

(As I write this I am praying for the “Mind of Christ”, as you read it, please do the same.)

CHRISTIAN -----

IT’S OK TO HATE-----

MAMMON

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED MAMMON?

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two Masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Mammon.” (money – new NIV Translation). Every time I come to this text I’m disturbed. I mull over its meaning.

From the very beginning let me point out that I do not believe the word money here is a good translation of Mammon in this text. I believe Satan is again attacking Christians by trying to make us believe that money is an evil thing. It is not evil! He has done this for years having Christians as well as non-Christians misquoting 1 Timothy 6:10 “Money is the root of all evil.”

Any Material thing that takes the place of God in our lives becomes Mammon. We are to hate and despise Mammon not money!

Money is neutral, it is how we view it and use it that gives it character, that labels it as good or evil. The statement Satan left out of the Bible quote sets the reason money can become evil. “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”.

Money is the agent and mover in getting things, good things when they are God-pleasing, and used to His glory and honor. But when money is hoarded and used selfishly to acquire things that can become a blockage between God and us then it is no longer just a mover. THEN MONEY ITSELF BECOMES MAMMON.

From the time that I was child I heard people in the church saying, ‘They are always preaching about money’! I don’t think it was true then, nor do I believe it is true now.

As an active lay person, student Vicar, and even later as a pastor fresh from the seminary the echo of that phrase still lingered in my mind. It did not cause me to fear handling this topic in my sermons. It did make me sad that the people of my congregation felt that I should “soft peddled” and limit how often I should focus on this area of our faith-walk. Confine it to stewardship month seemed to be the unwritten law.

The Lord Jesus did not hesitate to speak of money, in fact one of six of His recorded statements dealt with this subject. When we read these scriptures we clearly see, Jesus did not speak of money as evil, but as something that could hinder relationship with God, when inordinately loved

Read the story of the “Rich Young Ruler” Matt. 19:16-22. This un-named man had it all; he was young, rich, and part of the ruling class. He was a good man, but he thought he could earn his way to Heaven. He asked Jesus what he still lacked.

He thought that he was keeping the Law perfectly. Jesus, lovingly pointed out his weakest link, his riches. If he could, Jesus told him he would have to give up his riches. This he could not force himself to do. So he went away sorrowing. The man let money and wealth become his Mammon.

JESUS TELLS US TO HATE. – MAMMON!

Mammon Takes Many Forms

“Gaming”

Satan knows how we love to play games. He’s not adverse to changing names and appearances. Satan had the world change the name, they now call it “Gaming”. It is still Gambling, make no mistake about it. He tries to dress it as an “angel of light”, and to dress the wolf in “sheep’s clothing”. He seems to be getting away with it.

Mammon wins when even governments have fallen for this deception, painting of gambling as a painless method of taxing. They not only allow gambling they are now promoting it. Native American TV ads thank gamblers for helping provide them better schools, health care, and other services that should have been provided all along through regular taxes. Is this not the 21st century “Scalping”?

There are many ugly sides of gambling many “retirees” spend their declining years wasting their time, and some, their life savings, making them a burden on their families. Many, said in the past, “Pastor, when I retire, I’ll have more time and funds to serve the Lord.” The Norwegian pastor replies “Ya sure!” You betcha!”

Ask any of the growing thousands in “Gamblers Anonymous” how this greed, this cancer of gambling has affected their lives. Families have drowned in debt and have broken up; employees have stolen from their companies and on and on.

I have heard many Christians say, “I enjoy gambling. I take along only what I can afford to lose”. -- Ask any casino operator if they could stay in business without these Christian people with their philosophy. They make it possible for those who can’t afford to lose, to lose.

I’m told of a Pastor who asked his congregation to deposit in a basket the losing lottery tickets they purchased during the past week. The un-lucky tickets were totaled and the following Sunday, the amount lost was announced. It was greater than that Sunday’s offering. I believe Jesus would call that Mammon! Wouldn’t you?

I don't believe in "luck"! If there is "luck", then there is no God. If there is a God, then there is no "luck"! How can anyone win against the will of God?

MAMMONEYS PLASTIC SHOVEL

I just got a notice that my credit card company has raised the amount I can now borrow, it's now up to \$10,000. Isn't that nice. Now I can owe them thousands of dollars and pay them for the privilege, up to 18% or more. Help like this I should never need! *How many new card offers have you gotten this week?*

Caring people have set up non-profit organizations aimed at helping those who have spent themselves so deeply in debt that they are in despair perhaps leading them to suicide. Television ads cry out to those already going down for the third time, "Bad credit? No credit? We'll get you a loan to buy this car."

The wife of the former ruler of the Philippines, Marcos, was found to have hoarded thousands of pairs of shoes. When this was revealed it was a shameful scandal in a country where people are so poor millions of children have no shoes at all. I don't know if she used a credit card, but we can join her with ours.

As Christians we need to check our spending habits. Get out the scissors and cut up Mammony's plastic shovel. Then take inventory to see how we can take Satan's Mammony and change it into God's Love in action.

LET'S GO "LOVE ACTIVE"

Are we to hide from the world and its "Mammony" temptations? Should we hide in a monastery? Should we be like the Amish in this world full of God's blessings and set our own rules of what we should deny ourselves to keep "pure"?

No, we are to be in the world, but not of the world. Jesus gives us guidelines. In the Old Testament through Solomon, in the New Testament through Paul, and of course through the prayer Jesus taught us to use. He has always given instruction to His children to follow, if we will only do it.

Solomon says in Proverbs 30:7-9 "Two things have I asked of You, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, *but give me only my daily bread*. Otherwise I may have too much and disown You and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God."

The Lord through Solomon instructs us to pray not only that we don't become poor, but also that we don't become rich! Christians are to be different. We are to be good stewards, setting priorities in all aspects of life.

Paul tells us what we are to do with the surplus of what we earn for our work, beyond our personal needs, “That they may have to give something to those in need.” (Eph. 4:28b see also Gal. 6:10.)

Jesus, in the Prayer He taught us, instructs us to pray in the fourth petition, “*Give us this day our daily bread*”. – Please note: He does not say, ‘cake’. He does not say ‘All I need for the rest of my life’. He doesn’t say, ‘all that I want’. -- Just give me what I need Lord, day by day, no more and no less!

LOVE IS THE ULTIMATE WEAPON AGAINST MAMMON

In the episode with the rich young ruler Jesus says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. When the Disciples heard this they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:24-26)

Jesus points out that the hardest, the most resistive person to the Holy Spirit’s call to repent and believe, is the rich person. Yet He immediately gives hope, for “With God all things are possible.”

Though we don’t know, I have always felt that the “rich young ruler” later became Jesus’ Disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, who gave his tomb for Jesus short stay.

I pray that this young man’s encounter with Jesus did change his life. My encounter with this essay continues to change and clarified my view of the texts I study and pray about. It is my prayer that reading what I have written will do the same for you.

EXPOSE MAMMON, REPLACE IT WITH LOVE!

We are told, one day Jesus standing with His Disciples was watching people put money into the treasury (imagine that, He watch how much they put in). He pointed out to the Disciples a certain widow lady. Though we don’t know her name, she will go down in all eternity as example of giving. (Mark 12:41-44)

I wish the Lord had given us the reason this widow gave the few coins, “all that she had!) into the offering. But Jesus made it clear she had done right. He commended her. He made her an example to His Disciples then and now of not letting money become “Mammoney”. Instead she let her money express her love and complete trust in God.

I have heard “well to do” Christians, who give leftovers for the Lord’s work say God is satisfied with my mites. They surely do not understand Jesus’ teaching of the Widow’s Mite. -- Am I wrong?

As a member of a “Main Line Church Body”, I was almost brought to tears when I heard that missionaries were being pulled from the field. Why? Because our 2,500,000+ church body lacked money!

THE OLD TESTAMENT STEWARSHIP “TRAINING WHEELS”

The Tithe

There are some who would apply the Old Testament law of the Tithe (10%) to our giving as Christians today. The command of God to Tithe was given to His people in those days to educate them in caring for the Jewish Clergy and Lay Assistants in their Temple service, and for the needy. Giving above this amount was encouraged for special thanksgivings. Actually, the Tithe was the “Training Wheels” of stewardship.

The “rich young ruler” was a Tither. He thought this was just one of the *rules* he had to follow to *earn* his salvation. The widow lady also was most likely a Tither when she was able, but even if she could not give 10% she gave all. Jesus didn’t tell her to do this, LOVE did. – One was told to give all, and couldn’t. One was moved by LOVE to give all, and did! -- She had learned. He hadn’t!

To have ongoing God pleasing stewardship in the church we need to train our children. It’s not good training to give a child \$10.00 for a movie, with pop corn and soda, to give ourselves some free time. Then give the child a dollar or less for the offering at church. Researchers tell us that teens have control of \$50.00 - \$75.00 per week (allowance, part time jobs, gifts, etc.)

The “Training Wheels of the Tithe” are a good place to start in training our children. Imagine what \$5.00 a week from all our teens would do for our church budgets. But they should see that we parents have gone beyond this in our lives. Paul says, “When I was a child I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” (1 Corinthians 13: 11)

Isn’t it sad, so many who should be acting as adult Christians haven’t even reached the level of the Tithe, the training wheels of stewardship.

Mature Love Says, “Forget the Training Wheels”!

Let’s throw off the “training wheels” of God’s Old Testament Tithe. Let’s throw off the chains of percentage thinking and giving and let Love be the measure we use. God uses Law to train us, but when we become adult in Love He sets us free to sore!

WHEN WE BATTLE MAMMON WITH LOVE – WE NEVER LOSE!

Jesus doesn't command us to give away all our wealth. He did command the "rich young ruler" to do this as a test. He doesn't test all of us this way, though some day He may. He does say, "Everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded." (Luke 12:48b)

Paul learned how to live with the material things of life, as he says, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:12-13)

IT'S AN OFFERING PLATE, NOT A COLLECTION PLATE!

When serving a congregation, I always insisted that when an offering was received in the service, the plate be called an "Offering Plate". -- What's the difference between an offering and a collection? In the past, I have had prospective members ask me, "What are the dues?" I jokingly would answer, "We don't have any do's, we do have a lot of don'ts!"

The Offering in our church service is a part of our worship, not dues to help pay the expenses of the congregation. Yet I believe many Christians view the Offering as just that, our dues.

If this were the case, then we should add up all the expenses: Pastor's, DCE's, Secretary's, Custodian's etc. salaries, also the mortgage payment, utilities, insurance, and O yes, 10% for missions. Then divide the total by the number of "giving units" in the congregation. Would that be "fair dues"!

In other words: a congregation of 200 "giving units" with a budget of \$8,000 per week would have to have dues from each unit of \$40.00 per week. For a widow on a small social security pension, that's lion's bite. For a CEO making millions a year that's not even a mosquito bite.

Mammon charges dues in many ways. Jesus asks for Offerings from a heart of Love, never dues! He paid all the dues that bought our ticket to heaven.

MONEY THAT COULD SERVE THE LORD, BUT DOESN'T, IS MAMMONEY

When Money Controls Christian Mission – That's Wrong!

I can't recall a time in the Church when the congregation, the district, or the national church body was not "short of money" and constantly asking its members for more. As a believer in Jesus not only as Savior, but also as Lord of all. Why don't we go to Him first? I can't understand that! Can you?

The Lord Jesus has told us what to do when we need anything to do His work, He says “Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened”. (Matthew 7:7-8)

The above being true, why don't we just do what He tells us to do? He commands us to ask, but ask who? Ask Him! We keep trying new ways to ask each other for funds and to raise money in the ways of the world.

When I served in parish ministry, our church body, as well as para-church organizations came regularly with plans to “raise money”. Whole programs with small group meetings, prepared letters, and pledge cards, “Dedication Sunday” when our commitment cards were placed on the altar some times in sealed envelopes not to be opened, and on and on.

When we hold back on money that we could give to fill the need of ministry to our Lord, that money being held back becomes Mammon

Why do we think our way of funding Christian ministry is better than Christ's way? Is His way too simple? Don't we believe His promise? Don't we trust in God's connecting link to Him -- prayer? Jesus says, “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11: 24) Do you believe this? I do! Am I wrong?

WHAT DOES JESUS THINK? (I continue to pray for the “mind of Christ”)

The young people have led the way in the last few years in asking, “What Would Jesus Do?” when they have to make life's decisions. Let's add to that and ask, “What Does Jesus Think?”

What does Jesus think when seeing a large banner sign across the face of a church property reading: “CHURCH RUMMAGE SALE”

I believe Jesus weeps. Neglecting His promises of support, we by this sign say to the world, ‘We have to sell junk in order to help pay the electric bill of the One who told us, “You are the light of the world!”.’ Am I wrong?

I believe Jesus weeps when he sees the signs in most Christian churches that start out with “FUND RAISER FOR ----”. If there is a need for funds for a mission, for a youth retreat, for the homeless or hungry in our area, the Lord wants us to take it to Him in prayer. Won't He move His people to give or provide a miracle that will fill the need? I believe this! Am I wrong?

Five thousand people were hungry. They had listened to Jesus preach for hours. He tells His Disciples, ‘let's feed them’. We don't have the funds to do that, the Disciples said. But there is a boy here with a few loaves and a few fish they told Jesus.

Did Jesus tell them to take up a “free will offering” or to hold a “fund raiser” to pay the boy? I don’t think so! Like the poor widow, the boy gave everything he had. Jesus turned it into a miracle fed the 5,000+ and collected 12 baskets of leftovers. I don’t believe the age of miracles is over! Am I wrong?

That’s the kind of a Fund Raiser I want, and we need!

THE FAITH GOD GAVE US – GIVES US CHOICES

Jesus clearly tells us that Christians have very important choices to make. The choice is between God and Mammon. The choice is between love and hate. The choice is to be devoted to God and to despise Mammon. “You cannot serve both God and Mammon.”

Mammon is Satan’s partner, it can be the love of money, or it can be any thing that money can buy that blocks the path between us and God, i.e. cars, houses, businesses, you name it. Mammon is “earthly stuff”!

You have heard it said, and you and I have probably said it many times, “I’ve never seen a U- Haul Trailer on the end of a hearse!”, or “You can’t take it with you!”

If we tie ourselves to Mammon i.e. the things of the earth, we will lose the tie we have to Jesus Christ and our home with Him in heaven.

The things and stuff of earth stay here when God calls us to eternity and even while we are here, they are not a safe treasure.

LET’S SEND OUR TREASURE AHEAD TO ETERNITY

So often when we quote one of our favorite texts, Ephesians 2: 8&9 we should really read through the 10th verse: “It is by grace you have been saved through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God --- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Without a doubt, we are saved by grace, we cannot earn it, but it is also true that when we hear Jesus speak of the last day He tells us that we will be judged by what we have done with what He has given us. The result of saving faith is works. Read Matthew 25: 34-46

Jesus warns us, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6: 19-21

It's important to keep faith and works in the right relationship. First comes grace, God's gift through faith, then the result of faith is acted out by works. James puts it this way, "You show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do." James 2:18 (read the whole 2nd chapter)

Jesus clearly tells us that there are rewards for His people who use their "Talents" investing them so that they will earn them dividends.

IT'S OK TO STEAL MAMMONEY

In my parish ministry, I followed the teaching of my seminary professors, "Don't try to get active worshipping people from another Christian denomination to join your church. It's called "Sheep Stealing" or "Proselytizing". -- But this doesn't hold when you try to get people from a non-Christian denomination to join your church, that is called "Stealing The Sheep From The Wolf! That is not only good, it's our job.

So, Isn't It Also OK To Steal "Mammoney" From Satan

I challenge you! If you are a gambler, steal "Mammoney", from Satan and use it to put God's Love in action. Help feed the hungry and cloth the poor. Figure out what you spend each month on Mammon's games and adopt a child/children in a third world country like India (through "Christian Children's Fund, for about \$30.00 a month, each). Or support a food bank in your area. **"Stealing Mammoney" can be fun and it can go to your heavenly Love Treasury!**

Do we really need 20 pairs of shoes? Do we have to buy new clothes every time styles change? Do we have to regularly shop to **find out what we need?** Do we really need to **"Shop till We Drop?"**

Before Jesus left physically from view in His Ascension, He gave one command "Make Disciples"! **Christians have no right to remain silent!**

Of all the things that Mammon and its master Satan hate most, it is when we take money from Mammon's wallet, and use it to help bring people to Jesus.

The majority of people outside of the Christian Faith believe you get right with God by being good, by doing good things. That is wrong! But it is also wrong to believe a person can be a Christian and not do the works that, "God prepared in advance for us to do"!

The story is told of a very rich father who began training his children early in life. He gave each one an "allowance". They could spend it as they wished, but he tried to guide them to be wise in this. When they became adults he gave each of them a **very large gift of money.** Then he **offered to sell them** part ownership in his company with what he had given them.

Let's teach our children to be savers. Start out with the Tithe, tell them this is like the "training wheels" of good investment. Do this when you begin giving them an allowance. Then also show them by example you have gone beyond "Training Wheels"!

WE DON'T NEED TO TAKE IT WITH US, WE CAN SEND IT AHEAD!

We so often miss Jesus' words, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven". All that we have on this earth is a gift of God. The time we give in helping others and sharing our faith can be sent to heaven as a "time share". Our talents and abilities used to help those in need can go into decorating the "room" Jesus is preparing for us.

Jesus would not have told us to do the above, if we could not partner with Him in building toward our future in heaven. Am I wrong?

Jesus says, "In My Fathers house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." John 14: 2-3. Why many rooms? Why not one great room? Think on this!

LET'S MAKE A GAME OF TREASURE STORING

The Lord has given us everything. He says, become a partner with Me in my work, and look forward to My retirement plan for you. That's what this essay is all about. God's IRA plan is what we make it.

Yes, start by teaching our children to be systematic in their giving, then show them that you as an adult have gone beyond the Tithe stage. Be a giver to special needs when the Lord moves you to do so. Be a thanks giver when your joy in the Lord moves you to do so. Let them see in you a walk with the talk! IRA's can be started early in life and go till home-coming.

WHY BURY THE TREASURE FOR LATER? HAVE JOY IN IT NOW!

Last year a faithful partner in our ministry went home to our Lord. This man was an active partner. He helped staff our "State Fair Witness Booth". He used his skills as an artist and carpenter in building displays sharing our work with others. He was also a regular financial supporter of our ministry together.

A short time ago his daughter called and told me that he had left an offering in his will for our work together.

I shared the good news of this upcoming gift with our Association's financial officer. I did not know what the amount would be. Legal papers showing our non-profit standing had to be sent to the lawyer as a first step.

I was thrilled with the possibilities of the ministry this gift could open.

Then I got a “Wake Up Call” from this financial officer of our ministry, who is also our family, financial adviser. He pointed out that my wife and I had set aside several thousand dollars of savings and designated them for the Lord’s work. We had not yet used them.

In our will, these monies would go to the Lord’s work when we die, but we would then have no say in how the specified organizations would use them. We are missing the joy we could have now. My wife and I have decided to change this situation.

I thought to myself, what joy this partner now in heaven, would have had to see what the fruits of his labor were doing while he was still here. Yes I know he may know it now and know our thanksgiving to our Lord and to him, but still -- I wish! Am I wrong?

THIS STUDY HAS CHANGED ME; I HOPE IT WILL CHANGE YOU!

I was brought up in “hard times” Mom and Dad had little to spare beyond the family’s needs. I followed the pattern they had set for me. I was, and still am frugal (I think some times my family uses the term ch ---”)

This study has set me much freer than I have ever been. I am not burdened by a feeling of guilt when I spend the funds He has given me and my family. We can take a vacation and eat-out from time to time. We can fix up the house and buy that new carpet we need. Law no longer rules. Love rules and will guide our giving and our living.

If Joseph of Arimathea was the Rich Young Ruler in Jesus’ encounter, I don’t believe he went out and sold everything he had. I believe he got the point that money does not have to be Mammony! The new tomb in which Jesus had that short stay most likely cost a great deal. It had to be chiseled out of rock by hand because there were no pneumatic drills in Jesus’ day. The tomb was no small gift.

The stone rolled away from the front of that cave is a symbol that will be remembered forever!! IT PROCLAIMS: “HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! HALLELUJAH!” - WHAT A DEPOSIT JOSEPH MADE IN HIS TREASURY IN HEAVEN.

*ONLY ONE LIFE TO LIVE, ‘T WILL SOON BE PAST
ONLY WHAT’S DONE FOR CHRIST WILL LAST!*

**I HATE MAMMON! GOD TELLS ME TO!
PLEASE JOIN ME AND – DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!!**

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I seriously ask of you. If you believe I am wrong on any point in this study, please show me from Scripture. Convince me and I will change what I have written. If I’m not wrong, may what I have written change you!
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DO YOU REALLY WANT WHAT YOU ASK FOR?

When we pray “**THY KINGDOM COME**” in the prayer that Jesus taught us to use, we are asking for two things: (1) That He would lead someone to us that doesn’t know the Good News of Jesus Christ so that we can share that message with him/her and through the power of the Holy Spirit His Kingdom will be enlarged. (2) We are also asking that Jesus would return soon and take us home to heaven.

Some of the early Christians believed that Jesus would return in their life time and that it would be soon. Some even stopped working and were just lying around, waiting. The opposite is happening today, many Christians seem to think His return will not happen soon, certainly not in their life time, or perhaps not at all!

His return will happen! When? That is known only by God. His return and our homecoming should not bring fear, but joy, read Matthew 24:6-14. Jesus’ tells us that we should be ready for the day of His return and “As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me. Night is coming when no one can work.” John 9:4.

The Lutheran Evangelism Association with our relatively small numbers and earthly resources can hardly train enough of God’s people to personally reach the whole world, and certainly not in short order, but remember Gideon. Read the story in Judges 7:1-24 see in particular verse 2. Through our present media *a few can reach the whole world!*

When small numbers are involved in doing great things in His Kingdom He gets all the glory! --That’s as it should be!

Following the guidelines of Scripture in this study we do not ask people for money, we do ask for partnership in sharing the Word, and in prayer.

GET TO KNOW US! THEN PARTNERSHIP WITH US!

So often at conventions and convocations we have people say to us, “I’ve never heard of the Lutheran Evangelism Association.” This, even though we have conducted over 400+ Witness Workshops for Shy and Timid Christians nation-wide, in Canada and even some in India. +We produce printed outreaches through our Prayer And Witness Network “PAWN” using the tract (One Love Fits All) that can be followed up by the seeker asking for more instruction, and by the giver who can through our system follow up with the seeker in a Lutheran way, without using “Spiritual Laws.” +Our Waiting Time Digest” an outreach to the waiting rooms of our land + By our County and State Fair Witness Ministry (bringing Christ into the “Market Place”) + Reaching Out Through the Press” ads offering our free booklet “O God Who Are You?” This also offers follow up possibilities to our involved partners. + TV and radio ads are also available.

Contact us: E-mail: levapfi@mindspring.com