

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to:
THE BAPTIST HERITAGE
2200 West Michigan Avenue
Pensacola, FL 32526-2379

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID AT
PENSACOLA,
FLORIDA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

a good place to visit
but
a better place to belong

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

SEPTEMBER 20, 2005

Family Affairs

The Book of the Revelation is the only Book in the Bible that begins with a direct statement of the purpose of the Book and then provides the three-point outline of the Book—we could even say that we are provided with a Table of Contents in the first chapter.

[Revelation 1] 1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, I have no quarrel with the title of the Book as found in the Authorized Version, but this Book of all the Books of the Bible is to be understood as The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This Book is given to us to reveal the LORD Jesus for us as no other Book—here, we have the summation of all the types and pictures that are given or mentioned beginning in Genesis and flowing through Jude. Here, we find Him depicted as the Lamb and the Lion, the Servant and the King, the Faithful Witness, the First Begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the One that loved us, washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—the One Who is coming in the clouds. The closest approach to a portrait of Jesus of Nazareth that we have in the New Testament is verbally drawn later in this opening chapter:

"One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

This description [which wonderfully images the Son of the Highest, the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2)] contrasts dramatically with the portrait that we are given in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, chapters 52 and 53 of the Servant of the LORD.

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were as-

(Continued on page 3)



this and that

Editor and Staff

Jerald L. Manley D. D.

J. Alan Wolf

Gary Roland

As I read Baptist histories, I am fascinated by the "heavy" doctrinal discussions and debates in which our forefathers engaged each other, non-Baptist believers, and even heretics and atheists. I fear many of those presently occupying Baptist pulpits and pews, in a historically un-Baptist manner, are so engaged in the "being relevant" business that doctrine

and practice are forgotten. I never write because I believe all who read what I have penned will agree; I hope, instead, to challenge my readers with what I have written regarding a particular issue of Bible doctrine or practice and to provoke them [Hebrews 10:24], thereby, unto thought, "love and good works." And, I invite, even welcome, critiques and suggestions because "iron sharpeneth iron." —Pastor Manley

This publication is mailed to you on purpose.

Someone who knows of you believed that you would profit by reading it.

If you do not agree, we will remove your name from the next possible mailing.

We have no desire to intrude or to offend.

Phone: 850-944-5545 * Fax: 850-944-9822
E-mail: JERALD.L.MANLEY@GTE.NET

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

(428-290)

is published monthly by
THE HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH
of PENSACOLA,
2200 West Michigan Avenue,
Pensacola, Florida 32526-2379.
PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE is sent without charge to members of the church and, by request, to interested friends of this church. There are no subscription charges and no paid advertisements are accepted.

VOLUME XXIX ISSUE NUMBER 9
SEPTEMBER 20, 2005.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 22)

must be understood and used as they are defined by Scripture and not by someone's systematic theology. I insist that all who are "born of God" are born into the family of God. I insist that Israel is not the same as the family of God. I also insist that Israel and the church are separate and that the church and the family are not identical. I freely confess, however, that I cannot find a direct identification of the composition of "the bride, the Lamb's wife" in any text of Scripture. I believe that any imposed definition is, therefore, nothing more than a speculative assumption. Others may, but I am not willing to base either preaching or fellowship on the flimsy thread of tenuous speculation. I am content to wait until the "marriage supper" to discover the identity of the bride. Why should I presumptuously conjecture about the things that the LORD has chosen not to reveal when I have the Gospel to proclaim?

Most of my readers each month are believers—actually, over 80% are Baptist preachers. Yet, I know that there are some who are reading this that are members of a church, but have never been born into the family of God. Do not let the discussions between preachers distract you from the central issue of life—"Where will you live in eternity?" Church membership will not grant you an entrance into Heaven, the place the LORD Jesus called "My Father's house." To enter Heaven, to go the Father's house, you need to be born of God, born into His family, just as Nicodemus did [John 3]. You must be born again.

—Pastor Manley

I do not know who wrote the following poem, but I like it. I will gladly give credit if I ever discover the author.

*If . . . in the blink of an eye
Our family is gone and no trace is left behind,
Find God's word here in our house
The explanation is found inside.
This home has housed many gatherings
Of loved ones young and old,
Look around and view the effects
Of faith and hope lived courageously bold.
So, take whatever you may like
We won't be coming back,
Just let us say one final time
That Jesus Christ is LORD . . .
And that is that. . .*

Reprint permission always granted;
acknowledgment is appreciated.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 21)

Godhead is not connected exclusively with this present world but clearly extends beyond time.

I say again that I am not certain that I yet understand exactly who comprises "the bride, the Lamb's wife" as identified in Revelation. This leaves me open to a particular attack from my "universal church" friends, who are bold to insist that *they do* understand the composition of "the Bride," insisting that "the [universal] church is the Bride." Since neither that definition or that term is found in any verse of Scripture, their designation is arbitrarily imposed upon manufactured terms. Even though I do not accept their capricious manipulation of the words, they insist, however, that when I use the word "church," I must be using it with their definition that it is a synonym for "bride." Their assumption is as false as their presumption to manipulate my words. I do not find the universal church to be taught in Scripture, but I continue to use the word "church" as I believe the Bible uses it [to describe a church in a geographically identified location]; therefore, some "universal church" friends accuse me of being a "Baptist-brider." In such cases, I have not found any response that will do much to further the discussion. It is difficult to hold a sincere conversation when the other participant chooses to define the terms as he pleases, to assert his personal assumptions as facts, and intentionally to distort my position.

One Pensacola pastor of "universal church persuasion," accepting the challenge to read Corinthians as I suggest above, advised me months later, that he was compelled to quit the reading; because, he said, that if he finished, then he would have to change his preaching. My first thought was that when reading the Bible causes any preacher to change his preaching, then he should eagerly read more Bible. I realized in later thought, that finished or not, the reading had already changed his understanding of the Scriptures and that he had made the deliberate decision that he would not or could not face the presumed consequences of correcting a doctrinal error. To sacrifice Biblical truth for pulpit security is certainly something less than the scriptural integrity held by past generations of Baptists. Had he said that he had considered the argument and disagreed with my position, I would have felt no loss of respect for him. However, to refuse to consider the concept because of some measure of cowardice does not merit admiration.

The major problem of my brethren [With charity, I believe that *they* are in the family and that *we are brothers*.] is that they falsely assume that only those "in the church are saved." There is no statement within Scripture that makes that assertion. My friends are confused regarding the difference between the family and the church. Those are distinct Bible terms [as distinct as "Israel" and "church"] and

(Continued on page 23)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 1)

tonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

This remarkable contrast is precisely the conflict that the apostle Peter writes as the motive for the prophets and the people to devote earnest time in "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

This God-given Revelation of Jesus Christ continues this "Forward" to explain the purpose of the Book.

[Revelation 1] 1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. 4 John to the seven CHURCHES which are in Asia:

(Continued on page 4)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 3)

The "Forward" having been completed, the apostle John now begins his salutation to the specific servants (verse 1) that are to receive this Revelation. The Book is addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia."

Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come;

While it is easy to overlook, this "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" is God the Father. In verses 4 and 5, we find the Godhead.

and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; Perhaps, it is proper to remind ourselves that "seven" is the number of completion when it is used in type or picture. The expression "the seven churches" does not include the sum of all of the churches that we know were then existing, not even all of those churches in Asia, in the literal number "7"—but it includes every church in existence then or since in the symbolic or typical use of the number "7." Even so, the use of the phrase "the seven Spirits" is a reference to the Holy Spirit in Whom "the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth."

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. 9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven CHURCHES which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Here the LORD Jesus selects seven churches and identifies them to John as those who are to receive "a book" ["send it"] and not seven individual, separate letters. What we call the "letters to the seven churches" are instead more like seven sections of the same "letter." I do not wish to be misunderstood; these seven churches did not receive an individual letter and nothing else. Each church received the entire Book of the Revelation. The Book is addressed to "seven churches" as representatives or types of the whole of churches. [The tendency on the part of dispensationalists to designate these seven churches as only symbolic of

(Continued on page 5)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 20)

why I much prefer to speak of the rapture of the children of God or of the family of God than to describe the event as the "rapture of the church." Church membership alone does not convey participation in the rapture to anyone. The family of God and the church of the LORD Jesus Christ are not identical in composition or in purpose.

In the present theological climate, I am also compelled to declare that the church does not supplant Israel in the plan of God. The church is not "spiritual Israel" taking the place of physical Israel in the plan and purpose of God. Calvinism and other Reformed doctrines have made such inroads into Baptist churches that one is increasingly hearing talk of "replacement theology." Emphasizing the church does not denigrate Israel. The LORD of heaven has not forgotten Israel and He is not finished with Israel. No promise to Israel will go unfulfilled. The promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and to all the seed are sure. While I do not have space to expand the theme, I am convinced that the purposes of the Godhead for Israel do not terminate with the end of time.

I have personal, strong convictions concerning the doctrine of the church. I believe that a consistent reading of 1 Corinthians substituting "The church of God which is at Corinth" [those to whom the Epistle was written] for each "ye" and "you" in the book will convince any sincere reader that the apostle intended to remind the church of God which was at Corinth that she was [3:9] "God's building," "God's husbandry," and "the body of Christ" [12:31] and that she was responsible to live accordingly. I believe the analogy in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians emphasizes that the LORD Jesus has a relationship with *each* church, as does a husband to his bride, his wife [Ephesians 5:23, 2 Corinthians 11:2]. I am not certain that I yet understand exactly who comprises "the bride, the Lamb's wife" as identified in Revelation. I do indeed believe there is a difference between the general assembly and the church of the firstborn in Hebrews 12:23—the first, "general assembly," being a word for an assembly that is not under the discipline of citizenship and the latter, "church," being an assembly of citizens called to assemble. I believe that Scriptural baptism is a church ordinance and is not a free-lance operation of believers. I believe the child of God who is disobedient in the matter of being added to the church by baptism will be held accountable at the Judgment Seat of Christ for that disobedience and will suffer loss; but I do not pretend to be certain of what constitutes that loss, *except that it is most certainly not a loss of salvation.* I accept, without reservation, that the Heavenly Father will receive "glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" [Ephesians 3:21]. The purpose of the church in the plan of the

(Continued on page 22)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 19)

[2 John 1:3] Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

The family of God and the church are not synonymous terms; they do not describe the same relationship. The family of God is composed of all believers; the church is composed of "a body of believers." Therefore, to emphasize the family of God is not to de-emphasize the church; it is simply to call for the proper emphasis on both. Scripture has no difficulty in keeping the two "entities" distinct.

[Ephesians 3] 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

I believe that the earthly branch of "the whole family in heaven and earth," ["the household of God" Ephesians 2:19, "household of faith" Galatians 6:10] began with Adam and Eve—I believe that they were included in the atonement of Christ by the act of their faith. Israel begins with Abraham [through the lineage of Isaac and Jacob]. The church, however, cannot exist before the LORD Jesus Himself builds it—though it is apparent that He used the disciples gathered by the Forerunner, John the Baptist, as the first "stones" in His building. [The Old Testament picture may well be Solomon using the materials gathered by David in anticipation of the building of the Temple.] Just as the church does not supplant Israel, the church does not absorb or replace the "family of God." These are two separate and distinct creations. Every believer is born into the family of God. Every believer is an heir of God and a joint-heir of Christ. Those believers who chose to be obedient to the commands of the LORD Jesus will identify with the church. All of those who are born again and are, therefore, of the family of God are going to Heaven upon death. All of these who are in the grave will rise at the trump of God and the voice of the archangel when Christ comes with a shout and all of these who are alive at the time of the call of the LORD Jesus to "Come up hither" will be caught up with them to meet the LORD in the air. No family member—no child of the Heavenly Father—will be left behind. Within the membership of any particular church at any given time there may be [probably are] individual members who are not children of God. If so, they will be left behind. This is

(Continued on page 21)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 4)

arbitrary church ages has caused many believers to assume that those churches assigned to represent the churches of "past ages" are of no value to the present "age," except as history lessons.] Every church needs each of the seven "letters," because those seven were combined into the one Book and "it" was sent to all.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Now we are given the outline for the Book:

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;
The Revelation of the Jesus Christ

1. The things which thou has seen—this is chapter 1.
2. The things which are—this is chapters 2 and 3
3. The things which shall be hereafter—this is chapter 4 to chapter 22:16, where the Epilogue begins.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven CHURCHES: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven CHURCHES.

Surely all who just read chapter one caught the emphasis in the chapter that the LORD Jesus places on one word. That word is not one that we might think it would be. It is the word "CHURCHES," which is to be found four times. When we continue into chapters two and three, we find the plural form of the word "CHURCHES" is used nine times and the singular form "CHURCH" appears seven times in specific relationship to seven particular and individual CHURCHES.

[Revelation 2:1] Unto the angel of the CHURCH of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; [Revelation 2:7] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

This admonition, repeated seven times, should make every reader understand that these "seven letters" are to be read by all the churches

(Continued on page 6)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 5)

and, thus, have an application to every believer in every church that will ever exist.

[Revelation 2:8] And unto the angel of the CHURCH in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; [Revelation 2:11] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

[Revelation 2:12] And to the angel of the CHURCH in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

[Revelation 2:17] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

[Revelation 2:18] And unto the angel of the CHURCH in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

[Revelation 2:23] And I will kill her children with death; and all the CHURCHES shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

[Revelation 2:29] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.

[Revelation 3:1] And unto the angel of the CHURCH in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

[Revelation 3:6] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.

[Revelation 3:7] And to the angel of the CHURCH in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

[Revelation 3:13] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.

[Revelation 3:14] And unto the angel of the CHURCH of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

[Revelation 3:22] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.

With such an emphasis upon "CHURCHES," it is most intriguing to notice that no church is mentioned in the Book of the Revelation after Revelation 3:22, until we arrive at Revelation 22:16, which is only five verses from the very end of the Book, where it is not an individual church that is addressed, but "the churches." Context might suggest that these "the churches" should be understood as the seven churches of Asia—but it might also suggest that John is to address all churches. Remember, those seven churches represent all churches—seven is the number of completion.

[Revelation 22:16] I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you

(Continued on page 7)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 18)

church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

[2 Thessalonians 1:2] Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 Thessalonians 2:16] Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

[1 Timothy 1:2] Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

[2 Timothy 1:2] To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Titus 1:4] To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

[Philemon 1:3] Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following passage is important because the relationships as "brethren" and "children" are plainly separated from the relationship as believers in the church—and the church is identified, just as clearly, as being the church in Jerusalem. Dr. Bob Jones SR, famous for his pithy sayings, was wont to challenge us that "Duties never conflict." The duties and responsibilities as a member of the household of God are never conflicting with the obligations and tasks incumbent upon those who are members of a church.

[Hebrews 2:] 10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

I witness because I am a child of the Heavenly Father, not because I am a church member—in simple terms, the message to the unsaved is that "ye must be born again" and not "you need to be baptized and become a church member." Please take note that God "dealeth" with His children *as children* and not as church members.

[Hebrews 12:7] If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

[James 1:27] Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

[1 John 3:1] Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

(Continued on page 20)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 17)

each other. This comprises a central theme throughout his epistles as this sampling of references will show.

[1 Corinthians 1:3] Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 Corinthians 8:6] But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

[2 Corinthians 1:2] Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

[Galatians 1:3] Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

[Galatians 4:6] And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

[Ephesians 1:2] Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

[Ephesians 4:6] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

[Ephesians 5:20] Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

[Ephesians 6:23] Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Philippians 1:2] Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Philippians 2:11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[Philippians 4:20] Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Colossians 1:2] To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 Thessalonians 1:1] Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 Thessalonians 1:3] Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

[1 Thessalonians 3:11] Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

[1 Thessalonians 3:13] To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

[2 Thessalonians 1:1] Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the

(Continued on page 19)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 6)

these things in the CHURCHES. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

I would be negligent if I did not call attention to the fact that the singular "CHURCH" is used in the Book of the Revelation exclusively concerning a specific, particular local church. The word "CHURCH" is never used in any type of generic or universal sense anywhere in the entire Book of Revelation. In every place that the words "CHURCHES" or "CHURCH" is found, the words identify existing local churches.

Personally, I do not use the term "universal church" for two reasons—it is not a Bible phrase and I try to use Bible words whenever possible to describe Bible things; more importantly, I do not find the concept of a "universal church" taught in Scripture. Though I find in Scripture and prefer the word "Godhead," I use the word, "Trinity," because that concept is clearly presented in Scripture. I use the word "Rapture" to describe the event when "the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" even though "Rapture" is not a word found in the text of Scripture—because the concept is clearly there. I do not find the idea of a "universal church" taught in Scripture.

"Well, what term do you use to identify all of those who are saved?"

Actually, I am glad that you thought to ask that question. I believe that you have raised an important inquiry and its answer has wide-ranging implications for understanding the plan and purpose of God. I use, and I encourage others to use, the phrases that the Bible offers to describe all of the redeemed, all of the saved, all of those born again: "the whole family in heaven and earth," "Household of God," "household of faith," "children of God," "sons of God," "My sons and daughters." When one is "born again, that individual is born as a child of God; the concept is summarized by some with the phrase, "the Family of God." As "Rapture" and "Trinity," "Family of God" is a term not in the text of Scripture—but the concept is unmistakable.

[Ephesians 3] 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom [God the Father] the whole family in heaven and earth is named [families take their name from the father of the family].

The term, "Family," is fully within keeping of the promise of 2 Corinthians 6 as to the intention of the Father in Heaven.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and

(Continued on page 8)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 7)

walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

A Father with sons and daughters obviously constitutes a family relationship. The term "family" is also in accord with the manner that the LORD Jesus taught us to address the God of Heaven—"Our Father which art in heaven," "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these," etc. Therefore, when I am describing all those who are believers—I use the term "children of God," "the household of God" or I speak of the family of God.

I wish to be certain that all of my readers understand that I am making an essential difference, a clear distinction, between the family of God and the church. I believe that this division is maintained throughout the New Testament. The responsibilities and privileges of the family relationship are separated from those arising from church membership. As an example, consider that the very basic witnessing work of the Holy Spirit to the spirit of the believer is, not about church membership, but about *family relationship*.

[Romans 8] 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

I will return to the them of being "heirs of God." For right now, I merely wish to insist that THE BELIEVER IS BORN AGAIN AS A CHILD OF GOD. This is surely not a new concept to those who base their belief system upon the Scriptures and not upon so-called denominational dogma. Lest any think, however, that I am pulling words from the Biblical context, I will offer that context.

[John 1] 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full

(Continued on page 9)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 16)

Notice that there is neither "male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This is a statement in reference to the consequence of God the Father sending His Son, "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." We are not adopted into the family of God. We are born into His family. The adoption has to do with the right of inheritance. In the right of being an heir, there is no distinction made between "male and female"—both have equal and full inheritance.

Consider these other verses with that emphasis:

[Romans 4:14] For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

[Galatians 3:29] And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

[Titus 3:7] That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[Hebrews 1:14] Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

[Hebrews 6:17] Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

[Hebrews 11:9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

[James 2:5] Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

[1 Peter 3:7] Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

The apostle is moved by the Holy Spirit to place emphasis upon the family relationship and not the church relationship in connection with creation's deliverance.

[Romans 8:19] For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

[Romans 8:21] Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

When he then introduces Israel, the apostle is moved by the Holy Spirit to show that the essential change is not from being "of Israel" to being "of the church," but to becoming "children of the living God."

[Romans 9:26] And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Though the apostle wrote his epistles primarily to churches, he never lost sight of the family relationship of believers to the Father and to

(Continued on page 18)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 15)

Jesus.

[Colossians 3:17] And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

While I could not print a complete listing of all texts that emphasize the family relationship of the children of God, I cannot fail to call attention to at least some passages.

[Matthew 6:9] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

[Luke 11:2] And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

When one takes note of how often the LORD Jesus reminds His disciples that they are "children" and that God is their Heavenly Father, it is amazing how little impact this truth has upon our lives.

[Mark 10:24] And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

[John 11:52] And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

[John 20:17] Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Paul opens nearly all of his epistles with a statement about "God our Father."

[Romans 1:7] To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Romans 8:14] For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

[Romans 8:16] The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

The theme of being "heirs" is no minor issue in the New Testament.

Galatians 3:28

[Galatians 3] 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. [Galatians 4] 1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

(Continued on page 17)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 8)

of grace and truth.

Those who receive the LORD Jesus as "the true Light," the very Messenger of God, become the "sons of God" by being "born of God." Notice that this birth "of God" is "not of blood"; that is, it is not the result of natural family generation and/or connection [a severe blow to Covenant Theology]. This birth "of God" is not through "the will of the flesh"—that is, it is not through personal resolution or reformation. The LORD Jesus does not offer a new leaf; He preaches a new birth. This birth "of God" is "not of the will of man"; that is, no one can do it for the individual, except the individual. As a preacher, I have no power, no authority, no prerogative, and no commission to make anyone a "son of God." Becoming a "son of God" is the result of being "born of God." The LORD Jesus expounded this marvelous truth to a deeply religious man named Nicodemus.

[John 3] 1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Though I must do so briefly and in passing, I find it necessary to identify that this being "born of God," being "born again," is connected with "the kingdom of God." Our relationship to the kingdom of God is through the family, not by the church. It may sound simplistic; but we are in the kingdom, because our Father sits upon the Throne and not because we are members of a church.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

May I also call the attention of my readers to the sometimes-overlooked fact that Nicodemus is thinking only of "physical birth." In contrast, the LORD Jesus carefully explains that He is speaking of being "born of the Spirit," a spiritual birth. The term "born of water" is a valid medical term for natural physical birth and corresponds with the term "born of flesh."

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how

(Continued on page 10)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 9)

shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Throughout the New Testament, this family aspect is continually in view. By no means do I offer a comprehensive listing, but consider that, among other things, I am instructed that salvation is a "new birth" and that I am "born of God." I am taught to pray, by the LORD Jesus, based on my membership in this family and not because I am a member of a church, to "our Father." My identification as an "heir of God" and a "joint-heir" with Christ is through the family not the church. I am to love my fellow believers because we are "brethren." [In Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 8, the LORD Jesus identifies as His brethren, "my brother and my sister."] My fellow believers and I are commanded to follow God as "dear children." The list continues to great length. None of these areas of "the Christian life" is dependent upon or is a consequence of my being a member of a church. There are definite Scriptural responsibilities, obligations, and instructions that relate to my membership in the church, but they are separate from and are not commingled with my responsibilities, obligations, instructions, *and privileges* that are related to my membership in the family of God. The church is not the family: the family is not the church. Membership in the family is by spiritual birth; membership in the church is by baptism. *[Please permit me to save the discussion of so-called "Spirit baptism" until another article. At the least, concede that no Bible passage connects the so-called "Spirit baptism" (another term not found in the Scriptures) with any church. I know the response—but let us not argue right now about your assumption that "the body" is "the universal church."]*

I struggle personally with the use of the term "Great Commission." Aside from the fact that it is not a Scriptural term, its use depreciates the value of "the Great Commandment," which is a Biblical term. The Great Commandment, as I understand, is addressed to "the family of God" and not directed or restricted to those who are members of any

(Continued on page 11)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 14)

I find ample evidence of inter-church cooperation in the support of ministries in the New Testament. The Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John abound with references to such activities. I am no opponent of medical or humanitarian ministries [rescue missions, food pantries, clinics, etc.], of printing ministries, of youth camps, of Bible colleges, universities, and seminaries, and/or of multiplied other activities. I do not oppose churches cooperating with each other or with individuals to accomplish any of these ministries. I do not even find fault with mission agencies—I want the individual missionaries to be responsible to their individual home churches and I would prefer that every missionary were sent with the full support given by the missionary's own church. However, Paul, sent by the church at Antioch, received support from other churches and, very often, from his own labor. Therefore, I do not wish to become extra-Biblical in my zealous defense of Scriptural truths.

Our church uses, with slight modifications, the Covenant historically connected with the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. In that Covenant, this church affirms that, as members, we should give to this church "a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin." This is implicit recognition of the existence of "institutions of human origin" that are worthy and proper of association with on the part of the members of this church; otherwise, the wording would call for a "withdrawal" from "all institutions of human origin." The wording originally was chosen, I believe, to assert the validity of the cooperation of pastors and churches—even the establishment of "institutions" to assist in the fellowship—but to insist that the church is not subject to the decisions of any institution and that the members of churches owe their first involvement to and in the church where they are members. That is the understanding of this church. The statement does not preclude "human institutions; it establishes priorities for relationships: "preeminent" having the meaning of "having paramount rank, dignity, or importance."

In the plainest of terminology, I cannot require that believers receive an imprimatur before they witness. To say that anything and everything connected with the "Great Commission" must be under the control of a local church exceeds the delineated purpose and the defined authority of the church in Scripture. While I appreciate the desire to defend the importance of the church, I find this extreme position to be the establishment of an extra-Biblical fiefdom. I use that particular word intentionally, for it describes, as no other word, the situation that I see eventuating from the application of this concept. The underlying problem in requiring such a stipulation, in my view, is the failure to recognize the importance of the family of God.

[Galatians 3:26] For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ

(Continued on page 16)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 13)

God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; [Ephesians 5:1] Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; For a particular activity to be under the authority of the church, that activity must be voted upon by the church, not merely sanctioned by the pastor or deacons. The consent of the pastor and/or the deacons is not the granting of church authority. If this concept of required authority were to be instituted, then no member of the church could witness unless the church voted for him or for her to have the authority of the church to do so. No one could distribute a Gospel tract unless and until the church had voted to that person the specific right to do so. In an absurd example, if this philosophy were adopted, then a church could only use tract racks that the church herself made or that were made by "a tract-rack maker" to whom the church voted the authority to construct that tract rack. [Under this theory of administration, my mother cooked and delivered hundreds of meals to unsaved neighbors in an unscriptural manner. Perhaps, it is personal, but the very suggestion that she needed "church authority" offends me. My father owned and operated service stations. He was a deacon in his Baptist church, but the church never voted him permission to distribute the Bibles and tracts that he gave away. (His goal began at 100 New Testaments personally handed to someone each year and increased yearly over the nearly thirty years of ownership.) The church never voted him permission to purchase radio time for the preacher each week—in fact, no one in the church knew he did so. He loved his church, but he did these things because he loved his Saviour.] Truth is always applicable in all situations. Tangential excursions always contort the truth so that it is unusable universally.

Biblically, churches are called to plant churches, as I understand the Scriptures and are not instructed to engage in businesses. To the specific point, I do not find any Bible basis for a church to establish a hospital; but I believe that Christian business and/or medical men might indeed establish a hospital and properly provide a Gospel witness. I find no Biblical mandate for a church to establish a college or school. It is wonderful for a church to print Bibles and tracts—but it is absurd to insist that only a church printed Bible or tract could be used in evangelism or in the instruction of believers. If this illogical concept is carried through to its logical conclusion, then I certainly could not use the Authorized Version. The Committee of Translators was assuredly not under the authority of a Baptist church. Neither Oxford University Press nor Cambridge University Press has a Baptist connection; and, contrary to the oft-repeated rumor, the Authorized Version is "printed under authority." The Head of the Church of England is the Queen of England and the text is printed by the license of the Throne.

(Continued on page 15)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 10)

church. As the child of my Heavenly Father, I am entitled to tell others about His kindness and His greatness. In reality, I am commanded to witness about my Heavenly Father [Matthew 5:16], "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In addition, there are specific instructions about my witnessing:

[Matthew 10] 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

"The Great Commission" is generally defined as including three responsibilities or steps:

1. To preach the Gospel
2. To baptize the converts
3. To teach those converts the commands of Christ.

While I believe that it is possible to show that baptism is connected by the Scriptures to church membership and, therefore, to church authority, I do not believe that the same can be affirmed about either preaching the Gospel or teaching believers. I think that I have an answer that satisfies my inquisitive nature for every baptism in the New Testament [including that of the Ethiopian eunuch] without resorting to arguing from silence, without requiring any alteration to the text, without resorting to the excuse of "transitional period," and that is consistent with my stated position. In simple words, I believe that every baptism in the New Testament was for the purpose of membership in a local church and was under the authority of either John the Baptist [whose authority was from the Father for the express purpose of preparing a people for the LORD] or an identified church. If the authority to baptize were granted promiscuously to every believer, then it must be conceded that a five-year-old child or a teen could baptize. Scripture connects the authority for baptism, in my view, with the Biblical purpose of baptism, which is to "add" to the church. As I understand Scripture, any baptism for any other purpose is not Scriptural baptism.

Historically, Baptists have identified baptism as the "introductory rite" or the entrance or door into the membership of the local church. The old battle cry of my youth was "Blood before water," which was to call for salvation before membership. No one is ever born into a church—not a true Biblical church. Birth into a human family does not

(Continued on page 12)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 11)

convey salvation to the child or even the promise of salvation to that child. The Covenant Theologians are in error on this essential doctrine. Baptism is never presented as a picture of a birth, but always as representative of "the death, burial, and resurrection of the LORD Jesus Christ—which is never conveyed by sprinkling or pouring.

HOWEVER, AN OBEDIENT BELIEVER WILL BE BAPTIZED INTO THE CHURCH

[Acts 2] 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

It seems to me that baptism is indeed much more the confession of Christ before men than is walking the aisle of a church. Baptism represents "making the public profession of faith in the LORD Jesus" in a tangible way. In some cultures of this present world, baptism means that individual will be cut off from family. There is a severe price to pay for following the LORD in believer's baptism in those lands and there should be a deeper sense of commitment in this land among those who are baptized. Baptism is not child's play. Baptism is to be the public identification of the believer with Christ and with His people as the one being baptized is added to the church.

While I am on this theme, since baptism is not a birth but an ordinance, it follows that the church is built; the church is not birthed. There is no prophecy, no picture, and no passage that suggests any event that was "the birth of the church."

[Matthew 16:18] And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY OF GOD ARE CLEARLY NOT SYNONYMOUS TERMS REPRESENTING THE SAME RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

While I am convinced that baptism is one of the two ordinances reserved to the church [The other is the Table of the LORD], I cannot make that distinction about witnessing or teaching. These are the other TWO sections of the humanly titled "Great Commission." Without straining, I find examples in the New Testament of preaching the Gospel and of teaching believers that are not under either the direct or the implied authority of any church. This is true during the time of the Gospels and of the Acts and of the Pauline Epistles. I do not accept the

(Continued on page 13)

FAMILY AFFAIRS

(Continued from page 12)

premise that witnessing is the sole prerogative of the church. To do so would be a presumption that violates, in my view, *the essential* Baptist distinctive—the one that separates and identifies Baptists in all generations and in all places [Axioms of Religion, E. Y. Mullins]—"soul liberty, soul sufficiency, soul competency, or the priesthood of the believer and the Lordship of Christ." I believe that in the misguided effort of "defending" one doctrine—the doctrine of the church—good men have undermined another doctrine, the ultimate Baptist Distinctive.

By no means exhaustive, but as a quick reference, consider these "unauthorized" activities of preaching and teaching:

[Mark 5:18] And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

There is no indication that this man was a baptized member of any church; but he was most certainly called upon to witness.

[Acts 8:3-4] As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

There is no suggestion in Scripture that the church at Jerusalem convened and voted authority to "men and women" members to "scatter abroad" and to go "every where preaching the word." An argument from silence is never convincing.

The admonition to holy living is as "sons of God," not as members of a church. We are to emulate the Father, because we are His children.

[1 Peter 1] 13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. 17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

[Philippians 2:15] That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of

(Continued on page 14)