

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

Volume XXXII

2003



January

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Defender



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Balance?

Daniel Denham

In an article titled “Balance” in the bulletin of the Scenic Hills Church of Christ of Pensacola, Florida, with the date of December 8, 2002, Ronnie Missildine, who is the pulpit preacher of the Central Church of Christ of Dalton, Georgia, addresses the subject of fellowship. The article is of significance in that he not only writes on an important subject, but also refers to a situation that he says existed when he was in Pensacola in his “first pulpit work.” He refers to “a congregation” which would not fellowship other congregations over “matters of judgment.” As he fails to name the congregation(s) involved in the matter, one is left to wonder as to what specific situation he has reference.

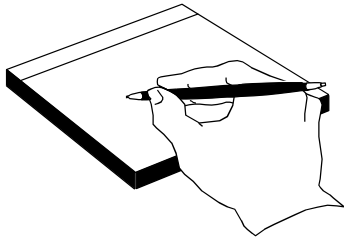
Balance properly understood is to be greatly desired. The need to stay on course down the narrow way of truth is vital for any generation of God’s people (Mat. 7:13-14). We must always be careful neither to be led astray to “the left hand” nor to “the right hand.” Unfortunately, what some call *balance* is to keep one’s mouth shut against the liberalism being promoted by the change agents in the Lord’s Church today! Brother Ronnie assures us that he is not speaking of “compromise,” but nonetheless his article is cause for some concern.

He begins by writing: “Extremes in our fellowship in churches of Christ are getting more and more extreme.” He recounts briefly the fact that he “grew up in the church” and that “fringe” elements were always present in one way or another, but “generally speaking we were ‘the churches of Christ,’ and all felt a strong affinity and bond with each other.” “But,” he

ominously adds, “things began to change.” At this juncture, he cryptically notes: “I experienced the first ‘tightening of circles’ in my first pulpit work when I was in Pensacola, FL. It confused me that a congregation would have nothing to do with fellow-churches if those churches didn’t agree with them on every matter.” He then states, “And the confusing thing was that these were matters of judgment and not of faith—though they made them out to be faith.” “Everyone,” he asserts, “could see it but them.” He does not identify the congregation that committed the alleged affront. Nor does he identify the church or churches offended by the boorish action of the guilty scoundrels. We are simply left to take his word for it. He does not give us any details as to the nature of the things that may have led to the withdrawal. Was it over the color of the carpet that one of the churches used in their meetinghouse? May it have been over how many songs were used at the beginning of the worship services of a particular church? Might it be that the wicked withdrawal may have occurred over whether Bible class literature or support of an orphan’s home from the church treasury was Scriptural? Ronnie assures us that “matters of judgment” were the foci of the withdrawal. Surely then, it could not have been over such things as: the teaching, promotion, and practice of Crossroadism (prayer-partners, et.al.); the disciplining and multiplying ministries of the Boston philosophy as fashioned by Kip McKean and company out of the Crossroads system (including the house church

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Notes From The Editor



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Teaching

Peter, by inspiration, responded to the Jews by saying, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). The theory “widely held by most conservative New Testament scholars” is that *for* in this context means “because of.” The electronic edition of the Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon states, “‘For’ (as used in Acts 2:38 ‘for the forgiveness ...’) could have two meanings. If you saw a poster saying ‘Jesse James wanted for robbery’, ‘for’ could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one. So too in this passage, the word ‘for’ signifies an action in the past.” As evidence of this usage of the Greek term *eis* which is translated “for” in Acts 2:38, consider what our Lord said to the people of His day. “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here” (Mat. 12:41). The term translated “at” in the phrase “they repented at the preaching of Jonas” is the same Greek term as in Acts 2:38, *eis*. The men of Nineveh did not repent into or looking forward to Jonah’s preaching but rather repented because Jonah had already preached to them. You have the same construction in John the Baptist’s words, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire” (Mat. 3:11). John baptized individuals who had previously repented not so that they would in the future repent. Walvoord and Zuck write concerning Acts 2:38: “‘Be baptized... on the basis of the remission of your sins.’ The propo-

sition used here is *eis* which, with the accusative case, may mean ‘on account of, on the basis of.’ It is used in this way in Matthew 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4.” Wiersbe in his commentary on Acts, writes, “The Greek word *eis* (which is translated ‘for’ in the phrase ‘for the remission of sins’) can mean ‘on account of’ or ‘on the basis of.’ In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented.” Many others could be called upon as proof of this theory, but these along with the Bible examples give us plenty of evidence.

If the previous paragraph was the only thing I stated concerning “for” in Acts 2:38, and I did not offer any other views concerning it, nor show that such a position is false; then I have taught that “for” in Acts 2:38 means because of. However, what would happen if someone charged me with teaching such and I responded by saying that I did not teach that “as fact,” I only taught that as a theory? You would know that I am simply trying to “pull the wool over your eyes.” You would know that I have taught it, no matter how much I protested that I only taught it as a theory and not “as fact.” When one presents only one view or position and does not falsify that view then he believes and is teaching that one view even if he claims that it is only a theory which some believe and teach. Let us notice a couple of other examples of this.

Several years ago a brother wrote an article dealing with Isaiah 7:14 and presented his case that it had a literal physical fulfillment in the days of Isaiah and then a spiritual fulfillment in Jesus. He concluded his article with the **possibility** of that literal physical fulfillment—his exact words were “could have had a literal physical fulfillment.” Yet, the entirety of the article gave the evidence of that view and nothing to disprove that view. In writing to that brother I pointed out that he had written the article in such a way so all would believe Isaiah 7:14 was a dual prophecy. I also called upon him to simply admit the position he was taking. In responding to me, he stated that he simply wanted people to “explore the possibility.” Later in the same letter he mentions another view of Isaiah 7:14. This view is that “there can be only one fulfillment of this sign. But they insist that it is not Christ. They insist that the sign was given only to Ahaz and was to be fulfilled within the next few years.” He stated that he did not agree with that conclusion. If he did not believe the dual fulfillment and only wanted people to “explore the possibility” realizing that it was false, then why not also present this view which he rejected? In my response to him I asked him: “If you were writing to get people to

‘explore the possibility’ then why did you not write concerning this possibility? The answer is that you do not believe this view. The reason you wrote the way you did concerning the dual fulfillment, is that is what you believe and that is what you were teaching.” I also stated to him: “You say you did not intend for the person to understand Isaiah 7:14 to be a dual prophecy, but wanted them to ‘explore the possibility.’ Why not go ahead and admit that you believe that this has a dual fulfillment? You were not and are not writing to get people just to ‘explore the possibility’ but you were and are teaching a dual fulfillment. This is seen to be true by your not mentioning the single fulfillment only in Christ. If you wanted people just to ‘explore the possibility’ then why not speak equally as much about this view?” In reality, the proper way to teach would have been to mention the dual fulfillment along with the single fulfillment not in Jesus and show the error of those views, then present the truth that it is fulfilled in Jesus as Matthew stated (Mat. 1:22-23).

A college professor teaching young students with impressionable minds introduces the accounts of the life of Christ. In that introduction he also introduces what is called the “synoptic problem” (i.e., to explain the similarities and differences in Matthew, Mark, and Luke). He presents “two major approaches to the gospels: 1. Source Criticism (written sources; Lk. 1:1-4... 2. Form Criticism (study various oral forms said) [*sic*].” He informs those young impressionable minds that the theory “widely held by most conservative New Testament scholars” is the Source Criticism presented by B. H. Streeter which is the Four-Source Theory. He also informs them that “most Neoorthodox [*sic*] take” the Form Criticism view. However, the truth is not presented nor are these two views disproved. In this situation the professor has thus taught these students to accept either Source Criticism or Form Criticism. If these students want to be known as conservative, then they know which view they are to accept: the Four-Source Theory by B. H. Streeter or Source Criticism. The professor and his cronies can argue all day long that the professor did not teach this doctrine “as fact,” but we all know he taught it to the students for them to accept.

Are we opposed in our teaching to inform the students of these differing views? Of course not! All people need to be forewarned of false doctrine so they will not fall into error, whether it be these or others. Thus, a teacher will inform his students of these views, point out the error of those views, and present the

proper view. When properly presented all who hear the teacher will know the views, but more so they will know those views are false and they will also know how to refute the damnable heresy. This is the proper way to teach.

Lest anyone should misunderstand the previous examples. In the first example: “for” in Acts 2:38 does not look backward, it looks to the future. The Greek *eis* is always prospective not retrospective. This includes the other passages cited (Mat. 3:11; 12:41; Mark 1:4). In the second example: the dual prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is a false view. Instead there is a single fulfillment in Christ. In the third example: Form Criticism and Source Criticism are both false doctrines which undermine the integrity of God’s Word. MH

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(Continued from page 1)

concept); the use of women leading prayer in the presence of men in Bible classes, etc.; the teaching that the Holy Spirit was operating in a miraculous way to strengthen the Christian and do wonders, with such inane claims as the Spirit turning a coffee pot off during a youth meeting; the use of false teachers in workshops, etc., whose efforts to pervert the truth have been well-documented (e.g. Chuck Lucas, Richard Rogers); and other errors, such as the divided worship assembly (euphemistically called “children’s Bible hour”); and fellowship with sectarian groups in various efforts. Surely it could not be over teaching in any particular church coming from change agents like Buddy Bell or Eddie Leveck. None of these things could have been factors involved in the withdrawal in question: for brother Misseldine assures us that only “matters of judgement” were involved. Rampant liberalism that would lead to a split in a particular congregation that produced a Community Church inhabited by even more liberally-minded brethren in the city’s downtown area has to be also rejected as a factor. We have brother Ronnie’s word on it! Certainly, the kind of beliefs and actions that would strongly tie a congregation of the

Lord's church itself to the ultra-liberal Landmark and Twickenham churches (websites and other forms of documentation are amazing things) could not have caused the rift leading to withdrawal over "matters of judgment." Nor could the use and endorsement of the work of the Nazarene minister James Dobson, the work of theistic evolutionist John N. Clayton, and the A.M.E.N. program of White's Ferry Roads Church of Christ (West Monroe, LA) by a particular church be at fault. Matters of opinion were at the heart of the dissolution of fellowship in Pensacola, according to our brother. Only the old meanies who bound where the Bible does not bind were at fault!

Missildine decries "labels." However, I suspect he really approves of truth in advertising when it comes to purchasing his food and clothes. While labels can be misused, in and of themselves they do serve a purpose. He has even used a few "labels" in his piece. He states that those on the "left" and the "right" are "wrong." He accuses the offending church that disturbed the peace of the other churches of binding as matters of faith what were really matters of judgment. He even says, "Everyone could see it but them." This implies that these brethren were in some way blind to a truth that he and every one else grasped. Our brother should be careful not to arrogate to himself what he would not allow for others. It would not be broad-minded of him to do so.

Missildine does not want to go too far to the left nor to the right. When one is talking about the left and right as distinct from the narrow path of the truth, then that is a noble desire. However, if one is using *left* and *right* (and subsequently *middle*) to designate the philosophical differences of brethren without some doctrinal frame of reference, then the desire is more politically than Scripturally driven. Some folks desire to be perceived as being in the middle, moderate, and easy to get along with on the issues of the day. In some cases they will even, as Bill Clinton frequently sought to do in secular politics, "redefine the middle" as suits their own agenda. Liberal change agency especially does this by way of post-modernism's new speak or double speak (wherein the meaning of the thing is subject to the *momentary*—existential—thought and definition given by the agent). Some may even take the taffy illustration by brother Missildine precisely as expressive of this philosophical use of terms. The truth, however, is not like taffy. The middle ground of a generic, philosophical idea does not necessarily

correspond to the objective, unshifting ground of truth. In fact, sometimes the truth of a matter lies in an extreme position. The question of God's existence, for example, involves the extremes of theism and atheism and the middle ground of agnosticism. The truth is that God does exist! Not all *extreme* positions as viewed from human perspective are false just because they are extreme from that philosophical perspective. If Missildine and David Newberry, whom Missildine quotes, believe they are "taffy" being pulled in both directions (left and right), they need to consider carefully the real essence of the issues being discussed. Change agents are destroying congregations and damning souls, while some brethren are serving, even well-meaningly, as enablers providing opportunity for such work to be done. Mistaking "matters of faith" for "matters of judgment" is as dangerous, if not more so, than mistaking "matters of judgment" for "matters of faith." One can always live beneath his privileges, but never does he have the right to exceed them!

Brother Ronnie complains against the *left*: "Too far to the **left**, and you lose your 'audience.' One of the precepts of the 'left' is to include as many people in the religious world as possible. So eventually, the point is reached where there is no distinctive message at all; nothing to stand for." If this is genuinely what worries brother Ronnie about the left, then I can put his mind at ease. The left has plenty of people willing to listen and support its views. Just take a look at the Willow Creek movement, the Third Wave charismatic movement, etc. By the way, Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, Richland Hills near Fort Worth, Texas, and dare I add, Landmark and Twickenham each seem to have a fair size "audience."

One, however, will note that it appears it is not the doctrinal errors of the left that concern our brother, but it is simply that you wind up without a "distinctive message" by following their ideas. Our brother does not express any angst about the substance of their teaching on any specific matter. We would hope that the distinctive message that Missildine seeks to spread does not somehow overlook the oneness and uniqueness of the church, the organization and worship of the church, the extent and limitations of fellowship, and the role of women in the church, et.al. From his article, one, understandably, may be led to the conclusion that he holds that these are all just "matters of judgment." Perhaps, he will enlighten us on these things. He later does express concern over those "leaving the precious

body of Christ...and going to the denominations, or establishing the 'community' churches where they think they can escape the 'fights.'" He even calls it "alarming," but apparently only "because they lose the very distinctiveness of the body of Christ in His church!" Does brother Missildine consider such folk to be out of fellowship with the Lord? Are they still in a saved condition? One wonders what is his full position on such departure from the faith. One gets the impression that he cannot quite bring himself even to suggest such a conclusion that they have thus departed from the faith to the extent that they are no longer the proper objects of fellowship. His complaint against the left implies also that as long as a sufficient audience remains then every left-wing idea from the sayings of Chairman Mao on could be acceptable.

Missildine's protest against the *right* is that they measure their spirituality by whom they exclude from their fellowship. Evidence for this he does not provide. Yet he opines: "If I grow spiritually by not allowing today, something I allowed yesterday, or not including someone today that I included yesterday, pretty soon my circle is so tight, from excluding certain people and practices, that I am essentially by myself." As he does not provide a doctrinal frame of reference we are left to wonder if our brother would have us to strike from the inspired record Ephesians 5:11; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; and 2 John 9-11, because these would have us exclude some from our fellowship with whom we previously had fellowship. Would he have Paul rewrite his admonitions to the Corinthian brethren in 1 Corinthians 5 "not to keep company" with any brother who is a fornicator, covetous, idolater, railer, drunkard, or extortioner? Paul may have been guilty of drawing some "tight circles" concerning their fellowship as per brother Missildine. Should the Apostle have apologized to Hymenaeus and Alexander for being too hard on them in delivering them to Satan—a figure of speech that means that Paul was excluding them from his tightening circle? How unspiritual of the him, if such were the case! The fact is, brethren, we have no Scriptural right to knowingly fellowship those whom the Lord has said He will not fellowship! Amen or "oh, me," brother Ronnie?

He states, "Why, I might not even be able to fellowship my own wife, because she doesn't agree with me on everything." While it is indeed not a matter of perfect agreement on "everything," it is definitely a

matter of agreement on matters of faith (Amos 3:3; Phi. 3:16; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:10). He needs to identify clearly the things he labels "matters of judgment" so brethren could better judge for themselves the matter at hand. He ought to state clearly what he believes constitute matters of faith and matters of judgment. He should tell us whether or not women leading prayers in the presence of men is a matter of faith, and so on.

Brother Missildine wants to be in the middle with the rest of the taffy, despite the fact, he says, the middle is getting thinner and thinner. He states that the two extremes "are wrong in what they are doing." By what authority does he say that? Must we all agree with him on this matter in order to be in fellowship with him or to gain in some measure his approval? Is he *labeling* those he considers to be to the left or to the right of him? His article demands some doctrinal frame of reference—yet he provides none.

He calls upon brethren: "Let's just say, 'I'm sorry' and again join hands to get the saving message of the Gospel to a lost and dying world." The problem with Missildine's advice here lies in the definition of "the saving message of the Gospel." What does he mean by it? Liberalism holds that the Gospel is only the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and that belief in those things alone constitute the basis for fellowship. This is the Ketcherside doctrine (named after Carl Ketcherside) that makes a distinction between the Gospel and New Testament doctrine. The former is the basis of fellowship, according to the Ketcherside view, while the latter involves purely optional matters or matters of judgment. Is this what Missildine has in mind? To be sure he states that we must "commit to be true to the Scripture," but even the most ardent post-modernist professes "to be true to the Scripture" depending upon how one defines "true" and "Scripture."

As to the current crisis over fellowship with the change agents, it is clear that those who have forsaken biblical authority in what they teach and/or practice are the ones who owe an apology to those who are still standing where they have always stood. If fellowship has been broken, the guilt is not—and never is—on the part of them who stand with the Lord. Certainly, many divisions have come about over matters of judgment, but are we to believe that every case of division is so formed? Think about it.

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Introductory Matters: In the July issue of *Defender* we began looking at some questions an Independent Baptist sent me (and several others). He had sent 23 questions in an email to me and to which I responded. These are the answers that I wrote to his questions. I encourage you to go back and read the introductory information from the July issue. This is the next installment of these questions and answers with his questions numbered and indented (otherwise without any editing) and my answers immediately following. I pray that this will be a profitable study to others.

Questions about The Church of Christ

Michael Hatcher

17. Can we lose our salvation? Jesus says in John 10:28-29 that no man can pluck us out of his hand or his father's hand. Wouldn't no man include us as well? If I can lose my salvation can I lose my baptism as well?

Yes we can lose our salvation. The Scriptures are clear on the fact that we can lose our salvation. In fact, there would be no need for the majority of the Bible if not for the fact that we can lose our salvation, for it reveals how we should live so we will be pleasing to God. If we cannot lose our salvation, then there would only be the necessity for the Bible to inform us of how to be saved, not how to stay saved.

The context of John 10:28-29 begins in verse 22. When the Jews asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He is the Christ, He begins His answer in verse 25. He explains to them that His works have told them plainly that He is the Christ, but they did not believe Him because they were not His sheep. Now notice what Jesus does say and is not included in what you mentioned: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (v. 27). This shows the activity on the part of man. Man must follow Christ to be known of Christ and thus be in the Father's hand. If a man stops following Christ, he is no longer known of Christ and is no longer in the Father's hand. Thus, here Jesus is speaking of faithful disciples and those who are faithful (following Christ) cannot be plucked out of the Father's hand.

Another part of a proper understanding (and a reiteration of the previous) of this passage is *pluck*. It comes from the Greek word *harpazo* and means to take by force and can also mean to steal or to seize or capture possessions by force. Jesus is discussing the power of the Father; that no one has greater power than the Father, so they could come and forcibly remove someone from Him. What is not under consideration is the activity of the person himself. The disciple himself could make the decision to leave the protection of the Father. This is the same thing which Peter stated. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath

begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5). God's power keeps us (God's activity), through faith (our activity in remaining a Christian). Now let us consider a very few of the hundreds (if not over a thousand) passages which teach that a man can so sin as to lose his salvation.

In the parable of the sower, there was one soil which did not receive the word and three soils which did receive the word with joy. Of those three soils, one brought forth fruit to God while the other two fell away. To fall away one must first be in or on that from which he can fall away. When Jesus discusses the vine and branches, He states, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away" (John 15:2). He goes on to say, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). Here is one who is a branch, thus in fellowship with and a part of Christ, who makes the decision in his life to no longer abide in Christ; then he is cast forth (he could not be cast forth if he were never a part of the vine), gathered, and cast into the fire where he is burned.

While the doctrine you are speaking of is sometimes called "once in grace, always in grace," Paul shows that we can fall from grace. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Paul is writing to Christians who have turned back into Judaism, and he tells them they "are fallen" (you cannot fall if you are never there) from grace. Thus, they possessed God's grace at one time, but are no longer recipients of His grace. Paul realized the possibility of his losing his salvation when he wrote, "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). *Castaway* is from a word meaning a reprobate, or one who is rejected. It refers to something which does not stand the test and is

thus not approved. The apostle Paul recognized that he could, if he did not buffet his body daily, get to the state of being rejected by God.

Notice what Peter writes concerning some who left the ways of the world. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Notice the changing situation of these individuals Peter is talking about: (1) They were a part of and in the pollutions of the world; (2) They escaped those pollutions; (3) After escaping them, they are then entangled in those pollutions again and overcome by them. Peter says that the last state is worse than the first state. They were lost and now they are again lost but with the knowledge that they once enjoyed the salvation which comes "through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The only way to understand the "true proverb" is that here is one who was lost, then saved,

then lost again. While there are many other passages which show one may lose his salvation, these are sufficient.

The last aspect of your question also needs to be mentioned: Does a man's falling away cause his baptism to be lost? The answer is: No. He will not need to be baptized again. At baptism one becomes a child of God. That cannot change. However, he can become a disinherited child, in which case there would be the need to return to the fellowship of God. This is done by repentance, and prayer. An illustration of this fact is seen in Simon (Acts 8:4-25). Simon was baptized, thus becoming a child of God (v. 13). Simon then sinned in trying to buy the power to lay hands on others to impart to them miraculous gifts (vv. 18-29). Because of this sin as a Christian, Peter says he is now in a state where he will perish (that is, losing one's salvation). "Thy money perish with thee... for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). Notice he is told to repent and pray, not to be baptized again. He did not need to be baptized again, but he did need to be restored.

Updated CD Study Aid

The 1988-2002 books, *Defender* issues of 1989-2001, and the *Hatcher/Schweitzer Exchange* (an exchange of letters between Michael Hatcher and a Lutheran "pastor," Keith Schweitzer, on the subject of Total Hereditary Depravity and other matters) are available on computer disk in Adobe Acrobat Reader (PDF) format (making it useful for both Intel and Macintosh computers). The Acrobat Reader is also provided on the CD. The CD is completely indexed allowing searches of all the books at the same time (you can find every occurrence of a word or phrase such as "baptism for the remission of sins" in every book at the same time). The cost of the CD is only \$55 in which you receive all 15 books (less than \$5 per book), plus postage/handling fee of \$1.25. If you purchased a previous version of our CD, then check with us for an upgrade at a significant reduction in price upon the return of the CD. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church of Christ.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Editor's Note: Because of the increasing prevalence of the reevaluation/reaffirmation of elders and the defense of this ungodly practice, I thought it would be good to reprint this evaluation of this practice. Because of the length of the review, it will have to go into several issues of "Defender." Also because of the number of endnotes found in the review, we are going to delete them here and if you want a copy of them you may contact us or find them in the book. This review is a reprint of the chapter found in the 1997 Bellview Lectureship Book titled "Leadership" on pages 83-103.

REEVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS?

Dub McClish

INTRODUCTION

The following note was in a printed worship announcement program of a local congregation of the Lord's church earlier this year:

ELDER AFFIRMATION: As part of our service this morning, our five current elders will be re-confirmed [*sic*] and Brother _____ will be re-appointed [*sic*] as an elder. This is as a result of the overwhelming response of the congregation to the recently distributed Elder Recommendation Forms.¹

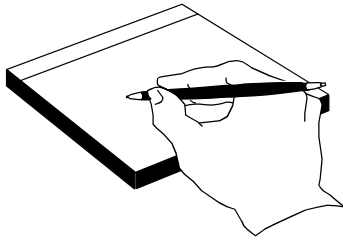
A brother who champions the "reaffirmation" of elders based upon periodic "reevaluation" of them began a manuscript on the subject as follows: "The reaffirmation of elders is new ground for most congregations. It is an uncharted course—a path not traveled. Few congregations have had any experience with reaffirmation."² While (as noted above) this practice is generally of recent vintage among us, it has been observable in the denominational world for many years.³ My first exposure to this practice in a church of Christ was in about 1987 when the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Forth Worth, Texas, announced in its bulletin that it follows such a process for both its elders and deacons. Due to its history of leadership in all things liberal for many years this unscriptural idea was not at all surprising. However, the next time I heard of such a practice was both

surprising and disappointing. The Brown Trail congregation, Bedford, Texas, generally known through the years for its scriptural soundness, used the reevaluation/ reaffirmation process in 1990 to restructure its eldership, which included selection of one new elder.⁴ Although there are doubtless many others, in my research for this chapter I only have documentation of the employment of this practice by the following congregations, including the two mentioned immediately above:

1. The Richland Hills congregation, North Richland Hills (Forth Worth), Texas
2. The Houston Park congregation, Selma, Alabama
3. The Pleasant Ridge congregation, Arlington, Texas
4. The Airport Freeway congregation, Euless, Texas
5. The 11th and Willis Streets congregation, Abilene, Texas⁵
6. The Crestview congregation, Waco, Texas⁶
7. The Brown Trail congregation, Bedford, Texas (the only congregation in the list without a reputation for liberalism to a greater or lesser degree.)

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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“For” (*eis*)

In the editorial for January 2003, I mentioned three passages (Mat. 3:11; 12:41; Mark 1:4) which use the Greek word *eis* (translated as “for” in Acts 2:38) which some state has the meaning of “because of.” Matthew 3:11 and 12:41 do seem to have the apparent meaning of “because of.” In this article I would like us to look a little closer at these passages because if it can mean “because of” in these passages, then it could mean the same in Acts 2:38. If it can mean “because of” in Acts 2:38, then is it possible for baptism to not be a part of the salvation process? What we will find is that *eis* does not mean “because of” but is looking to the future (not the past).

First let us consider Matthew 12:41 which says, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here.” This mentions that the men of Nineveh repented “at” the preaching of Jonah. “At” is the Greek word *eis*. With just a cursory reading of this passage one might come to the conclusion that the men of Nineveh repented because of the preaching of Jonah. However, this interpretation is incorrect. The grammar itself will not allow such a view. Look at *preaching* in this verse. It is a noun, not a verb thus it does not refer to the act of preaching but to the substance or content of what is preached. The reference is to the proclamation of the necessity of repentance and reformation made by Jonah. When we go back to the time God gave Jonah the command to “Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee” (Jon. 3:2), we see the same principle. The LXX has that Jonah is to go *preach*, this is a verb denoting the act of preaching. He was to go preach the *preaching*, this time he uses a noun denoting the message or substance

preached. Jonah preached a certain kind of life. This life was in his preaching, his message. The men of Nineveh got into this life by repentance.

J. W. McGarvey explained it this way:

They repented into the preaching of Jonah. This is not idiomatic English, but it conveys the exact thought which a Greek would derive from the original. The term preaching as put for the course of life required by the preaching, and it is asserted that they repented into this. Their repentance brought them into the course of life which the preaching required. If Jesus had merely said they repented in consequence of Jonah’s preaching, he would have stopped short with the internal change which they underwent; but he chooses to go further, and indicate the terminus of their repentance, that is brought them into the condition which the preaching demanded (113).

These Ninevites embraced the manner of life which Jonah preached, they repented into his message and proved it by the actions which they took. Thus, when Jesus states that the men of Nineveh repented into the preaching of Jonah, he is not saying they repented because of Jonah’s preaching but that they repented into the manner of life which Jonah preached.

The other passage which sounds much like *for* means because of is Matthew 3:11. In this context John the Baptist is speaking and states, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with*

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fire.” The phrase we are concerned with here is “baptize you with water unto repentance.” “Unto” is this same Greek word *eis*. Again with just a cursory reading of this text one might arrive at the conclusion that John was saying that he was baptizing them with water because they had repented. As in the previous example, this view would be incorrect. As McGarvey states, “To assume, as some have done, that the preposition has the sense of *because of*, is to seek escape from a difficulty by attaching to a word a meaning which it never bears. The preposition (*e[]*) is never used to express the idea that one thing is done because of another having been done” (37). Notice *repentance* as is used here though. Again, it is not a verb it is a noun. Thus, it is not the act of repenting but the manner of life set forth by John. They were being baptized into that lifestyle which John had proclaimed. McGarvey has a different view concerning this when he writes:

A baptism which required repentance as a prerequisite would have a tendency to cause those yet unbaptized to repent, in order that they might receive the baptism and enjoy its blessings. Prizes in schools are given in order to good behavior and good recitations, although the good recitations and the good behavior must precede the reception of the prizes.... In the same way was John’s baptism in order to repentance. The inestimable blessing of remission of sins being attached to baptism (see Mark i.4; Luke iii.3), the desire to obtain this blessing would prompt those yet unbaptized to repent, so that they might be baptized. The words declare simply that the general purpose of John’s baptism was to bring the people to repentance (37).

Brother H. Leo Boles presents this same view when he writes, “The desire to receive the forgiveness of sin would prompt those who had not submitted to John’s baptism to repent so that they might be baptized and in so doing receive the remission of sins” (82). However, he also wrote, “If he did what he says he did, he baptized them and all others unto repentance, or to doing work meet for repentance.... There is nothing in the context that intimates that he sent them off to prove their worthiness before he baptized them, and it is contrary to the spirit of God’s dealings with man throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament” (82). Either way one understands this, it gives no credence to the view that *eis* (translated “unto”) refers to action that has already taken place.

Those who try and use these two verses in an attempt to try and offset the plain and clear teaching of Acts 2:38 are simply grasping at straws and trying to confuse the issue because they refuse to obey God’s Word. MH

Work Cited:

- Boles, H. Leo. *A Commentary on The Gospel According To Matthew*. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1952.
McGarvey, J. W. *The New Testament Commentary*. Vol. 1 Matthew and Mark. Delight, AR: Gospel Light, n.d.
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(Continued from Page 1)

DEFINITIONS

In order to understand the practice under discussion we need to understand the definition and application of the principal terms used by its advocates:

1. “Reevaluation” is based upon the word *evaluate*. To evaluate is to determine or fix worth or value of an object or person (in this case, the latter) based upon examination. To reevaluate is to evaluate again or anew. To reevaluate elders means to reexamine them in order to determine their worthiness or unworthiness to continue to be elders.

2. “Reaffirmation” is based upon the word *affirm*, which means to validate by positive assertion. Thus, to reaffirm means to validate again that which was once validated. In respect to elders, reaffirmation means that men already serving as elders have their continued service validated and positively asserted. Please note that reaffirmation implies prior reevaluation; without it there is no basis for reaffirmation in this procedure.

3. “Reconfirmation” is based upon the word *confirm*. This word means to make firm, strengthen, ratify, or give approval to. Reconfirmation obviously means to repeat the giving of approval or ratification. Since this word is actually a synonym for reaffirmation, when applied to elder selection the two words may be and are often used interchangeably.

4. *Deaffirmation* and *deconfirmation* (admittedly coined words, DM) are effective antonyms for *reaffirmation* and *reconfirmation*, respectively. It logically follows that a man who is not reaffirmed/reconfirmed after reevaluation is thereby “deaffirmed”/“deconfirmed”!

APPLICATIONS—SOME CASE STUDIES

In his sermon manuscript, John Cannon asserted the existence of two general parts to the application of the reaffirmation process:

First, each elder as an individual should reaffirm his desire to continue to serve. Self-examination requires an elder to ask, “Do I still have my heart set on serving the Lord’s church as an elder?” (1 Tim. 3:1). If the answer is “no,” he should be willing to resign or retire with dignity. If the answer is “yes,” then he should be

concerned about the congregation's attitude toward him, Second, the congregation's attitude should be determined. The congregation can reaffirm its desire to have any or all of the present elders to continue to serve. They can reaffirm their commitment to follow the leadership of the elders as individual men and as a group or body of elders—the eldership. In the event an elder is not reaffirmed by the congregation, he is given the opportunity to retire with dignity. If reaffirmation is positive, the elders resume their leadership role in the congregation with a vote of confidence.⁷

His purpose is to argue the case for the concept and process. Therefore, he does not set forth the details of how either the reevaluation or reaffirmation is to be executed, although he later advocates “frequent evaluation of leaders,” “periodic evaluation,” and that elders should undergo “congregational evaluation periodically.”⁸ While I have confirmation that the congregation where Cannon preaches (Pleasant Ridge, Arlington, Texas) uses this approach, I do not have documentation of the specifics of it.

The Richland Hills Congregation combines a specifically-structured tenure plan with its approach to reevaluation, reaffirmation, and selection process for both elders and deacons, as follows:

1. Each newly-appointed elder is appointed for only a three-year tenure before reevaluation.
2. At the end of the three-year term he can resign if he chooses to no longer serve, or he can choose to be a candidate for reaffirmation, subject to reevaluation by the congregation.
3. If his reevaluation “ballots” are sufficiently negative, he understands that he will not be reaffirmed. If they are sufficiently positive, he is reaffirmed. (I was not able to learn the formula by which one is reaffirmed or deaffirmed.)⁹
4. New elders are selected and appointed based upon the evaluation process and formula used for the reevaluation of existing elders.
5. Deacons are reaffirmed and new deacons selected by the same process, except the tenure of deacons is one year.

The Crestview Congregation, Waco, Texas, patterned its process after the plan of the 11th and Willis Congregation, Abilene, Texas (as mentioned above) (notwithstanding its claim to be following “a model patterned after that revealed in the book of Acts”). A summary of this plan is as follows:¹⁰

1. The congregation selected fifteen members for a “Drafting Committee” to “draft the procedures for selecting elders and present them to the congregation at

an open meeting.”

2. The Drafting Committee prepared a list of “introspective” questions for prospective elders, which, when filled out by the eventually-determined candidates, were made available to the entire congregation.¹¹

3. The chairman of the Drafting Committee conducted an “open” meeting of the congregation in order to select a seven-member “Administrative Committee.” This committee could not include any man who presently served as an elder or who might be an elder candidate.

4. The Drafting Committee tabulated the nomination ballots for members of the Administrative Committee, with the top seven vote-getters being appointed, after which the Drafting Committee dissolved.

5. The Administrative Committee, after selecting its chairman, had the responsibility to review and supervise the elder selection procedure.

6. The congregation was urged to submit written, signed nominations for elders over a given number of days, with existing elders automatically nominated unless they removed themselves from consideration (which four of the five Crestview elders did on February 12, 1987—four days after nominations began). Each candidate had to receive at least twenty nominations to be considered for appointment/reappointment.

7. The Committee then met with each candidate to determine his willingness to be appointed if selected. The list of those who were willing was then placed before the congregation.

8. A period of several days was allowed during which any member could lodge scriptural objections to any of the men. These must be in writing, signed, and delivered to the Committee by the pre-announced deadline.

9. “Ballots” (their word) were distributed and voting on the candidates took place on a given Sunday morning after worship. “Making the cut” for reaffirmation/affirmation was based on “yes,” “no,” and “I don’t know” “votes” (their term) cast for each man according to the following intricate formula:

The minimum level of confidence is a percentage of all affirmative votes cast for a nominee after his “I Don’t Know” votes have been subtracted from the total number of votes cast. The minimum level of confidence for elders shall be set at no lower than 70%. The maximum percentage of “I Don’t Know” votes shall be set at no higher than 25% of the total number of votes cast.¹²

10. The Committee tabulated the elder ballots on the same day the voting was done, thus determining

which nominees had been “affirmed.” This being done, the ballots were destroyed.

11. The Committee then announced the results of the voting and set a date for installation/reaffirmation of the new eldership.

12. The Committee prepared a written report, in conjunction with suggestions from the congregation, evaluating the selection procedures and projecting the date for the next selection process. The Committee then dissolved and its functions ceased.

The specifics of the reevaluation/reaffirmation/selection blueprint implemented at Brown Trail, although not as intricately detailed, have many similarities to the above. The document in which they set forth their plan is reproduced in full below:

1. The elders formed a committee to regulate and monitor the process. Committee members: Gary Fallis, Dave Miller, Johnny Ramsey, Don Simpson.¹³
2. Formally apprise the congregation of the commencement of the evaluation/selection process (Dave Miller—April 8). Present sermons on elder qualifications and responsibilities (Johnny Ramsey—April 15 & 22).
3. Distribute evaluation/selection forms to the membership (April 22). Give membership one week to carefully/prayerfully evaluate present eldership as well as potential new elders and submit forms to the committee no later than April 29.¹⁴
4. Tabulation of forms by the committee. Present elders must receive 75% support of those submitting forms.¹⁵ Individual interview appointments will be scheduled. Interviews will facilitate introspection and review biblical qualifications [*sic*].

5. Names presented to the congregation (May 13). A two week period will be given for the submission of signed scriptural objections to the committee (Deadline: May 20).

6. If any objections are forthcoming, interview appointments with objectors will be scheduled in order to ascertain the validity of objections. The objector will not be required to meet with the one to whom he objects. The objector’s anonymity will be maintained. Scriptural objections will then be discussed with those receiving objections.

7. Appointment/ordination service (May 27).¹⁶

All of the plans above, while differing in some details have numerous things in common, including the following: (1) A committee (or committees) which stands between existing elders and the congregation. (2) The committee is vested with authority and oversight of the entire reevaluation/selection process. (3) The committee establishes an arbitrary (and sometimes complex) formula by which it determines who is to be reaffirmed/affirmed. (4) The congregation reevaluates existing elders and suggests prospective elders. (5) A period of time is allowed for lodging objections against any of the candidates. (6) Those who satisfy the pre-established formula and who are not disqualified because of sustainable scriptural objections lodged against them are then reaffirmed or affirmed, respectively.

Having seen the nature of the process, we turn now to consider the attempts to justify and defend it on the basis of Scriptures.

908 Imperial, Denton, TX 76201

Introductory Matters: In the July issue of *Defender* we began looking at some questions an Independent Baptist sent me (and several others). He had sent 23 questions in an email to me and to which I responded. These are the answers that I wrote to his questions. I encourage you to go back and read the introductory information from the July issue. This is the next installment of these questions and answers with his questions numbered and indented (otherwise without any editing) and my answers immediately following. I pray that this will be a profitable study to others.

Questions about The Church of Christ

Michael Hatcher

18. Is there a difference in fellowship with God and a relationship with God? Can I be out of fellowship with God but still have my relationship with God? If I quit speaking with my dad the fellowship has been broken, but that doesn’t change the fact that I am his son and he is my dad because we are still related no matter what thus a relationship is always there whether or not I choose to fellowship

with him.

Yes there is a difference in fellowship with God and one’s relationship with God as you have defined it in your question. One becomes a child of God by being baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Once an individual becomes a child of God, he will always have that relationship. However, he can so sin as to break his fellowship with God. He then becomes a disinherited child. For this reason we are instructed to be baptized to

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Spring Bible Institute Lectures

“Islam—From God Or Man?”

February 23-26, 2002

David P. Brown, Lectureship Director

Sunday, February 23

9:30 AM	“The Islamic View Of The Bible”	Gary Grizzell
10:30 AM	“Abraham Sows And The Middle East Reaps”	Tom Wacaster
4:00 PM	“Biography Of Muhammad”	Paul Vaughn
5:00 PM	“An Overview Of The Koran”	Gary Summers
6:00 PM	“Islamic Objections To The Trinity And Deity Of Christ Answered”	Tom Bright

Monday, February 24

9:00 AM	“Who Owns Palestine?”	Roddy Covington
10:00 AM	“The Status Of Women In Islam”	Jim Nash
10:00 AM	“From The Women’s Quarters” (Women’s Class)	Fran McClure
11:00 AM	“Is Islam A Religion Of Peace?”	Charles Collett
1:30 PM	“The Religious Hierarchy In Islam”	Darrell Broking
2:30 PM	“The Causes Of Division In Islam”	Michael Hatcher
3:30 PM	“The 5 Pillars (Duties) Of Islam”	David Baker
	DINNER BREAK	
6:30 PM	CONGREGATIONAL SINGING	
7:00 PM	“Jihad”	Jerry Murrell
8:00 PM	“The Jesus Of Islam” (Born of a Virgin, a True Prophet—But Not Deity)	Barry Grider

Tuesday, February 25

9:00 AM	“Religious Tolerance Of Muslims In Islamic States”	Rick Popejoy
10:00 AM	“Islamic Holy Places”	Clifford Newell
10:00 AM	“Through The Lattice” (Women’s Class)	Fran McClure
11:00 AM	“Islamic Worship: Then And Now”	Randy Mabe
1:30 PM	“Sources Of Authority In Islam”	Keith Mosher
2:30 PM	“Muhammad Is Not The Fulfillment Of Biblical Prophecy”	Richard Massey
3:30 PM	“Islam’s Eschatology”	Jerry Brewer
	DINNER BREAK	
6:30 PM	CONGREGATIONAL SINGING	
7:00 PM	“The Nation Of Islam (Black Muslims)”	Michael Shepherd
8:00 PM	“The Church Confronts Islam In America”	Curtis Cates

Wednesday, February 26

9:00 AM	“Islam—From God Or Men?”	Kent Bailey
10:00 AM	“Shariah Law” (Punishment by Severing Fingers, Hands, etc.)	Preston Silcox
11:00 AM	“How Islam Grew—The Culture In Which Muhammad Lived”	Michael Light
1:30 PM	“Islamic Distinctives In Diet, Clothing, Etc.”	Lester Kamp
2:30 PM	“The Impact Of Islam On World Affairs”	Bobby Liddell
3:30 PM	“The Islamic View Of The Prophets”	John West
	DINNER BREAK	
6:30 PM	CONGREGATIONAL SINGING	
7:00 PM	“A Christian’s View Of Islam” (Salvation is Only In Christ’s Church)	Lynn Parker
8:00 PM	“Allah: Islam’s God Is Not The God Of The Bible”	B. J. Clarke

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(Continued from Page 5)

enter into that relationship with God, but once we have that relationship, if we sin, our response is not to be baptized again but to repent and pray (see the previous answer regarding Simon in Acts 8). Also John deals with Christians who commit sin in their lives and how to have the forgiveness of those sins when he writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). There is no need to be baptized again (which would be done to become a child of God); instead there is only the need to be restored to fellowship (as you have defined in your question).

I tend to feel you are asking this question to attempt to prove that, even though we might no longer have fellowship with God, we are still His children, therefore we will still receive the blessings of being His children (i.e., eternal salvation). I have two sons. In my will, my two sons, when I die, will receive my goods (if I have any left, otherwise they inherit the debts). However, if one of them should begin living a life contrary to what we believe is right, then he will no longer remain as an inheritor of my goods—I will disinherit him. Will he remain my son? Yes. However, he will no longer receive the benefits of being my son. In my case, I would have to change my will (testament) and remove him from it. In the last Will and Testament of Jesus of Nazareth, He has already made provisions for those who become children of God to be disinherited, and, thus, no longer receive the benefits of sonship, including eternal life.

19. Was the thief on the cross saved?

Yes! Jesus stated to the thief on the cross, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). That settles the question for anyone who respect God’s Word. However, I can only think of two reasons why this question is asked: (1) to discuss the state of the dead, or (2) to try and offset that baptism is necessary for salvation. I do not (based upon your other questions) think that you are asking about the state of the dead; thus allow me to deal with the question of baptism relative to the thief on the cross.

Was the thief on the cross saved without being baptized? I do not know, but it does not matter. While I doubt that the thief was baptized, we do not know for certain. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were teaching and practicing baptism. The Record does state concerning John’s baptism: “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark. 1:5). Was the thief a part of those who came to John to be baptized of him? I do not have any evidence of such, but cannot say for certain that he did not. Either way, it does not matter. The New Testament is just that—a testament or a will. A testament comes into effect after men die. While the person lives, his testament is not in effect. Jesus was/is the mediator of a New Testament (His Law). However, His Law (Testament) did not go into effect till after Jesus died. While Jesus was alive, He could give His possessions away upon any basis He wished. Upon seeing the faith of men bringing a man sick of the palsy to Him, He forgave the sick man’s sins (Mat. 9:1ff). Jesus, being anointed by a woman who was a sinner, would forgive her sins (Luke 7:37-50). A thief upon saying “remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” caused Jesus to forgive his sins. (Why just bring up the one case, why not all of them where Jesus forgave people of their sins?) Why could He forgive their sins? Because He had not yet died, His Testament (His Law) had not come into effect. The Hebrews writer taught this: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Heb. 9:15-17). Thus, while Jesus was alive (prior to His death), He could tell someone they were saved based upon anything He wished. Jesus was still alive when He told the thief that he would be with Him in paradise. Thus, the thief was saved and that without baptism, because Christ’s law (His testament) which teaches that a man must be baptized to be saved but mankind was not amenable to it yet.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com> E-mail: bellview@bellviewcoc.com

Editor's Note: Because of the increasing prevalence of the reevaluation/reaffirmation of elders and the defense of this ungodly practice, I thought it would be good to reprint this evaluation of this practice. Because of the length of the review, it will have to go into several issues of "Defender" (this being the second installment of this chapter). Also because of the number of endnotes found in the review, we are going to delete them here and if you want a copy of them you may contact us or find them in the book. This review is a reprint of the chapter found in the 1997 Bellview Lectureship Book titled "Leadership" on pages 83-103.

REEVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS?

Dub McClish

JUSTIFICATIONS OFFERED BY ADVOCATES

Those congregations that have adopted a reevaluation/reaffirmation approach to elder and/or deacon appointment (such as the ones described) indicate varied attitudes toward justification of same. These range from no justification attempt to setting forth of an alleged scriptural basis.

John Cannon observes that the New Testament says little about the appointment of elders. Just as it says nothing of elder tenure, resignation, retirement, leave of absence, or sabbatical, "Likewise, the reaffirmation of elders, either individually or congregationally, is not addressed in the text." He concludes that reaffirmation is in the realm of "congregational judgment."¹⁷

The documents from the 11th and Willis Congregation (Abilene, TX) offer no justification for their plan, however, the "Crestview Plan" (Waco, TX) (which is based entirely upon that of the Abilene Church) attempts to do so. This is likely explained by the fact that the Abilene Congregation had been using their plan so long that they assumed that none of its members would question it. On the other hand, this was all new and novel to Crestview, and its implementors seemed to have anticipated objections to it

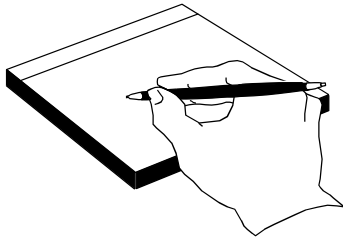
on scriptural grounds. For whatever reason, the Crestview Administrative Committee offered the following in the opening paragraph of its "Procedure" explanation: "We are choosing to follow a model patterned after that revealed in the book of Acts in which the Church [*sic*] sought to determine its leaders." I suppose that the passage referred to above is the same as that mentioned in a later statement made orally to the congregation by Norman Murphy, Chairman of the Administrative Committee:

The purpose of this process is simply for this congregation to recognize the shepherds/elders among us whom God has already chosen. Notice how Matthias was chosen as the apostle to replace Judas. Acts 1:24 says: "And they prayed and said, 'Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen'" [RSV, DM]. Not even the apostles sought to impose their will on the church.¹⁸

The Brown Trail (Bedford, TX) Elder Selection Screening Committee went to much greater pains than those previously cited in its attempt to provide scriptural justification for employing its elder reevaluation process. This would be expected for at least two reasons: (1) The Brown Trail Church has had a long history of seeking to do only what the Scriptures authorize (admirably so), and the other

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Time And Forgiveness

An individual obeys the gospel of Christ Jesus (upon hearing God's Word, he believes, repents of his sins, confesses his faith in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God, and is baptized in water for salvation) becoming a Christian. For a while he faithfully lives the life God has authorized, neither adding to God's Word nor diminishing ought from it. However, as time goes by, his faithfulness to God wanes. He does not study the Bible anymore, and seldom prays. His attendance is affected: first he only misses on Wednesday night, then he is seldom seen on Wednesday's and begins missing Sunday night, and then even Sunday mornings. As time continues to go by, he soon drops out of worshiping God completely. While the brethren try to encourage him and make him realize his need to once again be faithful to God in all aspects of life, all such attempts are rebuffed. This one is now lost having returned to the pollutions of this world.

With the passing of time, this one who has fallen back into the clutches of Satan, realizes his need for God. Therefore, he makes the decision to return to services one Sunday morning. The day comes, he gets dressed, and when the time comes he comes in the back door at the last minute and sits down at the back of the auditorium. After services he is given a warm welcome by his friends and encouraged to continue attending. Thus, he continues to attend and becomes more comfortable. With the passing of time he slowly moves toward the front of the auditorium and finds a place in which he feels comfortable. He gets to the point where he is once again attending all the services of the Lord's church. Soon someone in the congregation asks him to lead a prayer or do something else. He accepts the invitation and soon he is an active participant in leading the

worship of the saints.

This congregation and this wayward brother have forgotten one little aspect. Time does not produce forgiveness. Some, while maybe not admitting they actually believe this, practice that given enough time (enough for people to forget about the sin) that there is no need for repentance. The time has taken care of the sin. Sadly, many will have a sad day of reckoning when they stand before God in judgment. They think they are right with him, but they have never removed the sin from their life.

What does it take to remove sin for one who is a Christian? Let us consider two passages in answer to this important question. The first passage concerns Simon the sorcerer. Simon heard the preaching of Philip and was brought to believe and then baptized (Acts 8:13). The apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria and they laid hands on the Samaritans imparting to them the Holy Spirit (8:14-18). Simon offered to pay Peter and John for the same power they possessed—the ability to lay hands on others and impart the Holy Spirit to them (8:18-19). “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity” (8:20-23). Peter reveals to him that he had sinned and tells him what he must do to have forgiveness of that sin—and it was not just give it some time and everything will be all right. Peter instructs Simon to repent and pray.

John, in writing to Christians, discusses our fellowship with God (1 John 1:3ff). As long as we walk in the light the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us from our sin. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1:7). However, John recognized that Christians even though trying to live separate from sin will commit isolated acts of sin. They have the blood of Christ available to continue to cleanse them of those sins, but there is a qualification. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:9). If we do not confess our sins, then we will not receive forgiveness of those sins. *Confess* comes from a word meaning to have a word together with. God says (through His Word) that I have

sinned, and I have a word together with Him in saying that I have sinned.

Thus, for one to receive forgiveness of sins, he must confess his sins, repent of them, and pray to the Father asking His forgiveness. Till one does these things, he does not have forgiveness. One who tries to sneak in the back door without doing these things, no matter how long of a time transpires, he does not have forgiveness. The same is true of those who advocate false doctrine (while the controversy might go away, they retain their sin till they confess, repent, and pray), or those who are divisive within a congregation. If there are sins in your life which you have not properly taken care of, for the sake of your soul, do those things which God commands to have them taken away by the blood of Christ. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

congregations involved in this work have not exactly distinguished themselves in this pursuit. (2) Both the Brown Trail elders and the committee of its preachers and instructors surely anticipated that its adoption of this process would identify them with generally-recognized liberal congregations in the minds of many sound brethren and that they would therefore receive criticism because of this fact.¹⁹ Due to the committee's concerns about such matters it issued the following lengthy (by comparison) "Rationale" for the program they adopted:

(1) The members select elders to begin with (Acts 6:3). Since the complexion of congregational membership changes over the years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals whom the present membership would select.

(2) Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively.

(3) The Bible makes provision for the evaluation of an elder's spiritual standing (1 Tim. 5:19). Should a current elder be found to be disqualified, he no longer meets the qualifications to be an elder. An evaluation process is simply one expedient means of ascertaining the elder's conformity to God's will. "Once an elder, always an elder" is as false as "once saved, always saved."

(4) Elders have the authority to ascertain the amount of confidence that members have in their leadership capabilities. Any shepherd who genuinely wishes to serve the flock will naturally desire the continued approval and respect of that flock. Should an elder no longer sustain that respect from a sizable portion of the flock for whatever reason, the only proper attitude would be to remove oneself from a position that depends upon credibility. A Christian does not have to be an elder to go to heaven.²⁰

Let us summarize the assertions offered in justification of the concept of reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders from all of the foregoing sources:

1. The New Testament authorizes the selection and appointment of elders, but does not instruct us how to do so. Therefore, we must use our judgment concerning the best way to do so.

2. The selection of Matthias as an apostle (Acts 1:24) is a model for selection of elders. God had already made His choice and the other apostles simply employed a means by which He could reveal who it was.

3. Elders are to be selected by the members (Acts 6:3).

4. Elders must have respect of the church members to be able to serve effectively.

5. Elders should be evaluated to see if they continue to be qualified (1 Tim. 5:19).

6. Elders have the authority to determine whether or not the congregation still has sufficient confidence in them to respect and follow their leadership.

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“God The Father”

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

9:30-10:20 AM Listening In The Presence Of God Jerry Martin
 10:30-11:30 AM The Greatest Sermon On God—Acts 17 Barry Grider
 6:00 - 7:00 PM The Eternal Purpose Of God Paul Sain
 7:00 - 7:45 PM The Heavens Declare The Glory Of God Curtis A. Cates

MONDAY, MARCH 31

8:30- 8:50 AM CHAPEL (Forest Hill Auditorium)
 The Peace Of God Matt Jagers
 9:00- 9:50 AM God The Father Will T. Winchester
 10:00-10:50 AM The Foreknowledge Of God Dub McClish
 10:00-10:50 AM A Practical Approach To Worshiping God (Women’s Class) Corinne Elkins
 11:00-11:50 AM God Is Not Mocked B. J. Clarke
 Class 1: One Nation Under God Sam Willcut
 Class 2: The Nature Of God Tim Rice
 Class 3: Can Man Know And Be Known Of God? Jimmy Ferguson
 Class 4: God Keeps His Promises Eric Owens
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM God’s Compassion For The Afflicted And Oppressed Harrell Davidson
 Class 1: That Which God Hates David B. Jones
 Class 2: The “God” Of Existentialism Charles Cochran
 Class 3: Our God Is A Sun And Shield (Women’s Class) Annette Cates
 2:10- 3:00 PM God Is The God Of The Living Gary McDade
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM God So Loved The World Wendell Winkler

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

8:30- 8:50 AM CHAPEL (Forest Hill Auditorium)
 The Holiness Of God Eugene Edwards
 9:00- 9:50 AM God Has Spoken Keith Mosher
 10:00-10:50 AM Where Is Their God? Jack Openshaw
 10:00-10:50 AM Draw Near To God (Women’s Class) Betty Tucker
 11:00-11:50 AM God And Christian Elders David Brown
 Class 1: God And Temptation Lane Dix
 Class 2: What God Has Joined Together Michael Shepherd
 Class 3: Is God Just In Punishing The Wicked? Mike Hixson
 Class 4: The Providence Of God Michael Hatcher
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM God Seeks True Worshipers John Shannon
 Class 1: Glorifying God Don Treadway
 Class 2: God, Evil, And Suffering Glenn Colley
 Class 3: God Made Them Male And Female (Women’s Class) Irene Taylor
 2:10- 3:00 PM PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND SUPPORTERS SEMINAR Andy Cates
 2:10- 3:00 PM The Origin Of The Idea Of God Lennie Reagan
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM God Gives Sanctity To Life James Segars

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

8:30- 8:50 AM CHAPEL (Forest Hill Auditorium)
 The Justice Of God Bill Doyle
 9:00- 9:50 AM The Angels Of God Kenneth Gossett
 10:00-10:50 AM God Is Not Dead Wayne Coats
 10:00-10:50 AM God Chose A Woman (Women’s Class) Martha Bentley
 11:00-11:50 AM Should We Seek Unto God Or Familiar Spirits? Wayne Price
 Class 1: The Problem Of Sin And The Process Of God’s Forgiveness Brad Poe
 Class 2: Friendship Of The World Is Enmity With God Daniel Cates
 Class 3: The Indwelling Of Man By God David Smith
 Class 4: Answering Charges Against God Brent Smith
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM The Oneness Holiness View Of God Billy Bland
 Class 1: The Names Of God Barry Elliott
 Class 2: God In The Home Dan Goddard
 Class 3: Learning To Trust In God (Women’s Class) Vada Rice
 2:10- 3:00 PM God Resists The Proud And Gives Grace To The Humble Tony Lawrence
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM The Importance Of One Person To God Ronnie Hayes

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

8:30- 8:50 AM CHAPEL (Forest Hill Auditorium)
 The People Of God Mike Hall
 9:00- 9:50 AM Is All We Do Worship To God? Darrell Beard
 10:00-10:50 AM The Relationship Of The Father To The Son And Spirit Barry Gilreath, Jr.
 10:00-10:50 AM Living Godly Lives In An Ungodly World (Women’s Class) Celicia Grider
 11:00-11:50 AM God, Time And Eternity James Hudley
 Class 1: Walking With God Jesse Dickison
 Class 2: The Living God And The Idols Of Men Gary Summers
 Class 3: The Wrath Of God Floyd Johnson
 Class 4: The Secret Things Belong To God Preston Silcox
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM The Grace Of God Melvin Hampton
 Class 1: Respect For God And His Name Freddie Shows
 Class 2: God, Man, And Money Robert Williams
 Class 3: Is There Anything God Cannot Do? (Women’s Class) Elizabeth Ferguson
 2:10- 3:00 PM There Is One God Bobby Liddell
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM The Conclusion Of The Whole Matter Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

NOTE: There will be classes and activities for pre-school children daily, and also for the evening classes.
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Introductory Matters: In the July 2002 issue of *Defender* we began looking at some questions an Independent Baptist sent me (and several others). He had sent 23 questions in an email to me and to which I responded. These are the answers that I wrote to his questions. I encourage you to go back and read the introductory information from that July issue. This is the last installment of these questions and answers with his questions numbered and indented (otherwise without any editing) and my answers immediately following. I pray that this will be a profitable study to others. One last note, since I emailed my answers to this individual on June 29, 2002, I have not received any reply from him.

Questions about The Church of Christ

Michael Hatcher

20. How was Abraham saved because The Law was not established until Moses time?

Paul wrote, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness....For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:3, 13). "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gal. 3:6). These passages make it clear that Abraham was saved by faith. Paul continues and explains the nature of the Law of Moses by saying, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:16-18). However, this passage does not mean that Abraham did not have any law from God, or else he would not have committed sin. "For where no law is, *there is* no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Abraham simply was not subject to the Law of Moses (see the answer to question 16 for the purpose of the Law).

What type of faith did Abraham possess? It was not simply a faith which acknowledged that God exists. It was a faith which was obedient to what God instructed him to do (also see answer to question three). "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (Jam. 2:21-22). "**By faith** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed**; and he went out, not knowing whither he went....**By faith**

Abraham, when he was tried, **offered** up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:8, 17-19).

Abraham was saved in exactly the same way we are saved today, which is why he is called the father of the faithful. "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:12). He obeyed the commands which God gave him (doing so by faith), thus being saved by the blood of Christ. All men who are saved, whether during the Old Testament time or the New Testament time, are saved by the blood of Christ. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Thus, by his obedience to God's commands, the blood of Christ went back to cleanse him of his sins, saving him.

21. Did people who were baptized by John The Baptist need to be baptized again to receive the remission of sins? Explain.

I do not know, because the Bible does not state specifically one way or the other. We do know that those baptized by John The Baptist were baptized for the remission of their sins (Mark 1:4). We also know that those who lived during that time were in a special situation as they were living under the Law of Moses, but that law was ending, and they were coming under the Law of Christ. Therefore, if God did not require them to be baptized after Pentecost then that is certainly left up to Him. If God did require them to be baptized again, again it is left up to Him.

Another aspect of this question should be con-

sidered. John's baptism was only valid for a certain period of time. In Acts 18 we see Apollos was at Ephesus preaching John's baptism after it was no longer valid (Aquila and Priscilla took him and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly). In Acts 19 when Paul comes to Ephesus he found some of those who had been baptized according to John's baptism (according to the teaching of Apollos). These 12 men were baptized again.

However, having said all this, in reality, it does not matter what God required of them. What we should be concerned with is what God requires of us today. What God requires of us today to receive remission of sins is clear, and that includes baptism (and for the purpose of receiving the remission of sins).

22. Is baptism part of The Gospel? Romans 1:16 says "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" In I Corinthians 1:17 Paul says "*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*" Here Paul makes a distinction between The Gospel and baptism, Paul says Christ sent him not to baptize so how could he preach The Gospel without baptism?

He did not preach the gospel without baptism. Baptism was a part of the gospel. If Paul preached the gospel without baptism, then why did he baptize? He says he knows he personally baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. Why and how did he baptize these if he did not preach baptism and if baptism is not important? When Paul went to Corinth, as recorded by Luke, it says that Crispus believed (and Paul says he personally baptized him), and many of the Corinthians "hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). If he did not preach baptism, how did they know to be baptized? Baptism for the remission of one's sins is a part of the gospel and preaching of the gospel, or preaching Christ (see Acts 8:36-39), or preaching the cross (1 Cor. 1:16ff). If one fails to preach baptism for the remission of one's sins, then he is not preaching the gospel (or Christ, or the cross).

While baptism is a part of the gospel, baptism without the gospel is worthless. This is the point Paul is making in 1 Corinthians 1. If baptism without the

gospel saved people, then we could get a lot of people *saved* by simply forcing them into and under the water. However, this would save no one. The idea that baptism saves without the gospel is the false doctrine of "baptismal regeneration." Baptism is only profitable upon ones belief, repentance, and confession of his faith in Jesus as the Son of God. So in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul is saying that Christ did not send him out to simply dunk people in water without their faith, repentance, and confession of their faith, for this would save no one. Christ sent him to preach the gospel (which is God's power to save; Rom. 1:16), and that preaching the gospel he will be preaching baptism (which is for the remission of their sins and thus for their salvation).

23. Are the new Bible translations the inspired word of God as well as the King James Version? Is there anything wrong with using one of the new Bible translations? Explain.

Any time a word is translated into another language, you still have the original meaning. The New Testament was written in the Koine Greek language. When a translation correctly translates a Greek word into the English language then that is the inspired Word of God. This is true no matter what translation one might be discussing. The problem with many of the modern *translations* is that they have no intention of bringing the words of the Greek into the words of the English. What many of them use today is called Dynamic Equivalence or Functional Equivalence. This philosophy of translation deals more with an emphasis on the receptor of the translation and more concerned with readability and communication, and not what the text actually says. One *translation* says they try for "fidelity to the thought of the Biblical writers." The process in this philosophy is that the translators interpret what the words of the Bible mean and what they believe those words meant to the people who read it in the first century. They then rewrite it to try and convey what they believe it meant to those of the first century to try and convey that meaning to the modern reader. In this case you no longer have God's Word, you have the translator's interpretation of God's Word which would not be inspired. Would it be wrong to use such? It would not be any more wrong to use such as it would any commentary (which is what these are, except these are under the guise of a Bible). However, one needs to understand what he is using and that it is not, in reality, God's Word he is reading but that he is

reading the translator's commentary of God's Word.
For a more detailed and fuller discussion of this subject

see my sermon outline at:
<http://www.bellviewcoc.com/Sermons/translations.htm>.

Updating Our Books-On-CD

We are in the process of updating our CD and it should be available at our 28th Annual Bellview Lectureship. The cost (if it is not an upgrade) will be \$60.00 plus \$1.25 postage (if it is an upgrade, please contact us for the cost). What will you get for this money? To start with you will receive all the Bellview Lectureship books beginning at 1988 and going through 2003. However, we found that a few other books were printed in a spiral binding, thus we have the 1975, 1976, and 1978 books on the CD also. These books are: *Characters Of The Bible* (1978), *Back To The Bible* (1976), and *Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks* (1975). Many of those books are out of print and at present this is the only way you can get that material. The cost of the CD goes for the purchase of these books. You are paying \$60.00 for sixteen lectureship books and receiving the other three for a total of nineteen lectureship books. Thus, you are receiving sixteen books for less than \$4.00 each.

However, while you are paying for the lectureship books, we are placing a great deal more material on the CD than just the books. We are placing all issues of *Defender*, which we possess, on this CD. *Defender* began in 1970, but it appears as if it was not printed in 1971, so we have 1970, 1972-2002 issues on the CD.

Next, we have a section we are titling *Other Material*. I am placing some of my study materials of Bible books on the CD. Those books I have done cover: Philemon, James, 2 & 3 John, and Jude. These are basically commentaries covering every verse in those books. There will also be the *Hatcher-Schweitzer Exchange* which was an exchange of letters between myself and a Lutheran *pastor* dealing primarily with the subject of "Total Depravity" but also covering some other subjects.

We also have included a book by Clifford Newell titled *Biblical Ethics*. Keith Mosher wrote a tract several years ago titled, *Can One Trust His English Bible?* which has also been included. Brother Mosher has published two books dealing with inspiration which we were not able to get prepared for this CD but Lord willing will be on next year's CD. We also have his *Romans: A Study Outline* on the CD. His son, Mark Mosher wrote a booklet exposing the Lads to Leaders program which we have included. Its title is, *Is "The Lads To Leaders/Leaderettes, Inc." Really Good For Our Children?* A book which has been in great demand which we have on the CD is, *Studies In...Christian Doctrine And Practical Christian Living* written by William S. (Bill) Cline. Another important book which deals with the A.D. 70 doctrine (also called Kingism) is titled, *Studies In Refutation Of Realized Eschatology*. This book is a compilation of material written by Roy Deaver, Rex A. Turner, Sr., and Robert R. Taylor, Jr. Last, but certainly not least, we have a book written by Dudley Ross Spears of his material which he prepared for a debate with J. T. Payne in 1962. The title of this work is *The Refutation Of The United Pentecostal Denomination*.

As you can see from the list of material on our Books-on-CD there is a wealth of material available for your usage. This is over 275 megabytes of material. All of it has been done in the Adobe PDF format and the free reader is also included on the CD. Everyone will want to get a copy of this CD or upgrade their previous version.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

Volume XXXII April 2003 Number 4

Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com> E-mail: bellview@bellviewcoc.com

Editor's Note: Because of the increasing prevalence of the reevaluation/reaffirmation of elders, the defense of this ungodly practice, and the advocacy of it by some; I thought it would be good to reprint the evaluation of this practice written by Dub McClish for our lectureship book on "Leadership." This is the third installment of this evaluation and we would encourage everyone to read the first two in the February and March issues of "Defender." Also because of the number of endnotes found in the review, we are going to delete them here and if you want a copy of them you may contact us or find them in the book. This review is a reprint of the chapter found in the 1997 Bellview Lectureship Book titled "Leadership" on pages 83-103.

REEVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS?

Dub McClish

RESPONSES TO THE JUSTIFICATIONS

The initial response that needs to be made in reference to the proffered justifications is to observe the following: All of the justifications have linked (whether wittingly or unwittingly) **selection and appointment** of elders with **reevaluation and reappointment** of elders as if they were inseparable and without distinction. The basic argument of the reevaluation advocates may thus be stated as follows:

1. The Scriptures authorize local congregations to select and appoint their own elders, but the details of doing so are in the realm of expediency.
2. Reevaluation and reaffirmation are merely alternate names for and means of the selection and appointment of elders.
3. Therefore, the Scriptures authorize reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders as expedients for selection and appointment of elders.

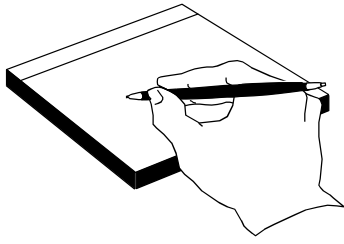
The first premise above is true. Assuredly, the Scriptures authorize the selection and appointment of elders/bishops/pastors in every congregation in which two or more men can be found who are scripturally qualified (Acts 14:23; 15:4ff; 16:4; 20:17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Tit. 1:5-9). Moreover, the specifics of how these are to be done are not provided either by

example or precept in the New Testament. Such matters are therefore left to the exercise of human wisdom that works in harmony with the overall context of scriptural principles.

The problem arises with the second premise above: It assumes that which requires proof and evidence, which are not offered. It should be obvious to all that programs of "reevaluation" and "reaffirmation" (or "deaffirmation," such as those described above) of previously-selected and appointed elders are not the same as mere selection and appointment procedures. The plans referenced above use separate and different forms for evaluating present elders and nominating new elders—a tacit admission that reevaluation and initial selection are separate processes even in their minds. Moreover (as noted above), the Brown Trail plan stipulates: "Present elders must receive 75% support of those submitting forms." No such stipulation was applied to those who had not previously served. Since the second premise is false, the third premise (conclusion) is necessarily false. The reevaluation, reaffirmation, deaffirmation process concerning elders is a separate issue from the mere selection and appointment of elders and thus must be

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Seed Principle

Early on in the Sacred Record, God firmly established the seed principle. As early as the third day of Creation, God stated that, “And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good” (Gen. 1:12). *After his kind* is the seed principle. Moses writes this same principle regarding the whales, living creatures in the water, and fowl (1:21); living creatures, cattle, creeping things, and beast of the earth (1:24-25). From a biological standpoint, Moses reveals to us the Law of Biogenesis (*bio* meaning life and *genesis* meaning beginning).

This principle or law is very well known to all individuals. We often speak of this law under the terms of sowing and reaping. If someone wants to reap some corn, they do not go out and plant (sow) watermelon seed. Good old common horse sense tells us that whatever seed you sow, that is what you will reap. Thus, if you sow (plant) watermelon seeds, you will reap a harvest of watermelons.

This simple principle destroys the theory of Evolution (although it would be better described as the hypothesis of Evolution—and a poor one at that). How many of you upon seeing a human baby look around for two monkeys as being the parents of that human baby. Yet, that is exactly what evolution states took place. For evolution to take place, two non-humans had to cohabit and produce a human offspring. The Law of Biogenesis proves that event does not happen; we know that does not happen. Thus, the Macro-Evolutionary model of man’s existence did not and could not happen.

Another area which this seed principle is important to understand is dealing with God’s Word. In the parable of the sower (Mat. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8), the sower scattered the seed which then fell upon different

types of soil. Jesus enumerated four different types of soil: wayside, rocky ground, thorny ground, and good soil. Of the four soils (which Jesus explained as being different types of hearts) only one brought forth fruit: that seed which fell upon the good soil. In explaining this parable to His disciples, Jesus said, “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11).

When God’s Word is planted within the heart of an honest and good person, it will bring forth a Christian. This is what took place in the first century and will take place today in exactly the same way. On the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, Peter and the apostles preached God’s Word to the Jews assembled on that occasion. We find that 3,000 obeyed the Gospel that day, being baptized for the remission of their sins and thus being added by God to the church. Some today might want to ask which church. There existed only one church—it was the church Jesus established (Mat. 16:18), of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23), and which He is going to save (Eph. 5:23). A little later we see that Barnabas and Saul (the apostle Paul) were assembling themselves with the church—that same one church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Those members of the church were called Christians. “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). We thus see that when God’s Word is planted in the good and honest heart it will produce a Christian, nothing less and nothing more.

How does one become a Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, et al.? Since God’s Word produces only a Christian and nothing else, then to become one of these one must either add something to God’s Word or he must take something away from God’s Word to become a member of a denomination. To make one a Baptist, one must be taught and accept Baptist doctrine. The same is true whether one is discussing Baptist, Lutheran, or any other denomination. One must be taught and he must accept that denomination’s doctrine to become such. If he is taught the Bible and nothing but the Bible, he will not become a member of a denomination—he will be a Christian, a member of the church of Christ.

One other aspect of the seed principle regards our life. Paul puts it this way: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the

flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8). Numerous passages teach that each person will be judged by Christ and His Word based upon what they do in their lives. One day you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and He will place your life on one side of the scales and His Word on the other. If you have lived up to that standard (you have sown to the Spirit) then you will receive an eternal reward with God in heaven. If, however, your life does not measure up to that standard (you have sown to the flesh), then you will be eternally separated in a devil’s hell to be tormented forever. Never deceive yourself into thinking you can sow one thing and reap something else. *MH*

(Continued from Page 1)

separately tested in light of the Scriptures. There is both implicit and explicit authority for the latter. There is neither for the former.

What about the use of Acts 1:24 as justification, per the Crestview documents? I must admit that I have never before seen this passage used in any connection with the selection or appointment of elders, and, I think, with good reason! The setting here is the meeting of the 120 disciples, including the eleven apostles, in Jerusalem between the ascension of the Lord and the Day of Pentecost. In the process of selecting a replacement for Judas, the group prayed (apparently led by Peter, Acts 1:15): “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom thou hast chosen, to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away” (Acts 1:24-25). It is argued that the apostles did not “impose their will on the church.” This would hardly have been possible since the church had not yet been established! But granting that this was after the church was established, it hardly helps the argument unless those making the argument are willing to cast lots and rely upon the same means by which God signals His choice of elders. The fact that this was a selection involving the miraculous element invalidates it as a precedent for any generation of the church since the cessation of miracles. True, this incident shows that the apostles did not independently or arbitrarily make the choice of Matthias, but this has little to do with the question before us. The “church” did not make the final selection, either. God did! The argument seems to be that, because the apostles did not choose Matthias, we therefore have scriptural authority for reevaluating and

reaffirming or “deaffirming” elders. This is a very large stretch—even for a Texas church!

I turn my attention now to the “Biblical Rationale” statement (hereafter referred to as the “Rationale”) issued by Brown Trail (see above). Due to the fact that it is by far the longest attempt at a biblical justification it will require a longer response than the other attempts. While realizing that the Bible need teach a thing only once for it to be the will of God, it is still noteworthy that the four paragraphs of the “Rationale” are not all that “biblical.” That is, only two passages are cited (not even quoted), and little application of them is made. Had there been more Scripture in their favor they surely would have used it! I intend to demonstrate that neither of these passages justifies what these brethren purport to see in them.

The first passage cited is Acts 6:3. What, if anything, does it have to say about the issue before us? The only point the “Rationale” drew from it was that “The members select elders to begin with (Acts 6:3).” The context of this passage is the response of the apostles to the complaint from the Grecian Jews that “their widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations” (Acts 6:1). The apostles called the church together and told them, “Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). While admitting in his sermon cited earlier that the seven men selected were not elders (in his opinion they were deacons),²¹ Dave Miller concludes: “Let’s simply note that here is an inspired selection process given by the inspired apostles.” I have no problem with this conclusion. In fact, I believe it a correct use of the passage and have so used it for many years. However, I ask how this justifies the reevaluation, reaffirmation, deaffirmation program? All this passage does is furnish the principle that the whole congregation is to be involved in the selection of elders (and deacons), not in some intricate reevaluation process of men who were already selected, appointed, and serving.

Next, the “Rationale” states: “Since the complexion of congregational membership changes over the years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals whom the present membership would select.” My initial reaction to this statement was registered immediately after the Brown Trail program was implemented, and it remains the same:

Just because the “complexion” of a congregation changes over the years (as all do) says nothing to justify

the practice (i.e., of reevaluation/reaffirmation). When saints come to place membership with a congregation they are under the same directive to submit themselves to the elders of that congregation, just as every other member is (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). If said members cannot follow the leadership and work under the oversight of those elders, why should they want to place membership?...

I see certain harmful consequences that may accrue from this practice: (1) The congregation is “up for grabs” with the change of congregational “complexion.” Any group of errorists of any sort (antis, premillennialists, Crossroaders, Kingites, whatever) could move into a congregation over a period of months and so change the “complexion” of a church as to demand their own chosen elders. Of course, this has been done as a power move in more than one place, but the “reevaluation” program invites and encourages same. (2) This “reevaluation/reconfirmation/deconfirmation” concept removes the oversight of the congregation from the elders (Acts 20:28) and gives it to 25% of the congregation! Majority rule in the absence of elders has its drawbacks at times, but allowing a mere 25% to determine who will or will not serve as elders, and that, perhaps on the basis of personal likes and/or dislikes rather than on Scriptural qualifications, is absurd. Moreover, the 25% apparently relates to the number of forms received by the...screening committee, rather than 25% of the actual membership (“75% support of those submitting forms,” “Procedure...” statement [emp. DM]). Depending on how many forms were submitted, the 25% could represent a much smaller percentage of the entire membership. Talk about “minority rule”!²²

A similar response was made by Garland Elkins to the “change of complexion” idea:

Those who contend for “reconfirmation” argue that many of the present members were not there when the present elders were appointed, and if they were given the opportunity at present they would not be in favor of appointing the present elders. That may be true, but remember that they agreed to work under the oversight of the present elders when they placed their membership with a given congregation.²³

W. Terry Varner reacted to the “change of complexion” statement as follows:

[The] argument for “Reconfirmation” based on “the complexion of a congregation in terms of its membership can change over a period of time...no longer consist of the same individuals...” proves nothing. Hopefully, the case would be that...the congregation would grow by winning souls and transfer of memberships, so that membership would indeed change. If the eldership continues to meet the divine qualifications, whether the complexion of the congregation changes or not, he remains God’s servant as an elder.... For a congregation’s complexion to change wherein the members would not submit themselves places the members in violation of Heb. 13:17, “obey them that have rule over you” [sic].²⁴

There is not even any reasonable, much less scriptural, connection between the “change of complexion” of a congregation and the justification for some sort of reevaluation/reaffirmation process for elders.

The next item in the “Rationale” asserts: “Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow.” It goes on to argue that while a man may be “technically qualified” to be an elder, if the congregation does not respect and trust him as a leader, he cannot “shepherd effectively.” Does not this open the flood gates to abuse of and rebellion against the eldership or at least of certain men who are elders? Does not this place all of the responsibility upon the elders to be men (even though scripturally qualified) who the members want to follow (based on carnal standards), rather than placing it on the members to obey the elders because they are qualified and because God commands them to (Heb. 13:17, et al.)?

Mac Deaver wrote the following perceptive observations in response to the attempted justification of “reevaluation” of elders on the basis that the members will not follow him even though he is scripturally qualified:

Brother Miller did not exactly prove what he set out to prove regarding the alleged scripturalness of evaluating elders who are already elders in order to determine whether or not the sheep are going to follow them.

I think the matter of stressing that elders can’t lead if the sheep won’t follow needs to be thought about more thoroughly. The evaluation process, as far as I can see from the material you sent, is to determine whether or not the congregation is willing to submit to certain men. It is not simply an effort to find out who is or is not scripturally qualified to remain an elder.

I think the position that brother Miller takes implies that at any time there is an effort on the part of the elders to lead in a direction in which the sheep don’t want to go, then all they have to do at that time is to reevaluate the eldership and remove all those to whom they do not want to submit. **This would imply that the elders are not ruling the congregation but that really the congregation is ruling the eldership** [emp. DM]....²⁵

The argument that a man could meet the qualifications, yet not be perceived by the members as a shepherd or one to whom they would submit themselves “is filled with questions and problems,” according to W. Terry Varner:

1. If an elder met the divine qualifications, he would, by virtue of his qualification, “know” the flock he helps to oversee (1 The. 5:12-13) and be a watchman of (Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17).
2. The subsequent result would be that the eldership would be known (come to be known by all newcomers in the membership). There is no justification for

“Reconfirmation of the Eldership.”²⁶

This pretense of an argument in fact adds a qualification to those in the Scriptures, namely, that “the bishop therefore must measure up to certain ‘leadership qualities’ as determined by at least 75% of the membership.”

The second passage of Scripture cited in the “Rationale” (1 Tim. 5:19) is supposed to demonstrate that “the Bible makes provision for the evaluation of an elder’s spiritual standing.” In this passage Paul teaches: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at *the mouth of* two or three witnesses.” He then adds, “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). The “Rationale” goes on to state the redundancy that “should a current elder be found to be disqualified, he no longer meets the qualifications to be an elder.” It is then alleged that “an evaluation process is simply one expedient means of ascertaining the elder’s conformity to God’s will.” The paragraph closes by stating: “‘Once an elder, always an elder’ is as false as ‘once saved, always saved.’”

My immediate response to this use of First Timothy 5:19 when I first read the “Rationale” was that it was a misuse of it, and my convictions have not changed. I wrote the following concerning this part of the “Rationale”:

I find no Scriptural precedent for it [i.e., the “reevaluation/reconfirmation” practice] in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. To find this practice in this text requires some imaginative eisegesis, rather than sound exegesis. Of course, “once an elder, always an elder” is faulty. However, the task and necessity of removing an elder because two or three witnesses sustain a charge of sin against him is one thing, and “reevaluating” and either “reconfirming” or “deconfirming” an entire eldership as a matter of policy or routine is something altogether different. Further, I know of no basis for removing a man as an elder unless he is proved to be unqualified on the basis of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. To say that a man should be removed because “25% of the congregation doesn’t want to follow him” or “doesn’t like him” [is not in this passage or any other].

Brown Trail has not announced that it will do this annually or at any other stated interval, but the precedent has now been set for doing it. “If it was a good thing to do once, why not a good thing to do regularly?” it might be argued.²⁷

The late Bill Jackson wrote some incisive comments relating to the “reevaluation” practice and removing a man from the eldership as set forth in this part of the “Rationale”:

The work of the eldership is permanent—the congrega-

tion will always need elders. The men appointed were appointed because they met the qualifications set forth in the Bible. I think all of us would agree that an elder can resign, and certainly, if unqualified, should be removed if he does not resign. But that is the point: An elder is “examined, evaluated” day-by-day in his life and in his functioning. Fellow-elders and the congregation should be able to see the man, know the man, day-by-day in the work of the kingdom. It becomes nothing but a political arrangement, giving every man a vote, however wrongly motivated he may be, and through this process, good and qualified men can be rejected on this second evaluation, and thus unscriptural and liberal forces can move their own men into office!²⁸

Once more, from the pen of W. Terry Varner came the following words:

Elders must meet the divine qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:3-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3, and other related Scriptures. This is not to affirm “once an elder, always an elder,” as brother Miller seems to accuse those of us of who would oppose the “Reconfirmation of Elders.”

Since an elder must meet the divine qualifications in order to be appointed an elder, it follows by implication, that an elder becomes disqualified when he fails to meet and/or violates the divine qualifications. To imply any other manner of removing an elder or eldership is to assume more than the Bible teaches. There is no hint of “Reconfirmation of Elders” in the divine qualifications.²⁹

The “reevaluation” process is merely an expedient means of determining whether or not an elder is conforming to God’s will, the “Rationale” asserts. John Cannon made the same basic assertion in his attempt to justify the reevaluation procedure to the Pleasant Ridge Congregation (Arlington, TX):

The reaffirmation of elders, either individually or collectively is not addressed in the text.... If congregational judgment or opinion is valid for current practices of dealing with “elder questions,” then reaffirmation would be in the same realm of congregational judgment.³⁰

The attempt to place the reevaluation/reaffirmation phenomenon in the realm of expediency overlooks an elementary principle of biblical hermeneutics: Authorization must precede expediency. In other words, no matter can be expedient unless it is first authorized, and the authorization for this practice has not been produced.

The final paragraph of the “Rationale” asserts that elders have the authority to determine what level of confidence the members have in their “leadership capabilities.” Granting that they have this authority, where is there any emphasis in the New Testament relating to a craving for such information? This sort of

uneasiness smacks more of the cold, sterile, secular concerns of executives in the business world than it does of God's elders. It is evident throughout the "Rationale" that there is a severe preoccupation with whether or not an elder is perceived as having "leadership" qualities that will inspire members to follow him. There seems to be a corresponding under emphasis on the actual Scriptural qualifications themselves in the whole reevaluation/reaffirming process. Elders have authority in the local congregation in matters of expediency and judgment, but they do not have authority to empower a committee, whatever its purpose, that supersedes the authority God gave them alone!

A LIST OF CONCERNS

I will now list a number of matters that need to be seriously considered by any congregation that is contemplating adoption of a reevaluation/reaffirmation plan. This plan concerns me because:

1. It professes to "reappoint" (the practical meaning of reaffirming or reconfirming) men who are already appointed and who have not resigned (both contradictory and nonsensical).

2. It renders duly-selected and appointed elders only "de facto" or "quasi" elders during the reevaluation process.

3. It places an administrative or screening committee in authority to which the elders must give account and submit.

4. It prevents elders (who are to oversee all of the members and all of the work of all of the congregation) from having any voice in or oversight of who will serve as elders.

5. It sets a precedent that will be very difficult to abandon. It will thenceforth appear unfair to those to whom it was originally applied if all succeeding elders are not likewise subjected to it.

6. It adds the qualification of "leadership characteristics" to the qualifications found in the New Testament.

7. It may result in removing certain unqualified men from the eldership, but it also provides an opportunity for forces of error to quickly and easily gain control of the eldership of a congregation with a minimum number of people by removal of qualified men. What if the elders in a congregation are qualified men who are determined to keep the church pure, but in the reevaluation process a twenty-six percent element of liberals in the church turn in negative ballots? Just this easily (and unscripturally) can a dedicated, qualified eldership be restructured!

8. It creates a great potential for dissension and division in a congregation should the elders dare contradict the committee the existence of which they have authorized and whose policies and procedures have been sanctioned by the congregation.

9. It gives an opportunity for fraud, deceit, and favoritism in the process of tabulation of the ballots by the committee members.

10. It could encourage an elder who is being reevaluated to engage in politicking and "promise-making" in order to be able to attain the necessary percentage of votes for reaffirmation.

11. It establishes arbitrary percentages for "reaffirmation" or "deaffirmation."

12. It necessarily tabulates the percentages only of those who actually participate in the balloting, which may represent much smaller percentages of the actual membership.

13. It allows a small percentage of the members of a congregation to determine who will be its elders and how long they will serve.

14. It smacks more of the standards of failure and success employed by business rather than the standards set forth in the New Testament.

15. It replaces the scriptural mandate, "them that sin rebuke before all" (1 Tim. 5:20) with "in the event an elder is not reaffirmed by the congregation, he should be given opportunity to retire with dignity."³¹

16. It supplants the scriptural instruction for dealing with sin and/or failure in qualifications of elders (1 Tim. 5:19) with a humanly-contrived scheme of detailed and intricate "reevaluation" relating more to "leadership characteristics" than with Scriptural qualifications.

CONCLUSION

The one major concern that overrides all others for lovers of Truth is that the formal, arbitrary, highly-structured reevaluation, reaffirmation, or deaffirmation procedure that is almost a fad running through liberal congregations (and that has ensnared even some unwary conservative ones) is **without scriptural authority!** Most of those who defend it hardly make an appeal to the Scriptures. Those who attempt such an appeal fail.

Philip Gould, a deacon at the Brown Trail Congregation at the time the "reevaluation" and "reconfirming" plans were being implemented, expressed his grave concern about this and several other matters in a letter to the elders. The words below are germane to the point at hand:

Regarding the office of an elder, brother Peterman [one

of the elders at that time, DM] mentioned something called “reconfirming” the existing elders through a majority or some percentage of votes of the congregation. I assume that this is similar to the bishops’ way of electing a new pope, **because there is no basis for it in God’s Bible** [emp. DM]. The eldership is not a popularity contest. You are either qualified or you are not—you know the Truth. It was interesting to see where the Airport Freeway Congregation [Eules, TX], now home to many past Brown Trail members, “reconfirmed” their elders a few weeks ago as they installed others. Is the Brown Trail Church going to import doctrinal error from those who previously left when God’s will and not theirs prevailed?³²

Many other astute Bible students have recognized this dearth of authorization and have boldly stated so:

Robert R Taylor, Jr.:

Like you, I do not believe there is Biblical authorization for what they [the Brown Trail Elder Selection Screening Committee] proposed. I constantly stand amazed at our brethren seeking to tamper with God’s crystal clear pattern. The eldership is clear in Holy Writ. They are seeking to muddy the clear water of such. I view such with great alarm.³³

Bill Jackson:

There is absolutely no Bible, or justification, for that matter, of “reconfirming, reexamination, or reevaluation” as to either elders or deacons. It smacks of political maneuvering done in foreign countries whereby a new government is formed, based on “reevaluation” and a “vote of confidence.” It reflects adversely on a congregation, and those behind this process, to move in

this direction.³⁴

W. Terry Varner:

The process of “Reconfirmation of Elders” is without Scriptural basis and results in a way to remove Scriptural men as elders and to place men into the office of the eldership that harmonize more nearly with the thoughts and desires of the membership rather than the divine qualifications.³⁵

Garland Elkins:

I do not know of any Bible authority for “electing” elders as if it were a political process. Neither do I know of any Bible authority for “reconfirming” existing elders. If elders lose their qualifications, they should resign. If qualified elders resign, the congregation has the same right to appoint them again in the future (if they are qualified) as they did the first time they were appointed.... I do not know why brethren cannot be content to simply “appoint” (ASV), “ordain” (KJV) (Acts 14:23) rather than to come up with an imaginary “reconfirmation” of present elders.³⁶

Mac Deaver:

I find no authority for such a procedure in the New Testament.³⁷

I concluded my written reaction to this practice at the time it was being carried out with the following assessment:

The best argument against it is the same as that against the instrument and a thousand other innovations that men have dreamed up: “There ain’t no Bible fer it,” as the hillbilly saint declared!³⁸

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Re-evaluating “Reaffirmation”

Gary W. Summers

Everyone anticipates the first day of the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman’s Annual Lectures, wondering what topics will surface. The second question under consideration (February 3, 2002) contained a brief treatment of “the reaffirmation of elders.” Ralph Gilmore’s remarks are put in quote format [double-indented with smaller font]; our comments are interspersed.

Is the recent custom of reaffirming elders—Is this somehow or another Scriptural, the question goes? And then 1 Timothy 5, verses 17-20, talks about the fact that we should give honor to those brethren who are worthy of honor—even double honor—especially to those who work hard at teaching and preaching. Notice the verse where there is *presbuteros*, and in verse one it seems to have in mind the fact that the younger folks should, you know, appreciate the older folks, and that’s encouraging to me. “You should not bring an accusation against an older man,” New American Standard says. So the word *presbuteros*, I think, in verse one is talking about older people, that you should respect older people. But then, when it gets down to verse seventeen, I think he’s talking about elders, because these are those who rule over you, and that would not be true of all people. That would be true of the elders.

Certainly, all of this is true, and if someone had asked about the word usage of *presbuteros* in verses 1 and 17, it would even be relevant, but the question has to do with whether or not elders should be reaffirmed.

Now the question then is, “Is it possible for there to be a reaffirmation, or should elders be reconfirmed after so many years?” Okay. This is certainly in the area of speculation, but I’ll tell you what I think.

Wait a minute! Why is this subject in the area of

speculation? Either the Bible authorizes the practice, or it does not. Is it commanded? No. Is there an example of reaffirmation? No. Is there an implication that the eldership as a whole should be reaffirmed? No. Is there generic authority to reaffirm elders? No.

Someone might say, “But suppose an elder becomes unqualified?” Then that individual must be dealt with on an individual basis; more will be said on this point later. “What if all the elders become unqualified?” Then they will probably not submit to a reaffirmation anyway. The point is that a reaffirmation of an eldership is an idea of man—not something that someone would derive from a study of the Scriptures.

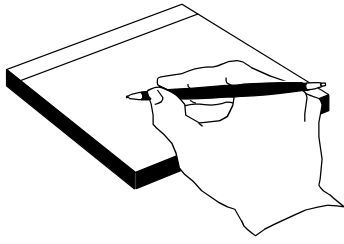
One problem that arises is that maybe in one case out of three, when elders get to the point where they cannot function well, they recognize this themselves. And because of that they will sometimes step down when they see that they cannot function because of...mental faculties, they can’t do it because of problems in their family, they can’t do it because they’re taking care of a spouse.

These situations do occur, and many elders do resign because of them, in which case reaffirmation on the part of a congregation is unnecessary. The man in question has re-evaluated himself and decided it is best, under his current circumstances, to resign. He realizes that he can no longer serve the way God intended for elders to function; conscientious men make these decisions all the time because it is in the best interests of the body of Christ to do so.

But I think part of the problem is that we’ve seen elders as a lifelong, honorary position, which it is not.

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Intent

In the February 1996 issue of *Defender*, I wrote an article concerning marriage. In one of the paragraphs I dealt with how one becomes married. I began that section by writing, "First, there must be the decision by both parties (man and woman) to live together as husband and wife, to be married to each other. They must have the intention of being married to each other. A 'shotgun' wedding would not be recognized as a marriage. Adam accepted Eve as his wife when God brought her to him. 'And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh' (Gen. 2:23-24)." Personally, I only know of one person who challenged this statement at the time it was written. However, most are in complete agreement with this statement, as others have also written.

Brother Woods wrote, "The requisites of a valid scriptural marriage, in our day, include the following: There must be the *intention* to enter into such a union.... The agreement to enter into marriage must be unrestrained; it must be freely entered into, and with full consent of both" (298). Brother Roy Lanier wrote, "Intention to live together.... It is unthinkable that...God would join two in holy marriage who had no love for each other and had no intention of forming a union which would fulfill the purposes of God" (89, 91). Then brother Tom Warren, in a chapter titled "What is Marriage? When Does it Occur?," wrote, "When that pronouncement is made to (or over) such an eligible man and an eligible woman (in the face of their mutual understanding of the significance of such), the man and the woman will be 'joined together' (by God) as husband and wife" (32).

Brethren, it is sad that statements such as these are now being used in a way in which they were never intended to be used. It is extremely disturbing that some would use the writings of a person who has passed on into eternity in a way that the person would never have intended it to be used. They were not dealing with the situation where someone does not marry for the proper reason.

Recently there arose a situation to which some have applied statements of intent to get married as necessary for there to be a marriage in which I would never have imagined when I wrote that article for "Defender." The situation is that a man who was not an American citizen "married" a woman who is an American for the purpose of obtaining citizenship in the United States. After obtaining that citizenship, they then divorced. Some are now saying that this man has the right to marry because there was no intent of marriage when they went through the marriage ceremony. The only intent which existed was the intent of obtaining citizenship.

I know that those who are making this application could take my article as *proof* that this person has the right to now get married, or that I am in agreement that this person now has the right to get married (to my knowledge no one has quoted from my article, they have quoted the others). While I cannot prove that the others would not agree to this application, I know that I do not agree with it and do not believe they would agree with it for a second. It is a grave disservice to a faithful brother in Christ who has written something and then passed on to his reward; and then for brethren to take what he wrote and make an application to which the individual, were he still alive, would never agree. Years ago I saw Dan Billingsly use this tactic in furthering his false doctrine. It was disgusting then, and it is today also.

Let us take a look at this situation. There was an intent to get married. While the purpose of the marriage was not what God intended marriage to be, there was still an intent to get married. To deny the intent of marriage in this situation is to deny the obvious. They intended to get married so he could defraud his way into the country. Since intent to get married exists in this situation, they are married (by both God and the laws of the land).

Consider some three examples of where the purpose of the marriage is not what God intends it to be (as is the situation under consideration). Image a situation (does not take much imagination) where one unmarried

person has a great deal of money. Then think of a *gold digger* who decides to *go after* this rich person. The one who is rich falls in love with this *gold digger* and they get married. The rich person loves the other and marries them with the full intent of it lasting “till death do us part.” However, the *gold digger* is only thinking of getting the money: marry and then divorce with a big monetary settlement. According to those who are misusing this intent argument, the rich person would be married while the *gold digger* was never married because that one did not really have the intent to be married, just to steal the rich person’s money.

A wealthy individual puts in his will that for his son to inherit his money, he must marry and have children (again something that has taken place). Thus, the son seeks a woman to marry for the simple reason to obtain his inheritance. The woman whom he finds knows nothing about the inheritance and falls madly in love with the son. The son cares nothing for the lady and his only concern is the inheritance he will receive. They marry and have a child (meeting the stipulation of the will). The son gets his inheritance and then immediately files for a civil divorce. According to the perverted view now being presented to us, the son was never married because he only intended to obtain the inheritance. However, what about the woman in this scenario? She loved the son and married him for better or for worse till death do us part. According to this new view (actually a misapplication of the idea of intent), she was married to him but he was never married to her. Who can believe such nonsense.

The Bible says, “it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9). The idea of burn is burning with lust. If a young man is burning with lust toward a young lady and he decides to marry her so she will have sex with him, is he married? What about the young lady who marries this man, is she married? What if she marries him with the proper intent and purpose, is she married then? If the man who marries this young lady for the purpose of sexual relations, as the Bible teaches him to do, but he is not married because the intent is simply for sex, then when they have sexual relations is he simply committing fornication, and is she not committing fornication? Surely all can see how ludicrous this view is.

In the actual situation which some are attempting to defend with this new intent view, there is a misunderstanding of intent and purpose. In the actual situation, as well as in all these examples, there was an intent to get married. Yet, in each of the situations the

purpose of getting married is not what God intended. However, there is a difference between intent and purpose in all these cases. In each case they intended to get married (that is they intended to go through the ceremony, intended to say I do, intended to pass themselves off as married to each other), yet their purpose was something totally different (to get into the country, to get someone else’s money, to get an inheritance, to have sexual relations). In each case they are married! In each case the only way they can get out of the marriage with the right to remarry is for their spouse to commit fornication. If they divorce for another cause and remarry, then they continue to live in adultery according to Matthew 5:32; 19:9. MH

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(Continued from Page 1)

Amen!! Probably, everyone can name an elder in a particular congregation that is not doing the work God expects of him, yet he continues to be listed with those who do labor. In some instances he is barely able to make it to worship once or twice a month. Probably, it is respect for such a man and his past achievements that leads to such an arrangement, but it would have been far better for him to have been honored when he stepped down than for everyone to attempt to maintain an impossible facade.

Some are enticed to become elders more for the decision-making power (oversight of the congregation) than they have been for the task of shepherding (feeding, leading, and protecting the flock). Of course, such is the wrong motivation, but it happens—and frequently the congregation does not become aware of it until after it occurs. However, reaffirming **all** the elders is not the way to deal with one that does not belong.

It is a functioning position; there’s no such thing as an *ex officio* elder. Therefore, I don’t think that it’s wrong to reaffirm elders or to let it be known that an elder is gonna serve for five years or ten years....

What?! How does a problem with one particular elder warrant a re-evaluation process of them all? And where did the idea of *term limits* come from? Does 1 Timothy 3 really **imply** reaffirmation? If so, is there any historical data to back up this notion? Or does not

history deal with these offices as lifetime appointments? The silence of the Scriptures on this question does not permit the practice; as always, the question should be: “What in the Scriptures would authorize it?” Surely, God, who foresaw that sin would require the sacrifice of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, as a sacrifice for our sins from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), knew that questions would arise about the ability of some to remain elders.

One can hardly imagine imposing upon the church the ideas of our political system (two years for Congressmen, four for the President, six for Senators)—with the opportunity to be re-elected, if they are popular enough with the citizens. Of all things, brethren do not deserve to be bombarded with campaign promises: “Reaffirm me, and I will get us a good deal on getting the parking lot paved.” “Say, I am the one who will delay withdrawing fellowship from your son; vote for me.”

Although men may not be appointed elders for life, they should be elders as long as they remain qualified and are capable of doing the work. Why should they not be? The Lord’s church should not become a political battleground or a popularity contest. They must be free to uphold the Word of God without fear of reprisal by some members who are less than spiritual.

...and then, according to the principles of Acts chapter six, Let there arise from the congregation hopefully a wellspring of support.

These words are not found in Acts 6, and that chapter does not refer to the appointment of elders anyway. The seven men selected to “serve tables” are likewise not called *deacons*, although their work would be more consistent with their labors. Paul does not cite either the work or the selection process used in Acts 6:1-7 when he discusses deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-12). There is no evidence that indicates that Acts 6 is intended as a model for the selection of elders or deacons, but even if it were intended to be so used, it says absolutely nothing about reaffirmation. Acts 6 simply shows a specific solution to a specific problem.

I know this makes elders, perhaps, feel a little bit vulnerable, but preachers, hey, welcome to the club.

Mmm. How tempting it is to place elders in the same precarious position that preachers often are! While it is the case that some preachers have abused and taken advantage of the good faith of elders, we cannot even count all of the preachers who have been unjustly fired. In many cases elderships have intentionally violated the normal “90-day” agreement, occasion-

ally saying, “You do not have it in writing.” Problems of this type have resulted from the erroneous view of some elders that preachers are disposable *hired hands* instead of co-laborers in the kingdom of God.

However “two wrongs do not make a right,” and while some might rejoice for “the shoe to be on the other foot” for a change, the idea of “term limits” on elders is not Bible-based.

If indeed it is true that elders feel a little vulnerable here, I believe that an elder, to rule well, should have his name come from the congregation and affirmed by the congregation.

We have no problem with this technique, since the specific process of appointing these men is not set forth. There must be a dozen ways in which congregations have chosen to initiate the process (some of them not too shrewd). Most elders were suggested by the congregation or approved by them in some manner.

A book that has been suggested, Flavil Yeakley’s book, *Church Leadership and Organization*, indicates that we need to understand that *presbuteros* or *episcopos* or *poimeen*, that these words indicate a position of service and not a position just of honor, though it certainly is a position of honor.

Yeakley may emphasize it, but this view is first set forth in the inspired Word of God. This observation is not a putdown of the book, which is well-organized and quite helpful. Although he does suggest that elderships determine if they still have the consent of the congregation to serve as elders, he does not outline a reaffirmation process (23).

Yeakley also includes a pertinent quote by J. W. McGarvey, whom he calls “one of the greatest scholars the Restoration Movement ever produced.” McGarvey said that “if we give up the belief that we must have Bible authority for what we do, we have abandoned the only ground on which the restoration of the New Testament church can be accomplished” (13). We agree wholeheartedly and point out once again that reaffirmation has **no** biblical authority.

Is the Reaffirmation of Elders a Violation of the Scriptures?

Not long after the December 22, 2002 *Spiritual Perspectives*’ article on Reaffirmation was published [*Spiritual Perspectives* is the local bulletin Gary Summers edits], I received an inquiry regarding the matter, which included the important question: “Is the reaffirmation a violation of Scriptures?” In the reply given, I first stressed that there is already in place a way of dealing with an elder who has become unqualified. Of course, Timothy, as an evangelist, was to rebuke those

who were sinning (1 Tim. 5:20), but what about removing one?

If he refused to repent of his sins, he would need to be withdrawn from, as any other member would be (Mat. 18:15-17). But what if he simply cannot function as an elder and will not resign? My response was (and is) as follows:

However, there remains a Biblical way of dealing with such a situation; that situation should be dealt with by the elders, who oversee the flock. Just as they should guard against a wolf in sheep's clothing, they should tell a fellow elder that he is no longer qualified. It is their responsibility; on what basis does it devolve back upon the congregation? Is this a matter of opinion? How can it be, when the elders have been given a specific task of taking care of the church of God (1 Tim. 3:5)? ... If God has put someone in charge of the congregation (and He has, as you pointed out), then why not let them do their job? Why circumvent these

men in order to ask those who are not authorized to make such a decision?

The idea of the flock deciding whether or not to follow certain men is dangerous and invites all sorts of petty jealousies to surface—not to mention playing politics. If the elders are qualified and performing their work, they should not have to test their popularity periodically. What if Jeremiah used popularity to decide if he should continue preaching? Jesus didn't ask the Pharisees for a vote of confidence. Neither did God set up the church with a built-in reaffirmation process. To answer your question, yes, I believe reaffirmation involves a Scriptural violation.

This letter was mailed March 3, 2003, and to date there has been no reply. Brethren need to begin, before adopting this innovation, to evaluate this concept very carefully, in light of the Scriptures. And those who have erroneously adopted it need to repent.

920 Imperial Drive; Denton, TX 76201

The Heart

Mark McWhorter

There are many references to the heart in the Scriptures. Almost all of them have reference to the spiritual heart. But if one looks closely, the spiritual references also have truth in the physical realm. This really should not be surprising. God never uses an impossibility in the physical realm to teach a spiritual truth.

God is all knowing. The fact may be that those to whom He spoke in ancient times may not have had a full understanding of the physical parallel He was making, but we can in many instances. This would seem to help demonstrate just how all-knowing and timeless our God really is.

In Deuteronomy 10:16, God tells the children of Israel to "circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart." He wants them to free their hearts of the restraints of sin, to fear Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and to walk in all His ways. In the physical realm the heart has a foreskin called the pericardium. In certain pathological conditions the pericardium becomes stiff, hard, and constrictive. It will not allow the heart to expand and contract the way it needs to in order to adequately deliver blood to the body. If this situation is allowed to continue the individual will die. Surgery is necessary and the foreskin of the heart is circumcised, cut away, from the heart. God knew that one day we would truly understand the physical/spiritual parallel He was making. Of course, they knew about Abraham's circumcision so they were able to understand the con-

cept God was commanding.

In Romans 1:21, those who have become vain in their imaginations (reasoning) are said to have their hearts darkened. Their spiritual hearts are sick. Their hearts are not thinking the thoughts nor pulsing the thoughts throughout their being that God would have them thinking. In the physical realm, when the heart becomes sick from clogged arteries it tends to become dark. It especially turns dark when the blockages are so bad that a heart attack occurs. The damaged area of the heart is no longer the vibrant healthy red color it should be. It is now a very dark red and becomes useless. We now know full well the parallel God was making between the physical and spiritual heart.

Christ stated that those who are well do not need a physician but those who are sick do (Mat. 9:12). Is it any wonder that the Creator of all would use physical analogies for the spiritual realm? The Great Physician does not just look at the outward man, He looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7) (could be reference to echocardiograms or open heart surgery). He looks inside and can see the secrets of the heart (Psa. 44:21) (again, reference to several cardiac tests and procedures today). He is able to revive (resuscitate) the hearts of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15). And if need be, He can perform a heart transplant for those with hard hearts (Eze. 11:19-20).

What a great and marvelous God we have. He is timeless. He is all-knowing. He is our Great Physician.

420 Chula Vista Mountain Road; Pell City, AL 35125

Great Old Testament Questions

June 7 - 11, 2003

Saturday, June 7		7:45 PM	“How Shall We Order The Child?”	Bobby Liddell
7:00 PM	“Were They Ashamed When They Committed Abomination?”			
				Tuesday, June 10
7:45 PM	“Who Knoweth Whether Thou Art Come To The Kingdom For Such A Time As This?”	Keith Mosher	9:00 AM	“Who Hath Woe...Redness Of The Eyes?”
				Geoff Litke
		David Smith	10:00 AM	“Who Can Find A Virtuous Woman?”
			11:00 AM	“How Then Can Man Be Justified With God?”
				Clifford Newell
Sunday, June 8				
9:00 AM	“If The Foundations Be Destroyed, What Shall The Righteous Do?”	Lee Davis	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
10:00 AM	“Who Told Thee That Thou Wast Naked?”	Lynn Parker	1:30 PM	“What Doth The Lord Thy God Require Of Thee?”
				Joe Galloway
<i>Lunch Break</i>			2:30 PM	“Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?”
2:00 PM	“Should Not The Shepherds Feed The Flock?”	Eddie Whitten		Toney Smith
3:00 PM	“What Shall Be The End Of These Things?”	Glenn Hitchcock	3:30 PM	Open Forum
<i>Dinner Break</i>			<i>Dinner Break</i>	
7:00 PM	“Will A Man Rob God?”	Howell Bigham	7:00 PM	“Who Is On The Lord’s Side?”
7:45 PM	“Why Is The House Of God Forsaken?”	Gary Grizzell	7:45 PM	“What Hast Thou Done?”
				Tom Bright Harrell Davidson
Monday, June 9				Wednesday, June 11
9:00 AM	“For Why Will Ye Die?”	Jesse Whitlock	9:00 AM	“Is Thy God...Able To Deliver Thee?”
10:00 AM	“Can Two Walk Together, Except They Be Agreed?”	David Brown	10:00 AM	“What Shall I Render Unto The Lord For All His Benefits Toward Me?”
11:00 AM	“Is There Any Word From The Lord?”	Kevin Beard		Bryan Braswell Marvin Weir
<i>Lunch Break</i>			11:00 AM	“Is There Not A Cause?”
1:30 PM	“Is It Nothing To You, All Ye That Pass By?”	Lester Kamp	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:30 PM	“What Is Man That Thou Are Mindful Of Him?”	Darrell Broking	1:30 PM	“Whom Shall I Send, And Who Will Go For Us?”
3:30 PM	Open Forum			GussEoff
<i>Dinner Break</i>			2:30 PM	“How Shall We Know The Word Which The Lord Hath Not Spoken?”
7:00 PM	“If A Man Die, Shall He Live Again?”	Curtis Cates		Randy Mabe
			3:30 PM	Open Forum
			<i>Dinner Break</i>	
			7:00 PM	“How Then Can I Do This Great Wickedness, And Sin Against God?”
			7:45 PM	“How Long Halt Ye Between Two Opinions?”
				B. J. Clarke Ronnie Hayes

Bellview Lectures Information

HOUSING

Free housing in the homes of Christians will be provided on a “first come, first served” basis (call our office at: 850/455-7595, or write at: 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The Comfort Inn (8690 Pine Forest Road) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$59—1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850/476-8989. Tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures* when making your reservations.

MEALS

The women of the Bellview Church of Christ will provide a free lunch Monday through Wednesday.

EXHIBITS

Limited reservations will be accepted subject to approval of the Bellview elders and available space. Exhibits are expected from schools, children’s homes, bookstores, publications, and other projects of general interest to the brotherhood.

AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes and video tapes. These tapes may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail

order afterwards. Order blanks and price information will be available during the Bellview Lectures or by mail upon request. (We request the cooperation of all who attend the Bellview Lectures in keeping the pulpit area free of privately-owned recorders and microphones.) If you would like to make your own recordings, please see one of our sound technicians in the sound room.

BOOKS

The lectureship book, *Beatitudes* will be available to those attending the *Bellview Lectures* at a reduced rate of \$10. Others may purchase the book at the pre-publication price of \$11 prior to June 30, 2003, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will contain thirty-eight chapters and approximately 400 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

TRANSPORTATION

If you will be flying to the Pensacola Regional Airport and will need transportation, please call or write our office. We will arrange to meet you, at no charge, if we know when, where, airline, flight number, and the number in your party.

Minister's File System

Preachers, file away your books, sermons, and location of those poems, sermon illustrations, and sermon ideas, for easy retrieval. Ever forgotten where that poem, or quote was located? Cannot remember where you put that sermon, or when and where you preached it? This electronic Minister's Filing System will allow you to enter that information into a database system with extensive search capabilities. In addition you will be provided more than 22,000 records showing the locations of articles, authors, titles, etc. from more than 20 years of popular brotherhood publications and lectureship books.

There is also a Membership Database program which allows you to track (1) Membership by family, (2) Attendance, (3) Abilities, (4) Personal work progress on those enrolled in classes, (5) Visitors, (6) and the ability to print pictorial and non-pictorial directories.

Run by Alpha Five Runtime, this system is a free standing, automatically installed program designed for

the preacher and his work. Full tutorial for operation is included in the database. Email Tom Wacaster at tswacaster@aol.com and put in your subject line, "Minister's File System" or "Membership Database Program" and he will answer any questions and/or put your copy in the mail the day he receives your order. The cost for the Minister's Filing system is \$55 and the Membership database program is \$75.

Brother Wacaster recently completed a commentary on Galatians also. These are selling for \$10 (Texas residents must add tax). For a limited time brother Wacaster will pay the shipping on the books. This would be a good time to obtain one of these books.

He also has another book, at the printers but he should be receiving them this month. This is going to be a series of books covering Psalms. This first book covers Psalms 1-25 and will be over 300 pages. He is selling this book for \$12 and for a limited time he will pay the postage on the book.

Bellview Lectures

On page 6 of this issue there is more information concerning this year's lectureship program including the schedule (speakers, topics, and times). We would love to have every person who reads this to be able to come and be with us during this wonderful time. I know, from past lectureships, that it would be profitable for every Christian to attend. You would be encouraged both by hearing the lessons and enjoying the sweet fellowship of others of like precious faith, plus you would be an encouragement to others.

However, we realize that not everyone has the opportunity to come to Pensacola for our lectureship. With technology the way it is today, there are opportunities for those who cannot physically come here to attend the

lectures to still hear every lesson live if you have access to the internet. The faithful brethren of the Online Academy of Biblical Studies have made available to us the right to broadcast our lectureship live on their web site: www.oabs.org. After the lectureship the lessons will be posted to their archive section. They have provided this service for the Bellview Lectures for the past two years. Simply go to their web site and then go to live events and follow the instructions given there. While you are there, you might want to look at the other lectureship they have available plus their classes for the school. If you cannot be here watch us on the internet. Also, please sign the guest book, and if you have a question for the open forum, email it to us.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com> E-mail: bellview@bellviewcoc.com

Modern Scholarship and the Bible

Tim Smith

It is amazing and confusing to read what men write about the Word of God! This statement is true on so many levels, but never is it more true than when we are considering the efforts of modern scholarship to remove the supernatural element from the Bible and discredit the historical and ethical truthfulness of God's Word. Those who are considered by many to be *experts* in various fields often fail to take seriously what the Bible has to say about their particular field of knowledge, and sometimes it seems as though they are going out of their way to cast doubt on the Bible and its contentions. It is alarming to many, and though I have known for many years the way the *scholars* often treat the Bible, it is to me also, the way otherwise rational individuals cringe at the thought of believing the Bible. I understand that there are many people who take anything that is said in the name of religion, regardless if it is proven by the Bible or not, regardless of whether it fits consistently with other teachings in the Bible, and regardless of whether it is consistent with other things they themselves believe. These people act foolishly when they do such as this. But it seems also that for a *scientist* or *historian* to disbelieve everything that is “religious” (i.e. that comes from the Bible), is equally foolish. The Bible asks no more of us than that we give it a fair hearing: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 The. 5:21-22). This seems to be more than many are willing to do.

As for taking the book of Acts as literal history, though many have come around to the truth, many still are far from it. Consider the words of E. M.

Blaiklock in defense of the historical accuracy of Acts.

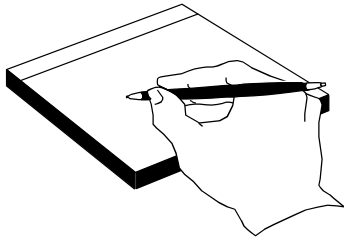
The general reluctance of historians to recognize the value of the Acts of the Apostles as a document of life and society in the mid-first century is a curious phenomenon to be explained only by some deep-seated suspicion of a biblical text. The book begins with the emergence of the Christian Church in Palestine, and traces one movement of its expansion through important tracts of the Empire. The central figure in this historic process was a citizen of Rome, a Jew by birth and heritage, a rabbi by education, a Greek by virtue of his Tarsian environment...in a word the first recorded person to combine in himself the three elements of Western culture. The organization which he shaped and fashioned was destined to confront and ultimately overcome the political power of Rome, and to modify the whole course of history. To weigh the worth of such a genesis and such consequent biography would seem to be an obvious duty of research (*Apostolic History and the Gospel*, p. 41).

Mr. Blaiklock goes on to cite the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and its article on Tarsus, homeland of Paul, and indicated that not one line was devoted to the mention of this great and influential man:

In something like one hundred and eighty words the eminent historian outlines the story of Tarsus from its legendary founders to the end of the first century of the Christian era, concluding: “During the first century B.C. Tarsus was the seat of a celebrated philosophic school.” Why did Professor Jones [writer of the article] not claim two hundred words, and us the final score to say: “Tarsus was the birthplace of Paul who wrote a large part of the New Testament and founded the Gentile Church”?

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Knowledge

It is amazing the amount of knowledge that man possesses today and the amount of knowledge available to man today. In just about every area of study, man possesses a greater amount of knowledge that just a few years ago. However, there is one area which we seemingly have less knowledge than previously—that area is regarding God’s Word. It is not that we have less available material available to us today. No, the opposite is true, we have more available to us today than a few years ago. We have more papers, more books, plus the majority of access to an enormous amount of material about the Bible on the internet. There might be the possibility that man is simply not as smart (in his capability of learning) as he was in the past. By simply comparing other areas of study and learning, we realize that man’s capability of learning is just as great now as it has ever been. If these things are true (which I believe most will accept), then why do we have less knowledge of the Scriptures now than a few years ago (also something I believe most will accept)?

One of the greatest reasons we do not have the knowledge of God’s Word which we once possessed is desire. People generally do what they want to do. If they have the desire for one thing, they will generally find a way to accomplish it. The Scriptures often speak that we are to desire God’s Law. “More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:10). The Bible is to be our delight: “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word....Thy testimonies also *are my delight and my counsellors*” (Psa. 119:16, 24; et al.). Yet, so many have no delight or joy in God’s Word. Consider how many fail to attend Bible classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings. Look at what happens when the preacher preaches a little to

long on a Sunday morning (the Baptist might beat us to the restaurants). How many today will sit through an hour long sermon, much less one that would be three hours (as Foy Wallace Jr. regularly preached)? Yet, we would not have any problem staying that long for a sporting event, and generally want it to last longer.

How many study the Bible at home? At one time each week congregations all over the nation would ask how many daily Bible readers there were. Very few now do that. Could it be that the reason so many stopped asking was there was an embarrassing low number which raised their hands? How many have read every word in the Bible (Genesis through Revelation)? While reading is a necessary part of study, it is only the beginning part; study involves a great deal more than simply reading. Yet, the Bible informs us that if we want to be accepted with God, we must study the Word. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Far too many are not willing to put forth the effort which is needed to be that workman.

Another reason that we do not know God’s Word as we use to know it is that we fill all our time with things of this world to such an extent that we no longer have time for God and His Word. As one looks at our society today, we observe people running here and there all day long. When we finally get home, we neither have the time nor the energy to study the Bible. Jesus said that some would have the Word choked out of them this way: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). So many need to simply slow their lives down and enjoy life and give themselves time to do what is really important.

In the long ago, Hosea said to the Israelites, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6). Isaiah also told the people of his day: “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: and their honourable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst” (Isa. 5:13). Like the Israelites, God will also have a controversy with us. “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the

land” (Hos. 4:1). Do we think that with our abysmal knowledge of God that He will be pleased with us? Paul spoke of the shame of the Corinthians because of their lack of knowledge: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame” (1 Cor. 15:34). Brethren, we need to get back to faithfully studying God’s Word, learning, and applying the truths that are found therein.

MH

(Continued from Page 1)

It does seem strange that one of Paul’s importance did not find even a mention in a work on his hometown, does it not? Drive to the border of the state of Arkansas and you will find mention of a famous political personage who used to reside there. A few years ago when you entered our fair State of Alabama you would see a sign indicating that it was home to the winner of a national beauty contest. Still as you enter you see the name of our “First Citizen,” the Governor. None of these are as important as Paul, yet he is not mentioned in the history (of that one scholar) or the city of his birth.

This problem is not limited to those who write on New Testament themes, nor even who write secular histories. A man named Michael Grant, in his book *The History of Ancient Israel*, repeatedly and maliciously denies the power of God in the history of the nation of Israel, seeking to account for happenings either with natural explanation or by indicating that the historians of the Bible (whom he does not think were inspired) merely “mythologized” the events about which they were writing. I was unfamiliar with Mr. Grant when I selected his book from the public Library and I did not know just what he might have to say about the history of God’s people, but it did strike me as odd when he thanked everyone under the sun except God (who, I know, is over the sun) for helping him to write it.

In discussing Abraham he said:

Abraham came to be regarded as a figure of overwhelming religious significance, the recipient of God’s call, who responded to it with total submission, and received the divine promise of Israel’s future destiny. It was claimed, therefore, that his life was a supreme embodiment of the principles by which God’s people should live—faith and obedience. This enormous significance encrusted his career with countless folklore motifs and legendary, miraculous stories, and Jews in their daily prayers still refer to him

as “Father,” the first man to renounce idolatry and recognize one God, just as to Islam he is the most revered biblical personage, God’s friend, El Khalil (p. 31).

Is it fair to reject as “legendary” and “folklore” the record of God’s Word? He offers no proof, yet casts doubt on the veracity of the Word in a condescending fashion. With respect to his homeland, Mr. Grant says:

His reported places of origin are two, “Ur of the Chaldeans” in the extreme south of the country and Haran in the extreme north Lower and Upper Mesopotamia respectively. The introduction of the Chaldeans of Chaldees was a later anachronism, since Ur was Sumerian and had no connection with the people known as the Chaldeans until a thousand years after any possible date to which Abraham can be attributed (p. 32).

As for proof offered... there is none. On the basis of his word we are to disbelieve the Word of the God who was there and accept his. As for “two” places of origin, the Bible says:

Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram’s wife *was* Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there (Gen. 11:27-31).

The biblical recorder (Moses identified for his people the land whence Abraham came and that to which he later moved. There is no contradiction on the part of God’s Word).

In discussing the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt Mr. Grant said:

So they all set out together, with their dependants [sic]. And flocks and herds. The party came to an expanse of water, later described (in the Greek Bible) as the Red Sea; but what the original writers possibly the Gulf of Elath. At all events, a strong wind had temporarily converted the water into dry land, so that they were able to get across. The Egyptians, on the other hand, pursuing them, were all overtaken by the returning flood, and drowned (pp. 39-40).

No Proof is offered for these “conclusions” he has drawn, no evidence. On the basis of nothing but conjecture he rejects the biblical account. He repeatedly makes reference to the miraculous being “added later,” implying that the Israelites were not only an “unlucky” people, but increasingly dishonest!

With respect to the Creation, Mr. Grant writes:

The tale that follows has affinities with Mesopotamian creation epics, especially the *Enuma Elish* chanted by priests in the Babylonian spring (New Year) festival. And there are echoes of other, older, and even more popular texts as well. It seems that priests from Judah had come to know these cosmological texts after arriving in the place of their exile (p. 173).

He goes on to cite “other” likely “sources” for the biblical account of creation, rejecting without serious consideration the record as it is given, totally ignoring the concept of divine miraculous plenary inspiration (cf., 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Is it not possible that the few “other accounts” of creation are based on what the Israelites reported? Could not they have gotten their “legends” from the God of the Israelites before they fell into idolatry?

The account of the Flood of Noah’s day is relegated to one of many, by Mr. Grant, flood stories that were circulated as myths in ancient times. He does not consider that the Bible is the only consistent historical record to have survived the times, and he does not consider the possibility that these ancient peoples based their stories on the true account, not considering it plausible that there ever was a universal flood. The Bible tells us that all civilization grew from Noah and his descendants, and therefore it is only reasonable to think that all civilizations would tell of a great flood, indeed that they all would look back to The Great Flood. He relegates the story to be the product of a man named “J” who, according to Mr. Grant, later went back and “doctored up” the biblical records to round out the history of mankind for his people, the Israelites. As for proof, none is offered.

Men such as W. M. Ramsay have sought to disprove the biblical record, being as they were predisposed to reject the account of the biblical writers, but still seeking objective proof to settle the matter, have actually ended up changing their minds. Mr.

Ramsay wrote of his effort to disprove the Bible:

I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favor of the conclusion which I shall now seek to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavorable to it, for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tubingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then lie in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth. In fact, beginning with a fixed idea that the work was essentially a second century composition, and never relying on its evidence as trustworthy for first century conditions, I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations (*St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, pp. 7-8).

Having concluded that Acts is indeed a reliable record of first century conditions, he went on to say:

The narrative in fact shows remarkable familiarity with the provincial and juridical situation in the last years of Claudius. An author familiar with the later situation in Cilicia, and the final form of the judicial custom of *forum defecti*, would have avoided the question of Paul’s *patria*, or place of origin. The scene belongs unmistakably to an era which did not survive the age of the Antonines...The Evidence in Acts not only agrees in general with the civic situation in Asia Minor in the first and early second centuries A.D., but falls into place in the earlier rather than the later phase of the development... The author of Acts is very well informed about the finer points of municipal institutions at Ephesus (pp. 57, 85, 87).

Like Mr. Ramsay, if we would but approach our search for the truth as just that, a search for the truth, even if we are predisposed toward a conclusion, allow for objectivity, accept the verdict of the evidence, seek truth, not merely the confirmation of previously held beliefs, it might surprise us what such an approach will do for our *world view*.

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Theme: Great New Testament Questions

A Thirty-Day Challenge

Jim Laws

Those of us who love the church and are concerned about our spiritual lives want to see the work of the Lord prosper; but are we willing to do something about it? I have heard many prayers offered asking the Lord to bless us in our work for Him, but, are we really willing to do what we can to bring this about? I am setting a thirty-day challenge before you. Will you accept the challenge?

Study the Bible Every Day

There can be no substitute for Bible study. The faithful child of God knows just how important the Bible is for his life. Yet, we all are aware of how busy our daily lives can be and how this can crowd out our time for Bible study. The only way to keep this from happening is to make time for study and guard that time faithfully so that other matters will not interfere with it. If each of us will study our Bibles daily, then it will not be long before we will see just what a difference it will make in our lives.

Pray like You Have Never Prayed Before

The Bible teaches that prayer should be a regular part of our spiritual lives. The church should always be in our prayers. We should pray for its continued growth, both in number and in spiritual maturity. Pray for the church here, that we will be all that we can be as children of God. May I suggest that we pray for wisdom (Jam. 1:5-8); pray that God's will be done (Mat. 6:10); pray for forgiveness (Mat. 6:12); pray for help in time of temptation (Mat. 6:13); pray for one another (Jam. 5:16); pray that the leaders of our community, state, and nation might have wisdom (1 Tim. 2:1-2); pray for more laborers in our work for God and in the work of saving souls (Mat. 9:38). I challenge the church here to pray every day out of a sincere heart for the next thirty days. Will you do it?

Think Optimistically

I challenge the church for thirty days to think optimistically. By that I mean: do not say anything to hurt, harm, or criticize another. See if you can last for thirty days without saying anything negative about another. Do not denounce the elders; do not reprimand the Bible school teachers; but be a Barnabas where you encourage the other and build the other up on the work that we are trying to do together and in the life that we are trying to live. The Bible says that the name Barnabas means one who encourages another (Acts

4:36). I challenge each one to be a Barnabas for the next thirty days. Will you do it?

Be an Andrew

The Bible teaches that Andrew brought his brother, Simon, to the Lord (John 1:40-42). As the text says, the first thing Andrew did was to tell his brother he had found the Messiah, and then he brought his brother to meet Jesus. It was at this time that Jesus changed the name of Andrew's brother from Simon to Cephas (Peter—v. 42). It was a wonderful thing which Andrew had done for his brother. Look at the work Peter would do for Christ. Think of the possibilities when we bring our friends, loved ones, family members, and associates to worship services and Bible study. Will you be an Andrew for thirty days? Will you bring someone with you to visit our services?

Give Liberally

I challenge this congregation to give liberally of our means. Think of what we can do by meeting and surpassing our budget each Lord's Day. Think of the opportunities we have before us to preach the gospel to others. Think of the missionaries we could support if we truly gave as we have been prospered. Stop and think of your blessings and count them. If you do, you will see that we are truly blessed. We should feel a sharp sense of obligation and responsibility in this matter due to what we have received from the Lord, both spiritually and physically. I challenge the church here to give bountifully. Will you do it?

Attend Every Service of the Church

I challenge you for the next thirty days to attend every Bible study class and worship service of the congregation. Make up your mind that you will not allow the cares of life to crowd out this important part of your life. The worship of the church is an essential part of our Christian lives. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). If we truly strive to seek the kingdom of God first and foremost in our lives (Mat. 6:33), then we will plan to worship when the Lord's church assembles. Will you do it?

Worship in Spirit and in Truth

When you come to worship, do you leave your heart and your mind at home? Is your heart a "million miles away," or is it centered on the important activity of worshiping God sincerely? I cannot be involved in

vain worship (Mat. 15:9) and at the same time be pleasing in the sight of God. For my worship to be pleasing to God I must put my heart into it (1 Cor. 14:15). It is not to be a meaningless ritual but rather worship which is sincere praise to God out of a sincere heart. I challenge the church for the next thirty days to worship like you have never worshiped God before, by putting your whole heart into every prayer, song, and sermon. Will you do it?

I Will Have the “We” Concept

I challenge you for the next thirty days to have the “we” concept as opposed to the “they” concept. We have all heard someone say, “They are doing this at the church building,” or “They are not doing this today but

tomorrow.” Each time I hear someone talk this way, that tells me a lot about their attitude toward the work of the congregation. Instead of saying “they,” let us start including ourselves in the conversation by saying “we.” Start having the “we” concept of our work together. Will you adopt that concept as far as your participation in the work of the church?

If each of us would accept such a challenge and then do all that we can to fulfill it, do you think this would make a difference in the congregation? Do you think it would make a difference in your spiritual growth and maturity? Yes, I believe we all can see that it would. Are you willing then to do it?

Copied

Peace of Mind: an Elusive Fruit

Eddie Whitten

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). It is neither against the law of the land nor the law of Christ to be at peace with oneself. We, as a people, are prone to torture ourselves by not having peace of mind. Being at peace with ourselves seems to be an elusive alternative rather than a reality. We busy our lives with many interests, mostly mundane. It is not wrong to be busy. It is not wrong to be involved in works that occupy our time, energy, and talent. Society needs the strong influence of godly people in the social activities of the area. It becomes wrong, however, when those activities begin to overpower us and become burdensome.

Peace of Mind Requires Reason

For peace of mind to be real, there must be an evaluation of basic elements. Some things are more important than others. The standard of importance is the key of determining whether a thing is worth giving attention to. From the physical standpoint it is important that we give attention to providing the necessities of life. This is a biblical principle (1 Tim. 5:8; 2 The. 3:10). Food, clothing, shelter are all needs and should be provided to the best of one’s ability for himself and his/her family. The standard for physical life is really nothing more than the needs of the family. In our society, much more is desired and aspired. It is nice to have good things and there is nothing wrong in having good things; things that bring comfort and security. It is not nice, however, to let those physical desires for nice

things supplant reason. This is the point at which we begin to threaten our peace of mind. We begin to let our desire eat away at our reason and rationalizing begins to take over.

The American economy provides for a thing called *credit*. Someone observed that we are so possessed with “buying power” that if we could get it on credit, we would be tempted to buy a battleship even if it was located on top of a mountain in Montana. This is an absurdity, but the point is well taken. People do stupid things when reason is removed from the equation, and the stage is set for worry, manipulation, improper money management, and peace of mind becomes a thing of the past. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is an old expression indicating the borrowing of money to pay one debtor from which we borrowed money to pay yet another. We do not gain financial ground, we just rearrange the soil. Reason is vital to our peace of mind from a physical standpoint. Keeping our fiscal capabilities in line with our needs is not an easy thing to do, but to have peace of mind it must be done. Our physical peace of mind is important to us, and our standard should be our needs instead of our wants.

Peace of Mind Requires Commitment

Once a person becomes committed to a cause, little else matters. His cause becomes his focus and he strives to discharge whatever time and energy he has to do a good job. He feels a sense of urgency to accomplish the task(s) set out for him. Incentive comes from conviction, and commitment is the outfall of incentive. Conviction is that which comes from teaching, or study.

Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Peace of mind overflows when the right thing is done. Conversion can only come when a change of heart and mind occur. Commitment produces zeal and enthusiasm.

Peace of mind floods the soul of one who knows he is right with God. Paul wrote to the church of Philippi that peace "that passes understanding" grows out of a relationship with God that is based on the prayers of commitment. Unquestioned loyalty to God is the anchor of commitment. Nothing of a lasting, quality relationship in any context can survive without an attitude of commitment, especially with regard to God, His Word, and His Son.

Peace of Mind Consoles the Troubles Heart

Spiritual security should be the goal of every individual. So many are ignorant of the values of Christian life because they have never experienced the thrill of peace they can have with God. The faithful who lived before Christ, as catalogued in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, knew the security of hope through the knowledge of prophecy. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them

afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). The secular understanding of peace misses the mark tragically from the spiritual quality of peace. Peace between man and God was not possible before the birth of the Savior. Luke records the momentous occasion of the birth of Jesus, in Bethlehem, in Luke 2. The shepherds on the Judean hillside heard the melodious voice of the angels announcing the birth of Christ "saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14). For the first time in history, the reality of peace between man and God was Divinely proclaimed. The Savior was here! Every troubled heart now had the opportunity to be at peace with God! What a blessing for the world to everyone who would submit to God's will!

Conclusion

The peace of mind so coveted by the billions now living is so close and so available. It is tragic to contemplate the anguish, pain, and despair of the majority of the world's population when it is totally unnecessary. Why not gain peace of mind through obedience to His Word??

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Is “In Spirit and in Truth” the Holy Spirit?

Gary W. Summers

This article stems from this year’s Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman University. It concerns a follow-up comment on the proper direction of our worship. The words are those of Todd Deaver, who is well-known at Freed-Hardeman.

I just wanted to address the comment about the question, whether or not we should worship the Holy Spirit. I certainly don’t claim to have all the answers concerning that, but let me just offer one observation. Possibly, one of the reasons that you don’t ever find, in the New Testament, worship being directed specifically to the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is viewed in the New Testament as being within the Christian and helping him to offer it—his worship. For example, in Jude, verse 20, you have a reference to praying in the Holy Spirit. There are several other passages that talk about the same thing.

John 4:24 refers to worshipping in the Spirit. I believe that’s the Holy Spirit there. He is in the Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), helping us in our worship. He is interceding for us within our hearts (Romans, chapter 8). And so, possibly, how that’s supposed to be looked at in the New Testament is that the Holy Spirit is not in heaven receiving our worship but is in our hearts helping us to offer the worship.

Brother Ralph Gilmore’s first response was: “Todd, that’s a great point.” We are forced to disagree with the overall thesis, as well as some of the specific points made. We also unhesitatingly affirm that the vast majority of brethren disagree with this logic, and those who do not should.

Before we get to John 4:23-24, however, let us consider the points made in the first paragraph. The thesis would be that the Holy Spirit is in the Christian and that He is helping us offer our worship. The proof offered for this statement is Jude 20. That the Holy

Spirit dwells within the Christian is substantiated by several passages (Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:9; et al.), but where are those that say He helps with our worship?

Do we sing better because the Spirit is within us? If He is helping us, we all ought to be Anthonys or Pavarottis. Is the brother who sings off-key a false teacher? Are our prayers of a higher quality with the Spirit’s help? They ought to be. Can those proclaiming the Gospel preach better? Do members give more money? Does Jesus’ death for our sins become more vivid during the Lord’s Supper with the Spirit’s help?

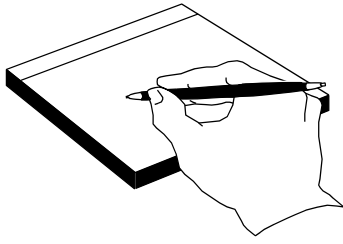
Romans 8:26-27 does mention the Spirit’s help in connection with our worship, but notice **what** He does to help: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*”

Certain things happen in our lives, and we do not know what is the best option for which to pray. Our “weakness” here stems from a lack of knowledge or wisdom. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf: He understands and expresses our anguish to the Father, who in turn comprehends the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit does not empower us to worship better or to become more articulate. He does not help our weaknesses by **directly strengthening** us; He helps us by expressing to the Father what we are unable to say.

What we have set forth above appears to be in agreement with what Roy Deaver (Todd’s grand-

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Hatcher**

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Patience

Several years ago I read an article written by brother G. K. Wallace titled: “I Will Lead On Gently.” It was one of those articles which I considered a *keeper* to help remind me to be patient with others. (Be sure and read this article elsewhere in this issue.) This principle was brought home to me again within the last few days.

Recently I had the opportunity to study with a young man and through that study he obeyed the gospel being baptized for the remission of his sins. This young man became a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27), however he is a new babe in Christ. He did not “grow up” in the church, instead he has been taught denominational error which will have to be corrected. However, you cannot correct everything at one time. He spoke of “witnessing” for Christ in his conversation. We should know better and realize that one cannot witness for Christ today. As one studies the idea of witnessing, he realizes that for one to *witness for Christ* he must have seen the resurrected Lord. In fact, *witnesses* as is used in the Bible is used for one who is an apostle of Christ (see Acts 1:21-25; 2:32-33; 10:39-42). This young man was not claiming to be an apostle of Christ. Instead through denominational influence he simply meant that he wanted to tell his family and friends about his conversion and try to show them the way of salvation. Was/Is the terminology improper—Yes! Yet, there will be time to teach and show him the proper biblical terminology. There is no need to quench that attitude which he possesses by putting too much upon him at one time.

We can demonstrate patience with others, without compromising the Truth. Jesus recognized that we are not always prepared to accept everything at the same time. His apostles had been with Him for about three and a half years, yet He says to them, “I have yet many

things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). They could not *bear* everything which they needed and all that Christ had a desire to say to them. He realized the need to be patient with these men with whom He had spent all this time.

Preachers have a great deal of difficulty in this area (and it seems that young preachers just out of a preacher training school have even more difficulty in this area). We move to a congregation, we know what a congregation should be, and we expect them to be that type of congregation. Yet, many times they are not. The congregation might not have had sufficient teaching or possibly incorrect teaching. They might have been years getting to the point where they now are. The new preacher, who knows the truth and knows what they should be, often does not spend the time and effort to gently lead the congregation back to where it should be. Instead they jump right into the problems and expect change overnight. When that immediate change is not forthcoming, he often becomes frustrated and either moves on to another location or sometimes quits preaching altogether. Instead he needs to realize that it took them longer than overnight to get to where they were and it will take them a long time to get back to where they need to be. He needs to be prepared to spend sometimes years in teaching and instructing them, slowly and gently bringing them back to a strong congregation for God. (I wonder how many congregations could be saved to the cause of the Lord instead of going into apostasy, if preachers would be willing to spend time bringing them back to the Truth of God’s Word?)

Patience needs to take place within the home also. Often those whom we love the most, we are the least patient with. We often hear parents say things along the lines of their children should know better. Yet, often that is not true. Christianity is a growth and often they have not learned to be able to discern right from wrong. The writer of Hebrews pointed out, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Because of their young and tender age, they have not had the experience to deal with some of these things and thus they do not know. Parents, who have had those experiences should know how to discern right from wrong should be the ones who set the boundaries for their children. This is what helps them to learn how they are to live. However, we as parents must be patient with them as they grow and develop spiritually.

Last, I would mention that this is not meant to tolerate sin and error. In the first example, this new Christian has to be taught and he must come to understand the proper terminology so he will “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). Patience does not mean that we ignore sin and error nor the teaching which needs to be done. It is simply a recognition that there is a growth and development in Christianity. *MH*

(Continued from Page 1)

father) advocated in his commentary on Romans.

The picture is simply this: In my life as a Christian, I am obligated and privileged to pray to the Heavenly Father, and especially with regard to heavy burdens of life. Often the load is so heavy that I cannot alone carry it to God in prayer. Often I don't even know *how* to pray, or for *what* to pray: “...for we know how to pray as we ought.” But, I am willing and anxious to do my part. I will get on one side of the load: and—together—we can carry the load to God in prayer. Blessed assurance! The Spirit helps me to carry my burdens to God in prayer (289).

The Holy Spirit does not do something to us to make our worship better; He helps us, once we have prayed, by acting *on our behalf* to make certain that the Father understands our confused thoughts and needs. Again, brother Roy Deaver writes:

What we want and what we need are often different matters. What we think we need may not be what we need. We may know that the end we have in mind is pleasing to God, and yet we may not know how to pray for the accomplishing of that end. Hence, Paul says the Spirit helps us. The Spirit intercedes on behalf of Christians. Therefore, this work of the Spirit is intended to overcome that deficiency (290-91).

These comments are correct, and they reflect what brethren have always taught—that the Spirit does something *for* us, not *to* us.

“Praying in the Holy Spirit”

This phrase from Jude could be interpreted a number of ways. Ted Clarke expressed the thinking of many when he wrote for the Annual Denton Lectures (1998):

To pray “in the Holy Spirit” is to be under the influence or guidance of the Spirit. Again, there is a stark contrast between the ungodly “having not the Spirit” and God's faithful saints “praying in the Holy Spirit.” However, this verse does not tell us how to be under that influence—just the fact that we are to be so in our praying” (*Studies in 1, 2 Peter and Jude*, ed. Dub McClish, Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1998, p. 311).

The context furnishes the key to this interpretation. It follows a lengthy description of the ungodly, concluding with: “These are sensual persons, who cause

divisions, not having the Spirit.” Verse 20, which begins with *But*, demonstrates a distinct contrast between the sensual and the spiritual. At any rate, there is nothing in the context of Jude 20 or Ephesians 6:18 (“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”) which indicates that the Holy Spirit is helping us in our worship. At best, such a notion is an assumption.

John 4:23-24

Now what about the allegation that John 4:24 refers to worshiping in the Spirit? Well, it is certainly a unique interpretation. First of all, it ignores similar phrases used in connection with worship, service, and becoming a Christian. These are presented below. The word *truth* or its equivalent will be printed in all capital letters; the equivalent of *spirit* will be printed in bold.

“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him **in sincerity** and in TRUTH” (Jos. 24:14).

“Only fear the LORD, and serve him in TRUTH **with all your heart**” (1 Sam. 12:24).

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their **heart** is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* DOCTRINES the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:8-9).

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in **spirit** and in TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in **spirit** and in TRUTH” (John 4:23-24).

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed **from the heart** that form of DOCTRINE which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17).

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of **sincerity** and TRUTH” (1 Cor 5:8).

In all of these passages two elements are crucial: Truth (or the doctrine of God) and the proper attitude or spirit (sincerity, “from the heart”). How, in the face of all these similar expressions, could anyone look at John 4:23-24 and conclude that suddenly “in the spirit” means “in the Holy Spirit”?

Furthermore, most commentaries (although not all) agree that *in spirit* refers to attitude. Below are a few of them.

Barne's Notes: The word *spirit*, here, stands opposed to rites and ceremonies, and to the pomp of external worship. It refers to the *mind*, the *soul*, the *heart*. They shall worship God with a sincere *mind*... *Spiritual* worship is that where the *heart* is offered to God, and where we do not depend on external forms for acceptance (218).

Gospel Advocate Commentaries: Here, the three simple, but vitally important, aspects of true worship are set

out: (1) We must worship God; (2) we must worship God in spirit, i.e., rationally, and sincerely; (3) we must worship God in truth, as his word directs (Guy N. Woods 83).

Pulpit Commentary (John 4:23): But “spirit” here does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man—that part of man’s constitution through which he especially bears the image of God, and with which the Divine Spirit deals, and in which he dwells (Rom. viii. 26) (17:169).

Studies in John, ed. Dub McClish: **Fifth**, Jesus next instructs us as to the *attitude* that we are to have in worship in that we are to worship “in spirit” (Gary Grizzell 100, emph. GWS).

All of these agree with the idea that *in spirit* refers to attitude and sincerity on the part of man—and not the Holy Spirit. What is the importance of *God is spirit* in John 4:24? In the context of the conversation between Jesus and this Samaritan woman, the point is that God is not physical; He cannot be bound to one location or one nationality. He is to be worshiped by all men everywhere. Since He is not physical in nature, we cannot offer our worship based on a physical emphasis—a place, certain objects, etc. (Acts 17:24-25). We must offer Him our worship with our entire being, our spirit, our enthusiasm, our sincerity—from the heart.

Why would it be assumed that the Holy Spirit must help us offer up our worship? Did Abel have the help of the Holy Spirit to offer up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4)? If he did, then why did the Spirit not help Cain, also? If someone answers, “The help was available, but he rejected it,” then we have a real problem on our hands. Consider the possibilities:

1. If the Holy Spirit helped Abel to offer his worship but did not help Cain, then we have a form of Calvinism, in which God selects some to be His and rejects others. He helped Abel to offer the correct worship, but He did not *elect* to help Cain, thus insuring the failure of his attempt to worship properly. This puts the burden of offering acceptable worship on God rather than on us. Hebrews 11:4 does not say, “By the help of the Holy Spirit Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” It was *by faith*. It was his heartfelt response to the command of God to obey it.

2. If the Holy Spirit offered His help to Cain and he refused it, then we are back where we started—with man having the free will to accept or deny that which God requires, in which case the question must be asked: “Of what value is this special help?” If we cannot offer correct worship without the offer of special help, and if we can reject special help, then what has been gained by injecting the notion of special help? Possessing the free will to accept or reject special

help is not essentially different from accepting or rejecting the original command in the first place, which makes the idea superfluous. It presumes that God did not give us sufficient ability to obey His commands, which is also Calvinism. Did God create man in such a state as to be incapable of worshiping Him, or did he become incapable due to the Fall? The former reflects on the power and nature of God; the latter view is Calvinism.

Did Enoch have special help in walking with God (Gen. 5:22, 24)? Could he not choose to do so on his own? Again, we read that he did so by faith (Heb. 11:5)—not with extra help from the Holy Spirit. God does not need to help us do those things which we already possess the ability to do. The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit helps to accomplish what we do *not* possess the ability to do (such as in Romans 8:26).

We are to offer our worship in spirit and in truth. Do we have the ability to offer worship unto God sincerely, from the heart? Yes. The Scriptures nowhere hint that we lack this ability. Even those worshiping in error frequently do so in all sincerity (as did Saul, when he persecuted the church, 1 Tim. 1:13).

Do we have the ability to offer worship according to truth? Yes, we do. Calvinism denies that fact. It teaches that God must send us the Holy Spirit to understand the truth and that without Him, we cannot understand or interpret correctly the Scriptures. The Bible, however, teaches that all we need to worship in truth is a knowledge of the truth, which we can obtain without any special help. Jesus taught: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Solomon also exhorted, “Buy the truth, and sell *it not*; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Pro. 23:23).

God created mankind with intelligence, which in part is what it means to be created in the image of God. God did not say, “Come now, and let us reason together” to people that have no such ability (Isa. 1:18). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit inspired the Word to be understood by those created in the image of God.

“Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa. 119:130).

“The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:8b).

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. 3:3-4).

Therefore, God gave us both the intellect to understand words and the Word, which is comprehensible.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, then, that God gave each of us the ability to offer up worship in spirit and in truth without the need of special Divine assistance. If Calvinism were true and we were in a depraved condition, then we would need help. If we were somehow deficient in expressing sincerity or in understanding the Truth, we would need help. But neither of these is the case, as taught in the Scriptures.

Therefore, we are neither promised, nor do we expect to receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts to help us offer up acceptable worship. Furthermore, we must wonder why anyone would suggest such an idea, because it implies either that man, as God created us, is deficient, or that the Word, which God has given us, is deficient to accomplish its purpose. Brethren, God designed His Word as sufficient to instruct us in proper worship, and He designed us as intelligent beings, capable of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

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Corrective Church Discipline: How?

Chuck Webster

In considering the “process” of church discipline, it is essential that we distinguish between sins of a private nature (between individuals) and those of a public nature. Private sins must be handled according to the edicts of Matthew 18:15-17. Our concern is, however, with the treatment of public sins, whether committed publicly or brought to the public view by the offended one’s following the Lord’s instructions in Matthew 18:17. With this in mind, what is the process we should follow? The Bible does not set forth in distinct language a concise outline to be heeded. It does, however, provide us with principles to help us navigate this somewhat precarious course.

Positively determine the certainty of guilt. Too often we rush to judgment and assume rumor to be fact, instead of searching for the truth. We find, however, an interesting principle in Deuteronomy 13:14: “Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, *if it be* truth, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought among you.” God further commanded the Israelites that when a person was accused of “wickedness” that if they “inquired diligently, and, behold, *it be* true, *and* the thing certain,” *then* they were to take disciplinary action (Deu. 17:2-6). Certainly God would require no less of us than that we “inquire diligently” and see if the accusations are true or false. If false, a brother’s reputation has been cleared. If true, further action must be taken.

Make every effort to restore the person. If we discover the person is indeed guilty, we should expend every effort to bring him or her back to the church. Jesus illustrated His Father’s boundless love for the wayward soul in the three parables of Luke 15 (The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Boy). We must remember that the supreme goal in discipline is to

restore sinners, not punish them. Paul admonishes us: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). If we are able to convert an erring brother, James tells us, we “save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jam. 5:19-20). This effort should be led by the shepherds of the flock, those who will one day give an answer for our souls (Heb. 13:17). It seems best that at this point the efforts are conducted privately, perhaps only by the elders and those who are aware of the sin. Those who are *spiritual* offer many prayers on behalf of the erring soul; they also may make extensive visits, send numerous cards, and make multiple phone calls during this crucial time. During these contacts, we should make every effort to impress upon the erring one’s mind all of sin’s dangers, as well as all of faithful Christianity’s blessings. Paul urged us to “warn them that are unruly” (1 The. 5:14), which certainly includes pointing out the destination to which unfaithfulness leads.

Hopefully, the erring brother or sister will recognize his or her foolishness and return home; but if not, further action must be taken.

The whole church should attempt to restore the erring one. In keeping with the Lord’s principle expressed in Matthew 18, if no repentance occurs, the matter must be taken before the entire church. The most expedient way to accomplish this is to make a public statement regarding those who are in error and who refuse to repent. The eldership (or men in leadership, if no eldership exists) encourages the congregation to do all they can to restore the erring one. Most congregations set a time frame within which they hope to bring about repentance. In order for church discipline to work

the way God planned it, the entire congregation must participate by lovingly exhorting and warning the erring soul. Many erring brethren will return to their Lord when they recognize how much they are loved and how deeply they have hurt the Lord and His church. But some will not, and in such cases:

Fellowship must be withdrawn by the church. Paul commands us to “withdraw” ourselves from an impenitent brother and “have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 The. 3:6, 14). He urged the Corinthians: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:4-5, 13).

Withdrawing fellowship means, in part at least, refusing to extend fellowship to him by sitting down and eating a common meal with him (1 Cor. 5:11). He is to be treated as a “heathen man and a publican” (Mat. 18:17), but not as “an enemy, but... as a brother” (2 The. 3:15). Apparently this means we are to treat him as someone who has turned his back on God, but not harshly, remembering that he is an erring brother in Christ. He is to be marked and avoided (Rom. 6:17). We are to note (“distinguish by marking”—*Strong’s*) him and have no company with him (2 The. 3:14). Nonetheless we must **always** stand ready to forgive him and receive him back (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

The above admonitions mean practically that we must treat the erring brother kindly, but never leave the impression with him that he is in fellowship with God. Until he repents, we cannot fellowship with him again by eating with him (a symbol of fellowship). We should

use every opportunity to reprove him and encourage him to repent. No longer can we engage in the kind of deep, intimate friendship that only Christians share, because we no longer have in common the same bond with God.

Corrective Church Discipline Should Always Be Practiced

Personally: “Souls are not saved in ‘groups,’ but rather individually. Likewise church discipline must focus on individuals with names, who live at specific addresses, with very personal needs” (G. R. Holton).

Prayerfully: “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16).

Consistently: Discipline should be exercised toward the well-dressed liberal giver as well as the “poor man in vile raiment.” We, like God, should see only souls in need of repentance.

Unanimously: The whole church **must** be involved. If one segment of the congregation (e.g., the erring one’s closest friends) continues to fellowship him, God’s plan is thwarted.

Completely: Like the permissive mother who is constantly warning her children but never follows through with punishment, it does little good (and actually may harm) to take the first step (warn) but never act.

God’s plan, when executed according to His principles, still works today. The pressing need is for more congregations, in keeping with the Restoration Plea, to go back to the Bible in this area and restore first century, New Testament corrective church discipline.

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Great New Testament Questions

I Will Lead On Gently

G. K. Wallace

A good leader will display tender consideration for the old, young, weak, and unfortunate. Jacob knew this when he said to Esau, "I will lead on gently" (Gen. 33:14). Jacob said, "If they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die." A good leader will not overdrive.

We may overdrive by continual controversy about "words to no profit" (2 Tim. 2:14). It is so easy to reject the weak if they have not reached the heights of the strong (Rom. 14:1). It is tempting to condemn the young if they do not know life as we who are older know it. We may require of the young and weak a degree of courage and other graces which in their case may be only buds.

We may "overdrive" by preaching nothing but severe truth, threatenings, and punishment, and never emphasize the great promises of God. It is ours to console as well as to condemn. The great comforting passages of the Bible should not be reserved for funerals only.

We may "overdrive" by manifesting austerity, suspicion, and harshness toward those who disagree with us. We must do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10). To return good for evil is indeed a golden rule (Mat. 7:12).

Faultfinding has a place, but not to the neglect of worthy praise. "Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged" (Col. 3:21). We may discourage even the strong by dwelling upon the woes and trials of Christianity and saying little or nothing about its joys.

Jesus had a special place in His heart for the poor and downtrodden. He was tender and kind to the most sinful. Even to those who would become leaders He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). We should not drive as did Jehu, but lead as did Jesus. We move a lighted candle slowly lest it go out. A fire almost expiring can be put out by a strong wind. A tender plant can be watered too much. In dealing with the weak we would do well to follow the hospital rule: "Walk softly and speak quietly." We were all little children first and had to learn to walk. "The Lord's servant must not strive." We must have "a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another... and love which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12-14). These qualities help to make a good leader.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Review of 2003 Bellview Lectures

Marvin L. Weir

The lectures conducted June 7-11, 2003 at the Bellview Church of Christ were tremendous. The theme was *Great Old Testament Questions*, and these questions produced outstanding lessons that need to be heard by every person concerned with his soul's salvation. All who are interested can study these great lessons as they are available on audio and video tapes, DVD, and in printed form in the excellent hardbound lectureship book of 458 pages.

Let me be bold to say that the Law of Patriarchy and the Law of Moses (this includes the Ten Commandments) are not binding upon people today. The Old Law was abolished and nailed to the cross (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14-15). God speaks to all men today through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2); Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant (Heb. 9:15); and all today will be judged by the words that He spake (John 12:48; Heb. 1:1-2). Why then study the Old Testament? As Paul declared, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). We learn that God keeps His promises and that His Word is sure. When Israel obeyed God by keeping His commandments, she enjoyed His blessings, but when she disobeyed His laws, she incurred God's wrath. This is an eternal principle that is applicable today.

The New Testament is a sufficient and complete guide for people today (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). To reject Christ and His Word is to reject the Father that sent Him (Luke 10:16). The Old Testament is **not** our source of authority today. Thus, we do **not** go to the Old Testament to prove how one becomes a child of

God, how one worships and serves in the kingdom, or how one is to live his life as a Christian. Many of the questions, however, that were asked long ago regarding sacred matters could and should be asked today. God's eternal principles do not change.

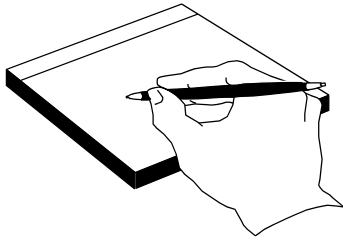
This review will focus on the lessons this writer was privileged to hear while attending the lectures. There are several excellent lessons in the book furnished by men who were not scheduled to speak in person. Others were scheduled to speak but were not able to be present. You will want to take the time to study all of the good material in the book.

The lectures began on Saturday evening with Keith Mosher discussing whether or not Judah was ashamed when she committed abomination. The sad truth is that God's people of old were **not** ashamed when they sinned. They were not embarrassed, and neither did they blush! The lesson pointed out that today fornication is accepted and joked about by most of our society, abortion is preferred over responsibility, homosexuality is touted as an alternate lifestyle, foul speech is in vogue, truth is perverted from the marketplace to the pulpit, covetousness runs rampant, and drunkenness, drug abuse, and pornography have a death grip on millions. But, does America blush? No, she now prides herself on being tolerant of sin and passing laws to protect what God has called abomination.

David Smith discussed the question, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?” (Est. 4:14). One must never underestimate the power of one person choosing to

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Be Strong

Paul gives five imperatives to the Corinthian brethren at the end of his first epistle to them. Among those imperatives is the charge to be strong. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Yet, the sad fact of the matter is that the Lord’s church is not growing stronger. For the church as a whole to grow stronger, each individual Christian must grow stronger. Yet, there seems to be many hindrances to this growth today.

First, we are digesting the wrong type of spiritual food. Jesus taught that the one who would be blessed by God is the one who hungers and thirst after righteousness. “Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6). Righteousness is defined by the Psalmist as God’s commands. “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness” (Psa. 119:172). Paul says that the gospel reveals God’s righteousness to us. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16-17). Thus, we are to be hungering and thirsting after God’s Word. Peter states, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). However, many do not feed their minds on God’s Word, instead they are digesting the wrong kind of food. We have many today who sit at the feet of false teachers instead of those teaching the truth. Elders often open their doors to wolves in sheep’s clothing, instead of watching out for the flock of God, or they encourage the flock to go hear brother False Teacher who is at a meeting or Family Bible School at

a nearby congregation. Only by hearing the Truth and hiding it in our hearts will we have the strength to overcome sin in our lives. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

A second great problem which is causing us not to grow strong is that we are being distracted by the world. As Jesus explained the parable of the sower, he said, “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). As a result the spiritual appetite of many is dwindling. We have a great problem today in that many Christians love the world more than they love God. John wrote, “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). Far too often we are allowing the world to mold us into its form instead of following Christ.

Next, there is a general disrespect for God’s Word. When we disrespect God’s Word, we cannot grow strong. We have so many challenges to the Scriptures today. We have those who challenge the inspiration of the Bible saying it is not really from God. Others deny the all-authoritative nature of the Scriptures looking to other things as their authority in life. There are some who are now claiming that we need something in addition to God’s Word. They claim that the Christian must have a direct working of the Holy Spirit on their spirit to grow strong and overcome sin in their life. Paul wrote, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This affirms that Scripture comes from God, not man. It also affirms that the Scriptures when used properly will make us (1) a man of God, (2) perfect or complete, and (3) complete furnished to all good works. We do not need anything other than the Word of God to lead us to do what God desires for us to do. It provides all that we need to get us to heaven. Peter wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). In God’s Word, given by His power, He has given us everything

we need for life and godliness. This life and godliness comes through knowledge which comes by studying God's Word. Through this knowledge and our application of God's Word to our lives, we can obtain heaven's home. Peter goes on to say, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11). The Bible has the answers to the fundamental questions of man (where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going). There is nothing else that will give satisfactory answers to these questions. God's Word is not only all-authoritative, it is also all-sufficient to direct our lives and guide us to heaven.

A fourth hindrance to our growth so we are not strong is an increasing disregard for worship. In speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). God desires worshipers. Yet, for far too many worship is a drudgery and weariness. It should be something we are looking forward to. It should be the highlight of our week. We have the opportunity to come before the throne of grace and give praise and adoration to our God. We additionally have the opportunity to be with our brethren and encourage them and receive encouragement from them. David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psa. 122:1). Do we find our joy in attending worship. The problem with some is that go to be entertained by the preacher, song and prayer leaders, instead of going with the attitude of worship. Thus, they do not "get anything out of" the worship service.

Last is that there is a dislike for the work of the Lord. Spiritual matters should be a priority within our lives, otherwise we will not grow and be strong. Paul wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). Our heart and desire must be on spiritual matters. Yet, as noted previously, we have become so worldly oriented that our heart and desire is on earthly matters. This has even been seen by congregations changing to appeal to ourselves instead of to God. They seek to please man instead of pleasing God. Thus, congregations provide recreation and entertainment (often building gymnasiums) to appeal to the physical desires of man, instead

of staying firmly rooted in the Lord's work. The work of the Lord is spiritual in nature, not physical. Jesus said, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). That spiritual work we are to be involved in is that of saving souls. Jesus stated His purpose in coming to this world when He said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The saving of souls is going to be done through preaching to the lost, edifying the saved, and benevolence to those in need, not in entertainment and recreation. We need to get to work for the Lord. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). MH

(Continued from Page 1)

do what is godly and right! Seven practical observations are listed: (1) Those with wicked agendas will lie to suit their purposes; (2) Opportunities, when realized, must be seized and used to the glory of God; (3) Servants of God must always be prepared for every good work; (4) One must obey God rather than men; (5) Silence is deadly; (6) Concern must be coupled with courage; and (7) A strong stand for God's cause aids evangelism.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3). Lee Davis did an excellent job of noting how the foundations relating to the Godhead, the foundations relating to the gospel, and the foundations relating to the church can be destroyed. As Lee noted, "What can the righteous do? They can know their Bible. We can know and understand the truth...and we can defend the truth...if we allow those who teach and practice error to go uncorrected, we are allowing the *little foxes* to eat away at the foundations."

"Who told thee that thou *wast* naked?" (Gen. 3:11). People today surely need to be told that they are naked, for undressing is much more popular than dressing. Lynn Parker noted that the world's view of clothing is **not** to be the Christian's view of clothing. Our clothing "should not cause others to lust...must be modest...and must promote spirituality." Can one dress modestly and go mixed swimming? The answer is found in this very practical and straightforward lesson.

All need to be concerned with what the Lord requires of them (Deu. 10:12; Mic. 6:8). If I remember correctly, Eddie Whitten next addressed the question:

“Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” (Eze. 34:2). Woe to the flock that is not properly fed! This lesson shows that members of the Lord’s body can be starved spiritually by those whose responsibility it is to see that they are properly fed. Glenn Hitchcock’s lesson considered the question that asks: “What *shall be* the end of these *things*?” (Dan. 12:8). To sum up his lecture, the answer is “when New Testament revelation was completed and Jewish state destroyed, it left nothing but the church of Christ as the last remaining kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44; Mat. 16:18).” “Will a man rob God?” (Mal. 3:8). Howell Bigham discussed several different ways that one can rob God today. The problem of stealing from God is a sin that has affected every generation of people. Gary Grizzell developed the study that the house of God is forsaken (Neh. 13:11) when God’s people refuse to support the preacher in proclaiming the precious gospel.

Monday was a rich day of study. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). David Brown discussed the meaning of walking together, defined fellowship, and showed that fellowship is conditional, and explored the limits of fellowship. Desiring to know the will of the Lord we ask, “Is there *any* word from the LORD?” (Jer. 37:17). Kevin Beard affirmed that there is indeed Word from the Lord and that all people must faithfully submit to it. However, beware of false teachers for they only bring trouble! “*Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by?” (Lam. 1:12). Lester Kamp showed that the pleading of God’s prophet fell on “deaf ears and hardened hearts.” Nothing has changed! “Is it nothing to you when you see the church in ruins in many places because of **false teachers**”? It should be, and in the Day of Judgment it will matter.

Man is created in God’s image and it should therefore be no surprise that God is mindful of His special creation (Psa. 8:4). Darrell Broking pointed out that God visits man in both positive and negative ways. The rhetorical question has been asked for centuries: “If a man die, shall he live again” (Job 14:14)? Curtis Cates did a masterful job of proving the critics wrong who espouse the false notion that the resurrection was not taught or believed in the Old Testament. Bobby Liddell stated that “Manoah realized what some *parents* today seem not to know. Training children is primarily and ultimately the responsibility of **parents**.” The lecture is entitled, “How shall we order the child?” (Jud. 13:12).

Tuesday began another great day of lectures with

Geoff Litke discussing the woes of intoxicating drink. Sorrow, contentions, babbling, and wounds without cause, and “redness of the eyes” (Pro. 23:29-30) are all the result of wine prohibited by the Scriptures. Jerry Martin noted that the Bible says to keep away from ungodly women. If one looks in the right place, he can find a “virtuous woman” (Pro. 31:10). He who finds such has a rare treasure. Job 25:4 asks, “How then can man be justified with God?” Clifford Newell discussed the importance of justification, man’s need for justification, and how justification occurs under New and Old Testaments. Joe Galloway did a great job of showing that God has **always** required a faith that acts in accordance with His divine will. Who was the troubler of Israel and who is the troubler of the Lord’s church today (1 Kin. 18:17)? Toney Smith did not mince words in pointing out that “modern-day Ahabs” are a blight to the Lord’s church today and our greatest needs is more “modern-day Elijahs.” Brethren, the troubler of Israel is not God’s faithful mouthpiece! “Who *is* on the LORD’S side?” (Exo. 32:26). Tom Bright showed what it means to be on the Lord’s side, and gives examples of those who are **not** on the Lord’s side and those who **are** on the Lord’s side. Many profess to be on the Lord’s side when in reality they are not anywhere close to being on the side of the Master. “What hast thou done?” (Gen. 4:10). Harrell Davidson noted that fellowship with God can be broken. The question was asked, not for information, but to make man aware of his departure from God’s way.

More great Bible questions were discussed on Wednesday. Darius did not appreciate the predicament he created for Daniel so he asked the man of God, “Is thy God...able to deliver thee?” (Dan. 6:20)? Riley Nelson set forth the truth that God is always able and capable of seeing to His children’s needs. The psalmist declared: “What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?” (Psa. 116:12). Would it not be great if all those who professed to be Christians today had the desire of the Psalmist? Bryan Braswell did a great job of challenging folks to recognize what God has done for man and the need for man to realize he was created for the purpose of glorifying Jehovah (Isa. 43:7). “*Is there* not a cause?” (1 Sam. 17:29). What a thought provoking question! In view of the value of man’s soul (Mat. 16:26) and the cost of the Lord’s church (Acts 20:28), is there not a cause? Absolutely, there is a cause! This writer had the privilege of discussing some eight “causes” that need to be remembered by every child of God, but especially by elders and preachers in the Lord’s church.

Souls need to be saved and thus the question: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8). Guss Eoff shows the need for God’s preachers to go to those who have a need to hear the precious gospel. Most of the world’s population is lost, and there are not nearly enough Isaiah’s ready to go forth to carry the gospel to a lost and dying world. Surely all want to know how one can know the Word which the Lord has not spoken (Deu. 18:21)! Randy Mabe reminded us that today we have completed revelation, the Word of Truth. We are therefore capable of judging righteous judgment (John 7:24) and trying or proving the false teachers (1 John 4:1).

The lectures closed with two great lessons. B. J. Clarke’s topic was: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). Do we all understand that we can sin against others, but every sin is also a sin against God? B. J. pointed out what this question reveals about Joseph, and challenged his listeners to think what the outcome would have been if Judah and David had asked the same question. You will want to study this fine lesson to discover how you can be prepared to ask such a question as Joseph asked. Ronnie Hayes closed out the lectures discussing the question that needs to be asked of so many who profess to be Christians today—“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if

Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kin. 18:21). He discussed the charge (false accusations against faithful brethren), the call for a decision (either God or Baal), and the challenge for all today (God’s way or man’s way).

We are grateful for these great Old Testament questions that remind us of God’s glorious truths. We owe a debt of gratitude for the work of Michael Hatcher for directing the lectures, for the godly elders and their vision of planning the lectures, and to the brethren at Bellview for their work and support of the lectures. This faithful congregation’s hospitality was enjoyed by all.

You will not regret purchasing the book and the tapes of these lectures. They will serve to strengthen the faith of those who study them for years to come.

5810 Liberty Grove Road; Rowlett, TX 75089

Editor’s Note: I want to thank brother Weir for the excellent job he did in reviewing our 2003 Bellview Lectures. As he pointed out, a copy of the lessons can be obtained in audio, video, or DVD format by contacting this congregation. The lectures can also be viewed online at either our web site (www.bellviewcoc.com) or at www.oabs.org. We also want to invite all to attend next year’s lectureship as we continue with Great Questions but these will deal with New Testament Questions.

“Are You Sure?”

Israel Crocker

It is easy to be misled in our day. There are so many “scam artists” and persons looking to take advantage of anybody they can. These con men are very persuasive in their attempt to lure people to believe things that are not true. For example, the scammer may convince some person that his roof is in need of repair when he cannot inspect it for himself (maybe because of elderly age or illness). The fraudulent character is fully aware that his scam is only to swindle thousands of dollars, even if it is from persons who desperately cannot afford the loss. This type of thievery makes any honest person angry.

This same situation can happen to a religious person. There are a lot of people who believe things that are not actually found in the Scriptures, because they have been taught by someone who is persuasive. Yet, if you ask them about their ideas, they are convinced their practices are pleasing to God based on what they have been taught.

Jacob was a man who experienced the same type of misleading from his sons. Although, Jacob was not duped in a religious way, he serves as an excellent illustration of innocent people being misguided.

Jacob had twelve sons, which would become the twelve patriarchs of the nation of Israel. One of the son’s name was Joseph. “Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours” (Gen. 37:3). Joseph’s brethren began to envy him because of their father’s preference toward Joseph. Also, his dreams displeased his brethren in relation to their having to bow to him (vv. 7-8). His brethren became so envious of Joseph they conspired to kill him.

When they were away from Jacob tending their flocks, the men take Joseph and cast him into a pit. Instead of slaying Joseph, they sell him to the Ishmeelites who were traveling to Egypt. To cover their misdeed, the brethren of Joseph took his coat of many

colors and dipped it into goat's blood. Then they tell Jacob that his favorite son was slain by an evil beast.

Please observe Jacob's response: "And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days" (Gen. 37:34). Jacob had received false information, and it caused him to react in such a painful way: "And he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him" (v. 35). The obvious problem with Jacob is his believing a lie. Will the reader please notice that Jacob did not desire to believe the lie. However, he was willing to trust his other sons, and they used that trust to deceive Jacob. Some people will place their trust in a person instead of the message. No matter how we perceive a person, we should always confirm what we are taught by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Many once faithful brethren have been gradually lead away from truth because of their confidence in a departing preacher. Let us endeavor not to let any person of influence lead us away from the truth just because we value their opinion. (A point of balance: This does not mean we cannot trust any person of influence—1 Cor. 13:5.)

Another point of observation is Jacob's extent of belief. Jacob truly believed his son was dead. There is no doubt of this because of his emotional reaction. However, just because Jacob believed something to be true did not make it the truth. People are the same way when religion is considered. They have always been taught a certain way, or they have strong emotional

feelings toward a certain belief. Emotions are good in their proper context, but they should never be our source for truth. Jacob had very strong emotions about Joseph's death, but his emotions were based on the false information he received. There are some who are passionate in their defense of their beliefs, but their emotions are based on error, just like Jacob's.

It was, of course, good news to Jacob when he learned the truth of his son being alive in Egypt. "And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, *It is* enough; Joseph my son *is* yet alive: I will go and see him before I die" (Gen. 45:27-28). Some who have believed a lie religiously, when they discover the truth, are not willing to receive it joyfully like Jacob. When we learn the truth pertaining to any matter, we should be exceedingly joyful and ready to place aside any falsehood we have formerly believed.

Are we sure we have been taught the truth? A Christian can go to the Bible and find every doctrinal concept and practice in the Scriptures. Yes, we can be sure. Yet, there are people who attend the assembly, who still hold to old feelings and convictions of persuasive men. Consequently, they have closed the ears to truth. Let us strive to only "speak where the Bible speaks."

PO Box 825; Point Clear, AL 36564

There Is a Generation

Bill Brandstatter

Many who have been in the church of Christ for many years have told me that generations are changing. How does the generation of adults coming up in the church compare to generations in past years? Many will agree in all areas that things are different today. Some of the finest young people are in the Lord's church today. Many youth groups are doing a lot of good. Yet, what about the generation outside the church? What about some in the church? What will be said in future years about this generation?

Solomon the wise man has much to add to our subject. He wrote, "There is a generation that curse their father, And bless not their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, And *yet* are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are *as* swords,

and their jaw teeth *as* knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men" (Pro. 30:11-14). This could well be a commentary on some of the younger generation of our day. What is this generation being taught? What will be written about this generation in future years?

This generation should be taught to obey their parents and to honor them (Eph. 6:1). This deals with the area of respect and submission to authority. If children do not honor and respect their parents, how can they ever be obedient to God. Paul made this parallel: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). The message here is simple: if you respect your father you are more likely to respect God.

This generation of young girls need to be taught by good Christian women what true motherhood is all about. In reference to aged women and what they ought to teach, Paul adds this testimony: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:4-5). Unfortunately, too little of this is going on today. Young girls are learning these things from other people and other sources. The information being received is often not the right information, and often ungodly and immoral.

This generation needs to be taught the importance and sacredness of worshiping God. Worship is

not to be in anyway similar to entertainment. Habakkuk put it this way: "The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). Worship is a serious, sacred, and separate time for the Christian. All worldly things are shut out, and the Christian approaches God and the focus of worship is God. He seeks this type of worshiper. Let us teach this generation the correct attitude regarding worship services.

What are we teaching this generation? When the books have finally been closed on this age, what will be said about this generation? What is taught today will affect the church of tomorrow.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



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Editorial comment: I have asked brother Smith to write a series of articles under the general theme of “The Callings of God.” This is the first in this series and I know that not only this article but the succeeding ones will benefit all of us.

And The Lord Said Unto Adam

Tim Smith

Concerning Adam, the Lord first said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26-27). Thus came into the world the first man and the first woman as products of God’s special, miraculous, and absolute creative power. Man and woman came whole and complete and in the image of Him Who made them. It was of the Lord’s own property that Adam was made—that is to say, He borrowed nothing from anyone and is therefore beholding to no one for the materials. “The LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). Before the creative power of God was brought to bear on the lifeless dust of the ground, Adam was not. Before He breathed into the lifeless body formed from dust the breath of life, Adam’s life was not. It is the case, therefore, that Adam was in all respects the property of God. As such, it is up to the Lord to govern and order the life of His own property as He pleases. The creature is to be totally under the control of the will of the Creator. The Lord had every right to command Adam as He pleased. None can deny Him the right to require from His own property what He wills, nor can any deny Him the right to so restrict

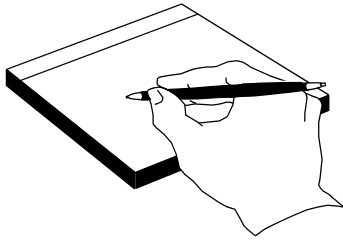
His own property from engaging in certain activities. Adam belonged to God. God therefore sought to speak to him to tell Him how he ought to order his life in such a way as to find favor in the eyes of his Maker.

Since we all came from Adam, we, too, are beholding to the Maker of Adam in and for all things. Were there no Adam, there would be no me! Just as the Lord had every right to order Adam’s doings, so He has the right to order our doings. But for the creative power of God, Adam would not be; but for Adam, we would not be; therefore, but for the creative power of God we would not be. His claim to sovereignty over Adam rested on His having created Adam, and it is equally the basis of His claim to sovereignty over us. Just as Adam **should have** obeyed Him in all things, so we **should** obey God in all things. This fundamental truth is often omitted from the philosophies that govern the lives of men today. So many have accepted as fact the unproven and unscientific theories of evolution, and in so doing they have rejected the basis of God’s claim to sovereignty over them—creation. To believe God is to believe the Bible; to believe the Bible is to believe creation; to believe creation is to believe that God, by right of creation, has the right of sovereignty over our lives.

Exercising His prerogative as Sovereign, God early began to direct the lives of His subjects. Let us

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Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Letter Response

I recently received this email from a lady (I do not know if she is a Christian or not). It was a general email apparently sent out to many members of the Lord's church. I thought I would take the time to respond to her email in this manner. Prior to my response please read her email message (it has been copied and pasted directly from the message so it appears exactly as it was sent).

Dear Church of Christ members,

I would like to ask why the Church of Christ does not obey the dietary restrictions as given in the book of Leviticus??

Let me explain, it is quite clear that the dietary restrictions given are VALID. For example, pigs often carry rotavirus - a virus that has been clearly linked to diabetes in humans.

Additionally, shellfish are dangerous to eat because they act as water filters in the water -- consuming dangerous viral and bacterial matter, thus cleaning their environments. While shellfish are certainly beneficial to their habitat, they are clearly not fit to eat. Would you eat a water or air filter??

Catfish and reptiles (frog legs, etc) are also very dangerous to consume as they both carry a wide variety of viral and bacterial infections.

As you may know, most cancers are traced back to virus and bacteria that we are exposed to through our food and water. As a result, it seems quite logical and reasonable to declare the dietary restrictions in Leviticus as both modern and valid guidelines for living. (Despite what Paul said about "all food being clean".)

Additionally, here in America we spend close to a trillion dollars a year annually in healthcare. These expenses could be drastically reduced if people would follow the dietary restrictions. Eating "unclean" food leads to disease and cancer, and there are many medical journals to back this up.

To sum it up, following the dietary restrictions in Leviticus would not only improve one's quality of life, it would also reduce the amount of money we spend

each year on healthcare. I call that a win-win solution, don't you?

I would like your comments. Thank you.
God Bless You and Yours,
Alison Reed

My first response would be why should we follow those restrictions? You seem to vacillate between two arguments but never really settle on either. You seem to indicate that we are subject to those regulations because they are part of the Law of Moses (they are found in Leviticus). Then you leave that aspect and seem to argue that we should eat this way because it is the healthy way to live. Thus, let us consider both of these in this response.

The regulations which are found in the Law of Moses were never given to us today. Moses' Law was never given to all men, it was given to the Israelites and them only. Moses wrote, "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who *are* all of us here alive this day" (Deu. 5:1-3; see also Exo. 31:17; Jer. 31:31). Thus the Law of Moses (of which these dietary laws were a part) was never given to the Gentile world, it was only given to the Jews.

No one today is subject to the Law of Moses. While prior to the death of Christ only the Jews were subject to that Law, today no one is amenable to that Law. One of the things Christ did in coming to this world was to fulfill the Law (Mat. 5:17-18). Once the Law was fulfilled, it was taken out of the way (while it is still valuable to us today, we are not subject to it). Paul writes, "But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away" (2 Cor. 3:7). The Law of Moses was done away in Christ. Thus, Inspiration says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace" (Eph. 2:15). The "law of commandments contained in ordinances" has reference to the Law of Moses, and Jesus abolished it in His flesh. We learn that it took place at His death. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). Through His death, our Lord brought a

change of priesthood (no longer needing the blood of bulls and goats because we have His blood to cleanse us from our sins). With a change of priesthood, there is also a change of the law. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). Thus, if you are saying that we should follow these dietary laws because they are a part of the Law of Moses, then you have a misunderstanding of that Law because no one is subject to it today. If we are not subject to that law (which these verses prove), then we do not have to abide by these dietary restrictions.

One of the purposes of the Old Testament was to bring us to Christ and His New Testament Law. “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:23-25). What does the New Testament Law of Christ state about dietary restrictions? We are first introduced to this in Acts 10 in the conversion of Cornelius. Peter has gone onto the roof to pray (v. 9). As he was praying there was a sheet let down from heaven “wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air” (v. 12). Peter hears a voice telling him to raise, kill, and eat (v. 13). Peter, a Jew and having been subject to those dietary regulations as a Jew, says, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean” (v. 14). God told him, “And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common” (v. 15). In paraphrasing this, God was informing Peter that those dietary regulations are no longer binding upon people today. There are no longer any clean and unclean animals and thus people can eat what they wish.

Paul informs his son in the faith Timothy that there will be some who “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2). He then mentions some of the items which fall into this category of doctrines of devil, “Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 4:3-4). From this passage it is clear that the dietary regulations of the Old Testament are no longer in force

and that we have the right to eat anything we wish.

The second argument you seem to make is that this is the healthy way of eating. If we eat this way we will have fewer diseases and health related problems. I will readily admit that I cannot really speak to the benefits of abstaining from certain foods from a medical standpoint. However, I have already shown that we have the right to eat these foods from a biblical standpoint. Thus, this now falls into the category of Christian liberty. We have the right to eat those types of food, or we have the right to abstain from eating those types of food (from a biblical standpoint). Having said this, what would be sinful would be trying to bind one’s opinion on this (trying to forbid what God allows, what we generally think of as anti-ism). However, it would be permissible to encourage others to make the choice to abstain from those foods because of health reasons.

To answer your question as to why churches of Christ do not obey those dietary restrictions is that they are not binding upon us today, and thus we have the right, if we wish, to eat those foods. If someone wishes to abstain from eating those foods, they have every right to do so as it is their choice. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

notice a few of the things He said to the first human beings and their reactions and some of the lessons we may learn from them.

Groundskeepers

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Though the matter is not offered as a quotation directly, it is implied that God told Adam and Eve that they were to dress and keep the garden, so it may be said that this was their first commandment. Many overlook this part of their lives in Eden, but it must have played an important role in the way they spent their time each day. This required the creatures to expend energy and spend time and use their talents in the implementation of the will of God. God continues to deal with His creatures in much the same way—requiring things from us. We are to study the Word (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 2:15), believe it (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6), repent of all sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31), confess our faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10; Mat. 10:32), be properly baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and be faithful in all things even to the point of dying to remain faithful (Rev. 2:10). Each of these represents a thing that is to be done—a thing requiring time, energy,

and talent. A man must decide to do each of these things, do them, and do them properly. Adam heard and believed the command given him by his Creator and, so far as we know, set about doing it faithfully so long as it was possible for him to do so. If only he had been so faithful in other respects.

The Forbidden Fruit

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). We note, first of all, that God gave Adam authority to eat all fruit—save one—in the garden. He provided the man with such as he might need to live and restricted him from partaking of that which would in no wise benefit him and which held only evil. Adam could do very well without eating the forbidden fruit—in fact, he did very well until he partook thereof. O that man today would realize that such wisdom is behind every restriction God has placed on man! He has provided the marriage bed to supply the acceptable means of satisfying the sexual desires of man and has restricted all other means of satisfying them. He condemned fornication (Gal. 5:19), and He condemned homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27), but He supplied the legitimate means of satisfying the desires (Heb. 13:4). He has never forbidden a thing to His subjects that would either properly be styled necessary for them or in their best interest. He gave Adam plenty to eat, all which was good for him, and authorized him to eat it. So it is in all of life.

In the second place, we note that God withheld authority from Adam to eat one particular fruit—the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Having plenty, this should have certainly been easy enough to obey, much easier than the requirement to dress and keep the garden. I could see many slacking in their duties with respect to grounds keeping—hiding in the shade when no one was looking, leaning on their hoe when they should have been working it, etc.—but how could one eat the one fruit forbidden him by One Who had been so gracious and generous in His dealings with His own creatures? But, as often happens, the easiest to understand and the simplest to do becomes the very means of undoing to man. Satan, in the form of the serpent, approached Adam through his wife and worked his evil influence on what was a good situation and man was all the worse for it.

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he

said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1). We should note that this question was altogether disingenuous—the devil knew perfectly well what God had said on the matter. Like many serpents today, he only wanted a chance to pervert what God had said and turn it into something more to his liking. For example, do you not think that preachers who teach salvation by and at the point of faith only know of the existence of Philippians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21, and James 2:14-16? They do! They simply pervert the meaning to suit their own purposes. Preachers who teach that baptism can mean sprinkling or pouring know of the existence of Romans 6:1-4. Preachers who advocate the use of the mechanical instrument of music in the worship of the New Testament church know of Ephesians 5:19 and Revelation 22:18-19. Elders who use and support false teachers know that 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17-18 are in the Bible. These folks, and a host of others like them, merely seek to abuse these passages and put them with other abused passages to support their own teaching and thus to suit their own purposes. Be careful of people who ask you a question pretending not to know the answer when they really do know it.

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:2-3). Good answer—and factual. She knew what God said and what He meant (many might be surprised to learn that God **always** says what He means and means what He says). Had the devil been sincere in his part of the transaction, he would have thanked Eve for the answer and moved on. He was not and he did not.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5). Imagine—calling God a liar! He did it brazenly and openly, while many today sneak around at it, but in the end we still have Paul’s word on the matter: “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Whenever anyone, whether through subtlety or outright, disagrees with God, disbelieve him and trust God. This tale would be over had Eve done so—she did not.

“And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. 3:6). She surely had seen the tree before now, but she now looked on it differently. Before it was forbidden, now it was desir-

able. What changed? Not the fruit. Eve changed—her desire to satisfy the desires of the flesh supplanted her desire to please Him Who made her. It was an attitude problem! The commandment was simple, the duty easy enough to carry out, but she failed in it because she succumbed to the tempter.

Kind Likes Kind

As is often the case, Eve sought to involve others in her sin—she approached Adam and induced him to sin. As the serpent had been the means of her temptation, so she became the means of Adam's temptation. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). The first sin led quickly to the second, and so it ever has been and so it is now. The desire to possess the property of another leads one to covet, covetousness leads him to steal, and stealing makes him a liar as well. I am unaware of a single sin content to stand alone—they always invite other sins to join them, and more often than not they consume their host!

The Cover-up

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). Having sinned against their Sovereign, they now sought to cover their mistake up. Time and again we see this today in the lives of church members—one gets drunk and, instead of repenting, leaves the Lord and His people. One runs down the preacher or the song leader or the elders and, instead of repenting, leaves the Lord and His people. One compromises the truth at home or in the workplace and, instead of repenting, leaves the Lord and His people. Other examples abound, but **why?** I can only surmise that it is because they are ashamed of their actions and are hiding in the bushes to cover their nakedness.

The Lie

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:9-10). God having found him, Adam now lies to Him as Satan had lied to Eve about Him. His nakedness was not the real reason he was hiding—he had sinned and knew that God would be angry with him!

"And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen. 3:11). God caught Adam in a trap that was of his own doing. Adam knew

nothing of nakedness before this incident, and yet now he did. How was this to be explained? God knew that there was but one way to explain Adam's new-found knowledge and, in His grace, was extending an opportunity for him to come clean. Did he? Note the next verse: "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). He blamed Eve! What he should have done was to confess and ask for mercy; instead, like many today, he sought to shift the blame to someone else. Eve's sin was her problem, his sin was his own.

"And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). Like her husband, Eve tried to "pass the buck." While both were correct in their assertions that others had played a role in their demise, both conveniently failed to deal with their own culpability. Others may make it easier for you to sin, but always remember: if you sin, it is your own fault.

The Price to Be Paid

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:14-20).

There is always a price to pay for sin—maybe here and now, maybe later, maybe hereafter—but always it must be paid. Jesus offers to pay it with His blood for all who will come to the Father through Him, and this is the only way it can be paid for and man to come out of it well. Hell is the wage of sin (Rom. 6:23), and all those whose sins are not paid for by the blood of the Lamb will pay their own price there someday. One way or another, sin will exact its price.

Some Practical Applications

Like Adam, God has given us things to do and things from which we must abstain. Like Adam, we

should do all of the right things, and unlike Adam, we should abstain from all wrong things. If and when we fail, we should own up to our failures, take the responsibility for our sins, and ask Him in His mercy and

grace to forgive us and restore us to faithfulness in His sight. May God Bless You as You Study and Obey His Word.

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Great New Testament Questions

“My Preacher Says”

Allen Webster

I love preachers: For one reason, as the country gentleman said, “because I *are* one!” Preachers are generally cordial, outgoing, and likeable. Despite some fallen TV evangelists, most ministers are good men who are honest and possess high morals. Likely, he will be a man who knows something of the Scriptures and wants to help others understand them. Paul said, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15).

I do not trust preachers. At least not with my soul’s salvation. Though most of them are trustworthy, when it comes to what to believe about the Bible, I have not met a man who can make up my mind for me. They might help in understanding the Bible, but the final decision is reserved for me because God will judge me by what He has said, not what my preacher says He says (John 12:48). Paul said, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi. 2:12).

Preachers have led others astray (Mat. 7:15; 1 John 4:1; 2 Cor. 11:13), and many are presently doing so. Maybe they were themselves taught wrong and are just perpetuating error. We would like to think that each is honest, but we need to be careful that we do not let a preacher make up our minds against the truth. Let us look at some common statements heard from preachers and compare them with God’s Word. Make up your

own mind what you should believe.

“My Preacher Says...”

“**The Bible cannot be taken literally.**” “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2).

“I should call him ‘Father’ or ‘Reverend.’”

“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven...But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat. 23:9,11-12). “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” (Gal 3:28).

“Sprinkling is just as good as immersion.”

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4; Cf., Rom. 6:17).

“**Baptism is not necessary for salvation.**” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

“Salvation is by faith alone.” “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**” (Heb. 5:8-9).

“One cannot fall, from grace.” “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after

they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

“Instrumental music is acceptable to God.” “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18). Where did God command its use under the New Testament? (Please read: Col. 2:14; 3:17).

“One church is as good as another.” “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” (Mat. 6:18). “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all...*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4).

Listen to the preacher, but study for yourself. If what he says is different than what the Bible says—find one who teaches the truth!

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



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Oak Hills And Max Lucado Dropped Christ Long Ago

Marvin L. Weir

Christ promises that He will not “fail” or “forsake” a child of God (Heb. 13:5), but a Christian can “fail” and “forsake” the Lord! Max Lucado and his apostate followers at the *Oak Hills* congregation in San Antonio have just recently **officially** dropped the name “church of Christ.” Those faithful to the Lord and His church have known for years that Max Lucado is a false teacher and an enemy of Christ. Lisa Harrison Rivas, staff writer for the *San Antonio Express-News* writes in the Saturday, September 6, 2003 paper these words: “Max Lucado hopes renaming his church, opening new campuses and adding musical instruments to the worship service will help bring more people to Christ.”

The staff writer is correct in calling the congregation “his” or Max’s church because this group who spurns the Word of God certainly does not belong to Christ! One is reminded of the Lord saying, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

The report continues with the staff writer saying, “Oak Hills Church of Christ is now Oak Hills Church, and although the name has changed, Lucado said the church’s core values will not.” Lucado is quoted as follows: “When it comes to strategy, when it comes to approach, we want to do **whatever** seems most effective **at the time**...That’s what these initiatives are: changes of strategy, not changes to doctrine or core values” (emph. MLW).

Lucado abandoned most of the Lord’s teaching or doctrine (cf., 2 John 9-11) long ago. His statement, however, of “these initiatives” not being “changes to

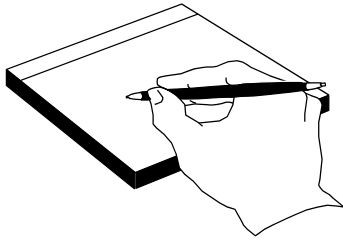
doctrine” reveals his disdain for the Lord authorizing **singing** as an act of worship. Max has successfully convinced his loyal followers that instrumental music is an option or expedient and not a doctrinal matter. The Lord teaches otherwise (Mat. 26:30; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Jam. 5:13), and Max’s church was **singing** until the pied piper convinced them to **change** by adding the instrument. It is a tragedy that “about 4,000 worshippers each Sunday” are content to follow Max down the broad way that leads to destruction (Mat. 7:14). The Lord has commanded His followers to “sing”—not “play” or “make music.”

Vic King, minister of missions at Oak Hills, “said the staff doesn’t expect a lot of members to leave over the changes.” Neither do I! It sad that it is so very difficult to convince brethren with the Word of God that they are in full-blown apostasy! King goes on to say, “It’s the sign that we are changing...We are changing to a sign that more accurately reflects who we are.” This is only double-talk from those who cannot bring themselves to be honest false teachers! At least Lucado tells the truth in saying that “some find the Church of Christ name to be an insurmountable barrier.” He continues saying, “A common comment from new members is this: ‘We would have come sooner, but we had to get over the name of the church.’”

What a sordid mess and a stench in the Lord’s nostrils! How it must grieve the Savior to have traitors boast of loving Him while **changing** the sign because some are embarrassed by the name church of

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Letter Response

Recently I received several responses to an article which I penned for the November 2000 issue of *Defender*. Apparently, one person recently read what I wrote and did not appreciate it, and had others read it and asked them to respond to me. Because of the number of responses I received, I do not have the time to respond to each one, therefore I am going to respond by way of this article and deal with most of the things which were brought up. The article in question dealt with the subject of the singing group “Acappella.”

One of the writers informed me that “every single one of those scriptures you used for making your case was totally [sic] ripped from their context and subject.... For every subject you covered, and the scriptures you used to back statements, that scripture you used had nothing to do with the subject you were trying to say it does....EVERYTIME!” In case you do not have a copy of that article, I dealt with the need for having authority and used Colossians 3:17 and Matthew 21:23-27. Along that line, I pointed out that authority only comes from man and not God, then our worship is vain according to Matthew 15:9. I pointed out what God authorized concerning our music: singing. Then I listed these passages to show this point: Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 2:12, and James 5:13. In considering this I showed that the singing was to teach and admonish according to Colossians 3:16 and it was to be speaking according to Ephesians 5:19. I closed the article by mentioning that we should never encourage or support sin and used Romans 1:32 and Ephesians 5:19. Of course this writer never showed where any of these passages are “ripped from their context and subject.” I would encourage each person to read these and see for yourself if they were used properly or

improperly.

Next I want to deal with two things which are tied together. One person asked how I could say that clapping hands was “not allowed by God” and asks, “What is written in Psalms 27:1? Psalms 98:8 also talk about clapping hands as a good thing to the Lord. How can you say that God forbids [sic] that?” Another wrote, “My Bible says that we should make a ‘joyful noise’” without giving a specific passage of where the Bible stated this (it does some seven times in Psalms). Closely tied with this is when I discussed needing authority from the Bible, one objected by writing, “by which you failed to point out that you only mean the New Testament.” This question very simply deals with the question as to what law we are amenable to today. Are we subject to the Old Testament and do we go to the Old Testament for our authority for our actions today, or are we subject to the New Testament for our authority? The Old Testament was never given to all people, only to the Jews (Exo. 31:17; Deu. 5:1-3). Second, the Old Testament Law was taken away in Christ. We are dead to the Law of Moses (Rom. 7:1-3), it has been done away (2 Cor. 3:7), it has been abolished (Eph. 2:15), and it was nailed to the cross and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14). Since there has been a change of the priesthood (from the Levitical priesthood to the priesthood of Christ) there must be a change of the Law (from the Old Testament Law or Law of Moses to the New Testament Law or the Law of Christ) according to Hebrews 7:12, 18. These passages show we are not to go back to the Old Testament to derive our authority, instead we are subject to the New Testament and must gain our authority for our actions today from it. While the Old Testament might authorize clapping hands (even as it does authorize animal sacrifices) that does not mean that clapping hands or mechanical instruments of music are authorized for today when we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We do not “throw out the Old Testament,” we simply recognize where we are to obtain our authority from today. The Old Testament is valuable but we simply are not subject to it as a Law today.

One individual did not like my comparison with the Lord’s Supper and the use of steak, potatoes, and Coke on the Lord’s Supper. He wrote, “Your comparison between music and the Lord’s Supper is ludicrous – the Bible DOES specifically talk about the Lord’s Supper, definitively calling out the use of Bread and Wine (and I bet you use grape juice in your church, which would be a clear violation of what the Bible does

specifically authorize – and don't use the excuse that, in Biblical times, wine wasn't really very alcoholic – if that were the case, the Bible would not have exhorted us to 'be not drunk with wine.').” The comparison which I made was in a discussion of our need for authority for what we do. I wrote, “If we do not need authority for what we do (silence permits, and whatever is not specifically forbidden is allowed) then it opens the door for steak, potatoes, and Coke on the Lord's supper; the rosary beads; and a thousand and one other things in worship to God.” I would again state that if we do not need authority from God for what we do, then these things (along with many other things) are all allowable. If this person does not believe we need authority for our actions, then let us see him (or anyone else) prove that using these things on the Lord's Supper is wrong. In addition, he is again wrong concerning the element used on the Lord's Supper. He calls it “Wine” but the Scripture says it is “fruit of the vine” (Mat. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). The word *wine* is different from *vine* in the original. Grape juice is the fruit of the vine and is thus exactly what Jesus stated in instituting this communion. Even if *wine* had been used by Jesus, it would not mean that we had to use alcoholic wine. This word can have a variety of meanings including wine that is still in the cluster or that is still on the vine (Isa. 65:8; cf., Num. 6:3-4; Jud. 9:13), non-alcoholic produce or grape juice (Isa. 16:10; Joel 2:24; cf., Gen. 40:11), and also alcoholic in nature. However, Jesus did not say “wine” instead he said “fruit of the vine” which would include grape juice. (Notice that I did not even say that the wine in Bible times was not very alcoholic. The alcohol content of the wine in Bible times and alcoholic drinks today is very different. While one could become drunk on the wine of the Bible, it did not contain the alcoholic content of today's drinks.)

Because of the length of this response, I will stop at this point and continue answering these comments and statements in next month's issue of *Defender*.

MH

(Continued from Page 1)
Christ. Who died for **the** church? Was it Max? I think

not (Acts 20:28)! Who is the head of **the** church? Is it Max? No, it is the Lord (Eph. 1:22-23)! Since Christ purchased His church of which He is head with His blood, why would it be an “insurmountable barrier” for folks to attend a congregation that wears His name? Mark it down, and mark it down well: Those who must “get over” a congregation wearing the Lord's name have **never** genuinely obeyed the gospel and been converted to Christ.

The staff writer continues, saying, “Most Churches of Christ feature only a cappella singing, a **tradition** King says is based on the absence of the use of instruments in the New Testament churches. But for the first time, Oak Hills will **add** instruments to a **new** Sunday evening service, which will be **geared toward young adults** and will begin early next year” (emph. MLW).

A cappella singing is **not** some man-made tradition, but a God-given command! It is true that Max and Oaks Hill are **adding** to the worship—something God has forbidden man to do (Rev. 22:18-19). Their motive is crystal clear—the **attraction** of “young adults.” It is a pity that so many today are more interested in **attraction** than **conversion**.

The article ends noting that Lucado is asking the “members to spend the next 40 days praying about these and other initiatives.” It would be much better **if** all of Lucado's followers could spend the next three days in the belly of a great fish—so they might be convinced to repent and come to their spiritual senses (Jon. 1:17-2:10).

Our prayer is for more members of the body who truly love the Lord and have no desire to drop Him from His church!

5810 Liberty Grove Road; Rowlett, TX 75088
Editor's Note: Someone asked me about this and I told them that I was very thankful for Lucado's Church dropping “church of Christ” from their name. I pointed out that it would be wonderful to see them repent, but they are way too far down the road of apostasy for that. I also pointed out that Lucado has not taught the Truth for years and has been more closely aligned with the denominations than with the Lord's church. Thus, I was proud of what they did. My prayer is that more of those who no longer love the Truth will do what Lucado's church has done.

Remember the Bellview Lectures: June 12-16, 2004
Theme: “Great New Testament Questions”

Backsliding

Preston Silcox

It has been observed that the prodigal son of Luke 15 did not find himself among the swine the very moment he considered leaving his father's house. The way of the backslider is gradual and, no doubt, therein resides a great part of the danger. As with any real and present threat, considering various aspects of the peril at hand can help one guard himself against backsliding.

The Possibility

Among the many deceptions of the devil is the teaching that once a person commits himself to Christ, no sin can place his soul in eternal jeopardy. This position has been declared in denominational creed books, preached from sectarian pulpits, and defended in public debates. In spite of its popularity, however, this doctrine is nowhere supported in God's Word. In fact, the Bible clearly confirms just the opposite—that a person once saved by Christ **can** so act as to be finally and forever lost in eternity!

To those who were being tempted to return to the Law of Moses, the Hebrews writer warned: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38-39). Those under consideration are "the just" who "live by faith." These *just* ones had the ability to "draw back" and thus face *perdition* (destruction)! This text plainly teaches the possibility of apostasy.

Similarly, Paul warned the Galatians with the following words: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Paul declared that the reasonable conclusion of their doctrine caused their union with Christ to be dissolved. The verb *fallen from*, meaning "to fall out," was used in reference to seamen who were thrown ashore and of actors who were hissed off the stage. Obviously, these had been separated from grace, an absolutely essential ingredient in salvation (Eph. 2:8).

Among many other passages which show the possibility of backsliding is 2 Peter 1:10. Following a list of God-given responsibilities (often called the "Christian graces"), Peter promised, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The small word, *if* carries a lot of power. It shows that the inspired promise of Peter is absolutely conditional. In other words, if one refuses to adhere to the apostle's preceding list of duties, then

falling is not only possible, but absolutely probable.

The Problems

While some fool themselves into thinking that their lives and actions have no influence on anything or anyone beyond themselves, the fact remains that others are watching and being affected by the backslider.

First, the lost are negatively influenced when one turns from God. As a result of what they see in others, some in the world form opinions about their own ability or inability to follow Christ faithfully. They might reason that since the individual under consideration does not demonstrate the ability or concern to "walk in the light," then they themselves either shall be unable to follow Christ or shall also one day lose interest in Truth.

Next, the church suffers. It loses potential leaders, teachers, and other working members. It shuffles responsibilities to make up for those who have *jumped ship*. It suffers misrepresentation in the community. And among other things, it spends time and energy grieving the loss of the backslider, rather than using such commodities to reach the world and encourage the faithful.

Finally, the backslider suffers the loss of his own soul. How tragic it is for a person to hear and heed the Gospel only to turn his back on it later. Peter described this sad situation with the following words:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Truly, the way of the transgressor is hard.

The Preventatives

Knowing that apostasy is possible and understanding some of the problems it presents, the wise and prudent Christian will want to do everything he can to prevent backsliding in his own life. Consider a few suggestions.

To begin with, look back. Peter said one of the mistakes of the backslider is that he "hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9). Every

Christian should constantly remember the day his sins were washed away. It was then that the old man who was dedicated to sin was put to death, and it was then that he became a new creation in Christ (Rom. 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17). Surely, keeping in mind the joy and significance of such a time will encourage faithfulness.

Also, look around. Once again, Peter offered sound advice when he warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Soberness and vigilance require the Christian to carefully consider the possible dangers around him—those tempting traps placed by the adversary who desires the apostasy of every child of God. Watch out!

Finally, look forward. Peter perceived that some could not “see afar off” (2 Pet. 1:9). Failing to keep eternity and heaven in view often leads to unfaithfulness. Man has a tendency to get wrapped up in the things of this life. When the Christian allows such to take place, the hope of heaven slowly, but surely, fades from his view and before too long he no longer feels the need to follow the Christ. Brother or sister, please do not lose sight of heaven.

Backsliding is a real and present danger. Those who drift away from God and fail to penitently return shall be forever lost. Consider the facts and fortify your soul. Heaven will surely be worth it all!

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Pride and the Preacher

Lynn Parker

The preaching of the gospel is of utmost importance seeing that “it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). God holds faithful preachers in high esteem as well.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom. 10:14-15).

Good, faithful brethren are great friends to preachers. In most congregations, brethren respect preachers for their work, sacrifice, and dedication. Brethren appreciate the preacher’s sermons. They thank him for his service. Preachers are admired for their knowledge of the Bible. If there is a family problem, often the preacher is invited to help resolve it. More than a few times folks have gone past sincere commendations to offering a preacher outrageous flattery. May we sound a note of caution here? Pride can damn a soul (Mark 7:22; Jam. 4:6). Pride can ruin an otherwise useful preacher.

God’s preacher does not seek a name for himself. When Paul worked among the beloved brethren at Thessalonica, he was not “seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others” (1 The. 2:6). Faithful proclaimers do not want people to remember their (the preachers’) names. They want hearers to remember the name of Jesus Christ for “in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved”

(Acts 4:12). It does not matter if your name is mentioned from every pulpit or in any religious journal. Whether or not you are invited to speak on a lecture-ship or preach in a gospel meeting is of no eternal consequence. If you are invited to speak on a lecture-ship, it is pride in full-bloom that complains because you did not get the evening slot which has the best attendance. There is no one among us that is indispensable. Even the best known among us put on their pants one leg at a time. Watch out for the preacher whose favorite subject is himself.

God’s preacher does not try to awe hearers with his speaking ability. Do the best you can with the ability you have (Col. 3:23). Surely! But remember that the power is in the message—not the messenger.

And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

A lot goes through the mind of a preacher in the few moments as he steps to the pulpit. The thought on the preacher’s mind should never be: “I’m gonna impress them with my preaching!” Rather, it should be: “I have a precious opportunity before me to present the truth that affects the destiny of souls.” It ought to be humble rather than *puff-up* the preacher. Paul was an educated man but he preached “Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23). Paul did not seek to impress people with

his own words of wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4). I cannot help but believe that if Paul was standing before us in the pulpit, you would never know whether he held a degree or not; but, you would know Jesus better as a result of his preaching.

God's preacher does not seek credit. He does not want credit for conversions, restoration of the erring, and *great* articles. Lesser characters are continually trumpeting their accomplishments and value to the brotherhood. Please, give it a rest! We are but vessels for use in the Master's kingdom (2 Tim. 2:20-21). We plant and water but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-7). If we do a good work, are we not doing that which was our duty to do all along (Luke 17:10). When a soul obeys the gospel and is added to the church, he does so because he obeys from the heart the doctrine of Christ (Rom. 6:17). Let God remember your good work in His name (Heb. 6:10). He sees and knows all about it. Telling it to the brotherhood will not move you an inch closer to heaven.

God's preacher does not confront those in error for purpose of displaying his debate prowess. If we effectively utilize the sword of the Spirit to the destruc-

tion of error, is the victory ours or because of God's powerful Word? Pride shouts, "Everyone—look at me! I've refuted old Joe Apostasy and cleaned his plow! I am a masterpiece of logic and wit." God's preachers do not run from the fight but they do not seek personal trophies either. Paul wrote:

And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

I love preachers. I enjoy their company. I have learned from preachers and still do. This is not a criticism of all or even many. It is simply a caution. It is a warning to all that while God can accomplish great things with a meek man, He accomplishes nothing through the man overtaken by pride. "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

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Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of six articles brother Newell has written on the subject of leadership and the qualities elders/leaders of the church need to possess. Brother Newell is not only a fine preacher of the gospel, but he is also an elder in the East Bristol congregation and thus is one who is well qualified in writing these articles. We would encourage you to carefully consider each one.

Qualities Of Leadership (No. 1)

Clifford Newell, Jr.

Will the real leaders please stand up? This may sound a bit bizarre, however, in too many churches this is a reality. It will be our purpose to set forth some fundamental principles of leadership and then note five specific qualities of the leadership God desires within His kingdom.

Is it possible that we have chocked and pushed aside the leadership of the church? Observe the following: Entering the building one of the first things one noticed was the minister's picture and name. Under it was the pictures and name of the staff and under that was the pictures of the members. Down the hall was another picture board with the names of the elders. The immediate thought was what an illustration of how the elders have been pushed aside to a scarcely visible position in the church! Friends, this is quite different from the New Testament plan and pattern of God's leaders.

The Sacred Scriptures speak to the fact: "This is a

true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1). Within the pages of Holy Writ there are three Greek terms that set forth six English terms relating to God's organization of His church. *Presbuteros* is translated as elder and presbyter. *Poimen* is translated as pastor or shepherd. *Episkopos* is translated as bishop or overseer. Note these six terms: bishops/overseer; elders/presbyter; pastors/shepherds, as they are grouped together. It greatly aids one studying the Bible to grasp what the function is as it relates to the elders. The function of this group of men is extremely important, especially as it relates to the guidance and growth of the church. There is no single factor more important in determining the growth of a congregation than the quality of the men who are chosen as its elders! By their knowledge of Jehovah's Word, their consecration, their vision, their mission, etc., they largely determine the future guidance and growth of the local congregation.

Thus, they are God's men, chosen, selected by the congregation which is "to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (1 The. 5:12), and "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.... Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:7, 17).

These men are to lead the congregation by being elders and presbyters which indicate spiritual age and judgment. In regards to bishops and overseers the work involves superintending and overseeing the local church, which they do by seeing over (overseeing) the local flock. With reference to pastors and shepherds

they feed or nourish by tending the flock. Therefore, the emphasis is upon these leaders as being in charge of pastoral care. Robert Taylor observed:

Palestinian shepherds loved their sheep, extended the fullest protection over them and gently led them to pastures of green, nourishing grass and to sparkling streams of refreshing water. Jehovah's shepherds over his local congregations must love deeply the flock committed to their care, must protect them from any and all error, must feed them with the bread of life and quench their spiritual thirst with the water of life (Robert Taylor, Jr., *The Elder And His Work*, Lambert Book House, 1978, p. 42).

Hence, one should be able to discern that God's leaders (as discussed in this lesson) have a solemn responsibility to the flock of God. In the lessons to come we will discuss the qualities that must prevail.

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Bible Class Material

It always seems to be difficult to find good Bible Class material. The Northside Lectureship in Calhoun, Georgia, recently had a lectureship on the theme: "The All-Sufficiency Of The Scriptures." Instead of producing a hardbound book, they produced a book specifically with the classroom setting in mind. There are thirteen chapters each with discussion topics and additional space for personal notes. If you would like to place an order, the books are \$2.00 each and you may order from Northside Church of Christ; 700 Jolly Rd; Calhoun, GA 30701. Or you may call: 706-625-8722.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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And the Lord Said unto Noah

Tim Smith

Noah was the tenth Patriarch from Adam through the line of Seth, son of the original couple. His grandfather was Methuselah, his father Lamech, and his three most famous sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Lamech was one hundred eighty-two years old when he begat Noah: “And he called his name Noah, saying, This *same* shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed” (Gen. 5:29). Whether Noah proved a personal comfort to Lamech or not we do not know for certain, but we do know that when the flood came Lamech was not on the ark, having expired some five years before. Noah, not at all unlike us, lived in a very wicked age wherein men had largely forgotten their Creator.

As God surveyed the world of Noah’s day He found precious little to comfort Him concerning the people He created in His own image. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). This lack of holiness and the prevalence of evil in the hearts of men moved God to action: “And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Gen. 6:6-7). This sad commentary on a generation of men so long ago was given that we might learn from their mistakes (cf., Rom. 15:4). My prayer is that we have learned, especially those of us in the Lord’s church, but the reality is that most in the world (and

even many in the Lord’s church, if not most) have not learned. The attitude of man today is highly reminiscent of the attitude of man then.

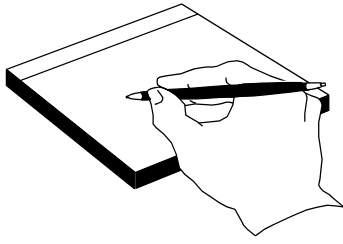
The Initial Communications from God to Noah

The initial communications from God to Noah are lost to us: having been given in that mysterious way in which God dealt with man before giving a written law. The fact remains, despite our ignorance of the particulars, that God did indeed communicate His will to Noah and others of his time. It is also true that all of them, Noah included, failed to satisfy sinlessly those requirements set forth in those communications. We know this because, in the case of the rest of the world, God pronounced them evil and set about to destroy them; and in the case of Noah, he received grace from the Lord: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). Though not sinless, we may safely infer that Noah was at least making an effort to live by God’s laws, and, upon failing, he repented and tried again. The sinless need no grace, and the evil at heart receive no grace so that leaves Noah somewhere in between. That is not at all unlike the man or woman today who is endeavoring to be a faithful Christian.

We have our initial communications from God to man—the New Testament. We know both that He gave it and what it is that He gave. How have we responded to it? Have we studied it? Have we believed it? Have we obeyed it? We have the added benefit of knowing what happens to the faithful and the unfaithful. Have we placed ourselves in the company of Noah or the world of his day?

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Letter Response

This article is a continuation of a response to several emails which I received about an article I wrote in November 2000 issue of *Defender* concerning the singing group “Acappella.” Since I do not have the time to respond to each one who wrote to me, I am taking this avenue to respond to all of them at one time. I would encourage you to make sure that you read last month’s editorial also since that was the beginning of my response. Instead of placing “sic” all through their quotes, I will simply state to begin with that all of them are exact quotes, mistakes and all.

One of the respondents simply informed me that we are Pharisaic and legalistic. One wrote, “May I warn you that your attitude and method of open rebuke is very much the same as that which Jesus rebuke the Pharisees for. I assume from your writings that you are versed in scripture, and realize that the Phaisees were legalists. Jesus and the Apostle Paul come down very hard on legalists. Where you say we need authority for all we do, I ask where is your authority for binding on others what the Lord has not bound.” These charges mean very little to me. *Pharisee* and *legalist* mean something different to each individual. Unless the person identifies what he means by these terms, no one knows what is being charged. However, it seems that to most people these terms are used for those who desire and teach an adherence to the Law of Christ. One of my common responses to such is that I would rather be a legalist than an illegalist.

The Pharisees did bind things which were not a part of the law. In Matthew 15, Jesus asked the Pharisees, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (3). Then He charged them by saying, “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (6). He then calls them

“hypocrites” which is saying one thing and doing something else. Jesus explained hypocrite to them by appealing to Isaiah, “well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me” (7-8). Then He added that they were “teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (9). This is harmonious with how He condemns them in Matthew 23 (see especially verses 4-5). However, Jesus never condemned anyone for strictly adhering to the Law of Moses. Actually He commanded an observance of the Law (since that is what they were amenable to then).

If those who responded to the article on Acappella wish to charge that I am binding something which God did not bind (which is what the Pharisees did), then let them prove that such action as making one’s voice sound like mechanical instruments of music is an authorized by God action. This they did not and cannot do.

A second aspect of this charge that I am being a Pharisee and legalist is simply intimidation. There is very little if any proving of such an accusation, nor explaining what the individual meant by the accusation, nor proving that such action (making one’s voice sound like an instrument of music is authorized by God). They simply try to intimidate others to keep quiet about the subject because they desire to do so and do not wish to be condemned for their action. Therefore, throw out an accusation to try to scare others into remaining quiet. While it might not have been the intention of Christ’s disciples to intimidate Jesus after His conversation with the Pharisees in Matthew 15:1-12 the result would have been exactly that when they stated to Jesus, “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” (Mat. 15:12). It was basically saying: the Pharisees were offended so you should not speak in this manner to them, simply remain quiet about their sin and hypocrisy. Jesus would not be intimidated and responded, “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:13-14). Neither shall we be intimidated by such false accusations as being a Pharisee or legalist.

One individual tried to justify the practice of making our voices sound like instruments of music by appealing to the area of spiritual gifts. He writes, “The Bible says we are given ‘spiritual gifts and talents’ can

you sir make drum noises with your mouth? Not everyone I know can and can do it good.. so you are trying to tell me it is not a talent given by God to help lead people to His way?! ...God has given me the talent to be a Vocal Percussionist and a singer and has called me to minister to the lost with it.” Another writes, “They are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ by living there lives as a good Christian example and using a gift God has given them to praise him and provided an uplifting, wholesome, alternative to secular music. So please, understand that I believe in your right to be narrow minded, but don’t try to push your legalistic attitude on others who may actually enjoy praising God.” First, it is important to recognize that “spiritual gifts” from a biblical standpoint refers to miraculous powers. Paul begins a discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and continues through chapter 14. Notice how he begins this section: “Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Cor. 12:1). He proceeds to list nine spiritual or miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in verses 8-10. In the fourteenth chapter Paul regulates the usage of these miraculous or spiritual gifts or powers. While I do not believe these individuals were intending to mean that God has given them the miraculous power to “be a Vocal Percussionist,” that is what they imply by their statements.

Second, I would point out that simply because we stress and call upon people to do only what God authorizes does not mean we do not enjoy “praising” God. The truth of the matter is that we do enjoy praising God, but we realize that one cannot truly praise God unless he does so according to the pattern God has established (i.e., the way God has authorized). If this is being “narrow minded,” then I certainly want to be “narrow minded.” Truth be said, I want to be as narrow minded as is God and I wish to be as broad minded as God. I do not want to turn to the right hand (adding to what God has authorized) nor to the left hand (taking away what God has authorized) but do exactly as God has authorized. Sadly, there is never any attempt to show that God has authorized this action (because there is no authority for the action).

These are arguing that since they have this ability, and they claim it is a God-given ability, they should be able to use that ability in worship to God. I doubt that any would want to argue this point for they know that simply because someone has an ability does not mean he can use that ability in worship to God. There is a simple rule that something which proves to much,

proves nothing. This is certainly the case with this argument. Consider two illustrations: the first being a cook. This cook argues that not everyone can cook, and that cooking is an ability which God gave him. Thus, he reasons that he should be able to cook to the glory of God and that God has called him to “minister to the lost with it.” Thus, he cooks steaks and potatoes and expects them to be served in the Lord’s Supper. Most realize that the Lord never authorized steak and potatoes to be a part of the memorial feast where we commune with our Lord. Our Lord told us what emblems to use in that memorial supper: unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Likewise, the Scriptures tell us what to do in our making of music: singing.

One other example will have to suffice. In the first century, a priest is converted to Christ (see Acts 6:7). This priest argues that God has given him the ability to offer animal sacrifices and that not everyone can offer sacrifices and do it very well. Since it is his God-given ability, he reasons that he should be able to offer animal sacrifices in worship to God as a Christian. Yet, all know that animal sacrifices were done away with when Christ died upon the cross for mankind. Given the argument these individuals are making, it would be wrong to tell this priest that he could not use his God-given ability in offering animal sacrifices in worship to God in the Christian dispensation.

Certainly God does give man certain abilities which man should use to the glory of God. However, he can only use those abilities as directed by God. God has directed that in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, that man is to sing and that singing is to be teaching and admonishing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Thus, while it would be acceptable to make one’s voice sound like mechanical instruments in the making of secular music, when it comes to religious music (psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs) he must be guided by the Word of God to do what God says: sing. Next time we will plan to begin looking at discovering biblical authority. *MH*

(Continued from page 1)

According to Genesis 6:9, Noah was a “just man.” That is to say, he respected the principle of justice and governed his life by it. Since he would, naturally, recognize and respect the right of the Creator to exercise dominion over His creation, Noah was obedient unto his Creator. The same verse indicates that he was

“blameless in his generation,” or that he lived in such a way as to make sure that there were no “blotches” against him. He is also therein said to have “walked with God,” that is by the things he did and did not do he indicated his holiness. Moses recorded for us two different times the following great truth about this righteous man: “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.... And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him” (Gen. 6:22; 7:5). He was not, as are so many today, selectively obedient (you know, doing what he wanted to do but leaving off that which was distasteful to him), but in all things he was obedient. First Peter 2:5 calls him “a preacher of righteousness.” He was a man whose message comported with his life. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that he did what he did “by faith,” which, as we learn from Romans 10:17, comes from hearing the Word of God. Noah was the kind of man he should have been—godly.

Make Thee an Ark

Because of his own moral goodness, Noah was chosen to become the savior of the human race. The condemnation of the world had been pondered, proposed, and was now ready to be performed. “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6:13-14). Herein Noah is given his most difficult task—the building of the ark. In the verses that follow the general duty to build an ark is supplied with very specific details concerning the dimensions of the ark. The general task was inseparably connected with the specific details—and so must it ever be. The floating of the boat is as connected with the building thereof in a seaworthy condition as was the keeping of the details by Noah connected with the pleasing of God in the general task.

Today we have many who would argue that God is not at all concerned with “what we do.” They would state that He rather cares only that we do “something religious” in a noble way (now, admittedly, they would not put it just that way, I am simplifying their arguments and saving you the time it would take to read thousands of pages from the pens of the likes of Shelly, Walling, or Lucado, etc.). The simple truth is this: God is concerned that we do the right thing in the right way at the right time and for the right reason. Noah had to build a boat—not just any boat, the ark; not to just any

dimensions, to the very dimensions given him by God; not for just any old person to board, but for the use of those selected by God; etc. The ark would not have floated to the saving of Noah and his seven human passengers had Noah been of the mind of many today concerning details!

Of Gopher Wood

Gopher wood—what is it? For all the “fussing” about the identity of it in scholarly fields, we can know for sure a few things—it was the kind God specified. Noah knew what kind it was, and the boat would not have floated to the salvation of its inhabitants had any other kind been used. Many today would argue that one wood was as good as any other wood, but, thankfully, Noah did not. Many today might well contend that a diversity of woods would make for a more attractive ark, but, thankfully, Noah did not. God said build a boat, and He said use Gopher wood to do so. What was to be done was specified, as well as that with which it was to be done.

Had God said merely that a wooden ark was to be used, then any kind of wood would have worked. He did not—He was very specific as to what kind of wood was called for. Noah respected that specificity and in that we would do well to imitate him. When God says that we are to do something, it is incumbent upon us to do it exactly as He instructs. For example, He has indicated that music (of some sort) is to be used in the assemblies of the saints (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; etc.). Has He been more specific than “music”? Yes—in fact, very much so. He has indicated that the *music* is to be singing. Further, He has indicated that all of the members of the congregation are to participate in the singing. He has indicated that the musical accompaniment is to be the heart (see Eph. 5:19 where it says, “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”). Have we the right to be more general than Him? Can we say, “Well, so long as we have some kind of music, that is enough”? Think about it: God tells us what to do and how and by whom and (in this case) where the instrumental accompaniment is to be found (the heart). We have no right to leave off any part of His specificity. We have no right to add to His specificity. The only way to find anything more than “singing” as an authorized part of the worship of the saints is for a man to first remove the specificity God imposed in the passages and then substitute their own particulars in place of His. Noah did not do so in the building of the ark and neither should we in the planning of the worship of the church.

And this Is the Fashion Which Thou Shalt Make it Of

“The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits” (Gen. 6:15). We do not know with any certainty exactly how long a cubit would have been at that time, but the general rule is eighteen inches. That would be quite a large boat! Notice that Noah did not complain about how long or wide or high it would be, he did not try to dissuade God from such an order because it would be hard, nor did he try to argue that a smaller boat would better suit his needs or anything of the kind. Noah received his instructions and set about obeying the voice of the Lord.

In verse 16 of the same chapter God said, “A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above.” How many windows were there to be? As many as Noah wished, just so long as there was at least one? No. There was to be but one window in the ark. Many today might contend that one was not enough—they would be wrong in that contention. Many today might wish for a more *airy* dwelling and argue that, absent central heating and cooling, more windows would be needed. Many make such arguments when it comes to other aspects of the work God has given the church to do. Noah did not. He built the boat with one window, just as God ordered. The work of the church, as God has given it, is saving souls. This is done in three areas: (1) preaching to the lost of the world (Mat. 28:19), (2) edifying the saved (Acts 20:32), and (3) helping the needy (Jam. 1:27). If we were like Noah in his approach to the building of the ark, we would be satisfied with that work. Sadly, many are not. Now we are told that the church needs to do almost everything in the world but those three things! We have ball teams and social leagues and civic endeavors—very little preaching of the Word, plenty of most everything else. We have no more right to add entertainment to the work of the church than Noah would have in adding a second window.

There is another important detail (they all are, but we are only considering a few of them) also in verse 16: “And the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof.” How many doors were there to be? At least one? Is that what God said? Many today might argue that as there are many diverse backgrounds in the world, so we need many doors into the ark. That is their basic argument concerning **The Door of Entry** into the Lord’s church. It is contended that we need to be more interested in telling the story of Jesus and less inter-

ested in telling people how to get into Jesus. How can one tell the story of Jesus and not tell how to get into Him? At best, such an effort would be woefully incomplete. When the Eunuch heard the inspired man of God preach in Acts 8, he heard him “preach Jesus.” It is interesting to me that when they came to a certain water the Eunuch said, “See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Where do you suppose the Eunuch heard anything about baptism? Remember, the inspired preacher began at Isaiah 53 and “preached unto him Jesus.” Could it be that preaching Jesus involves preaching baptism? It could, indeed. Further, one cannot fully preach the “story of Jesus” unless he also indicates how to get into Christ (cf., Gal. 3:26-27)!

There is but **One Door to Heaven**, and that door is Jesus (John 10:7). To preach the *door* is therefore to preach Jesus. To preach Jesus is to preach, among other things, baptism. No man will ever successfully enter into heaven who does not do so by Jesus (John 14:1-6). To enter by Jesus is to enter as Jesus instructed. His Word will be the standard of judgment in the last day (John 12:48). His Word instructs that the means of access to the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16), the death (Rom. 6:3-4), the entering into the body (Gal. 3:26-27), and to being saved (1 Pet. 3:21) is baptism. We will no more succeed in getting people into heaven by some other door than would Noah have succeeded in getting people into the ark by some door other than **The Door** he was instructed to place in the ark by God.

But with Thee Will I Establish My Covenant

God herein invites Noah into an agreement. The plan is simple: Here is what you are to do, Noah, and here is what I will do. You built the boat as I have given order, and I will destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth—save those who participate in this, My covenant. What was Noah’s response? “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22). This indicated that Noah had accepted his covenant and agreed to its terms. Noah was a participant in the agreement. God did not force him to agree, He merely set before him the terms and the consequences of rejection and Noah, like the wise and holy man he was, accepted them. “And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation” (Gen. 7:1). Noah set about the task of rounding up the required livestock and “There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to

pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (Gen. 7:9-10).

Have you ever wondered about those eight humans as they set about to honor their end of the agreement? Think of the ridicule to which he would have been subjected as, day after day, he preached about a coming flood (especially since it had never rained before) and worked on what must have seemed a monstrosity of a seaworthy vessel. Think of the years—somewhere near one hundred—of toil and labor. What must the neighbors have thought? Perhaps they said, “Look at old Noah, building a boat. He says he and his little bunch are the only ones going to survive.... They think they are the only ones right.... I wouldn’t be caught dead on that boat.... I don’t believe for a minute that God will kill everyone not in that boat...” Further, think about life on the boat after six days—still no rain. Would you have wavered a bit? Noah does not seem to have wavered. Think of the neighbors as day one ended and then day two and then day three and four and five and six—ah, but then! A drop of rain. Another. Still another. Those who heard his preaching and rejected it all those years, how must they have felt when the flood rose from dry ground to a foot of water? Then two feet? Then waist deep? Now it is at their shoulders! Now they are floating! Are they beating on the wall of the ark trying to gain entrance? Are they sorry for their sins? Do they wish another chance? Wish though they doubtless did, it was too late for them. The time to ready oneself for the judgment of God is not after the judgment has begun, but now—even right now.

It Will Not Be Water, but Fire, this Time

The world will never again be destroyed by a flood of rain, for:

God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen. 9:8-11).

In order to allow Noah (and posterity) to see that He would not destroy the world by a flood again, God set a mark in the sky as a reminder:

And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and

the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth (Gen. 9:12-17).

That the world will not be destroyed with water again does not mean that it shall not suffer destruction—in fact, the destruction that is coming is far greater than a mere worldwide flood. Of that day Peter wrote:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:3-13).

Some Practical Applications

As He made good His promise to destroy man through the flood of Noah’s day, so God will make

good His promise to end this world and sweep everyone away through the Judgment and into another world. The question is not “Will He?” It is not even “When

will He?” The question is, “Are you ready?” May God bless you as you study and obey His Word.

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Understanding the Book of Revelation

Tracy Dugger

Many believe the book of Revelation to be a record of events yet to come. They see in this book prophecies of Russia and China, events unfolding in the Middle East, the workings of a “New World Order,” World War III, and many other fanciful theories. But all of these notions miss the purpose of the inspired man who wrote—John.

“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” (Rev. 1:1). We are not left in the dark, for in the very first verse of the book, John tells us that the things in which Jesus gave him to reveal “must **shortly** come to pass.” This simply means that the main events of this book would occur in the **near future**. This is why he continues in verse three by stating, “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.” John says very plainly that the time of carrying out these things is at hand (near). Not only in the first chapter did he mention the nearness of these events, but also in the last chapter: “And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done” (Rev. 22:6). How can anyone be so presumptuous as to contend that the events of Revelation have yet to be fulfilled, when almost 2,000 years ago John explained that they would come to pass **shortly**? Still, if these events are yet to be fulfilled, then what meaning or encouragement did the book have for the original audience, the saints who were suffering persecution (Rev. 1:7)? None!

Do not be taken in by the fanciful theories of man. Look to God’s Word to see the explanation.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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