

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Defending the Moral Standard Given by God

Paul Vaughn

It is the goal of an immoral minority to radically and politically change the foundation of the home. This minority is pushing a lifestyle that seeks the overhaul of common decency to make a nation composed of sexually immoral people who are nothing but creatures of sex. The issues that once were spoken of in obscure places of darkness are now brazenly advanced in the news media without shame.

A moral war is advancing in our country, leaving souls spellbound in violation of God's standard for the home. Homosexual advocates attempt to make immorality look normal. They seek to change the makeup of the family to a perverted lifestyle celebrating depravity and desensitizing people to the homosexual agenda.

How Homosexuals Seek to Overhaul America

Homosexual advocates have a planned agenda to destroy the moral values in America. In 1987, homosexual activists, Marshall K. Kirk and Erastes Pill wrote an article titled "The Overhauling of Straight America." Erastes Pill is a pseudonym used by Hunter Madsen. Kirk and Madsen also wrote a

book in 1989, titled *After the Ball*. Both works show how homosexual activist execute their scheme to change the moral thinking of America.

Throughout their works, Kirk and Madsen used six principles or points to misguide readers' thinking about homosexuality. In this article, we will look at three of their points. They are as follows:

The first point is, "Talk about Homosexuals and gayness as loudly and as often as possible." They are seeking to erode the moral thinking of Americans with this strategy. The rationale behind this point is to wear down the moral thinking of a community to get them to accept every sort of outrageous behavior. In their articles published in the *Hickman County Times* (December 16, 2019, and January 13, 2020), are trying to fulfill point number one. They are seeking to "muddy the waters" to portray faithful Christians as obsolete and uneducated.

The second point, "Portray homosexuals as victims, not as aggressive challengers." Here, the goal is to win public sentiment by making homosexuals look mistreated

by Christians. This supports the homosexual agenda by depicting Christians as the only ones being "aggressive challengers." It is not in Christianity to physically harm anyone because they are not living according to Christian morality! It is not in Christianity to distinguish between error but to speak the truth of God's Word against all sin. Therefore, it is the supporters of the homosexual platform that are mounting a challenge against Christianity. Christian love demands addressing the issues plainly and clearly without wavering, but we must use Christian integrity in the process. Jesus taught His followers are required to live by a higher standard. "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Mat. 7:12).

The third point is, "Make homosexuals look good." This point is advanced in different directions. They use postmodernism to rewrite history, seeking to convince society that many famous people who are dead and cannot defend themselves were homosexual. This argument can only be advanced by walking over the truth. It does not make

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Arguments for Miracles

Introduction

There are several arguments made by the “faith healer” of today. One wrote, “The explanation of the expectation of miracles in Pentecostalism is to be found in the rock-like belief that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and for ever (Heb. 13:8), that those who believe are accompanied by the signs of faith (Mark 16:17-18), that Jesus Christ has come to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18), and that he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains (Isa. 53:4). Other fundamentalists *preach* the miracles of the Bible, but Pentecostals experience them. “Take away the supernatural from Christianity, and Christianity ceases to exist” (368). We want to examine these along with others and then refute these arguments.

Healing Is in the Atonement

Invariably Pentecostals will argue that healing is in the atonement. Walter J. Hollenweger writes, “The Yugoslav Kristova Pentekostna Crkva proclaims: ‘Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement at Golgotha, and is the privilege of all believers’” (359). We

find this same statement in declaration of faith of the Assemblies of God in the United States with the addition of the main passages they believe support this doctrine (Isa.

53:4-5; Mat. 8:16-17). Isaiah writes: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Matthew records Jesus physically healing people and says it is a fulfillment of Isaiah.

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

No one can successfully deny that there is an element of the physical healing in Isaiah’s statement. However, to overlook the obvious deeper spiritual meaning in Isaiah is to wrest the Scriptures. The whole thrust of Isaiah’s message is salvation from sins and how our Savior suffered for our iniquities to heal us. Thus, the healing is primarily spiritual and not physical. Sin is like a disease which needs healing (Isa. 1:5-6). Jesus is the great Physician who heals us of our sins. “And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).

Jesus used this figure elsewhere.

For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have

closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Mat. 13:15).

Jesus could heal them if they would be converted. Is this physical healing or spiritual healing? Mark answers for us. “That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them” (Mark 4:12). The healing that takes place is the forgiveness of sins; it is spiritual healing. The same is true in Isaiah’s statement. Isaiah—the atonement—does not offer physical healing of the body, but spiritual healing of the soul.

God Does Not Change

The Scriptures teach that God does not change. “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). Pentecostals will teach that since God does not change, He must still be performing miracles.

Simply because God does not change, does God always do the same things He has previously done? Obviously not! God directly made Adam out of the dust of the earth. God does not do that anymore. Yet, if this argument is true, then God is still doing so. We want

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

to know who, living today, did not have parents but was made directly by God from the dust of the earth. God made the woman from the rib of Adam. God is not doing that today. God does not and never did repeat the miracle of the virgin conception and birth of Jesus. If God's not changing means that He always does the same thing in the same way, then He **must** be doing these things today. Yet, He is not. Instead of dealing with God's actions, Malachi was dealing with God's nature. His nature does not change. God will always be holy, righteous, loving, etc.

God Is Able

As was mentioned previously, when individuals deny the occurrence of miracles today, Pentecostals will charge that they are denying God's ability. They will mention passages such as Genesis 18:14, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." They will affirm that God is just as powerful today as He ever was.

Simply because we deny that God works miracles today does not mean that we deny His power to do so. He is still all-powerful. However, simply because God is able, does not mean that God does everything He is able to do. John the Baptist reminded the Jews of his day, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Mat. 3:9). God was (and still is) able to raise up children to Abraham from rocks; however, He did not do it. God is/was able to bring the world to an end at

any time including yesterday. However, while God has the power to do so, He did not! We will agree that God has the power to work miracles today but deny that He does so.

We would mention that Pentecostals are the ones denying the power of God. They believe that the only way God can work is through miracles. We affirm that God is not limited to working through miracles; He can and does work through providence. He has done this through all dispensations of time. For some examples: consider Joseph (Gen. 50:17-20), Esther, and Onesimus (Phm. 15-16).

Christ Is the Same

This is basically the same argument as God does not change. They will argue that Jesus worked miracles, He is the same; therefore, He still works miracles today. They will specifically mention Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." However, as was said concerning God's immutability, this deals with Christ's moral and spiritual nature. This does not teach that Jesus will continue to do what He did during His personal ministry.

Miracles Are Promised in the Great Commission

We are often chastised when we quote Mark's account of the great commission and do not continue with the promise of miraculous powers. Jesus said:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any

deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:15-18).

We do need to add Mark's last observation:

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen (Mark 16:19-20).

This, on the surface, seems to be a powerful argument for the continuation of miraculous powers. Jesus says that these miracles will follow "them that believe" (16:17).

Many of our brethren when faced with this difficulty will try to change the antecedent of *believe* in verse seventeen to the apostles in verse fourteen. They will trace how that the apostles did not believe the testimony of Mary Magdalene (16:9-11) of Jesus' resurrection. Next, Jesus appears to two, but again the rest of the apostles did not believe (16:12-13). Jesus then appears to the eleven and rebukes them for their unbelief and hardness of heart "because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (16:14).

There are some problems with this interpretation. There is no reason to change the grammatical laws in making a change of antecedents. Also, and more importantly, verses nine through fourteen is a narrative given by John Mark. When we come to verse fifteen, we no longer have a narrative, we now have a direct statement made by Jesus to His apostles. In verse seventeen, when He says, "them that believe," if He were speaking about the apostles He would have said *you* instead of *them*. Then in verse nineteen, Mark

returns to his narrative. Others in explaining this see this problem and explain that it is representative. As long as some work these miracles, which was accomplished during the first century, then it has been fulfilled and we do not need to expect them today (For a fuller discussion of this point and that this refers to all believers see: James D. Bales and Frank Van Dyke. *Miracles or Mirages?* Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing. 1956. pp. 233-257).

However, allow me the opportunity of presenting another view of this passage. I believe the key to the passage is *follow* in verse seventeen and *following* in verse twenty. They both come from the same root word *akoloutheo* which means “to follow.” However, there is a great deal of difference in the words because of the prefixes. In verse seventeen, we have the prefix *para* meaning “beside or next to.” In verse twenty, we have the prefix *epi* meaning “upon.” Thus, in verse seventeen we have the miracles following beside of or being laid beside of those who believe. This in no way indicates who is performing the miracles. Verse twenty is a discussion of the apostles and we are now told that they are the ones who had the miracles laid upon them. They were confirming the Word with the miracles laid upon them.

The miracles have been laid beside all believers of all time (16:17). Because of the miracles giving confirmation to the Word (16:20), we have faith in Jesus as the Christ and God’s plan to save sinful mankind. John wrote:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the

Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

As we read God’s Word (which is how faith comes—Rom. 10:17), we read of the miracles the apostles worked and those signs follow our faith. “The miracles written in the Bible confirm our faith although we were not there to witness them and although we do not see them repeated and cannot repeat them. There were recorded that we might believe in Christ and believing have eternal life (John 20:30)” (Bales 143).

Apostles Are Not the Only Ones Who Performed Miracles in the New Testament

This statement is true. Notice some in the New Testament who were not apostles who did work miracles. The Bible records that Stephen worked miracles. “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). Philip went to Samaria and worked miracles. “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did” (Acts 8:6). It is obvious from 1 Corinthians that they also worked miracles, as did the Galatian brethren. However, this does not prove what the Pentecostals want it to prove. The only way they could work miracles is through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Since there are no apostles to lay hands on people today, no one can work miracles today.

Paul Worked Miracles and Instructed Others to Do As He Had Done

This argument is taken from Paul’s statement to the Philippian

brethren. “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phi. 4:9). This does not mean that they were to work miracles because Paul worked miracles. He is teaching them to “adopt and practice the principles of Christianity which Paul had taught them” (Nichols 142). It is parallel to what he told the Corinthians. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

To do all that Paul had done, they would have to strike those who opposed their teaching blind for a season as Paul did (Acts 13:9-11). Yet, they will not attempt to do this. They would also have to raise the dead because Paul did (Acts 20:7-12). Yet, they will not try this. Therefore, by their own actions they will not attempt to do what their argument demands of them, showing it is fallacious.

Conclusion

While the fake healers of today try and convince us the Bible teaches there are still miracles taking place, all their arguments fail. Their greatest failure, however, is the ability to perform true, Bible miracles. With the completed New Testament, all miracles ceased; therefore, there are no miracles today.

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Continued from Page 1

any difference if famous people in history were homosexuals. It is still a sin in God's eyes. Likewise, the advocates of the homosexual agenda also seek to take Scripture and twist it to advance their ideas and make their lifestyle acceptable to all. The Aydelotts are doing precisely this in their two articles by claiming it is Christians who are twisting the Scriptures. The cultural shift that they are trying to make will destroy the home.

The Scriptures are inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and can answer for themselves. What does the Bible teach us about homosexuality?

Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carnally*" (Gen. 19:4-5).

Homosexuals try to make this an issue of rape, but that is not the case. It is men doing that which is not natural and condemned by God. Note the preponderance of evidence from the Scriptures.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination (Lev. 18:22).

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them (20:13). For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is

shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27).

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:8-10).

Friend, God gave mankind a Book that can be understood. It is when men try to muddy the waters by twisting His Word that makes it difficult to understand. These verses are evidence of the truth that God condemns homosexuality!

The Centurion's Servant

In the article, "Scripture Still Being Misused," Mr. and Mrs. Aydelott make a statement that blasphemes the Lord Jesus. They are implying in their teaching that Jesus healed someone to be a sex slave. They said, "If you remember the servant of the Roman Centurion that Jesus healed, perhaps you didn't know that the servant was basically a sex slave because soldiers were not permitted to marry

until after they performed their service as soldiers" (January 13, 2020). Please note what the passage says:

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour (Mat. 8:5-13).

According to Scriptures, the age of the servant is not given. He could have been a boy or an older man. Second, there is no evidence in the passage to support the conclusion that Aydelotts taught. Third, they impugned the character of the Centurion, but Jesus stated that he had "great faith." Finally, they could not prove the Centurion was not married. Luke describes a Centurion who was "a devout *man* and one who feared God with all

his household” (Acts 10:2). This Centurion was a very moral and religious man who had a family a “household.” The Aydelotts accused many of taking the Scriptures out of context, yet that is what they are doing.

Are Homosexuals Born That Way?

It is interesting that a few who defend the homosexual agenda claim that homosexuals are born in that condition and cannot change their lifestyle. Those who hold to this teaching are advancing error. The Bible condemns homosexuality!

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27).

That would make God a respecter of persons for condemning people to Hell who are unable to change. God is not a respecter of

persons (Acts 10:34). Many have left their homosexual lifestyle to follow Jesus. Paul teaches this in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Therefore, if they can change, they are not born as homosexuals. In some persons, childhood molestation affected their homosexual activity.

In research with 942 nonclinical adult participants, gay men and lesbian women reported a significantly higher rate of childhood molestation than did heterosexual men and women. Forty-six percent of the homosexual men in contrast to 7% of the heterosexual men reported homosexual molestation. Twenty-two percent of lesbian women in contrast to 1% of heterosexual women reported homosexual molestation (Tomeo and Templer).

Conclusion

A typical pattern of false teachers is to redefine terms to muddy the waters of truth. Mr. And Mrs. Aydelott said, “People routinely confuse homosexuality with homoeroticism. In other words, homoeroticism is about sex, not a way of life.” What is the meaning of homo-

eroticism? Webster’s defines it as “specifically: marked by, revealing, or portraying homosexual desire.” Therefore, homoeroticism leads to homosexuality! Truth defeats their arguments.

In defending the moral standard given by God, all Christians must show kindness, longsuffering, and Christian love. The Bible defines homosexuality as a sin. Faithful Christians never physically harm anyone in their defense of truth. Moreover, Christians must pray for all in sin that they may come to God and follow His standard of morality!

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Hopkinsville, KY

Buying Up the Opportunity

Guy N. Woods

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, **Redeeming the time**, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, **redeeming the time**” (Col. 4:5).

In each of these passages *redeeming the time* have a marginal reading in the Revised Version as follows: “Gr. buying up the opportunity.” The compound verb used in both of these passages is

from *exagorazo* and means “to go into the market (agora) and buy-out of it (ex) what one needs.” Paul uses it in Galatians 3:13 and also 4:5, of the redemptive work of Christ in going into the slave market of sin and purchasing our redemption. The verb, in these passages (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), is in the middle voice, and thus pictures one as going into the open market and buying for one’s self the chance or opportunity of do-

ing something for the Lord. The word for time in these passages is *kairos* (opportunity), and not *chronos* (time in general). It is the present opportunity, the “now time” (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 6:2), when great and far-reaching decisions are made. The Spanish have *manana* (tomorrow), the use of which has become proverbial for shiftless drifting and indecision. There is a vast difference between time and opportunity. Time is

long, but the opportunity is fleeting. It must be grasped while it is present.

We are admonished to walk *circumspectly*—i.e., **looking around on all sides!** The faithful disciple is to keep his eyes open and ever exercise patient watchfulness, that no opportunity for good may ever elude him. In the market place, the best bargains are for those who come first and who are willing to pay the price.

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The Hebrew writer wrote of “help in time of need”—**well-timed help!** (Heb. 4:16). Procrastination is, indeed, “a thief of time,” and “present decision determines future destiny.”

The best jobs, the rarest bargains, the choicest opportunities come to those who redeem the time. There is an excellent little treatise, by Arnold Bennett, titled, *How to Live on Twenty-Four Hours per Day*, that will be read with pleasure and profit by those who are sincerely desirous of “buying up the opportunity.” Five of the virgins were foolish because of neglect—not positive disobedience. The judgment parables, without exception, reveal to us that condemnation was meted out for failure to utilize the present opportunity. Time should be redeemed because (1) it is the most choice and precious thing in the world; (2) when once passed, it never returns; (3) it must one day be accounted for; (4) because we have already frittered away so large a portion of the time allotted us, and we have so much to do in the time remaining.

We are instructed to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” Those *without* are, of course, those who are not children of God. Our conduct is, therefore, to be of such nature that those who are outside the pale of God’s mercy may be persuaded to come into the fold. This is all the more urgent because “the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). An old preacher had written in the margin of his Bible at this place these words:

(a) Evil times leave many opportunities unimproved. So many excuse themselves from service

then. (b) Evil times bring many opportunities of their own that we otherwise would not have. (c) Do not dream what you might do at some other time but do what you can now.

The Expositor’s Bible observes: We owe them that are without such a walk as may tend to bring them in. Our life is to a large extent their Bible. They know a great deal more about Christianity, as they see it in us, than as it is revealed in Christ, or recorded in Scripture; and if, as seen in us, it does not strike them as attractive, small wonder if they still prefer to remain where they are.

Conversation offers a special opportunity for the exercise of that wisdom that “redeems the time.” “Let your speech *be* always with grace,” the apostle urges, “seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). Talk, like food, must be seasoned with salt to make it palatable and wholesome. The opposite of salt-seasoned speech is “rotten speech” (*logos sapros*—Eph. 4:29): “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Salt is a preservative; moreover, it gives flavor and keeps food from being insipid. Our speech is to be thus seasoned that we may know how to answer every man who may inquire of us concerning Christianity. As Lightfoot observes, we should be “opportune as to time and appropriate as to person” in all matters of the Christian life. It is only thus that we may “walk in wisdom,” and buy up the opportunity concerning those around us.

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“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Harding University: What College Students Are Being Taught (1)

Gary W. Summers

The purpose of this article is to analyze what was taught in only one class at Harding University on October 30, 2020. All of the information comes from an audiotape, which presumably is available to anyone who wants a copy. I personally transcribed the 47-minute tape. Occasionally, I summarized a point, for brevity's sake. Most of the time I am presenting an exact quote. If I omitted or added a word, I apologize in advance, but great care was taken for accuracy's sake. If anyone is misquoted, it will be a minor error and not alter the point being made.

Often preachers are asked what Christian College to recommend. After reading this article, it should be clear why the list of schools we feel safe with is infinitesimal. Would I send my child to Freed-Hardeman? No, and several articles have been written regarding the nudity policy they have for their art classes. The president assured everyone that the faculty, staff, and administration were all in agreement, and, so far as I know, no one there is willing to discuss the matter (see February 23, 2020, “My

Mormon Foreman and a College President” at cocwp.org).

Now comes along a Bible course at Harding, in which the teacher, Allen, has been discussing the Sermon on the Mount. This class has within it young **women** and young **men**, which makes one wonder why the wife of the teacher was asked to teach the class this particular Friday. “Well, this is a college course. It's not like a worship assembly.” Since when was 1 Timothy 2:8-15 restricted to an assembly? The context is *everywhere*. Men are to lead in prayer—not just in the assembly, but everywhere (2:8). That includes an assembly of Christians, but it also includes a Bible class or a campfire. Nothing is changed when Paul begins talking about leadership in the form of teaching.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into the transgression (2:11-14).

On December 8, 2019, I wrote an article titled, “Quit Blaming Bible Study and Prayer.” The Downtown Church in Searcy, Arkansas (where Harding University is located) reported in the school newspaper (*The Bison*) that they were moving in a new direction regarding women's roles. That certainly happened in this college class. There was a time when brethren would have known that it was a shame for a woman to teach the men—but apparently not any more. A time once was when the young men would have walked out of this classroom for conscience's sake.

Doesn't anyone read the Scriptures anymore? Or do young people just not care? Not at Harding. Rachel Holloway spent about 35 minutes “teaching” the men as well as the women. About 2/3 of the way through, she said she was half historian and half theologian. Really? The theologian half did not bother to justify her teaching men—contrary to 1 Timothy 2:8-15. The historian half did not, either. She and her husband, al-

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Joshua's Admonition

After the death of Moses, Joshua, per God's instructions, took over leadership of the Israelite nation. As we begin with the book of Joshua, we see God's charge to Joshua in Joshua 1:2-9. It is not my intent with this limited space to discuss all of this charge. However, I would like to direct your attention to verses 7-8:

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

We can learn a great deal by considering this admonition.

There is the admonition for Joshua to be strong and of good courage so he would not depart from God's Word. Being strong and of good courage is a continual admonition in God's charge (1:6, 7, 9). Just as God realized the need for Joshua to be strong and of good

courage, He also realizes our need for such. Paul told the Corinthian brethren: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Paul, in encouraging the Ephesian brethren to fight against Satan and the forces of evil, begins by saying, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). To effectively fight in this battle, the Christian must "put on the whole armour of God" (6:11). As Paul goes on to describe the armor we are to wear, one cannot help but notice that every item has reference to the Word of God: truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, word of God. Thus, for Christians to be strong to fight against Satan, we must "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Thus, our need is to grow in the knowledge of God so we can be strong. If we do not know God's Word, we cannot be strong. This is why we are admonished to "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). As God writes to the Hebrew brethren who were leaving Christianity to return to Judaism, rebukes them for not having studied and developed into strong Christians.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 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. 5:12-14).

If they had been studying and developing properly, they would have had their senses exercised so they would not have been apostatizing from Christ but would have been strong and of good courage to endure till the end. Sadly, many are not studying, walking, watching, and working as they should, and, thus, they are growing weaker instead of stronger today.

Allow me to mention some causes of why we are not growing strong in the Lord today (by no means all of the causes). First, they are digesting the wrong type of spiritual food. Jesus instructed all men to, "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). The reason we must take heed what we hear is that we are to "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat. 7:15). John puts it this way: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Since only truth will save (John 8:32), we need to feed our minds on God's Word and not the false doctrines of man. We need to be desiring God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2) so we can overcome temptation: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). Far too many today are sitting at the feet of false teachers. Also, far too many preachers are studying under liberal teachers, reading denominational books, and getting their sermons from those instead of the good food of God’s Word. We need to return to feeding upon God’s Word and not man’s.

Second, far too many are being distracted by the world. In the parable of the sower, the third soil Jesus mentions is the soil that is thorny. Jesus explains that this is the person who hears the Word of God but the world chokes it out. “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). We have so many distractions in our day that it becomes difficult to maintain our spirituality. We run here to there and always on the road doing something that we no longer have time for God. Then, the world tries to make us conform to what they do. With young people, we call it *peer pressure*, but it is just as present with adults as it is the youth. Paul warns us: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We must resist and always follow Christ and allow Him to live in us. Paul wrote, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). When we allow the world to put us into its mold, then our spiritual appetite dwindles.

Then there is the disrespect for God’s Word that is plaguing the world, the denominations, and

many within the church. When God’s Word is disrespected, we cannot grow. God’s Word, by its nature of being from God, is authoritative. It is that Word that will be the standard of judgment on the last day (John 12:48-50). Thus, God has given us within that Word all things we need to get us to heaven. Peter states, “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). The Scriptures answer all the great questions of life (where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going) along with teaching us how to live to obtain heaven’s home. Thus, we must do everything we do by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17) as revealed in the New Testament. It is that Word of His grace “which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). However, when there is a disrespect for that Word, we cannot “grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18) and as a result, we grow weaker instead of being able to be strong in the Lord.

Fourth, there is a growing disregard for worship. God seeks people to be true worshippers:

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).

There should be an excitement in coming together to worship the Creator and Sustainer of life. David stated, “I was glad when they said

unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psa. 122:1). To many, worship, instead of being a joy and delight, has become drudgery and weariness. Normally this is because they no longer come to worship God; they come to be entertained by others. The denominational world has long centered its *worship* around entertaining the masses and the ones with the best entertainment get the most attendance. This entertainment craze has made its way into the Lord’s church, so members become accustomed to being entertained instead of actually worshipping God. These are the type of *Christians* who asks what the church can do for them instead of what work can they be involved in. These brethren, unless they change their attitudes, will never be strong but will continue to grow weaker through the years.

Last, there is a dislike and disdain for the work of the church. The Lord’s work involves saving souls. It is spiritual in nature. Jesus said, “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). We should be about our Father’s business (Luke 2:49) and center our minds and affections on spiritual matters. 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). In setting our affections in the proper place, we will then put the Lord and the church as the priority of our lives: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God,

and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). The church is to be about this business of saving souls but so many today have turned inward to pleasing and pleasuring self instead of teaching the soul-saving message to a lost and dying in sin world. Many congregations have turned to recreation and entertainment instead of preaching

the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). As a result of this meeting the felt-needs of people instead of spiritual needs, brethren grow weak and useless in the cause of Christ. The church collectively and the individual members of the church must return to the design for the church if we are to be strong.

Until we return (as a people) to God’s Word and properly applying

that Word in each congregation and with each member today, we will continue to see the departure from what God intended. We will grow weaker and never be able to stand against Satan and his workers. Let us return to being strong and very courageous and observe to do according to all the Law of Christ.

MH

Continued from Page 1

though teaching the Sermon on the Mount, have both lost sight of the very first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 5:3).

Humility is a must to enter the kingdom of God. No one can be characterized as humble who rejects blatantly what the Word of God teaches about the roles of men and women. If they had not already died, the founders of today’s *Christian* colleges would probably have heart attacks when they discovered what was going on in their schools. No wonder many are reluctant to begin a School of Preaching or a Christian college these days. No one knows whether their efforts will be succeeded by wise men or fools, but they will rule over all their labors (Ecc. 2:19). Are no alumni protesting about what is happening at Harding?

Preliminaries

One thing is certain, dear reader: You have never heard a class like this one concerning the Sermon on the Mount. And may you never hear another one like it! This is not your parents’ Bible class. She introduced herself by saying, “The Sermon on the Mount, for me, was

where I met Jesus for the second time in my life.” She confides that she was an “elder’s kid” and 26 at the time this occurred in 2004. What does she mean by saying she **met Jesus** at that time? She did not explain except to say: “In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus slowly taught me a much bigger gospel than I had ever heard in church before.” It turned her upside down. Since she attended Bible classes since birth, in what way was she woefully lacking the truths taught in that sermon? What suddenly changed her life? Had she never heard sermons on the marvelous truths recorded in it? How would that be possible?

And in what way was the Gospel “bigger” than she had ever heard before? Although the Sermon on the Mount is part of the **Gospel**, the word itself is not used in Matthew 5-7. Nor did she mention the Gospel again, let alone explain what she meant by the statement. Was there something wrong with the church she attended—presumably the one in which her father was an elder? Why did it take until she was 26 to sink in? It might be that she did not begin until then thinking in the way she now does.

She certainly has her own vocabulary, as will soon be evident.

Rules

Both the husband and wife agree with the material she presented. At the outset and the conclusion, not to mention in between, both disparage rules and rule-keeping. Rachel says in the opening moments, “We shouldn’t look at the Sermon on the Mount as a set of rules.” Should we be prone to do so, we would misunderstand Jesus, who is an “ethics ninja.” Certainly, the Sermon on the Mount is not merely a set of rules; has anyone ever claimed that it is? In it, Jesus teaches principles to live by—principles of His kingdom.

But it would not be inappropriate to refer to Jesus’ teachings as *rules*. Two definitions of *rule*, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, are: 2b. “A principle of conduct observed by the members of a group”; 4. “An established standard or habit of behavior.” In fact, Paul exhorts brethren: “Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Phi. 3:16).

The word translated *rule* is from the Greek word, *kanon*. It refers to

a measuring rod. Metaphorically speaking, it can refer to “any rule or standard.” The Bible contains rules, standards, principles by which we are to live. So why put down the concept? Were the Ten Commandments God’s rules under the Old Covenant? And were His people expected to keep them? Christians belong to a New Covenant. Does that mean we have no rules in the Gospel system? Paul affirmed that we did in Philippians 3:16.

The woman teaching the men at Harding said of Matthew 5:27-32: “In this section, Jesus doesn’t actually tell us what to do.” Really? The reader can judge for himself from just the first two verses:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery;” But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Does Jesus give a command here? Does He use an imperative in the form of, “Thou shalt not”? No. However, He points out that to lust after another is to have committed adultery in the heart. Does that sound like behavior He approves of? Then, in essence, He is saying, “Don’t do it.” That is the **rule** we should live by.

Nevertheless, Rachel claims: “This whole Sermon on the Mount is not about rules. If it’s just a set of rules, the Sermon on the Mount is too hard.” This is followed shortly by this statement: “...it is literally too hard if it’s just a set of rules...” Excuse me? Since Matthew 5:28 is a rule or principle or standard Christians must live by, how is it too hard? And if it is too hard, then what is the remedy? Actually, one is presented, which will be dealt with

later. This section closes out with the affirmation that Jesus is not giving a list of rules for individuals here, which is interesting, if not correct.

In some closing remarks, the husband Allen, whose class this was, offered these words: “Jesus is giving us a better standard, a higher standard. It doesn’t have to be, like, a list of rules.” And yet there are rules throughout the Sermon on the Mount. No, they are not simply cold, informal injunctions to be carried out by automata programmed to follow orders. To be sure, Jesus has given us a better covenant (Heb. 8:6-7). The first covenant forbade the act of adultery, the new one takes aim—not in what finally occurs—but at the root of the problem, which is the heart. While Jesus’ explanation may be better and higher, we are still discussing a standard (or rule) of behavior.

Rachel decided to add one more comment before the class ended after her husband had summed up her session: “...the rules don’t work. Or they don’t work very long. They don’t help me desire something different.” Hmph! The list of rules given in the Ten Commandments worked for the new generation when they conquered the land under Joshua’s leadership. God fought for Israel because they kept His rules. When they went back into idolatry, it was not that the rules had become incomprehensible or more difficult to keep. What happened was that the hearts of the people turned away from God.

Motivations

What we are discussing here is motivation. We will all abide by the

rules—if we are motivated to do so. If we are not, we will disobey when we feel like it. Consider the First Covenant. How did God seek to motivate His people? He gave them His holy laws; they should have obeyed Him for several reasons: (1) The fact that He created them and possesses all power is reason enough; (2) The fact that He gave the commandments for their good (Deu. 10:12-13)—for their own benefit—is also a good reason; (3) The fact that He punishes disobedience is also a worthwhile consideration. In case His people missed it, Moses repeated the Covenant of Blessing and Cursing (Deu. 28). Are these motivations not sufficient?

What about today? Jesus is our Creator and Redeemer; He possesses all power (Mat. 28:18). He is the mediator of a better covenant. He goes after our hearts, it is true, but the motivations are still the same. If we obey Him, we live happier, more blessed lives (5:3-10; John 10:10). In other words, His teachings are for our good. If we disobey or draw back, we are on our way to perdition (Heb. 10:39).

Jesus Himself tells us in the Sermon on the Mount that we have but one of two places to dwell after this world ends—either in destruction or in life. Elsewhere in this Gospel account of Jesus’ life, Matthew records our Lord’s teachings concerning those choices: everlasting punishment versus everlasting life (Mat. 25:46). He also describes hell as a place of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (25:41). The choice is clear, and the motivations are in evidence. Christians should lovingly obey Jesus in all things.

Winter Park, FL

“The Fulness of God’s Love”

Don Tarbet

Introduction

The New Testament word for *fullness* is used many times in Scripture. The Greek word for “full” or “fulness” is *pleroma*, and refers to Jesus being full of grace and truth (John 1:14); the fulness of the Gentiles enjoying the Gospel (Rom. 11:12), etc. Paul speaks of the “fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Earlier in Ephesians 3:19, he wrote of “the love of Christ,” that we might be “filled with all the fulness of God.” Knowing the love of Christ enables us to enjoy the “fulness of God.” One of the qualities of God is His **love**. Every aspect of God’s love is known by Christians. If we have the fulness of God, we will have the fulness of His love.

The word and number *ten* is often symbolic of fulness or completeness of something. With this in mind, we would like to point out ten aspects of God’s love, with each one beginning with the letter “E.”

Expense

The cost was high. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom price (Mat. 20:28); to shed His blood for remission of sins (26:28). God did not send an angel or pay a material price of redemption, but with something more precious even than gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18-19). God’s love for the sinful world was so great that it was necessary for Deity to take on the form of human flesh and die that the redeemed could live. He gave His only begotten Son that we might not perish but have eternal life (John

3:16). Few would give a son even for a righteous person, but God gave His Son when we were enemies. This is the way He commended His love for mankind (Rom. 5:7-8).

Expansive

God loved the world, which motivated the sending of Jesus to pay the high price (John 3:16). In this, “the love of God is shed abroad” (Rom. 5:5). God’s love has been expanded throughout the world when the Gospel is proclaimed. By AD 63, the Gospel had been proclaimed throughout the world (Col. 1:23). The apostles were to go into all the world and preach to every nation (Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:19-20). We used to sing a song titled “The Kingdom is Spreading,” as the Gospel went to the heathen nations to make the dark shadows fly. We need to keep expanding the Gospel of the kingdom, no matter the culture or the color of skin.

Exclusive

It is politically and socially unacceptable to even suggest something that sounds like we are to be exclusive of anyone. However, the love of God’s blessings is exclusive. His love is for all but benefits only those who respond to it in obedience (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). It is for those who “believeth in Him” (John 3:16). The wicked and disobedient who do not respond to God’s love are excluded from the promise and hope of eternal life. Those in false religions are excluded (Mat. 15:9). Those who reject Christ and His Word are

excluded (7:21-23; John 12:48). Those who fall away from the faith and cease to abide in Christ will be excluded (Heb. 3:12; Gal. 5:4; John 15:6; 2 John 9). Those who believe in the person of Jesus but deny His doctrines will be excluded (Mat. 7:24; Luke 6:46; 2 John 9). Those in idolatrous religions or terrorist religions will be excluded. Only those who obey Christ will be eternally blessed (Heb. 5:8-9).

Encroachment

God’s love does not seek to compromise with false religions or enemies of the cross, but it encroaches or *intrudes* into any sinful society of lost people. God’s love encroached into the wicked life of Saul of Tarsus and brought him to repentance. His love encroaches the lives of the atheists and evolutionists. It encroaches the lives of members of the body of Christ who prefer to follow the world instead of the Scripture. It encroaches the lives of those who love sin rather than God (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Tim. 3:4). It encroaches the lives of those who love money or relatives more than God (1 Tim. 6:9-10). It encroaches those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and those who had rather follow the religion of their ancestors rather than the religion of Christ (John 12:42-43; Acts 26:5, 9).

Excellence

God’s love is perfect—without flaw. It is without respect of persons in its offering of salvation to man. God loved all in the world equally. He sent His Son to die for

the decent and the wicked (Rom. 5:5-10). God's love is excellent or perfect, for He is love (1 John 4:8). He is the author of love, and He showed it by the sending of His Son to die for all. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (4:10). We learn to love because God showed us the way. Christ died for all men (Heb. 2:9). We sing about the "Perfect Love" of God for man.

Expectation

God desires that none perish, but that all men come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who come to know the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Out of His love, he has promised eternal life (Tit. 1:2). He expects some to obey, but He knows most will not obey. Only a few will be saved as they travel with Christ on the narrow road to heaven (Mat. 6:13-14; John 14:6). He did not conclude that all men are so wicked that there is no need in offering His love. In Noah's day, only a few were saved. Though God was grieved at the general wickedness of the day, He still wanted some to live, and they did. It is the same today.

Effectual

God's love is effective. Many are touched with the love of God and will obey the truth. It cannot be obeyed where it is not known. God's love is not a system of force, but a trait or quality of character that motivates a response, and He tells us how we can respond. We must be obedient to His instructions. We cannot claim salvation just because God loves us, but we must respond in faith, repentance, and baptism into

Christ (Rom. 6:3-5). In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul said, "the love of Christ constraineth us." It holds us together. Love from God, for God, and love for the brethren is a binding tie of fellowship in His love.

Enduring

It will always be there—it is everlasting or eternal. He is faithful in His promises and love and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 10:13). His love will never leave us, and we will be blessed as long as we abide in that love. Paul said that "love abideth" (13:7). God is love, and if we dwell in Him, we dwell in that love that always endures (1 John 4:12-16).

Expressive

God has expressed His love in various ways. He does so in giving His Son (John 3:16). He does so in the giving of the Holy Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation. He does so in the many blessings that He provides for us daily (Mat. 5:45; 6:11; Jam. 1:17). All the spiritual blessings in Christ are because of God's love (Eph. 1:3). Even His love as revealed in the Scripture is an expression of His love.

Enriches

God's love enables us to enjoy true riches—the kind that endures even into eternity. Paul said he preached "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8). The Scripture speaks of the riches of glory (Rom. 9:23), the riches of grace (Eph. 1:7), the riches of Christ (3:8), the riches of wisdom (Col. 3:16), and our being rich in good works (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul wrote, "God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

The treasures of earth are not mine. I hold not its silver or gold; But a treasure far greater is mine, I have riches of value untold.

The treasures of earth must all fail, Its riches and honor decay, But the riches of love that are mine, Even death cannot take them away.

Compared with the riches of love, The wealth of the world is but dross, I will seek but Christ Jesus to win. And for Him I count all things but loss.

Come, take of the riches of Christ, Exhaustless and free is the store, Of its wonderful fulness receive, Till you hunger and thirst nevermore.

Oh the depth of the riches of love, The riches of love in Christ Jesus! Far better than gold or wealth untold, Are the riches of love in Christ Jesus (H. B. Hartzler, "Riches of Love." *Sacred Selections for the Church*, 447).

Conclusion

Liberal thinkers have tried to identify the New Testament as a "love story" instead of a book of rules, regulations, and commands to be obeyed. True, the Scripture is a love story to man in that it describes the fulness of God's love for man, but it is also a book of instructions for man to keep to benefit by this love. James calls the "royal law" that which calls for love. After quoting various commands from God, Paul then stated, "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Those of us who believe in adhering to the law of the Lord to be made free from sin (8:1-3) are mocked and called *legalists*. Jesus said that if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). Will you not keep them?

Denison, TX

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Clothed, and in His Right Mind

Lee Moses

Having passed through a life-threatening storm on the Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee), Jesus Christ was met by another frightful sight on land: “And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs” (Luke 8:27). This demoniac was forced to endure a terrible state of depravity and misery. Thankfully, Jesus was to end this man’s wretchedness. He cast the demons out of the man, the demons entered a herd of swine that fled into the lake, and the herd promptly expired in a clamor of spluttering *oinks*.

When the people of the area came to see what had happened, they saw a pronounced change in the demon-possessed man. “Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid” (8:35). This man had previously been in a state of utter depravity. He had been possessed by the forces of wickedness. He had been in a state of insanity. But now he was “clothed, and in his right mind.”

Likewise, today, one in his right mind will be sufficiently clothed when in public.

Clothed in the Right Mind of God

When God created the first man and woman, “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). However, it should be noted that this was a man alone with his wife. Also, this depicts the world before sin ever entered it. A great number of things changed once sin entered, including man’s responsibility to clothe himself: “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” (3:7). Before sin had entered, Adam and Eve were so innocent that they had not even realized they were naked. Once they **realized**, they saw the need of covering that nakedness.

Even after they had clothed themselves with the fig leaf aprons, Adam told the Lord, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself” (3:10). Even though Adam had put on some clothing, he still considered himself “naked.” The “aprons” they had made provided limited coverage, not even down to the knees (Koehler

and Baumgartner), and Adam felt ashamed of such insufficient clothing. More importantly, God did not consider Adam and Eve sufficiently dressed. After rebuking and sentencing Adam, Eve, and the serpent for bringing sin into the world, God took action to make things right regarding both sin and skin: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (3:21). These coats were **long** garments (Holladay), probably at least down to the calves, if not to the ankles.

That God did not consider Adam and Eve properly clothed until they had been covered past the knees ought to give someone pause before going out in public in something less.

Clothed in the Right Mind of New Testament Teaching

The New Testament teaches that wearing modest clothing is essential: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Tim 2:9-10). Certainly, the question of

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Sin

During the period of the judges, we find a recurring cycle: the prosperity of the Israelites leading them to apostatize forgetting God causing God to send an oppressing nation upon them, after being oppressed a certain time, they cry unto God who then sends a judge or a deliverer to deliver them from their oppression leading to another period of prosperity. In Judges 6, we see the start of this cycle with the sin of the Israelites. The first verse informs us: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." I would like to note a couple of points in this verse.

The first is the realization that sin is a choice. *Did evil in the sight of the LORD*, is found seven times in Judges (2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). Their doing evil was by their choice. God did not force them to do evil. God instructed them to drive out the enemy and not to intermarry with them. However, they choose to cease driving out the enemy and to intermarry with them. Their choices led them to compromise, it led to confusion upon the land, and then it led to catastrophe upon the people. This all because of the choices they made; the choices to go into wickedness, evil, and idolatry.

Likewise, we become sinners by choice, not by birth or by inheritance. Sin is something we decide to do. God created man with free moral agency: the ability to choose to do right or wrong. God desires that we choose to do right and to always follow His directions. He acts benevolently towards man even to the giving of His only begotten Son to motivate us to serve Him. John would write, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Because of God's love for Israel in giving them the land and providing for them, it led Joshua to challenge the people to serve God (Jos. 24:15).

Another lesson we learn from this verse is that God will hold us accountable for our actions. Israel chose not to drive out the enemy and to intermarry with them leading them to forsake God. The consequence is that God delivered them into the hand of Midian.

This is the eternal principle of sowing and reaping. 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).

We are what we are by the choices we make in life. Those choices bring about consequences (good and bad). This is true in both the physical realm and the spiritual realm. In the physical realm, certain sins lead to various illnesses and often to death. At times, others will also suffer the consequences of someone else's actions. (Someone drinks alcohol, gets in the car, and kills someone by his driving under

the influence, for example.) There are numerous negative consequences today as a result of evil actions.

However, far greater than any physical consequences are the spiritual consequences of evil, sinful actions. Sin causes us to be separated from God (Isa. 59:2) causing spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). The result of that spiritual death is to be separated from all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). They are outside of Christ and stand condemned by God (Rom. 8:1). That condemnation is eternal separation from Him in a devil's hell.

However, because God made us free moral agents, we have the ability to choose. Just as we chose to sin, we can choose to obey God. Israel of old could stop doing evil and do what God commanded and be blessed by Him. Likewise, we today have the power to choose to stop doing evil and do right. We must determine to do everything God authorizes in the New Testament (Col. 3:17). We must not add to, take away from, or substitute for what God has authorized (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19; etc.). What a wonderful opportunity God has graciously given to us to change our life to accord with what He authorizes and receive His blessings.

MH

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Continued from Page 1

whether clothing is modest or immodest does not only concern whether it adequately covers. However, no apparel is more immodest than that which is intended to draw attention and lustful desire to certain parts of one's body. Unfortunately, much of today's clothing is designed for this very intent.

To be adorned with *shamefacedness* (2:9) is to be adorned with "a sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect" (Thayer). To dress scantily does not accomplish this. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" (Jer. 6:15). Many have lost their ability to discern that there is something wrong and shameful in the way they dress.

To be adorned with *sobriety* is to be adorned with "soundness of mind, self-control, sobriety" (Thayer). Some women who are confronted about their lack of discretion in clothing will respond, "It's not **my** fault if men can't control themselves." According to the teachings of this passage, the woman who dresses indiscreetly is also demonstrating an inability to control herself. Also, parents who send their daughters out of the house dressed provocatively fail to exercise control Divinely delegated to them (1 Sam. 3:13; Pro. 29:15; Eph. 6:4).

Some suggest that modest dress is relative, or that one cannot say with certainty, "This is modest, and that is immodest." Admittedly, one should consider the circumstances when determining what is modest. There might be certain situations where an

elegant gown, though not revealing, would be immodest. Likewise, one's wearing of only undergarments within the privacy of his home would not constitute immodesty. But to continue to wear only undergarments in the presence of company, or to retrieve the morning newspaper so scantily clad, would be blatantly immodest. Time, place, and culture might have certain bearings on what determines modest dress or behavior. Nevertheless, none of these variables can ever change the rule set forth in 1 Timothy 2:9. To argue that one "cannot know" the difference between modest and immodest apparel is to accuse the apostle Paul, and ultimately God, of commanding an impossibility.

According to how God defines nakedness and what the New Testament teaches about modest apparel, there are certain clothes commonly worn today that leave the wearer naked. Bathing suits are one obvious example. There is nothing sinful about either bathing or swimming, but what one **wears** to swim, **where** one swims, and **with whom** one swims are indeed matters of modesty. Being at a public beach or swimming pool does not automatically grant one license to dress in what would otherwise be described as undergarments. Consider when the disciples, having taken a fishing trip, saw the resurrected Jesus on the shore: "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea" (John 21:7). Just as with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:10), *naked* here also likely means "insufficiently clothed." Peter saw a need to wear something more, even though it would make

the swim to shore more difficult. It was not because of the cold water into which he plunged—a coat would not have provided any additional warmth when both he and it were submerged in the water. When Peter was "just fishin' with the boys," away from public view, light clothing providing little coverage might have been acceptable. However, when he went to see his Lord on the shore, he knew more would be needed. Even the fact that he was swimming would not have excused him from wearing something immodest.

Also, short-shorts and miniskirts constitute immodesty. Truly, they constitute nakedness. As God gave instructions to Moses for the design of the priestly garments, He commanded, "And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach" (Exo. 28:42). So, for their *nakedness* to be covered, the priests' breeches "were to reach above the navel near the heart, and to the end of the thigh, which is the knee" (Gill). So, clothes that fail to cover this area leave their wearers naked—a case of the emperor's new clothes accomplished by short-shorts and miniskirts.

Other clothes leave their wearers naked, including cheer-leading and drill-team uniforms, skimpy sports uniforms, tank tops or *muscle shirts*, low-cut tops, tops that rise above the belt, and spaghetti-strapped, shoulderless, and backless tops and gowns. Some people insist that they see no problems with such garments. But provocative displays of flesh in scanty clothing can be more sexually seductive than no clothing at all. Jesus warned:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That

whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell (Mat. 5:27-29).

Do we want the way we dress to cause someone to lose his soul? Hopefully not, because it will cost us our souls as well.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (18:6-7).

Clothed in the Right Mind of the World

For the Christian to base his actions upon what the world thinks is often a bad idea. Many times, people of the world will intentionally cloud their minds against better judgment:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

This "**vanity** of their mind" speaks to the uselessness of their minds. This is not because they are **incapable** of using their minds, but because they **choose** not to use their minds. We do not want to appeal to those who have rendered their minds useless when deciding what or what not to wear. But even though the

world often clouds its mind when choosing what to wear, most people are very aware of what constitutes enough clothing, and of what immodest attire signifies.

Consider the following sign posted in a jail outside the room where visitors enter to have contact with inmates:

Attention Visitors—No person admitted unless properly dressed.

1. Shorts must be knee length.
2. No tank tops.
3. No short dresses.
4. No sun dresses.
5. No shirts with obscene language or pictures.
6. No see-through clothing.

Should a Christian be any less concerned with modesty than a jail?

Former swimsuit model Kim Alexis regrets the lack of clothing she became famous for wearing when she was younger: "There are pictures I look back on today and think, 'Oh, why did I let them talk me into that?' I made some choices I'm not proud of." She warns other women not to do what she did:

Dressing modestly tells the world, "I respect myself and I insist on being treated with respect"... Many women are playing with fire in the way they dress. Dressing like a floozy tells the world, "Look at me, want me, lust after me. I'm easy and you can have me." Displaying intimate parts of the body is a form of advertising for sex—so if you dress to attract sexual attention, you can hardly blame anyone else if that kind of attention comes your way.... It's possible to be stylish and attractive without wearing something that is too short, low-cut, or see-through.

Many young Christians would be well-served to forgo future regret in favor of present modesty.

One fashion designer exclaimed, "A dress is successful when it awak-

ens in the man who looks at the woman the wish to take it off, to undress her." Ladies professing to be Christians then purchase and wear such clothing, claiming ignorance of any possible wrongdoing. But the clothing is admittedly **designed** by its worldly manufacturers to provoke lust.

A newspaper in Trivandrum, India, spoke of the problems taking place on their beaches, and they spoke of the source of the problems:

Where Scanty Clothing Poses Problems Aplenty

The advice is given (due to recent indecent activities at a beach resort) to dress properly. Nothing of this kind (referring to attempted rape of American and English girls) would happen again if the tourists followed the dress instructions from the tourism department. All that the department would like is to see them covered with an appropriate apparel.

Any man who attempts rape is wicked and vile, regardless of how his victim is clad. However, this does not mean that an immodestly-dressed rape victim is altogether innocent herself.

Even the world views those who dress scantily in an unfavorable light. "And, behold, there met him a woman *With* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart" (Pro. 7:10). There is a particular "attire of a harlot" or prostitute, and the world knows what that is. Sometimes a young Christian may say, "Everybody else dresses immodestly—no one else will think a thing about it if I dress immodestly." But they will.

Clothed in Your Own Right Mind

Christians are to use their minds in a Christian way:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which* is your rea-

sonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:23-24).

Too often, and particularly when it comes to the subject of appropriate clothing, children of God think in a worldly way: “What is stylish?” “What will attract the guys (or gals)?” “God never expressly condemns showing cleavage, does He?” But their consciences tell them better. Their common sense tells them better. They **know** better, but they shut off all spiritual light to their brains. They would rather dance along the edge of the chasm than walk in the light of God’s Word.

When several friends tried kindly to warn one supposedly Christian woman about her immodest attire, she responded, “You’re just jealous, because you don’t have what I’ve got.” The inspired wisdom of Solomon warns, “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, *So is a fair woman which is without discretion*” (Pro. 11:22).

Conclusion

One who is insufficiently clothed in public is simply not in his right mind, just as the demoniac was not in his right mind prior to receiving correction from Christ. Too many people are allowing the *demons* of this world to determine what they should wear. However, Christians should use the good minds with which God has blessed them to choose that which is decent. We should realize that even the world holds negative connotations of immodest dress. Christians should look to the New Testament, which re-

veals the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:9-13) and provides “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Let us always consider what God would think before we speak, act—or dress.

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Union City, TN

Harding University: What College Students Are Being Taught (2)

Gary W. Summers

This series of articles concerns some of the ideas being taught at a Christian university. When hearing about a “purity culture,” one might imagine something along the lines of positive peer pressure and that it would be a good thing. But alas! such is not the case. Rachel Holloway introduced the subject when speaking to her husband’s college class at Harding University on October 30, 2020. The students consisted of both adult women and men (see the article in February’s issue of *Defender*). She introduced the “purity culture” concept in connection with their mission work in Africa:

I’m in Mozambique, but having to walk through, um, uh, the seasons and situations with a friend, um, where the, “Just don’t have sex until you’re married,” uh, message from an awkward and sometimes harmful purity culture that this friend got in her home church, um, that did not help her at all. It was insufficient, and, “Just don’t have sex till you’re married,” from within that purity culture; it did not deliver—it does not deliver the resources, the ethical resources and transformation that is needed for my friend, and I think for us—um, uh—the transformation and resources that are needed to handle extremely complicated situations that we find ourselves in, in 2020.

The “Just don’t have sex until you’re married” message is apparently harmful. A “purity culture” seems to be insufficient. Extremely complicated situations? How long has lust been complicated? Does the person breathe who does not know the way lust works? Even in the Ten Commandments, the last one states: “You shall not covet.” As it is used in Exodus 20:17, the idea is for a person to not desire that which is not his. What kind of things are on the list that people should not covet? The first one is a neighbor’s house. The second one is his wife. God knew full well a man would covet another’s wife and a woman would covet another’s hus-

band. He forbids not only the actual act of adultery—but the desire expressed in the coveting. Was God trying to form a “purity culture” in Israel?

Perhaps Bible students should remind themselves of the kind of holiness that God demanded of His chosen people, as expressed in Leviticus 18-19. Consider Leviticus 18:24, after God has prohibited several unauthorized sexual liaisons: “Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.” How can we conclude otherwise than that God was forming a “purity culture” within Israelite towns?

Was He serious about not committing adultery (Exo. 20:14)? Leviticus 20:10 tells us that “he who commits adultery with another man’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.”

So why is the wife of a Harding professor denigrating the purity culture that God seems to desire among His people? Yes, this is the Old Testament, but adultery remains a sin (Heb. 13:4), and Christians are warned: “Flee fornication!” (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Why is God’s Word “insufficient”? All of us ought to agree that Christians need to be “transformed by the renewing” of their minds rather than to be conformed to the world (Rom. 12:1-2), but what is wrong with communicating to young people that they should “wait until marriage” to seek sexual fulfillment? Why does that not help at all? In case anyone missed it, Rachel got onto this topic again:

I think there’s a lot of churches who thought that the only conversation they needed to have was, “Don’t have sex outside of marriage.” And usually that was in a purity culture context

that often did harm, and that conversation is stunted.

Rachel takes time to berate churches for not doing more to educate teens on the subject. Is it the church’s job to teach more on the topic, or does it fall under the sphere of parents to do so? The church can do certain things, such as examine the history of fornication and adultery, notice how it was frequently part of idolatrous religious celebrations, and consider the consequences of disobeying God. But some questions and answers are best dealt with by parents, not in a Bible class.

This writer once found 25 reasons that the Bible gives for not committing adultery. Obviously, this effort far transcended the “Just don’t do it” message. Would presenting all of this information to young people satisfy those seriously contemplating the sin? If not, what would? Consider the next quote:

And so, I think that churches need to wrestle really hard, um, to develop a robust sexual ethics for training our communities in faithfulness. And that cannot be just a list of rules or a shame-based purity culture. It needs to come from a vision of covenant faithfulness, um, that we get from a kingdom that is the Kingdom of Heaven that we are trying to make real on earth.

So, now we are not just dealing with a “purity culture,” but “a shame-based purity culture” with “a list of rules.” It is too bad Moses did not know better than to give “a list of rules” to Israel. So, are churches evil if they attach shame to bad behavior? What are we supposed to do—say congratulations? “Oh, you’re moving in together to live in fornication. Far be it from us to try to burst your bubble or make you feel ashamed. We won’t even quote you a list of rules that present God’s view on what

you’re doing. Just enjoy your new home.”

What is the Alternative?

So, if church members should not read off a list of rules or try to shame anyone, and if a purity culture is insufficient and even harmful, what is the alternative? That is an excellent question, but the answer is a bit vague. There seem to be two answers: The Holy Spirit and Christian community. After saying that the Sermon on the Mount “is literally too hard if it’s just a set of rules” (although no explanation exists for this assertion), Rachel adds: “We need empowered discipleship, I mean, inhabited by the Holy Spirit in community with other people inhabited by the Holy Spirit.” Okay, but what does that mean? Another comment follows later:

We are inhabited by and empowered by God’s Spirit, and what that means is, as we are together discerning an ethic of sexuality with the Holy Spirit, we are not alone. There is no burden to figure this out by yourself. Um. This is meant to be communal discernment of kingdom ethics, um, so that we can love God with our whole lives, and the, we, yes, includes the, me. I wanna love God with that kind of faithfulness, with my whole life, including what I do with my body, including what I think about other people, including learning not to objectify others, um, or the act in my fantasies. Um. I want to love God back in the context of a community that is learning to love God and imitate that whole consuming love, um, that includes loving God and loving our neighbors.

What do all of these words mean? How does the Holy Spirit empower us? Many brethren believe in the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but what is the empowerment that is supposed to be taking place? Also, everything seems to be tied to the Christian community or kingdom. Why is

it never referred to as the church? In another sentence, she adds: “I need God’s help, I need God’s power, I need God living inside me with the Holy Spirit to be that enduringly faithful.”

The implications of this sentence are interesting. God is living inside her with the Holy Spirit. Well, we certainly do not want to exclude Jesus from being in there, do we? Paul said that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). It only seems fair and equitable to have the whole Godhead living in us. The implication is that if the Holy Spirit was not living inside her, she could not be faithful to her husband. (You know how boring and insufficient rules are.)

But wait. Was not the Holy Spirit living within David? When David prayed his psalm of repentance, he requested of God: “And do not take your Holy Spirit from me” (Psa. 51:11). Nevertheless, he sinned with Bathsheba, even though he was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). None of these advantages kept David from sinning. Are we to infer that, today, the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit keeps the Christian from sinning? Then whose fault is it when we sin? If we sin anyway, how does the Holy Spirit help?

But there is more: “And so churches need to be training gyms. Um. I really think a gym is the best metaphor. If the Holy Spirit is our personal trainer and we’re doing this together. Churches need to be training gyms.” Most of us have never thought of the Holy Spirit as our personal gym instructor. Are not these university students lucky to get this information? But there is still more:

What kind of practices do you need to have in your communities, um, your small groups? I want my community to help me be ready for complicated,

complex desire, um, and so, um, there’s a vision, there’s a big picture and I think it’s also, uh, an invitation to be really practical with your small groups.

Here small groups are mentioned in connection with community. Apparently, the Holy Spirit (living within) and this sense of community (small groups) are supposed to help the Christian overcome the sexual temptations that come their way. Rachel assures her audience that they will face them.

I promise you that you will experience out of bounds desire. Um. And so, I think—nobody told me that, in that really direct way. When I was a teenager, when I was in my 20s, um, that I think was part of being an embodied human with the biology and the chemistry that God gave us in these bodies, and these bodies are good. Um. You will experience out of bounds desire. I hope for you that you also experience desire that is, uh, fulfilled. I want that for you. Um. So, I’m not talking about that won’t happen. So, I’m saying, even if you are having a lifetime of, uh, physical desire that is fulfilled in faithfulness, you will still also experience out of bounds desire. This has been true 100% across the board with all the conversations we’ve had with our peers in the last 15 years. And so, we need to be talking about that. We need to plan for it—just practically—we need to plan for it. What kind of practices do I need to have in my life individually? What kind of practices do you need to have in your communities, um, your small groups? Your churches need to plan for your actual, practical responses when those out of bounds desires happen in your life. Um. We need to be honest so we can be practical because they will happen. Um. Uh. We think about it now. What do we do with desire? How do we shape desire in the community?

Rachel’s husband may throw light on the emphasis regarding commu-

nity. In summarizing her presentation, he commented in part that to defeat lust: “It’s definitely gonna mean life in community and having people that you can be accountable to and pray with, to have you escape the gravitational pull of lust and instead get caught up in the orbit of God’s kingdom.” Is this a form of Crossroads-ism—where a Christian confesses to others his sins—his inmost, personal sins? And then the group prays for each other. How are they accountable to them?

And is this a wise practice? Guy N. Woods correctly wrote in Volume 1 of *Questions and Answers* as part of his comments on James 5:16:

Sins known only to God should be confessed only to God; sins known to one or a few, should be confessed only to the one or the few, as the case may be; public sin, sin known to all, should be confessed publicly and before the church. It is a practical rule, clearly grounded in the premises above that the confession should be as public as the sin—but not more so (212).

Amen! We do not know precisely what kind of practices are being conducted at Harding University, but we are fairly certain they will not stop lust. Professor Holloway mentioned that two of the six families that went to Mozambique were now disintegrated for reasons of lust. We might assume that these were spiritually-minded dedicated Christians who were going to a foreign country to spread the Gospel.

But the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh prevailed. It might also be mentioned that pride and selfishness are also involved and that one’s emotions play a role as well. No magic formula or community to whom one must give account will stop lust from occurring. Only God and the human will can defeat it.

Winter Park, FL

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Harding University: What College Students Are Being Taught (3)

Gary W. Summers

As we conclude consideration of this lecture given to students at Harding on October 30 by the wife of a professor, we want to notice the main thesis. Before giving her explanation of the Sermon on the Mount, let us begin with Allen Holloway's summary at the conclusion. He said that Rachel's lecture summarizes pretty well what Jesus probably would say to us if He was giving the Sermon on the Mount today. "So, you have heard it said, regarding sex, Fulfill all the obligations of mutual consent," but I say to you, "What does it mean to imitate the deep faithfulness of God?"

Does it make anyone else nervous to hear someone conclude, "Jesus would probably say this to us today"? First of all, it is an opinion as to what Jesus would say or do today and, second, it is not a very accurate opinion. Rachel decides that "in 2020, He would have used different examples. The ones He used in the New Testament made sense to a first-century audience, but today He would use examples that would make sense in 2020."

One wonders if she and her hus-

band make any effort at all to study the Bible in its context. She cites two examples from Matthew 5:21-32, where Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old" (5:21, 27). A third reference in verse 31 simply states, "it has been said." All three of these refer to God's law from the Old Testament. Where did, "You shall not murder," come from (5:21)? It is the sixth commandment God gave to Israel (Exo. 20:13). Where did, "You shall not commit adultery," come from (Mat. 5:27)? It was God's eighth commandment (Exo. 20:14). Where did, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce," come from (Mat. 5:31)? It was part of the law—Deuteronomy 24:1.

What Jesus would probably say to us today is precisely what He said then. He was contrasting what the Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments, taught with what He was about to teach. Implied in what He said is that His authority is greater than that of the Law of Moses, which is exactly the conclusion people drew when He finished: "And so it was, when Jesus

had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mat. 7:28-29).

This authority of Jesus and the contrast between Him and the Law was never mentioned in this lecture. It was correctly noted that Jesus highlights the internal part of man where problems of anger and lust begin. However, Rachel tried to paint a contrast between the culture of Jesus' day with ours, thus ignoring the fact that Jesus quoted directly from the Law. She explains:

Um, I think the status quo ethic that "you have heard it said" part, um, is different today. So, I think that if Jesus was here preaching to us, the whole Sermon on the Mount, as an invitation that creates desire, um, I think He would use different examples—um, all throughout chapter 5—not just in the sexuality part. Um.

So, "You've heard it said, but I say." I think if Jesus was preaching to us today the cultural status quo, "You have heard it said," I think today Jesus would say, "Get thorough and explicit consent."

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Paul's Admonition

In what most believe is Paul's first letter, he gave a wonderful admonition to the Thessalonian congregation and thus to us as well. While it is primarily directed to the congregation, it also deals with the elders' work relating to the congregation. He writes:

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves (1 The. 5:12-13).

First, Paul sets forth three admonitions relating to elders: (1) they labor among the members, (2) they are over the congregation, and (3) they admonish the congregation. Let us briefly consider each of these responsibilities.

Elders labor among the members. *Labor* is from a word (*kopiaio*) meaning "to grow weary by working" or "exhausted" and implies hard work. When one considers the responsibilities of elders in overseeing the flock, he can understand why Paul would speak of it as hard work. Sadly, many members of the Lord's church and many elders consider the eldership more like a board of directors who simply set policy and supervise the

work, but then they expect everyone else to do the actual work. Elders, if they want the congregation to follow them, must be out front doing the work of the church, which implies they actually know what the work of the church is, which many do not seem to know.

Elders' work also includes watching for the souls under their care. The Hebrews' writer states, "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. 13:17). There is both a physical work and a mental work that is involved in watching for the souls of the congregation. It takes time and effort (hard work) in both aspects (physical and mental) in watching for the souls of the members and knowing that you are responsible for their eternal destiny. What greater weight on one's shoulders could one possibly have?

Second, elders are over the congregation. *Over* is from a Greek word (*proistemi*) and is literally "to set or place before; to set over" (Thayer) while BDAG has "to exercise a position of leadership, rule, direct, be at the head of." Zodhiates adds, "By implication meaning to care for something, to be diligent, to practice." Yes, the elders are over the congregation despite the fact many have taken the view that elders have no authority (except by example). God gave them the authority to make decisions in fulfilling what He has authorized. Elders do not have the right to make laws God did not make, but within those obligations God has given, there are optional matters in fulfilling them. These optional matters

are where God has given elders the authority to decide or rule. They are to exercise leadership or rule over the congregation in these areas, and members have the obligation to submit themselves to that rule.

Many times, elders try and lead the congregation in ways they should not go. They rule in areas where God does not allow. They will bring in actions that God has never authorized, or sometimes forbid things God does allow. So many elders simply do not have sufficient Bible knowledge to rule, direct, or be at the head of the congregation. They are pseudo-elders and wolves in sheep's clothing. They need to step down or be removed from the leadership position God has given elders. There are also elderships that do not lead but allow the congregation to lead them or simply turn everything over to the preacher, so he "runs" everything.

Paul says that the labor the elders exercise is "among you." They have the right to make decisions in ruling or exercising authority over the congregation of which they are members. They have no authority over any other congregation. We are increasingly seeing some elderships attempting to be over one or many other congregations other than their own congregation. Some

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

liberal congregations started satellite congregations in other areas and then have their elders rule those satellite congregations along with their own. However, among conservative congregations, we have observed (even though not as opaque as the liberals) exercising control over other congregations to remain in fellowship with them. Unless other congregations do and act in those optional matters exactly as they do, they will no longer fellowship those congregations. There is not much difference between their actions and the Roman Catholic Papacy.

The third principle Paul mentions regarding elders is they admonish the congregation in which they labor. *Admonish* literally means “to put mind” and means “to admonish, warn, or exhort.” A. T. Robertson said of this word, “putting sense into the heads of people.” Vine says that “it is used,

(a) of instruction, (b) of warning.” This certainly points out the need for elders to be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). They have a responsibility to make certain the congregation is fed a proper diet of God’s Word (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). While elders do not have to do all the teaching, they must have the capability of teaching and are responsible for what is taught. To do that teaching, they must know God’s Word sufficiently and then be able to impart that knowledge to others (specifically the congregation they are admonishing). To properly admonish, elders must know what is taking place. This knowledge must be regarding the events of this world. Many of the philosophies of this world correspond to what we need to know regarding God’s Word and how God’s Word applies to those philosophies. They must also know what is going on in the denominational world.

He must know what they are teaching and how to refute it. Those false doctrines generally will make their way into the church and elders need to be ready to refute such, teach the Truth, and warn the congregation of those errors. Brother Don Walker added regarding admonish: “This word also denotes that the elders are to see that the thoughts and ideas communicated from one to the other are laid to heart, that they are taken into the mind of the hearer. It may be explanation, encouragement, reproof, rebuke or other training which sees that the lesson is learned in the proper way.” Is it any wonder that Paul would say that the work of elders is hard work?

Lord willing, next month I plan to discuss this admonition regarding the congregation’s responsibility to the elders.

MH

Continued from Page 1

The best sexual ethic people are agreeing on out in the world today is the ethic of consent—thorough consent. It’s based on mutual desire, people making sure this is actually what the other person wants, making sure that the mutual desire includes a care and respect for human dignity in this situation. That mutual consent has no hint of any power imbalance in the sexual encounter. It includes a concern that there is no objectification of yourself, of the other person, or even of the act. Um, and that is, uh, I think the, a...I’m not trying to say that I’ve explained all of that right here. This is a much longer conversation. But that ethic of consent, I want to say, that is good.

When Jesus gives us another option, He’s not saying that the ethic, uh, that everyone’s agreeing out there in the larger world, is bad. Um. I think this ethic of consent....

The problem with this presentation is that Jesus is not dealing with questions of culture. As already stated, He contrasts His authority with the Law’s authority. He is not dealing with the popular cultural ideas of His day. We do not read, “Some of your best ethical teachers have said—but I say....” The Scriptures do not describe Jesus as saying, “The popular mood of society would have you live by this idea, but I say....” How does one get that from the context of Matthew 5?

And how much plainer could

Jesus be than to use the words *adultery* and *lust* in his comparison? Do people today not know what these words mean? Not only do all major translations retain these two words, but even paraphrases have no problem with them. The words are just fine; people understand them. But Rachel continues in the same vein:

So, I think Jesus is saying, “Everyone out there is talking about consent, and that’s really important.” But Jesus would say, “I say to you, ‘What does it mean to be deeply faithful?’ and ‘Would you like to learn?’”

Well, that last comment is catchy, but it is not what our Lord said in Matthew 5:27-28. It is not even a close approximation. It is

true that society places the wrong emphasis upon sexual relationships, and Christians need to teach what it means to be deeply faithful, but Jesus did not say either one of those things in Matthew 5:27-28. Below is one last quotation on this theme:

I think intimacy and faithfulness go together. Um. I think that often our cultural status quo out in the world does not, um, train us enough for faithfulness. So, hear me saying that I think an ethic of thorough consent that's based on dignity and respect is so important. I don't think it goes far enough to train us for deep faithfulness that will, including in times of suffering, might resemble crucifixion. Um, uh, and so if faithfulness is what Jesus is inviting us into; um, there is agency here.

Obviously, the status quo of the world will not prepare us to be faithful to our mates. The standard of the world has always been different (and lower) than God's system of morality, which explains why we should not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:1-2). However, does the world really teach mutual consent in sexual relationships? A portion of it does, but as a whole, it does not. For every dating or marriage manual that praises "mutual consent" and "dignity," one will probably find a hundred pornographic magazines and a thousand pornographic websites that objectify human beings.

Various Other Observations

The students may have profited from hearing a few good points in this lecture, but they also would have received several misconceptions. Much of what was said did not pertain to the text, and the main thesis based on the text was

faulty. If students do not learn that the authority of Christ is greater than the authority of the Law, a disservice has been done. Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6-7), and His authority supersedes everyone else's (Mat. 28:18). So, hear Him saying that the action of adultery is wrong, but it starts in the heart with lust. The implication is that we need to battle the problem where it first arises—in the heart, where one's will and thoughts are.

Rachel discussed plucking out the right eye if it causes sin and cutting off the right hand as well. Her explanation undoubtedly left students in a state of confusion; the reader may understand it better than this writer. She taught: "It is hyperbole, but I also think Jesus is being very, very literal here. Very literal." What exactly is a literal hyperbole (exaggeration)?

Perhaps the reader has noticed how many times that the speaker used the words, "I think." As composition teachers, we were taught not to allow students to write such words. Speakers should avoid them, also. Why? Anyone who speaks is obviously saying what he thinks; so, it is redundant to say or write it—especially repeatedly.

Besides, are we all not taught to say, "Here is what the Bible says"? Do we not train teachers and preachers to ask others, "What do the Scriptures say?" We do not teach our own doctrine; we do not preach ourselves. God's Word is worthy of respect and deserves to be heard; our opinions do not matter.

What Does Matthew 5:27-32 Teach?

We have already dealt with the

actual meaning of verses 27-28—that lust begins in the heart. And that is where it needs to stop, also. Once it infiltrates the mind and goes forth, it will express itself in flirtation and ultimately in adultery itself. Generally, one does not wake up one day with no thought of being unfaithful to a mate only to have committed the sin by the time the sun went down. First, there is an attraction and possibly some, "What ifs...?" These should not be indulged; Christians must shut down the direction of such thoughts immediately, or they will just keep expanding.

In fact, this type of indulgence is so bad for us that Jesus talks about cutting off an offending part of the body (Mat. 5:29-30). He is not meaning literally to cut off the hand, as one of the church fathers did, or pluck out the eye (How many men would be blind in at least one of them?). But Jesus made the hyperbole as severe as possible to make sure that we understand the importance of controlling our hearts and "out of bounds" desires. Job must have known the importance of taking such a precaution; he wrote: "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?" (31:1). He did not say anything about having special help from the Holy Spirit or a community to whom he was responsible.

Not much was said about verses 31-32 of Matthew 5, but Jesus forbade divorce. Has He provided a progression of the way dissolutions of marriage occur? First, lust begins in the heart. Then, if it is not soundly defeated there, and it becomes a mutual desire between two people, then adultery is committed,

which quite often leads to divorce. A man who divorces his wife because he wants another woman (or vice versa), has no authority to marry again; he would be committing continual adultery while living in such an arrangement.

Do people at Harding believe what Jesus said, or do they take Bales' view? Or even worse, do they take Olan Hicks' view that would

allow unlimited divorces and remarriages? What do students learn about that subject? So often, one hears comments such as, "They just fell out of love," or, "They could not withstand the pressures on their marriage," or, "They grew apart over a few years of time." Does anyone remember those things we call marriage vows? How much effort goes into keeping them? How

much counseling was received beforehand?

This passage was taught early on. Jesus did not allow for any exceptions here, but in Matthew 19:9, one can divorce because of a mate's fornication. Only that person is authorized to marry again. It might have been helpful to the students to have heard such teaching.

Winter Park, FL

The Heart...Root of the Problem

Marvin L. Weir

The Bible is emphatic in describing sin as being **progressive** in nature. Three classic examples are given in God's Word that all would do well to consider. In Genesis 3, Eve does what many people will do down through the stream of time. Eve is aware of right and wrong for she says to the serpent, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (3:2-3). However, Eve begins her departure from God by **doubting** His instructions. As doubt enters her mind, she then **sees** the forbidden tree in a different light—it is good for food. The more distance one puts between himself and the Word of God, the easier it is to travel down the slippery slope of sin. Eve **takes** the forbidden fruit, eats a portion of it, and then **gives** some of the fruit to her husband. Notice how one sinful step can very quickly and easily lead to another. While we are quick to see the outward sin of Eve **taking** and **eating** the forbidden fruit, let us not forget that God sees and identifies the real problem—the heart!

The second classic example of sin's progressive nature is found in Joshua 7. Achan sins against God by taking the forbidden spoils of war. Achan seeks to explain his actions by saying, "when I **saw** among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I **coveted** them, and **took** them; and, behold, they are **hid** in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it" (7:21). Some see the only problem as being the "devoted thing" (7:1) hidden in Achan's tent, but God knows that the root of the problem is the heart.

The third classic example involves David, King of Israel. David **saw** Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, bathing, and she was beautiful to **look** upon. The king then proceeded to **inquire**, **take**, and **lay** (commit adultery) with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2-4). We are quick to point to the sin of adultery (and rightly so), but God is also looking at the heart and the thought behind the actual deed.

A truth stated in Galatians 6:7 should cause each of us to give some serious thought before yield-

ing to sin. The apostle Paul states, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We know from studying these three classic examples that such a principle is true. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and their lives would never be as they once were. The sin of Achan affected all of Israel and led to the death of he and his family. Tragedy after tragedy floods David's life during the last years of his reign in Jerusalem and all because of his sins of adultery and murder.

Let us now, however, focus on the thought behind the deed, and view the heart as God views it. In 2 Samuel 12 God sends Nathan to David with a parable that David will never forget. Two men who live in the same area are set in contrast one to the other. One man is very rich with great flocks and herds, and the other man is very poor with only a single ewe lamb. The rich man has a "traveler" to come his way and decides to use the poor man's lamb for the meal instead of one of his many sheep (2 Sam. 12:1-5). David correctly understands that the rich man's sin

goes far beyond the **taking** of the poor man's one ewe lamb. This **wrong** act came from a **heart** that has no compassion for one's fellow man. But was not this the same lack of compassion that led David to commit adultery with Bathsheba and to murder her husband?

We live in a society where people are proficient at treating the **symptoms** of specific sins without ever getting to the **root** or **heart** of the sin! Jesus teaches that it is not what goes into the mouth but what comes forth from the mouth that defiles a man (Mat. 15:15-20). It is made clear that **words** and **actions**

come from the heart: "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings" (15:19). In this vein, all church problems are nothing more than heart problems. Think about it—jealousy, covetousness, backbiting, hatred, respect of persons, and unfaithfulness in attendance, giving, prayer, communion, study, steadfastness, conviction, matters of doctrine, and one another relationships—can be traced back to a problem with the heart!

All people are obligated to "come to the knowledge of the

truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). But especially are Christians to think on things that are "true...honorable...just...pure...lovely...[and] of good report" (Phi. 4:8). It is most important and of eternal consequence what a Christian *feeds on* and *thinks about*. Jesus addresses the root of the problem in a positive way when He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mat. 5:8). Make sure you do what is necessary to guard against a heart problem that left uncorrected will lead to spiritual death!

Reno, TX

Religious Indifference

Gus Nichols

Now Indifferent

It seems that religious indifference is becoming more general than ever before. The Pentecostians were so interested in the first full Gospel discourse that all who did not mock cried out to know what to do to be saved (Acts 2:14-38). Those receiving the Word "gladly" accepted it (2:41). It seemed that none were indifferent toward the truth. All took a stand, either for or against the Gospel. Saul of Tarsus was not indifferent. Before he heard and accepted the truth, he took a stand against it and "persecuted the church," and tried to destroy the faith from the earth (Gal. 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:13). He was never neutral. Cornelius was not neutral. Even before his conversion he was standing for what he believed, living up to all the light he had (Acts 10). Throughout the Acts of the Apostles the people were either for or against the Gospel of Christ. This was the rule, even though there were many exceptions.

But now the masses seem to be almost wholly indifferent toward the true Gospel. They are neither for nor against it. They have embraced the neutral position of Doctor Gamaliel, a Pharisee, who said: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:38-39). This man was an exception to the rule, as may be seen in the fact that he had to win his point in favor of tolerance by argument. Now his idea seems to prevail, and the masses take no stand with reference to Christianity. They feel no obligation to oppose it nor to support it. Their philosophy is to "let it alone."

Even in the Church

Even members of the true church follow this old philosophy.

They let the church alone as if they were outsiders. They are indifferent, being neither "cold nor hot"—only "lukewarm," as was the church at Laodicea. This was the only church of the seven in Asia Minor charged with holding this attitude. But such is now very general or is apparently so. They do not fight the church, neither do they work for its progress. They want to let it alone, and to be let alone. They feel the need of nothing. And they seem not to be aware of the fact that they are lost, unless they repent, the same as an outsider (Rev. 3:14-19). Many do not care what the Bible teaches. They are too indifferent to read it, or to hear the truth preached. They do not care whether the Gospel is ever preached unto the lost or not. Sin in the church causes them no worry. They do not care whether leaders are trained, and young preachers develop, or the cause goes down in shame and reproach.

Some Causes of Indifference

Denominational divisions and parties are making infidels—causing unbelief, even as Jesus knew they would (John 17:20-21). The Lord knew “the world” would not believe in Him, unless His disciples were “one.” Such parties have taken the position that the Bible teaches about everything. If you doubt this charge, ask them if their church with its doctrines is the only one that is right, and they will say: “No, I am not so narrow as to think all churches and doctrines are wrong except mine.” They do not object to any of us preaching what we believe the Bible to **positively** teach, so long as we do not teach that others are wrong, even when they contradict what we teach. The general indifference is such that they say: “Preach what you please, but do not fight other churches.” They have accepted as final the idea that the Bible teaches all doctrines and indorses all churches, and they do not want to hear another church, “just as scriptural,” opposed. Since everything is all right, and one is sure to be saved just so he is religious, as they think, they are naturally indifferent as to what the Bible really does teach. They are even prejudiced against any new study of such matters. Many of them have gone into some church to accept what it teaches, and to hate all who may try to bring them to a knowledge of God “more perfectly.” Such people, they are taught to believe, are meddlers with other men’s matters, and should tend to their own crowd, preach the Gospel, and let others alone. Now, how could Satan have gotten in his deadly work more effectively? How could he have

blocked the way of truth more effectively than to have thus closed the avenues of further knowledge? This binds the masses to the ignorance of the Dark Ages.

Modernism a Deadly Poison

Modernism has been injected into the blood stream of this generation, and the masses do not have enough faith in the Bible to care a straw about what it says. Human wisdom is the standard instead of the Bible. What the masses are **doing** has more weight than what the Bible says. “Science falsely so called” is the final word. They think the Bible has been demonstrated to be thousands of years out of date, when in fact it is thousands of years ahead of date. The saddest thing about the whole affair is the fact that many so-called “gospel preachers” are preaching little sermonettes picked up secondhand from sectarian preachers, and they do not seem to know of the disease needing treatment.

The Only Remedy

There is only one remedy, and that is the ancient Gospel, preached in all its condemning and saving power. There is no other power to save the world (Rom. 1:16). When this fails, all has failed. There is no place for experimenting with something else. All such is an insult to Almighty God. To preach the full and complete Gospel, in all its facts, threats, commands, and promises, will get results, or there can be nothing done about the matter. Compromising to please those who have made an unwritten law against preaching the whole truth cannot save anyone. The mighty tide of worldliness and unbelief cannot be checked by joining the ranks of the

enemy. To all intents and purposes, this is done when the truth is kept back and only matters of agreement stressed. We need plain Gospel preaching, done with courtesy and in love—love of the people and the truth. We must have more “mission” work done, at home and abroad. We must train more and better teachers. More and better literature must be distributed. We must take advantage of the use of the radio and all means of propagating the truth. Every member must become a private teacher, and special men trained as leaders. All of our forces must be strengthened, and the ranks replenished all along the line. All must be “set for the defence of the gospel” (Phi. 1:16; Jude 3). The worship must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The church must help the poor and let its light shine. Each member must live above reproach, or else be disciplined, counted as a heathen (Mat. 18:15-18; 2 The. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5). The church must be kept united and strong (Eph. 4:3). All the forces must be put to work. The work must be planned, and the plans worked. All must be friendly and zealous for good works (Tit. 2:12-14). The whole membership must make contacts, each with his friend, and bring the people to hear the pure Gospel, preached in kindness and love. This has always brought whatever results God has made possible, and it will not fail now (Isa. 55:8-13). Man of God, arise, and cheerfully and with all boldness, yet humbly as the Master, drive out the things which have brought our race to such indifference! Great God, help us, lest we fail!

Deceased

DEFENDER

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



The Tentacles Of Humanism

Paul Vaughn

During the past year a deadly pandemic, coronavirus, has been reaching into every facet of society. It has advanced into our homes destroying the physical health of thousands and bringing physical death to a multitude of families. Everyone has been aware of this pandemic.

There is a spiritual pandemic that has been spreading its poison into the hearts of millions. It advances an anti-God *virus* with a deadly infection without the knowledge of most of the people it is affecting. It is called Humanism. It has tentacles that reach into a large indefinite number of directions. In this article, the avenues used by Humanism will be examined and exposed so Christians can be prepared for the battle for their souls and remove the virus from their hearts.

Paul directed the Christians in Ephesus and all Christians to undergo training and instruction for the spiritual war between good and evil.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the

devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13).

Defining Humanism

In every time period of mankind, there has been a common teaching coming from an antagonistic and non-religious segment of society that rejects God and all things supernatural. Their main teaching is there is no life after death or a resurrection from the dead. This was also the core doctrine of the Sadducees at the time of Christ (Mat. 22:23).

Today, they are called Humanist because they believe man can survive solely on human reason. Modern-day humanism can be traced back to around 490 B.C. *Webster's Dictionary* defines Humanism as “Any system of thought or action based on the nature, interests, and ideals of humanity; specif., a modern, non-theistic, rationalist movement

that holds that humanity is capable of self-fulfillment, ethical conduct, etc. without recourse to supernaturalism.”

In general, Humanism replaces the teaching of God from His inspired Word, the Scriptures, for the teachings of men. Humanists reject the Biblical account of creation for the unverified theory of evolution. Humanists reject also the Biblical teaching that man has an everlasting soul for the doctrine that man is just flesh and bones and ceases to exist at death. James and Solomon teach differently from the atheist views of Humanism. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jam. 2:26). “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Humanism rejects Jesus as God’s Son and salvation made possible by His death on the cross. Yet, Jesus proclaimed that He is the only way to Heaven: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Paul's Admonition

Paul gave a wonderful admonition to the Thessalonian congregation and for us when he wrote:

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves (1 The. 5:12-13).

While mainly directed toward the congregation, there are three admonitions to elders: (1) they labor among the members, (2) they are over the congregation, and (3) they admonish the congregation. We considered these three admonitions in the last issue of *Defender*. In this issue, I want us to notice the admonitions to the congregation itself as it relates to those who pastor over us. They are also given a threefold admonition: (1) know them, (2) esteem them, and (3) love them. Then Paul gives the result in the congregation when both elders and members do what is admonished here: peace.

The first admonition was for the members to *know* the bishops. Know is from a Greek word which is a "knowledge which comes by perception" or "a perception which comes from the mind's eye as opposed to a knowledge which is grounded on personal experience."

It should be obvious to all that as shepherds of a congregation, the eldership must know the members even as Christ knows His sheep (John 10:14). However, the members of the congregation have the obligation to know the elders. This means that the congregation must know and appreciate their true worth and work. In appreciating their worth and work, it will include being submissive to their oversight. They are watching for our souls and must give an account of us, so we obey them and submit to them (Heb. 13:17). They are working hard for our spiritual benefit and we, as members, need to appreciate what they are doing for us.

Then Paul admonishes us to esteem them. Paul uses a word here (*hegeomai*) that in some context would be defined as: "to be in a supervisory capacity, lead, guide" (BDAG). However, they point out that it also means, "to engage in an intellectual process, think, consider, regard" and under this definition they state, "In 1 Th 5:13 there emerges for ἡ. [*hegeomai*] the sense esteem, respect." Marvin Vincent adds, "To lead the mind through a reasoning process to a conclusion, and so *to think, to estimate*" (4:48). The members of the congregation realize the work and oversight they are involved in for the good of the congregation and each individual member; thus, they esteem, respect, and honor them. It would be impossible for one to have this type of honor for the elders and then fail to do what they say. This type of esteem or honor would lead one to submit to their authority; they would consider or regard the leadership role of these men.

The degree we are to esteem them is *very highly*. This comes from a single Greek word, *hyperpekperissou*. Friberg defines this word "as the highest form of comparison imaginable *immeasurably more than*" (*Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*). Everyone certainly knows of men who were appointed to the eldership who were not really qualified and did not do the work necessary. These unscripturally qualified men do not remove our necessity to esteem the eldership in the very highest way possible. They will answer to God for their lack of proper leadership (either in failure to lead or in lording it over the flock); we will answer to God for our failure to esteem them very highly. Members of the congregation should esteem them very highly because of (1) the work they do, (2) their character, and (3) their position.

In love might be that we are to esteem them by loving them. Others would state it is to esteem them while loving them, thus separate admonitions: esteem them and love them. Still, others would say that love is the motive or reason for esteeming them. We do not esteem them out of fear (either of reward or punishment), but out of love. Some elderships lord it over the membership to such an extent that instead of prompting love they

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

prompt fear from its members. A congregation should realize the work the elders are doing in watching for their souls and feeding them properly with God's Word and love them for their work's sake.

Paul gives the result of these admonitions. When elders do their part in oversight, working, and admonishing the congregation, and members do their part in knowing them, esteeming them very highly, and loving them, peace will be the result. Pfeiffer and Harrison wrote: "To degrade leadership or to cavil with author-

ity is to sow seeds of strife. The well-being of the Christian community (**among yourselves**) is dependent on cordial cooperation between followers and leaders." Paul states a general principle that is applicable for what happens when a congregation does not highly esteem its pastors in their oversight when he wrote, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). When a congregation esteems elders in submitting to their authority, they will not be biting and devouring

one another, but they will have peace within the congregation.

In summary of these wonderful two verses (1 The. 5:12-13), Paul gives admonitions to both elders and members. Elders are to (1) oversee the congregation, (2) labor or work with them, and (3) admonish them. Members have the responsibility to (1) know the elders, (2) esteem them, and (3) love them. When both elders and members fulfill their responsibility, then peace will reign in the congregation.

MH

Continued from Page 1

The Tentacles of Humanism and the Death of Truth

The Bible has a great deal to say about truth. Man is to speak "the truth in his heart" (Psa. 15:2). Wise men desire to be led by truth: "Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day" (25:5). Jesus said we can know the truth: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Lord proclaimed that God's Word is truth: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (17:17). Paul taught that everyone who rejects truth for a lie will be put under a strong delusion (2 The. 2:9-12).

The agenda for Humanism is man-centered and not God-centered. Everything in their teaching is based on man's interests and ethical standard. Humanism has a drastic and far-reaching change in the way man should think to a twisted change in behavior. To attain their goal, Hu-

manists rewrite history to advance their social interests on society to accept a false view of the Feminist Movement and the Homosexual agenda. Humanists understand that truth, God's Word rejects their agenda and revolution.

Humanists teach that Biblical truth is morally offensive and arrogant. It is overbearing, unwarranted, and prideful. They claim that no one should discuss false teaching and error in anyone's religious beliefs. To disagree with anyone's beliefs is malicious and offensive.

Humanist rejection of truth is known as Postmodernism, which rejects absolute truth leading to relativism. They teach that truth is ever-changing and is tailored to the tastes of the individual. In the mind of the Humanists, truth is dead! Humanists change their mindset from the worship of God to worshipping self.

There is a standard for truth! It is God and His Word! "He who has received His testimony has

certified that God is true" (John 3:33). Jesus is truth: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (14:6). The Lord taught very plainly that man can know truth: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (8:32). The revealed truth in God's Word is infinitely more valuable than all the humanist teaching of men. Truth is not dead! But sadly, it is dead in the hearts of multitudes who have been influenced by Humanism. Therefore, all are encouraged to buy the truth and never sell it. It is written, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Pro. 23:23). We buy the truth by trusting in God and obeying His Word.

The Tentacles of Humanism and the Death of Outrage

One of the many things that accompanies Humanism is the death of outrage. People are not shocked or horrified at the absence of morals in society. Im-

morality is forced on every segment and facet of life. People have lost the ability to blush. Jeremiah saw the same problem in his day. “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, they shall be cast down, says the Lord” (Jer. 6:15). How long has it been since you have blushed?

Humanism advances sin with the teaching of individual subjectivism. This view teaches that man sets the standard, not God or Jesus. Yet, Scripture teaches differently.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality (Col. 3:23-25).

The rejection of God and Christian morality is looked upon as out of date and harmful. The distinction between good and evil, right or wrong is blurred in our school systems from grade school through college. There is a void of motivation based on right and wrong. Where is the outrage?

Sin is a taboo subject from many pulpits and the word *sin* has vanished from the vocabulary of many preachers and elders. Sadly, families are laid waste in a flood of sin. Where is the outrage? God will not accept such an attitude from His people. God views sin as vile, corrupt, and an abomination. Co-habitation treats marriage as useless and

many even glorify their wicked lifestyle. The nation has been demoralized with sin and many have forgotten the Old Testament proclamation against sin: “But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). Where is the outrage?

The Tentacles of Humanism and the Death of the United States of America

Freedom is a wonderful word, and people who are free are truly blessed. As citizens of the United States of America, we are granted the freedom to speak plainly without fear. The First Amendment to the Constitution grants this right to all citizens of the United States.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of Grievances (Amendment I, Constitution of the United States).

Citizens have the right to speak without fear. They have the right to travel throughout this wonderful country without having papers to cross state boundaries. They have the right to worship God as it is authorized in the New Testament (John 4:24). All citizens must cherish, treasure, and value this freedom. Humanism is seeking to put to death this freedom by socialism.

Socialism is defined as “Any of various social systems based on shared or government ownership and the administration of the means of production and distribution of goods” (Webster’s). Social-

ism has the goal of centralized government and the redistribution of wealth.

How does the humanist doctrine of socialism affect the work and operation of Christianity? Socialists will silence the teaching of pure New Testament Christianity by controlling the pulpits. Preachers will depend on the government for entitlements and the government will demand churches to join the collective. In the Humanist Manifesto II, their goals are plainly set forth. “We urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended.” This statement simply means preachers and the church cannot speak against false doctrines of man, homosexuality, cohabitation, or any number of moral issues. Humanists will destroy our nation and Christianity!

Conclusion

The spiritual pandemic is destroying the foundation of society and will affect the church and all that Christianity stands for. The tentacles of Humanism reach in many directions. The corrupting influence of Humanism has silenced the voice of many Christians. They have lost the ability to blush and no longer view the wickedness of society as outrageous.

Christians must stand against this spiritual pandemic before it is too late. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:10-11). Are you ready to stand against Humanism?

Hopkinsville, KY

The Folly Of Pride

Marvin Weir

Numerous warnings sound forth about pride in the Old Testament. The things “written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). Consider these Bible warnings:

When pride cometh, then cometh shame; But with the lowly is wisdom (Pro. 11:2).

By pride cometh only contention; But with the well-advised is wisdom (13:10).

Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall (16:18)

A man's pride shall bring him low; But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor (29:23).

As for thy terribleness, the pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah (Jer. 49:16).

The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? (Oba. 3).

Even from a casual reading of the Holy Scriptures, one should observe that pride can contribute to spiritual death! No person is exempt from the sin of pride. This sin can overtake and overcome even the most righteous (like Moses, Psa. 106:32-33), and thus the warning to beware of pride that comes from man's heart and defiles him (cf. Mark 7:21-23).

The power of pride is an amazing thing.

Pride can be the cause of heartache and anguish in human relationships. Pride can destroy a home. Pride can cause Christians to sit on opposite sides of the church building and refuse to speak to one another. Pride can be the reason one will not admit that he has made a mistake—has sinned—is wrong! Pride can sabotage friendships that have existed for years. Yes, pride is the devil's tool that will keep many people out of Heaven.

Let us observe two ways that pride can contribute to one's spiritual death. First, pride keeps many people from obeying the Gospel plan of salvation. One can read his Bible every day and still not believe what he reads. Folks do this all the time! For instance, the Bible says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Yet, one who has been taught a manmade creed will say, “I just don't believe baptism is necessary for one to be saved. Baptism has nothing to do with one's salvation.” Does this mean that Peter was confused when he said, “wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism” (1 Pet. 3:20-21)? I think not!

One reads in his Bible about Jesus promising to build His church (Mat. 16:18). He continues reading and discovers that Paul speaks of “one body” and “one faith” (Eph. 4:4-5) and that the Lord's church is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). But then this same person defends the right

of numerous denominations to exist! He also argues that man should attend the church of his choice. Does he read this from his Bible? I think not!

Second, pride keeps many brethren from admitting they made a mistake or committed a sin. What is amazing is that some brethren have held certain doctrinal positions for years but now are compromising or casting aside these positions because of pride. Some of these brethren have made both verbal and written statements regarding the right and wrong of certain matters. And yet, because of a moment's reckless folly, the use of bad judgment, or the practice of inconsistency, these brethren's pride will not allow them to confess their mistake, repent, and change their course of action. It is usually the case that when one is overcome with pride the hole he is digging just gets deeper and deeper.

Pride causes preachers who have for years taught and defended the truth to turn on truth for personal gain. Pride causes elders who have loved and defended truth to allow their opinions to become laws, and they bind where God has not bound and loose where God has not loosed. When their vocal concern does absolutely no good, pride causes members to continue to support a congregation that is drifting down the wrong path because of its previous influence and good work. In most instances, if one chooses to oppose the proud, he is shunned and ignored. Satan knows that he can usually count on

pride working for him when all else has failed.

The sad truth is that some brethren today believe that they are above reproach and correction. In an earlier verse we referenced, Jeremiah stated that the pride of one's heart will deceive him (Jer. 49:16). Solomon stated that one's pride will bring him low (Pro. 29:23). Pride is also guaranteed to bring "shame" (11:2) and "destruction" (16:18). Again, one can read

his Bible and no longer believe what he reads!

In the past few years, some Universities and Schools of Preaching have demonstrated that they believe themselves to be beyond reproach. The once old reliable, Freed-Hardeman University, and both Memphis and Southwest schools of preaching come to mind. They, because of past success, evidently now believe that they are untouchable. Is it not amazing that some

who know better will continue to defend a false position simply because they do not want to swallow their pride? As Obadiah said, "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" The answer: God will bring one down to the ground. Let us beware of the folly of pride!

Reno, TX

Does Grace Cover Innovations?

FranklinCamp

This is a vital question in relation to the study of grace. Grace is designed for man's imperfections. Grace is essential in view of man's sins. But grace may be abused. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). Jude speaks of "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Grace is necessary for our salvation, but we must be careful not to abuse it. It is being abused today in defense of innovations. It is necessary to study this subject of grace and innovations.

Men Are Imperfect

One of the arguments that is being made today is as follows. We are imperfect and need grace. We differ over some questions such as the manner of the indwelling of the Spirit. We also differ over the use of mechanical instruments in worship. The instrument is not authorized in the New Testament, but it does not say not to use it. Some are saying I cannot use it, but I am not perfect; grace takes care of my imperfections and it will also cover those who use

the instruments. Is this sound reasoning based on the Truth? The indwelling of the Spirit and the use of mechanical instruments are **not** parallel. Let us test it and see if this is not the case. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1). Leviticus 9 gives the account of the offering of the sacrifice for sin. It was done by Aaron the high priest. Priest and sacrifice opened the door for grace. "Fire from before Jehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat: and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (9:24). Here is grace. Now watch what follows.

Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire which God had not commanded. What is the problem? An **innovation** has been introduced into religion. They introduced into the divine order something without authority. One may say "isn't fire, fire?" Indeed, it was not. The fire they used was not that of 9:24. The

rendering of the ASV shows that their action was based on the silence of the Scripture. God has not said, "Thou shall not use strange fire." In 16:12, the command is to take fire from before the altar of the Lord. Even though verse 1 mentions Nadab and Abihu, verse 23 does not say take fire from the altar but do not use common fire. It is silent about the use of any other fire. Would anyone contend that specifying fire from the altar alone did not exclude all other fire? God thought it was enough just to give the command to take fire from the altar. Would it have been right if they had used fire from the altar with common fire? If silence allows innovation why would it not have been right? If two kinds of fire would not have been acceptable when one was without authority, why should one think that two kinds of music will be acceptable when He has authorized only singing? Grace did not cover their sins. What was their sin? Was it not presuming on the silence of the Scripture? Their action was presumptuous based on the silence of the Scriptures.

Blood Sanctified, Grace Covered

They made a grievous mistake in failing to keep in mind that what is not sanctified is not covered by grace. “And that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean” (10:10). Go back and read Leviticus 9. Blood sanctified the altar and the offering. Anything that is not authorized in the New Testament is not sanctified by blood.

A man that hath set at nought Moses’ law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, **and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing**, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28-29).

The new covenant is sanctified by the blood of Christ. “For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins” (Mat. 26:28). Instrumental music is not authorized in the New Testament. It is not sanctified by blood and therefore not covered by grace.

Unity and the Grace Argument

It is unfortunate that some are using grace to cover the innovation of instrumental music in worship. Some that are involved in the new unity movement are trying to use an Old Testament event to prove that grace will cover the use of the instrument. I have seen this argument used by at least one preacher in the Christian Church and one of our brethren. Let us look at the argument.

The reign of Hezekiah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 29 through 32. He was one of the good kings of Judah.

His father was a wicked king and led the nation into apostasy. Hezekiah sought to bring the nation back from apostasy to the true worship of God. He also wanted to unite the divided kingdom by inviting those from the northern kingdom to come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. He sent messengers with a proclamation throughout all Israel urging them to come to the Passover. Many of them came (2 Chr. 30:11). Many of them were not sanctified, “yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written” (30:17-18). Hezekiah prayed for them, and the Lord heard his prayer. This is being used in an attempt to justify the use of the instrument in worship. Let us look at it.

Numbers 9:6-14 gives the law. The Passover was to be observed the first month (9:1). Some were defiled and could not keep the Passover on that day. Moses sought God’s will about it. God told Moses they could keep it the second month. Here is the law on it. Some observations are in order.

1. They had no problem in interpretation about the question of one eating while unclean. They did not have to consider some new hermeneutic. No one said, “Let us have a summit and see if we can agree that it will be right to eat even though we are unclean.”

2. They could have said the law allowed the unclean to wait a month and then observe it. If it could be delayed till unclean why may it not be delayed till the third month? It does not say we cannot do it in the third month. We will sanctify ourselves and keep it the third month. If silence gives authority for something, why would it not have done so here?

3. They admitted that to eat while

unclean was a violation of the law. If this is parallel with the instrument, then those who use it admit it is a violation of the New Testament law. What happens now to the argument based on silence? One cannot have it both ways.

4. Hezekiah realized that it was a sin and prayed for pardon. “For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon every one” (2 Chr. 30:18). Have the brethren that participated in the unity meetings prayed that God would pardon the sin of those that used the instruments? If one may use this as a pattern, then isn’t prayer for pardon necessary.

5. I have shown that what occurred here was a violation of the law. It required prayer for pardon. This brings up another question. Since what they did was unscriptural, sinful, and required confession and prayer could they repeat this every year? Was this a precedent that could be repeated from year to year? The Bible does not record another observance of the Passover during the reign of Hezekiah. It tells of the apostasy under Manasseh. Josiah followed him. Josiah, like Hezekiah, sought to restore the divine order. “Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month (35:1). Did they follow the law or the example of Hezekiah? “So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses” (35:6). If Hezekiah is an example for the Christian Church, then they should admit that the use of the instrument is a sin. They should confess their sin and pray for forgiveness. Then cease to use it.

Deceased

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



The Red Menace

Roelf L. Ruffner

Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment* (Exo. 23:1-2).

Granted the above passage deals primarily with lying in legal proceedings, but the phrase “thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” is quite relevant to my concern in this article. That concern is the rise of the old nemesis of personal freedom—Communism.

For several months our country has been embroiled in a deepening turmoil concerning the shooting of an unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, Missouri by a policeman and lately the death of an unarmed black man in New York City as he was being arrested by the police. Protests and looting have ensued all over the United States. However, increasingly I see among the banners of these protestors the old red “hammer & sickle” of Communism. Being a student of the Bible and history, I recoil at this banner. They might as well put up a swastika or the banner of the Islamic State. It is sickening and revolting to hear them chant, “What

do we want? Dead Cops! When do we want it? Now!” Many of these are professional agitators and anarchists giving the clenched fist salute of Communism. They do not really want *justice*; they want mayhem and revolution.

At one time preachers of the Gospel would preach sermons against Communism. The late brother Roy C. Deaver had a series of sermons on this topic. Brother George S. Benson, former President of Harding College and Chancellor of Oklahoma Christian University, spoke fervently against Communism. He had been a missionary in China for twelve years but was forced out by the Red Chinese in 1936. They and others saw the malevolent evil in this ideology as a threat to Christianity.

A concrete fact of history is that Communism has been responsible for the slaughter of multiplied millions of human beings through persecution, forced migration, starvation, and execution. We often think of the National Socialist (Nazi) regime of Adolph Hitler as the worst mass murderer in human history, and they were horrible. But Hitler’s crimes pale in comparison

to the devilish deeds of the Communist dictators Joseph Stalin and Chairman Mao Tse-tung. From the Russian Revolution of 1917 to the Castro brothers’ executions in Cuba, the history of communism is one of the shedding of blood. One of the happiest moments of my life was to see the tearing down of the old Berlin wall in 1989, which symbolized what many thought was the utter defeat of this decrepit ideology and the liberation of the oppressed peoples of Communist Eastern Europe.

Communism at its roots is atheistic and materialistic. It does not hold to God as the author of all things (Dan. 2:44), but rather that man evolved from slime and is still evolving. Their *god* is their ideology. There is no Judgment Day, no Heaven, or Hell in their twisted minds. Dialectic materialism (Communism or Marxism) sees human society as evolving into a perfect “workers’ state.” The Bible teaches that man is made in God’s image but is now a fallen creature because of his own sin.

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *There*

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Prove All Things

Paul would admonish us: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). He would also write that we are to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). God expects man to reason in such a way that he can prove a proposition.

While few would be able to set forth an argument in a strictly formal way or in a technical logical form, man is still to reason correctly regarding “all things.” God said to Israel of old, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). God is desirous of Israel to think correctly (specifically regarding their sins and if they would repent, they would be cleansed).

Yahweh, Himself, would prove the sins of the Israelites and thus His right to punish them by using the concept of a lawsuit and courtroom. The plaintiff is God, and the defendant is Israel. Various prophets serve as God’s lawyer, and God also serves as the Judge. God has been offended by Israel and brings forth His case against them proving their guilt and His right to punish them (see passages such as Isa. 1:2-9; 3:13-15; Mic. 1:2-7; 6:1-8). God challenges Israel to “State your *case*, that you may be acquit-

ted” (Isa. 43:26—NKJV). This was true even when Israel tried to argue for the wickedness of idolatry (41:21-24). God expected them to reason (the Law of Rationality) to prove their case.

When it comes to the concept of faith, it seems as though evidence and proof are removed from the scene. Soren Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith” (he never used this phrase in his published writings) loosely states that evidence can only take you so far and then you have to make a “leap of faith” to trust God anyway. It is a “blind” leap and ultimately is irrational and irresponsible. One of Webster’s definitions of faith is: “firm belief in something for which there is no proof.”

However, the Bible tells us, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). *Substance* is a word meaning “to place or set under” and thus assurance or guarantee. Wuest wrote of this: “The word was used, in secular manuscripts, of the documents bearing on the ownership of a person’s property, deposited in the archives, and forming the evidence of ownership. It, therefore, was used of that which formed the basis or evidence of one’s assurance of the ownership of anything.” Common to all usages is an undergirding and support. One’s faith stands under and undergirds his hope in things beyond and the hope we have of heaven. That faith that undergirds our hope comes by the Word of God: “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). We are to present the proper evidence from the Word of God that leads to proper conclusions regarding God and salvific issues.

Far too often today people act upon emotionalism and irrationality instead of reasoning (there is a proper place for emotions, but our emotions are to be under the control of our mind—reason). Pentecostals of our day base their entire religion on emotion with little to no true faith (“True faith is based upon evidence connected together properly from the mind of Almighty God and has nothing to do with feelings or what any person or group desires to be true”—Terry Hightower). Preachers in the Lord’s church often seek public responses, so they center upon emotionalism (getting the people worked up emotionally to walk down the aisle).

The New Testament indicates that those who were sent from God would *reason* with others both “opening and alleging” from God’s Word (Acts 17:2-3). This *reasoning* is going to include the three laws of thought: (1) Identity, (2) Excluded Middle, and (3) Non-Contradiction. Paul, and those with him, reasoned with the Thessalonians but it would be expected that they would likewise reason with Paul presenting arguments for their views. Thus, all men need to present sound arguments for their contentions (whether right or wrong).

We contend that God exists; Jesus is “God was manifest in the

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) and that He died for our sins and those obedient to His commands will receive the remission of those sins. We also maintain that Christianity answers the ultimate questions of life and instructs man as to how to live to obtain eternal life with God in heaven. We need to be prepared (1 Pet. 3:15) to “*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope*

that is in you with meekness and fear.” This means to properly establish our case and “Prove all things” (1 The. 5:21).

To *prove* things, one must put premises together in such a way that the conclusion is based upon those premises in such a way that it follows properly from the premises. Then prove the premises true in such an evidentiary way as to prove the conclusion to be true. When ar-

guments are made that are sound and true, then the conclusion must also be true. As Christians, we must be willing to “Prove all things.” We must be always ready to give that answer (those arguments) to anyone and everyone (1 Pet. 3:15). It is not our responsibility as to how it is accepted (some things are proven yet still rejected), but it is that we spread the seed of God’s Word.

MH

Continued from Page 1

is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: There is none that doeth good, no, not one* (Psa.14:1-3).

Human society is only a means God has provided to know Him and maintain order (Acts 17:26-27) and will never be perfect.

For the Communist, this world is a struggle between the “haves and the have-nots” or the “proletariat” (working class) versus the capitalist system (owners of wealth). They envision a future “worker’s state” in which all of society’s ills will be corrected and the world will be ruled by a “dictatorship of the proletariat” or mob tyranny. The Bible teaches we should love one another, especially our enemies whether worker or owner (Mat. 5:44; 1 Cor. 13:1-7).

Because of their Godless, humanistic bent, the Communist sees the Collective (The State) as everything and the individual as nothing. This is why they can kill with impunity, whether it is one person or a million. For them we are all

animals, some more evolved than others. To kill another human being is no different than swatting a fly. This is why the dedicated Communist will give his life for “the cause.” They will burn church buildings and execute Christians. Whatever stands in the way of societal *progress* must be eliminated. This is why dictators like Joseph Stalin and Mao Tse-tung could oversee the slaughter of whole communities without losing a night’s sleep.

By contrast, the Son of Man came and offered Himself on the cross for me as an individual as well as the billions of other souls in this sin-sick world. Our goal should not be to make this world into a materialistic paradise, but rather the restoration of one soul to God at a time.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily (Col. 1:28-29).

Communism is attractive not only to the unemployed and the hopeless but to the educated and affluent as well. The latter are often

spoiled children who are angry at society. They have an emptiness in their lives that only God can fill. Rather than turning humbly to their Creator, they seek fulfillment/salvation in utopian ideas and “class struggle.” Yet, Communism does not lead to personal satisfaction but only unrest and violent revolution. “Frowardness is in his heart, He deviseth mischief continually; He soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; Suddenly shall he be broken without remedy” (Pro. 6:14-15).

As a Christian, I should teach others that true fulfillment/salvation only comes by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The way of Christ is an inner revolution or change of oneself by the grace of God. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Their guidance should not be found in following the Communist Manifesto but in obeying God’s Word. “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in

you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14b).

Are we challenging our young people, especially those in college, to run from Communism? I have read that brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. once said, “There are no ‘isms’ in Christianity!” How true this is! We

need to preach sermons and teach Bible classes against Communism and pointing souls to Christ (John 14:6). Our goal in life as Christians should not be to overthrow the government but to overthrow Satan.

Let every soul be subject unto the

higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (Rom. 13:1-2).

Columbia, TN

Is It the Disease or Just a Symptom of the Disease?

Charles Pogue

When I was a boy, my jaw right in front of my ear began to hurt, and then swell, but the swollen jaw was not the disease I had; I had the mumps. The swelling was just a symptom of what was really wrong with me. When Cain rose up and slew his brother, Abel, the murder was prompted by an underlying disease of the heart, jealousy. When David had Uriah sent to the front of the battle, his disease was not that he wanted to see a plain man killed, his action was a cover-up of the prior sin of adultery. God, in the end, sent Nathan to David to convince the king what the real problem was (2 Sam. 12:1-7). While it is legitimate to treat the symptoms of a disease, even if it is just to reduce the discomfort associated with it, unless the disease will eventually run its course and go away on its own, treating the symptoms is not always enough.

When a congregation of the Lord’s church begins to question the sinfulness of instrumental music or insists that it is okay for its women to have a public leadership role, those things are not the spiritual disease that is present in the congregations but rather symptoms of a deeper problem. While it is certainly necessary and important to deal with those individual issues,

we dare not neglect the underlying disease that causes those and countless other departures from the faith; rebellion against the authority of God (Col. 3:17).

Things are not always the way they appear. Sometimes a thing may be just exactly what it appears on the surface to be, but at other times it may not, and the reality of a thing may actually be worse than its appearance.

In John 6, we are told that Jesus healed the people who were in a great multitude, and who were afflicted with diseases. Later in this context, He fed them (5000 men) with five loaves and two small fish. Still later in the chapter, at least some of these people came looking for Jesus. When they finally crossed over to Capernaum and found Him, John records this:

When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled (John 6:24-26).

It seems these people wanted Je-

sus to believe they sought Him because they saw the miracles He performed and believed, but no, Jesus knew they sought Him because He had fed them. If He had fed them once, would He not do it again?

Men sometimes make a mistake in judgment, and that is all it is, but at other times the mistake in judgment may be indicative of a symptomatic heart condition that produced that one bad judgment and will later lead to others.

Consider this: suppose a group of men defend a false teacher. They can do so because they are unaware of his error, and thus they continue to fellowship him. It is also possible for them to recognize his error but decide that over a period of time they will attempt to persuade the man to leave his error before they mark and avoid him. But it is also possible that neither of those two things is the truth, but rather, they have an underlying problem with God’s law of fellowship. Unknown to everyone else, that underlying problem was there all along and their favorable treatment of the false teacher was actually indicative of a greater underlying problem and perhaps not the surprising thing men took it to be.

Supposing the underlying prob-

lem is a failure to honor God's law of fellowship, it is not only possible but also almost certain that other occasions will arise in which they will continue to or commence to extend fellowship to other false teachers.

What seems likely to follow the expanding circle of fellowship, is questioning over whether some evil things actually are evil. This is to humor this or that now fellowshipped false teacher. Before anyone knows it, these men defend the evil things, and as we know, acceptance is a mere step away from personal practice. Tennis during Sunday evening worship hour anyone?

Has there been with such men an underlying disease all along that first manifested itself in the refusal to mark and withdraw from a single false teacher? If the answer to

that question is yes, and the underlying disease happens to be a hidden liberalism of sorts, it is unlikely that faithful men attempting to restore those men by continuing only to treat the symptom without addressing the underlying disease will have much success.

The discussion so far is serious enough, but what if the same men who began by fellowshipping one false teacher, then extended fellowship to others who are also false teachers, and then appear to be changing their view regarding certain sins, yet all the while insisting they have not changed but still stand where they have always stood? We now face the truth that one disease has led to another disease.

The measles, a disease in its own right, may lead to rheumatic fever,

and a spiritual disease such as liberalism can, and almost always will, lead to hypocrisy. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Mat. 23:25).

Would it not be good if brethren who recognize that a man is teaching error would be as wise as my mother was when I had the measles? She did the things she could to make me comfortable, but she also made me stay in bed to treat the underlying condition and make sure it did not lead to some other disease, such as rheumatic fever. Those who attempt to treat spiritual sickness among brethren might be wise to take a lesson from mom!

Deceased

To Change or Not to Change?

Dennis (Skip) Francis

There has been tremendous pressure applied in recent years to change the message the church preaches, to change the methods used for getting the message across, and to change the moral ground on which the church stands.

The agents of change say that the church and its message have become irrelevant, and for it to become relevant again, change must occur. Talk seems to center around such issues as "tolerance," and "presentability." It is suggested that the church should become tolerant of certain types of behavior or attitudes or that the church should become more *presentable* to society to be accepted by more of that same society.

In religious issues, change is

good when it brings us closer to God and His ways. Change that takes us away from God and His teachings is, of course, bad.

The apostle Paul speaks about how some changed to become closer to God. "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. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). Changing from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness was good.

Paul also wrote, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some

that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7).

The Galatians had obeyed the Gospel but had changed and were turning away from Jesus Christ. In Galatians 3:1, Paul says to them, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth." The Galatians had changed, but it was not good change. Further, those who were responsible for their change were called "perverters of the gospel."

There are good changes and some bad changes. Are the changes that modern-day critics of the church desire good or bad?

Many today say that the church must become more tolerant. *Tolerance*, in the mind of some, means non-judgmental. To many, being

non-judgmental means never saying that anything is wrong, except, of course, saying that being judgmental is wrong. In Luke 13:3, Jesus says, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" and illustrates for us that he is not tolerant of sin!

In Luke 19:45-46, we read how Jesus went into the temple and drove out the moneychangers, and then says to them, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." This also illustrates that Jesus was not tolerant of those who defile God's house.

Not only was Jesus intolerant of some things while He was on this earth, the Bible tells us that He will not be tolerant when He comes again. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Paul tells us that Jesus will come with "flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." Jesus is most decidedly not tolerant of those who do not obey the Gospel!

God's Word does teach tolerance, but not tolerance of sin. Rather, it teaches tolerance of people, not their behavior. God does not desire that anyone should perish, but that "all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

What about the *presentability* of the church and its message? Should that be changed? Most of those who advocate changing the presentability of the church are talking about making the church more entertaining. They want fun and games.

God is not the author of confusion but of peace. How confusing worship would be if the church caters to each person's idea of fun and games. In 1 Corinthians 14:40,

we are taught, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (cf. 14:33). The Corinthian church turned the Lord's supper into fun time, and some even got drunk (11:21). This caused them to be guilty of the body and blood of Jesus Christ by taking it in this unworthy manner.

Paul told us in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Further, in the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21), and he decried the wisdom of this world which tells us that the message of the cross is foolishness. Paul says, "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1:19). He goes on to say, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1:20). The message of the cross and the method of its presentation are not up to us.

The church is not to be like a politician and take polls to see which way the wind is blowing and then go in that direction to gain votes and followers. The church is to be governed by principles—eternal principles. If that pleases men, good; if it does not, too bad for those who are displeased, but the church must not waver. The church is often counter-cultural, and that is what makes her a "city set upon a hill."

We need not please the men of this world; on the contrary, the Scriptures teach that we are not to please men. Ephesians 6:6 tells us

we are not to act "with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the **servants** of Christ." Paul tells us in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Feel-good theology says that anything that makes you feel good is right. Christianity says obeying God is right and will give you peace—and that makes you feel good. There is a difference between saying that feeling good is the standard for conduct, and saying that right conduct produces happiness. Some seem to say, "I know that I am right because I feel good." We ought to say, "I know that I am right because I obey the Gospel, and that makes me feel good."

Practicing feel-good theology has another detrimental effect of even greater importance: one cannot be saved until one is convicted and convinced of his own sin. You cannot convince a person of his sin by using the "I'm OK, you're OK" methods which are advocated today. No one seeks God until he is convinced that he is a sinner and needs God. There is such a thing as "godly sorrow that works a repentance that is not to be repented of."

Some advocates of feel-good theology say, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." That is true, but we seek the souls of men, not flies.

Should the church change to be tolerant of sin or to be more entertaining? Not according to the Word of God! The Bible has not changed, people and their needs have not changed, the church should not change.

Liberal, KS

Delightful Pleasures

Don Tarbet

Did you ever have “delightful pleasures?” These are two distinctively different words in English but are related in their roots. No Scripture uses them together, but when we **do** use them together, it gives added emphasis to a situation. They are synonymous in meaning, but their use in Scripture brings certain points to the surface. *Eden* means “delight,” and the first time the word is used is in Genesis 3:6 in the ASV, where Eve saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was *pleasant* (KJV) to see. In this lesson, we shall note the separate uses of the word.

First, consider *delight*. We begin by looking at it from God’s viewpoint, as to that in which He does and does not delight. God does not delight in **disobedience** to His will. When King Saul was to utterly destroy the Amalekites, but brought back part of his booty and began to make excuses for his sin by claiming the people wanted to sacrifice them unto God, Samuel firmly rebuked him for his sin by asking, “Has the LORD *as great delight* in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:23). God is delighted each time a sinner repents and turns to Him in obedience.

Neither does God delight in **dishonest gain**. Solomon wrote, “Dishonest scales *are* an abomination to the Lord, But a just weight is His **delight**” (Pro. 11:1). James 5:1-5 discusses such in detail.

Additionally, God does not delight in **wickedness**. Isaiah wrote:

But you are those who forsake the Lord, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, And who furnish a drink offering for Meni. Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose *that* in which I do not **delight** (Isa. 65:11-12).

Now note some things in which God **does** delight. He delights in prayers that are offered from the heart of the obedient. “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD. But the prayer of the upright is His **delight**” (Pro. 15:8; cf. Psa. 66:18; 1 Pet. 3:12).

The Lord also delights when wickedness is rebuked. “But those who rebuke *the wicked* will have **delight**, And a good blessing will come upon them” (Pro. 24:25; cf. 28:23; Luke 17:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:1-3).

Now, let us look at *delight* from man’s viewpoint. The man is blessed who delights in the Lord. “**Delight** thyself also in the LORD; And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa. 37:4—KJV).

Man is also to delight in the law of the Lord. David wrote concerning the man who walks uprightly, “But his **delight** is in the law of the LORD; And in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2—KJV; cf. 119:16, 47).

Second, let us look at *pleasure*. We begin by again looking at it from God’s viewpoint—the negative and the positive. God does **not** take pleasure in the death of the

wicked. “‘Do I have any **pleasure** at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord GOD, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’” (Eze. 18:23 see also 18:32).

Neither does the Lord have pleasure with the apostate—one who leaves Him completely. “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no **pleasure** in him” (Heb.10:38; cf. 10:39).

On the positive side, the Lord **does** have pleasure in the obedient. “The LORD taketh **pleasure** in them that fear him, In those that hope in his mercy” (Psa. 147:11—KJV).

God also takes pleasure in making the kingdom available to man. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good **pleasure** to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32—KJV).

Finally, let us look at pleasure from **man’s** viewpoint. Man should always take pleasure in **not** loving pleasure or being addicted to it. “He who loves **pleasure** will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich” (Pro. 21:17; see also 2 Tim. 3:4).

Then, man should take pleasure in not living in rebellion to God but doing His will in righteous living. “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the **pleasures** of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25; cf. 2 Pet. 2:13). In contrast, we are to love righteousness.

Heaven will be a place of delight and eternal pleasure. It will be for those whom God delights, and those who delight in Him and do His will.

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Errors Heard from Those Who Have Left the Church

Charles Pogue

Over the years there have been many who have abandoned the church of Christ. Some of those have left the church and gone into indifference if not total unbelief. There may be a greater number who have left and joined forces with the denominational world. There are several videos posted on YouTube by some of the people who give their excuses for leaving the body of Christ and have joined themselves to religious error. Following are a few of the ones I have heard.

They say churches of Christ claim there must be authority for everything one does in worship. It is not the churches of Christ who made that rule, God did. Colossians 3:16-17 demonstrate the mandate is set in stone. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” It is God who has said we must have authority for all we do in worship, not members of the church of Christ.

Often, those who have left the church accuse us of overemphasizing doctrine. Let them consider a truth. No one can overemphasize anything God requires of man. So far as doctrine is concerned, the New Testament warns us not to be carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul reminds the younger preacher he left in Ephesus to charge some to teach no other doctrine. The apostle then lists some things contrary to sound doctrine (1:4-10). In Romans, Paul expresses his joy those brethren obeyed from the heart the doctrine delivered to them (Rom. 6:17). We all are to be nourished or brought up in the words of faith and good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6). Paul further instructed Timothy that “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (4:13). In the oft-quoted 2 Timothy 4:2-4, Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word in season and out of season. He was to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering, and what else? Doctrine! How important is doctrine? The apostle John states it clearly. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not

God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Sound doctrine cannot be overemphasized.

Again, those who have left the church falsely accuse brethren of minimizing God’s grace. What in the world do they think teaching and preaching concerning the cross of Christ are if not maximizing the grace of God? We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is a gift from God. Why? Because none of us can save ourselves. We are all guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23), the wages of which is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord (6:23). We are not guilty of minimizing God’s grace, but rather those who have left seem to have forgotten that the grace that brings salvation has appeared unto all men, but it does not save all men. Instead, it **teaches** us. God’s grace teaches us how not to live and how to live (Tit. 2:11-15). How are we to live? As obedient children (1 Pet. 1:14-16). The point is grace and obedience to the doctrine of Christ cannot, they must not, be separated. Faithful members of the church are not guilty of minimizing grace. Rather, those who have left the church have

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

God Is

“The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*” (Psa. 14:1). If there is no God, then everything and anything goes. Thus, as David continues that Psalm, he writes, “They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good...* they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (14:1, 3). Denial of God leads to wickedness and moral corruption. Without God, there is no standard of right and wrong, and we become our own standard. When we are our own standard, then anything and everything becomes *right*, and there is no wrong. Thus, if the Nazis determined to brutally murder over six million Jews, no one has the right to say it was wrong. Brother Thomas Warren effectively used this in his debate with Anthony Flew to falsify the atheistic position. However, in falsifying the atheistic position, the only alternative is that God exists.

It is our responsibility to “Prove all things” (1 The. 5:21). Therefore, it is our responsibility to prove God exists. Through the knowledge we gain (by proof) we believe that God exists. “But without faith it is impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of

them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). We cannot please God without faith including faith that God exists. Yet, faith is based upon evidence (11:1). When the proper evidence is presented, we can confidently state: “I know God exists.” That becomes the basis of the faith that saves. Can the proper evidence be presented which proves this? Indeed it can be (and must be).

What was mentioned at the beginning is an argument from morals. There does exist such a thing as outside, objective moral law; there is moral law beyond or greater than international law. Since there is objective right and wrong, then there must be an ultimate Good (God) by which real right and wrong are determined. There are actions that are right and will always be right, just as there are certain actions that will always be wrong no matter the time or place. That is real, objective moral law, thus there must be a Lawgiver who is God.

David also wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (19:1). What David wrote long ago, points to the fact that the universe declares not simply the fact of God but His glory and handywork. Let us notice a couple of arguments using the universe.

There is the **Cosmological Argument** stating that for every effect there must be a sufficient or adequate cause. This universe exists. Thus, there must be an adequate or sufficient cause. There are only two alternatives as to a cause of the existence of the universe: (1) evolution, or (2) a Supreme Being which is God. Evolution is not a sufficient or adequate cause. Therefore, a Supreme Being (God) exists. Using

this same argument relating to man: If a contingent being exists, then the absolute necessary being (God) exists. I (a contingent being) exist; therefore, God exists.

A second argument is the **Teleological Argument**. The marvelous design of this universe can only be explained in light of a Designer (God). The design is so precise we can determine exactly where a planet will be at a precise time so we can send ships to those planets and land on them. That type of design can only be explained in light of a Designer (God). The human body is often used to illustrate this argument: the marvelous design involved in the human body (the hand, eye, respiratory system, skeletal system, etc.) can only be explained in light of a designer (God). In an argument form, there is a deduction from order and adjustment to design and in turn from design to a Designer (God). Since it is very obvious that order and adjustment do exist, it is equally clear that God exists. The Hebrews’ writer put this argument this way: “For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4).

While these are more philosophical, the Bible itself proves the existence of God. The unity of the books of the Bible can only be accounted for by God. There are two

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Testaments containing sixty-six books written by about forty men coming from various backgrounds, with different occupations, different nationalities, speaking different languages, and writing under different circumstances. Their writing covers possibly as much as 10,000 years of man's existence (history) on earth, written over at least 2,400 years. While there is a diverse group of men, when one puts their writings together there is a unity of thought and presentation. Each book complements the others. One cannot understand one testament without an understanding of the other. A couple of adages have come down to us because of this: "The Old is by the New explained, the New is in the Old contained"; "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed." There is no way to account for such unity except a Divine Being directing the men in what they write.

There are several different ways to establish the fact of God's existence from the Bible: fulfilled prophecy; influence; victory over all attacks to destroy it; scientific inerrancy; etc. I will, in this short article, only mention one other, the testimony of Jesus of Nazareth. As Peter said in his sermon on Pentecost, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22). The "miracles and wonders and signs" prove that He was approved of God which in turn proves God's existence.

The crowning evidence regarding Jesus of Nazareth is His resurrection from the dead. The resurrection proves Him to be the Son

of God (Rom. 1:4), proving the existence of God. However, can we prove that Jesus was raised from the dead? Without a shadow of doubt, it can (and has) been proven. We can put this historical account to the test history and conclude that He was raised from the dead. We can prove historically that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and the third day the tomb was empty. Brother Rex A. Turner set forth nine facts accepted by both friend and foe in *Sound Doctrine*, October 1985.

1. Both grant that a man by the name of Jesus lived.
2. Both grant that he arose to great heights of prominence, particularly among the common people.
3. Both grant that he suffered the crucifixion of the Roman Cross and was thought to be dead when he was taken from the cross.
4. Both grant that his body was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
5. Both grant that a great stone was laid at the mouth of the tomb.
6. Both grant that the seal of the Roman Governor was affixed thereto.
7. Both grant that a Roman guard—consisting of from fifteen to sixty men—was stationed about the tomb.
8. Both grant that sometime after the third morning the body of Jesus disappeared.
9. Both grant that his disciples came to believe with unshakable confidence that their lord had been raised from the tomb by the power of God.

The question that must be asked is: What happened to the body? There are various answers given to

this important question. One answer is called the Swoon Theory. Around 1800, various men began claiming Jesus never died on the cross but only passed out (fainted or swooned). However, the soldiers, who were experts in death, declared Him to be dead. Roman law did not permit the removal of a body from the cross until death was obvious and certain. Then one of the soldiers pierced His side and there came out blood and water (John 19:34) evidencing death. There is simply no evidence for a swoon theory that men 1800 years after the fact invent.

Another theory is that the body was stolen. This is divided up into those who claim the enemies of the Lord stole the body and those who hold His friends stole it. If you consider the enemies stealing the body, they had no motive for doing so. They wanted Jesus dead and in the grave which meant they were victorious. They are the ones who requested Pilate to put a guard at the tomb which would be counterproductive if they planned on stealing the body. The *coup de grace* of this view is the enemies would have produced the body when the apostles accused them of murdering Jesus, but God raised Him up (Acts 2:23-24; 3:15; etc.).

The enemies of Jesus spread the idea that the friends of Jesus stole the body (Mat. 28:11-15). The chief priests unwittingly gave credence to the fact of the empty tomb. The absurdities in this report from the soldiers abound. Roman soldiers would not sleep while on guard. Nevertheless, if they were asleep, how did they know the body was stolen? Also, how would they know **who** stole the body? Surely, if they had been asleep, the activities of

the friends of Jesus would have awakened them. Why would the chief priest and elders pay the guards if they fell asleep at their duty (especially considering they are the ones who asked Pilate for the guard)? Why would the guards have to be bribed to tell the truth?

If the friends of Jesus had stolen the body, what did they do with it and why was it never found? They would then have to invent the resurrection story and keep it consistent between all of them. However, there was no motive or advantage to inventing such a story and it became a disadvantage for them. They were persecuted, tortured, and put to death for what they all

knew was a lie. That is not what reasonable men do. Additionally, there is no way to account for the change in the apostles if they stole the body (much could be said about this as they were a beat, defeated, demoralized group of men and became men of courage and strength).

The only way to account for the empty tomb is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead proving Him to be the Son of God and thus proving the existence of God. However, we must also account for the witnesses and their testimony. For space sake, I will not go through all the testimony of the witnesses but the resurrection more than meets

the criteria for acceptance as a historical fact based upon their testimony. There is no other historical event so completely attested to as the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave proving Him to be God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

We can have confidence that God exists, and we can prove such in multiple ways. We have no need for something more probable than not. Yes, we are to “Prove all things” (1 The. 5:21) including the existence of God. An easy task by going through the evidence (even though some will still reject the evidence and proof).

MH

Continued from Page 1

decided to minimize obedience.

Concerning the matter of grace, some who have left the church claim focusing on striving for perfection puts down grace. If such be the case, the writer of Hebrews does the same thing. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1). We are all weak and erring. Yes, all of us sin, but over and over the New Testament warns us to stay away from sin and do what is right. Jesus, Himself, said not to minimize obedience. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24). *Strive* refers to a struggle, to contend for a prize with difficulties standing constantly in our way. Our English word *agonize* is a transliteration of the Greek word translated “strive” in the King James. The claim that focusing on striving for perfection puts down grace is

the opinion of some, but an opinion is all it is. One wonders if such people are down on Paul who over and over, in Galatians 5, Colossians 3, and Ephesians 4, in particular, contrasts the life of the new man with the old man. Was Paul wrong to tell the Romans when one rises from the watery grave of baptism he is to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4)? Peter sums this point up well in 1 Peter 4:15-16: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” The deserters who make this false charge against the faithful are the ones guilty of minimizing something. They minimize Scripture!

Many of those who leave the church claim it is a denomination among denominations. They tell us there are Christians scattered throughout the various churches of

men. These are guilty of denying the oneness of the church. As in all the other excuses they appeal to, they ignore the Scripture. Jesus said He would (Mat. 16:18) and did (Acts 2) build His church. There is only one body (Eph. 4:4) which is His church (1:22-23). Therefore, there is only one church. The New Testament describes all things concerning that body including its worship, mission, and organization. In other words, the New Testament is the pattern for the church (Heb. 8:1-13). Paul instructed the Corinthians to speak the same things and for there to be no divisions among them. The apostle sent Timothy to Corinth to remind them of the things Paul taught them, which were the exact same things he taught in every congregation (1 Cor. 4:17).

Those who have left the church and who now claim the church is one among many denominations need to consider Paul’s writing to the Corinthians instructing both

them and us to be of the same mind, to teach the same things, and for there to be no divisions among us (1:10). If the deserters are right in their belief that there are Christians in the different denominations is right, and there are divisions in all of them regarding the matters Paul listed, we are all lost. If not, why not?

Departures from the unity of doctrine, practice, and manner of life are reasons the Scripture gives us the clear command to practice the withdrawal of fellowship. John wrote concerning some, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). Many of those who went out from us have proven themselves to have

never really been one of us.

From the various ones I have heard speak who left the church at some point in their lives, I have concluded three things regarding their thinking. First, they have the wrong idea that we are full of arrogance when we insist that we can absolutely know the truth. What an attack that makes against Jesus Himself, Who said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth, shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The second thing is they have abandoned the necessity of being obedient in all things. Their condition is sad in that Paul wrote, "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things (2 Cor. 2:9).

Third, they seem to have bought into the popular Calvinist error of once saved always saved. If so, they

need to return to the Scriptures and meditate on passages such as 2 Peter 2:20: "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."

Jesus died for and built one church, His church. He did not die for the denominations of men, the various community churches popping up all over the country, nor for those in the various world religions who do not honor the God of the Bible nor esteem Jesus as His only begotten Son. No one outside the church of Christ will be saved regardless of whether they have never been members of it or if they have gone out from us.

Deceased

The Message of Christ to the World

Guy N. Woods

The most casual observer of men and events must surely be impressed with the fact that ours is, truly, a day of confusion and chaos. Principles long believed to be inviolable are surrendered daily, institutions the most sacred are despised, and governments for ages considered invincible now totter on their foundations. The spirit of restlessness hovers like a heavy cloud over the earth, and bewilderment and doubt characterize a significant portion of the race. Men with fear in their eyes and terror in their hearts plead piteously for an opportunity to live at peace with themselves and with each other.

Vast segments of society live in daily want of life's necessities, and little children, gaunt with hunger,

their bodies wracked with pain and disease, move helplessly toward an inevitable destiny they do not deserve, but cannot avoid.

Throughout the earth, the wisest and most intellectual men among us, instead of devoting their energies toward making the world a better place in which to live, are engaged in a mad race to create fearful engines of destruction capable of annihilating whole peoples in a matter of moments.

Here and there, discordant voices rise above the din of confusion that swells through the world and offer their vain philosophies, each of which, when tried, mocks the hearts of the hopeful and teaches again the age-old lesson of man's utter inability to direct his steps.

Must we accede to the cheerless doctrine of fatalism and conclude in the light of these facts that we are nothing more than the creatures of a blind, inexorable fate, worthless pawns in the hands of unreasoning forces, individuals. Without purpose or design in the world? Have we no other destiny than to stand helplessly by and see ourselves drawn inexorably into the maelstrom of destruction without hope of salvation or deliverance?

It is indeed a sad but revealing commentary on human nature that in our search for the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, we choose deliberately to close our eyes to a philosophy of life that has never once failed to satisfy all of the longings and aspirations of the human

heart.

Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Christianity, therefore, offers us **abundant life**.

Is this, too, nothing more than a vain and empty promise, destined to create hopes and expectations it can neither satisfy nor fulfill? Let us examine it carefully and see what it has to offer to the world.

Its Founder and Head is the revealer of all spiritual truth. Before He left the earth, He assured His disciples that provision had been made for them to be guided into all the truth. Years later, one of His disciples asserted that all things pertaining to life and godliness had been delivered. Therefore, it follows that Christianity does not seek to solve life's difficulties by applying human plans or efforts, but to them applies principles heaven-born and hence fully adequate to accomplish that for which they were originated.

Only the most thoughtless today believe that the world in which we live is without intelligible direction. Those who **really think** have no difficulty accepting the reasonable conclusion that the order and perfection everywhere manifest in the universe must be the result of purposeful and intelligent planning. "In the beginning God created" is the first article of faith of those who have thought things through regarding the material universe about it. A divine superintendency, preceded by a miraculous creation, is a postulate few today have the hardihood to deny.

These facts premised, it is highly significant that Christ (founder of Christianity) is the public declaration of the great Jehovah to the

world. Said He of Himself: "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal *him*" (Luke 10:22). Again: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:8). And still further: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*" (1:18). The words "declared *him*" mean literally "made him plain." To *declare* is to make manifest, to bring out into the open. Christ, therefore, has as it were, brought God out into the open—**made him plain!** No longer may men refuse to obey God on the pretext that He is too obscure to be known. Christ is His public announcement, the open and official revelation of His glory to the world. Hence, to know Christ is to know the Father; to acquaint oneself with the principles He enunciated is to know the will of Jehovah.

It is, then, pertinent to inquire: What is the message of God through Christ to the world?

Overshadowing all else is the boundless, immeasurable, passionate love which He felt for the wayward children of the earth as manifested in the supreme sacrifice of His Son to die the shameful and ignominious death of the cross for their redemption. *Redeem* was used frequently in the first century of the transaction by which one went into the slave market and purchased freedom for another. Thus, our Lord went into the slave market of sin and purchased our complete freedom with His precious blood, thus delivering us from the bondage of sin and giving us liberty and freedom in Christ Jesus. In describing the wondrous love that prompted such a sacrifice, Paul does so in this manner:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 4-7).

That is, God plans to put the redeemed **on exhibition** throughout all ages as a continual demonstration of the "exceeding riches of his grace" as manifested to fallen and sinful man.

However, we cannot conclude that Christianity is simply "another worldly" affair, designed to govern and regulate man in another sphere, but with little practical benefit here. This charge, though often lodged against it, is false in every detail. Every relationship of life is recognized and regulated in the New Testament. It is impossible for a child of God to find himself in any situation that he can be in wherein he cannot find explicit directions touching his conduct as a Christian therein.

Before He ascended, the Lord laid plans for a divinely purposed order of society, which He designated as the kingdom of God. The first word of His public teaching was, incidentally, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; and His last words, spoken just before He returned to His Father, were concerning this kingdom. This institution was the dominant thought in all of His teaching, the center of His plans and purposes, touching the redemption and final salvation of all men. Its principles are of the most exalted nature, superior to any ever formulated before or since. Adhered to and faithfully followed, they would turn the world into a veritable

paradise. Were all men everywhere willing to submit themselves to it, war would immediately cease and be ever thereafter impossible. He revealed the fact of human brotherhood, urging through one of His disciples that God hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth.

In His view, all men were destined to be brothers, not enemies; friends, not fighters of one another, but following always and implicitly the Golden Rule: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."

The followers of Christ invariably make the best citizens, for they "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; the most faithful husbands, for "they love their wives, and are not bitter against them"; the best wives, for they obey their husbands in the Lord; the best parents, for they bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the best children because they honor and obey their parents all of their days; the best employees, who with good will render service, not as unto man, but as unto Christ; and the best employers, who, forbearing threatening, give to their servants that "which is just and equal."

In a word, Christianity gathers up every human relationship and ordains that those who profess to adhere to its principles conduct themselves in such fashion as to reflect credit on the institution to which they belong and to Him who founded it. Recently, an able jurist observed that "the teachings of Jesus contain those principles that must solve all the social and economic problems of our time."

Christ taught the sanctity of the marriage relation, honored a wed-

ding with His presence, and established the indissolubility of the marriage bond, allowing it to be broken for one cause only. He taught the right of private property and forbade an improper desire for that which belongs to another. He visualized a state of society wherein all hate is eliminated and where men love one another and seek each other's good. His were indeed the highest ideals of human life, the most sublime fellowship ever launched. He taught that the supreme good is in rendering the greatest service to the largest number of people. He made it plain that the way up is first down in pointing the way to true greatness! "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them," He once said to His disciples, "But so shall it not be among you." He wanted them to know, "but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:42-44).

"Not I, but others" was, and remains, the watchword of His standards, the slogan that motivates His faithful followers, the fundamental principle governing and regulating the lives of those who are indeed His own.

The church of the New Testament purchased with His precious blood and vitalized with His Spirit—the kingdom of God on earth—is the divine conservator of His principles, the agency through which He has elected to operate here below. As such, its place in man's redemption is essential and irreplaceable. Only as it can function in harmony with its divine purpose is it able to accomplish that for which it was established in the earth. Far from mini-

mizing its importance, it should be elevated to its rightful place and sphere in life and allowed to perform its Divine obligation of bearing the message of life and salvation to the world. Just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus bade the disciples to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He admonished them that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Moreover, repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in connection with the same message—all of it to go forth from Jerusalem. In pursuance of that Divine order, they assembled in the city appointed as the New Testament church's birthplace. Faithfully the message was preached; thousands heard and obeyed and were thereupon added to the church. Adequate for all the human family's needs then, it remains so today and awaits only an opportunity to demonstrate its all-sufficiency for our age and time.

It points us to Almighty God; it offers to reclaim the human soul for an immortal destiny; it reminds us of Jesus Christ; it comforts broken hearts; it is a friend of education and culture; it exhibits the highest type of brotherhood; it stands for social justice and civic righteousness; it is the greatest builder of morals; it stands ever before us as an implacable foe of evil; it inspires to health and happiness; it expounds our duty to our God, to our neighbor, and ourself; it is a big brother to every needy soul and worthy cause; it is the mother of all that is best in our civilization; it is a guardian of the home, herald of the Lord's day, and defender of the Bible.

Is it not worth a trial?

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



“Will Ye Also Go Away?”

C. D. Plum

The trend is away from God and Jesus. Largely it has ever been so. The question that heads this article, “Will ye also go away?” is suggestive of this truth. Sad! Yes, indeed, but it is the truth.

Jesus’ preaching was received no more readily than when He was on earth than His Word is received by the masses of the people today at the hands of faithful Gospel preachers. They still say of His preaching: “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60). They look upon faithful preachers as next to being illiterate, as they contend “for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

The exodus from Jesus affected Him. It seemed to make Him doubtful of His apostles. At least, He put them on the spot by the question: “Will ye also go away?” Whether Peter’s statement carried much assurance to Jesus, given his denial of Him later, judge ye; but his statement was full of truth. Said Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). If we consider Peter’s question most seriously, we will not join the growing movement away from the Lord and truth.

The Trend Was Away from God

In every Bible age, the trend has been away from God. Let us read, think, and heed the warnings of the things written aforetime which “were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).

The Patriarchal Age was the first age. It lasted twenty-five hundred years [about four thousand years for the Gentile world—editor]. What was the trend in this age? It was away from God. The exodus was on a grand scale. In about the last one-third of this age, conditions were terrible. But let the Scripture describe these conditions. We read:

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. 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 (Gen. 6:5-7).

This not only gives a vivid description of the trend but the result of this sinful exodus. Destruction!

Look now at the Jewish Age of the world, the second age. This age

lasted about fifteen hundred years [applying itself to the Israelite nation only—editor]. Here, again, the trend was away from God. In about the last one-third of this age, we see Ezra, the prophet, in heaviness. As to what he did and what he said, let Ezra tell us. Here are the burning words:

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens (Ezra 9:5-6).

A fine way, indeed, for Israel to show appreciation to God! How soon Israel forgot the Egyptian deliverance via the Red Sea! How soon the manna and quails were forgotten! How soon the crossing of raging Jordan! How soon they forgot that God gave them a land that flowed with milk and honey! This age, too, was closed with sin on the increase.

The Trend Is Away from God

If we would only learn from the

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Christianity

We as Christians need to be able to make a case for Christianity. We are to “Prove all things” (1 The. 5:21) and to “*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet. 3:15). The apostle Paul when he was in Athens was taken to the Areopagus to make a case for Christianity (Acts 17). That which Paul was teaching was “strange things” to their ears. The Athenians were *superstitious* (devout, religious—BDAG) in their worship of idols. Thus, Paul set forth to declare to them the one true and living God of which they were ignorant. He was making the case for Christianity.

It is necessary to point out simply because something claims to be something, does not mean that it is. While the Catholic Church, for example, claims to be Christian, they are far from anything God established. Often Christianity suffers from those who make a claim to be Christian but do not follow the principles of Christianity. When making a case for Christianity, we must separate ourselves from and oppose these false religions claiming to be Christian.

Paul in making this case for

Christianity appealed to the one true God who created all things including creating man in His own image (Gen. 1:27). God does not live in temples made by men’s hands; nor is He worshipped with men’s hands but must be worshipped in spirit and according to Truth (John 4:23-24).

Paul proclaimed that God, who created all men in His image, created them of “one blood.” The Greeks thought all non-Greeks were barbarians and inferior to them. Think of how this same principle is needed in our world today and how much better our world would be if all had this view. Also, we learn the value of all human life from such teachings as Christianity. Learning this lesson would solve the problem of racism that is sometimes seen in our world. Such makes Christianity superior to any other system or philosophy.

He gives a little about the nature of this one true God and that we are to seek Him and that He can be found of those who seek. Man can find Him because He left evidence of Himself in nature (Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). This evidence should lead us to seek what God desires of us and live according to His Way. That involves every man repenting because we will be held accountable for our actions. God has given assurance of these things by raising Christ from the dead (see my editorial in July 2021 issue of *Defender*). The empty tomb makes the case for Christianity.

Additionally, Christianity offers the best ethic upon which to live. Without God, and thus Christianity, there is no moral basis upon which to determine right and wrong. Each person becomes a law to themselves so whatever they de-

termine is best. All man consists of is matter with no lasting or eternal consequences.

In considering the Christian ethic, let us notice what man has termed the *golden rule*. Jesus stated it in His Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat. 7:12). The superiority of Christianity is evidenced when we compare the various *rules* man devised and lives by. Many through the years have lived by the *iron rule*, which states, “Do whatever you are strong enough to do.” Another way of expressing this rule would be “might makes right.” Whatever one is big enough or strong enough to do is what he should do. It is the basis for Darwin’s survival of the fittest, that species (including man) survive and thrive only by destroying those who are weaker. Adolf Hitler is a prime example of this rule by attempting to destroy all those he considered as inferior and develop his “master race.” This rule is so evil that few, if any, will advocate such, but it is practiced by many.

The next *rule* has been called the *silver rule*. It can be stated as, “We should not do to others what we do not want them to do to us.” Another way of putting this is,

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

“What you do not wish done to you, do not do to others.” Many philosophers and religious leaders have taught this rule as a way of life. However, Lenski described this rule as “no more than the voice of selfishness,” then added, “this is the egoism which withholds injury lest it suffer injury in return.” The major emphasis in this *rule* is that it is negative in nature; it forbids much but it enjoins nothing. This principle eliminates any help or assistance given to the downtrodden.

One other *rule* that has been given is called the *ulterior motive golden rule*. This rule states, “Whatever you would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, so that they will be kindly disposed to do unto you what you wanted in the first place!” This rule has no concern for others except as what they can do for you. It is selfish and directed only in one’s self-interest. If they cannot provide what you want, then there is no motive for doing good to them.

The *golden rule* is the highest form of ethics. William Barclay

stated, “It is the topmost peak of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching.” He goes on to point out the original aspect of this rule: “This is something which had never been said before. It is new teaching, and a new view of life and of life’s obligations.” Notice with me five characteristics of the *golden rule*. First, it is **reasonable**. All people have the same rights as we have and should be treated as we desire to be treated. Recognizing everyone has the same rights is inherent in that God created us in His image (Gen. 1:27). Second, it is **equitable**. God is no respecter of persons (He does respect character) and there should not be with us. The *golden rule* allows all people to treat others the same (as we would want to be treated). Third, it is **positive**. It is the doing of good and not simply inaction or a failure to do evil. It does not allow inaction on our part; we must be actively doing good. Fourth, it is **universal**. It applies to our dealings with all men. Often, we are willing to treat some men according to this rule, but this rule demands our treatment of all

men with the doing of good. Then fifth, it is **evangelical**. The greatest good we would have others do to us is to teach us the Gospel of Christ to the saving of our souls. Thus, in doing to others as we would have them do to us, we will be teaching the saving power of the Gospel to others.

This one ethical standard shows the superiority of Christianity over any and all systems. There is nothing comparable to this standard. It was a standard set forth by Christ for all. If all people acted morally upon the basis of Christ’s standard, this world would immediately be changed and for the better. Fornication and adultery would immediately cease leading to the improvement and preservation of the home—the foundation of society and the church. Government would be changed for the better and seek everyone’s good. Wars would come to an end. Social ills would be solved in the right way. This one ethical standard of the golden rule makes a beautiful case for Christianity.

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Continued from Page 1

experience of others, this Gospel Age, the third and last age, could show improvement. We have not learned our lesson. Our departure from God is fast and furious. Jesus indicated as much when He said: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat. 24:12). And the Holy Spirit said: “But evil men and seducers shall **wax worse and worse**, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

The Government Is Alarmed

Our national government has

seen the handwriting on the wall. J. Edgar Hoover, our FBI man, is crying for a return to better moral standards. The extent to which crime has increased is appalling. Sex sins are no less so. The divorce rate has reached an all-time high. We are pleasure mad—sinful pleasure at that. The home standard is low, very low. Many times parents are leading the exodus from God. Respect for things sacred is fading away.

The Church Is in This Exodus

The church is drifting! Anyone

with eyes to see and ears to hear knows there is a foundation for this charge. We are rapidly moving away from God. Christians no longer have the respect for the Lord’s day that they should have. The Lord’s day to many is now stream day, field day, game day, and what have you. Christians are not teaching the children as they should that Lord’s day is **worship** day. Children used to be taught that they should be quiet and reverential on the Lord’s day; that they should not be loud and noisy on

this day; that they should lay aside their sports on this day. With such teaching, the children were led to inquire for a reason why. They were informed that it is the day Jesus rose from the dead and the day we should worship God. They learned thus to reverence and respect things sacred. It is not so any more among many professed followers of Jesus.

The divorce evil is in the church. Ignoring the only ground for divorce and remarriage on the part of the innocent—that of fornication (Mat. 19: 9)—children of God are crowding the divorce court. Some are not even getting divorces. They just step out with other men and women, and they do not seem to care who knows it. Elders of the church know these things many times yet make no effort to restore, and later to withdraw, if the restorative measure fails. Challenge these statements if you will, and I shall name positive proof so fast you will be surprised at my speed. Verily we are drifting!

Another real sign that the church is in this exodus from God may be noted thus: The country churches have few members, as a rule, anymore. The members have emigrated to the city. The last five years have seen a large number of members leaving the country. Are the city churches getting the benefit of their presence and contribution? Very little. The city churches, making few exceptions, are not gaining much. Many of the members, leaving the country, forget the Lord in the city, and many of the members in the city forget the Lord and go to the country. Thus, it goes. Nevertheless, the trend is the same—away from God.

If J. Edgar Hoover is alarmed

over the state of the country, no less am I alarmed over the state of the church. The specific time of 1,913 years, which we have traveled in this Gospel Age, sees this age filled with sin and tottering as a result of the same. Is there no hope of a return? I do not know. It could be, perhaps. The church has been in cycles of depression before and came out. It may do so again. However, in my twenty-eight years of preaching, I have not known a time when we have had in the church the worldliness which we have now. Even if the members of the church who are making a pretense of Christianity at this time, multitudes of them are filled with the movie craze, mixed-bathing craze, dancing craze, etc. And to the shame of the leadership, and the membership, if a preacher is bold enough to cry against these things (which even J. Edgar Hoover warns against) his job is no longer secure. His services are no longer wanted.

So, I do not know if the church will weather this storm of worldliness or not. But this I know: the answer is partly up to the preachers, and partially up to the elders, and partly up to the members. If the preachers will stand together and stand up against the worldliness which threatens the church, and if elders will back the preachers in so doing, multitudes of now lost church members will be rescued from the exodus from God. There is no question, but what God and Jesus will do their part, but will we do our part? Let elders and preachers possess a background that is not shadowed by crookedness. Let them not seek lordship. Let them seek only the glory of God, the exaltation of Christ, and the salvation of souls. If we get this

kind of cooperation among preachers and elders, the help of God is sure, and victory is certain.

Deceased

[editor—While brother Plum wrote this many decades ago, the things he stated for then are worse in both society and the church today. Ungodliness, worldliness, immorality, immodesty, covetousness, and the list goes on and on, is so prevalent in the church today that brother Plum would not even recognize it in most places and, more importantly, neither would our Lord. Elderships have so little Bible knowledge, instead of stopping the mouths of the “unruly and vain talkers and deceivers” (Tit. 1:9-10) they have become such. Preachers are certainly no better. The jealousies, backbiting, biting and devouring one another is resulting in being “consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15). “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2) is no longer accepted by elders, preachers, and brethren, much less the world. Paul’s reason for preaching the Word is true in our time: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). So, we have heaped to ourselves preachers who will preach little to none of God’s Word, and fill their time telling stories, moralizing, sharing how to be good neighbors, friends, the curing of social ills, etc., to the congregation. We have more workshops on how to handle money, bereavement, etc., than we do Gospel meetings. We must get back to preaching the Word, and if it offends people and they leave be-

cause of the Truth, then they have left the only thing that matters but it is their decision to spend eternity in torment instead of availing

themselves of the salvation found in the Scriptures. If we fail to warn them, then woe be to us (Eze. 33). Elders demand such preaching.

Members insist that the Word be preached in its purity. Let us get back to speaking as the oracles of God.]

Faithfulness Is Not Impossible

Lee Moses

Of all the discouragements a Christian must face, perhaps none surpasses the apostasy of once faithful brethren. The Christian is discouraged when he sees how error has gradually infiltrated and overcome congregations with whom he could once assemble and worship in spirit and in truth. The Christian is discouraged when colleges and schools of preaching that once served as spiritual lighthouses within their geographic regions now disseminate liberalism and Biblical agnosticism. The Christian is discouraged when children of God in whom he once placed the utmost confidence have lost all trace of conviction in the Gospel to which they once clung tightly. Such disappointing departures can cause a Christian to wonder: “If all these brethren cannot remain faithful, how can I? Is a life of faithfulness impossible?” Undoubtedly, such discouragement has caused some to throw in the towel, as they finally conclude, “Yes, a lifetime of faithfulness is more than I can give.” Or perhaps they redefine *faithfulness*, reasoning, “What the Bible teaches as faithfulness is more than God can reasonably expect.” Then they happily clear their newly lowered bar of “faithfulness,” which actually places them in the realm of faithlessness. They begin fellowshipping doctrinal error, ignoring immorality, and generally not living very differently from the

rest of the world; all the while convincing themselves that they are sufficiently faithful.

However, faithfulness—that is, true faithfulness—is not impossible, even in this age of apostasy, liberalism, and doubt. One can continue to follow the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16) that faithful Christians followed in times past. Let us consider a few reasons we can know that faithfulness is not impossible.

Because God Has Told Us What We Must Do

“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). One can lament that we live in an age of apostasy, but not that we live in an age without access to the Word of God. Bibles are more readily available and affordable than at any other time in history. And by reading and heeding, one can still be a “perfect...man of God...thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The Lord’s “divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3), and that applies to life and godliness in every year, generation, century, and millennium as long as the world stands. Even if others lose sight of following God, “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may

have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

Because God Warns Us What We Need to Avoid

The world is a spiritual minefield, capable of destroying souls attempting to pass through to the other side. But in His Word, God has shown us where all the *mines* are. He warns us to avoid false teachers and teachings (Mat. 7:15; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11), hatred (Gal. 5:20; 1 John 4:20), unbelief (Heb. 3:12; 4:11), enthrallment with human philosophy (1 Cor. 3:18-20; Col. 2:8), dimming of the spiritual perception (Eph. 4:18-19; 1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 3:13), fornication (1 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 13:4) and other sinful lusts (Mat. 5:27-29; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Pet. 2:11), fearfulness (Mat. 25:25; Rev. 21:8), responding in anger (Eph. 4:26, 31), foul language (4:29; Col. 3:8), and other sins and stumblingblocks that endanger the soul. Perhaps it may seem a bit much to avoid it all, but we can indeed “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). This brings us to another assurance that faithfulness is not impossible.

Because God Does Not Demand the Impossible

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not griev-

ous” (1 John 5:3). God does not expect people to do anything they cannot do. God expects Christians to be faithful in the midst. Jesus exhorted the church at Smyrna, and consequently all Christians, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Jesus’ primary point was not that one needs to be faithful until he dies, but rather that one must be faithful even if it costs him his life. However, if this teaches explicitly that one must be faithful regardless of the cost, it teaches implicitly that one must be faithful regardless of the duration; a teaching affirmed in numerous other passages (Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 3:14; 10:35-39). Additionally, God demands faithfulness regardless of how many others may depart from faithfulness: “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19; compare with 1 John 2:19). God expects us to “preach the word” when people no longer want to hear it, and when the few faithful Christians are being **killed** for their faithfulness (2 Tim. 4:1-8). Since God demands a life of faithfulness, and God does not demand the impossible, one can live a life of faithfulness from the time he puts on his Lord in baptism until the time his spirit departs the body for the beyond.

Because God Has Recorded Historical Examples of Faithfulness

“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). The word for *patience* in this

verse means “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty” and can be translated “patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness,” or “perseverance” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 1039). So, when Paul speaks of the “patience of the scriptures,” he speaks of “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty” that the Scriptures provide. One of the most powerful ways the Scripture provides the capacity to hold out or bear up is through its historical examples of faithfulness:

Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which **endure**. Ye have heard of the **patience** of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (Jam. 5:10-11).

As Jesus gave the exhortation to the church at Smyrna to “be faithful unto death,” He shortly followed the command with an example: “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan’s seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth” (Rev. 2:13). Many of the greatest heroes of Biblical history are those who remained faithful to God despite widespread apostasy, such as Noah, Elijah, and countless other prophets. Their lives serve as a testimony that faithfulness is not impossible.

Because the Blood of Christ Can Cleanse Any Willing Soul

Sometimes one can be discouraged by the overwhelming power of temptation and sin. One’s past love for the Lord may have waned,

and he may view himself as being past restoration to that first love. But as the hymn proclaims, “There is power in the precious blood of the Lamb.” “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Just as that power in the blood is available for the alien sinner willing to believe the Gospel of Christ, repent of sin, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of his sins (Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 22:16; compare with Rev. 1:5), the power in Christ’s blood is available for the child of God who gives in to temptation or goes astray: “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.... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7, 9). One who is “far off” from the Lord, and thus “without hope,” can be “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12-13). The blood of Christ brings **redemption**, purchasing our ransom from the slavery of sin (1:7; compare with Rom. 6:16-18). That blood brings **justification**, rendering a “not guilty” verdict from the judge (5:9). That blood brings “**boldness** to enter into the holiest [“holy place,”—ASV]” (Heb. 10:19). That blood purges one’s conscience from dead works that he may again serve the living God (9:14). God does not allow acquiescence to sin, but He makes provisions for His children who do—He demands faithfulness,

and the blood of Christ will do the rest. No matter how numerous or egregious may be the sins in one's life, he can be forgiven.

Because God Is Right

Regardless of how many may deviate from God's way, God's way is still the right way. As the psalmist praised"

Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments. Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous And very faithful. My zeal hath consumed me, Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Thy word *is* very pure: Therefore thy servant loveth it (Psa. 119:137-140).

Yes, the psalmist was very discouraged by those who had "forgotten" God's words. However, he never lost his certainty that God was right and continued to follow Him. We must not concern our-

selves with obtaining or being part of the largest following (John 12:42-43; Gal. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:20; 1 John 5:19). "Forsake the foolish, and live; And go in the way of understanding" (Pro. 9:6). "As for God, his way *is* perfect: The word of the LORD is tried: He *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Psa. 18:30). God's commandments are mandatory. His warnings are invaluable. His promises are certain. One who sides with God may not be on the side of the human majority, but he can know he is right. God is always right!

Conclusion

Perhaps the thoughts of this article are obvious and rudimentary. However, when one considers the numerous brethren who have lost heart at least partly because of the apostasy of others, it is apparent

that some are missing the obvious and forgetting the rudimentary. Yes, a lifetime of faithfulness is rare—it is the exception, not the rule (Mat. 7:13-14). However, it **can** be done and **must** be done—let us avail ourselves of the provisions and promises God makes, that we may finish our course with joy and faithfulness: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

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Worship

Michael Hatcher

The first time we are introduced to worship in the Bible we find out an important aspect of it. Cain and Abel both made an offering to Yahweh. Abel's offering was acceptable to God while Cain's was not. We learn that not all worship is acceptable to God. Yahweh tells Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen. 4:7). Abel offered a sacrifice by faith (Heb. 11:4) which comes from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), while Cain apparently did not.

As one considers the Law of Moses, God gave the Israelites very specific directions as to how to worship Him acceptably. He also gave them the day(s) they

were to come before Him and where they were to come.

As Jesus passed through Samaria (John 4), the woman Jesus spoke to asked Him about worship and specifically the place of worship. In His answer, Jesus let her know that their worship at Mount Gerizim was not the proper place of worship (4:22). Their worship was not acceptable to God because it was not in the right location. Again, we should learn that God does not accept all worship. He only accepts worship that is done in accordance with His Will. We are to worship the Father with the proper attitude and according as God has instructed (which has always

been the case from the beginning).

We observe more people who want to worship according to their desire instead of doing as God instructs. This is evidenced by the comments regarding the use of instrumental music in worship to God. God said to sing but never authorized mechanical instruments in worship to Him today (since God did not authorize their use for New Testament worship, their use is sinful). While seen in this aspect of worship, it is but one example of many to be seen today. Let us make sure we worship "Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23).

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



“The Way”

H. Leo Boles

Way is used in different senses in the Bible. It usually means the direction or course one follows—the road or the customary path. In a very easy way, it is applied to the course of human conduct, the manner of life which one lives. In some cases, the language may be such as to leave it indeterminate whether the way or course of conduct is good or bad (Deu. 28:29; 1 Sam. 18:14; 2 Chr. 27:7; Job 13:15; Pro. 3:6). Sometimes the way of conduct is of purely human choice without reference to either God or that which is good. Jesus, in Matthew 7:13-14, spoke of the two ways: one, the broad way; the other, the narrow way. Since all of God’s plans and purposes tend toward man’s salvation, we have the way of salvation.

Jesus, the Way

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus declares Himself to be the way to the Father. He had taught earlier in His earthly ministry:

No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is

written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

Jesus not only taught the way to the Father, but He set the example for us to follow. His teachings guide us from earth to glory; they teach us how to live here upon this earth. He first gave His teachings to His apostles, and then sent the Holy Spirit to guide them in teaching them to man. He then, by the Holy Spirit, made a record of His teachings, and we have the New Testament. All of the divine plans center in Christ; hence, He is pre-eminently “the Way.” Out of the fact that He is the way, we have the title “The Way” as one of the earliest names applied to Christianity. It is the way that His disciples lived, the life that they lived.

“The Way” in Acts

Luke, the writer of Acts, has frequently used “the way” to describe Christianity. With him, it is “the way of life.” Before Saul’s conversion, he had received “letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women,

he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). This means that if he found any walking in the footsteps of Jesus, or living the Christian life, he would have them arrested and punish them for it. Again, Luke uses this expression as follows: “But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” (19:9). Later on, the writer says: “And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way” (19:23). Later, when Paul was making a speech to the Jews, he said: “I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (22:4). Here the writer uses “the Way” to show that the persecution of Christians was the punishment for walking in “the Way.” Again, we have the term used by Paul in making his defense when Tertullus was charging him with being “a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5), in which he says: “But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Bible As God's Word

Is the Bible God's Word? Are other books God's Word? As Christians, we need to be able to establish the case that the Bible is the Scriptures and comes from the very breath of God. If the Bible is not God's Word, then it is good for nothing but the trash heap. While the Bible claims to be the Word of God, other books also make similar claims. Thus, can we prove the Bible is God's Word? Indeed, we can, as we must! There are several avenues to prove the Bible is God's Word. I will only have space to mention some. Several ways to prove the Bible as God's Word and thus proving God's existence were mentioned in the July 2021 editorial and I will refer you to those.

The unity of the Bible can only be accounted for by the inspiration of God. The Bible consists of two testaments containing 66 books. The Old Testament was written by about 32 different men (we do not know who wrote some of the books, thus there is no way to know exactly) while the New Testament was written by 8 men. These 40 different men came from various backgrounds (humble stations in life to the noble, some rich while some poor, some educated while others were uneducated), had

different occupations (kings, statesmen, soldiers, priest, preachers, fishermen, shepherds, physicians, tax-collector, tent-maker), were of different nationalities, spoke different languages, and wrote under different circumstances (on thrones, in prison, in exile and captivity, some honored while others dishonored). Their writings cover from 6-10 thousand years of man's existence on earth and are written over a period of at least 1,600 years and possibly 2,400 (if Job is the author of his book). One would have difficulty in finding a more diverse group of men. Yet, when you put all their writings together, they are not disjointed, separate entities, but they make a harmonious whole. Each book complements the others and there are no contradictions within them (sometimes difficulties, but never any contradiction). If you could take 40 different men today who had the variations these 40 men had yet writing over 24 years (instead of 2400 years) and they were writing on one subject, would we have the harmonious unit that is found in the Bible? There is no way to account for such unity except by the inspiration of God.

Internally, the Bible is an unparalleled demonstration of unity. Even though they are dissimilar, they are a single unit. Notice some of their dissimilarities. They are written in different languages: the Old Testament in Hebrew with some parts in the related dialect of Aramaic while the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. The Old Testament is concerned with the Israelite nation (other nations are taken under consideration only as they relate to the Israelites) while the New Testament dealing with

the Israelites initially almost immediately goes into a consideration of the Gentiles. Yet, one cannot understand the one without the other. No one can have a true understanding of the New without the Old, nor the Old without the New. We have a couple of adages that express this thought. The Old is by the New explained, the New is in the Old contained. Another, the New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed.

The doctrinal thesis shows the unity of these 66 books. The theme of the Bible is the redemption or salvation of sinful man. This theme is set forth and developed in the Old Testament. We see it was **planned** (before creation God planned a way to save man after he falls), **required** (in that man sinned and was cast out of the Garden and thus died), and **prepared** (God preparing the world for the Christ and His coming). This theme reaches its apex, climax, or summation; its fulfillment in the New Testament and the Christ Who died on the cross to redeem man. This redemption is **effected** (Christ coming, living without sin, and bearing our sins upon the cross), **shared** (Acts showing the plan shared with the world), **explained** (the Epistles), and **realized** (in the epistles and Revelation).

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

This doctrinal thesis is further emphasized in the various covenants. There was the covenant God made with Adam after he was cast out of the Garden. This covenant included the seed of woman who would bruise the head of Satan (destroy his power and giving a hint of the virgin birth (science did not discover women had a seed until the 1800s as science said the seed was in man and the woman just provided the soil). One of the great covenants is the one with Abraham. In this, there are three great promises: the nation promise, the land promise, and the seed of Abraham which would bless all families of the earth. There is the covenant with Israel. This covenant adds that the seed of woman and the seed of Abraham would be of the lineage of Judah (the kingly tribe). It also prophesied that this promised seed would not only be king but that He would be a priest (and a priest at the same time He is a king). Then there is the covenant at Calvary which is the fulfillment of all these covenants. Christ came being the seed of woman, he came from the lineage of Abraham and was of that kingly tribe of Judah. He became our great high priest offering His blood for the sins of all and thus blesses all humanity. Thus, we have in the Scriptures a harmonious presentation of redemption in the covenants.

The type and antitypes found in the Scriptures show a connection between the testaments that would be incomplete one without the other. There is a type antitype relation between Adam and Christ in 1 Corinthians 15. Isaac becomes a type of Christ in being offered upon the altar of sacrifice. There is

a great type antitype relation between Moses and Christ. God promised to raise up a prophet like unto Moses (Deu. 18:18-19). This relationship prompted James D. Bales to write a book, *The Prophet Like Unto Moses*, which is highly recommended. However, that typology does not end there as we observe it between Joshua and Christ (Heb. 4) and then between Elijah and Christ in that both were great prophets of God and both fasted 40 days and nights. Then there are the type antitype relationship between the various offerings and various feasts and Christ. One of the great studies of the Bible is the typology between the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament to the church of our Lord in the New.

The three dispensations of time show a unity of the Bible. The Patriarchal Dispensation is more of a family expression. Next comes the Mosaic Dispensation which is a national expression. The final dispensation, the Christian Dispensation is a worldwide or international expression.

The prophecies of the Bible demonstrate a unity of the Scriptures. There are prophecies concerning **individuals** like Abraham and the four great promises to him (promised nation—Israel, a great name—father of the faithful, all nations of the earth would be blessed—Jesus, and a promised land—Canaan), the prophecies to Ishmael, the prophecy to David that his Son would build the temple, the prophecy about king Josiah made over 300 years before he comes on the scene. There are prophecies concerning **nations** like the Israelites and their fall and for Judah to spend 70 years in captivity

(606 BC to 536 BC) and the fact that Cyrus would release them. There are prophecies relating to the destruction of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and others. Then Daniel's prophecy of 4 world empires in Daniel 2 and 7. On top of all these and more prophecies, there are over 300 prophecies concerning the coming **Messiah** in the Old Testament spelled out in minute detail. One must put the 66 books of the Bible together for these prophecies to make sense showing the unity of the Bible.

The Bible's **impartiality** demonstrates its origin is from God and not man. When one compares the writings of men with the Scriptures, one quickly observes the difference between the impartiality of the Bible versus the partiality of men's writings. An illustration of man and what he writes would be seen relating to who won World War II. If one goes to England, England won the war; if one goes to France, France is the nation who won the war; however, in the United States, it is the United States who won the war. There is partiality in the views of each nation. It has long been known that the winner of a war always writes the history of the war. The result is there is a great deal of revising of history.

On the other hand, the Bible is always completely impartial. It records the truth of both friend and foe; nothing is *painted over*. The Bible presents the good and it presents the bad. It presents great men, yet it shows their human frailties. Abraham is the father of the faithful, yet the Bible shows that he lied on two occasions about his wife. Moses was kept out of the Promised Land because he disobeyed God by striking the rock to

bring forth water instead of speaking to it (Num. 20), yet there was no other servant in God's house like unto him whom God spoke mouth to mouth. "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. 12:7-8). Aaron (Moses' brother, a leader of Israel, and becomes the first High Priest of the nation with every High Priest coming through him) when Moses was receiving the Law made a golden calf to worship in direct disobedience from what God had stated in the Ten Commandments and then lied about its origin (Exo. 20, 32).

The first king of Israel, Saul, was also presented as a cruel, barbarous man who eventually goes insane. The second king of Israel, David, was described by God as a man after His own heart. Yet, the Bible records his committing adultery with Bathsheba which finally leads to David murdering Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. The great prophet of God who appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, Elijah, runs in fear from a woman, Jezebel, when she threatens his life.

When the promised Messiah comes, His own hometown rejects Him twice (Luke 4:16, 24; Mark 6:1-6). Initially, the physical brothers of Jesus rejected Him (John 7:5), and only after the resurrection did they accept Him. God's chosen people, the Israelites, had Jesus crucified on the cross (John 1:11). John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus and bore witness to Him

(John 1:15; Mat. 11:11); yet, while in prison, there is the possibility that his faith wavers. Peter was described as a pillar in the church and an elder, yet he denied our Lord three times (Mat. 26:69-75). It appears as if all the apostles essentially gave up (John 21:3). The poem by H. L. Hastings aptly describes the Bible's impartiality.

When the Lord undertakes to tell His story of a sinful man, He does not select a poor, miserable beggar, and show him up; He does not even give the name of the thief on the cross, nor the wretched outcast who bathed the Savior's feet with her tears; but He takes King David from the throne, and sets him down in sackcloth and ashes and wrings from his heart the cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out my transgressions." And when he is pardoned, forgiven, cleansed and made whiter than snow, the pen of inspiration writes down the whole dark damning record of his crimes; and the king on his throne has not the power, nor the wealth, nor the influence enough to blot out the page; and it goes into history for the infidels to scoff at for three thousand years, "Who wrote that?"

The Bible's calmness demonstrates it as the Word of God. While Jesus said there is none greater than John the Baptist, when the Scriptures tell of his death, it is presented very matter of fact with no emotionalism. Man would have greatly embellished and elaborated on his death, but not the Scriptures. We observe the same calmness when dealing with the crucifixion of our Lord. Sermons, movies, books galore have been made dealing with the crucifixion of Christ. Just about all of them play to the emotions of man. How

many sermons have we heard that left many, if not all, in tears as the preacher describes the pain and anguish our Lord went through on the cross for the sins of each one of us. Yet, as one reads the Bible, it does not present the death of Christ in such a way. The Bible presents it factually and not emotionally.

The brevity of the Bible shows that it is something other than a human production. Some people cannot be brief if they had to be; they do not know how to write something short. Their emails or letters will be pages long. Yet, look at the Bible when it deals with even great events. The baptism of Christ in Matthew consists of 5 verses; the transfiguration of Christ is covered in 8 verses in Matthew. When we get to the death of the first apostle of Christ, Luke covers it in 11 words in English (Acts 12:2). When the Bible writes about the resurrection of our Lord, it is only a few lines that cover it. In comparison, think of the millions of books written on the Bible. Many of those books are larger than the Bible itself, and many of them are only dealing with a small portion of the Bible text. How brief the Bible is shows the Divine nature of its writing.

The Bible never needs revision. While translations, which are the work of fallible men, need to be revised and are subject to errors and shortcomings, the Bible itself does not because it is the work of God and not man. The writings of men need updating because many times this world changes. When the Bible touches on subjects like medicine, biology, topography (map-making), etc., it is always right and never needs updating while the

writings of men in these and other areas do. The only way to account for such is that the Bible is God's Word and not man's.

This is only one aspect of proving the Bible is God's Word. There are (as mentioned at the beginning of this article) many others available to us. Any one of these many ways proves the Bible is the Word of God. However, let me close with an anonymous poem.

Many years ago I entered the wonderful temple of God's revelation. I entered the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament Art Gallery where the pictures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua; Samuel and David and Daniel hung on the wall. I entered the music

room of the Psalms where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth the dirge-like wail of the weeping prophet Jeremiah; to the grand impassioned strains of Isaiah, until it seemed that every reed and harp in God's organ of nature responded to the tuneful touch of David, the sweet singer of Israel. I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes where the voice of the preacher was heard, and passed into the conservatory of Sharon where the lily of the valley's sweet scented spices filled and perfumed my life. I entered the business room of the proverbs, and passed into the observatory room of the prophets where I saw many telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far off events but all concentrated upon the Bright and Morning star which

was soon to rise over the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation. I entered the audience room of the King of kings and caught a vision from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I entered the Acts of the Apostles where the Holy Spirit was doing His office work in the forming of the church. I passed into the correspondence room where sat Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John penning their epistles. I stepped into the throne room of Revelation, where all towered into glittering peaks. I got a vision of the King seated upon His throne in all His glory and I cried, "All hail the power of Jesus name, Let angels prostrate fall, Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all."

MH

Continued from Page 1

all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets" (24:14). Luke speaks of the knowledge of Felix: "But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will determine your matter" (24:22). This is the same as "the way of salvation" (16:17), or "the way of the Lord" (18:25).

The Use of the Word

Luke uses "the Way" almost exclusively regarding the speeches of Paul and his life. When Paul started out as a persecutor of Christians, he was determined to punish those whom he might find "of the Way" that he might bring them to Jerusalem. Some years later, when Paul was preaching in Ephesus and persuading the people about the kingdom of God, some of his hear-

ers "spoke evil of the Way." This caused Paul to turn away from them. Then, again, as Paul was preaching in the same city and condemning idolatry, "there arose no small stir about the Way." Paul had found something which at one time he had gone out to persecute, but now he preaches with power and stirs up trouble everywhere he goes. This manner of life that Paul and others lived is called "the Way"—"the Way" with a capital "W." This manner of life was something new in the world and could be described by "the Way," in so much that it was a new way of living. Christ had taught His disciples to pray for their enemies. This was new to the world at that time. He had taught them to do good for evil and to bless them that persecuted them. This was strange and new to that age. In fact, it is strange and new to our age. The way of life in

Christ is the way which God teaches man to live; it is the way that leads to heaven—no one can go to heaven any other way. The poet has truly said:

I must needs go home by the way of
the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of
light
If the way of the cross I miss.

I must needs go on in the blood-
sprinkled way,
The path that the Savior trod,
If I ever climb to the heights sub-
lime,
Where the soul is at home with
God.

Then I bid farewell to the way of the
world,
To walk in it never more;
For my Lord says, "Come," and I
seek my home,
Where he waits at the open door.

“A New and Living Way”

The writer of the Hebrews’ letter says:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and *having* a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver

not; for he is faithful that promised (Heb. 10:19-23).

The Christian life was a new way of living. Nothing like it had appeared before; it was different from all the great religions of the ancient world. It was something that the sages of the ages had not found; it was something that the philosophers had never planned. It was, indeed, new to the world. It was a “new and living way.” It was a new way of living and bore new fruits. This little word, “the Way,” describes that way of life which

requires volumes to describe and instruct. It is the way of life that exhorts those in it to love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and self-control. This new way that leads to eternal life has no tribalism in it; it has no nationalism in it; it has no color line; no sectarianism in it. It is the way of happiness in this life and the life to come. Let all walk faithfully in this way, and they may claim heaven as their home.

Deceased

The Teacher’s Responsibility

Roger Genung

“My brethren, be not many masters [teachers—ASV], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (Jam. 3:1). James is saying, quite literally, to “stop becoming many masters.” He is not trying to discourage sound men from becoming teachers and presenting the truth. What James is dealing with here is to sound a firm warning to those who would be teachers, unprepared. Teaching was held in high esteem both among Jews and with the early Christians.

Paul had much to say about the act of imparting knowledge. In Romans 10:2 Paul speaks of those that “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” How many of us know people who have a zeal for God, but they are involved in denominational error? Their zeal is there, but not the knowledge. It is the Gospel teacher’s responsibility to reach these with the truth.

To the young evangelist Timo-

thy, Paul writes, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:13, 16). Paul says to *continue*. The teacher that begins to preach the truth and then for comfort’s sake, he waters down the Word so to not offend, he is the one to whom James, in our opening verse, is trying to keep from teaching. Paul instructs Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Here Paul speaks of “faithful men.” These are men who have proven themselves. These are men who will *continue*.

We must treat God’s Word with the honor it deserves

it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Let us who are Gospel preachers always rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and “Hold fast the form of sound words” (1:13). Let us fight the good fight of faith until we have finished our course (4:7). Let us never forget the charge that was given to our brother Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (4:2). Let us recall James’ exhortation and never forget our responsibility to God and His Word, and do not forget that all our labors on this earth will surely be worth it all when we see our Savior face to face.

Arkadelphia, AR

Was Stephen Praying to Jesus?

Don Tarbet

When the subject arises as to **whom** we should pray, the advocates of “prayer to Jesus” almost always and immediately bring up the so-called example of Stephen, as if Stephen could pray to Him, so can we. This is brought up even though nowhere in the Scripture does it ever say that we can or should pray to Jesus. Too, this is brought up in spite of the fact that we are taught to pray to the Father, in the **name** of Jesus. Let us examine the words of Stephen in Acts 7:59: “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

First, we might keep in mind that if Stephen was praying to Jesus, it does not necessarily mean that **we** are authorized to do so. Did not the apostle Paul take a Jewish vow that we are not to take? Did not Peter make a mistake in respecting Jews over Gentiles in Galatians 1? Did not Peter at first refuse to “slay and eat” (not wanting the Gentiles to receive the Gospel)? Did not John get rebuked for attempting worship to angels, in Revelation? Peter was caught up in the moment on the Mount of Transfiguration and said something without thinking it through. Though these men were inspired by God in their preaching and writing, they were not inspired in their **living** and in the **words** they uttered in life.

Let us look at the context of Stephen’s prayer. The scene is not an **ordinary** situation. Here was a man of God, having just delivered an inspired sermon, being stoned to death because of it. The heaven

being opened with a view of Jesus standing at the right hand of God was not ordinary, but very special indeed. Such never happens in our time of prayer and worship today. This was a **heavenly vision**. Where is any indication of a pattern or example for us today to address Jesus? Did not He Himself tell the apostles that when He went to the Father, they would no longer ask Him anything, but would ask the Father, in His (Jesus’) name? See John 14, 16. Inspired men are not authorized to do things that un-inspired men are to do, though the Lord may lead them in a way that is not characteristic of un-inspired men of any age.

Now, the instructions of the inspired apostles to **us** today reveal the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). Their message: (1) Pray to the Father; (2) Pray always to the Father (Eph. 5:20); (3) Pray always in the name of Jesus (5:20); (4) Lift our voice to God (Acts 4:24); (5) The church is to pray “unto God” (not unto Jesus—12:5); (6) Even in prison, prayer is “unto God” (16:25); (7) Disciples gave thanks “to God” (27:35). True, Jesus is also God, but He is not “God the Father.” When Jesus addressed God in John 11 at the tomb of Lazarus, He was not addressing **Himself** as the Lord but was addressing the Father (11:41). The Father and the Son have different roles in the scheme of redemption, as well as in the realm of worship.

One very important, and usually overlooked point of Acts 7 needs to be addressed. Luke, the inspired

writer, said that Stephen “**called** upon God” (7:59). The Spirit moved Luke to use the Greek word *epikaleo*, which means “to submit to, or submit to the authority of.” This word is used fourteen (14) times in the New Testament and is **never** used with reference to “prayer” a single time, nor does it refer to a prayer. Most of the time it is associated with the word *name*, suggesting a submission to authority, doing what is being authorized or commanded. In Acts 2:21, it is used **before** the word *saved*, and not referring to a prayer in connection with salvation. It is used again in Romans 10:13-14, showing that it pertains to something done to be saved (and certainly not *prayer*). In Acts 22:16, Saul was told to “arise and be baptized, **calling** [Gr. *epikaleo*] on the name of the Lord.” We may speculate as to what was meant in Acts 7:59 about *calling*, but it certainly does not refer to a “prayer.” He was responding to the presence of Jesus who showed His concern about a beloved believer being stoned to death, and it was an appropriate response from a man to His Lord in such a situation. Anyone under an identical situation today might well do the same.

Let us do things the way they are authorized, and always be pleasing to God and Jesus His beloved Son. Addressing Jesus in this manner was no more an example of prayer for us, than was the request of Saul to the Lord in Acts 9 a *prayer*, nor is the action of John addressing an angel in a vision an example for us to pray to angels today.

Denison, TX

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Is the Church of Christ a Cult?

Gary W. Summers

On a few occasions, the church of Christ has been called a cult by some. The purpose of this article is to explain why this statement is inaccurate. One disclaimer, however, is necessary, and that is that in the late 70s there was a group that split off from us that did become a cult. Chuck Lucas began what he designated the Crossroads Church; later Kip McKean became the head of the movement, and it was referred to as the Boston Movement. Currently, it is known as the Church of Christ International. This group has been separate from us for more than two decades, although some individuals may not have this knowledge and erroneously believe that any church of Christ is a cult. The fact is that they divided churches and, once churches discovered their cultic practices, were opposed by brethren everywhere. They went out from us because they were not of us (1 John 2:19).

Characteristics of a Cult

The best way to determine whether or not something is a cult is to set forth definitions and see how many of them may apply to any religious group. The following definitions are provided by Josh

McDowell and Don Stewart in their book *Handbook of Today's Religions*. All the information cannot be repeated, but the main distinguishing marks are listed below.

1. A cult is a perversion, a distortion of Biblical Christianity and/or a rejection of the historic teachings of the Christian Church (17).
2. Cults justify their existence by claiming they have something more than just the Bible and its "inadequate message" (20).
3. Some cults make no claim to new truth or extra-biblical revelation, but believe that they alone have the key to interpreting the mysteries in the Bible (20).
4. A sure mark of a cult is that the final authority on spiritual matters rests on something other than the plain teaching of the Holy Scripture (21).
5. One characteristic that is found in all cults is false teaching about the person of Jesus Christ in the light of historical biblical Christianity (21). All cults ultimately deny the fact that Jesus Christ is God the Son, second Person of the Holy Trinity, and mankind's only hope (24).
6. Characteristic of many cultic groups is a frontal attack on orthodox Christianity. They argue that

the church has departed from the true faith (22).

7. A feature of some cultic groups is that they say one thing publicly but internally believe something totally different (22).
8. Another characteristic of all non-Christian cults is either an inadequate view or outright denial of the Holy Trinity (23).
9. Cult doctrines are continually in a state of flux and have no sure foundation on which to anchor their hope. Adherents of a particular cult will learn a doctrine only to find that doctrine later changed or contradicted by further revelation (23).
10. Cults are characterized by central figures who consider themselves messengers of God with unique access to the Almighty...he can dictate the theology and behavior of the cult (24).
11. Another feature of the cults is they often promulgate false prophecy. Cult leaders, who believe they have been divinely called by God, have made bold predictions of future events, supposedly revealed by the inspiration of God...these predictions of future events do not come to pass (24-25).
12. One teaching that is totally absent from all the cults is the gospel of the grace of God. No one is

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Respect

We live in an age of a lack of respect: whether it be disrespect or even no respect. *Respect* is “a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). The Bible uses respect in various applications dealing with God (Isa. 17:7), God’s Word (Psa. 119:6, 15), and man (Exo. 2:25). Respect begins in the home and must be taught to children as they grow up. Children must learn to respect their parents by being taught to obey them and corporal punishment when necessary. Respect is essential if we are going to have a proper relationship with God. However, it goes beyond respect to a feeling of awe. *Awe* is “a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). The Psalmist wrote, “Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him” (Psa. 33:8).

From the beginning of time, man should stand in awe of God. The Creation itself should cause us to stand in awe of God and His power. The 24 elders fell down to worship God and said, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created”

(Rev. 4:11). What amazing power to be able to speak the universe into existence. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3).

Man should respect God for His righteousness and holiness. When “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), then He destroyed the world with a flood. Yet, through that destruction of the world, God would save faithful Noah instructing him to build an ark for the saving of his family. Later, we observe this same principle when “the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (19:24) because they had given “themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh” (Jude 7).

Pharaoh and the Egyptians learned the *hard way* to respect God’s Word. God sent Moses to Pharaoh saying, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exo. 5:1). Pharaoh’s response was, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (5:2). God showed Pharaoh and Egypt who He was by bringing ten plagues upon them. Each of the plagues showed Yahweh’s superiority over the gods of the Egyptians. Israel had a *front-row* seat for these plagues and should have learned respect for God but seemingly it did not seem to take. Also, they

were to teach these things to their children so the children would learn to be in awe of God. “And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage” (13:14).

God leads them to Mount Sinai to receive His Law given through Moses. God calls Moses up to the mountain, where He tells him: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (19:4). He sends Moses down to the people to prepare them for when He could come and speak to them as they needed to be properly prepared (19:10-11).

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder,

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice (19:16-19).

God was preparing the people in all these events to have proper respect for Him and to be able to see His great glory and power. As recorded in the next chapter, God speaks to them giving them the Ten Commandments (20:2-17).

Notice how the people reacted:

And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was*. And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee (20:18-24).

The Hebrews' writer recalls these events when he writes:

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust

through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) (Heb. 12:18-21).

He then goes on to inform us that we have come to Christ and His church. We must make sure that “ye refuse not him that speaketh” (12:25). He concludes this section by then stating, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire” (12:28-29). While God was teaching Israel to respect and give awe unto Him, we have come to something far greater and thus deserving of even more respect and reverence.

However, instead of feeling respect, reverence, and awe for God, we have become a people (in the midst of people) that have a lack of respect for God. This is demonstrated in various ways. It shows in how people live. Through the Scriptures, God has instructed man how to live. When we live contrary to His Will, it shows we do not respect Him. The proper respect will cause us to live as He desires that we live, to follow His Word in all we do. We will live our lives in view of what Paul taught: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). Consider again the Hebrews' writer review of the events in Exodus 19 and then saying, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven” (Heb.

12:25). We are not to refuse what the Son of God has taught. When He (through His apostles and holy prophets—Eph. 3:5) says to add certain things to our lives (like the fruit of the Spirit, the Christian graces, etc.) and we fail to do so, then we do not have the respect and reverence for God that we should. Yet, many *Christians* today never make any real attempt to bring their lives in harmony with God's Word.

Another way a lack of respect is shown is in our words. Christians are to “Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). We should never use blasphemous words by using the Lord's name in a common way. Paul taught us: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (3:8). Yet, many get out into the world and there is no difference between the language of one professing to be a Christian and the man of the world. When we respect God, our speech will demonstrate such.

By the way some dress, they show a lack of respect for God. God set forth a standard of nakedness and what it takes to cover our nakedness in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3), they realized they were naked and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. However, even after doing so, they and God recognized they were still naked. Thus, God made them “coats of skins, and clothed them” (3:21). These coats or tunics would cover from the shoulders to the knees. That

was what was necessary to cover their nakedness. Yet, today people have no compunction in going out in public with their body on full display. Many in the Lord's church dress the same and have lost the sense of shame in the way we clothe ourselves (1 Tim. 2:9). We also observe this disrespect of God when we see people dressing down

to come to worship the King of kings. Instead of giving God our best, we put on that which would be almost our rags (study Mal. 1:6-14).

To be pleasing to God, we must reverence, respect, or stand in awe of Him. In the example prayer Jesus used to teach the apostles how to pray, He began by saying, "Our

Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Mat. 6:9). BDAG uses this phrase, "may thy name be held in reverence." The only reason one is to hold God's name in reverence is because God is holy and set apart. Let us always venerate our God in everything we do.

MH

Continued from Page 1

taught in the cults that he can be saved from eternal damnation by simply placing his faith in Jesus Christ. It is always belief in Jesus Christ and "do this" or "follow that." All cults attach something to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. It might be baptism, obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, or something else, but it is never taught that faith in Christ alone will save anyone (24).

Before commenting on these, let us add the definitions of others.

Walter Martin has both studied and written about cults. He said:

A cult, then, is a group of people polarized around someone's interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ (Walter Martin, *The Rise of the Cults*, p. 12) (McDowell and Stewart 17).

Similar to these are: "What Are Some Characteristics of a Cult?" from Carol Giambalvo's Cult Information and Recovery website (carol2180@aol.com). She lists most of the preceding characteristics and a few additional ones (all emphasis is mine):

1. **Authoritarian** in their power structure
2. **Totalitarian** in their control
3. **Deceptive** in recruiting and/or fundraising
4. **Exclusive** and **innovative** in appearance
5. **Dependent** on others in the group
6. Led by a charismatic, self-appointed leader
7. Maintained by a fear of leaving the group
8. **Skilled** in thought reform techniques
9. **Isolated** physically or psychologically from society
10. **Zealous** in **controlling the flow of information**; many use mind-altering techniques (such as chanting, meditation, hypnosis, and other forms of repetitive actions) "to stop normal critical thinking."

Now anyone familiar at all with the churches of Christ would know immediately that, out of all the characteristics given above, only one could possibly be applied to us. We simply do not fit the pattern on practically any level of consideration. For someone to even accuse us of being a cult is to show a tremendous lack of knowledge on their part of (1) what a cult is, and (2) what members of the body of Christ actually teach. No one who knew either could so charge us.

Our Defense

First, the churches of Christ have had no strong central leader apart from the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some have tried to credit Thomas or Alexander Campbell with beginning the church of Christ, but such is folly. Others were teaching some of the doctrines they taught prior to them, as well as about the same time that they reached their conclusions. Furthermore, Alexander Campbell would have made a poor cult leader, since he not only did **not** act in secrecy but set forth his views publicly for years. He edited first *The Christian Baptist* (1823-30) and then *The Millennial Harbinger* (1830-1866, the time of his death). These are thick volumes; he taught nothing in secret. Furthermore, he engaged in five public debates, including one with atheist Robert Owen. What cult figure was ever so public? Furthermore, he had no revelation of his own but called people to abide by what the Scriptures teach. He invited people to read and study for themselves—a poor way to control information. He championed critical thinking, as brethren always have.

When we preach and teach, we often ask people not to take our word for anything but instead to

study the Scriptures to see if what we are saying is so (Acts 17:11). We are one of the few religious groups who invite critical thinking. Many religious groups defend themselves by saying, “That’s our tradition,” or “That’s just the way we do things.” The important thing to remember is not what we or Campbell teach—but that the Scriptures themselves teach critical thinking. How often did Jesus reason with His enemies? As one studies His life, He is constantly encouraging others to think upon the evidence and draw the proper conclusions.

We do not teach that we have any authority of our own, nor is there anyone among us who claims to be authoritative or is dictatorial. All we do is attempt to discern what the Bible actually teaches. We have no one with latter-day revelations who wastes his time making foolish predictions. As we consider this point, however, where does this description leave Pentecostals, who claim that God speaks to them constantly? We, not they, are abiding by the teachings of the revelation from God found in the New Testament; they are the ones saying, “God told me this” and “God told me that”—and we are considered a cult? The pope claims Divine interpretive power. He is a charismatic leader; has anyone called the Catholic Church a cult?

Churches of Christ have no leader besides Christ (Mat. 28:18). We not only do not have an earthly head over us; we do not even have a denominational structure. The Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians all have annual conferences to decide what they will believe for the next year; they even take votes on

it. We never need one because God has already declared in His Word what Christians are going to believe next year, as well as every year after that. Has anyone accused these various denominations of being cultic because they have a human authority (themselves) in addition to the Bible?

So, we are neither authoritarian in our power structure (since we do not have one), nor totalitarian in trying to control our members. Our only *control* is to appeal to fellow Christians based on what the Bible teaches.

We are not deceptive in recruiting; we teach the Bible to those who are interested. We do not engage in fundraising of any kind. We do not use thought-control techniques or isolate members to get them to conform. We do practice withdrawing of fellowship, as the New Testament teaches (1 Cor. 5:1-13), but no one, apparently, is intimidated by this practice, since people depart all the time. We use no physical pressure on people whatsoever, since we do not have a commune, and the only psychological pressure comes from what the Scriptures themselves apply to a person.

Historic Teachings

The churches of Christ have not changed regarding the historical teachings on moral issues, but look at what various religious groups have done. Anyone who wants to take the trouble to trace what has been taught about homosexuality through the centuries would discover that virtually all religious denominations have been opposed to such a perversion. **We still are!** How many denominations have reversed themselves regarding this

doctrine—yet we are called a cult? We are the ones still upholding what the Bible teaches as it applies to moral issues.

The same is true of worship. Historically, just about every religious denomination opposed the use of instrumental music when it was added to worship—leaders such as John Wesley, Adam Clarke, Charles Spurgeon, Albert Barnes, and others. Now, some have turned the concept of worship given unto God into entertainment for themselves. We are not the ones who have changed the historic teachings of the Christian Church.

The Deity of Christ

Christians cannot hold to any other doctrine but that Jesus is the Son of God. If there is any doctrine that has been upheld by us, this is it. Some of the greatest lessons ever presented by preachers in the church of our Lord have been on this topic. By this one definition of a cult alone, we must be excluded. We truly believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and have defended these truths for centuries.

Of course, we do not hold to any of these doctrines because others do; the only reason Christians believe any doctrine is that the New Testament teaches it. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church did change many teachings. History records them. The appeal of the churches of Christ has always been to return to the doctrine and practices of the New Testament. Something, such as infant baptism, may have been practiced incorrectly for centuries. Longevity does not validate it.

Our One “Aberration”

The only accusation that could

possibly be leveled against us is that we teach something in addition to grace and faith—obedience. Cults may demand so many works be done, or one’s salvation is in jeopardy; we have no such practice. The Scriptures do teach, however, that there is a correct response to God’s grace. Nowhere does the Bible teach salvation by “faith only.” We are saved by faith—one that obeys the Lord. Do McDowell and Stewart wish to argue that one can be saved without any obedience whatsoever?

They obviously showed their bias in what they wrote on this cultic characteristic. Churches of Christ teach the grace of God and the necessity of faith. It would be foolish for anyone to think he could earn salvation. No one possesses that much goodness; no one has the ability to counteract his own sins by laboring diligently in the kingdom or doing so many acts of kindness. **Only** the blood of Christ, shed by the sinless Jesus, the Son of God, can remove sins. Works cannot do it.

A person’s *faith*, however, if it will not lead him to repent and have those sins washed away (Rev. 1:5) in baptism (Acts 22:16), is not genuine faith. If Hebrews 11 teaches anything, it is that faith acts. Jesus promises salvation to all them that **obey** Him (Heb. 5:9). Does that sound like “faith only”? Again, Jesus said: “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). Does that sound like “faith only”? “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). Does this Bible verse make it sound like we are saved by “faith only”?

So, are we saved by faith or works? We are saved by faith that obeys God. We are not trusting in ourselves to save us—only Jesus can do that. However, He saves us **when** we repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). Being baptized does not merit salvation, but it is an expression of compliance with God’s commands—the answer of a good

conscience toward Him (1 Pet. 3:21). Even after we are baptized, we will not be 100% obedient to God in all things and will still not merit salvation (1 John 1:8, 10). This fact, however, does not mean that we must not walk in the light anyway (1:7). Imperfection does not disprove the need for obedience. God still requires that we obey Him in all things to the best of our ability.

This is not some new doctrine. It was taught in the New Testament, and early Christians practiced baptism for the remission of sins. People departed from that truth, along with others, at a later time. The question is, “Do we want to stand with the doctrines of men that developed over time—or stand with what the Holy Spirit revealed in the New Testament?” May the members of the body of Christ stand with truth—despite what all others do! We have debated this issue with denominations for 200 years—with great success—and will continue to do so.

Winter Park, FL

The Exaltation Of Christ

Guy N. Woods

“The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory...put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:17-23). Ephesians, believed to be one of the “imprisonment epistles” of Paul, and therefore written about AD 62, emphasizes particularly the headship of Christ in His relation to the church, and speaks with espe-

cial care of the sovereignty He enjoys as the supreme Ruler thereof. The following facts flow out of the foregoing statement from this epistle:

1. **All things have been put under the feet of Christ**—i.e., in so far as the church and the world are concerned. The Hebrews’ writer, in indicating the superiority of Christ over the angels, said to him:

For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we

speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet (Heb. 2:5-8).

When the Lord entered the domain of death and emerged triumphantly, He demonstrated His

power over death and the grave. Then, when elevated to the right hand of His Father and made “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” He was made to occupy a place superior to that of all other beings. Moreover, to Him was vouchsafed all the authority both in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28:18). There is, therefore, no authority superior to His in the earth or heaven; and His is indeed the supreme position of the universe. As such, he is:

2. **The Head of the church.** In view of this fact, it is exceedingly impious and wicked to refer to any other as occupying this exalted position. Catholics make the absurd claim that the pope is vicar or vicegerent of Christ on earth and that His authority is supreme. This could be true only if Christ has deputed to him power to serve in His place and has abdicated in his favor. There is no remote hint of any such abdication on the part of our Lord in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it is expressly declared that He is to reign until His enemies have been put under His feet, the last enemy being death. Death will be destroyed in the resurrection; hence, Christ will continue to exercise His sovereign prerogatives until the resurrection of the body from the tomb (1 Cor. 15:25-26). The denominational position is little better, seeing that they also attempt to legislate for Him in their conferences, synods, conclaves, etc. Any effort to govern or regulate the Lord’s people by the issuance of rules or articles of faith, whether written or unwritten, is a presumptuous and officious intermeddling with the sovereign will of the Lord, and highly objectionable to Him who occupies that exalted position as Head of the

church. All authority, whether legislative, executive, or judicial, has been committed into His hands, and He alone has the right to prescribe laws governing His followers. It is, therefore, a usurpation of authority to attempt to legislate in His stead. This is as applicable to His own followers as to those above alluded to. A creed is no less objectionable because it happens to issue from our own brethren. There is a definite and persistent trend in the church today to formulate policies and establish attitudes and force the churches into harmony therewith, and on their refusal to allow their freedom to be interfered with, to brand them as sympathetic toward some form of error, or soft with reference to the issues of the day. The church should be on its guard against all such and watch with jealous vigilance against any semblance of a movement that would encroach on the free churches of Christ. No church is answerable to any preacher or group of preachers, however eminent they may be, and when preachers attempt to force a church or churches into conformity with a certain policy or attitude they have adopted, they should be vigorously resisted and shown to be enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. **Christ has been made head over all things to the church.**

Inasmuch as the position He occupies is supreme in its nature, all else, both in heaven and on earth, has been made subservient to Him. Principalities, powers, dominions, everything named, whether in this world or in the world to come, have been relegated to a position of secondary importance to make Christ com-

pletely sovereign in the power He exercises over the world. Any organization, therefore, however powerful or respectable it may be, that presumes to interfere with the Lord’s people or requires them to do that which is inconsistent with the decrees of their King, is guilty of usurpation and should be resisted.

4. **The church is His body.** As there is but one body (Eph. 4:4), so there is but one church. However, since all spiritual blessings are in the one body, including forgiveness of sins (1:3; Col. 1:13), it follows that every blessing vouchsafed to man is to be enjoyed only in the church. In the church must one be, therefore, to avail himself of the blessings thus extended. This church is that which was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection and is to be identified in the following fashion: (1) It taught faith, repentance, and baptism for remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38); (2) the Lord added those thus obedient to the church (2:47); (3) the church to which He adds is His own (Mat. 16:18), and, in the plural, is referred to as the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16); (4) it met regularly for worship on the “first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2) for the purpose of observing the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7).

5. The “**fulness of him that filleth all in all**” is in the church—i.e., the “fulness of Christ” is in the church. Every blessing available to man in Christ is to be enjoyed only as a member of the church. Hence, the absolute necessity of being a member of His church. It may be easily identified by the characteristics above noted.

Deceased

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Refusing to Wear Our “Best” for God in Worship: Why?

Wayne Duren

I cannot say that I saw it coming, nor can I tell you that much of my experience was not disappointing and upsetting to me, including several Gospel Preachers! The *experience* to which I refer was the very negative response by some, even members of Christ’s church, to a post I put online several weeks ago; a post containing a message which, if made in an article or sermon 70 years ago, would have been met with substantially more love and positivity! Then, going back even decades earlier, greater love and support could be found for the message in that post which asked:

If by chance we were asked to dine with a “King,” what should we wear? So, what about when we come to worship the “King of Kings”?

That post was followed by days of online discussion, with some attacking the good commitment to dress beautifully for God (not people) to respect and glorify Him in the worship. Mocking comments such as “Better button the bottom button on that tuxedo, They’re watching you,” and “Better not park that old pickup truck in the church parking lot,” along with various other comments were made. Again,

even 70 years ago, when more Christians believed in giving God their best from **within** as they worshiped and **wearing** their best for Him as they did so, this message would have been met with even more loving approval! However, as I found out, it is not 70 years ago! Would I have gotten a more negative response if I had slapped a hornet’s nest? Oh, it got serious quickly, with at least two positions espoused and defended! But sadly, within the “intentionally dress down” group, the following example has been witnessed numerous times! Some attended the AM worship *dressed down*, then left to *dress up* for a funeral, later changing back into *dress-down* attire for PM worship! Truthfully, who was more “respected and honored”: God Almighty, or those at the funeral? Wow! What a powerful contrast of choices here relative to what some choose to wear to honor and respect mere men while refusing to do so as they worship the God of Heaven and earth! Is it possible that this *choice* issue comes down to how much a Christian wants to respect, honor, and glorify God in the worship inwardly *and* outwardly?

In truth, there seem to be at least three groups represented in the *attire discussion*. Group A constitutes those who have no problem dressing beautifully during the worship but have a huge problem as to their reason(s) for doing so. It has become more of a *fashion show* for them, dressing fancy, sometimes beyond modestly, as some even **compete** with each other! What a sinful attitude!

Group B moves in the opposite direction. Some believe that while proper honor and glory **must** be given to God in the worship from within, there is no real need or desire to translate that honor and glory into how they dress while worshipping! Some refuse to dress great for God in the worship, while readily doing so for funerals, weddings, etc., stating, “God doesn’t care what I wear!”

Now we look at Group C, which strongly believes that God Almighty deserves the **best** from every Christian, in every proper way that it can be given, especially in the worship, as their *best* is given from the inner man and how they adorn the outer man while worshipping! Group C does not dress to

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Prayer

One of the great privileges of being a Christian is the avenue of prayer. Those who are outside of Christ do not enjoy the rights of being in Christ—prayer being one of many. As the formerly blind man said, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). Those who are righteous (Jam. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:12) have the wonderful promise that we will be heard. John writes, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (1 John 5:14-15). However, who is it that hears us, and thus to whom are we to pray?

It has always been understood that we pray to the Father; however, some were not satisfied with such. The Catholic Church was not satisfied with praying to the Father, so they devised the “Hail Mary” to pray to Mary. They also have prayers for departed saints. Others joined in on the *festivities* and advocated prayers to the Holy Spirit and even more advocated praying to Jesus. Many of our brethren have begun advocating and defending this practice of praying to Jesus re-

cently (not as many praying to the Spirit but there are some). Thus, let us consider to whom are we to direct our prayers.

Jesus taught in the example prayer to direct our prayers to the Father when He said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Mat. 6:9). Jesus had just stated to pray to the Father in making a contrast with the hypocrites, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (6:6). Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus would add, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (7:11). Additionally, Jesus, of course, directed His prayers to the Father: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (John 17:1).

While that should be enough for everyone, we do have other instructions. Christians have the right to address God as their Father because they are sons of God. Paul said we cry to the Father: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:14). We see the apostles praying to the Father after Peter and John had been rebuked by the chief priests and elders. They “went to their own company” and ad-

dressed God the Father in prayer. “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24). Some might question if this is the Father or if it is a prayer to Jesus. Yet, we know it is not Jesus and must be to the Father because of the statements in the prayer, “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together” (4:26-27).

In speaking about the eternal purpose which the Father purposed in Christ, Paul states, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:” (Eph. 3:14). Later, to these same Ephesians, he states, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:20). In the parallel passage, we find, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). Later in this book, Paul would admonish, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds” (4:2-3). Then, to the Philippians Paul would give the comforting words, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi. 4:6). God here applies to the Father and not to Christ as seen in the next verse.

These passages clearly show we are to pray to the Father. The question then comes, do we have authority to pray to anyone else? Many in the Lord’s church are now saying we also have authority to pray to Jesus. Let us consider some of these supposed evidences of praying to Jesus. A favorite is the account of Stephen. As we all know, Stephen was being stoned and he looks up into heaven and sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He then says to Jesus, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:59-60). Even if it can be proven that this is a prayer, it would not authorize us to pray to Jesus. This was a heavenly vision, so it was not an ordinary situation. One cannot take an extraordinary event and make it applicable to everyone. Brother Don Tarbet dealt with this account in the September 2021 issue of *Defender* (page 7), so I will not spend time rehashing what he wrote. He showed clearly this was not a prayer. Suffice it to say, this account gives no authority for us today to pray to Jesus.

Another favorite passage appealed to is Acts 1:24 in the selection of Matthias to take Judas’ place

as an apostle. It is recorded, “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.” There are a couple of aspects that we need to take into consideration. This prayer was prior to the establishment of the church, and it was a selection of who would be Jesus’ apostle to take Judas’ place. Since Jesus is the one who selected the other eleven, it would be natural for Him to select this one. However, this very well could be a prayer to the Father and not to Jesus. *Lord* does not demand that it refer to Jesus. He first recorded prayer after the establishment of the church, the brethren addressed the Father as Lord (Acts 4:24, 29). The description of “which knowest the hearts of all men,” would be reminiscent of the selection of king David that Yahweh “looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Then it was the Father speaking to Samuel regarding the selection process. The only other time the Greek word translated “knowest the heart” is used it refers to the Father (Acts 15:8). Thus, it might be probable that Lord in this selection process refers to the Father and not Jesus.

Some would hold that what is stated in 1 Corinthians 16:22 constitutes a prayer to Jesus: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” *Anathema* is a transliteration of the Greek and means to be cursed or eternally cut off from God. Maranatha comes from two Aramaic words meaning “Master” and “come.” However, *come* is in the aorist tense which is often considered past tense but more accurately completed action. Thus, early Greek and Latin expositors said it

was “our Lord has come.” Thus, *Young’s Literal Translation* has it, “let him be anathema! The Lord hath come!” Also, it was never considered to be a prayer to Jesus, historically. Very shaky grounds to find authorization for an action.

Some have appealed to Paul’s saying he thanked Jesus. “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12). We should all be thankful for many things, including our Lord Jesus Christ. I am thankful to both of my parents for many things, but that does not mean I pray to them. Also, the Greek construction is simply, “I have thanks” and not as the KJV has it, “I thank.” It is an expression of thanks or gratitude and not an act of prayer.

Some have used Revelation 22:20 where Jesus states, “Surely I come quickly,” and John responds by saying “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” as if John’s statement gives us authority to pray to Jesus. How can an inspired man caught up in a heavenly vision in which Jesus was personally manifested give us authority to do as that inspired man did? It does not (the same as with Stephen).

There might be other passages to which brethren will argue their right to pray to Jesus. However, there is one definitive passage that must be considered. Jesus states, “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23). Jesus is very clear and almost impossible to misunderstand when He says, “ye shall ask me nothing.”

The question might arise, how-

ever, as to what day is under discussion, as Jesus simply said, “in that day.” The context will determine what *day* is under discussion. In considering the context, we learn “that day” is the day after Jesus ascended to the Father and the Spirit was sent to the apostles to “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (16:8). The Spirit was sent to the apostles to accomplish His work at Pentecost of Acts 2. (This is why the argument regarding Acts 1 and the selection of Matthias does not stand even if it was a prayer to Je-

sus.) It was “that day” when the Spirit was going to inspire the apostles in what they taught: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14). Therefore, the “that day” was the day of the New Testament period which began on Pentecost of Acts 2 when the Spirit was guiding the apostles

in this way. It was “that day” after Jesus returned to the Father: “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:16). Thus, Jesus’ statement is for us today: “in that day ye shall ask me nothing.”

We need prayer in our lives and need to “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17). However, in those prayers let us make sure we address the Father and pray in the name of (by the authority of) our Lord Jesus Christ.

MH

Continued from Page 1

be seen of men like Group A but adorn themselves in beautiful, yet modest apparel (1 Tim. 2:9) **for God!** Still, some in Group B, unfairly lump C in with A (the *showoff* group)! C realizes that Scripture dictates that God’s children must **never** put Him in second place, nor give to Him second-rate love, effort, respect, honor, or worship. Look at Cain in Genesis 4! Can it be that *how* we love God dictates what we want or do not want to do for Him in every area of life—especially in worship—whether to give Him *extra effort* in attire or to intentionally **not** give such to Him, while often giving it to people and events?

Jesus, in Mark 12:30, commands us to love God “with all thy heart ...soul...mind, and strength”! That kind of love will ensure that Christians will not forsake the assembly, will evangelize, and will not pass up honoring Him any way we can! God deserves our very best in every area of a Christian’s life! What area can be left out?

Consider the husband who loves his wife, but never *dresses up* to respect and honor her on special occasions like Anniversaries, Birthdays, etc.! Then, on her next birthday, he does dress in a suit and tie, and when she asks why, he tells her that he wanted to show her love and respect in his attire, instead of just telling her he loves her! Wow! Now that touched her heart! The extra effort was given and powerfully noticed! Do you suppose God notices when His child gives that extra effort relative to our dressing beautifully in the worship to honor, respect, and glorify Him? Does He also notice it when we intentionally do not but do so for others?

The aforementioned Group B often demands Scriptures wherein we are told we must *dress up* for God in the worship, while Group C sometimes looks for passages forbidding *dressing down*! Is it simply a choice as to whether Christians want to give that extra effort in attire as we worship, or **do not want to!** Can the necessary inference avenue regarding God’s expectations

for us help here?

First Corinthians 10:31 says, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” What good thing does **all** not include? Is dressing great to *glorify* God in worship, good? Many in Group B admit that “whatever ye do” and “do all to the glory of God” covers a great scope of good things such as giving our *best* in evangelism, family, jobs, and certainly worship. Why then when they are dressing for worship, do they intentionally leave their *best* in the closet?

Paul wrote, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). The Modern Language Bible has “with your body.” B.W. Johnson writes, “Since both body and spirit are God’s, both should be used to glorify Him.” Is it not true that we can glorify God with our bodies by refusing to dress “immodestly” and by dressing to honor and glorify Him in worship? If not, why not?

The wise man, Solomon, would

write, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecc. 9:10). "With thy might" would include the extra effort Group C puts forth when what their "hand findeth to do" just happens to be picking out their attire to be worn in worship to Jehovah as they gladly and intentionally dress great for Him, but "not unto men" (Col. 3:23). Although what Group B's "hand findeth to do" often results in that *hand* intentionally choosing something far short of their best, although believing in worshipping *with thy might*. It is significantly less effort than *with thy might* but giving that extra effort in attire for people, weddings, funerals, and the like!

What is worship? Webster, among other things, says worship is "to show religious devotion or reverence for; adore...as Deity. To have intense love or admiration for; idolize." So why would that attitude just described not include dressing wonderfully for the Almighty (not for men) as we reverence and honor Him relative to the outer man as the inner man "empties himself in worship" (Wendell Winkler)?

Group B often relies on 1 Timothy 2:9 to tell us what to wear in worship, and so it does! However, what many do not know is that when it says "women [includes men too], adorn yourselves in modest apparel," "Paul is not telling women to wear drab clothing! The Greek word for *apparel* (*kosmeo*) is defined as something having an attractive appearance" (*Truth For Today*). The Revised Standard Version says, "Modestly...in seeming [pleasing] apparel," while The Modern Language Bible says, "Modestly...in attire that is becoming." So, do not

try to use this passage as proof for intentionally *dressing down* when worshiping God, when it also allows for modest suits and dresses, "having an attractive appearance" (*kosmeo*)! "Modesty is avoiding extremes" (Sheerer). What about those extremes, whether *dressing down* to look like a bum or *dressing* to show off desiring attention (Group A)?

Why do some in Group B, demand that Group C, wearing their best for the Lord, are **bound** to the task of wearing their most dazzling, costly, and fanciest outfit, and wear it **every time** to worship? However, that will not work because it **blatantly disobeys** the "modest apparel" command! Could we wear a tuxedo, wedding dress, evening gown, etc., to worship without being extreme?

Group "B" may challenge "C" with, "Ok, then you still must pick whatever your modestly *best* outfit is, the one that God likes the most and wear it **every time**!" Oh, that will not work either, because no one knows which outfit God would like the most. Since everyone's *best* varies, it comes down to whatever our *best* is at the time! Most of us have several outfits that constitute our nicest clothing that can be interchangeably worn to worship. Consider the dirt farmer, often referenced in sermons on attire, who owned only two pairs of overalls. One was worn for everyday use, while the second pair was kept nice for special occasions, and especially **for wearing to worship**! That is the position of Group C in a nutshell!

Consider this illustration: A man celebrates his 100th birthday and both his sons travel to attend the party. One son arrives and goes

in dressed **very** casually. The older son comes in dressed in a nice suit! Dad is shocked and asks why? His boy replied, "You're a great Father who deserves honor and respect! I dressed **extra special** to give both to you!" Dad cries in joy, but the younger son is mad and later calls his brother a *showoff* who was making him look bad! In tears, the older brother responds, "I would have worn this even if you weren't here! I did it for Dad! So, if you look bad, it's not due to what I did, but what you could've done but didn't! You have suits too!"

Consider Jesus' parable in Luke 15 when the wayward son returns home and the father (who represents God) honors his son by having him dressed (15:22) in "the best robe...a ring...and shoes." Honored by attire? Of course! Why not? Once, the late brother Wendell Winkler challenged us as he asked how Christians could dress great serving as pallbearers then be found *dressing down* during the Lord's Supper as they are bearing the body of Christ (unleavened bread)? Powerful! And since the Lord's Supper is part of our worship unto God, why would Christians not **desire** to glorify the Father with our *best*, not only from within us but also with what we choose (and it is a choice) to wear as we seek to "glorify God with your body"?

Question: In dining with that aforementioned "King," how many would **not** wear what they normally wear during the worship, but would *dress up* for the "King"?

There is also the effort by Group B to avoid the fine apparel in the worship by resorting to James 2:1-10 relative to those in "goodly apparel" as opposed to those in

“vile raiment”! This is **not** what we are discussing but deals simply with the *well-off* mistreating the less fortunate!

So then, some are committed (Group C) to honoring and glorifying God in the worship from within and with great attire while so doing! Good! But what shall they do if they are out in casual clothing and an unplanned opportunity to worship God presents itself? They have no access to their best clothes. Do they have to go home to get them, or just refuse to worship? No! What they are wearing is their best in that instance: so worship! [editor—This is not what is actually under consideration in this article and discussion. What is being considered is those times in which we come together in corporate worship to God which is far different than an “unplanned opportunity.” Some have argued that we would not be able to pray or sing religious songs at any

time unless we were wearing our best. If we were out on the lake, or at work or at home, we would have to change into our best clothing to say a prayer or sing a religious song. This illustrates the lengths some will go to defend intentionally dressing down to come together as disciples—Acts 20:7—or “come together in the church...come together therefore into one place”—1 Cor. 11:18, 20. That corporate gathering together is under consideration and the choices we make as to what to wear, not worshipping at other times, an “unplanned opportunity.”]

I appreciate those Christians leaving work, faithfully heading to worship services, but they are unable to wear for God what they would have if at home! Again, **worship** in the best they have then! Some being home-bound, dress as great for God there as they would have if at the church building!

Then, in answer to the question of our attire at the PM service, the same God on His throne in the AM worship is still there at PM! So, why would not dressing great to honor God in the AM be repeated in the PM?

In closing, notice what David chose to do after his son died in 2 Samuel 12! David “arose...washed...anointed himself...changed his apparel...came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped” (12:20). None of us is the other’s judge. The crux of the matter, however, is the **choices** made relative to apparel worn in worship? Group C gives extra effort, wearing their best to glorify God, but many in Group B refuse to yet will for funerals, weddings, etc.! Some agree that God deserves our best but intentionally leave their best in the closet! **Why?** Is Almighty God not worth the extra effort many are giving to others?

Tuscaloosa, AL

God’s Will Is Not Modified by Man’s Moral Condition

Andrew M. Connally

It is man’s nature to seek self-justification at the expense of all others, even God. Man has an infinite capacity to deceive himself regarding his own actions, the nature of God, and God’s revealed Will.

The Sin of Deception Is Ancient

From the Garden of Eden, the deceitfulness of sin and self-deception are evident. When the serpent tempted Eve, he was very subtle:

Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, Of

the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Gen. 3:1-3).

Surely nothing could be plainer than these simple instructions! There was no controversy over their meaning, they were too plain to be misunderstood. Yet, Satan lied, and the woman allowed herself to be deceived.

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 God,

knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat (3:4-6).

And so, “sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Most of us are painfully aware of the tragic consequences of this sinful deception.

Balaam, who loved the hire of wrongdoing (Jude 11), thought

also that he could bargain with the Lord of destinies and make Him a god of convenience. Man has been doing the same ever since.

God Is Immutable

“For I, Jehovah, change not” (Mal. 3:6). The unchangeableness of Jehovah is hard for fickle man to comprehend. Man is in constant flux. So often he is as a child, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error” (Eph. 4:14). Man’s “heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt” (Jer. 17:9). He is constantly seeking to mock God by his actions and thoughts. Yet, God has made it abundantly clear, with whom “can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (Jam. 1:17). And again, “God is not a man, that he should lie, Neither the son of man, that he should repent” (Num. 23:19).

God’s Will Is Only the Reflection of His Immutable Nature

God speaks only in harmony with His immutable nature; hence His Will is an immutable decree. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat. 24:35). The reason is that the words of God and Christ reflect the immutable nature of God Himself.

Jesus said, “Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48). Again He said, “but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living;...for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16). And finally, “And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth

himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). This *perfection, purity, and holiness* demanded by God of His people is the reflection of His Divine immutable nature. This becomes our standard and thus God’s Will for all men who desire to be saved.

God’s Will Cannot Be Modified by Man’s Condition

God can act only in harmony with His divine immutable nature. Therefore, God could not change His Will regardless of anything or anybody! Nothing in heaven or on earth could cause one jot or one tittle to be changed of God’s immutable decree. It would be easier for man to flatten every mountain, fill every valley, dry up every sea, snatch down every star, and quench the shining of the sun than to change a single law of God or reverse a moral pronouncement of His.

All Men Everywhere Are Commanded to Repent

Paul states, “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:30-31). This is a universal command given to “all men everywhere” to repent because judgment is coming! The Athenians were guilty of idolatry (Acts 17:23-24). The Corinthians were guilty of immorality (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The Pentecostians were guilty of murder (Acts 2:23). The Gentile world was guilty of gross impurity (Rom. 1:18-28). The Jews were guilty of zeal for God but not according to knowledge

(10:1-3). Therefore, they, like all sinners, were commanded to “repent or perish.”

Surely there were “mitigating circumstances” in some of their lives. Surely some of them were “sincerely wrong.” Surely “in good faith” some had been led into their error. Perhaps some were “doing the best they knew how.” Perhaps others “were trying hard.” And on and on the excuses could go. However, God’s Will has never changed because of man’s moral (or immoral) condition.

The Demands of the Gospel

It is true that the Gospel and obedience to it may break up families, destroy friendships, separate husbands and wives, alienate children, cost us mothers and fathers, and cause us to give up our jobs. This has always been so, for Jesus said:

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword....and a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household.... And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Mat. 10:34-39).

After all the excuses have been offered, and after all the problems have been presented to justify man in his sin, the God of all the universe still says, “For I, Jehovah, change not” (Mal. 3:6), and “the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). May God help us all to appreciate, accept, and always contend for His immutable law which reflects His immutable nature that will always punish sin and exalt righteousness.

Deceased

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