

DECEMBER 1998

CONTACT

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FREE WILL BAPTISTS



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Christmas*
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*The Women of
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*The Sailor and the
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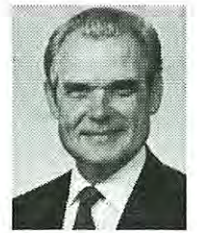
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The Spectrum of Stewardship (XII)



Melvin Worthington

This final study on *The Spectrum of Stewardship* examines the foes of biblical stewardship. The devil tests the subject of stewardship. He opposes the precept and places obstacles in the path of those who would give serious consideration to biblical stewardship.

Materialism

Materialism is sapping the vision and vitality from the Church during this age. Statistics indicate that giving from those in the evangelical community stands at 4%.

"Per capita church contributions among both mainline Protestants and evangelicals have continued to fall for over 27 years. Members of mainline denominations now give an average 2.9% of their income (down from 3.3%) while evangelicals contribute 4% (down from 6%). The typical church member (in either category) gives less than \$20 annually to his church for global outreach yet spends an average of \$164 a year for soft drinks, \$667 for eating out, and more than \$1,000 on entertainment," (*Current Thoughts and Trends*).

Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," (Matt. 6:19-21).

Again, Jesus said, "... Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," (Lk. 12:15).

Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteous-

ness; and all these things shall be added unto you," (Matt. 6:33).

Marketing

Another obstacle which lies in the path of those who would exercise biblical stewardship is marketing. Marketing is often substituted for biblical precepts, practices, philosophies and principles. We live in a market-driven society. In order to do what we believe needs to be done, we forsake God's plan for financing His work and adopt carnal methods used by the world to finance God's work on earth.

While this may provide immediate funds, we must remember that God's blessings are promised to those who give tithes and offerings. Marketing principles do not take into account God's ownership, our obligation or the divine oracles of God regarding individual and institutional stewardship. Market-driven funding is destined to fail and does not bring honor and glory to God.

Manipulation

Manipulation is another obstacle which challenges those who exercise biblical stewardship. Methods which manipulate people to give are offensive to God. We give in light of Calvary. We give in light of Christ's pattern. Those who manipulate people through excessive emotional appeals are dishonest and do not develop a biblical concept of stewardship.

The Lord expects us to give a por-

tion of what He has given to us. Christians should be on guard against being manipulated to give impulsively, ignorantly and impersonally.

Misinterpretation

Misinterpretation is another obstacle which must be overcome. Many people misinterpret the biblical doctrine of stewardship. Some view it only in terms of money. It is when we view stewardship in a comprehensive sense that we can interpret the concepts correctly.

Misinformation

Much misinformation exists today regarding biblical stewardship. Christians need to determine what the Bible teaches regarding stewardship. They need to view it comprehensively. Rather than taking what others say, they need to determine for themselves what the Bible teaches.

Mentors

Mentors can mislead their followers. We must remember that mentors are human. They have their blind spots. We must make sure that what they teach us is consistent with the scriptures which are our final authority in all matters of faith and doctrine.

Thank God for godly mentors who lead people into a full understanding of stewardship. Beware of those who distort, deny and denounce the comprehensive doctrine of stewardship set forth in the scriptures.

Exercising biblical stewardship calls for accountability. We must keep the proper focus in a world that is wicked and sinful. We must remember the Sovereign's ownership, the steward's obligation and the significant opportunities as we exercise biblical stewardship. ■

The Secretary's Schedule

December 1998

7-8 Leadership Conference

9-10 Executive Committee Meeting

Beyond football, guns and power tools stand . . .

. . . The *Real Men* of Christmas

By Michael E. Waddell



Into the woods I walked, feeling about as manly as a guy could feel. It was Christmas 1996, and I had already done two of the three most male things possible—I had used some power tools and I had watched some football. And now I was about to complete the trifecta of masculinity—I was going hunting. I traveled deeper into the forest, finally spying three deer, which I followed. Before long, I had to face the very non-manly fact that I had absolutely no idea where I was.

I walked toward a light in the distance and came upon a quaint little farm house. So as not to scare them, I put down my gun and took off my hunting jacket. I could see the Christmas tree glowing inside as I knocked on the back door. A nice grandmotherly woman let me use her telephone to call my family. Swallowing my pride, I did what no self-respecting male wants to do. I said, "I'm lost."

The kind lady told me where I was so that I could tell my folks to meet me at the road. As I thanked her, she called out, "I'm going to let my dog out, but don't worry, he won't bite." A few seconds later I saw and felt this healthy pit bull's jaws clamp onto my calf.

As manfully as I could . . . I ran. I made two trips around the yard when I saw the elderly lady and her husband

looking out the picture window sipping coffee and waving at me as I ran past. It was really like a Norman Rockwell painting, except for all the blood.

I ran toward the road for help with the pooch right on my heels. When I got there, no cars were in sight, so out of sheer desperation I did something that to this day I'm ashamed of (no, I didn't shoot the dog). I climbed on top of the couple's brick mailbox. From my perch I could see the road and the canine that had me treed.

I speak from experience. There is nothing as unmanly as being perched on top of a mailbox on Christmas Eve. After a few minutes, a man stopped by and said, "You look like you could use some help."

"Yes, sir," I whimpered with what little dignity I had left.

From that episode I learned three things. Never ask for directions in Whites Creek, Tennessee. Be prepared to run if someone dogmatically says, "My dog doesn't bite." But, most importantly, I've learned that there is a lot more to being a man at Christmas

than power tools, football and guns.

Real Man Myths

However, the world around us teaches us that to be a real *Real Man* you must be a

great athlete, excellent handyman and courageous cowboy all rolled into one. Because of this, I grew up wanting to be one part Joe Montana, one part Bob Vila and two parts John Wayne. With every man expected to be a combination of Santa Claus and George Bailey this Christmas, let's consider the world's measure of a man and see where the confusion originates.

In the book *The 49 Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role*, Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon point out several themes that American culture perpetuates as being part of a *Real Man*. Society tells men that they are not supposed to be sensitive but instead to live without any signs of weakness.

A *Real Man* should be tough, sturdy, totally in control, be the boss or, in today's vernacular, "Be the man." *Real Men* are required to be aggressive, daring, even violent (if need be). They must be totally self-reliant, ignore the counsel of others and stand alone.

Society's definition of what constitutes a *Real Man* puts tremendous pressure on men to perform; and yet

its standard of perfection is far from the one God uses to measure manhood.

Real Man Blunders

Many of the false qualities of a *Real Man* are found in the men who were present at the first Christmas but who failed to celebrate it. Consequently each one missed out on knowing the meaning of the first "Christmas" as we would label it today, because he was not looking for the spiritual meaning of the occasion.

The innkeeper missed out on entertaining the ultimate house guest because he was too interested in business to help a family in need. He boarded ordinary people for pay when he could have housed the Man-Child of all time and eternity in his home and his heart.

The men of the Sanhedrin knew so much about God and the Gift He was sending, even the precise place where Jesus would be born, but their orthodoxy made them perform out of hearts of pride instead of a loving acceptance of who He really was.

Herod, filled with hatred and a desire for control, resorted to violence in an attempt to accomplish his self-serving purpose. The epitome of the Big Gun, Herod would not allow Jesus to rule on the throne of his heart. Therefore, his decision was to attempt to murder the Messiah-Gift.

Do any of the players in this unholy trinity sound like someone you know? These seemingly *Real Men* were the ones with the power and the control but fall short by God's standard.

Real Man Examples

So what does a real *Real Man* look like at Christmas time? We find several good examples that explode the *Real Man* myths woven within the Christmas story itself.

Zechariah was the man who had his ability to speak taken away until after the birth of his son John. When he could speak again, instead of doing the worldly thing which would be to focus on himself with self-pity, he praised God for the deliverance that Christ would bring and the important role that his own son would play.

Joseph had every earthly reason to save face and put Mary away when

she was with child. Anyone of the world would understand that to be a *Real Man's* right. I am sure that the other men whispered and called him wimpish because he stood by the woman God had given him. Joseph obeyed God without fully understanding what God asked of him, even though it was not the *manly* thing to do.

The Shepherds were just a group of blue-collar guys who had seemingly better things to do than going to find a newborn in a barn, but they followed the angels' instructions and humbled themselves before the Lord. Those men left that night with a new life's calling, worshiping and witnessing the miracle and wonder of Jesus Christ. Their lives and destinies were forever changed in the surprise of that night.

Simeon, on the other hand, had waited his entire life to see the Messiah, and this purpose was all he cared for. He was not sidetracked by the unimportant since his chief priority was to have an encounter with Christ. Afterwards, He said he was ready to die because he had experienced success and salvation by holding the Christ Child.

The Wise Men were men of prestige. In many ways our world would worship them for their entrepreneurial skills, their wisdom and wealth. What made them go to the trouble at that great distance and offer valuable gifts to a child? Why did they refuse to play political games with Herod?

The answer is simple: They gave up any physical benefit and humbled themselves before the Son of God for an eternal reason that the men around them refused to see, both that and this Christmas season.

Real Man Principles

These godly men did not bow to the pressure of society to conform to someone else's external portrait of manliness. Instead, they lived life knowing that only God's judgment of them mattered. Their example in this first Christmas story illustrates three characteristics that God desires from men everywhere. Living by these characteristics will make your Christmas a lot more Christlike.

Give Without Anticipating Rewards

This is in huge contrast to men

who feel they must have recognition and only give if it will benefit them in return. Worldly *Real Men* make trade-offs. "Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." The simple but true meaning of this season is that Jesus loves us as ungodly as we are. We have nothing to offer Him; we cannot out-give God. And we ought to give to others in the same way that Jesus gave to us, not expecting any gain from our gift.

Love Without Imposing Conditions

Most men never really love because they have too many strings attached. The selfishness in men who live by the world's standard demands that we love each other only on our own terms. This means that *Real Men* not yielded to the Spirit of Christ say, "Yes, I will give out of the abundance of my life IF you see things my way." Which men of Christmas fit into this category?

Believe Without Demanding Answers

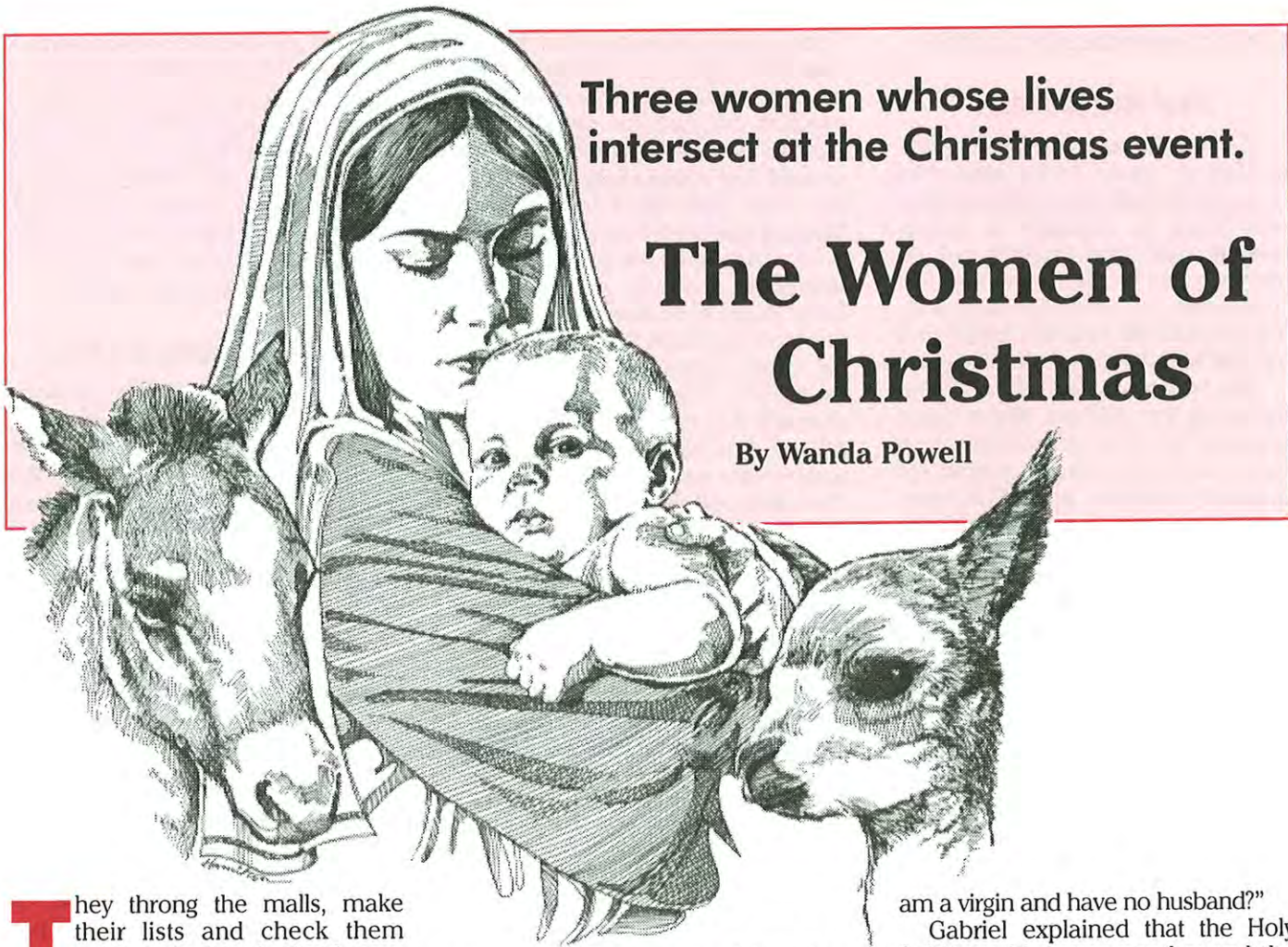
The desire to be in control causes men to demand a complete knowledge which is contrary to the simple faith which is really needed. Many of the phenomena of the Christmas story can never be explained. No man will ever know definitively in this life how many wise men there were nor Jesus' exact age when they fell down to worship Him. But God's *Real Man's* lack of knowledge only enhances his faith; it does not hinder it.

Each of these godly men present a portion of the picture, but to view the complete picture of a *Real Man*, we must always look to the center of the Christmas story. We must focus on that baby boy who was the perfect representation of a godly male.

So, Men, whether you feel like Ebenezer Scrooge or Tiny Tim right now, you can be a real *Real Man* of Christmas because of the Man, Christ Jesus. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . ." (Phil. 2:5, 7).

Now that is a real *Real Man!* ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Michael Waddell pastors Soul's Harbor Free Will Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida. He also serves on the Sunday School and Church Training Board.



Three women whose lives intersect at the Christmas event.

The Women of Christmas

By Wanda Powell

They throng the malls, make their lists and check them twice, bake hundreds of sugar cookies, even stay up late at night making costumes out of old bathrobes, make sure Uncle Joe gets a different tie from last year and complain, complain, complain about how little time there is until Christmas. Who are they? The women of Christmas, of course. But if it weren't for the women, who would or could get all this done?

Let's take a closer look at those special women of the first Christmas. You know who they are—the teenager named Mary, the middle-aged woman named Elisabeth, and the centenarian named Anna. Let's review their stories.

The Teen-Ager

We know very little about Mary prior to the day of her call. And what a call it was—to be the mother of the Son of God! That would be quite a call for any woman at any age, but a teenager?

How could she possibly under-

stand it all? What was she doing when the angel came out of nowhere to give her the heavenly message? Was she in prayer, helping around the house or daydreaming about her future husband, Joseph?

Luke tells us that she was of the tribe of Judah and the line of King David. We know she must have been a girl of good report, a chaste girl, a devout Jewish girl who loved Jehovah God. Yet, she must have been somewhat confused and disturbed with the appearance of the angel Gabriel and the message he brought.

No one she knew had ever used such a salutation, "Greetings, favored woman, the Lord is with you."

Even so, she did not swoon and cry out nor flee from his presence, but showed grace and quietness of spirit as he gave her the message from God. Mary was, no doubt, brought up in strict Jewish tradition and had great respect for marriage. She questioned the messenger, "How can this be since I

am a virgin and have no husband?"

Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and she would conceive and that the baby born to her would be holy. Did her mind race back to the scripture in Isaiah she had heard read in the synagogue so many times before, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"?

How long she and all her people had awaited a Savior, but now she would be the instrument God had chosen to bring this to pass. In simple faith she replied, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

In full submission she yielded her body to God, the very act that will influence everything else that would happen to her. Teenager? Yes, but what spiritual maturity!

As the message began to sink in, her thoughts must have turned to Joseph and their engagement. How can I tell Joseph? What will he think? Will he believe me when I tell him that I have not been unfaithful to our vows? What will the townspeople think? What will I do?

The Middle-Ager

Mary remembered that the angel had told her of her cousin Elisabeth's pregnancy. Immediately, she rushes to share her news. Why did Mary go to Elisabeth? Was it because Gabriel had said, "for with God nothing should be impossible" and that she and Elisabeth now shared this common bond?

Or, was Mary an orphan with no mother to share this news? Or, was Mary's mother such a woman that Mary could not have opened her heart to her and confide in her as she could in this motherly friend and wise and tender counselor?

Both Elisabeth and her husband priest Zacharias were described as "righteous before God, walking in all of the commandments of the Lord blameless." They had lived a long and happy lifetime together but their home had remained childless.

The childless state was humiliating for the wife of a priest, for in Israel it was the dream of every woman that she would be privileged to be the mother of the Messiah. For years Elisabeth's prayers for a child had gone unanswered.

Why God had chosen this late time in her life to give her this honor she did not understand nor question. Not the case with her husband. And because of his unbelief he was struck dumb, a prophet no longer able to minister or prophesy in the Temple. Therefore, they had hidden away in the hill country for five months.

There they were sitting alone with their own thoughts, in silence, when Mary's knock came to the door. With an embrace and with the authority of a prophetess Elisabeth saluted Mary, she said: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Elisabeth was looking for the Messiah and prompted by the Holy Spirit was privileged to be the first to announce His coming. What a meeting! What laughter, singing and tears.

Mary's response was an outburst of sacred and unselfish joy in praise to God, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Mary stayed with Elisabeth about three months. We can only

imagine the conversations those two mothers-to-be must have had.

Perhaps they talked about the angel's visits, the names they were to give their little ones, the future they would want to give them, the teaching and training in the synagogue. No doubt they spent much time in prayer for the two sons they would soon deliver.

The Child of the Ages

Mary returned home to face humiliation and shame. But Joseph had also had a heavenly visitor who told him not to be afraid to marry Mary for the child she carried was of the Holy Ghost. Their meeting must have been bitter-sweet.

Their wedding day was not what either of these young people had dreamed about and planned. They must have taken courage as they remembered God's blessed promise, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass . . ."

Then, the long journey to Bethlehem to pay a tax and to be counted. What a journey that must have been on the back of a donkey so late in a pregnancy. Yet, we read nothing about a grumbling, complaining wife.

Not even when all the best of the least hotels were filled and the only place they could find to sleep was in a smelly stable surrounded by animals. Not the kind of place to give birth to a baby, any baby, but especially a royal baby.

Mary must have wondered, "Had not the angel said that this baby I carry will be great and is to reign over Israel forever? Here we are in this smelly stable surrounded by animals and filth."

She did the best she could to make a cradle of clean sweet hay in a feed trough. When the fullness of time had come, ". . . the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . ."

What were Mary's thoughts as she looked into His tiny face? Did she see God's face? There He was her baby and yet, her Savior. What emotions must have filled her heart and soul. What an awesome task. To nurture, teach and train the very Son of the Most High God.

When the shepherds came telling their story and fell to worship her newborn baby, she must have felt God's approval on all they had done up to this time. Mary kept all these sayings and treasured them in her heart.

The Old-Ager

When Jesus was eight days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple for dedication and circumcision. There they saw an old woman name Anna. Mary might have seen her there many times before, for the woman's husband had died after they had been married only seven years.

She had been a widow 84 years and had lived at the Temple day and night worshipping God with fasting and prayer and looking for the Redeemer to come. Her seat was never empty in the Temple. Surely she heard the words of Simeon when he said that he had lived to see his salvation.

She also recognized this to be the Messiah for whom she had watched, waited and prayed. Only three verses are given in scripture about Anna, but what a commentary.

Anna not only prayed and praised but went out proclaiming the good news that the promised One had come. She was the first missionary to herald the Incarnation to all who looked for the Redeemer in Jerusalem.

A teenager, a middle-aged woman and a very old widow: different yet so alike. They were all three wise women, found walking worthily while they were watching, waiting and worshipping God. They were, most certainly, willing to be used of God. These are the chosen women of that first Christmas. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Wanda Powell is a member of Ebenezer Free Will Baptist Church in Glennville, Georgia, where her husband, Larry, pastors.

How to put the sparkle back in Christmas.

Keeping the Wonder Alive

By Randy Hill



Want to see the freshness and wonder of Christmas? Look through the eyes of a child. My wife and I watched our five-year-old open her Christmas gifts and were amazed. Instead of blazing through the paper and ripping open the boxes, she meticulously enjoyed each package. Then after all her gifts were opened, she decided it would be a good thing to help us open ours.

It didn't matter that the gifts weren't for her. She just liked the joy of opening gifts. She got just as excited over our gifts as she did her own. The joy of Christmas was captured in her giggles and high energy.

Wonder and amazement surrounded the life of Jesus Christ. When shepherds rushed to Bethlehem to see God's Son in a manger, the Bible says that all who heard their

testimony "were amazed . . . at what they said," (Lk. 2:18).

When the holy man, Simeon, held baby Jesus in his arms in the Temple and announced to all that this Babe was God's promised Messiah, the Bible says Joseph and Mary "marveled [were amazed] at what was said about him," (Lk 2:33).

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He returned to the synagogue in the city of Nazareth, read from the prophet Isaiah and announced that He was the One the prophet said would bring good news to all people. The Bible says the people were, "amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips," (Lk 4:22).

When Christmas Day is behind us and its aftermath before us, how can we keep the wonder and amazement alive? How can we increasingly enjoy the freshness and amazement of

Christmas throughout the year?

Make a Commitment to Grow

Freshness and wonder are not automatic experiences. They are the result of growth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew like any other healthy baby (Luke 2:40). For many years I have prayed that my daughter will "grow in wisdom and in stature, in favor with God and others." This is the way Jesus grew. Physical, spiritual, intellectual and social growth is every parent's desire for his or her child. Growth is normal.

When growth does not occur, there is something terribly wrong. We take our child to the doctor. We have tests run. We listen to the diagnosis and treatment plan. We want our child growing again. Where there is growth, there is freshness.

Christian growth is just as natural for the believer as physical growth is to the developing child. Have you taken a look at your spiritual growth chart lately? Think of where you were a year ago with the Lord. Can you identify areas of inward spiritual growth during the last 12 months? We are responsible for our growth in the Lord.

Several years ago I had a figurine on a shelf in my bedroom. It was a just-hatched ugly duckling standing in the bottom half of his shell. Underneath the shell was the phrase, "Be patient. God isn't finished with me yet." It's exciting to know that there's always room for growth and freshness in the Christian life.

Increase Your Knowledge of God

The more I get to know God, the more I stand amazed at His greatness. God wants us to know Him (Col. 1:10). Like a dad who pulls for his son or daughter when they step up to bat, God is pulling for you and me. He knows that the more we know Him, the more we are going to love and obey Him.

Knowing God is not an option for the believer who wants to impact his or her world for Christ. In fact, our growth in Christ will never exceed our knowledge of God. Only the man or woman who possesses a growing knowledge of God will have anything of lasting value to give the hurting, the hopeless and the spiritually hungry of our world. We can only give what we have received. The freshness of Christmas is experienced year round as I grow in my knowledge of God.

"Anna's Plan" for Personal Growth

The Bible doesn't say much about Anna. Sandwiched in Luke's description of Christ's birth (chapter 2) we find three verses about her. Anna's life shows us how to keep the freshness and wonder of Christmas alive throughout the year.

Go to Church

Anna's life was centered around the Temple. The Bible says she "never left the temple," (v. 37). I realize that we can't live at the church, but neither can we make it spiritually apart from the church. A lot of people

go to the church like they go to the dentist—only when they have to.

However, we need the encouragement of other Christians and we need to encourage Christians. We need to hear the teaching and preaching of God's Word. If we want to receive the blessings of God, we must place ourselves in the path of His blessing.

Worship

Anna "worshiped [served] God night and day," (v. 37). Biblical worship takes the focus off ourselves and gives God our undivided attention. The most important question we can ask ourselves as we assemble to worship is not, "What do I want?" but rather, "What does God want?"

When we worship, it's all for God—the singing, the praying, the confessing, the praising—it's for Him. The freshness and wonder of Christmas is captured as I take the attention off myself and place it completely on God in worship.

Fast and Pray

Anna implemented the "twin sisters" of fasting and prayer (v. 37). Praying is hard work. It's easier to talk or teach about praying than it is to pray. We certainly like to feast—but fasting? We don't enjoy denying ourselves anything, especially food.

Could it be that the absence of these disciplines in our lives has contributed to the complacency of the church? Fasting and praying is a way of surrendering ourselves to the Lord; seeking His intervention in our lives and world. God honored Anna's fasting and praying with the visitation of His Son.

Study the Bible

The freshness of Christmas cannot be separated from knowledge of the scriptures. Anna knew about the prophecies concerning "the redemption of Israel," (v. 38) and was awaiting His arrival. The Bible is a Book of hope. God brings life and freshness to all who will look to Him.

Witness of Christ

Anna walked with God and she couldn't keep quiet "about the

child," (v.38). She told everyone who would listen about Jesus.

I heard about a body builder who appeared on a talk show. He got on stage and flexed muscles that most people never knew existed. His build was impressive. When he sat down, the interviewer commented that this guy had huge muscles.

Then he asked, "How do you use them?"

In response, the body builder flexed his biceps.

The interviewer said, "No. No. What purpose do they serve?"

The guy didn't know what to say. He just flexed his muscles.

The purpose for going to church, worshiping God, fasting, praying, and studying the Bible is to have power in witnessing! The purpose of being filled with the freshness and fullness of the Spirit of God (Acts 1:8) is to move others closer to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Souls are in the balances of eternity. God fills us with His freshness so we can flow into the lives of others.

The freshness of Christmas becomes increasingly amazing as we allow Christ to use us to move people closer to Him.

Do you want to keep the awe and wonder of Christmas alive year 'round? Allow Christ to fill you with His purpose and use you to help move a friend, family, neighbor or associate closer to Him. Christmas can be experienced year 'round as we see God use our prayers, relationships and invitations to bring the unsaved to Him. Not only will this bring Christmas to you; it will bring Christmas to them . . . and the Church! ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Randy Hill pastored several churches in Florida. He now resides in Cookeville, Tennessee.



Christmas Gift Wrap

By Carol Reid

Reds and greens and golds, stripes and plaids and solids, ribbons and bows and curls surround the Christmas tree with promises of gifts. The wrapping takes more time than the shopping, we sometimes think—especially in those marathon sessions standing over the bed in the guest room or at the dining room table trying to finish all the packages.

Some people are happy with last year's bargain paper and stick on bows, while others make their Christmas giftwrap into works of art: sewing, glueing, printing, shredding and attaching until each package is perfect. Some like their trees to have a variety of colors and patterns underneath; some like the gifts to all be wrapped alike. Some choose gift bags and raffia, others choose brown paper and fabric ribbon. Some even pay big bucks for the store to do their Christmas wrapping. And a few still stick a bow on the bag the gift came home in the store in. But part of Christmas is wrapping gifts. The very first Christmas present was wrapped too. That's where the tradition began. In the fullness of

time, God selected the perfect Gift for a sinful, hurting world, and wrapped Him in flesh. His only Son had never been hungry before, never felt physical pain before, never been cold or hot or tired, but God wrapped Him in the clothes of man and sent Him to know infirmities and be tempted and be touched with the troubles and sins of His creation. Mary gave birth to that tiny Baby, the first Christmas gift. She wrapped Him into the traditional layette of her time with those strips of cloth to keep Him warm and safe. And after she had wrapped Him again, as the angels had said, and cuddled Him close to Him there, she laid Him in a manger, and worshiped Him. But He couldn't have stayed in that manger very long. They rejoiced together over this precious Gift, new parents could bear that! They wrapped Him close to them. They rejoiced over this precious Gift, counting His fingers and toes, looking at his eyes and his dimples and every little baby expression. Perhaps that night they began to understand how very *loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to be Mary's son and our Savior. And in doing so, He wrapped the world in His love.* ■

ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Carol Reid is librarian at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Carol serves as organist at Cross Timbers Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, where she is a member.



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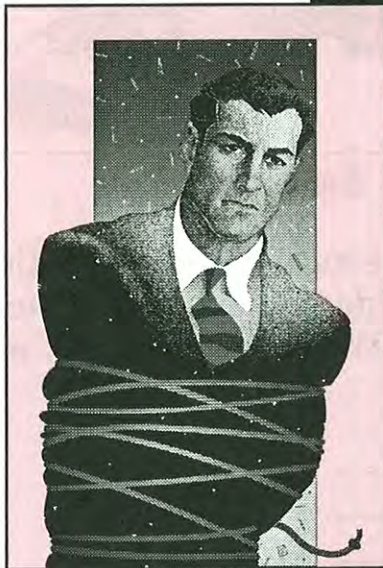
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The Counterfeit Jesus of Mormonism (Part II)

By Tom Forehand, Jr.



Mormon (LDS) Church commercials boldly tout family values. Also, many LDS, like many Christians, lead highly moral lives. Yet, behind this Mormon media blitz are several false doctrines sadly advanced in the name of Jesus Christ.

Before Joseph Smith died, he had preached publicly that men could become gods; privately, he had required men to practice polygamy to attain such godhood.¹ However, Illinois had a law prohibiting polygamy.² Regard-

less, scores of LDS secretly took additional wives.³

As Smith's doctrines spread so did new waves of anti-Mormon violence forcing most LDS to leave the United States (as it was at that time). Prophet Brigham Young led thousands of Latter-day Saints to Utah. Though many hoped to practice polygamy there undisturbed, before long the United States took possession of Utah and outlawed polygamy which was denounced as one of the "relics of barbarism."⁴ Before Utah was given state-

hood, its predominantly-Mormon citizenry had to authorize a state constitution banning the practice of polygamy.

Heavenly Mother?

Contradicting the Bible, Joseph Smith had "revealed" that God the Father had a body of flesh and bones.⁵ In addition, under Brigham Young's leadership, Mormons publicly revived the ancient pagan doctrine that God had a literal wife. Today, Latter-day Saints are encouraged to accept a

doctrine that includes heavenly “parents” (a heavenly Father as well as a heavenly Mother).⁶

Spirit Children

Smith’s *Book of Abraham*, accepted by Mormons as scripture, teaches that human beings first lived as “pre-mortal” spirits in heaven (before they came to earth to live in mortal bodies—*Book of Abraham* 3:22-28). Mormons claim that these spirits were God’s literal “spirit children.”⁷ According to LDS, these spirits even include Jesus and his spirit brother Lucifer, who rebelled and was never allowed to become a human being (have a mortal body).⁸

Virgin or Non-Virgin Birth?

I once was introduced to a woman raised as a Mormon in Utah. However, at that time she had left the LDS Church. “Why did you leave the Mormons?” I asked.

Her response: “Even as a Mormon, I believed that Jesus was born of a virgin. But when a non-Mormon friend showed me what some of my own Mormon leaders had taught about the virgin birth, I had to leave.”

You, too, may have Mormon friends or relatives, like this dear lady, who do not know what their own Latter-day Saint prophets have taught about the conception of Christ.

The Bible (Matt. 1:23) and even the *Book of Mormon* (Alma 7:10) teach that Jesus was born of a “virgin.” And surely there are many LDS who believe in the literal virgin birth of Jesus. Yet, several high-ranking Mormon leaders have taught something far different . . .

1. “*Not Begotten By The Holy Ghost*”—The Bible teaches that the physical body of Jesus was conceived by “the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:20). Still, last century “Prophet” Brigham Young claimed “. . . Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost.”⁹ This same Mormon doctrine was also taught in the 1950s by Joseph Fielding Smith who became an LDS prophet.¹⁰

If Jesus were not conceived by the Holy Spirit, then according to several Mormon prophets how was his earthly body conceived? In 1860 Brigham Young preached: “The birth of the Saviour [sic] was as natural as are the

births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—was begotten of his Father, *as we were* of our fathers.”¹¹

It must be asked: *How were you begotten of your earthly father?* A century later, the Mormon Church was publicly teaching its youth the same doctrine.

A 1972 Family Home Evening lesson quoted the late LDS Prophet Joseph F. Smith: “. . . how are children begotten? I answer *just as Jesus Christ was begotten of his father . . . [T]he Father of Jesus . . . in the flesh is the God of Heaven . . . Mary, the virgin girl, who had never known mortal man, was his mother . . .*”¹²

In Mormonism, God the Father is an immortal man.¹³ As recently as 1988 Mormon Prophet Ezra Taft Benson stated: “The body in which . . . [Jesus] performed His mission in the flesh was sired by . . . our Eternal Father. Jesus was not . . . begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father.”¹⁴

What does all this mean? According to former LDS Sandra and Jerald Tanner, in opposition to Christian doctrine, “. . . Mormon theology . . . teaches that God is a man and that Christ was conceived through a sexual act between Mary and God the Father.”¹⁵

2. *Mary Was The Spirit Daughter of God The Father*—In 1976 the Mormon Church was teaching: God the Father’s “marriage partner is our mother in heaven. We [human beings] are their spirit children, born to them in the bonds of celestial marriage.”¹⁶

According to Mormonism, Mary was one of those spirit children, too! Thus, these LDS teachings indirectly show that the earthly body of the Mormon Jesus was produced by an incestuous relationship between the Mormon God the Father and the Mormon Mary, one of his spirit children come to earth!

In summary, the Mormon Jesus is defined as: 1) just another man who became a god; 2) a spirit brother to Lucifer; 3) not virgin born! ■

Endnotes

(Recommended reading materials in **boldface**)

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:17-20, 32, 37. Polygamy is used here to mean the marriage of one man to more than one woman at the same time.

2. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), pp. 229-230, fn. 4.

3. See George D. Smith, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46: A Preliminary Demographic Report,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Spring 1994), pp. 12, 19.

4. Jessie Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life In The Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), p. 8. Slavery was declared to be the other “relic.”

5. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22. For the biblical response compare John 4:24 to Luke 24:39.

6. *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992), p. 11.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. Also see Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Willis, Inc., 1945), pp. 15 ff. However, a comparison of Colossians 1:16 with Ephesians 6:12 shows that the biblical Jesus is God the creator of all the angels, including Lucifer.

9. *Journal of Discourses*. V. 1 (Liverpool: Richards, 1854-1886, a Photo Lithographic Reprint. Los Angeles: Gartner, 1956), p. 51.

10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*. V. 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), p. 18.

11. *Journal of Discourses*. V. 8, p. 115.

12. Italics added. *Family Home Evening* (Home Evening 27) (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1972), pp. 125, 126.

13. Jesus was “the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal or resurrected . . . Father”—James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), p. 473.

14. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 7. “Jesus . . . is the Son of [the Father] both as spiritual and bodily offspring . . .” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 466).

15. Sandra Tanner, **The Changing World of Mormonism** (Moody Press: Chicago, 1980), pp. 179-180. **Mormons How To Witness To Them** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997) by John Farces and David Reed is another excellent book.

16. *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*—Student Manual (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), p. 129. “Mary”, according to the late Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, “was one of . . . the spirit offspring of the Father” (See Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. 2nd Ed.—Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 471).

FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

Reid to Write "Green Tree" Column

ANTIOCH, TN—Dr. Garnett Reid, professor of Old Testament studies at Free Will Baptist Bible College, will begin writing *Contact's* "Green Tree Bible Study" column in January 1999. Since 1982 "Green Tree" has been written by Dr. Robert Picirilli who completed his responsibility with the magazine earlier in 1998 with 145 Bible studies.

Brother Reid has served on the FWBBC faculty since 1982. He graduated from the college in 1977, completed his master's and doctoral degrees at Bob Jones University, then pastored four years in Nashville before joining the FWBBC faculty.

Dr. Reid served as official press officer for the Free Will Baptist National Convention four years (1979, 1980, 1981, 1983) and did the convention write-up for *Contact* each of those years. He



preached at the national convention in 1989 during the annual Bible Conference. In 1981, he wrote a series of booklets for new converts.

The 43-year-old Tennessee native grew up in Nashville at Cofer's Chapel FWB Church. He has served on local and state levels as moderator of the Cumberland Association and clerk of the Tennessee State Association. He

was ordained to preach in 1978 at Cross Timbers FWB Church (Nashville) where he and his family are members.

Dr. Reid chaired the Steering Committee for Accreditation when FWBBC sought regional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

He is a member of four professional societies—Evangelical Theological Society, The Near East Archaeology Society, National Association of Professors of Hebrew, and Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Reid is a frequently published author with articles in *Pulpit Helps*, *The Complete Biblical Library*, *Biblical Viewpoint*, *Worship Leader*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* and others.

He has presented papers at the Evangelical Theological Society and the Free Will Baptist Theological Symposium.

West Virginia Reports "Men of Victory" Conference

RIPLEY, WV—The third annual West Virginia Men's Conference met October 1-3 at Cedar Lakes Conference Center. Coordinator Ivan Asbury reported that 54 ministers and laymen registered for the three-day event.

Two speakers shared the pulpit and spoke a total of six times. Home missionaries Tommy Jones

(Pittsburgh, PA) and Vergel Maness (Philadelphia, PA) preached three times each. The conference theme was "Men of Victory."

Huntington pastor Ivan Asbury said that a Friday evening testimony and prayer time brought a great deal of bonding and closeness to the men. Twelve men came from Asbury's church (Central FWB

Church) to the conference.

In addition to worship and testimony times, attendees participated in numerous sports activities—golf, horseshoes, basketball, tennis and more.

The 1999 conference will meet September 30-October 2. Sixteen men have already pre-registered.

WNAC Retreat Draws 539 Attendees

RIDGECREST, NC—Meeting under the conference theme, "Order My Steps, Lord," some 539 Free Will Baptist women from across America gathered in Western North Carolina at Ridgecrest Conference Center, according to *Co-Laborer* editor Suzanne Franks. The 10th annual national retreat met September 24-26.

Keynote speaker Glenda Revell brought three messages. The author, speaker and registered nurse stressed that she is, first of all, a wife and mother. Mrs. Revell told how God drew her even as a young child surviving hideous abuse. Through her messages, she pointed women to the Savior

who knows, cares and heals. Many women eagerly purchased her books, *Glenda's Story: Led by Grace* and *With Love From a Mother's Heart*.

WNAC president Everyl Getz introduced Marjorie Workman, the new WNAC executive secretary-treasurer. Mrs. Workman gave her testimony of how God had led her steps from Bailey, North Carolina, to Antioch, Tennessee. She compared her own struggle to Moses' objection to God's call in Exodus 3:11, "Who am I that I should bring forth the children of Israel . . . ?" Or, in her words, "Who am I that I should lead thy women?" Mrs. Workman

requested the prayers and support of Free Will Baptist women.

WNAC member-at-large Debbie Burden presided at the missions service and Everyl Getz narrated. Nine missionaries gave testimony of how God directed and delivered in specific circumstances: Rhoda Snow (Côte d'Ivoire), Mirial Gainer (Japan), LaRhonda Bowerman (Panama), Brenda Bunch (Panama), Cathy Corley (Russia), Alice Smith (Côte d'Ivoire).

Susan Forlines coordinated and directed the music for each service. WNAC member-at-large Joanne King, directed fun time.

Florida Church Notches Centennial

BRATT, FL—Members of Shiloh FWB Church in Bratt took two days to celebrate the congregation's 100th anniversary, according to Pastor Kevin Flannagin. The September 5-6 centennial event attracted 250 people.

Saturday evening, five of the church's 26 former pastors shared special memories. Rev. L. V. Pinson (1951-53) recalled that it once took a formal vote to move the water bucket from the front of the pulpit to the side. Rev. Troy Walsingham (1966) told of 60 converts in a revival. Rev. Mike Jones (1982-84) described finding a rattlesnake in the parsonage hallway.

The three-hour Sunday morning service included a Sunday School lesson taught by Rev. Tim Owen (1988-96) and a sermon from Rev. Robert Owen (1967-70).

Shiloh FWB Church organized September 7, 1898, under the leadership of Rev. N. G. Baggett who pastored there 10 years. Twenty-seven pastors and 15 deacons have served the congregation.

Members Vera Crockett and Brian Bruley researched and



Former pastors (L to R) Tim and Karen Owen, Robert and Louise Owen, Mike and Paula Jones. Pastor and Mrs. Kevin Flannagin.

compiled a 12-page history of the church that was distributed at the centennial. The church purchased land for a parsonage in 1951 and called its first full-time pastor in 1961, Rev. Harvey Henderson who served eight years.

In 1957 the church began a weekly radio program. They voted to build a new church in

1958. They bought a bus in 1970 but sold it two years later.

The congregation voted to give *Contact* subscriptions to every church family in 1972, and voted to purchase a conference table for the National Office Building on Murfreesboro Road in Nashville.

Reverend Roy Norie with the Lord

WICHITA FALLS, TX—Long-time Texas pastor, Reverend Roy Norie, Jr., died of a heart attack at his home in Wichita Falls July 19. He would have been 75 years old July 24.

At the time of his death, Brother Norie was pastor of New Salem FWB Church in Decatur. Most of his life and ministry was invested in Texas Free Will Baptist churches. He pastored one church in Taft, California, and served for a time in Oklahoma at Hillsdale FWB College.

Reverend Norie suffered a heart attack in 1977 while working at Hillsdale College. Not long after the attack, he wrote *Con-*

tact editor Jack Williams, "I guess I've had enough of college for now. I will go back to doing what the Lord said for me to do in the first place—preaching."

Texas executive secretary Thurmon Murphy said, "Brother Norie was always active in the district and state work until his failing heart forced him to decline further nominations to serve on boards and committees."

Houston pastor Bobby Ferguson said, "There was not another heart in the state of Texas that was more committed to state missions than Brother Norie's." In earlier years, he traveled the state

promoting home and foreign missions. He gave every month to mission work in Texas, including the last month of his life.

The New Salem FWB Church where Norie pastored gave his widow, Juanita, a \$5,000 appreciation gift.

Funeral services were conducted July 21, with Reverend Clarence Hearron officiating. Pastor Norie's eldest son, Michael, gave the eulogy. Thurmon Murphy conducted the graveside service.

Reverend Norie is survived by his wife, Juanita; and two sons, Michael and David.

Milom Keynotes Florida Men's Retreat

BONIFAY, FL—A Tennessee businessman who led his church in a Sunday School and soul-winning explosion spoke to pastors and laymen at the 2nd Annual Northwest Florida Men's Retreat. Jerry Milom, 52-year-old Sunday School superintendent at Bethel FWB Church (Ashland City, TN) gave a hands-on, how-to-do-it response to sagging church attendance.

Mr. Milom explained how the Bethel Church harnessed lay involvement that triggered attendance surges for six years (1993-1998). The church added 35 new members the first year. They moved from a 135 average in 1993 to nearly 300 in 1998.

The increase focused on two Sunday School attendance campaigns each year (October and March), a carefully orchestrated visitation outreach in the community, creative Vacation Bible School programs and a strong pulpit ministry by the pastor.

Milom and his two brothers operate Ideal Printing Company near Ashland City, Tennessee. He is an ordained deacon with a blue-collar approach to church growth. He reads widely, adapts material he

finds useful and places a heavy emphasis on taking the gospel message to people's homes.

Mr. Milom told the 35 laymen and pastors to expect challenges when they begin reaching out into the community. They will encounter people whose lives are out of control and children with lists of behavior problems. The Bethel Church just completed a major building program to handle the growth increase, and may be looking at another expansion as members are added.

Reverend Donnie Hussey, coordinator for the Northwest Florida Men's Retreat, presided during the seven general sessions at Camp Mt. Bethel located 10 miles outside Chipley.

In addition to the strong lay leadership presentations by Jerry Milom, attendees quizzed a panel of men during a 90-minute open discussion Friday morning. Panel members included Alabama businessman Tim Jordan; retired missionary to Japan Fred Hersey; *Contact* editor Jack Williams and Jerry Milom.

Williams shared speaking responsibilities with Mr. Milom during the three-day retreat.

Coming Next Month



Redefining the Ministry



Mark Elliott Update



Go Ahead: Plan Ahead



Abortion—A Clear and Present Danger

Hillsdale FWB College in Moore, OK, kicked off its 1998 Student Body Christmas Drive asking students to spearhead an effort to raise \$60,000. The 1997 project raised \$44,000. College faculty and staff will join in the effort.

Congratulations to Pastor **Jon Canon** and members of **Mt. Vernon FWB Church in Bryson City, NC**. The church celebrated 100 years of service in August with a record-breaking 188 in attendance. Canon is the church's first full-time pastor.

Boger City FWB Church in Lincolnton, NC, turned 50 years old in 1998, according to Pastor **Brian Williams**. The special Sunday included English and Spanish services. English-speaking services met in the newly framed-in 14,000-square-foot facility. Former pastor **Robert Rose** preached. The congregation gave an \$8,600 building fund offering.

Pastor **Ken Haney** and members of **First FWB Church in Lebanon, MO**, celebrated completion of their new family life center with an open house in September. The new building includes a basketball court, walking track, volleyball court, fellowship hall, kitchen and Sunday School rooms. The church is 51 years old.

First FWB Church in Clyde, OH, reports seven baptisms and 11 new members. **Paul Finney** pastors.

The happiest pastor in **Ohio** may be **Carl Miller**. Members of **Dailyville FWB Church in Waverly** voted to build a new parsonage. Work on the parsonage was completed just after Pastor Miller arrived.

Catawba FWB Church in Catawba, OH, received eight new members and baptized seven converts. **Sturgill McCarty** pastors.

Pastor **Fred Crank** and the congregation at **Mansfield FWB Church in Mansfield, OH**, celebrated homecoming in September. They report three conversions and seven baptisms.

Twelve baptisms at **Pleasant Hill FWB Church in Delaware, OH**, made Pastor **Wayne Keith** smile. The church purchased a new van for outreach.

Everything went up in smoke, and Pastor **John Meade** loves it. **Southwest FWB Church in Columbus, OH**, burned their mortgage during 27th annual homecoming activities. The church is debt-free for the first time.

First FWB Church in Austintown, OH, reports 11 conversions in one month. More—their VBS averaged 106 daily and gave a \$2,025 offering to Home Missionary **Tom Jones'** land fund. **Bruce Beal** pastors.

An unusual dedication service occurred August 9 at **First Dayton FWB Church in Dayton, OH**. Members dedicated the office that former pastor **Hubert Ashby** used for more than 30 years as a prayer room in his honor. Reverend Ashby died in January. His son, Dr. **Stephen Ashby**, preached the morning message. **Michael Nabors** pastors.

Pastor **Kevin Bice** reports six new members and three baptisms at **Community FWB Church in Silver Grove, KY**.

They did it again! Pastor **Bobby Ferguson** and members of **First FWB Church in Houston, TX**, have mothered another church. This one's in the Houston suburb of **Tomball**. Twenty-five members from the mother church went with newly-commissioned missionary **David Holguin** in September to establish the work in Tomball. In 1995, the Houston congregation mothered **Westfield FWB Church in Katy, TX**.

Motivated by their two-fold goal to glorify God and to provide training for young Free Will Baptists, an **Oklahoma** couple gave a \$50,000 gift to Hillsdale FWB College. **David and Faye Baze** are members of **First FWB Church in Ada** where **Keith Burden** pastors. The June 28 gift allowed the school to close their fiscal year in the black.

More than 50 people gathered at the

river near **Five Points FWB Church in Washington, NC**, to watch four converts be baptized. Pastor **Allan Hall** said the church does have a baptistry, but the baptism could not wait until repairs were made on the pump.

After a standing-room-only revival with Evangelist **Van Dale Hudson** at **Fairview FWB Church in Hamilton, AL**, Pastor **Dwayne Hammontree** baptized 13 converts in Bull Mountain River. One of those converts was the pastor's father-in-law.

Members of **First FWB Church in North Little Rock, AR**, dedicated their 9,650-square-foot family life center, according to Pastor **Jackie Brown**. The \$350,000 structure includes classrooms, a foyer and a basketball court. Building Committee chairman **Jerry Lewis** formally handed the keys to Trustee Board chairman **Richard Dennis** to officially open the building.

Responding to a year-long challenge from Pastor **Mike Hutsell**, members of **Trinity FWB Church in Hamburg, AR**, paid off a \$90,000 indebtedness to make the church debt-free this summer. Pastor Hutsell read a declaration of independence from debt July 4 during Jubilee weekend celebrations.

Pastor **Ernie Lewis** baptized five converts at **Blue Point FWB Church in Cisne, IL**.

Members of **Webb's Prairie FWB Church in Ewing, IL**, set aside a day to honor **Margaret Legendre** who for 19 years has led singing, taught Sunday School, directed Christmas programs and other special services. **Jesse Allen** pastors.

A storm rumbled through town and uprooted trees on the property of **North Valley FWB Church in Phoenix, AZ**. The church also had some roof damage. However, Pastor **George Harvey, Jr.**, reports eight baptisms as the work continues. ■

Directory Update

GEORGIA

Daniel Araujo to First Church, Tifton
 Conrad Williford to Philadelphia Church, Folkston
 from New Liberty Church, Bankston, AL
 Billy Bevan, Jr., to Corinth Church, Alma from Hilltop
 Church, Fuquay-Varina, NC, as associate pastor

KANSAS

Dale McCoy to First Church, Wichita from Canaan
 Church, Lancaster, SC
 John Smith to First Church, Topeka

KENTUCKY

Hurston Webb to Brush Creek Church, Naples from
 First Church, Hazel Park, MI

NORTH CAROLINA

Joe Moore to Corinth Church, Dunn
 Tommy Dubose to Davis Church, Davis
 Randy Stone to Meadowbrook Church, Black Moun-
 tain
 Fred Carraway to Mt. Calvary Church, Hookerton
 Reggie Riley to Mt. Olive Church, Mt. Olive
 Kenny Tallman to Sandy Acres Church, Columbia

SOUTH CAROLINA

Todd Parrish to Temple Church, Darlington from Gar-
 ner Church, Garner, NC, as associate pastor

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THE TOGETHER WAY

September 1998

Receipts: State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Year To Date Designated	Year To Date CO-OP	Year To Date Total
Alabama	\$ 663.18	\$.00	\$ 663.18	\$ 4,515.83	\$.00	\$ 4,515.83
Arizona	149.12	191.10	340.22	2,841.29	594.30	3,435.59
Arkansas	11,121.01	13,770.60	24,891.61	121,233.18	135,786.58	257,019.76
California	.00	1,138.38	1,138.38	.00	10,067.50	10,067.50
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	118.00	5,000.00	5,118.00	275.21	14,999.98	15,275.19
Georgia	24,351.74	2,365.03	26,716.77	174,539.80	18,096.53	192,636.33
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Illinois	10,303.88	2,704.10	13,007.98	80,626.73	20,317.28	100,944.01
Indiana	845.54	548.81	1,394.35	9,590.91	2,523.29	12,114.20
Iowa	90.00	567.10	657.10	450.00	2,408.25	2,858.25
Kansas	.00	.00	.00	200.00	60.14	260.14
Kentucky	297.00	734.23	1,031.23	8,276.22	4,899.87	13,176.09
Louisiana	10.00	.00	10.00	80.00	10.00	90.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	2,327.80	2,327.80
Michigan	17,192.46	4,691.40	21,883.86	113,846.92	24,424.62	138,271.54
Mississippi	14,508.57	1,222.40	15,730.97	66,571.22	4,830.60	71,401.82
Missouri	37,426.53	12,056.96	49,483.49	358,831.51	70,408.75	429,240.26
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	1,127.77	27.39	1,155.16	8,635.83	414.43	9,050.26
North Carolina	200.66	733.76	934.42	13,154.86	11,842.84	24,997.70
Ohio	7,357.58	1,820.02	9,177.60	71,058.07	23,322.10	94,380.17
Oklahoma	75,494.28	8,853.45	84,347.73	449,341.75	82,435.69	531,777.44
South Carolina	46,350.38	.00	46,350.38	380,082.03	880.88	380,962.91
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Tennessee	4,356.80	521.00	4,877.80	106,470.54	14,565.28	121,035.82
Texas	.00	.00	.00	62,234.25	4,262.85	66,497.10
Virginia	663.92	.00	663.92	6,505.64	175.00	6,680.64
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
West Virginia	3,797.06	143.54	3,940.60	26,038.78	924.32	26,963.10
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Canada	187.13	10.68	197.81	1,454.18	67.57	1,521.75
Northwest Assoc.	80.75	.00	80.75	80.75	264.13	344.88
Northeast Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Other	.00	.13	.13	180.00	.48	180.48
Totals	\$256,693.36	\$57,100.08	\$ 313,793.44	\$ 2,067,115.50	\$450,911.06	\$ 2,518,026.56

Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 1,556.13	\$25,694.98	\$ 27,251.11	\$ 32,084.94	\$202,909.79	\$ 234,994.73
Foreign Missions	143,703.48	7,223.15	150,926.63	1,231,291.10	57,040.21	1,288,331.31
FWBCC	19,940.02	7,223.15	27,163.17	129,536.83	57,040.21	186,577.04
Home Missions	81,918.89	5,652.90	87,571.79	573,706.31	44,640.18	618,346.49
Retirement & Insurance	298.92	4,396.72	4,695.64	5,508.73	34,720.14	40,228.87
Master's Men	899.09	4,396.72	5,295.81	7,222.42	34,720.14	41,942.56
Com. for Theo. Integrity	42.85	157.04	199.89	483.51	1,240.06	1,723.57
FWB Foundation	166.96	1,884.30	2,051.26	4,323.14	14,880.15	19,203.29
Historical Commission	22.31	157.04	179.35	293.52	1,240.06	1,533.58
Music Commission	18.81	157.04	175.85	306.44	1,240.06	1,546.50
Media Commission	36.93	157.04	193.97	2,961.75	1,240.06	4,201.81
Hillsdale FWB College	1,535.92	.00	1,535.92	13,237.20	.00	13,237.20
Other	6,553.05	.00	6,553.05	66,159.61	.00	66,159.61
Totals	\$256,693.36	\$57,100.08	\$ 313,793.44	\$ 2,067,115.50	\$450,911.06	\$ 2,518,026.56



FOREIGN MISSIONS

Changing of the Guard

By Don Robirds

God's man in God's place in God's timing! That is extremely important when looking at the success of God's program. And R. Eugene Waddell has been God's man in God's place.

The last 12 years have been years of growth and development in Free Will Baptist ministries abroad. They have been strategic for the development of new areas of opportunity. Leading the way has been R. Eugene Waddell, general director of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions.

Logged More Hours

No Free Will Baptist alive has logged more combined hours in Foreign Missions board meetings, international travel, missionary counselling and general oversight of FWB Foreign Missions than Brother Waddell.

Of all the missionaries now actively serving, only four were appointed before Brother Gene became a member of the board. Some 56 missionaries have been appointed during Mr. Waddell's 12-year tenure as general director. At least 31 of these continue to serve overseas. Numerous others have served as overseas assistants, affiliates and apprentices.

Time to Step Down

Now Mr. Waddell feels it is God's timing for him to step down as general director and make way for "fresh blood, younger ideas and younger leadership." He has announced his retirement with the close of 1998. In his place, the Board of Foreign Missions has appointed Brother James Forlines of Batesville, Ark., to take the reins on January 1, 1999.



R. Eugene Waddell (left) welcomes James Forlines, general director-elect.

Brother James, a 1980 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College, has pastored in North Carolina, Indiana, and Arkansas. He has been an active writer of Sunday school materials for Randall House Publications and has served five years as moderator of the Arkansas State Association of Free Will Baptists.

Mr. Forlines has served four years on the Board of Foreign Missions and has been very active in promoting the missionary cause in the denomination, especially in Arkansas. He was one of the key figures in the development of the A.C.T.S. 1:8 plan of support adopted by the Arkansas State Association.

New General Director

As Brother James assumes his new role, he will need God's wisdom and grace. He will depend on prayer partners to sustain his vision and the energy necessary to take the foreign missions program to another level. He faces the challenge of managing a five million dollar budget and doubling the missionary force within the next decade.

Send a Letter

Free Will Baptists around the world and across the States are encouraged to write to Brother Waddell, commending him on his years of service and retirement. They are also urged to write to Brother James Forlines to assure him of their prayers and support in the gigantic task that lies ahead. Send correspondence to Foreign Missions, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002 or e-mail the men at gene@nafwb.org or james@nafwb.org and do it soon! ■

**MASTER'S MEN**

Introducing . . .

The Need

The family is under attack. Satan is at work in his effort to alienate men from their wives and children. No doubt God's heart is broken over the men who have become apathetic about their spiritual leadership responsibilities. Our churches, communities and country need men who will be committed husbands, loving fathers and spiritual leaders. Master's Men Family Enrichment Conferences will provide the encouragement and instruction they need to accomplish these goals.

Master's Men Family Enrichment Conferences

The Master's Men Department is currently scheduling conferences for 1999. If your church would be interested in having a "Family Enrichment Conference," please contact our office at 615/731-6812.



WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST

Woman's Window on the World

By Marjorie Workman

I've been uprooted! New ministry, new home, new route to work, new grocery store, drugstore, different mall. After 20 years of ministry at the same place and living in the same house then changing everything, you would feel insecure and unsettled, too. Not being prepared for drastic changes can make one nervous, stressful and tired.

I'm reminded of the hurricane season we just came through. Now that's a picture of uprooting! Trees that stood for years toppled over like paper dolls. In some trees you can see the hollow core and understand why they fell; others are not quite so revealing since you can not see the rot or weakness. Still others stand tall and strong. They did not yield to the storm's power. What made the difference? The roots and the inner strength of the trees.

The same is true for the human soul. Though I've been uprooted in a physical sense, I'm not blown over spiritually because my roots are planted "... in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he [I] meditate day and night," (Ps. 1:2). If we are grounded and rooted in Christ, we will not be beaten down when the storms of life hit. We are like the "tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," (Ps. 1:3-4).

Are you planted in the Word of God or are you constantly being uprooted spiritually? "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord..." (Ps. 1:1-2a). Dig in the Word to grow deep roots.

Ridgecrest Retreat 1998

The WNAC retreat at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, September 24-26, registered 539 women from North Carolina to Texas. Speaker Glenda Revell was a smashing success with her heart-warming testimony of how God used the great hymns of faith to plant a seed in her young heart which would later sprout into full bloom. Her plan to commit suicide stopped short as she picked up a gospel tract to read. The Word of God changed her life

forever. You can order tapes of her three messages from WNAC for \$4 per tape.

Glenda Revell wasn't the only good feature about the retreat. The generosity of the women overwhelmed me through the \$4,109.86 offering received for the missionaries attending the retreat, plus a \$1,500 offering for the WNAC office. God is so good!

Glorieta Retreat 1999

Make plans now to attend the WNAC Retreat at Glorieta, NM, September 24-26, 1999, (Friday - Sunday) and hear Barbara Tompkins. Barbara has established a Titus Tutelage mentoring program based on Titus 2:2-4 where older women guide younger women. Look for more information later in *Contact* and *CoLaborer* concerning costs and program.

Grow! Grow! Grow!

That's what we want to do in 1999. Women, get involved in Women Active for Christ. Reach out to those around you and invite them in, especially the younger women. Help them see that they are valuable to the outreach of the church and that together we can do greater things for Christ. Help erase the concept that WAC is for "our mothers."

Subscribe to *CoLaborer* magazine. The cost is minimal—\$8.75 for an individual subscription or \$8.00 each for a group of five or more. The magazine is published six times a year. Why not give a gift subscription to someone in your church or family who is not involved? One does not have to be a WAC member to subscribe to *CoLaborer*. Perhaps your church would be willing to put in the budget a subscription for all the women of the church. Many churches do that and save on subscription prices. ■



BOARD OF RETIREMENT

The Merle Haggard Syndrome

By David Brown

Some of us may suffer from the Merle Haggard syndrome in making decisions about retirement. One of Mr. Haggard's songs says, "Turn me loose, set me free somewhere in the middle of Montana. Give me all I got coming to me. Keep your retirement and your so-called social security."

It is understandable that we want a degree of control in our retirement decisions. The Free Will Baptist retirement plan offers a flexible variety of ways to settle your account, including the "give me all I got coming to me" lump sum or roll over choice. However, it is debatable whether either of these choices makes long-term sense for most retirees.

In many ways, taking control of your retirement funds means less freedom rather than more. It is true that you have the freedom to make your own investment decisions. It also means that you have to do some research on your own and actually make good decisions about how you want to invest your funds.

Many want to spend their retirement years doing things other than making investment decisions and worrying that the choices will be good ones. In addition to researching, retirees must also constantly monitor their portfolio to see if they are meeting the objectives they have set for the funds.

While some are accustomed to making these decisions, many are not and may be influenced by advisors or brokers who are more interested in a commission than what is the best investment decision for a particular individual. Poor decisions could jeopardize your retirement plans altogether. Chances are that when a couple retires at 65, at least one of them will live 20-25 years in retirement. Your decisions should be made in such a way as to assure that the survivor will not run out of funds.

We may think we would like to control our retirement funds, but if we make bad choices our retirement funds may control the financial quality of our retirement. Anyone who chooses to make these decisions must do so carefully.

The Board of Retirement offers annuities that allow you to enjoy your retirement without having to make additional investment decisions. There are several types of annuities to meet individual needs. You can spend your re-

irement years choosing how you want to continue serving the Lord rather than having to spend time making investment decisions.

Annuity funds are professionally managed to provide guaranteed retirement benefits. You can depend on your monthly annuity check as long as you live, without worrying that you may run out of money. Annuity payments may be designated as housing allowance up to your actual housing expenses in retirement if you are an ordained minister. Only church controlled 403 (b) plans can offer this benefit.

Merle Haggard's "Give me all I got coming to me," may be good lyrics for a country song, but for most of us it may not be sound retirement planning. Some may have the expertise required to manage their funds today, but what about later in life? However, you are much better off to choose a guaranteed annuity if you have any doubt about your abilities in this area. The Board of Retirement is ready to assist you as you make settlement decisions concerning your retirement funds. Call or write to find out more about your options in settling your retirement account. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: David Brown serves as member services manager for the Board of Retirement.

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PREACHERS



Dennis Wiggs

Practice Frugality!

Most young preachers do not earn a large salary. The challenge facing the majority of young men in smaller churches will be to keep their heads above the financial waters. Just to pay the bills, and maybe save a little for the future, will demand great skill. The young preacher and his family will need to exercise some principles of financial survival.

Be Content

Paul the Apostle declared, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The preacher must learn early in the ministry to refrain from "keeping up with the _____."

Some of your church members will throw away more on pet projects than you earn. Also, be glad they can buy a new vehicle every year or two. Rejoice with them when they build a new home. Express thanksgiving when they get promotions that produce better salaries. But don't get jealous!

The Lord called you to minister His Word, maybe live in a house the church owns, and possibly wonder at times how you are going to buy groceries. Grumbling or developing a sour spirit will not accomplish a thing. Watching God meet your daily needs will deepen your faith and strengthen you for future challenges.

Tithe faithfully on all the Lord sends your way; exercise frugality (some call it stinginess), and trust the Lord to miraculously meet your every need.

Be Careful

The funds the Lord blesses you with will go farther if you exercise financial self-discipline. To stretch every dollar as far as it will extend should be your daily commitment.

1. Don't buy merchandise unless it is being sold at a reduced price. Shop the end of the season sales.
2. Pay off credit card purchases every month. Refuse to be under the control of a piece of plastic.
3. Be determined to drive a vehicle just as many miles as possible. Keep it clean. Service it regularly. Pay off the debt and begin to save for the next one.
4. Be practical in saving money; turn off the water when you brush your teeth; turn off lights when you leave the room; change and hang up your clothes when you come home from church services; tear napkins or paper towels in half; write post cards instead of letters when possible. Don't join book or music clubs; shut the refrigerator door quickly and completely; control the thermostat carefully and sleep in a cool room; plan trips to eliminate driving extra miles.

Be Cautious

Don't create bills. If you do, pay them off as quickly as possible. Set a goal to live "debt free." The only possible large debts may be a vehicle and a home. Be determined to pay off both of these ahead of schedule. Debt should not hinder a preacher from doing God's will. Often the young preacher will be so burdened with bills that he cannot function properly.

Be Conscientious

Plan ahead. The young preacher must ask himself, "How would my wife pay the bills in the event of my sickness, disability or death?" Much prayer and study must be exercised to determine how the young preacher would provide for his family if tragedy struck.

Be Considerate

Consider your own body. As stewards, we are responsible to take care of the body. No one else will do it for you. Preventative maintenance can save money, lots of money. Get your teeth cleaned twice a year; keep blood pressure and blood sugar under control; exercise regularly; eat well-balanced meals; refuse to eat many sweets, drink plenty of water, sleep seven to eight hours each night. Just eliminating a visit to the doctor or hospital will save bundles.

Be Committed

How much debt do you want next year? How much do you want in savings in five years? Where do you want to be financially at age 65? The young preacher has far more opportunities for investing than the older preacher ever thought possible. Age 60 or 65 may seem a long way down the road, but it is much shorter than you imagine. Preparation must be made now, not later.

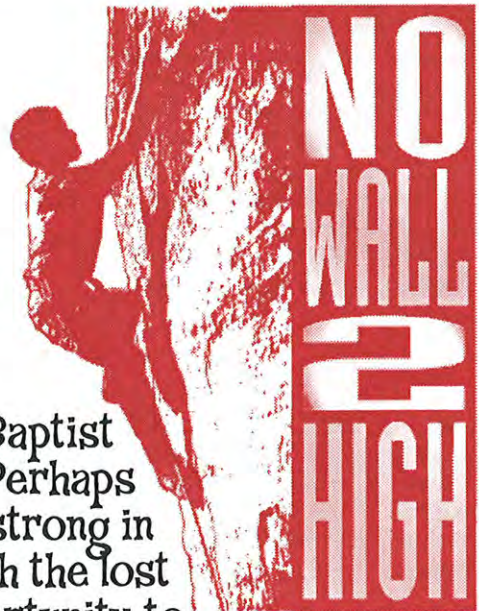
Be Confident

Trust the Lord. He knows your every need. However, remember that you are classified "self-employed." Most churches are not in position, or they do not elect, to establish you on a firm, financial footing. You must do it yourself. Seek financial counsel. Get a plan. Stick to the plan the rest of your life. Be willing to make financial sacrifices. You'll be glad you did. ■

YOUTH UPDATE

YOUTH DAY

FEBRUARY 7, 1999



There are many walls that Free Will Baptist young people are faced with everyday. Perhaps the most difficult wall is that of standing strong in their beliefs and sharing those beliefs with the lost world around them. Youth Day is an opportunity to give our youth the encouragement they need to put their beliefs into practice. Take advantage of **Youth Day '99** and let your church see the world-changing job your young people are doing.

Make plans now for **Youth Day '99!** Use this opportunity to spotlight your young people and showcase their abilities and service to the Lord. There are numerous ways to involve them in your Sunday School, Worship Service, or some other church-related program.

Consider allowing your young people to speak, teach, share a testimony, pray, usher, sing, or act in your service on February 7th. Your participation in **Youth Day '99** is just another step in allowing our young people to know that there is **No Wall Too High!**

Look for Youth Day ideas in the Winter issue of *Youth Ministry Direction!*

A Free Will Baptist Handbook

By J. Matthew Pinson

(Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1998, 288 pp., paperback, \$12.95).

The author of this book pastors First Free Will Baptist Church in Colquitt, Georgia, and serves as moderator of the Martin Association of Free Will Baptists. He attended Free Will Baptist Bible College, University of West Florida, Yale University, Regent College and Florida State University.

Brother Pinson holds two master's degrees and is in the final stages of his Ph.D. work at Florida State University. In addition to pastoral duties, he teaches religion and history at Bainbridge College in Bainbridge, Georgia.

This volume is a summary of who Free Will Baptists are and what we believe. It examines our heritage, our beliefs and our ministries.

The first chapter gives a brief history of our denomination. Pinson outlines the work of Paul Palmer, Benjamin Laker, Benjamin Randall and other early leaders of our movement. He gives special attention to the connection between North Carolina Free Will Baptists and the English General Baptists. He explains how our beliefs

and practices developed during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Chapter four addresses our doctrinal history. It examines three doctrinal statements which have greatly influenced what we believe today. They are *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam* written by Thomas Helwys in 1611, *The Standard Confession* which was adopted by English General Baptists in 1660, and the *Former Articles* adopted by Free Will Baptists in 1812.

Two chapters are devoted to a study of our beliefs today. Chapter two discusses our most important doctrinal beliefs: it emphasizes those doctrines which are distinctive to our movement.

Chapter five contains the complete text of our *Treatise*. This chapter enables the reader to examine carefully our church covenant, our major doctrinal beliefs and some of our most important practices.

The last section of the book analyzes some of our most important ministries. It summarizes the work of the National Association of Free Will Bap-

tists in Sunday School, Home Missions, Foreign Missions and other areas. Some attention is given to state and local ministries. The final chapter discusses other denominations which have similar beliefs and practices.

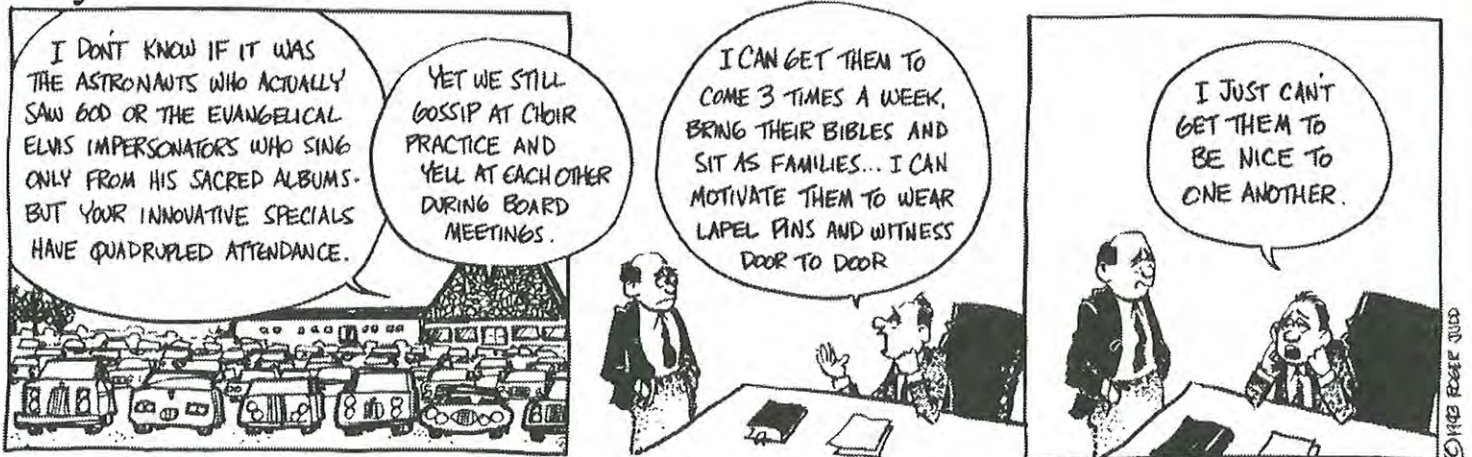
This is the kind of book we have long needed. It is a relatively brief and easy-to-read summary of who Free Will Baptists are, what we believe and what we do. This volume should be required reading for all pastors, missionaries, teachers and others who are involved in Free Will Baptist work on a full-time basis.

It should also be required reading for new ministers being licensed or ordained. It should be read by Sunday School teachers, deacons and others involved in local Free Will Baptist churches. Many churches now have orientation programs for new members, and this book could be very useful in such programs. Knowing who we are and what we believe can only help us serve the Lord more efficiently. ■



Thomas Marberry

Beyond Belief



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Volume 45

January - December 1998

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- In part one, articles are listed in order of title, author, issue and number of the page on which they appear. The authors' division is alphabetized according to last names.
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Students "Into All The World," Tom McCullough
 When I'm scared, I think of you!, Tim Campbell
 Moving Forward With Relocation, Roy Harris
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 The Virgin Islands—Cross-Cultural Ministry
 10 Miles in Cowboy Boots, Tommy Jones
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Our Future is our Focus, Alton Loveless January, 25
 What Do We Intend to Do Now?, Alton Loveless March, 26
 Do We Have a Problem?, Alton Loveless May, 25
 Our Kids Are Moving to the City . . . Will We Follow Them?, Alton Loveless July, 24
 Before Growth Comes . . . We Must, Alton Loveless September, 28
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Newsfront

National Ministries

Archie Mayhew, Pastor/Missionary, Dies January, 17
 Bible College Graduates 56 August, 22
 Bible College Launches Relocation Campaign June, 20
 Bible College to Host Summer Camp '98 June, 21
 Commission Plans Mass Choir Recording in Tulsa February, 19
 Convention Meets a Week Earlier April, 21
 Daniel Cronk, Missionary Statesman, Dies February, 17
 Discount Air Fares to National Convention Available April, 22; May, 21; June, 22
 Don Sexton, Former Missionary, Dies March, 20
 Free Will Baptist Bible College Enrolls 333 November, 20
 FWB Foundation Delivers Endowment Gifts April, 21
 FWBCC Appoints Recruitment Director June, 21
 FWBCC Hosts First Resident Missionary January, 19
 FWBCC Seeks Teachers November, 21
 FWBCC Seeks Youth Ministries Teacher April, 20
 FWBCC Seniors Chosen for *Who's Who* March, 20
 Georgia Family Gives \$55,000 to Bible College January, 20
 Georgia Steering Committee Meets October, 22

Instrumental Ensemble to Perform at Convention March, 21; April, 22; May, 21; June, 22
 Leadership Conference Explores Biblical Stewardship February, 20
 Leadership Conference Set for December November, 19
 Mabel "Mom" Willey Dies at 92 April, 19
 Marie Hanna Dies in India August, 20
 Mass Choir Recording Set for Tulsa June, 22
 Master's Men Director Resigns February, 18
 Music Commission Presents *Glory, Honor, and Praise* September, 21
 19 Bible College Students Appointed March, 22
 Nominating Committee Announces Nominees May, 19
 Reid to Write "Green Tree" Column December, 14
 South Carolina Junior Elected FWBCC Student President July, 21
 Tom Dooley to Lead Master's Men August, 19
 Trustees Appoint Bible College Relocation Director March, 22
 213 Attend FWBCC Welcome Days March, 22
 224 Attend FWBCC Welcome Days July, 20
 WNAC Retreat Draws 539 Attendees December, 15

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Brown, Charles	June, 19	Huckaby, Chester A.	November, 19	Terry, Grover	January, 18
Coffman, Lawnie	January, 19	Mantooth, Bob	February, 19	Turnbough, Elmer	October, 21
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Hall, J. R.	November, 20	Norie, Jr., Roy	December, 16		

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Willey, Mabel "Mom"	April, 19

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Alabama		Florida	
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Arkansas		First FWB Church, Seffner	June, 20
Freedom FWB Church, Garfield	September, 20	Shiloh FWB Church, Bratt	December, 15
Oak Park FWB Church, Pine Bluff	September, 22	Idaho	
California		Nampa FWB Church, Nampa	October, 20
Greenfield FWB Church, Greenfield	September, 22	Michigan	
		Kirby FWB Church, Taylor	September, 21

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Arizona	July, 20	Kansas	July, 21	North Carolina	September, 19
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Florida	August, 21; December, 16	Missouri	September, 22	South Carolina	May, 20
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Illinois	June, 19	New Jersey	July, 20	West Virginia	September, 19; December, 14
Indiana	September, 20				

Other

California Christian College Receives Accreditation	June, 21	International Students Enroll at CCC	January, 20
Camp Caleb Seeks Director	February, 17	1998 State Association Meetings	February, 22
Canadians Reaffirm Doctrinal Position	October, 18	Pike to Speak at Southeastern Graduation	May, 19
CCC Enrolls 182 Students	November, 21	Sawyer To Speak At Southeastern College	July, 19
CCC Seeks Christian Ministries Teacher	June, 21	Second Graders Cheer Gospel Music	September, 20
CCC Seeks Full-Time Faculty Member	July, 21	Southeastern College Enrolls 135	November, 21
Children's Home Needs Workers	July, 22	Southeastern Sets Camp Meeting	April, 19
Conference Set at Pigeon Forge	August, 20	Southeastern Sets Missions Conference	September, 22
Family Ministries Encourages Unique Offering	April, 21	Southeastern Sets "Get Acquainted Days"	March, 21
Hail Destroys Mexican Church Building	June, 20	Theology Symposium Meets at Hillsdale College	January, 17
Hillsdale College Expects Record Enrollment	November, 20	Three Generations Meet for Unique Service	November, 21
House Parent Stung to Death	October, 19		



Jack Williams

The Sailor and the Reindeer

Two wars and a singing cowboy trim the three Christmas episodes that define my earliest holiday memories. The first story occurs during World War II, the third during the Korean War. The second story I have always blamed on Gene Autry.

The Strange Man in a Green Suit.

My 18-year-old mother, Nannett, and I lived on Louisiana's Boeuf River in West Carroll Parish that Christmas in a big house with two porches in the middle of a cotton field. We were happy as I could be . . . I was the center of the universe—hers and mine. I was two years old.

One day a strange man in a green suit got out of a black car and tried to kidnap me. I screamed and kicked madly. Nannett, who up until this time had done whatever I wanted, tried to throw me off the front porch to the big stranger. I had been betrayed by my own mother!

Later that day, I discovered the strange man trying to strangle Nannett . . . but she did not resist him or scream for help, so I did. They both ignored me. Somebody sneaked up behind me and took me away so the stranger could kill her at his convenience.

That night the stranger tried to kidnap Nannett from the living room. He had apparently not killed her as I feared that afternoon. I suddenly found myself in the back seat of a car with the stranger having kidnaped both me and Nannett who was in the front seat sitting uncomfortably close to him. I yelled at him. He yelled back at me in a deep voice. Nannett did not help any.

I was 28 years old before I realized that the stranger in the green suit was my 19-year-old father home on furlough.

The Sailor and the Reindeer.

About 9:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, I was scanning the dark sky above the cotton field surrounding my grandfa-

ther's house trying to locate Santa Claus and his reindeer who, my Uncle Cleveland assured me, was coming to West Carroll Parish early that year. What's more, he promised, if I looked real hard, I'd see Rudolph with his flashing red nose that Gene Autry sang about on the radio.

I had been at my post for over an hour, which was good for a 6-year-old, when I began to suspect that Uncle Cleveland had not been entirely forthcoming with me. Then I heard a loud clatter on the tin roof and all the adults began yelling, "Look! Look!"

Wherewith, I immediately repented of my momentary lack of faith in Uncle Cleveland and Rudolph. I ran out on the front porch to see the sleigh and reindeer.

Unfortunately, there was no sleigh on the roof. The clatter had been started by fire crackers flung there by some evil relatives. What they were all looking at was a fire in the cotton field. The adult men began running down there with wet tow-sacks to put out the fire, all except my Uncle Cleveland.

He explained to me that the blaze in the field started when Rudolph guided Santa's sleigh down about 200 yards short of the tin roof and his hot red nose caught the dry cotton stalks on fire. I was astounded that Rudolph would do such a thing on Christmas Eve. My Uncle Cleveland allowed as how he was a mite surprised at Rudolph himself, and besides he had almost gotten into a fight with my grandfather, being falsely accused of shooting rockets out into the cotton field.

I never heard my Uncle Cleveland tell a lie. But then he was a sailor and had a way with words.

First Snowfall on Bayou Macon.

All my life, I had heard Nannett and Bing Crosby sing about how wonderful white Christmases were. I was eight years old and as yet had never

seen one. Christmas on the bayou was usually wet and cold, not white and beautiful.

That Christmas Nannett woke me early and told me to get my shoes out of the oven where she had put them. I stared out the window of our sharecropper's house at a different world. Bing Crosby had been up all night. Everything was white. I dashed for the door, and Nannett grabbed me by the left leg just as I rounded the Christmas tree.

She wrapped tow-sacks around my shoes because the snow was wet and cold. Let me tell you, *that* was a surprise. Bing Crosby had not sung one word about wet and cold in his song.

Finally, my oven-warmed, tow-sack-wrapped shoes and I ran higgledy-piggledy into six inches of bayou snow. I'd also heard about making snowballs and throwing them at cheerful people, which I did.

Two things immediately went wrong: I learned that people who make snowballs probably wear gloves and I did not have any. I also learned that my 7-year-old brother had apparently not heard that people who get hit with snowballs are supposed to be cheerful.

That was the last time I hit my brother with a snowball . . . for three reasons: First, it never snowed again. Second, my brother grew to be 6'1" with a bad attitude. Third, care to guess who wears a badge and a gun?

So that's my story. It all happened at Christmas a long time ago in a world that now seems far, far away.

Where are they now? The old sailor dropped anchor in 1982. The man in the green suit took a final helicopter ride in 1967. Nannett died in August. My tall brother with the badge and gun is still around. Which reminds me . . . this might be a good day to tell him I was smiling when I threw that snowball! ■

CONTACT

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