

THE REFLECTOR

APRIL 1975

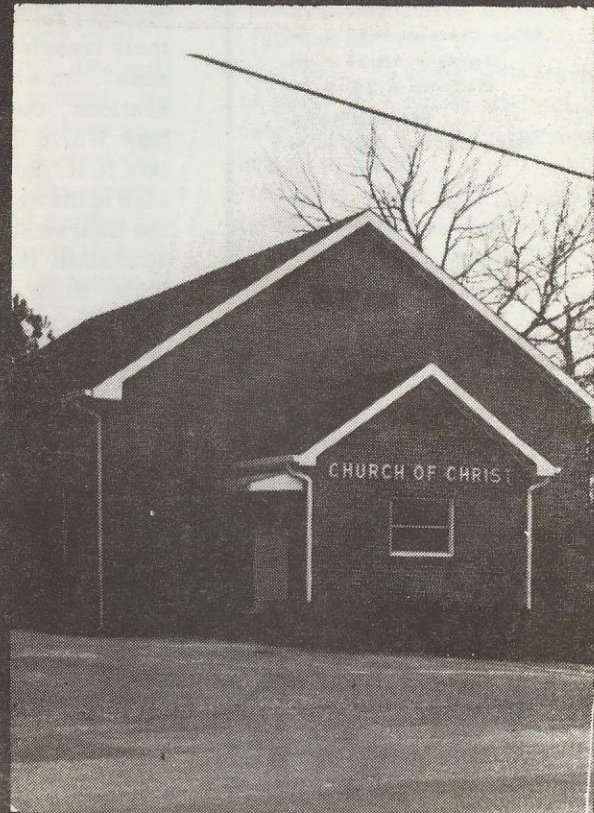


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Setting



THE REFLECTOR

April 1975

Published
once each month
by the

FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
1116 Walker's Chapel Road
Fultondale, Alabama

EDITED BY:
Edward O. Bragwell
P. O. Box 146
Fultondale, AL 35068

SUNDAYS:
Bible Classes 9:45 a. m.
Worship 10:45 a. m.
Worship 6:30 p. m.
WEDNESDAYS:
Bible Classes 7:30 p. m.

WORDS Hiram Hutto

Words and Context

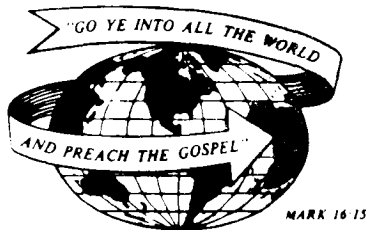
I don't know where it originated, but somehow the idea is prevalent in some quarters that "the thing" to do in translating from one language (like Greek) to another language (like English) is to assign one and only one meaning to a given word and then always translate by that word. This sounds good but it doesn't always work. Jehovah's Witnesses seem to be the chief transgressors in this effort. There are many words that have an area of meaning. It seems a little arbitrary, to say the least, of it, to select one meaning only and ignore the other meanings that are involved. Jehovah's Witnesses are very adept at such. Witness their efforts on "nephesh", "sheol", etc. Not only does it result in false doctrine, but, as Bruce Metzger pointed out, at best, it gives their translation a "certain woodenness". In addition to other considerations, the "woodenness" of the New World Translation caused the late H. H. Rowley to entitle his review of the New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures "How Not To Translate the Bible." (Emphasis mine, HOH).

There are many words which, while the root idea may be obvious, the context will often give to the word

a specific or technical meaning not possible in other contexts. Perhaps I have made a poor choice to illustrate this, but a word that intrigues me along these lines is the word apolou. The basic idea is that of "release" or to "loose from". The word appears something like 68 times in the New Testament. It is the word that is used to describe "divorce". "Whoever divorces" (or puts away "his wife, etc." (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). But it is also used in Matt. 14:15 where Jesus sent away the multitude of 5,000. Surely he didn't divorce them! In the KJ translation the word is translated forgive in Luke 6:37. This same kind of technical application exists in such words as diakonos (translated deacon, minister, etc.). Generally the word means serve or service. It is broad to include all Christians (John 12:26), Civil Government, (Romans 13:4), angels (Matt. 4:11), and at times, though surely not exclusively, even preachers! In 1 Tim. 3:12 it has a special or technical meaning where deacons (diakonos) are required to be the husband of one wife. Certainly this is not required of all Christians; definitely it does not apply to angels, who never marry (Matt. 22:30). Surely the word has a technical meaning. If nothing else, it is "religious" for I never met a man that said before voting for another for political office (a "diakonos" according to Rom. 13:4) he would check to see if the political candidate measured up to 1 Tim. 3:12-13).

The same could be shown for elders.

543 Midfield Street
Birmingham, AL 35228



OUR MAIL

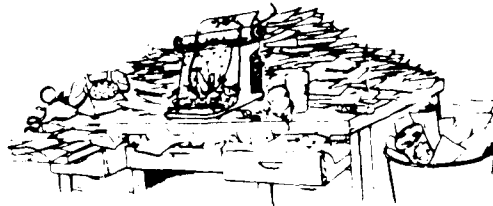
Since we began this enlarged effort in "THE REFLECTOR", we have received more mail than we can answer. We hope those who have written will understand. Each piece of mail is personally read and appreciated. The kind words encourage us to do better, so does criticism. Some have asked if we are willing to more people on the mailing list. **Yes**, by all means. We just ask that the additions be ones that would likely read it before placing it in "file 13".

OUR WORKERS

There would be no way that this effort could be accomplished without some good help. We have some of the best. One night each month this preacher's house is buzzing with other members of the congregation who have come to assemble, staple, address and bundle these papers for mailing. It sure takes a lot of work off this old editor. I sure hope they keep it up. I would hate to tackle 2,000 plus papers alone. Many thanks to these brothers and sisters.

OUR COLUMNISTS

We have three fine gospel preachers who have agreed to write columns for THE REFLECTOR on a regular basis, more or less. I have known these men for nearly two decades, one even longer. I asked them to write because I respect their



scriptural knowledge and writing ability, to be sure -- but that is not all. I equally respect their character, spirituality, and love for truth. In my judgement, their names attached to any effort would be an asset, if they wrote not a word.

HIRAM HUTTO, as he has from the first issue, will continue his word study column. He knows and loves words (to great profit). His articles are always interesting and helpful. They are simple enough that even I, with a little help, can understand them--yet deep enough for those who want to go beyond "milk" and take on "strong meat".

CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR. will handle our "questions" column. He has proven himself to be a keen student of the Bible and has a great deal of writing experience. I have profited from his preaching and writing for many years. Not that he is that old but started young. Our readers may send questions to him at his address printed at the close of his column elsewhere in this issue. Sending them to me will only delay them and could get them lost.

BARNEY KEITH has agreed to write under the heading, "Scriptures within their Setting". Many of our readers remember that brother Keith (now of Hueytown, Ala.) for a number of years edited the "East Flor-

ence Contender", a very fine paper published by the East Florence (Ala.) church. His column should be enlightening and interesting to those who love to study the Scriptures within their contextual setting.

SHOULD YOU TAKE EXCEPTION

It maybe that these men, the editor, or other writers will express things with which you might take exception. We just ask that you give them due consideration, in the light of the scriptures, and accept or reject based upon the evidence. If one should think that a reply needs to be made, make it and mail it to us. We might even print it, if, in our judgement, it is not too long nor unworthy of publication in a paper like this. We will have to be the judge of that--a job that no editor relishes but cannot avoid. As some have learned in the past, this editor will not knowingly publish a purely personal attack on any man.

As "the pillar and ground of the truth", the church has an obligation to teach and support the truth. It should encourage a search for the truth. In this search, it is often necessary to give opportunity for "all sides" (if that is possible) to be heard. So, we see nothing inconsistent about a church paper publishing materials with which we might not agree. We may even say that we disagree. We want the truth if we don't have it. We want our readers to have the truth. To this end this paper is published. **END**

Are You Tired of TV?
Is Your World Turning Badly?

Turn it Off

Turn On

BIBLE TALK
Monday thru Friday - 12:30 P. M.
W A T V Radio - 900 on a.m.

Questions: Their use in the Learning Process

The question has many functions in the learning process. They are used to determine one's knowledge on a subject--thus testing. Another common use is that of imparting knowledge -- usually such questions are rhetorical in nature. We often find such use in the Scriptures.

However, the most common purpose for questions is that of SEEKING INFORMATION. This use of the question is not only frequently in the Scriptures, but the child of God is charged to "be ready" to ANSWER such as pertain to our faith (I Pet. 3:15).

There is no more important area in which we should ask and answer questions than that of Spiritual matters, for these have to do with the eternal destiny of our souls. Thus, if there are matters of a Spiritual nature about which we are lacking in understanding, it is not only PROPER that we ask questions, it is vitally IMPORTANT that we do so! However, we should be careful as to WHERE we seek the answers to our questions in these matters. As stated above, we should be concerned

with "what saith the answer of God?" Many jeopardize their eternal welfare by accepting the answers of HUMAN WISDOM to questions where man is incapable of knowing, save as he turns to the Almighty God in His revelation.

Brother Bragwell has requested of this writer that I edit a question column in this journal. I am honored; and yet, humbled at the sense of such responsibility. I am well aware of my inadequacy in this field. But, I am as thoroughly convinced that within the Inspired Scriptures we have the answer to man's every single question that pertain to the salvation of our souls. (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16ff.).

We are, as noted above, to be ready to give answer to every man that asketh a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15), but we must understand that unless the answer we give to Spiritual questions is indeed "the answer of God", it will not only fail to be of benefit to the questioner, it may, by misleading him, cause the eternal doom

of his soul! With this in mind, I approach this assignment with "fear and trembling," and yet with confidence that if you will submit BIBLE QUESTIONS we can find BIBLE ANSWERS to the same.

The apostle Paul says that our faith "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (that is, the gospel of Christ - Rom. 1:16)... that we are to "walk by faith," and that faith cometh by hearing... the word of God" (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17). We must therefore turn to the Inspired Scriptures for the answers to all matters which have to do with the eternal welfare of our souls.

We solicit your questions; not that we would exalt our own wisdom, or that of other uninspired men, but that we might, by turning to the expressions of "the wisdom of God;" THE WORD OF GOD; help you to come to a better understanding of His will.

If you should have such questions, then please address them to:

CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR.
1744 Steiner Avenue, S.W.
Birmingham, Alabama 35211

Questions and Answers Concerning the New Testament Church

C. D. PLUM

1. Who was the founder of the New Testament church?

Jesus was the founder of the New Testament church. The psalmist prophesied of this 'house,' or 'church,' like this: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Ps. 127: 1.) And our Lord himself prophesied of the church while he was on earth. He said: "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. 16: 18.) That Jesus kept his promise to build this church, or spiritual tabernacle, is evident from the following Scripture: "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb. 8: 2.) The verb "pitched" is in the past tense. This signifies that this true tabernacle, or church, had already been established at the time of this writing, and this letter was written in about A.D. 64. So sometime previous to this date the Lord had established his church according to his promise.

2. When was the New Testament church established?

According to the date given in the King James Version of the Bible, Jesus was about thirty years old when he was baptized. (Luke 3: 21-23.) Christ's personal ministry on earth after his baptism lasted about three and one-half years. This makes his ministry closing in A.D. 33. It was fifty-three days after Jesus' death, and fifty days after his resurrection, that Jesus established his church, the history of which beginning is found in Acts 2. This church of Christ is five hundred seventy-three years older than its nearest competitor, which had its beginning in Rome in A.D. 608.

3. Where was the New Testament church established?

This church was established in the city of Jerusalem, in the land of Palestine. God's prophet, Isaiah, prophesied that "the Lord's house" (this New Testament church) would begin in this Jerusalem (Isa. 2: 2, 3); and the writer of the Acts of the Apostles specified this Jerusalem as being the "beginning" place (Luke 24: 46-49). Moreover, when the church was actually established, a record of which is found in Acts 2, it did take place in this same city of Jerusalem. The Church of Rome (Catholic Church) had its beginning in Rome, not Jerusalem. So the Catholic Church began in the wrong city and in the wrong year to be the church of the New Testament.

4. Who is the head of the New Testament church?

Jesus is the head of the New Testament

church. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him [Christ] to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) "The government shall be upon his shoulder." (Isa. 9: 6; note also Col. 1: 18.)

Peter never was, and never was intended to be, the head of the New Testament church. All such teaching is false teaching.

5. Who is the foundation of the New Testament church?

Jesus Christ is the foundation of this church. Not his literal, physical body, of course; but his truth, his teaching. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3: 11.) There is no foundation for the true church other than those truths taught by our Savior; and the fact that the apostles and prophets had a part in preaching these truths which form the foundation of the church is the reason for the following language, and is the only reason for it: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2: 20-22.)

Peter held no pre-eminence over the other apostles. Paul said of himself: "I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." (2 Cor. 11: 5.) And the claim made for Peter that the church was built upon him is a false claim and founded neither upon Scripture nor reason.

6. By what names was the New Testament church called?

"The churches of Christ salute you." (Rom. 16: 16.) The expression "churches of Christ" refers to the various congregations of this one church. Then "church of Christ" would refer to one congregation of this one church. "The church of God which is at Corinth." (1 Cor. 1: 2.) "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20: 28.) Jesus himself is called "God." (Heb. 1: 8.) Yes, he is called the "Mighty God." (Isa. 9: 6.) Hence, the name "church of God" honors Christ the same as the name "church of Christ." We may safely call the church by any name the New Testament uses, but we should not employ other names for the church which the New Testament does not use. "There is one body." (Eph. 4: 4.) "There shall be one fold." (John 10: 16.) He "called the elders of the church." (Acts 20: 17.)

7. By what names were the members of this church called?

"Disciples" (Acts 11: 26) "Christians" (Acts 11: 26); "saints" (Phil. 1: 1); "brethren" (Heb. 2: 11); "children" (Heb. 2: 14).

8. By what creed is this church governed?

The meaning of "creed" is "belief." The only creed, therefore, that governs the New Testament church is Christ and his gospel. (1 Cor. 1: 1-5; 1 Cor. 15: 1-3.) This church is not governed by any human creed."

9. What steps must people take to enter the New Testament church?

One must believe (Heb. 11: 6); one must repent of his sins (Luke 13: 3); one must confess Jesus to be God's Son (Matt. 10: 32; Acts 8: 37; Rom. 10: 10); one must be buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Col. 2: 12; Acts 2: 38).

10. How does the New Testament church worship?

By singing, not playing (Heb. 2: 12); by praying (Acts 2: 42); by giving as prospered on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2); by communing (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 10: 16) every first day of the week.

11. What is the work of the New Testament church?

Preaching the gospel of Christ. (Eph. 3: 10.) The church supports this preaching directly, just like the church at Philippi sent directly its support to Paul at Thessalonica. (Phil. 4: 15-17.) Whether we have a many-men missionary society or a one-man missionary society, this separate organization is unscriptural; and if we are not very careful, this one-church sponsorship, with the monies from various smaller congregations going through its treasury, is going to be a big sin among us if it is not already so. Here I fear a departure from the faith, even as it is so in every case where the church treasury supports secular education or other human institutions. This clearing-house proposition for many local treasuries is a step which led to digression.

Caring for the needy is also the work of the New Testament church. (Acts 11: 29, 30.) And this, too, is to be done as the church and through the church, and not through the Red Cross or any other human agency. The local church, for church work, is the biggest thing through which the church can work. These combines, foundations, and what have you, for benevolent work are as unscriptural as the combines for preaching the gospel.

12. How do members of the New Testament church live?

They are supposed to remain faithful worshipers (Heb. 10: 25; John 4: 24), and to live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.)

13. If the members of the New Testament church walk disorderly, what is usually done about it?

Usually nothing is done about it, but such members are supposed to be withdrawn from. (2 Thess. 3: 6; 1 Cor. 5: 13.)

14. Who is responsible for the guidance of the local congregation?

Elders are to have the scriptural oversight (1 Pet. 5: 1-3.) Deacons are to look after the temporal affairs under the oversight of the elders. (Acts 6: 1-4.) Preachers are to preach. (Rom. 1: 15, 16.)

GOSPEL ADVOCATE

November 3, 1949

OUR NEXT MEETING

May 4 - 10
Bill Lambert

Plan to attend!

Read the BIBLE Regularly

MAY

Day	O.T.	N.T.
1	I Ki. 1,2	Lk. 22:54-71
2	I Ki. 3-5	Lk. 23:1-26
3	I Ki. 6,7	Lk. 23:27-38
4	I Ki. 8,9	Lk. 23:39-56
5	I Ki. 10,11	Lk. 24:1-35
6	I Ki. 12,13	Lk. 24:36-53
7	I Ki. 14,15	Jn. 1:1-28
8	I Ki. 16-18	Jn. 1:29-51
9	I Ki. 19,20	Jn. 2
10	I Ki. 21,22	Jn. 3:1-21
11	II Ki. 1-3	Jn. 3:22-36
12	II Ki. 4,5	Jn. 4:1-30
13	II Ki. 6-8	Jn. 4:31-54
14	II Ki. 9-11	Jn. 5:1-24
15	II Ki. 12-14	Jn. 5:25-47
16	II Ki. 15-17	Jn. 6:1-21
17	II Ki. 18-19	Jn. 6:22-44
18	II Ki. 20-22	Jn. 6:45-71
19	II Ki. 23-25	Jn. 7:1-31
20	I Chr. 1,2	Jn. 7:32-53
21	I Chr. 3-5	Jn. 8:1-20
22	I Chr. 6,7	Jn. 8:21-36
23	I Chr. 8-10	Jn. 8:37-59
24	I Chr. 11-13	Jn. 9:1-23
25	I Chr. 14-16	Jn. 9:24-34
26	I Chr. 17-19	Jn. 9:35-41
27	I Chr. 20-22	Jn. 10:1-21
28	I Chr. 23-25	Jn. 10:22-42
29	I Chr. 26,27	Jn. 11:1-17
30	I Chr. 28,29	Jn. 11:18-46
31	II Chr. 1-3	Jn. 11:47-57

What Happens To 1975?

Many will doubtless say "nothing has happened to 1975; it's still here." And that's true. It is. However, I am referring to the 1975 which the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses" have been talking about for the past nine years. This was to be the year which would mark the end of the world, or the year for which "Armageddon" was predicted.

For some strange reason the "Jehovah's Witnesses" are revising their prediction. In the March 2, 1975 issue of the Louisville Courier -- Journal we note these words: "Faced with an anticipated Sept. 5 deadline and growing expectation among many Witnesses, F.W. Franz, the sect's 81-year old chief theologian, has put the damper on specific references to the war to end all wars." Now Mr. Franz says "it could be years before Armageddon." This acknowledgement is in spite of the fact that "since 1966, the Watchtower Society has been saying the Fall of 1975 would mark the point 6,000 years from the creation of Adam in 4,026 B.C. - a date derived by the Witnesses from their own Bible chronology" (Incidentally, their founder, "Pastor" Russell, said, the "six thousand years from Adam ended in A.D. 1872" - cf. "Studies in the Scriptures", Series I, unnumbered pages at back of the book).

Regardless of what the Witnesses NOW say about "Armageddon" not being "definitely predicted for 1975," it is nevertheless a well documented fact that they definitely caused their followers to believe that 1975 was "definitely predicted" to

be the year for the destruction of the present worldly political systems, and of all unbelievers. They also knew that some of their deceived and deluded members virtually dropped out of society and made many financial adjustments in their anticipation of the soon demise of the worldly system as we know it. After all, why should a high school graduate three years ago enroll in a college which he had been led to believe would be destroyed before time for graduation? And why should last year's job seeker look for a job with excellent retirement benefits 20 years from now, knowing full well that the prospective company had only one more year to exist? And with reference to giving sacrificially with reference to giving sacrificially to support "Jehovah's Witness" efforts, why should any "Witness" mind parting with all his savings over and above what it takes to survive until the Fall of 1975?

The leaders of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" knew these adjustments being made by some of their followers in anticipation of the Fall of 1975. And they knew these people believed these things because they believed what they (the Leaders) had taught them. Yet they deliberately waited eight years before they began to suggest they might be wrong in the date which they, with their usual degree of dogmatism, had announced. Why were they intentionally a part of and a party to a carefully contrived fraud, when they were bound to know ahead of time that their lie would inconvenience some even to the point of perpetual

ppened

Bobby Witherington

poverty, and which would in all probability have to be later" explained" even to their own embarrassment-- unless, of course, their consciences have become so seared as to render personal embarrassment virtually impossible.

They made these predictions for the same reasons they ALWAYS made such predictions -- to put life "into a sagging growth rate!" They know how easily people forget, and how gullible some people are (a fact re-affirmed every time one becomes a "Jehovah's Witness") and they know the flurry of activity a new just-around-the-corner announcement of "Armageddon" (another term about which they know less than nothing) will generate. This sort of thing is nothing new to the "Jehovah's Witness" movement. "Pastor" Russell, the infamous founder of the movement, declared of the Gentiles: "the full end of their lease of dominion will be reached in A. D. 1914; and that date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men." ("Studies in the Scriptures," Series II, Page 77). Mr. Russell died in 1916 and Volume VII of "Studies in The Scriptures" was published after his death, but therein we are told that the "nominal church," culminating in 1918, would be removed of "erroneous doctrine and deeds" (p. 485), and that the "entire destruction of nominal Christendon" would be "accomplished" 40 years "from the beginning of the Harvest - A. D. 1918." This meant that by 1958 "nominal Christendon" would be entirely destroyed! "Judge" Rutherford, who succeeded the deceased

"Pastor" Russell, also tried his hand at date-setting. In a book, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" (Copyright, 1920), Mr. Rutherford said: "1925 shall mark the resurrection of the faithful worthies of old and the beginning of reconstruction" (P. 97). He also said that such men as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be resurrected, be "fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth" (p. 88).

William J. Schnell in his book, "30 Years A Watchtower Slave," described himself and his work in the "Jehovah's Witness" organization. Therein he mentioned the "discrepancy" which some of the more mature among the Witnesses began to notice as 1925 approached. 1925 was predicted to mark the "end of the present wicked world;" yet the Society INCREASED its activities in "buying land, building, ordering printing presses..." (P. 30). The Society prepared for EXPANSION at a time when such things supposedly were to be destroyed! This proves the Society did not believe their own 1925 prophecy -- yet continued to make it anyway. Not only was their prediction a lie, it was a deliberately contrived lie!

"Jehovah's Witnesses" are a people to be pitied. Seldom has any system proved more capable of brainwashing its subjects. But even brainwashed people need jolting into action now and then, and for such people, nothing appears so effective as a new end-of-the-world prophecy in the near future. As Mr. Schnell

APRIL MEETINGS

- 6-11 NORTH GARDENDALE
Different Speakers
- 13-18 MT. OLIVE
Dale Smelser
- 20-25 HUFFMAN
Pat Farish (a. m. - p. m.)
- 21-25 BERNEY POINTS
Robert Jackson
- 20-25 MIDFIELD
Robert Bunting
- 27-M2 BLACK CREEK
Al Watkins
- 27-M4 VESTAVIA
David Claypool
- 27-M3 SUMITON
Hiram Hutto



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1975? Continued

says in his book, "they have delusions of persecution and Armageddon tremors." (P. 100).

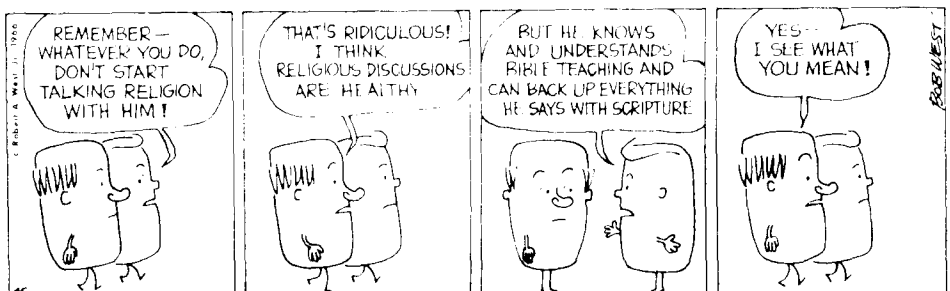
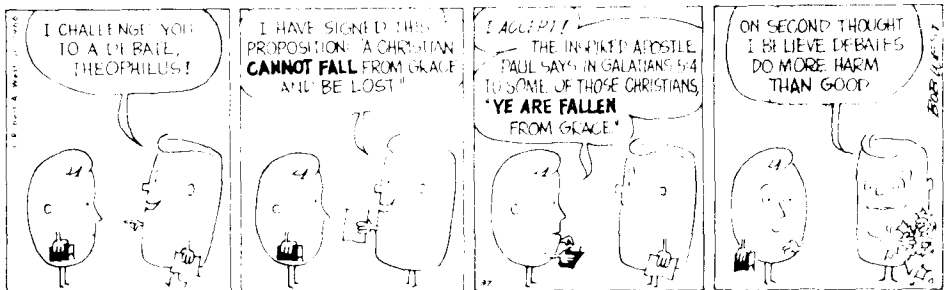
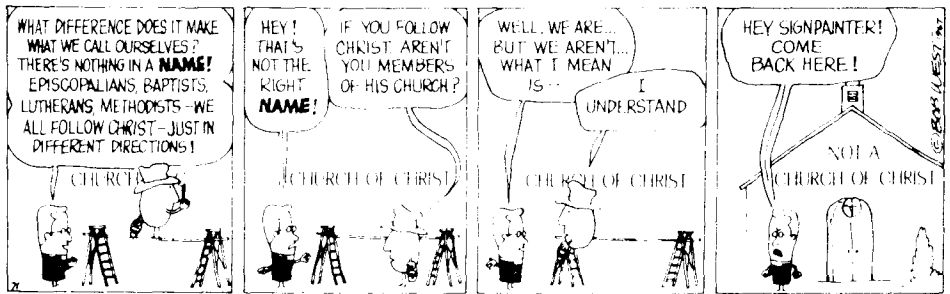
Notwithstanding what I've said about date-setting, I'm not denying that the Lord might come in the Fall of 1975. "Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42). "...the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5: 2). We have no way of knowing when our Lord will come--whether it be this Spring, this Summer, this Fall, or any season or year afterwards. The Lord could indeed come in the Fall of 1975. If he does, it will not be related to the jumbled, and oft re-arranged time calendar of the "Jehovah's Witnesses". And if He does come this year, I doubt that anyone will be more surprized than the ones who made the 1975 prediction!

The entire "Jehovah's Witness" movement consists of a hodge-podge of perverted passages taken out of context. It was founded by an immoral false prophet whose "prophecies" proved as false as his character. And it is perpetuated by his heirs who are equally as materialistically inclined, and who still feel compelled to resort to false date-setting in order to scare their deluded subjects into a flurry of "Witnessing" activity.

Let us not be resentful of them when they come to our doors. They need help. Let us study the Bible so that we can provide the help they so desperately need. They are included among that vast number God loves (John 3:16), and to whom we should carry the true gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15). Occasionally a "Witness" is converted. Not only does he rejoice in being made "free" (cf. John 8:32); he usually proves to be a very active Christian who seeks the salvation of others. **END**

409 N. 10th Street
Murray, KY 42081

THEOPHILUS



SCRIPTURES within their SETTINGS

Barney Keith

2 Peter 1:20

One who studies the Bible must exercise great care not to "wrest the Scriptures," for distorting God's word leads to destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). One way of wresting Scripture is to put an arbitrary construction on a verse without considering its setting or context. Divorcing a verse from its setting frequently prevents an understanding of God's word. No passage should ever be isolated from the material that surrounds it. In this column of "The Reflector" we plan to examine some Bible passages which have often been "explained" as teaching that is not actually in harmony with the context. Hopefully, this can help us to be more careful in our handling of the sacred text.

A LOOK AT 2 PETER 1:20

"No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Based on this statement, without regard for what is said either before or after it, many have contended that Peter says the ordinary man is not able to understand the Bible. Hence, Catholics believe they need the official and infallible interpretation of "the Church" through its clergy. Such a view, in effect, discourages personal Bible study and thereby encourages ignorance. Many Protestant people have also thought Peter meant that one cannot really understand the Bible without some special help (usually they think there must be aid from the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way). This is not at all what the apostle says in 2 Peter 1:20.

VIEWED IN ITS SETTING

It is suggested that each one read verses 16 through 21 in this chapter. A study of the context reveals that Peter was not discussing whether the prophet's message could be understood, but rather the source from which he obtained his message! His concern was with origin, NOT with understandability. In verses 16-19 Peter declared that what the prophets had spoken about Christ had to be true, for the prophecies had been fulfilled. The apostles had been eye-witnesses to the coming and the work of Jesus Christ. Thus, the New International Version puts it, Peter said, "We have the word of the prophets made more certain..."

Following this Peter explained WHY the words of the prophets were so completely true and reliable-- THEY HAD OBTAINED THOSE WORDS FROM GOD! (That is really what verses 20 and 21 state.) There were two possible sources for the words of the prophets: (1) they could have manufactured them of their own minds or wills; or (2) they could have received them from God. Peter affirmed that it was the second. Observe the two verses together: "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. FOR the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Thus the prophets were NOT expressing ("interpreting") their own private feelings or wills to the people; they were guided in what they spoke by the Holy Spirit. It is evident that verse 21 is a commentary on verse 20. Note how the two verses are parallel, saying the SAME thing in two different ways:

Verse 20: "Prophecy of Scripture"
(is not of)
"private interpretation"

Verse 21: "Prophecy"
(came not by the)
"will of man"

The "private interpretation" is simply the "will of man." So, as stated before, Peter was telling his readers where prophecy came from. He was not referring at all to whether his readers would be able to understand it.

Certainly a man who sincerely studies the Scriptures can come to an understanding of God's will for him. The very purpose for writing the Bible would be thwarted if men cannot understand. In fact, Paul says that he knew the Ephesians would be able to understand what he had written to them (Eph. 3:3, 4). The word of God can be "rightly divided" or "handled aright" (2 Tim. 2:15). Let no one, therefore, use 2 Peter 1:20 in such a way as to contradict such plain teaching. God wants men to "know the truth" so they can be made free (John 8:32).

The exact sense of Peter's words are conveyed in the New International Version of the New Testament: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

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A Man Saved on his way Home from Worship

EDWARD O. BRAGWELL

The treasurer of the Ethiopian queen, Candace, was returning from worship services in Jerusalem, when a wonderful thing happened. As he read from his Bible, in Isaiah 53, a man came running up and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" From this question the conversation continued and ultimately the treasurer experienced salvation of Jesus Christ.

The full story of this man's salvation is told in Acts 8:26-39. The story is factual and accurate in every detail, because it is told by one inspired of God. It can be divided into three significant events:

1. THE BRINGING TOGETHER OF THE PREACHER AND THE SINNER. Phillip, the evangelist, was one of the select few who had direct supernatural guidance and power. In the early days of the church while God's revelation as being given, certain ones were given special powers by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The apostles (Acts 2) received this power

directly from heaven. Other received it through the laying on of the apostles' hands. (Acts 8:17, 18). The purpose was to reveal God's will through these people and give them the means to perform miraculous signs, so that they could convince folks that they indeed were receiving direct revelation from heaven (cf. Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3, 4). We, today, have the complete results of their work in the written New Testament. The age of direct revelation and the accompanying confirming miracles ceased with the completion of the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-13).

It is interesting to notice that the preacher, Phillip, was the one instructed directly from heaven and not the sinner. It pleased God to save sinners by the preaching of the gospel through human instruments and not by direct messages from heaven to the sinner (1 Cor. 1:25; Gal. 1:8, 9). Everything I know about salvation came through human in-

strumentality. Every line of the New was written by the inspiration of God through specially chosen human beings. When I believed and obeyed the message, I was saved. If you are waiting for God to directly speak "sweet peace to your soul", you are destined to be either disappointed or convince yourself--against all Biblical teaching--that such has happened. You may even misinterpret a perfectly natural experience to be a divine message of salvation because of your expectation of such an experience. Our feelings sometimes play deceptive tricks on us--but the Bible is always right.

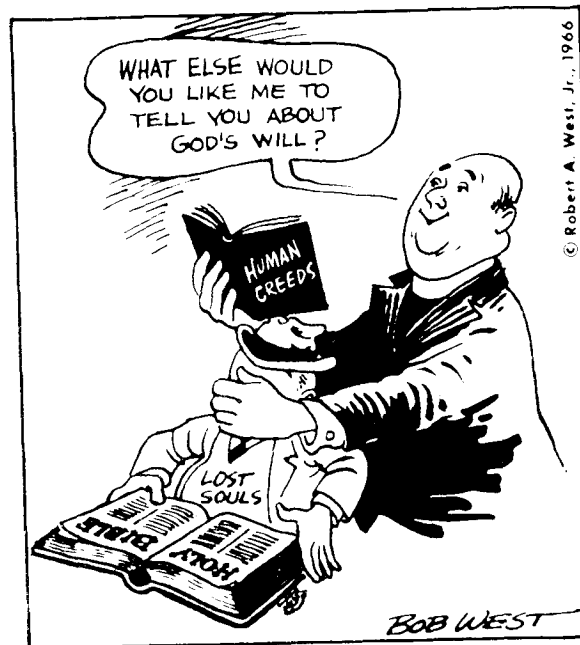
2. THE PREACHING OF JESUS TO THE TREASURER. Phillip was eager to preach and the treasurer was eager to learn. (vs. 30, 31). It is sad that many preachers would have hesitated to try to reach one of such high political position. Besides that, he was already religious. He was at that very moment returning from worship and reading the Bible. But, without obedience to the gospel, every man is lost regardless of his position or religious piety. Too many, in the Treasurers' position would have had no time for a simple gospel preacher. Besides, what did he need with a preacher--especially one of a different "faith"? He was already a member of a religious order that could boast of members by the multitudes and enjoyed political power. But this man wanted the truth.

Phillip preached Jesus unto him. The text does not tell all that was preached about Jesus. Since the treasurer was reading from Isaiah 53, it seems as a starter he pointed out that Jesus fulfilled that passage. Enough was said to convince the man of the deity of Jesus and that he needed water baptism (v. 36). It is incredible to think that one can really preach Jesus fully without preaching the necessity of baptism. Jesus was not only baptized himself, he commanded it for the whole world just before ascending back to heaven (Mt.

28:18-20; Mk. 16:15:16).

3. THE RESPONSE OF THE TREASURER TO PHILLIP'S PREACHING. He asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" There was no haste over it's being really necessary. No bringing up cases of probable salvation without baptism from the old order of things, such as the "thief on the cross". He was reading from Isaiah, but he did not argue that he wanted to be saved just like Isaiah might have been. He did not say, "Isaiah was saved without baptism, and what was good enough for Isaiah is good enough for me". He was eager to do what was commanded of him under the gospel of Christ. He immediately confessed his faith in Christ and was baptized in water (vs. 37-39). He was immersed or else why would both he and Phillip both go down into the water. Some have objected that he could not have been immersed, since they were in a desert. But "desert" is not necessarily a place void of water. Jesus fed some folks in a desert -- but there was GREEN grass to sit on. (Mk. 6:35,36).

Does your conversion story correspond to this one? Did you hear Christ preached--either orally or written? Did you believe it? Did you repent? Did you confess Christ? Were you baptized in water--not to show your salvation--but in order to be saved? Notice that the treasurer was baptized immediately. He waited for no church to vote on him. He waited for no one else to decide to be baptized with him, so they could have a "big baptizing day". He did not even wait until he had returned home. He did not even rejoice until after he was baptized. It was urgent for him. Baptism is an urgent matter because salvation is at stake. Bible baptism is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) or "to wash away sins" (Acts 22:16). I had rather have what the Bible says, than a stack of human "testimonies" ten feet tall! Hadn't you? END



Our Religious World

Sell the Ox or Fill up the Ditch

JOE R. BURNETT

People often soothe their consciences for missing services, by saying: "The ox was in the ditch." Once when Jesus was criticized for healing on the Sabbath, he asked: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (Luke 14: 5). He was trying to show them the stupidity of their reasoning. They knew they would not hesitate in rescuing an ox. Human life was even more valuable.

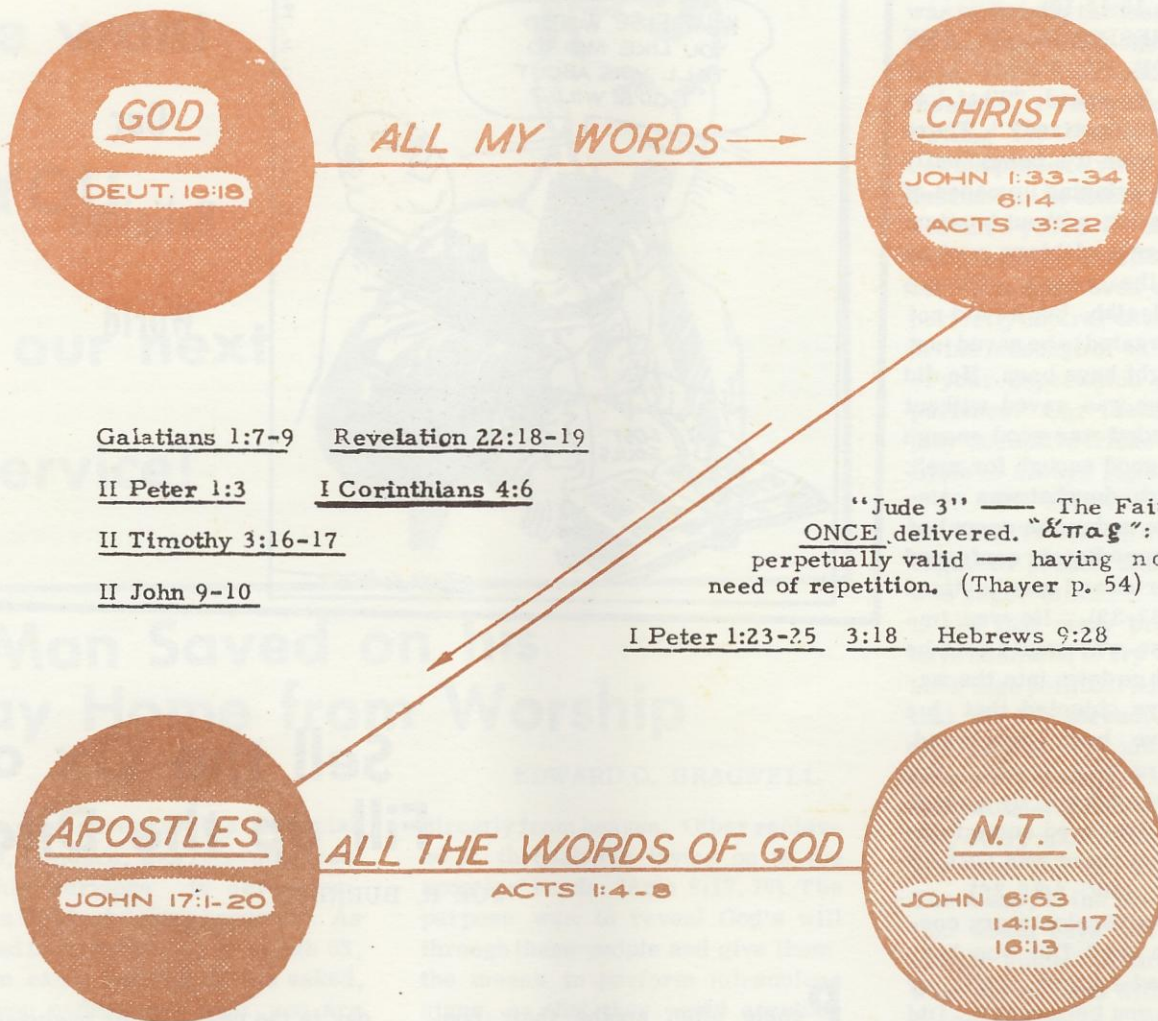
Many still seize this phrase to excuse (or try to) missing services. If they feel a little bad (but no worse on Monday when they go to work); if they have worked hard all week and need a rest; if they are behind with their work; or if they make good money through the week, but Sun-

day is the best day for business; or double-time is too tempting, then "the ox is in the ditch", and they must forsake the Lord to take care of the ox! To these brethren who so misinterpret the passage, may I suggest this:

(1) Sell the ox. If you had an ox that went around looking for a ditch to fall into, you would likely sell him. If your business demands so much time that you cannot serve the Lord, SELL IT!

(2). Fill up the ditch. If a ditch is located so that an ox will continually fall into it, then fill up the ditch! And if the ox doesn't fall in, we'll push him in. Brethren for the sake of your eternal salvation, SELL THE OX OR FILL UP THE DITCH!
END

GOD'S LAST REVELATION



"...BY WHAT AUTHORITY DOEST THOU THESE THINGS? AND WHO GAVE THEE THIS AUTHORITY?.... FROM HEAVEN, OR OF MEN?..." MATTHEW 21:23-24. Religious authority is all-important. The only authority we can depend on is given from GOD to CHRIST to the APOSTLES and they wrote it all in the NEW TESTAMENT! You can learn this by reading all the scriptures on the chart.

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