling for an all-boards meeting prior to the conference. Some 150 moderators, clerks, promotional officers and national board members will converge at Nashville's Maxwell House Hotel for board meetings and the Leadership Conference.

Dr. Worthington said that 12 plenary sessions will highlight the three-day conference. Four sessions will focus on implementing Target 90 in the local church and the state association. The Target 90 sessions will be led by Georgia executive secretary Herbert Waid, Arkansas promotional director David Joslin, and pastors James Puckett (Okla.) and Milburn Wilson (Calif.)

Four sessions will address specific qualities of the leader—his honesty,

REVEREND HARRY STAIRES, 81, WITH THE LORD



TULSA, OK—The Reverend Harry E. Staires, church organizer and denominational leader, died September 22, 1985, at age 81. Funeral services were conducted at New Home Free Will Baptist Church in Tulsa where he formerly pastored. Dr. Wade Jernigan officiated.

Reverend Staires organized 12 Free Will Baptist churches, assisted in organizing another 25 churches, and dedicated 20 church buildings. He organized the first quarterly meeting in Kansas, organized the Kansas State Association, and built the first parsonage in Oklahoma.

his humility, his home, his holiness. The speakers are North Carolina moderator Robert Durham, South Carolina promotional secretary Norwood Gibson, Florida pastor Ken Walker, and Foreign Missions general director, Rolla Smith.

Randall House editorial manager Jonathan Thigpen leads a Thursday workshop on the leader as a manager. The last two workshops address the leader and motivation. Speakers are Missouri executive secretary Clarence Burton and Bob Shockey, director of

The Oklahoma minister was elected to numerous denominational posts. He served 21 years on the national Home Missions Board. He chaired the Home Missions Board six years, served five years as its secretary-treasurer, and served as part-time promotional-secretary for the Board (1947-1953).

As the first public relations officer for the Home Missions Board, Brother Staires started *Mission Grams*, official Home Missions publication. He also prepared the first Home Missions Study Course and the first Home Missions Map.

Home Missions General Director Roy Thomas said at his funeral, "Brother Staires was a pioneer in Home Missions. We are building on the foundation he laid. We enjoy the benefits for which he sacrificed."

Reverend Staires was licensed to preach in 1931. He pastored for 40 years in Oklahoma Free Will Baptist churches. He served in 10 churches. In addition, Reverend Staires served eight years as moderator of the Oklahoma State Association, nine years as moderator of Oklahoma's First Mission Association, as well as other district and state offices.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Elsie Staires.

Christian service at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

On Tuesday evening prior to the Leadership Conference, Dr. Mary Wisehart, WNAC executive secretary, will address an all-boards dinner session on the subject "Among You As A Servant."

Each participant will receive a Leadership Conference notebook containing outlines and lists of denominational agencies and state leaders.



Thigpen



Walker



Smith



Burton



Wisehart



Shockey

newsfront

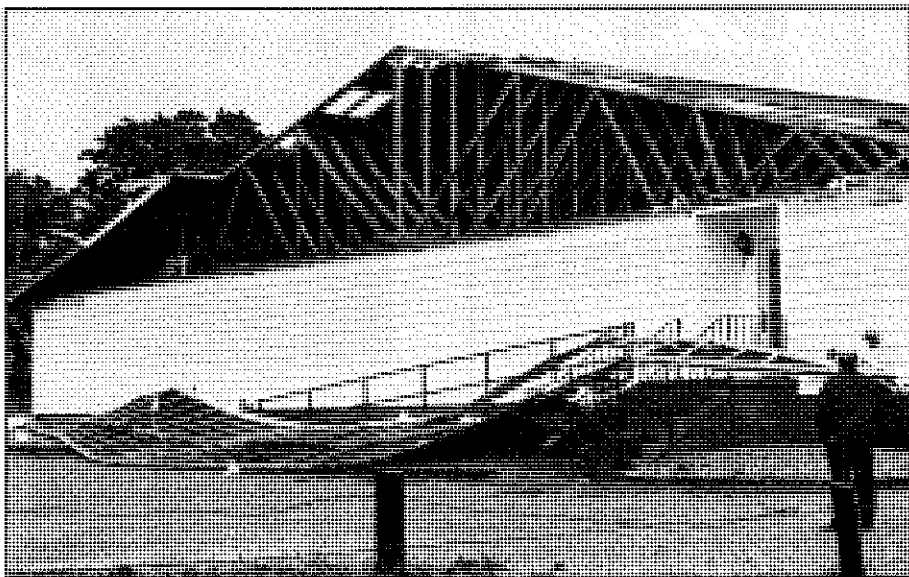
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SOUTHEASTERN SETS TIP-OFF TOURNAMENT

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA—The third annual Southeastern Free Will Baptist College Tip-Off Tournament gets under way December 5, according to Dean Lorenza Stox. Officials expect eight Christian school basketball teams to compete for the championship trophy December 5-7.

Dean Stox said that high school students participating in the sports activities will also "be challenged to be a victorious winner in the most important game of all—the game of life."

Schools interested in participating in the tournament in future years should write Southeastern Free Will Baptist College, Athletics Department, P.O. Box 61599, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23462.



Pastor Roger Childers surveys wind damage at Urbana FWB Church, Urbana, Ohio. Adjusters estimated damages at more than \$28,000.



The Free Will Baptist Pulpit

Reverend J. B. Varney, Pastor

Kirby Free Will Baptist Church, Taylor, Michigan

Jesus Is The One

Text: Isaiah 53

Introduction

The question was asked, "Is this man talking of himself or of someone else?" (Acts 8:34). John the Baptist asked, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3).

I. Jesus the Revealed One

A. God the Father reveals Jesus to the individual (Matt. 16:17).

B. God draws one to Jesus (John 6:44).

II. Jesus the Rejected One

A. He came to his own, but they refused Him (John 1:11).

B. You will not come to me that you might have life (John 5:40).

III. Jesus the Redeeming One

A. Redeemed by His own blood (Rev. 5:9; 1 Peter 1:18).

B. Return unto me for I have redeemed thee (Isaiah 44:22).

IV. Jesus the Resurrected One

A. I am he that liveth, and was dead; I am alive for ever more (Rev. 1:18).

B. Because I live, you live also (John 14:19).

V. Jesus the Returning One

A. Jesus said, "If I go away, I will come again (John 14:2-3).

B. This same Jesus will come again (Acts 1:11).

Conclusion

Yes, Jesus is the One. He is the only One. No other name given whereby we must be saved. Let's tell the world that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

According to the **Central Texas District Association, Dr. J. D. O'Donnell** has relinquished his Free Will Baptist ministerial credentials. He now pastors a United Methodist church in Houston, TX.

Evangelist **Tim York** told Evangelism Today, Inc. board members during their September meeting that the organization conducted 40 revivals, 446 radio broadcasts, and 298 worship services in six states and three countries. The Board of Trustees voted to begin a study on the possibility of establishing an evangelistic staff to assist York in evangelistic efforts. During the board meeting, York conducted a tent revival in **Louisa, KY**, which resulted in three conversions and other commitments.

Pastor **Rick Cason** and members at **New Salem FWB Church, Coquitt, GA**, observed ground breaking services in September for a fellowship hall addition. The new addition includes more seating space, a remodeled kitchen, and a drive-through carport. Most work was done by church members.

They burned \$3,000 worth of rock music tapes and records at **Homerville FWB Church, Homerville, GA**, following a revival meeting. Pastor **Curtis Alligood** said 70 people gathered around the bonfire, gave testimonies and tossed rock music into the flames.

The **Alabama-Florida State Line Association** conducted its 100th annual session in October. The meeting was conducted at **Antioch FWB Church** on Highway 103 between **Slocumb** and **Graceville**.

On September 15, members of **Philadelphia FWB Church, Mt. Clemens, MI**, celebrated Pastor Appreciation Day honoring **Pastor and Mrs. Gene Norris**. The next Sunday night, Pastor and Mrs. Norris celebrated church appreciation night by inviting the entire church to the parsonage for food and fellowship following the evening service. Pastor said the open house celebration was their way of telling the church what a pleasure it was to pastor that congregation.

Pastor **Cecil Spurlock** of **Clovis FWB Church, Clovis, CA**, reports an August Youth Camp in which 18 youth were converted.

Ohio Promotional Secretary **Alton Loveless** is putting together a Free Will Baptist Yellow Pages for the Buckeyes. Loveless asks each church clerk, pastor or interested laypersons to send him the names, addresses, phone numbers of Free Will Baptist businessmen. Loveless said this was one way that Free Will Baptists could keep their money in the family.

Pastor **Keith Perkins** reports nine saved and seven baptized at **Hillsboro FWB Church, Hillsboro, OH**.

There were 11 conversions at **Lockbourne FWB Church, Lockbourne, OH**. **Bert Miller** pastors.

The **Hillview FWB Church, Reynoldsburg, OH**, reports 17 baptisms. **Jay Justice** pastors.

Members of **Puritan FWB Church, Hamden, OH**, began building a shelter house in memory of former pastor **Arnold Pollard**. **Merlin Teets** pastors.

The **Wellington FWB Church, Wellington, OH**, has begun a church library.

When Pastor **Delmar Sparks** invited his congregation to attend the National Convention with him this past July, he may have been surprised at how many packed their suitcases and accompanied him to Nashville. Sparks says that more than 50 young people and adults attended the National Convention. Sparks pastors **Westerville FWB Church, OH**.

The Reverend **Melvin Staggs**, 74, a retired Free Will Baptist minister, died August 19, 1985, in Fort Wayne, IN. Brother Staggs had a reputation in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana as a preacher who "knew the power of God."

There's a new mission in the Huber Heights area of **Miami, Ohio**. The **Miami Free Will Baptist Mission** meets at 6166 Apache Street. Pastor **Lonnie Marshall** said 30 people were present for the first service in July. Marshall was a Free Will Baptist deacon for 26 years until the Lord called him to preach three years ago.

First FWB Church, Ardmore, OK, is on the radio 24 times per month with 30-second spots that air on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. **Earl Scroggins** pastors.

Members of **First FWB Church, Fort Smith, AR**, dedicated the R. E. Pixley Family Activity Building this summer. The 16,000-square-foot building includes a full-sized basketball court, recreation rooms and several large classrooms.

The building was constructed at a cost of \$350,000. **Rupert Pixley** pastors.

Pastor **Roger Childers** and members at **Urbana FWB Church, Urbana, OH**, wanted to pay off two loans and reduce their monthly budget by more than \$200. Childers announced September 15 as \$100 Sunday—that is, members were asked to give \$100 above their tithe on that day. Members gave more than \$2500 above their regular tithes.

Wow! The **North Carolina** churches are on a building binge. Promotional Secretary **Tom Lilly** said that as many as 20 North Carolina churches are in building programs. He estimated that the combined projects cost more than \$5,000,000 to construct 150,000 square feet of new buildings.

Pastor **James Childers, Sr.** preached the dedication for a new parsonage at **Boger City FWB Church** near **Lincolnton, NC**. The two-year project represented work done by members of the church. When the pastor moved in, the new facility was virtually debt-free. Plaques were presented to Superintendent **Paul Dellinger, Jr.**, **Allan Dellinger** for electrical work, and to **Bill McGree** for laying the block and brick.

Members of **First FWB Church, DeSota, MO**, appreciated Pastor **Charles Miller** and his wife with a new suit for the pastor, new dress for the pastor's wife, and a raise in salary.

Pastor **Earl Hendrix** called it "Sacrifice Sunday." The object was to raise \$10,000 above regular giving. Pastor Hendrix said that members of **First FWB Church, Inman, SC**, went over the \$10,000 goal. The funds were used to further work on the church's multi-purpose building which houses a gymnasium as well as classrooms.

Pastor **James Pittman** says that **Freedom FWB Church, Havelock, NC**, had nine conversions in a revival this summer. The group averages 40 on Wednesday nights, 51 in morning worship services and is faced with a must-have-space problem. Pastor Pittman and his family began the Freedom Church as a work of faith.

A successful Children's Crusade at **Faith FWB Church, Glenpool, OK**, resulted in 21 professions of faith, according to Pastor **David Archer**. The crusade averaged 100 children per night during the five-night event. ▲

Top Shelf



Thomas Marberry



Russell H. Dilday, Jr., *Personal Computer: A New Tool for Ministers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985, 188 p.p., paperback, \$7.95).

This is a book whose time has come, written by a man who pastored metropolitan churches for a number of years. He now serves as president of the largest theological seminary in the world. He is a busy man who carries great responsibility. He found in the personal computer a tool that helps him do his job more effectively.

The Lord's work is the most important work in the world, and we should use any tool that will help us do it better. The major advantage of the personal computer is as a time saver, and what preacher does not need to make better use of his time?

Most preachers write sermon notes, letters, church bulletins, newsletters, etc. The personal computer makes it

possible to write, rewrite and edit manuscripts without having to retype entire documents. The computer also makes it possible to store documents for future reference in a fraction of the space required for paper copies.

Today many churches mail newsletters weekly or monthly. The computer can reduce the time it takes to print and mail this newsletter. With a computer, it is possible to update mailing addresses without retyping the list. The computer can even print and sort the mailing labels in a fraction of the time previously taken.

Most preachers maintain different types of files. They keep sermon files, counseling files, prospect files and others. The computer makes it possible to store this information, update

it as necessary and retrieve it on a moment's notice.

Dr. Dilday is not a computer specialist. He does not advocate that every church invest thousands of dollars in large computer systems. He recognizes that the computer has limitations; it is no substitute for personal contact. It is not the answer to all the preacher's problems. It can help him, however, to be more efficient in what he does.

This book is clear, readable and easy to understand. The author does not tax the reader with technical computer vocabulary. In fact, he explains the meaning of common computer terms. This book is designed to help the reader lose his fear of the computer, and it does a good job of it. ▲

Put Something Back

By Jo Hurst

This familiar expression is heard from environmentalists, military people and others. It urges that when anyone receives or benefits from any source, a deposit should also be made into that source.

If you live in a house framed and floored with wood; if you watch dancing flames in a fireplace; if you eat from a wood dining table, then you should plant a tree now and then to replace those harvested ones.

If you enjoy living in a democracy, then you should put back into it, obedience of its laws, commitment to your community and your fair share of taxes.

If you have city services and protection in your neighborhood, you should

morally and verbally support the police as well as the firemen, school teachers and sanitary department workers—including support of appropriate wage scales.

If you worship in a comfortable sanctuary, hear the scriptures faithfully proclaimed, watch your little ones' eyes shine as they discover the truths of the Lord; if you feel great swells of love to God as the choir sings; if you have sat in the beauty of the sanctuary as a lovely bride sweeps to the altar; if you gain comfort, instruction, inspiration, fellowship, and find a friend from the church to turn to, then . . .

You should deposit into that source your faithful attendance, participation in its programs, cooperation in trying

out new plans, and, very importantly, contributing your tithes and special offerings.

If you want your house of worship established for the present and future generations, then now is the time to faithfully support its needs. In other words, consider all that you receive from this organism we call the church, and be certain to "Put Something Back." ▲

ABOUT THE WRITER: Jo Ann Hurst is a member of Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church, Antioch, Tennessee. This article was first published in The Fellowship Family, October 1985 issue.

Thank You For Your Contributions...



... Through the Cooperative Channel

Cooperative Channel Contributions September 1985

RECEIPTS:

State	Design.	COOP	Total	Sept. '84	Yr. to Date
Alabama	\$.00	\$.00	\$.00	\$ 89.00	\$ 5,221.94
Arizona	.00	.00	.00	.00	166.75
Arkansas	.00	5,247.02	5,247.02	3,622.34	35,740.16
California	.00	801.76	801.76	831.71	8,270.02
Florida	.00	1,791.38	1,791.38	1,392.17	14,622.19
Georgia	2,379.08	.00	2,379.08	3,146.24	34,285.36
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	131.60
Illinois	4,237.76	915.60	5,153.36	10,380.39	59,826.00
Indiana	448.21	.00	448.21	939.55	5,854.39
Kansas	.00	78.84	78.84	.00	939.43
Kentucky	.00	51.00	51.00	525.60	1,535.48
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	180.00
Michigan	3,267.78	368.84	3,636.62	4,262.45	31,001.77
Mississippi	.00	117.83	117.83	148.20	2,466.11
Missouri	1,213.45	6,775.15	7,988.60	9,047.10	68,530.42
New Mexico	.00	.00	.00	.00	316.24
North Carolina	257.00	1,875.69	2,132.69	543.50	8,528.22
Ohio	813.00	1,851.00	2,664.00	4,857.00	21,463.20
Oklahoma	17,736.83	7,864.62	25,601.45	31,315.99	292,489.72
South Carolina	.00	.00	.00	100.00	1,205.03
Tennessee	242.57	606.46	849.03	286.54	8,699.55
Texas	5,421.07	540.66	5,961.73	.00	43,861.28
Virginia	.00	.00	.00	127.74	5,000.33
West Virginia	3,134.43	308.19	3,442.62	2,476.19	30,528.73
Other	.00	.00	.00	10.00	25.00
Totals	\$39,151.18	\$29,194.04	\$68,345.22	\$74,101.71	\$680,888.92

DISBURSEMENTS:

Executive	\$ 153.18	\$14,003.47	\$14,156.65	\$13,209.02	\$126,374.45
Foreign Missions	29,002.98	3,493.80	32,496.78	34,271.49	325,721.81
FWBBC	1,870.54	3,493.80	5,364.34	6,316.17	54,547.62
Home Missions	6,484.83	2,734.32	9,219.15	11,165.11	106,896.54
Retirement & Insurance	161.62	2,126.71	2,288.33	3,059.73	21,744.49
Master's Men	52.01	1,974.78	2,026.79	2,640.75	19,868.42
Commission for Theological Integrity	19.37	151.89	171.26	208.23	1,671.46
FWB Foundation	11.04	911.49	922.53	1,207.52	9,481.97
Historical Commission	16.30	151.89	168.19	206.09	1,650.38
Radio & TV Commission	111.04	151.89	262.93	400.00	1,801.97
Hillsdale FWB College	1,231.00	.00	1,231.00	1,390.92	10,641.90
Other	37.27	.00	37.27	26.68	487.91
Totals	\$39,151.18	\$29,194.04	\$68,345.22	\$74,101.71	\$680,888.92

Directory Update

CALIFORNIA

Edward Mize to Valley View Acres Church, Sacramento
Alvin Kisner to Manteca Church, Manteca
Sherman Wren to Olivehurst Church, Olivehurst
Jack Arnold to Spring Church, Salinas

FLORIDA

Duane Harvey to Mt. Carmel Church, Perry from Olivet Church, Clarksville, TN

GEORGIA

Randy Corn to First Church, Savannah from Howard Grove Church, Cottonwood, AL
Danny Ryals to Baxley Church, Baxley
Kenneth Upright to Surrency Church, Surrency

MISSOURI

Mike Neuman to Hannon Church, Liberal

NORTH CAROLINA

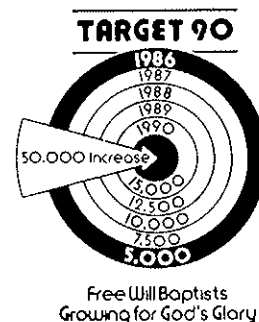
Henry Van Kluyve to First Church, Beaufort, from St. Croix, Virgin Islands
Tim W. Stout to Mt. Olive Church, Mt. Olive

OKLAHOMA

Russell Payne to Lindsay Church, Lindsay from Northeast Church, Oklahoma City as youth pastor

TENNESSEE

Tommy Street to Oak Grove Church, Charlotte from Parsley Bottom Church, Lenore, WV
Van Mitchell to Burl's Chapel Church, Sweetwater
Conrad Williford to First Church, Chattanooga





Green Tree Bible Study

Robert E. Picirilli

I Corinthians 6:13-20

The Christian Doctrine of the Body

I am convinced that we need to give more attention to the biblical teaching about our bodies. Our proper concern for the soul ought not to cause us to neglect this other important concern.

Some of the ancient Greeks had such a dualistic view that they regarded the physical world as unimportant and unreal. Some wished to deny the body in order to focus attention on the soul.

Others indulged all bodily appetites, saying that what the body did couldn't hurt the soul. Some of the Corinthian Christians had apparently been influenced toward moral carelessness by such thinking.

Our Christian doctrine of creation means that we must respect the physical world as being just as much part of God's work as the spiritual world—even if temporary. In the present life, the physical body is a real part of the person. This is the basis for Paul's pointed teaching about the body in this passage—probably the best single passage in the Bible on the subject.

1. *The body is "for the Lord"* (v. 13). Evidently some of the Corinthians said that "food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food" and used that to argue that "fornication is for the body, and the body for fornication." Paul rejects this false analogy.

Eating and digestion are merely physical processes destined to pass off

the scene with the present age. But the body is an integral part of the personality and sexual activity is *personal*, not merely organic. What the body does cannot be divorced from the inner man.

So, Paul says, the body is for the Lord. It exists to be possessed by Him and to be employed in His service. Furthermore, He has given Himself for our bodies, so that they are as truly objects of His love and redemptive work as our spirits (v. 14). This understanding of the purpose and destiny of our bodies gives them great significance.

2. *The body is a "member of Christ"* (v. 15). This is a truly startling statement—applying only to Christians. Obviously this means that *my body is me*. And since I am "in Christ," my body is part and parcel of that relationship.

This is one reason fornication cannot be tolerated. If I join my body in sexual union with another sinfully, I am therefore joining a member of Christ in a sinful union (vv. 15-18).

Verse 16 uses Genesis 2:24 to show that sexual union ("becoming one flesh") is a real, personal union designed only for marriage. Those joined in marriage are the only ones who have the right to join their bodies—their persons—in sexual union. This

speaks much about the seriousness and depth of meaning involved both in sexual intercourse and in marriage.

For this reason, fornication is, especially, a sin against one's body—in unlawfully joining to another what is intended for the Lord.

3. *The body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit"* (v. 19). Anywhere God dwells is a temple, and He dwells in each believer, by the presence of His Spirit. And since He is the Holy Spirit, the believer's body is a *holy temple*. Nothing could possibly provide a more powerful motive for keeping ourselves—our bodies—*holy*. This will include, but not be limited to, sexual purity.

4. *The body is God's, "bought with a price"* (v. 20). In a sense, this summarizes all the rest: body and spirit, we belong to God. But it provides an added basis: we—our bodies included—have been purchased with the price of the blood of Christ, shed in His sacrificial, atoning death on the cross. If that does not convince us of the value and sanctity of our bodies, nothing can.

We should have great regard for our bodies, then, seeing them in the light God sees them in. The outcome? We are to glorify God in our bodies. The tense of this verb suggests a settled commitment that whatever we do in our bodies will be for His honor. ▲



ON LITTLE LANES

BY DONNA MAYO

Something is Missing

Marty stared at the blinking lights on the Christmas tree, but he was not really seeing it. His mind hopped like a bullfrog from one thing to the next.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," he complained to Megan. "Christmas is supposed to be such a happy time, and I feel so gloomy."

Megan and Jeff were sitting beside the big Christmas tree shaking packages and trying to guess what was inside. "You're crazy," she said to Marty. "Just look at this gorgeous tree and all these presents. If that doesn't excite you, well, then you're just a Scrooge."

"Sure, I like presents," said Marty, "but something is missing. I don't have any Christmas spirit this year."

Marty went into the kitchen where his mother was busy baking cookies.

"How about a gingerbread man?" she said to Marty. "But only one. They're for your Sunday School party tomorrow."

"No, thanks," said Marty. "I'm not hungry."

"Not hungry?" asked Mrs. Lane. "You usually have an appetite like an elephant. Are you sick?"

"I don't guess," said Marty glumly. "Not unless Christmas blues is a disease."

"I know just the thing for Christmas blues," smiled Mrs. Lane. "A warm gingerbread man cures them every time."

"No, thanks," said Marty again. Then he went out to the garage. He heard the scrape of sandpaper and Mr. Lane whistling "Jingle Bells." His

dad always whistled when he did a woodworking project.

"Dad, why are you in such a good mood?" asked Marty.

"Well," said Mr. Lane as he put the sander down, "I guess because it's Christmas, and I enjoy making this gift for your mother. It's a bread box."

"Trees, gifts, food and parties," said Marty disgustedly. "That's all everybody thinks about."

"There's nothing wrong with exchanging gifts at Christmas," said Mr. Lane. "As long as we don't put it above Christ. After all, Jesus was the first Christmas gift."

"I know," answered Marty. "And I know we give gifts to each other because God gave us Jesus, but nobody ever thinks about that when they are getting and giving gifts at Christmas."

"You're probably right, Marty, but I don't know what we can do about it," said his dad.

Marty walked off with his head down. "Something is wrong with me. Everybody is happy at Christmas except me," thought Marty sadly.

"Presents, parties, shopping, yummy food—those things are all right, but something is missing," he said to himself as he sat near the Christmas tree. "Something is missing. Something is missing." The words ran through his mind. Before long, however, Marty fell asleep.

"Where am I?" asked Marty looking around. Then he heard the bleating of

sheep and the mooing of cows. "What am I doing in a barn?" asked Marty in surprise. "How did I get here?"

Just then Marty saw a young couple enter the barn. They were dressed in long, funny robes. The man said to his wife, "I'm sorry, Mary, that I couldn't find a better place for us to spend the night."

"It's all right, Joseph. We'll be warm here, and we can make beds of clean straw," said the young lady.

"Mary? Joseph?" asked Marty, "Can it be? Am I really in Bethlehem?"

"Why, I am!" said Marty excitedly. "I'm right here. Right in the middle of the first Christmas. Marty peeked from his hiding place in one of the stalls to watch the scene unfold. He saw Mary make a bed of clean, sweet-smelling hay in a manger. He watched as shepherds hurried into the stable. Then, with a holy hush, they knelt before the manger.

"Hey, what's going on?" asked one of the shepherds. Another shepherd dug through the hay in search of something. "Where's Jesus?" he asked. "Some angels told us He had been born. We came to worship Him, but where is He?"

Mary and Joseph shrugged their shoulders. Then three wise men from the East entered. They knelt before the manger, offering rich gifts. "What's the big idea?" asked one of them. "Where's the king of the Jews? We followed His star. It's resting over this stable. We want to see Jesus."

Marty had never seen a Christmas scene quite like this one. Shepherds

LANES (from page 23)

and wise men were yelling and searching the stable for the Christ child.

"We don't know what you are talking about," said Mary.

"We just came to pay our taxes," said Joseph. "My wife and I just want to rest after our day's journey. We've heard of the scriptures that promise a Messiah, but we certainly haven't seen Him. Please just leave us alone."

Marty could stand it no longer. "Wait! Wait!" he shouted. "You can't have Christmas without Jesus! You can't have Christmas without Jesus!"

But the people ignored him. They didn't seem to see him. "You can't have Christmas without Jesus!" Marty shouted again.

"Marty! Marty!" said Mr. Lane shaking his son. "Wake up, Marty. You must be having a nightmare."

Marty awoke and found himself in his own den near the Christmas tree. "I couldn't have been dreaming. It was so real," said Marty. "I was right there in Bethlehem where Jesus was born—except He wasn't born."

"What are you talking about?" asked Megan. "'Jesus was born, except He wasn't born.'"

"But He wasn't," insisted Marty. "Mary and Joseph didn't know anything about Jesus being born. Shepherds and wise men came to worship Him, but He wasn't there. I tried to tell them that they couldn't have Christmas without Jesus, but they wouldn't listen to me," said Marty.

Mr. Lane shook his head. Marty's words kept going through his mind. "I'm afraid we've been trying to have Christmas without Jesus. We've been so busy shopping, wrapping, cooking and partying that we haven't stopped to think that Jesus is the reason for the Christmas season."

"It's His birthday," said Megan, "and we didn't even invite Him to the party."

"We'll fix that," said Mrs. Lane.

That night the Lanes had a party. They called in all their neighbors and friends, and they had a birthday party. Mrs. Lane baked a huge cake and covered it with candles. Mr. Lane read the Christmas story from the Bible and Marty and Megan acted it out. Then the Lane family sang some Christmas carols.

"We decided," said Mr. Lane to the crowd of people, "that we're tired of trying to have Christmas without Christ. Celebrating is fun, but we weren't aware of what we were celebrating. Christmas is a birthday, the birthday of our Savior. Jesus was the best Christmas present even given to man, and we want to give Him to each of you tonight."

After cake and caroling and thanks and farewells, the Lanes said good-night to their last guests. Marty flopped exhaustedly into bed, but he had found what was missing. He had real joy because he had found the Christ of Christmas. Not only had he found the most precious of all gifts, but he had given Christ to his friends. ▲

Happy Holidays.

What To Give Your Pastor For Christmas

By Floyd Wolfenbarger

There's a little voice telling me not to write this article. After all it seems a bit pompous to assume that the reader wants to give the pastor anything for Christmas. But at the risk of seeming immodest, I am writing it anyway.

Give your pastor a crown for Christmas. Now I've really done it! To suggest it is proud, arrogant and self-seeking. However, my suggestion doesn't mean that I want to be treated like a king.

The crown of a preacher is a steadfast and faithful congregation. (Philippians 4:1) No elaborate gift nor eloquent flattery can do as much for a preacher as the satisfaction of seeing believers mature and grow.

Give your pastor a prop for Christmas. As the servant of the Lord, Moses, held up his hands, Israel won the battle. However he could not keep his arms raised long enough without the help of faithful friends who propped him up.

Every preacher needs props who say "Amen" or who reinforce his preaching with high standards at home and who allow no tearing down of the man who bears the burden of the Lord.

Give your pastor a clean slate for Christmas. The Hebrews had a jubilee periodically in which all debts were forgiven, slaves were released, and indentured land returned.

How good it would be if every church could have such a clean slate with every slight forgotten and every offence forgiven. No wonder that Israel called it "Jubilee!"

Give your pastor blinders for Christmas. In important races, horses are sometimes fitted with blinders so they can run the race without distractions. Every time you work for the church, you are eliminating distractions from the preacher's goal. In this way he can give attention to feeding the flock.

These things the pastor can't give himself. Only you can give them. ▲



Tomorrow's Free Will Baptist leaders are at Free Will Baptist Bible College today.

Please support them.

TEEN Scene

Len Davenport and Lisa Wallace have joined Jim Lauthern on the staff of the Youth Ministries Division at Randall House Publications. One major staff responsibility is promoting and planning the National Youth Conference. The activities, competition, special services, banquets, seminars, registration and all phases of the conference will be coordinated through the staff.

Other responsibilities include the Youth Evangelistic Team, Truth and Peace Youth Leadership Training Conferences, and YOUTHLINE publication.

The staff will also plan and develop regional youth workers' conferences.

Len Davenport is a 1985 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College. He served as a youth minister intern and traveled with the college drama team two summers. He conducted youth

revivals this past summer as he represented the Bible College.

Len was the student body president during his last year at FWBBC. He is from Pleasant Acres FWB Church, New Bern, NC.

Lisa Wallace is a 1984 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College. She will complete a master's degree in music this year at Scarritt College in Nashville. Lisa was featured soloist with the Bible College choir. She also served on the staff of the 1985 Peace Youth Leadership Training Conference. Lisa is from Berkeley FWB Church, St. Louis, MO.

The staff of the Youth Ministries Division can assist you with local, district or state youth programs. Please contact them at Youth Ministries Division, P.O. Box 17306, Nashville, TN 37217. ▲

Youth Ministries Division Staff



Davenport

Lauthern

Wallace

Index

Volume XXXII

Jan.—Dec. 1985

KEY TO INDEX: Articles, authors and Newsfront items are arranged in three separate divisions.

In part one, articles are listed in order of title, author and number of the page on which they appear. The author's division is alphabetized according to last names. The Newsfront index is alphabetical in four main sections: churches, personalities, national ministries, and state ministries.

—Compiled by CONTACT Staff

ARTICLES

A

- Abortion: Can We Hide Behind Our Ignorance? June, 6
Diana Eberts

B

- Bride and The Bayonet, The, Kathy Henderson February, 8
But Can I Trust Him? Marilyn Pritchard September, 25

C

- Child Not Ours, A, Branson Woodard November, 27
Christmas Credit Curse, The, Howard Bass December, 8
Crises in Our Times, George Waggoner November, 28
Curse of Presumptuous Sins, The, Carroll Alexander November, 2

D

- Daddy Was a Missionary, Brenda Spruill November, 16
Daddy Was a Missionary, Rodney Whaley November, 17
Deacons: Unlocking Their Potential, Wendell Walley April, 16
Deacons: What Are Their Duties? Wendell Walley March, 10
Deacons: Who is Qualified? Wendell Walley February, 13
Deacons: Who Needs Them? Wendell Walley January, 13
Dwarfed Walnut Tree and I, The, Clary Adams December, 10
Dying Thief, The, Floyd Wolfenbarger March, 9

E

- Effective Church Stewardship Program, The, Earl Hendrix July, 8
Effective Youth Program, The, Jim Lauthern March, 8
Empty Seats, The, Jim Mullen October, 12
Expand Your Family at Christmas, Ivan Ryan December, 6

F

- Facts About Christmas, The, I. Bennie Turner December, 2
Fit To Be Tried, Daryl Ellis October, 16
Focusing on Free Will Baptists, Larry Hampton September, 2
Four Faces of Trust, The, Brenda McElyea October, 15

H

- He's Part of the Family, Joy Jones August, 8
Help for the Hopeless, Floyd Wolfenbarger August, 15
Here's To Your Health, Larry D. Hampton October, 17
Hoing in the Shade, Charles Flynn October, 11
How It All Works, David Joslin July, 6
How To Illustrate a Sermon, Robert Morgan August, 2

I

- I Prefer A Housing Allowance, David Shores August, 10
I Prefer a Parsonage, Billy Keith August, 11
I Was There in 1935, Ralph Staten June, 12
I Was Ther in 1935, Ralph Staten January, 2
I'm a Chaplain's Wife, Susan Burgess November, 6
Is Your Church on Tract? Clifford Donoho May, 4

J

- Journey Into Winter, Roger Reeds November, 12

L

- Lessons from a Reluctant Missionary, R. Eugene Waddell April, 6
Let's Control Them, Floyd Wolfenbarger April, 13
Local Church in Mid-Life Crisis, The, Milburn Wilson November, 14

M

- Making Christmas Memories, Delilah Scott December, 4
Making Friends: A Key to Discipleship, Greg McAllister October, 10
Mask of Unrighteousness, A, Brian Cook December, 15
Meditations of a Nomad, Jim Shepherd May, 6
Ministry of Ushering, The, Malcolm C. Fry October, 6
Ministry for You? Letters!, A, Noveline Burgess February, 18
More Than the Resume, Helen Kettman May, 27
Move That Molehill! Steven R. Hasty February, 4
Music City Jubilee Meetin', Jack Williams May, 8
Music City Medley, Larry Hampton September, 6
My Friend, Pain, Zeke Jones May, 15

N

- NYC '85 Wrap-Up, Jim Lauthern September, 18
1935—As I Saw It. Agnes B. Frazier January, 6

O

One More Frontier, Vernie Hersey March, 16

P

Past to Remember, A Future to Mold, A (WNAC Review),
Lorene Miley, Debbie Payne September, 16
Pastor Appreciation Day August, 16
Patience: Vice or Virtue? Floyd Wolfenbarger January, 4
Peer Pressure Monster, The, Doug Henderson March, 2
Personal Soul Winner, The, Richard Kennedy May, 2
Preaching or Pork Chops? Yvonne Wolfenbarger July, 9
Purpose of Ministerial Ordination, The,
Clarence Hearron November, 10
Put Something Back, Jo Hurst December, 20

R

Reach the Minorities, Frank Breeden September, 26
Reaching Your Community for Christ, Gary Bigelow April, 14
Real Love, Malcolm C. Fry February, 6
Reflecting The Stars, Elwood McQuaid December, 12

S

Send the Kids to Camp, Jim Pursell June, 2
"Send Them, Not Me!" Clifford Donoho January, 12
Sender With the Lord, Jerry Barron March, 4
Spinning in the Mudholes, Kam Vestal August, 28
Stained Glass Prayers, Ruth Mullen September, 29
Story of Daniel Jackson, The, Robert J. Morgan March, 18
Such Were Some of You, Marvin Beculhimer June, 9
Support for Struggling Churches, Clarence Burton February, 11

T

Tax Advice for Christians, Michael Johnston April, 2
Teens and the Sexual Revolution, Kevin Parrish March, 6

That Special Friend, Charles Hampton July, 12
Those "What Kind of" Baptists? J. D. O'Donnell July, 16
Tiff Covington Chronicle, The, Thurmon Murphy February, 2
Totally Me, LaCrecia McFaddin November, 9
Touch of A Christian School, The, Sam Henderson January, 15
Truth About Gossip, The, Wade Jernigan April, 12

W

Wanted: Church Shuttersbugs, Bert Tippet July, 15
We Must Help the Divorced, Joe Grimmett October, 2
What About Our Best? Jeffrey Stegall October, 15
What Are You Doing Here? Floyd Wolfenbarger November, 15
What to Give Your Pastor for Christmas,
Floyd Wolfenbarger December, 24
What's The Difference? Bobby Jackson July, 17
When Parents Hurt, Brenda Evans January, 8
Where Am I Leading? Floyd Wolfenbarger February, 10
Who Is Normal? Mark Hampton March, 12
Who Touched Me? Floyd W. Harris, Jr. June, 8
Why I Am A Foreign Missionary, Norman Richards,
Janice Banks, Earnie Deeds April, 8
Why I Attend My Church, Mary Neal May, 16
Why Pastors Perish in the Parish, Fred D. Hanson October, 28
Without Leaving Home, Maurilio Amorim Jr. July, 14
Would I Want Me As a Member? Nelson Markham August, 7
Would I Want Me As Pastor? Sandy Adams August, 6

Y

Yes, We Must Say No! Marsha Rolan October, 20
Yes, You Can! Floyd Wolfenbarger October, 14
You Can Know God's Will, Milton Fields October, 8
Your Free Will Baptist Heritage, Bill Davidson July, 2

AUTHORS INDEX

Adams, Clary	December, 10	Hearron, Clarence	January, 25; November, 10	Pritchard, Marilyn	September, 25
Adams, Sandy	August, 6	Henderson, Doug	March, 2	Pursell, Cleo	June, 12
Alexander, Carroll	November, 2	Henderson, Kathy	February, 8	Pursell, Jim	June, 2
Amorim, Maurilio Jr.	July, 14	Henderson, Sam	January, 15	Reeds, Roger	November, 12
Banks, Janice	April, 8	Hendrix, Earl	July, 8	Richards, Norman	April, 8
Barron, Jerry	March, 4	Hersey, Vernie	March, 16	Rolan, Marsha	October, 20
Bass, Howard	December, 8	Hesselmeyer, Robert	September, 28	Rose, Robert	October, 18
Beculhimer, Marvin	June, 9	Horton, Lester	April, 18	Ryan, Ivan	December, 6
Bigelow, Gary	April, 14	Hurst, Jo	December, 20	Scott, Delilah	December, 4
Breeden, Frank	September, 26	Jackson, Bobby	July, 17	Scott, Ron	November, 23
Burgess, Noveline	February, 18	Jernigan, Wade	April, 12	Shepherd, Jim	May, 6
Burgess, Susan	November, 6	Johnston, Michael	April, 2	Shores, David	August, 10
Burton, Clarence	February, 11	Jones, Joy	August, 8	Spruill, Brenda	November, 16
Carney, Leslie	May, 29	Jones, Zeke	May, 15	Staten, Ralph	January, 2
Cook, Brian	December, 15	Joslin, David	July, 6	Stegall, Jeffrey	October, 15
Cordell, Richard	July, 29	Keith, Billy	August, 11	Sullivan, Carl	October, 13
Davidson, Bill	July, 2	Kennedy, Paul	January, 17	Summerson, Jim	August, 27
Deeds, Earnie	April, 8	Kennedy, Richard	May, 2	Tabb, Billy	March, 13
Donoho, Clifford	January, 12; May, 4	Ketteman, Helen	May, 27	Tippet, Bert	July, 15
Eberts, Diana	June, 6	Lauthern, Jim	March, 8; September, 18	Turner, I. Bennie	December, 2
Ellis, Daryl	October, 16	Long, Philip L.	March, 26	Varney, J. B.	December, 18
Evans, Brenda	January, 8	Loveless, Alton	August, 13	Varney, Lincoln	March, 14
Fields, Milton	October, 8	McAllister, Greg	October, 10	Vestal, Kam	August, 28
Flynn, Charles	October, 11	McFaddin, LaCrecia	November, 9	Waddell, R. Eugene	April, 6
Frazier, Agnes B.	January, 6	Markham, Nelson	August, 7	Waggoner, George	November, 28
Fry, Malcolm C.	February, 6; October, 6	McEllyea, Brenda	October, 15	Walley, Wendell	January, 13; February, 13; March, 10; April, 16
Gore, J. L.	March, 13	McQuaid, Elwood	December, 12	Whaley, Rodney	January, 27; November, 17
Grimmett, Joe	October, 2	Miley, Lorene	September, 16	Williams, Jack	May, 8
Hampton, Charles	May, 23; July, 12	Morgan, Robert J.	March, 18; August, 2	Wilson, Milburn	November, 14
Hampton, Larry D.	February, 29; September, 2, 6; October, 17	Mullen, Jim	October, 12	Wisehart, Mary R.	July, 10
Hampton, Mark	March, 12	Mullen, Ruth	September, 29	Wolfenbarger, Floyd	January, 4; February, 10; March, 9; April, 13; August, 15; October, 14; November, 15; December 24
Hanson, Fred D.	October, 28	Murphy, Thurmon	February, 2	Woodard, Branson	July, 9
Harris, Floyd W., Jr.	June, 8	Neal, Mary	May, 16; June, 29		
Hasty, Steven R.	February, 4	O'Donnell, J. D.	July, 16		
		Parrish, Kevin	March, 6		
		Patterson, W. H.	February, 20		
		Payne, Debbie	September, 16		

EDITORIALS

BRIEFCASE

The Impossible Dream	January, 5
The Case for Church Growth	February, 5
Don't Lose Tomorrow	March, 5
Join the Jubilee!	April, 5
The Man In The Shadows	May, 5
They Battle the Dark Demon	June, 5
The Name Game	July, 5
It's A Dog's Life!	August, 5
He Made a Difference	September, 5
Take Charge of Your Life	October, 5
The Flip Side of Thanksgiving	November, 5
The PSF Factor	December, 5

THE SECRETARY SPEAKS

Taming the Tongue	January, 31
Gideon's Group	February, 31
Tell the Truth	March, 31
He Is Not Here!	April, 31
Harmony in the Home	May, 31
Dear Dad . . .	June, 31
The Conventioneer's Creed	July, 31
The Pastor in Perspective	August, 31
Notes from Nashville	September, 31
From Now to 90	October, 31
Surveying Our Statistics	November, 31
The Shepherd's Story	December, 31

ON LITTLE LANES

When Nice Isn't So Easy	January, 28
Father Really Does Know Best	February, 26
Murder at Sunset	March, 28
The Preacher's Paddling	April, 26
Surprise in the Storm	May, 28
Pirates and Purse Strings	June, 27
Megan and the Bully	July, 26
The Great Pretenders	August, 26
Kids Can Serve God	October, 27
The Money Mistake	November, 25
Something is Missing	December, 23

TOP SHELF

What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism, Yechiel Eckstein	January, 26
The Christian Legal Advisor, John Eidsmore	February, 27
The Gospel of John, F. F. Bruce	March, 29
The Pastor as Evangelist, Richard Stoll Armstrong	April, 23
The Home Invaders, Donald E. Wildmon	May, 26
Financial Management for Clergy, David L. Northcutt	June, 20
Touching the Untouchables, Laura Belle Barnard	July, 28
The Transforming Vision, Brian J Walsch and J. Richard Middleton	August, 25
The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational? Richard R. Reiter, Paul D. Feinberg, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Douglas J. Moo	September, 28
The Free Will Baptists in America 1727-1984, William F. Davidson	October, 24
The Effective Invitation, R. Alan Street	November, 26
Personal Computer: A New Tool for Ministers, Russell Dilday, Jr.	December, 20

GREEN TREE BIBLE STUDY

Christ's Work is Our Work, Colossians 1:24-29	January, 26
Christ, the Treasure-house of All Wisdom, Colossians 2:1-7	February, 28
Complete In Christ, Colossians 2:8-17	March, 27
Spirituality—the True and the False, Colossians 2:18-23	April, 28
Living the Resurrected Life, Colossians 3:1-4	May, 24
Putting Off the Old Man, Colossians 3:5-9	June, 26
Putting On the New Man, Colossians 3:10-17	July, 24
The Christian Home, Colossians 3:18—4:1	August, 24
Living Before the Watching World, Colossians 4:2-6	October, 25
The Fellowship of the Christian Ministry, Colossians 4:7-18	November, 24
The Christian Doctrine of the Body, I Corinthians 6:13-20	December, 22

THE FREE WILL BAPTIST PULPIT

The Church, Clarence Hearron	January, 25
What is Man? Larry D. Hampton	February, 29
Walking Worthy of God, Lincoln Varney	March, 14
The Potter At Work, Leslie C. Carney	May, 29
"Stand," Richard Cordell	July, 29
Ashamed at His Coming, Jim Summerson	August, 27
The Jehovah Waiters, Robert Hesselmeyer	September, 28
A Father's Love, Robert Rose	October, 18
The Unknown Soldier, Ron Scott	November, 23
Jesus Is The One, J. B. Varney	December, 18

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Strike Up The Band, Rodney Whaley	January, 27
Insist On Variety, Philip L. Long	March, 26
Hymn of the Month, Charles Hampton	May, 23
Women Directors—Bless 'em! Mary Neal	June, 29

SPOTLIGHTING THE STATES

Spotlight on California, Paul Kennedy	January, 17
Spotlight on Indiana, W. H. Patterson	February, 20
Spotlight on Mississippi, J. L. Gore and Billy Tabb	March, 13
Spotlight on Maryland, Lester Horton	April, 18
Spotlight on Tennessee, Mary R. Wisehart	July, 10
Spotlight on Ohio, Alton Loveless	August, 13
Spotlight on West Virginia, Carl Sullivan	October, 13



NEWSFRONT

CHURCHES

ALABAMA	
Sardis Church, Eufala	May, 21
COLORADO	
Harvest Church, Colorado Springs	September, 22
FLORIDA	
Soul's Harbor Church, Pensacola	October, 23
GEORGIA	
Bellview Church, Colquitt	October, 24
NORTH CAROLINA	
Trinity Church, Greenville	January, 21
First Church, Morehead City	May, 21
First Church, Raleigh	June, 23
Peace Church, Wilson	October, 23
OKLAHOMA	
Christ Chapel Church	March, 23
TENNESSEE	
Portland Church, Portland	March, 23
Victory Church, Jackson	April, 24
North Memphis Church, Memphis	October, 22

LAITY

Leckbee, Wendell M.	February, 22
Trimble, Wade	March, 23

MINISTERS

Brashear, Thomas	September, 21
Cloer, Ron	November, 21
Craft, Ernest	July, 21
Dixon, O. T.	February, 23
Evans, Calvin	April, 25
Francis, Robert	May, 20
Harrison, Ernest, Sr.	November, 20
Hockenberry, John	May, 21
Hummel, Christian "Chris" and Linda	March, 21
Jenson, Earl	May, 20
Nelson, Homer	July, 22
Pollard, Arnold	May, 18
Staires, Harry	December, 17
Wolfenbarger, Floyd	August, 19
York, Tim	July, 20

STATE MINISTRIES

ALABAMA—January, 19; July, 22
ARIZONA—May, 19
ARKANSAS—August, 18, 21; November, 21
CALIFORNIA—September, 21
CANADA—September, 23
FLORIDA—January, 20
GEORGIA—February, 22; October, 22
IDAHO—August, 19
ILLINOIS—June, 23
INDIANA—April, 24; September, 22
KANSAS—September, 22
KENTUCKY—September, 21
MARYLAND—September, 23
MICHIGAN—August, 18
MISSISSIPPI—January, 20
MISSOURI—August, 20
NEW MEXICO—July, 20
NORTH CAROLINA—August, 18
NORTHEAST ASSOC.—January, 21
NORTHWEST ASSOC.—August, 21

OHIO—July, 21; September, 22
OKLAHOMA—January, 19; September, 23; November, 20, 22
SOUTH CAROLINA—May, 18
TENNESSEE—January, 21, 23
TEXAS—March, 23; August, 20
VIRGINIA—January, 22; February, 23; April, 24; July, 21, 22; September, 22, 23; October, 24; November, 22; December, 18
WEST VIRGINIA—August, 21

NATIONAL MINISTRIES

Agency Calls for 'Teacher Recognition Day'	June, 24
Bible College Students Declare 'Faculty Appreciation Day'	November, 20
Bible College to Open Dorms for National Convention Guests	May, 19
Bible College 'Welcome Days'	
Attract 349	June, 24
Bible College's Annual Conference Attendance About 1,000	May, 20
Book Dealers Elect New Officers	June, 24
Brazilian Writer Wins Journalism Scholarship	February, 23
College Trustees Approve Computers, President's Council	August, 18
Department Announces Winners of 1985 Writers' Contest	August, 22
Don Richardson to Lead Writers' Conference	January, 22
Dr. Haycock to Speak at Christian Schools Conference	November, 22
FWBBC Alumni Meet	June, 24
FWBBC Launches New Master's Program	October, 23
FWBBC Receives \$1,000 Homer Willis Music Scholarship	May, 19
Fifth Annual Softball Tournament Set	June, 23
Foreign Missions Board Issues Statement	February, 22
Four Speakers Set for FWBBC Bible Conference	January, 20
Free Will Baptist Bible College Enrolls 467 for 1984-85 School Year	April, 25
Free Will Baptist Bible College Enrolls Students from 25 States	November, 21
Free Will Baptist Bible College Graduates 77 Students	August, 19
Hundreds Attend FWBBC Conference	March, 22
Leadership Conference Set for December 4-6	December, 17
Mary Wisheart Takes WNAC Helm	October, 22
Master's Men Conference Attracts 150 Men	July, 20
Missouri Junior to Lead Bible College Students	August, 20
New FWB History Book Ready	June, 23
1984 Leadership Conference Leaders Rally to Church Growth Challenge	February, 16
Ohio School Wins FWBBC Basketball Tournament	March, 22
Over \$8,000 Raised for Bible College at Pleasant View Rally	May, 21
Randall House Announces Spring Enlargement Campaign Results	July, 22
Randall House Sets Requirements for Writers' Contest	January, 23
Shockey Completes Home Mission Project	January, 23

Sunday School Department Launches Enlargement Campaign	January, 22
Veteran Missionary-Author Keynotes Writers' Conference	August, 21
Washington Educator Addresses Christian Schools Conference	May, 19
Worthington Named RCMA Officer	April, 24
Writers' Conference to Meet May 17-18	May, 18

Merry



Christmas!

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NEWS OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

COUPLE SUES WHEN WORLD DOESN'T END AS PROMISED

LOWRY, MN (EP)—A couple from Lowry, Minn., is suing the Worldwide Church of God for \$5 million, alleging that church officials told them the world was going to end and defrauded them of 160 acres of farmland.

Gilman K. Anderson and his wife Gladys say they gave away much of their farm in 1969 when representatives of the California church told them the world was coming to an end.

The Andersons said they were told in 1969 that they would have to move to Petra, Jordan, for safety when the call from the church came. In 1971 they were told that there would be a famine so severe that people would eat their own children to survive. They also say they were told that Germany was going to attack and destroy the U.S. in 1975.

Attorneys for the church argued that the court has no business determining the truthfulness of religious beliefs, and also argued that the federal statute of limitations for fraud claims is six years.

SENATE DROPS TAX EXEMPTION FOR SATANISM, WITCHCRAFT GROUPS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—The U.S. Senate voted to rescind the tax-exempt status of organizations that promote witchcraft or Satanism.

The Senate action came on an amendment to the Treasury, Postal Service and General Appropriations Act of 1986, proposed by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The amendment says that no tax exemption will be allowed for any "cult, organization or other group that has as a purpose, or that has any interest in, the promoting of Satanism or witchcraft." Adopted without objection on a voice vote, the measure defines Satanism as "the worship of Satan or the powers of evil," and witchcraft as "the use of sorcery or the use of supernatural powers with malicious intent."

Helms said that he had received a letter from a constituent questioning the tax-exempt status of a group which promoted witchcraft. Following correspondence with the Internal Revenue Service and Treasury Secretary James A. Baker, Helms said he discovered that the IRS "has and will grant tax-exempt status as a religious organization to groups explicitly promoting witchcraft."

Helms explained his reasoning for revoking tax-exempt status of Satanist or witchcraft groups. "We allow tax-exempt status for bona fide religious organizations because we believe they help promote the common good. Cults and witchcraft groups do not; in fact, they lead to violent and unlawful behavior."

'PILGRIM'S PROGRESS' SELLS OUT IN CHINA

SHANGHAI, China (EP)—A report from Shanghai reveals that a recent printing of *Pilgrim's Progress*—200,000 copies, were completely sold out in three days, a strong indication of spiritual hunger in China today.

During the past four years, the government-owned Social Science Press and other agencies have been printing such books as illustrations of Western literature and civilization. 400,000 copies of Bible Stories in paperback were sold between 1981 and 1983. *Pilgrim's Progress* was first translated into Chinese in 1853 by William Burns the famous Scottish evangelist and missionary to China. With the exception of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into more Chinese dialects than any other book.

MEN BAPTIZED FROM STAUNCH MOSLEM GROUP

MONROVIA, Liberia (EP)—Five Mandingo young men have now been baptized here, the first of their tribe known to have made public confession of Christ in this way. "The water only made us wet," one of the group stated, "but being baptized identified us with Jesus. We are following someone who is alive, who has changed our lives."

The Mandingos are one of West Africa's largest and staunchest Muslim peoples, explained SIM missionary Fred Stoll, who has pioneered SIM's outreach to them, mainly in Liberia and neighboring Guinea. Outreach began in 1977 through evangelistic broadcasts by SIM's radio station ELWA, followed up by visits to listeners inland. "For these five young men to take the step of baptism makes it clear to other Muslims that they have definitely turned from Islam," Stoll said.

The young men scheduled the baptism so Stoll and his family could witness the event before leaving for furlough. They even requested television coverage, but no cameramen showed up.

MEMBERS OF SIKH SECT BAPTIZED IN INDIA

NEW DELHI, India (EP)—More than 1200 Sikhs have come to the Lord and have been baptized in strife-torn Punjab and neighboring states in northern India, Paul Pillai told Christian Aid Mission in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Pillai said that 850 of these were baptized by missionaries serving with India Inland Mission, which he heads. Altogether, IIM's 87 missionaries have baptized 2000 new converts in the last two years.

While Westerners can no longer enter India as resident missionaries, native missionaries are effectively reaching their own countrymen for Christ, Pillai explains. In this way, he contends, "Northern India is the world's largest accessible mission field."

LITERACY CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY IN INDIA

NEW DELHI, India (EP)—In response to an appeal by the Indian government for outside help to combat the country's 60 percent illiteracy rate, Bibles for India is mounting a huge literacy program in India. Using literacy primers which feature biblical themes and the life of Christ, BFI's distribution arm in Madras (India Bible Literature) has already taught 40,000 adult illiterates. Another 25,000 are now attending literacy classes.

New literates face another problem, however. There is very little available for them to read, and much of what is available is propaganda. It's been estimated that the Soviet Union outspends the United States \$40 to \$1 for literature in India. BFI President John DeVries says the church must respond to this need. "The American church does not yet understand the magnitude of the spiritual awakening in India." He called for support of agencies that supply Christian literature to India.

Literacy class graduates receive a free Bible course from BFI as their first piece of reading material. Through this program hundreds have made decisions for Christ. Some classes have developed into small churches.

MEESE SAYS HOSTILITY TOWARD RELIGION DRIVES ITS INFLUENCE FROM PUBLIC LIFE

SAN DIEGO, CA (EP)—"Artificially strict" views of separation of church and state threaten to drive religious values from public life, according to U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese.

At a prayer breakfast attended by about 100 members of the Christian Legal Society, Meese said, "There are ideas that have gained influence in some parts of our society, particularly in some important and sophisticated circles, that are opposed to religious freedom; indeed that have an attitude of hostility towards religion in our country."

Meese added, "By gradually removing from public education and public discourse all references to traditional religion . . . and by substituting instead the jargon and the ritual and the morality of cult and of self, we run the risk of subordinating all other religions to a new secular religion."

Meese said the Constitution does not even require government indifference to religion, let alone federal hostility. He also said that the First Amendment's "establishment clause," which prohibits congressional establishment of religion, has been widely misinterpreted.

"In its application, the principle of neutrality toward all religions has often been transformed by some into a hostility toward anything religious," Meese said. "The danger is that religion, which has been such an important force in our country, could lose its social, and historical, indeed, its public character."



THE SECRETARY SPEAKS

By Melvin Worthington

The Shepherds' Story



Christmas is a special season for the Christian because attention focuses on the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the world does not properly celebrate Christmas, there's no reason why Christians cannot seize the opportunity to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His Love.

The Account

Luke 2:1-7 records the birth of Christ in a stable at Bethlehem. The circumstances surrounding the birth are providentially arranged. Because "all the world" is to be taxed, Mary and Joseph journey to the right place at the right time.

History hangs in the Judean skies and hugs the hillsides, waiting for the star to appear, the choir to sing, the shepherds to speak, the virgin to deliver.

The Announcement

Luke 2:8-20 records the birth announcement of Christ to the children of men. Usually at the birth of a king's son there is a public announcement followed by public rejoicing. Not so the birth of Christ. His birth was announced privately to shepherds at a lonely site near a little city at night.

Consider where the shepherds served (v. 8). They were in a field in the darkness taking care of their sheep.

J. C. Ryle declared, "The want of money delivers no one from spiritual privileges. The things of God's kingdom are often hid from the great and noble, and revealed to the poor. The busy labor of the hands need not

prevent a man being favored with special communion with God."

Consider what the shepherds saw. They saw God's divine messenger who was later joined by a multitude of others, all praising God (vv. 9, 13-14). The appearance of the angel of the Lord terrified the shepherds.

But the angel's announcement calmed the shepherds (v. 10), characterized the Savior (v. 11) and confirmed the sign (v. 12). It was a statement of glad tidings for mankind concerning the Savior who would save men from their sins, with a sign to support the statement.

Consider what the shepherds sensed. They sensed God's presence and power. They were conscious, even as Isaiah (Isaiah 6), that they were in touch with God. He was in their midst. They were convinced that the Lord had spoken to them (v. 15).

Consider what the shepherds said (v. 15). When the angels departed the shepherds spoke to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us" (v. 15).

Without doubts, debating, disagreement, discussion, denial or dread, they acted on what they had heard. They hurried to Bethlehem where they found that what they had been told was true. They were the first sinners to see the Savior, and they saw Him on their knees.

Our spirit must be like theirs. Let us believe what we've heard. Let us act on what we've believed. Let us do our duty as willingly. They saw the Messiah; so can we. They worshipped the King; so must we.

Consider what the shepherds shared (vv. 17-18). They told what they had seen and heard. They may have been poor theologians, but they made great witnesses!

The shepherds became the first preachers of the gospel. They shared with others the good news that the Messiah had come.

The Application

The shepherds' story is the same story we tell today. The story of salvation, the good news of the gospel, is to be shared with all mankind.

As the shepherds served on their hillside that long ago night and were sensitive to the Word of God, may we be sensitive to His Spirit in our daily duties.

As the shepherds saw the Lord, may we see Him afresh and anew by faith.

As the shepherds sensed the Lord's presence and power, may we be aware of Him and His might.

As the shepherds said, may we say that we too will heed God's Word.

As the shepherds shared, may we share the gospel, the good news, with those around us.

For in reality—we feel what the shepherds felt; we see what they saw; we hear what they heard; we tell what they told. It's Christmas. The King has come! ▲

The Secretary's Schedule

December 3-4 Executive Committee
December 4-6 Leadership Conference

CONTACT

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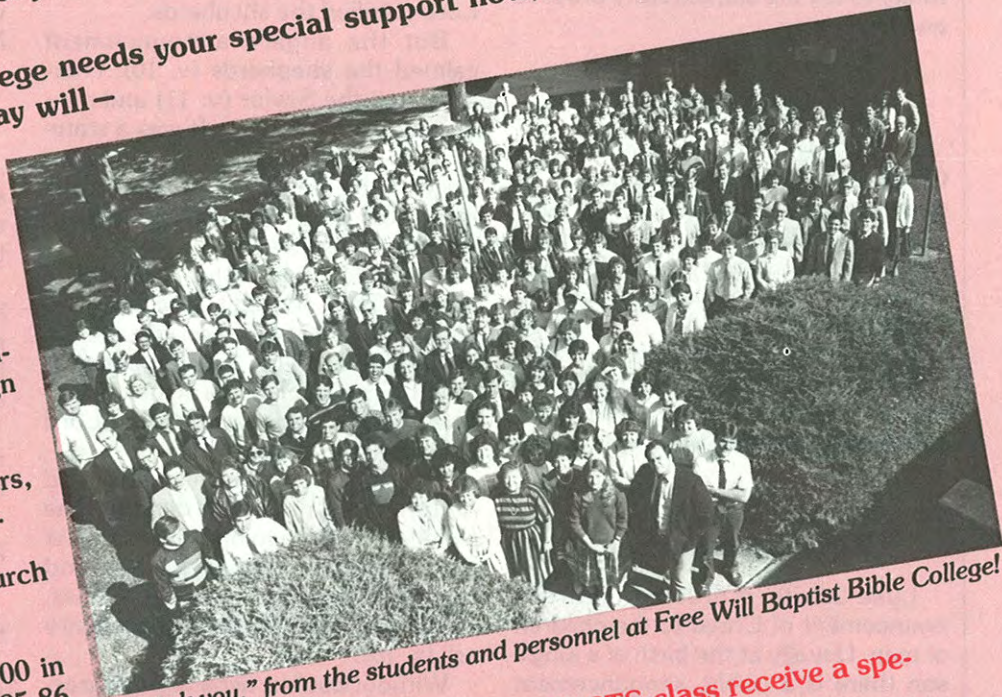
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