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AUGUST 1956. .1**

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the **LINK**

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PLAYING WITH FIRE

APPLE PIE NIGHT

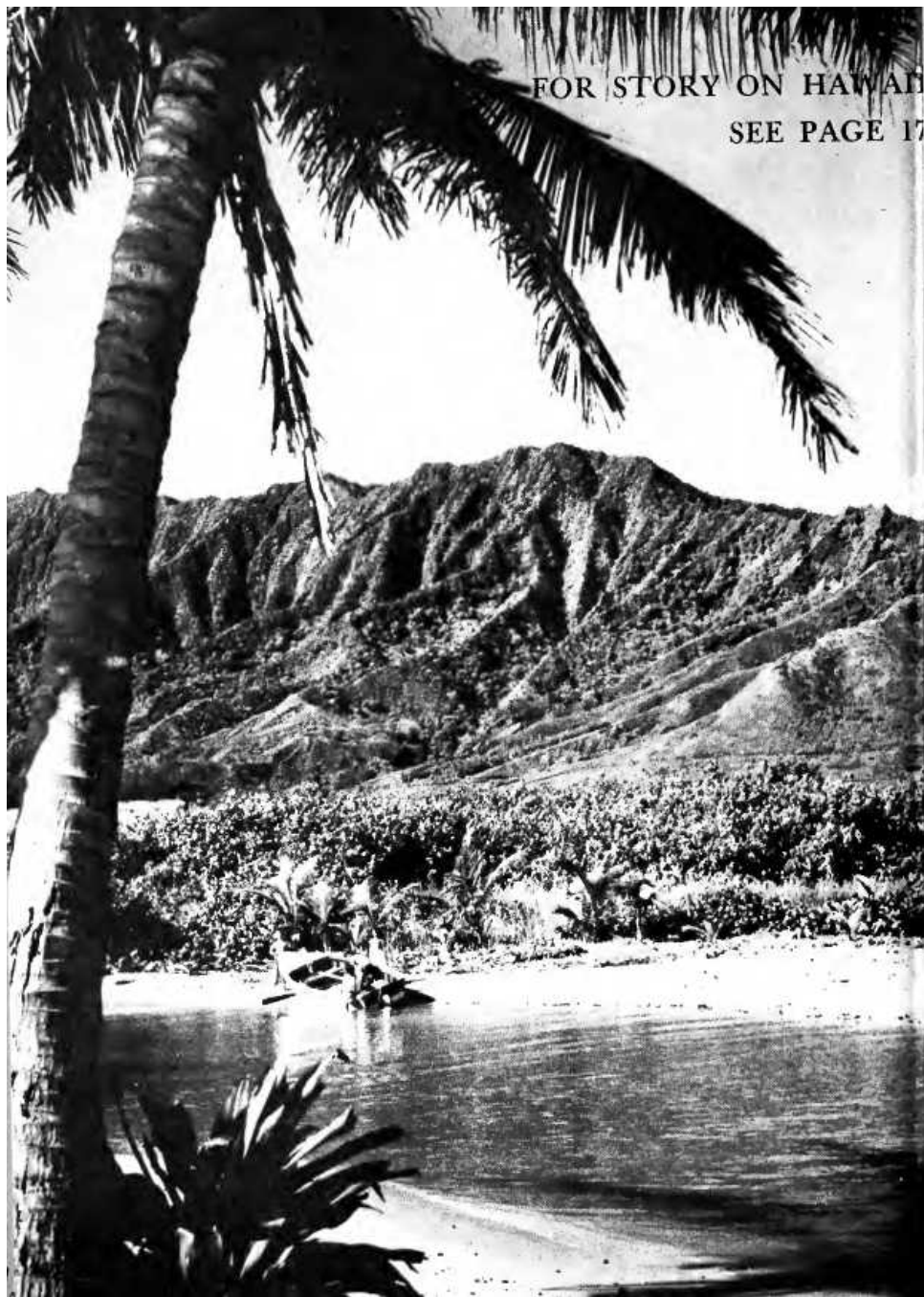
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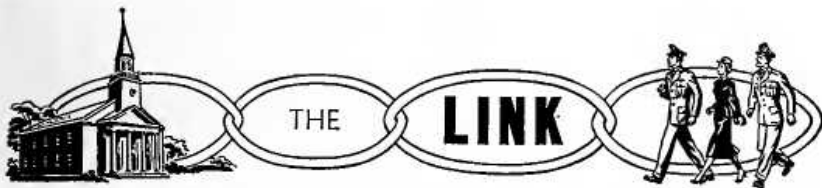
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A PROTESTANT MAGAZINE FOR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL



FOR STORY ON HAWAII
SEE PAGE 17





A PROTESTANT MAGAZINE FOR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL

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STORIES

RESERVE POWER	Daniel W. Fenner	9
APPLE PIE NIGHT	R. Joseph Landry	36

ARTICLES

PLAYING WITH FIRE	Robert W. Burns	5
AN ANCIENT HYMNAL	J. Carter Swaim	14
HOW HAWAII, OUR 50TH STATE, BECAME CHRISTIAN	Glenn D. Everett	17
LEARN THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING	Frederick W. Brink	22
SHOULD YOU GO TO COLLEGE?	James W. Carty, Jr.	25
DEDICATED SAILOR	William R. Kreh	28
SHOW ME YOUR FAITH	Paul W. Glad	32
WHY MEN DRINK	Roger Burgess	40
GENERAL WINGATE AND THE BIBLE	James H. Jauncey	44
PERSONS OR PAWNS?	James B. Ashbrook	47
THE BIGGEST LITTLE MAN IN BASEBALL	Edgar Williams	51
NIGHT STOP	Jack Bannick	56

OTHER FEATURES

LETTER FROM COMMANDING DEVIL	R. G. Hutcheson, Jr.	35
LETTER FROM HOME	Minnie May Lewis	43
LET US PRAY		58
THE LINK SATELLITE		59
THE LINK CALENDAR		62
HELPS FOR LAY LEADERS		63
BOOKS ARE FRIENDLY THINGS		64
AT EASE!		66

COVERS
 Front: A boy and his friends. Photo by David M. Mills.
 Back: Vernal Falls, Yosemite National Park, California. Photo by David M. Mills.
 Inside front: Vacationists beach their rowboat to explore a Pacific inlet on the Island of Hawaii, our fiftieth state. Photo by United Air Lines.
 Inside back: A lazy summer day in the South. Photo by Louis C. Williams.
 ART WORK: Story illustrations by Charles N. Newton. Occasional spots by Volk.

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STEPS

Thank God for steps! They are devices all
subtly ingenuous, and make ascent
and descent both convenient
and possible. By them, the tall
tower rises and the deep
channel is cut in earth. Men can go
down gradual slopes by them, or to and fro
upon a level, or by them climb the steep
acclivity.

Steps can be
for more than feet. They can be for minds
and hearts as well. A man may sit
looking through them at some infinite
problems of his life and, thinking, find
the reasonable solution. They are ties with sod
and air and water, and with other men,
and they are mighty architecture when
they widen to the full concept of God.

—HELEN HARRINGTON

STAFF

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Marion J. Creeger; **EDITOR:** Lawrence P. Fitzgerald,
CIRCULATION MGR.: Isabel R. Senar; **EDITORIAL ASST.:** Irene Murray

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All scripture quotations, unless otherwise designated, are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.



Playing with Fire

By ROBERT W. BURNS

**There are 50,000 unmarried mothers in the USA. . . .
Is not the wrong use of sex playing with fire? . . . "Can
a man carry fire in his bosom and not be burned?"**

A FEW years ago the front page of the Atlanta daily papers carried the story of one of the most pathetic tragedies our town ever witnessed.

Approximately twenty years before, it had been my privilege to help a young couple begin their home.

One morning the husband went off to work as happy as a man could be. The couple now had three children, aged eight, six, and three—two boys and a girl. The children

were in the kitchen and the wife went next door to talk to a neighbor about some of the little things of the neighborhood and while she was there, looking out the window, she was horrified to see flames leaping out of the windows of her home.

The little ones sitting at home on the kitchen floor had been playing with matches. They had been forbidden by their parents to do so, but in the mischievous manner of children they were disobedient. The house burned completely to the ground. The children and the mother who ran from next door to try to

Dr. Burns is the minister of Peachtree Christian Church, Atlanta, Georgia. His article is condensed from *The Christian-Evangelist*.

rescue them perished in the flames. All died because the children had played with fire. Little children like to strike matches, to watch the flame burst forth. But when tragedies like this occur, we see what devastation is wrought physically by playing with fire.

In the Book of Proverbs, the sixth chapter and the twenty-seventh verse, the writer asks, "Can a man carry fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" The answer is "No!" It's impossible to carry fire in your bosom and not get burned. He's talking, of course, in a symbolic sense.

After the writer of Proverbs calls attention to the danger of playing with fire, he comes swiftly to the point: "So is he who goes into his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished."

The reference here is clearly to adultery, to sexual intercourse outside of marriage. The wrong use of sex is *playing with fire*. Persons who sin in this way are punished. They are punished by disease, by a guilty conscience, by the embarrassment of children born out of wedlock, by emotional havoc that lingers for many years, by the scars produced by these character deficiencies.

In the thirty-four years of my ministry, I have ministered as tenderly as I know how to persons who have "played with fire" in the area of sex relations and have been burned. Needless to say, these people are not hopeless. Baffling as the consequences are and devastating as they become, there is always the possibility of redemption.

IN all the years that I have been counseling on this subject with hundreds of people—young people who have never been married and older people who have broken their marriage vows—I have found only a few who had no sense of regret. Generally they recognize the suffering they have brought on themselves and others.

Thousands of years of experience on the part of humanity testify to the truth of what the writer of Proverbs says: "He who commits adultery has no sense; he who does it destroys himself."

In the writer's word, "Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his disgrace will not be wiped away."

Analyze this judgment. He will get wounds. Physically he will be hurt. Mentally and spiritually he will suffer. Dishonor for him, for her, and for their families will come. So also will disgrace—her disgrace—and the family's disgrace.

Through the years I've seen many a family forgive and forget. I've seen friends exercise charity in their judgment and test a home simply on the merits of that home's own life. I've helped scores of families to begin again, to go on in spite of a cloud of suspicion. And I've watched them grow to become sweet, wholesome, fine, Christian homes. But it's a long, bitter journey before disgrace is wiped away.

"He will accept no compensation," Proverbs goes on, "nor be appeased though you multiply gifts." There is no way to pay for the damage done. If you break a window with a baseball you can easily replace the

broken pane, but it is not so easy when there is damage to personality, to character, to the integrity of another person.

LAST year there were over 50,000 unmarried mothers registered in the United States of America. These are only a part, for through wealth and influence many were not registered and many couples marry after pregnancy is discovered.

Birth control prevents conception in many illicit affairs, though many methods are not safe. A recent test conducted in Atlanta on some of the birth control instruments showed 25 per cent of them mechanically defective. Dr. Hannah Stone has issued a statement that more than 60 per cent of certain appliances used are unreliable.

The United States Public Health Service estimated that in 1956 there were 176,600 children born out of wedlock in the United States and that 40 per cent of the mothers were teen-agers.

Last year over 10,000 women in America died of abortions. Some time ago the American Social Hygiene Association reported that 5 per cent of the American people have syphilis and 10 per cent gonorrhoea. Each year there are approximately 200,000 new cases of venereal disease among teen-agers alone.

J. Edgar Hoover reported that in one month—in cities over 2,500 in population—there were a total of 38,807 criminal cases involving sex: 4,591 rapes, 14,619 convictions for prostitution, and 19,597 other sexual

offenses, most of which were homosexuality.

For the younger groups, the picture is even more distressing. Under fifteen there were 126 cases of rape, five convictions for prostitution, and 1,206 for other offenses—a total of 1,337. In the group eighteen and under, there were 5,309 convictions for sexual offenses in the United States.

ALL of us teach something about sex. Even our silence is a way of teaching. Our refusal to discuss it is an admission that we are unwilling to face it.

Parents need to take more interest in the sex education of their children! This may sound strange but one of the church's big problems is simply to get the cooperation of the parents in the religious education of their children. Parents simply will not take an interest.

Church school teachers are teaching about sex. One of the startling disclosures in Kinsey's study on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was the number of women who named the Bible as their first source of sex information. Unless you teach the Bible intelligently, pupils get some utterly distorted ideas from many of the stories they find in it.

Both parents and teachers may be baffled sometimes by questions children ask. They will find a book such as Margaret Harmon Bro's *When Children Ask* a tremendous help.

Our ideas of right and wrong are all learned responses. If nobody