

Current Crises Challenging The Church

Bobby Liddell, Editor

1992 Bellview Lectures

Current Crises Challenging The Church

Bobby Liddell, Editor

Seventeenth Annual
Bellview Lectures

Pensacola, Florida

May 9-13, 1992

CURRENT CRISES CHALLENGING THE CHURCH

Copyrighted © 1992 Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32526

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

IT IS ILLEGAL AND UNETHICAL
TO DUPLICATE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL.

The material in this study represents a considerable investment of effort, skill, time, and finances from both the authors and the publisher. If this material is photocopied and circulated to avoid buying a book for each student, the publisher does not sell enough copies to support the publication.

*Printed in the United States of America
by Austin McGary & Company
P.O. Box 37552, Pensacola, FL 32526
(904) 944-7883*

DEDICATION



Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

In appreciation for his work for the cause of Christ at home and abroad, we gratefully dedicate this book, containing the lectures delivered in the Seventeenth Annual Bellview Lectures, May 9-13, 1992, Pensacola, Florida to Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

He was born August 3, 1917, at Franklin, Texas, the son of Ira Y. Rice, Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. From childhood, he knew the holy Scriptures and planned to take the gospel to the world. He said, "I cannot recall when I did not want to be a missionary. It all began with my first learning to read; the Bible was my first primer. Even before starting school, I well remember my father, Ira Y. Rice, Sr., letting me say the 'little' words, while he said the 'big' words, as he guided my four-year-old fingers along the lines of God's Word. By age nine, I finished reading the New Testament for the first time; by age twelve, the entire Bible. Resulting from this familiarity with the Scriptures, when brother Y. E. Jones asked his class of eight-year-olds, back in 1925 at Norman, Oklahoma, what we wanted to be when we grew up, I declared without hesitation, *'I want to be a missionary.'*"

On March 2, 1939, he vowed to God to evangelize the world (with the help of his fellow-workers in Christ, of course) or die trying. “Father,” he prayed, “I am just one man. But if you will bless me with brothers and sisters to work with me and me with them—I promise not to stop until thy Word has gone from the rivers to the ends of the earth and from sea to sea...” Now, over fifty years later, he continues with tireless energy keeping the vow he made so long ago. As a result, Ira Y. Rice, Jr. has preached the gospel in all fifty of the United States, as well as Mexico, Canada, Hawaii, Wake Island, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Guam, Philippine Islands, South Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Sarawak, British North Borneo, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Austria, Italy, Monaco, France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, West Germany, East Germany, Nassau, North Ireland, Scotland, England, China, Russia and many other countries. In 1991, he along with five other preachers, pioneered the gospel effort in Latvia, which only recently has come out of fifty years of Communist domination.

He began preaching over sixty years ago and has been deeply involved in mission work for the majority of his years. He has traveled enough miles on behalf of world missions to have gone to the moon, come back and be on his way again. He, his wife Vada and their children have greatly sacrificed to reach the lost with the saving gospel of Christ. In addition to having devoted eight full years evangelizing in Southeast Asian countries—principally Singapore and Malaysia—he has spoken on world evangelism before thousands of congregations throughout the United States and Canada.

An accomplished singer, he has led singing all over the world and has directed singing schools with great effectiveness. Along with the “Rice Family Singers,” he has recorded several outstanding albums of gospel singing.

He founded and serves as Editor of *Contending For The Faith* and *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter* both of which are published under the oversight of the Bellview church. He also founded and edited *Christian Soldier*. He has authored several books including *God’s Truth On Elders*, *We CAN Evangelize The World*, and *Axe On The Root, Volumes I, II and III*. He is the co-founder and second President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions in Singapore. He has served as chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968 and, under the oversight

of the Elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida, as missionary to the Far East since 1978.

Bobby Liddell, Editor

Brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr. and his wife, Veda, have given unselfishly of their time, energy and material resources to the cause of Christ We fully endorse their work and their uncompromising stand for the truth and are happy to be associated with them and the good work they do. Our desire is that they may have many more years upon this earth to serve this the highest of all causes

Hairston Brantley

Paul Brantley

Bill Gallaher

Elders, Bellview Church of Christ

PREFACE

The church of our Lord stands at a crossroads. Many who once walked among the faithful have turned aside to follow the doctrines of men and their own stubborn will. In the forefront of this new digression are some who are well known and who have acquired a devoted following. In time past, many of these false teachers were proclaimers of the faith. In contrast to the great apostle Paul, who preached the faith he once destroyed, they now seek to destroy the faith they once preached (Gal. 1:23). Boldly, they proclaim “new” truths and “new” hermeneutics to support them. They sneeringly disdain God’s approved pattern as outdated “traditionalism” and mask their old thread-bare denominational doctrines as “progress” and needed “change” in a “church in transition” in a changing world. Shall faithful brethren acquiesce to the loud cries and much speaking of those who would make of the only blood-bought body just another denomination? No, regardless of what men say, we must listen to our Savior who said: “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,” (John 18:37). Shall the majority sway us? No, we must follow the right and narrow way (Exo. 23:2; Mat. 7:13-14). Have we so soon forgotten, men of faith and courage, only a generation ago, routed the same errors which false brethren now embrace and advanced the cause of Christ in public debate with denominational opponents who at least were honest enough to identify themselves as different from and opposed to the church of Christ? “Oh, for an honest false teacher.”

Others, working quietly in leadership roles in local congregations, have orchestrated subtle changes designed to gradually lead men away from the pure gospel of Christ. To compound the problem, a generation of spiritual illiterates has provided ready adherents who love to have it so. Do they not know they, in departing from the gospel they are running headlong into the clutches of Satan and the accompanying miseries and eternal damnation? It seems they do not or they do not care and will not be warned.

Evidently, such departures bring crises that challenge the church. What shall those who steadfastly seek to follow the will of God do? Should the faithful respond to the crises? Indeed, we must! Ignoring the fact of a mass departure of formerly faithful brethren will not solve the problem. Surely, we owe our brethren more concern than that (Gal. 6:1)! How shall faithful brethren respond to the crises challenging the church? First, we must be aware there in a real and present danger which threatens the eternal salvation of brethren and those whom they influence and

which significantly hinders the work of the Lord's people. Sadly, many would rather hide their heads in the sand and pretend there is no problem! Some, whose "Christianity" amounts to a couple of hours a week sequestered within the insulated isolation of a church building, have so weakened themselves from lack of Bible study and growth in Christian character they can not recognize a threat when they see it. They heed no warnings and they do not discern false doctrine when they hear it. Their excuse is often heard to be something like this: "I cannot believe brother _____ or congregation _____ would teach/do anything wrong because he is such a nice man/they are such a large church." Brethren, Satan is wreaking havoc among the churches. How can we say there is no problem?

Second, we must fortify ourselves to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12), putting on the Christian's armor (Eph. 6:10-18) and preparing ourselves to capably and courageously wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). Sitting back hoping somehow error will destroy both itself and its threats, and that its proponents will likewise self-destruct; thus, freeing us from having to address the issues or fight the battles, is the coward's way out. Let us be set for the defense of the gospel (Phi. 1:17) and ready to oppose error wherever it may be and whoever may uphold it (Eph. 5:11). Then, when problems arise and men oppose the truth, members of the Lord's church shall be ready to recognize the threat as a threat and to deal with it appropriately.

Finally, we must stop attacking faithful brethren who would, out of genuine love for Christ and His church, sound the warning against uncertain sounds and deceitful workers. Instead, let us focus our energies on the real problems and the real troublemakers of spiritual Israel (1 Kin. 18:17-18). It has always amazed me how some who claim to be "balanced" will either uphold error and false teachers or will refuse to stand in opposition to it and them. Are they not guilty (2 John 9-11)? Yet, that same "balanced" brother will viciously and maliciously attack and publicly vilify one who has the intestinal fortitude and backbone to stand up and say of error and its proponents, "This is wrong and brother _____ is wrong for teaching it," or, "This is wrong and congregation _____ is wrong for practicing it."

Are we facing serious problems which present crises challenging the church? Yes! Let us be warned and armed. The army of Christ shall overcome and the faithful shall win the victory now and eternally.

Thanks to all who have labored diligently in this volume's preparation. Especially are we grateful to the sound brethren who have expended hundreds of hours in research, study and preparation of the excellent manuscripts which comprise it. We trust their labors shall result in the salvation of souls. Thus, with hope and prayer, we offer this book to a church challenged by current crises. May it bring good to all who read it and may many turn from sin to follow the only Savior, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

*Bobby Liddell, Director
March 11, 1992*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Is The Church Of Christ The Restored Church Or Just One Part Of The Restoration Fellowship? Harrell Davidson	1
Is There A Pattern? Andrew M. Connally	15
Do We Need A New Hermeneutics? Eddie Whitten	25
Is It Time To Update Our Worship? Ray W. Peters	37
Questions About Worship Winfred Clark	45
Problems In The Pulpit B. C. Carr	55
What Is The Role Of Women In The Church? Bobby Duncan	69
Is The Church Lacking In Spirituality? Guss Eoff	79
Is Salvation By Grace Alone? Garland Elkins	89
Is The Bible The Inspired Word Of God? Jerri Manasco	107
Modern Versions—Translations Or Perversions? Robert R. Taylor, Jr.	119
Are We Still A People Who Know The Bible? Garry Barnes	137
Have We Sold Our House To Satan? H. A. (Buster) Dobbs	147
A Study Of Matthew 19:9 Roy Deaver	155
Is Abortion Murder? Terry Claunch	185
Does God’s Love Prohibit Punishment? Joe Gilmore, Jr.	197
Have We Lost The Desire To Be Servants? Ira Y. Rice, Jr.	211
Creation Vs Evolution Garry K. Brantley	223

Is The Church Of Christ A Cult?	
Stephen P. Waller	241
Do We Care That Millions Have Not Heard Of Christ?	
Ronnie Hayes	253
Is The Faithfulness Of Today The Anti-ism Of Tomorrow?	
H. Daniel Denham	263
Is It Wrong To Judge?	
Larry Middlebrooks	277
The Threat Of Influential False Teachers And Unfaithful Schools	
Noah A. Hackworth	291
The Eldership: Critical Problem In The Church Today	
William S. Cline	303
Strange And Uncertain Sounds From Brethren	
Allen Webster	309
How Does The Holy Spirit Guide Men?	
Jerry L. Martin	327
Must Christians Keep Themselves Pure?	
Willie Bradshaw	341

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE RESTORED CHURCH OR JUST ONE PART OF THE RESTORATION FELLOWSHIP?

Harrell Davidson



Harrell Davidson attended Freed-Hardeman College under the tutorship of men such as brother H. A. Dixon, G. K. Wallace, Frank Van Dyke, and W. Claude Hall. He also attended Harding College and the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He is married to the former Carrielyn Spurlock of Evening Shade, Arkansas. This union has been blessed with four children—three boys and one girl. He conducts several gospel meetings each year and has written for many gospel papers and at one time was the editor of *Vigil*. In December, 1987, he spoke on the Manila Bible Lectureship in the Philippines and also on the Third Annual Asian Lectureship in Singapore. From there he preached in a meeting in Taipei, Taiwan.

It is a genuine pleasure and great joy to be invited back from year to year to participate in this great lectureship. To the elders of the Bellview Church and to brother Bobby Liddell, I express my appreciation for the trust and confidence you have in me to preach the truth on the subject assigned.

I believe we need to start farther back than the restoration movement for this lesson and the lectureship book in order to do the very best we can for this particular discussion. All we have to go on is the Word of God. Regarding the church, Paul said,

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

The church of our Lord was and is to be a glorious church. It is to be without spot or blemish. The present church is no more pure than

are her members. If we are spotted by loose morals or false doctrine, then the church of our Lord is tainted and is not the church He desires it to be. We must remember this as we study this lesson.

THE CHURCH REACHES BACK INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

About 700 years before Christ established the church you read about in the New Testament, Isaiah had this to say:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

We need to underscore the phrase “to the house of the God of Jacob.” The reason is that Jacob had a special occasion to know something about the “house of the Lord.” You will recall that, in Genesis 28, Isaac blessed Jacob and gave a charge to him. The seed promise was restated in unmistakable terms. Jacob finally ended up near Haran. He was weary and tired from his travels and decided to lodge right there on mother earth where he happened to be. The sun had already set. He took some stones of that place and made for himself a pillow and lay down to sleep. During this sleep, he dreamed a dream. He saw a ladder set up between earth and heaven, and angels of God were both ascending and descending. The Lord stood above the ladder and reminded Jacob that He was the Lord God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and told him that the ground that he was on would be his. Promises that reflect the seed promise were made in the dream that Jacob had. Now mark it

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful in this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:16-17).

Remember the house of God and the gate of heaven; we will see it again.

It is not by accident then that the church you read of in the New Testament is also called the “house of God.” Notice with me, please

the following. “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”(1 Tim. 3:15). Make no mistake about it! The house of God is the church of the living God. Notice also the following Scripture. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God!” (1 Pet. 4:17). Here we have the house of God mentioned again. No one argues that this is not a reference to the New Testament Church. We have not normally noticed the reference all the way back to Genesis 28 in our studies regarding the New Testament Church, but it cannot be ignored. Another portion of the passage will come into view as onward we go.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, though Isaiah’s prophetic work was longer than Micah’s. Isaiah might have prophesied for a period of about 60 to 65 years. Micah, being a contemporary of Isaiah, said,

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Mic. 4:1-2).

Dear reader, make no mistake about it—if you are not a member of the church that began in Jerusalem, you are not a member of the church of our Lord. We have more information in the Old Testament that dates back about 500 years before Christ. Isaiah and Micah were both Pentecost pointers. Now, let us examine another prophet’s word.

King Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. He had what seemed to him to be a terrible dream. None of his associates from near and far could make the dream known to him with the interpretation to go along with it. Someone heard that Daniel had, “understanding in all visions and dreams” (Dan. 1:17). The King of Babylon sent for Daniel to give him the dream and the interpretation

of it. Daniel told the king that the images he saw in his dream were the rise and fall of various kingdoms. Finally, a strong kingdom would exist which would be stronger than all the others in the dream. History would reveal the strong kingdom to be the Roman kingdom. Now the Scripture says,

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

The Roman kings came into power about 63 B.C. and they were in power until about A.D 400.

We have now greatly narrowed down the time at which the Lord's church would be established. It is more than just a little interesting that Daniel spoke of the consuming of kingdoms or nations and the fact that Jesus said to go and teach all nations. What Christ had to offer was for everybody on the face of the earth. It would also be during the days of the Roman kings that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. He would flee for His life and have to move from one place to the next, finally living at Nazareth. His public ministry would be during the days of the Roman kings. His death, burial, and resurrection would also be during the days of the Roman kings. These matters were contained in prophecy regarding Christ and the church.

THE PROMISE OF CHRIST

During His personal public ministry, Jesus would say,

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mat. 16:18-19).

Please remember that Jacob said he was in the house of God and this was the gate of heaven. This is the reason we observed that the language was very noteworthy. Jacob used the language that our Lord used. Our Lord was describing the church.

Can we get a little closer to the time? Jesus had just promised that He would build His church. It would not be your church or

mine. It would not be Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Mormon, or any of the multitudes of other religious institutions. It would be His church. It would belong to none other than Christ. Since the church would be His, He would have authority over it. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat. 28:18). By no stretch of the imagination would the church spoken of here by our Lord belong to another. It would be HIS! Now, what about the time factor? He said it would come during the lifetime of some of those living during his public ministry. Notice this reading: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9-1). We have the time narrowed down considerably. Remember that ultimately the promise of Christ and His work dates back to Genesis 3:15. We have come centuries this side of Genesis 3 to a period in which Christ said that some of the folks standing there would not die before they saw the kingdom come.

Not only would they see the kingdom come, they would see it come with power. Now, let's investigate this a moment. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Tarry where? In Jerusalem Where did the prophets say the church would have its beginning? That's right—in Jerusalem The power spoken of here by our Lord was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was promised unto the Apostles and the Apostles alone in John 14:26; 15:26, and 16:13. Notice Acts 1:8 which says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Notice the wording! When would the Apostles receive power? Jesus told them it would be after the Holy Ghost came upon them. Can we find the exact time this happened?

Christ was taken up from among them into heaven to be with His Father. The Apostles remained in Jerusalem and another Apostle was chosen to take the place of Judas, who by transgression fell. The new Apostle would be named Matthias (cf., Acts 1:26). He was then numbered with the eleven. Look at the very next verse. As you do

so, remember that Scriptures were separated into chapters, verses, and paragraphs by man, not by God. Pick back up with Acts 1:26 where Matthias was numbered with the eleven. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place?” (Acts 2:1). Pentecost was one of three days in which all male Jews 20 years old and up were to assemble in Jerusalem. Look what happened!

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:2-4).

If we will add up all of the information we now have at hand, we will see that this is the beginning of the New Testament church. Watch it now! We have the right place—Jerusalem. This is very critical to the proper understanding of the beginning of the Lord’s church. It did not begin in England, Germany, France, or the U.S.A. It began in Jerusalem. Some of those Christ spoke to earlier were still living. Pentecost was the day the power (the Holy Spirit) came. This was the day the Spirit came upon the Apostles. He did not come down upon the 120. If one will look at the pronouns and their antecedents, one will see that the Spirit came only upon the Apostles.

The first gospel sermon was preached after some quibbles were settled with the Jews. It was proven to this Jewish audience that Christ was the seed of David. The sermon hit home when the audience was told, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Some of them were “pricked” in their hearts and wanted to know what to do. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Is this the beginning of the New Testament church? Let the Scriptures answer the question. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). “Praising

God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Added them to what? The Scriptures say "the church." Whose church was it? I shall answer by asking another question. Who was it that said "I will build my church"? Was it not Christ? Being fair with yourself and the Scriptures, you know most assuredly that this is the beginning of the church you read of in the New Testament.

THE CHURCH GREW AND WAS AT WORK

We have read that about three thousand obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 4:4, the number of men was five thousand. The word men (*aner*) in the original language is in the masculine gender. However, in Acts 5:14 multitudes were added, both men and women. Exact numbers fade out of the picture. The number was not the important part. We know that the number multiplied (cf., Acts 6:1,7). The church was at work and they were worshipping as they were directed. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "Praising God, and having favour with all the people" (Acts 2:47). It takes work to have favour with all the people. The devil is hard at work to cause upset and turmoil. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). The church was not a pastime for them, but it was their heart and soul. It was not an option to be busy in the Lord's business; they wanted to tell others of His great love and sacrifice. They appreciated that now, once and for all time, they had a gin offering made for them. No more daffy sacrifices. No more day of atonement where there was a constant reminder of their past sins. Sins were now washed away and forgiven.

Once we wrote in a bulletin article here in Obion, Tennessee, on Acts 20:20 and represented it as being the 20/20 vision of the church. Look at it now: "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house." Being a member of the Lord's church is the most important thing in the whole wide world. Any-

thing else comes in a distant second. There is no salvation out of Christ (cf., Acts 4:12).

THE BUBBLE WOULD BURST

In Acts 20:28, as Paul was addressing the elders of the church at Ephesus, he informed them that they were to “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Christ on Calvary purchased His church with His own blood. It was not borrowed blood, but His own precious blood, without spot or blemish—just like what He expects the church to be. But, sadness must now grip our souls. Paul said,

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

It is heart rending and pitiful that, so soon removed from Pentecost, the church would have division in her midst. Paul said “grievous wolves” would come in and would not spare the church. Even men from within the eldership would draw off disciples after themselves, speaking false doctrine. Later he would write: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). John would write: “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).

When Paul addressed the Thessalonians in the second letter, he made it even more graphic. He had warned them about the coming of Christ in the first letter. It caused some problem for them. They thought the coming was soon at hand, but he assured them that something would happen before that day would occur. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, he noted that Christ would not come until there was first a falling away. Falling away is where we get our word apostasy. The son of perdition would be revealed. He would be one that would exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Imagine a man that would exalt himself like that—one on

the equal or above God Almighty Himself. What a fearful place to project one's self into! Paul then said, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 The. 2:7). Everything had already been set in motion for there to be a falling away from the Lord's blood-bought church. The church had, as expressed in Philippians 1:1, elders, deacons, and saints or members. This was the order in the New Testament church. It appears that Diotrephes had already started a one-man rule in the church (cf., 3 John 9).

WHAT WAS TO OCCUR DID OCCUR

Corruption in the church by one-man rule greeted the next few years. Finally two bishops would be the rulers of the religious world. There was one at Rome and one at Constantinople. They were great rivals. Eastern Orthodoxy had begun and by the Sixth Century the bishop of Rome prevailed. He proclaimed himself to be the universal bishop. Ultimately, he was called "PaPa" or Pope. He exalted himself as though he were God. He received worship and made all the decisions. He refused God's Word to the people. In about A.D. 650, instrumental music was tried in worship and failed to gain approval. By about A.D. 750, it was brought back into the universal church of Rome with the Pope as ruler over it.

Infant baptism started and some years afterward sprinkling for baptism was begun. No, this is not a misprint; it happened that way. By and by, some began to be concerned. Martin Luther was the priest in Wittenburg, Germany. Zwingli had already started a little movement in Switzerland, and now Luther from Germany. John Calvin was born during the works of Martin Luther in 1509. These men, along with John Wesley and others, would become known as Reformers. They started back to the truth, but stopped short. In many ways, we owe them so much. In many ways, as with Calvin, their false doctrine invades the Lord's church today ever too often.

In 1517, Luther became enraged when he saw one of his members drunk. He said, "Good man, I expect to see you in confession." "Not so," the man replied, "for I have bought an indulgence." An indulgence was and is nothing more than a license to sin. It came about as a scheme to raise money. The Lord's church had freewill

offerings. When men depart, they go hog wild and pig crazy. What had happened was that Pope Leo X wanted to build St. Peter's Cathedral. He had commissioned a man by the name of John Titsell to go out and sell indulgences. Titsell said as soon as their silver touched the bottom of the coffers, their sins were forgiven. Luther was almost in shock at such a travesty. This was precisely when he wrote out the famous 95 theses or 95 propositions to debate. He did not write them out in the common tongue, but in Latin so the church fathers would be the ones to read them. The reformation was growing among the people.

We do not agree with all the Reformers did, but we are indebted to Luther for two things. One was that he started to write hymns. As a result, people began to sing and make melody in their hearts. One of his hymns which has been handed down through time is "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Another thing Luther did for which I am thankful is that he translated the Scriptures into the mother tongue of the day. He made some grievous mistakes. For instance, when he got to Romans 5:1 where Paul said, "Therefore being justified by faith" Luther put an asterisk. At the bottom of the page, he wrote "sola" which would make the passage read "being justified by faith alone (or only)." When he got to James 2 and read verse 24 where James says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," Luther wrote that James was a book of straw or a right strawy book. How sad to get close, but not go back far enough.

REFORMATION MADE WAY FOR RESTORATION

Just when the restoration movement had its beginning in America, we are not sure. Some things we can trace with accuracy. Several years ago in *The Gospel Advocate*, there was a picture of a tombstone, with the date of death being 1771, in one of the New England states with an inscription on it which said, "Here Lies A Christian." We know not who planted the seed of the Kingdom, but we do know that if that same seed is planted and nourished, it will only grow after its kind. John Allen Gano said, "The first church planted and organized since the grand apostasy, with the Bible as the

only creed or church book and the name 'Christian' as the only name, was organized in Kentucky in 1804 at Cane Ridge." The story of Cane Ridge is the story of Barton W. Stone.¹ Almost like Jerusalem, the movement began to spread.

In 1807, Thomas Campbell would come to America and preach for a branch of the Presbyterian Church known as the Seceders, or Seceding Presbyterians. Two years later, his son Alexander would follow his father from their mother country of Ireland. He was educated in the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Soon after Alexander Campbell arrived in America, his father Thomas gave his famous "Declaration and Address." They sought to have union with all the churches by using only the Bible for a "thus saith the in Lord." They contended sharply for this and a congregation was begun at Brush Run. Soon, however, the Presbyterian Synod would cast them out. They, along with some others, joined the Reddens Baptist Association with the understanding that only the Bible would be used in matters of faith. They had also been contending for some years that baptism was immersion in water. The Redstone Baptiste accepted their plan and they joined. The movement spread on through the country. A congregation in Maury County, Tennessee, Cathey's Creek, began in 1820 while the Campbell's were still members of the Baptist Association. Finally, in about 1827 to 1829, they were cast out of the Redstone Baptist Association. In 1823, Alexander started the publication *The Christian Baptist*. Later it would merge into and become *The Millennial Harbinger*. Some of his greatest work was done through this publication. Their plea was: "Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible in silent" This in the meaning of 1 Peter 4:11 where Peter says, "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God." Raccoon John Smith was another of the restorers. Many, many others could be named, but this is enough to tell the story.

Alexander Campbell was a well-educated man and well acquainted with the Scriptures. He debated for almost every square inch of truth that exists. Like any other man, he made some mistakes. Others came along to make paths right until the New Testament church was restored. However, this peace and growth would

own be hampered by those who would bring in the mechanical instrument of music. In 1905, the First Christian Church was recognized as being a denomination and still in. They have grown more liberal and will take into their assemblies those who have any sort of baptism.

A more liberal arm known as the Disciples of Christ was begun. For the most part any denominational practice is accepted by them. Then, on the horizon, there appeared the Independent Christian Church. They appear to be more conservative, but are not willing to give up the instrument.

THE LORD'S CHURCH IS THE ONLY CHURCH OF THE RESTORATION

Lately, we have had many so-called unity meetings. They have been more union meetings than unity meetings. In matters of faith, God's Word must be the divine standard to follow. Neither the First Christian Church nor the Independent First Christian Church will give up the instrument or the Missionary Society. It is not called that by the Independent First Christian, but they still have it by another name. Don DeWelt made known to the world that they were helping some particular relief effort somewhere in the world and were giving \$75,000.00 to a congregation of the Lord's church through the Society set up in the Independent Church. None of this is found in the Scriptures.

The union meetings have proven that neither the First Christian Church nor the Independent First Christian Church believe that singing or playing is authorized in the Scriptures, but we have brethren who are willing to accept such absurdity and call them brethren. Could a Baptist be our brother? We all know what the answer is. Is "faith only" any more a false doctrine than the instrument or the missionary society? We must now put sin into categories. "Faith only" is a terrible matter, but the instrument is a small matter that we can agree to disagree on, so some say. Brother Rubel Shelley would have us think there is more Scripture for solos or quartets in worship than there is for congregational singing. This is certainly "man talk" and not "God talk." He says "God talk" (which he says

is used for communication among God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit) is pure, while “man talk” (which he says must be used between Deity and mankind) cannot really be understood but is subject to interpretation. God could not communicate with us in any other way than through human agency. This makes the communication less than accurate. We suppose that if God had gotten his Ph.D., He could have communicated with man, a theory with which brother Shelley has no problem.

Shelley and others are getting ready to become part of a new denomination that is already set in motion, known as Christ’s Church Fellowship. What we have on our hands is another apostasy. Men can act in such a way for history to repeat itself. While we believe the true New Testament church has been restored, there must be another restoration movement or many will be lost.

One of the things that disturbs me the most is that these folks do not believe enough in what they we saying to debate the issues. Campbell fought every false teacher who would stand against the truth. Denominations of that day, and later periods for that matter, had debates among themselves. The Baptiste and the Presbyterians had a rather famous debate during the time of Alexander Campbell. However, we have weaklings in the pulpits who want people to feel good rather than right. They ask for sensationalism rather than good sense. They are after numbers to pay for their temples raised up to some man’s honor and are finding that such will not work.

Maybe there is a glimmer of hope alive. As long as there is life, there in hope. Let us pray that the true church win always stand for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let those who stand for the old paths encourage each other. It is certain that the devil is trying to discourage us at every crossroad.

ENDNOTE

¹John Rogers, *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*, Written by Himself With Additions and Reflections (Cincinnati, OH: J. A. & U. P. James, 1847), p. 138.

Intentionally Left Blank

IS THERE A PATTERN?

Andrew M. Connally



Andrew M. Connally married his childhood sweetheart, Claudene Franklin. They have four children, and six grandchildren. He attended four Christian Colleges and has three degrees, a B.A., MA. and Ph.D.

Brother and sister Connally have spent much of their lives pioneering the work of the Lord in Malawi and Tanzania, East Africa. They founded and built Chimala Mission and Hospital in Tanzania in 1962. This was the first hospital built by Churches of Christ any where in the world. It is presently overseen by the elders of the Seagoville Church and the Connallys are still vitally involved in the Chimala work. In fact, brother and sister Connally

now devote full time to this effort.

Brother Connally was a teacher for the Brown Trail School of Preaching for over eleven years. He has and is holding meetings and lectureships across America and writes for the *Spiritual Sword*, *Firm Foundation* and several other papers as well. Brother Connally has had several debates; one in print is on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, *The Connally-Hicks Debate*.

It is a strong belief of mine that we are here at this moment of history because of the overwhelming providence of God. Most of us who have lived and worked in the mission fields feel very strongly about the providence of God and how God shapes the destiny of our lives if only we are pliant and submissive to His will.

We strongly believe there is a purpose to our lives and work. We feel God can and will do wonderful things with us, if only we will pay the price. That is one reason we contend so strongly for His truth and cause. God is authoritative and so is His Word.

Our subject asks a question and must have a Bible answer. "Is There A Pattern?"

GOD HAS ALWAYS HAD A PATTERN

Our text is taken from Hebrews chapter eight, verses 1-5. Notice the following:

Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this, We have a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is

appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is necessary that this high priest also have somewhat to offer. Now if he wen on earth, he would not be a priest at all, mooring there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he in about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount (Heb. 8:1-5).

There are so many significant points in our passage, but none more important than this, “Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle. for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.” James Henry Thayer, a widely accepted Greek scholar, in his lexicon (p. 632), says of “pattern,” “An example, the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made” (Heb. 8:5). We could multiply the use of the word and the scholars to prove this basic meaning but this is left to such scholarly works, as, *Behold the Pattern* by Goebel Music.

We can illustrate the principle that proves God demands that we follow all He has said, and only what He has said. Notice: “Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:28). Now God had given Noah instructions as to how the ark should be built. This was obligatory and was not simply a suggestion, “God commanded him”! Nothing could be plainer, God commanded and Noah obeyed. He had a choice, but to find “grace in the eyes of the Lord,” he had to obey.

Moses was “warned of God to build according to the pattern,” to do otherwise is to incur the displeasure of God. He, too, had a choice. So do we!

The very fact that this principle is quoted in Hebrews shows it applies to God’s wishes in our day as well. In fact, every command given in the New Testament that is properly applied becomes our example and pattern, whether it is the “mind of Christ,” “the will of the Father,” or a “thus saith the Lord.”

There is a growing group of men and women in the church today who deny the New Testament furnishes us with a pattern that is binding in any or all realms of our lives.

Notice some of their comments:

The point here in: The church has always been in a state of flux and will continue to be. Regardless of what any of us say or do, the church will continue to change as well it should. If this be the case, it is for us, who are interested in the church to help it change comfortably and orderly without causing further division by our childish behavior.

It is time Bro. Connally that we quit thinking of Jesus as another Moses. Jesus never wrote any book or gave any Law. We are under GRACE and not *any* law (Rom. 6:14). Our *works* don't amount to a pile of dung with God (Eph. 2:8,9). It in about time we started relying on Jesus (our sin-offering) rather than our legalistic religion for salvation (Rom. 3:24,26).

Many of us are learning for the first time in our lives that what God has not made a condition of salvation, we should not make a test of fellowship. Such things as instrumental music, missionary societies, Premillennialism, Cape, classes, colleges, preachers, etc. were never a condition of salvation. Let us leave our unwritten creeds for Christ. Let us turn from the letter to the spirit (II Cor. 3:4,5). I hope, Bro. Connally, that you will study this scripture for it says exactly what is the nature of the problem at issue. Note carefully in the passage that there is a *qualitative* change, meaning a different *kind* of service rendered to God. Not one based on conformity to the letter (any letter) but one based on conformity to the Spirit.

Change is inevitable. Let us be sure that we do not make a crisis out of a very natural process. With best wishes for you and yours, I am as always Yours and His.

[Private letter sent to me, AMC.]

Since when does the Bible become the basis for Unity? I thought it was Christ—to whom all power and authority are given. There is a difference.

Who is a faithful brother? Are there some without sin? Who has decided that they are the faithful guardians of the truth?

To what are these brethren faithful: their own opinions, party, sect or Christ?

You use the phrase “pulpits of the Lord’s church;” I thought the church was people not buildings.

Has Paul, Peter, or John or Christ failed to give us a complete revelation, but fortunately through the nonoperation of the Holy Spirit we have decided to build our own way—buildings, pulpits, colleges, our professional pastor system (a child of Rome) etc., etc., and thus “save the pare way.” We’re great for authority. Where is our “authority” for these bastards? (Please do not be offended by the “scriptural term”).

When did the Holy Spirit retire to heaven and stop operating?

Who are we to *demand specific changes in doctrine and practice* of others? Aren't we all to stand before the great King and answer for ourselves the deeds done in our bodies?

If two people have fellowship with Christ shouldn't they both have fellowship with one another?

Where has division EVER purified the church? For a group which does not believe in evolution (and I don't) we have split and divided and multiplied into different species showing that evolution is so.

What must "unbelievers" believe in to be unbelievers? Have you ever eaten in a restaurant with unbelievers?

My brother, I too, have a concern for the Lord's body, I am not trying to be "smart" or snobby. But these questions are burning on my mind.

If we are all members of His family how can some of us tell others they are not members of that family any longer simply because we do not agree about some doctrine. Do you know of any family who agrees absolutely about every matter? I know several who agree about Christ but disagree about some of their individual interpretations and opinions about the doctrine. Since we are begotten by the Father through His Son shouldn't our fellowship be in Christ, the gospel. This blood relationship cannot be broken except by God himself.

[Private letter sent to me, AMC]

Surely we can see the errors in such thinking.

God has decreed the "Pattern" is true for doctrine as well. The "Form" is the "Pattern."

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS

"Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

God demands we speak forth sound doctrine and further, we hold it fast! Let us show forth the sound doctrine and how we can hold it fast.

The words of God are of vital importance to all of us. Without a strict adherence to the words of God our lives will fail. Without regard to the will of God our congregations will apostatize. Without a return to the will of God our nation will suffer inglorious defeat and the wrath of an angry God.

Jesus has well said, Matthew 7:21-27:

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 who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name

do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

Such sober words of warning, admonition and instruction cannot be neglected or deferred if a life is to be built, if a congregation is to grow or a nation is to progress. Ninety-nine percent of all our problems are directly traceable to the rejection, the neglect or indifference to the “form of sound words” God has spoken. In other words, “hold to the pattern!”

Paul states:

For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth (Tit. 1:10-14).

Our responsibility is clear, our job is great, but if the church is to survive the onslaught of liberalism she is now being subjected to, then we must go on with it, “Hold fast the form of Sound Doctrine.”

HOLD FAST TO THE FORM OF SOUND DOCTRINE

“Hold fast”—“of steadfast adherence to the faith.” Note:

This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

And, “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9).

Of old God has said: “My son, forget not my law, but let thy heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to thee” (Pro. 3:1-2). “She is a tree of life

to them that lay hold upon her And happy is every one that retaineth her” (Pro. 3:18).

And,

Hear, *my* sons, the instruction of a father, And attend to know understanding; For I give you good doctrine; Forsake ye not my law. For I was a son unto my father, Tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. And he taught me, and said unto me: Let thy heart retain my words; Keep my commandments, and live; Get wisdom, get understanding; Forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth; Forsake her not, and she will preserve thee; Love her, and she will keep thee. Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom; Yea, with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote thee; She will bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She will give to thy head a chaplet of grace; A crown of beauty will she deliver to thee (Pro. 4:1-9).

And again,

My son, attend to my words; Incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them depart not from thine eyes; Keep them in the midst of thy heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh (Pro. 4:20-22).

The New Testament commands: “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ that whether I come and an you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in the faith of the gospel” (Phi. 1:27). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). “Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayer” (Tit. 1:9).

And, “But Christ is a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm to the end” (Heb. 3:6). “Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” (Heb. 4:14).

And again, “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23).

And,

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

“The Form of Sound Doctrine,” “used metaphorically to denote a pattern”—Romans 6:17. “A model to which something is to be conformed,” hence a “doctrinal model,” hence the gospel and all that it includes; in other words, to be obedient to it, obedient to its rites and precepts, to its spirit and practice (cf., 1 Cor. 15:14).

Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

And,

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Thus the “form” or “Pattern” or “sound words,” “doctrine,” “commands,” all become “the example to which we must conform.” It is clearly seen, easily understood and must be carefully followed or else every man becomes a law unto himself and thus enshrines himself in God’s rightful place.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THESE PRINCIPLES

God has a “pattern” for marriage. Marriage is an institution founded by God and governed by Christ’s law. The husband is the cornerstone of discipline in the home. “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

A father must provide for his family in all realms. This not only includes the physical necessities, but the spiritual as well. Notice: “But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim 5:8). A lot of men are going to be sorely surprised at the Judgment to learn how miserably they have failed in this matter. The Prodigal Father needs to become the Faithful Father by repenting and changing his life.

Mothers are ordained of God and have a glorious position of honor and responsibility in God's scheme of things. They must "revere their husbands" (Eph. 5:33), "love their children" (Tit. 2:4), and be "workers at home" (Tit. 2:5). This is an awesome responsibility and brings great reward when followed and horrible tragedy when ignored!

Children also, must play their part in this beautiful picture of man's program and happiness in our civilization. They are to "obey [their] parents" (Eph. 6:1), and "remember [their] Creator in the days of their youth" (Ecc. 12:1). May God help us!

God ban a "pattern" for the family and it is clearly outlined by the Scriptures and when followed brings joy to all, but neglect it and all the terrors of hell break loose!

God has a "pattern" for the church. When Jesus built His church (Mat. 16:18), He did not leave it without chart or compass on the seas of life, but rather He charged the Apostles that in making disciples, they must do so by commanding them to observe all the commandments our Lord had taught the Apostles and to, then, baptize those taught into the Authority of the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:18-20). Thus, when you find the early church "Continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2), it was not by accident; it was by design, they were conforming to the pattern!

When you find the Apostles teaching men how to get into the church, into Christ's spiritual body, it is not an optional matter, it is "according to the pattern" (Acts 2:38, 47), thus God adds such "to the church."

Our singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), communion and contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2), are all "according to the pattern." To do otherwise in to violate the "pattern"!

God has a "pattern" for the Christian life. Notice, Romans 6:16-18.

Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves *as* servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to

that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.

Notice it was the “form [pattern] of teaching” which they obeyed. We are not left to doubt or wonder about how to live the Christian life. God has mapped out the way.

It is sacrificial,

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his arms, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it (Mat. 16:24-25).

It is committal, “And he said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This in the great and first commandment” (Mat. 22:37-38).

It is spiritual,

Have the mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, with God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross (Phi. 2:5-8).

It is God-honoring,

Wherefore also God highly exalted him and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phi. 2:9-11).

CONCLUSION

Time fails us to go further in showing the “pattern” of God. But to the honest inquirer we have proven our proposition and answered strongly that God has a “pattern” for His work and our lives.

May we adhere to it with all the power of our being and joyously teach it to all men.

Intentionally Left Blank

DO WE NEED A NEW HERMENEUTICS?

Eddie Whitten



Gospel preacher, has served congregations in Seabrook and San Antonio, Texas. Worked in industry for thirty years before going into full time preaching. Graduated from the Brown Trail School of Preaching in 1969. Returned to the school as the Administrator in 1971. Served as the Director at the school from 1982 until December, 1987. Served as one of the elders of the Brown Trail church from 1976-1989. He is the author of a book on the *Minor Prophets*. He has preached in India, Jamaica, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and Alaska in special efforts. Has conducted gospel meetings and various special Bible study series in many states. He directed the Fort Worth Lectures from 1983-1990. He is now working with the Bedford church of Christ in *Bedford, Texas*. He is a staff writer for the *Firm Foundation* and now serves as Secretary-Treasurer and Business Manager for that paper. He writes articles for several of our brotherhood periodicals. He is married and is the father of three daughters. He and his late wife have nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

INTRODUCTION

Until a few years ago, the term “Hermeneutics” was relegated largely to the theological classroom. Few members of the church had ever heard of the term. In recent years, it has become a much used expression, especially in the area of the so-called need for a new hermeneutics. The effect of a new hermeneutics is devastating to the church. Therefore, there is a desperate need to discuss this subject and discover just what it is and how it affects the church of our Lord.

DEFINITION OF “HERMENEUTICS”

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines “hermeneutics” as: “The science of interpretation; esp., the study of the principles of Biblical exegesis.” The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (I.S.B.E.) states:

Referred specifically to the sacred Scriptures, the science of interpretation in generally known as hermeneutics, while the practical appli-

cation of the principles of this science is exegesis. In nearly all cases, interpretation ham in mind the thoughts of another, and then, further, these thoughts expressed in another language than that of the interpreter. In this sense it is used in Bib. research. A person has interpreted the thoughts of another when he has in his own mind a correct reproduction or photograph of the thought as it was conceived in the mind of the original writer or speaker. It is accordingly a purely reproductive process, *involving no originality of thought on the part of the interpreter* [amp. mine, EW].

In either definition, there is the inherent principle of interpretation, not translation. To accurately convey the thought of the writer, or speaker, from his mind to another, necessitates the removal of one's own preconceptions. Interpretation does not mean to fit the thoughts of another into the mold of ones own understanding but to bring into one's understanding the thoughts of the other. An example of the wrong use of the term was expressed by one man when he said, "What Paul meant to say was." No, Paul said what Paul meant to say. The problem was that the man was trying to make Paul say what the man wanted Paul to say! This is misinterpretation, not interpretation.

There should be no quibble among scholars concerning the meaning of the word, "Hermeneutics." Everyone will agree that it is the "science of interpretation," but when it comes to the application of that science in the biblical sense, exegesis in very clouded. If exegesis is properly applied, proper and accurate interpretation will result. Such is not the case, however, because there is the demand on the part of some, even in the church of the Lord, for implementing a "New Hermeneutics!"

Can there be a new hermeneutics? An intriguing question, indeed? Is there such a thing as a new science of interpretation? If there is a new science of interpretation, what can it be? The truth of the matter is there is not a new science of interpretation, but an appeal to ignore the real application of hermeneutics. Such thinking is comparable to trying to change facts to suit fantasy. It would be as one saying, "I don't like apples. I know I should eat apples, so I will call oranges, apples." It might be pleasing to try to change the facts, but the facts remain unchanged.

Therefore, for one to say that the science of interpretation can be changed is making a false application of the term. He may mean he wishes to ignore the science of interpretation in order to implement his method of interpretation. This could not be a new science but the application of a false method to that science.

WHY A NEW HERMENEUTICS?

Speculation can run amok when we ask, “Why a new hermeneutics?” There was a time when the Lord’s church was known for its distinctive stand for truth. Such a stand was contrary to the common philosophy of religious tolerance. Members of the church were “looked down on.” We were the adamant fundamentalists who were fanatical, bigoted and arrogant. The preaching of the pure, uncompromising gospel upset those in the denominations. Members of the church were called “Campbellites” in derision. We met in small numbers in small buildings in the more undesirable sections of town. The term, “a small, frame building on the wrong side of the tracks” was familiar. It meant that little group who was unpopular and not socially acceptable with the rest of the religious world. What it really meant was: The denominations, which preached religious tolerance to the extent that all other religions were acceptable, did not practice that tolerance and acceptance toward the church because the church condemned the false philosophies propounded by them. Over a period of many years that distinctiveness faded into toleration similar to that of the denominations. The “need” to climb out of the unacceptable into the acceptable began to outweigh the need to stand firm for the Word. There are three distinct emphases involved in the owing toward a “new hermeneutics.”

1. *Social pressure is a powerful force.* It exercised its power by persuading the church into moving from “across the tracks” into high society. The danger of familiarity is that of losing individuality. Every person in responsible positions knows the basic axiom that “familiarity breeds contempt.” Such is the result of the church moving into the realm of society. Over a period of twenty to thirty years, the impact of the principles of going back to the Bible, the restoration movement, have been de-emphasized. When “movements” begin, they move slowly. Then when acceptance comes, they

accelerate in the direction from which the acceptance comes. The church began to become accepted in the religious world and the crescendo began. Now the church, in many places, is considered nothing more than another denomination, and some in the church are encouraging that nomenclature.

2. *Economic equality brings political pressure.* Politics is present in the church. “Keeping up with the Joneses” used to be an expression to convey the idea of trying to maintain economic equality only for the purpose of appearance. We wanted it to appear that we had as much money as our neighbor when the truth was we did not. Appearance was important and to be “poor” was a disgrace. This is still a problem of pride and covetousness, usually solved by the excessive use of credit cards. The “little white, frame-building church across the tracks” became the victim of political pressure to “climb out of the poor economic appearance” into the light of economic equality. We built big church buildings by the hundreds. Huge debt was incurred which necessitated more income. Income was the result of contributions and contributions came from people. More contributions meant the need for more people. The way more people could be obtained was to make the church more attractive to them. Thus, the distinctive ring of the church of our Lord began to lose its clarion tone. Today, we have more huge edifices dedicated to money and politics than we have “little white, frame-building churches across the tracks” dedicated to the Lord?

3. *Educational prestige necessitates doctrinal compromise.* In times past, the effort to provide education was left largely up to the church. Many of our major universities began as church-oriented schools. Nothing is wrong with trying to improve one’s education, but the purpose of the church has never been to provide secular education. Autonomous congregations looked to the colleges for the formal training of men to fill our pulpits. The time came when professors could not be recognized in the intellectual field without graduate degrees. Since the church had very few graduate degree programs, our professors had to achieve their higher education at secular, or denominational, universities. The results were mostly tragic in that the doctrines of denominationalism or atheism were

brought back into the classrooms of our colleges. Doctrinal compromise was introduced into the minds of our children and spread through our pulpits over the years. Subsequently, for the colleges and universities to grow, they had to appeal to all philosophical groups within the church. Compromise is a blight upon the Word of God! Jesus said we are either for Him or against Him (Mat. 12:30). Now, most of our colleges and universities make no secret that they honor no influence by the church but rather appeal to every philosophy in order to obtain students. In years past, most of what was taught in our colleges conformed to biblical principles. But, like in all denominations, when enough time is given, basics change. Now, the Bible is not the standard by which principles are determined, but whatever is necessary to attract more students is.

The role of intellectual equality and prestige is also expressing itself in the form of "The Christian Scholars' Conference." This is an effort to elevate the quality of education as related to religion in general. Denominational groups "share" the benefit of their intellect from the field of Theology with our faculties. Again, compromise is the aim of the game. The distinctive, singular, clarion call of the gospel is trodden under foot and all sorts of philosophies are suggested which cast derision upon the writhing body of our Lord hanging on the cross for the sins of man.

AN APPEAL TO HISTORY

The big appeal, at this time in the church, is to rely more on human judgment than on biblical hermeneutics. This is the philosophy of intellectualism and the practice of those with whom familiarity is sought. To be forced to remain true to a dogma smacks of individuality which threatens familiarity. Hermeneutics is a science. Science deals with reality. Reality demands individuality. Therefore, hermeneutics demands individuality. The final dilemma becomes: To remain true to the Bible necessitates alienating those with whom many desire to be accepted. The desire to be accepted socially by ones friends is very strong. The decision: many choose to be socially acceptable to their friends! For such a circumstance to be possible, they must have a "new method of interpreting God's Word." So, the "New Hermeneutics" is born.

We should recap history if we are to grasp an understanding of what has been happening right under our noses. The Bible is the standard for all who would hold to “first-century” Christianity. Many things we different today from the first century. Therefore, confusion results in the minds of many who, for whatever reason, have difficulty in recognizing, or accepting the application of first century principles to twentieth century practice. We live in a new age. The technological development over the past fifty years has surpassed such development from the beginning of time. World War II introduced scientific advancement to a degree never known before. The steam engine, electricity, automobile, telephone, radio and a thousand other things were totally unknown by Peter, James, John, Paul and the others of that time. Today, the computer boggles the minds of most of us. Medical technology is amazing. The idea of man in space is still an incredible dream in the minds of most. In view of the differences between the first century and the twentieth in so many areas of human existence, is there still the need to preach the old Jerusalem gospel, or in there a need to change the gospel to At the needs of the twentieth century?

In order to determine whether we need a “new hermeneutics,” we should answer another basic question: “Did the ancient gospel meet the needs of ancient men?” If it did, we have a problem with a new hermeneutics. If it did not, they had a problem with the old hermeneutics. Let us examine the question. Following Jesus’ baptism, he was led into the wilderness where, after forty days, he was tempted by Satan with every avenue of sin—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life (1 John 2:16). In each of these temptations, Jesus responded by, “It in written.” The Son of God relied upon the Scriptures.

The teaching of Jesus changed the lives of the disciples. They came from different backgrounds and occupations. Some were crude, but Jesus said, “Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3). The story of the Savior’s redeeming love melted the hearts of the Jews on the day of Pentecost and three thousand were saved on that day. The Word of God made saints out of sinners and turned idol worshippers to serve the living

God (Acts 17:34; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). The example of the principle of Christianity convicted the Philippian jailor—and his household (Acts 16:31). The ancient gospel was the answer to the needs of the ancient people. Now, the question arises, “Does the ancient gospel most the needs of modern man?” This is a big issue in the church today. How can the church most the “felt needs” of the people? Let us examine this question also. In order to answer the question, we must ask some other questions and consider the answer to them.

1. *Has the nature of man changed?* The answer, of course, is NO! There is nothing inherently different in the nature of man now than in the beginning. Aside from the physical components of man, his nature also is the same. He is made of flesh and blood and bones, etc. He hungers and thirsts just as men did back then. He grows weary from labor and other activities and he needs rest just as men did then. He has the same physical needs today as men did then. If the physical nature of men is the same now, the physical needs have not changed.

Man’s moral nature is also unchanged through the ages. He still has the same desires, appetites, passions and impulses of which we have record in the Bible. Men of the Old Testament were just as evil and corrupt as we read and hear about in today’s media. Vileness and wickedness is nothing new in the world. Our generation did not invent adultery, murder, covetousness and idolatry. We may have refined them somewhat and made certain forms of evil more sophisticated, but we have not invented new avenues of sin.

The penchant for chasing after idols has not changed over the years. Ever since the beginning of time, men have forgotten about God and have gone after idols. This was a terrible blight among the children of Israel, and continued to be a problem until the time of the Babylonian captivity. The apostle Paul addressed this evil in his discourse on Mars Hill to the Athenian philosophers. It is still a major problem among religious people today. The form of idol may differ, but it is still idolatry to depart from the living God to chase after alien doctrines (Heb. 3:12).

Therefore, if the nature of modern man is the same as the nature of ancient man and, if the ancient gospel met the needs of ancient

man, then the ancient gospel will also meet the needs of modern man. This is a necessary logical conclusion that we must accept.

2. *Has the world in which man lives changed?* When we refer to “the world,” we have in mind the influences in the world. The physical topography may have changed in the passing of time, and geographical boundaries change with every political regime, but the nature of the world in which men live does not change. The nature of temptation is the same as it has always been. James explains how temptation affects man. He says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (Jam. 1:13-14). Temptation has been in the world since the days of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah and his evil generation.

First John 2 catalogs the avenues through which men sin: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (v. 16). Today, man have invented many, many ways of implementing temptation, but every temptation, every sin, fits into one or more of these three avenues. We may feel we have a “corner on the market” for ways in which men can sin, but the world of our forefathers was the same as it is today. Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden by the lust of the flesh (“when the woman saw that the tree was good for food”), and by the lust of the eye (“and that it was pleasant to the eyes”), and by the pride of life (“and a tree to be desired to make one wise”). All three categories of temptation were employed by Satan to lure Eve into committing sin. He is still using these three methods to tempt man today.

Hebrews 4:15 states “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” There is no sin, or approach to sin, to which we are subjected that was not experienced by our Lord. The Hebrews writer stated, in regard to Jesus, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18). Only the sophistication, the facade, the veneer, of sin has changed over the years, but the world in which man lives has not changed.

Therefore, we conclude, if the ancient gospel was sufficient to meet the needs of the ancient man in the ancient world, and if the modern world is no different from the ancient world, then the ancient gospel is sufficient to meet the needs of modern man in the modern world.

3. *Has the malady which plagues man changed?* There is an old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." A similar thought is expressed in the idea that if any disease has not changed in its nature, there is no need to change the remedy. If a malady remains unchanged in its nature, whatever it is that can cure that malady should not be changed. The great and principal malady of man is sin. Regardless of whatever else, with which we might be plagued, sin is the ultimate culprit. Sin is the only thing that can keep us from living eternally with God in heaven. Sin is the weapon of Satan to keep us from God's favor (Isa. 59:1-2). Sin is the same as it always has been. It is vicious, uncompromising, relentless, impersonal and degrading. No new sin has been developed than those enumerated in Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; and Galatians 5:19-21.

Not only has no new sin been developed, but these were fully developed before the remedy for sin was ever prescribed. The world had become so wicked in the days of Noah that God determined to destroy the world by the flood (Gen. 6:5-7, 11-13). This he did, "but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

Since no new sin has been developed since the ancient days, and the Word of God was the remedy for sin in the ancient days, then there is no need for a new gospel for modern day. A corollary to that is, since no old sin has ceased to be practiced since the ancient days, and if the Word of God was the remedy for sin in the ancient day, then the Word of God is the remedy for the same mine in the modern day. If the malady is the same (sin), and the gospel is the remedy for sin, why change the remedy? There is no need for a new gospel, nor a new method of interpretation of that gospel today! The modern attempt to abandon the "old hermeneutics" is not new; it is a corruption!

THE “NEW HERMENEUTICS” IS NOT “NEW”

The camp of liberalism has long teemed with every wind of doctrine. Philosophy can be given the honor of being the mother of liberalism. Philosophy changes with the seasons. Therefore, liberalism also changes with the whims and customs of men. The “New Hermeneutics” is a product of those who have exchanged the authority of the Bible for the judgment of men. It is different; it is contrary to the standard of authority for man, the Bible. Louis O. Kattsoff says,

When we speak of Philosophy as a method of examining a body of knowledge, we must separate religion from it. Religion assumes that God can be known, and develops a ritual, a creed, and a moral code based on that assumption. Philosophy makes no such assumption. It examines the logic behind religious proofs, and tests the methods of investigation that religion uses. Philosophy questions the meanings of terms and sentences used in ritual, prayer, and talk about God. For example, a philosopher will examine the expression, “God in all-powerful” to clarify its meaning and to judge the evidence offered for it.

We would not agree with Kattsoff in his statement that “religion assumes that God can be known,” and that the religionist bases his ritual, creed and moral code on that assumption. However, his point is well taken that the philosopher, if he follows the definition of philosophy as Kattsoff portrays it, bases his conviction upon that which is empirical rather than on that which is spiritual. He further says, based upon the proposition that philosophy “must obtain” in determining truth, “This requirement of philosophy rules out forever and completely any figment of faith in God as deity, or Jesus as God’s Son, or the miracles of the Bible.” This was the liberalist’s view.

The “New Hermeneutics” has adopted the philosophy of secular humanism. This is a philosophy that rejects outward restrictions and makes man his own lawmaker. He knows he must follow the laws of the land, but they are man-made laws. In essence, he rejects everything that is beyond the wisdom and venue of man. Man becomes the criteria for all practice, and since there are no man-made laws dealing with man other than the political arena, he becomes a law unto himself in matters religious. The proponents of the “New Hermeneutics” have swallowed this philosophy hook, line and

sinker! In short, philosophers have not up criteria, or standards, for judging moral goodness in term of: (1) man himself; (2) God, and, (3) the world in which man lives. The “New Hermeneuticisers” have opted to embrace (1), heavily influenced by (3), leaving God out entirely.

The “New Hermeneutics,” in its rejection of God’s Word as authority, has adopted materialism as its standard in life. This is an obvious, automatic consequence. There is no other option. The materialist feels that matter is the only thing in the universe that has reality, and that it is the basis of all that exists. Materialists think physical changes in the body and nervous system cause all mental processes. They justify this belief by pointing out that men can really know only what they see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. They deny the existence of mind or soul as distinct from matter, and insist that feelings, thoughts, and will have no independent existence.

Following World War I, Karl Barth, who once was a leading proponent of liberalistic theology; i.e., he held belief in himself as his standard of life, could not reconcile the problems of the people with the destruction of his materialistic views. Barth charged that the liberal theologian is wrong on two counts. First, the liberal starts with himself; that is, he builds his world view upward from man. He uses reason, natural theology, and mystical experience to build a system in which God can be found. But, says Barth, the only God that can be found by such a method is a pale reflection of ourselves. The second error of the liberal is his optimism. He forgets that he is a “dying man speaking to dying men.” Instead of this man-centered faith we need to come to the crisis in which we recognize our helplessness. Hence, preaching must no longer appeal to the strength of men challenging them to do things; rather it must force men to face their weakness until they turn to God.

The “New Hermeneutics” is a mirror reflection of the philosophy espoused by the liberal philosophers prior to World War I. It was proven to be a false philosophy then, and it will be proven to be false again in due time. The stupefying aspect of the new hermeneutics’ view is that men are so gullible to even entertain its claims. It has been proven false time and time again!

By the claims of some of our own brethren who are embracing the false doctrine of salvation by grace only, or that the Bible has nothing to do with our salvation, or that the Scriptures are only God's "love letters to his children," they are placing themselves in the same camp with the Neo-Orthodoxy movement of the early twentieth century. These brethren, even though they are, by implication, denying the inspiration of the scriptures and placing man as the ultimate authority, are claiming a belief in God. They say God exists; that he has spiritual children on the earth; that he loves them, and in some way approves of their denial of his authority.

CONCLUSION

In this study of "Do We Need A New Hermeneutics?", we have considered several matters. We have discussed the definition of hermeneutics. We have asked, "Why a new hermeneutics?" We have made an appeal to history with regard to the fallacy of new movements, and we have noticed that the "New Hermeneutics" is not now after all.

The heretical, better-felt-than-told philosophies have been with us for many years. The New Hermeneutics Will be with us for a while, but in the day of judgment when the names of the faithful hear the welcomed "Well done," all of the high minded sophistication will vanish with the vapors and only the fine gold of righteousness will prevail.

IS IT TIME TO UPDATE OUR WORSHIP?

Ray W. Peters



Ray Peters was born in Pensacola, Florida in 1943. He graduated from Escambia High School in 1961 and attended Pensacola Junior College and in 1966 graduated from Valdosta State College in Valdosta, Georgia with a B.S. degree in History Education. He is a 1909 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and has a Masters Degree in Bible from Alabama Christian School of Religion in Montgomery, Alabama. Ray began preaching in 1965, and has preached full-time for congregations in Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas and Alabama. He has done mission work in Canada, Virgin Islands and is presently engaged in full-time mission work in Southeast Asia and Riga, Latvia. Brother Peters is married to the former

Judy Baker and they have one son, Michael, who is a senior in high school.

It has always been the practice of our society, especially in the work place, to update methods and equipment. In our day and time it is no different. One buys a computer, and the first thing one knows it is out of date and it needs to be renewed and brought up to new standards. This kind of thinking is carried over into the area of religion and specifically to worshipping.

In this lesson the question of, “Is It Time To Update Our Worship?” will be considered. While this is a subject that is needed by everyone, young and old alike, it will have a special emphasis and direction to the young people. Our young people are the church of today and of tomorrow. There are those who are older in the Faith who are falling into the liberal thinking and trying to change the “old paths,” and now are trying to lead the younger generations down that same pathway.

Consideration will be given to God’s never changing attitude toward worship, under the Old and New Covenants. Attention will be directed to efforts to influence our young people in the wrong way which will have an impact presently and in the future.

WORSHIP DEFINED

The Bible does not teach that worship is an accident or an on-going action. Yet, it is an act. A full definition is, “Honor, reverence, homage, an act.” The principal Old Testament word is, *shahah*, and means, “to depress, bow down, prostrate, as in Exodus 4:31: “then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” The principal word in the New Testament is *proskuneo* meaning “kiss the hand toward or the ground toward” and, therefore, the Oriental bowing upon the ground. These two words together present a beautiful picture of the humility, reverence, and submission that is to be present in true worship unto the Father in Heaven.

THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF WORSHIP

One of the first things mentioned in the Bible is the worship of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17). The first thing Noah did when he left the ark was to build an altar unto the Lord and worship (Gen. 8:20). The psalmist declared, “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). Our Lord commanded, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.” He also set forth to the woman at Jacob’s well, “God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Hence, it is plain that worshipping God is not something that God takes lightly, and that He demands that mankind pay homage to Him. Our Saviour not only taught about worship, He gave us an example: “And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16). In this passage notice: (1) It was his “custom” and not a whimsical thing; (2) He went to a certain place, the synagogue, and did specific things, “stood up to read” and did not assert, “ALL I DO IS WORSHIP!”; and, (3) Furthermore, He participated and did not come as an observer or one to be entertained.

GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARD INNOVATIONS

An “innovation” is defined simply as a “change, mutation, modification, or alteration.” It is true that Jesus is, “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” as is the Father, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). Yet, there is no contradiction that His law changes,

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). Our Heavenly Father fulfilled (Mat. 5:17) and took the Old Covenant out of the way and nailed it to the Cross of Christ (Col. 2:14). The Law of Moses is referred to as the “first testament” and was replaced by the “new testament” (Heb. 8:13; 9:12-22).

The Israelites were under the Law of Moses: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our Fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deu. 5:2-3). While they were subject to that rule of action, they could not alter or change it in any way. There is a principle that is set forth throughout the Word of God—man is not to add to or subtract from the Word of God (cf., Deu. 4:2; Pro. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). If there were any attempts to bring about an innovation God showed His displeasure. For example, when the kingdom of Israel was divided and Jeroboam was made king of Israel (1 Kin. 12:20) he moved the place of worship. The place of sacrifice was to be in Jerusalem, “If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem” (1 Kin. 12:27). Jeroboam, fearing the people’s loyalty would turn if they went to Jerusalem, made two calves of gold and set one in Bethel and one in Dan (1 Kin. 12:28-30). This “innovation” was called “sin” or transgressing of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Jeroboam reasoned within himself and with others and did not follow the precepts and dictates of God. Again, the example of Nadab and Abihu points out our Lord’s attitude toward varying from his directives, especially in worship.

The account of Nadab and Abihu is found in Leviticus 10. In Leviticus 16:12, further insight is found that they were to take a censor bucket and get the hot coals from off the “altar.” The record tells us that they took “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1) or fire, “which he commanded them not.” God showed His displeasure with this by devouring them with fire (Lev. 10:2). At the time this seemed to be a very “insignificant” thing, that is to take fire from off the altar. Do you think Nadab and Abihu think that way anymore! While God does not deal with individuals in that manner anymore, it does not mean He is not as displeased, saddened, or wrathful over additions,

subtractions, and innovations which are not authorized in His Will. There are those that believe that a “change here and a change there” are not very serious, and is no reason for concern. They need to heed the example of God’s dealings with these two priests. Although the Law has changed, that does not mean our Heavenly Father’s desire to be worshipped in “Truth” or according to Truth, has been altered (cf., John 4:24).

Furthermore, in the case of Uzzah and touching the ark (2 Sam. 6) God had given the charge to take care of the vessels of the sanctuary to the sons of Kohath (Num. 3:27-32). They were to “bear it. but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die” (Num. 4:15). The ark was taken by the Philistines and after awhile it was located and David went with the people to the house of Abinadab to get it. The record says, “They set the ark of God upon a new cart...Uzzah...drave the new cart” (2 Sam. 6:3). When they were going along, they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, the ark was about to fall because the oxen nearly stumbled and shook the cart. Uzzah, trying to keep the ark of God from falling, “Put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it” (2 Sam. 6:6). This angered the Lord and He smote Uzzah “for his error” (2 Sam. 6:7) and he died. There were at least three violations and alterings of God’s Word in this case: (1) only the sons of Kohath were to move the ark, (2) it was to be borne on the shoulders by the staves through the rings; and, (3) it was not to be touched. All of these may seem to be insignificant, but it was not to God!

There are other accounts that could be noticed, such as Noah and his building of the ark from Gopher wood (Gen. 6); Moses striking the rock for water instead of speaking to it (Num. 20:8-12), is not permitted entrance into the land of Canaan (Deu. 3:25-29), and Adam and Eve partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-24) and being cast out of the Garden. These well illustrate the strictness of God and His demand that no variance be made in His Law.

THE PROPER NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

The word “proper” means “conforming or agreeing with fact.” It is the accurate term to be used anytime when handling a Bible sub-

ject, especially on the subject of worship. Proper New Testament worship must conform to John 4:24 and be in “spirit and Truth.”

Proper worship must have the right attitude or outlook. There is no doubt about that fact. When it is stated that “God is [a] spirit,” it was not stating that God is an “attitude” but that He is a “spiritual being.” It is believed that the passage of John 4:24 and the statement of “spirit” involves more than just an attitude. In John 16:13, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth” and He was to come and “guide you [the apostles] into all truth.” The Holy Spirit showed the apostles the truth in regard to many things, and especially the correct way God wanted to be worshipped. Therefore, it is believed that “spirit and truth” serve to emphasize that one must follow what God, through His Spirit, has shown to be the truth in worshipping Him.

The number in legion that may have the right attitude in worship, may be just as sincere as the day is long, and, yet whose homage rendered will be “vain.” Jesus referred to the Jews in Matthew 15:9: “But in vain do they worship me, teaching the commandments of men.” Not all so-called “worship” is proper, or according to fact or Truth, or fruitful in the sight of God. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, refers to those that would follow the innovations of men (doctrines or teaching of men) as “will worship” (Col. 2:22-23). The Judaizing teachers, those that would bind circumcision and the Old Law (cf., Acts 15), were imposing on the Gentiles worship that was not proper. It is referred to as “will worship” and means: “A self chosen worship that is willed by the will of those who want it and not a type of worship that is willed by God.”

That seem to the trend of the day. It is this same kind of thinking that has crept into the church, and has brought about the altering of certain aspects of the worship. It may be so subtle, and we will discuss these subtle changes later, and is being forced on our young people.

It is obvious that if there is “true worship” then there is such a thing as “false worship.” It is only the true worship that our Heavenly Father will accept.

THE TRUE ASPECTS OF WORSHIP

It has been well stated: “We are just one generation from apostasy.” While the venerable Truths in regard to the plan of salvation and worship may seem, to some, an out of date, it still does not change the true fact. To the Jews of Malachi’s time, worshipping the Lord in the strictness of the Mosaical law had become a “weariness” (Mal. 1:13). In like manner, there are those who become “weary” with following the New Testament pattern. There was a pattern to be followed in worship under the Old Covenant (Exo. 25:40), and there is one for the New Covenant (Heb. 8:5).

In true worship there are some absolutes and there are some expediencies or incidentals. It is very important that one make the distinction. For instance, one of the elements or aspects of the worship is the observance of the Lord’s Supper. It is absolutely necessary to partake of the Lord’s Supper because Jesus said, “this do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24). It is to be observed on every “first day of the week” as the early church did. When there is a command and then an “example” of that command being carried out, it is binding (Acts 20:7; Mat. 26:28). It is incidental whether it is in an “upper chamber” or if there are “many lights.” Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine are to be used. It is not binding that one container be used as the “cup” has reference to the contents. Innovations that have been made are: (1) the observance on Thursday nights—for which there is no authority; (2) binding that only fermented wine can be used; (3) binding only one container is to be used; and, (4) singing during the Lord’s Supper (That is mixing two items of worship. Would it be alright to sing during the prayer?). There may be others, but these are authorized.

Another item of worship is prayer. The early church continued in prayer (Acts 2:42). It was done at other times, but was a vital part of the worship (cf., Acts 12:5). Worshipers are not authorized to hum or sing during the prayer as humming is not authorized at all and singing is another act of worship. The position in prayer is not binding. Whether one wants to stand or kneel is optional.

There are those that would like to eliminate the aspect of preaching from the worship service. Jesus said, “preach to every creature”

(Mark 16:15), and Paul preached until midnight (Acts 20:7). Also, Paul commanded, “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Some want to alter the message by preaching other things than the WORD, or eliminate the practice of quoting scriptures or giving the Scripture reference.

There are not many religious bodies that want to remove the practice of taking up the contribution. The early church gave on the “first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2), and these organizations will do it “every first day.” Why not partake of the Lord’s Supper “every first day”? Let it be emphasized again that singing while the contribution is being collected is mixing two items of worship and this practice should be avoided. Simply stated. “There is no authority for this practice!”

The last item of worship in singing. Now Testament worship does not authorize the use of a mechanical instrument. The command in to “sing” (cf., Mat. 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2-12 and Heb. 13:15) and this specifies the kind of “music” that in to be used in the worship service. It in not because members of the church of Christ do not like instrumental music—many like to play instruments outside the worship—nor is it because they cannot afford to buy an instrument for the services. Again, it is simply following the pattern of the New Testament and a desire to “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

SINGING AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Satan has his “wiles” and “devices” (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11). He in going to use every avenue to bring about alterations and changes in the worship services. Some of theme may be subtle, and may take a while to surface. In recent years, the Devil has concentrated heavily in bringing about innovations through the avenue of music in the efforts of the liberals to get us to compromise with the Christian church. Now the adversary has set his sights on our young people knowing that almost all young people love to sing. As the record people in the world have found out, young people can be influenced through singing when no other avenue would work.

The trickery that Satan is using is similar to the “put the false doctrine in what is called a Bible” strategy. Knowing that most people have grown wise to creeds, manuals, or disciplines, he came out with so-called translations having false doctrine in them, but people will buy them and believe them because it is in the “Bible.” Well, knowing that it would be too blatant to use the instrument at the young people’s activities, he will get a group that will use their “voices” and make “instrumental” sounds. On the surface, that may seem to be innocent, but it is basically the same thing as having the instrument. If Satan can get our young people to accept this, then it will be a “step” toward getting the instrument in the worship services.

Another tenet of these groups that are being invited to “perform” for our young adults is the words in the songs. After listening to a tape of a group that used the “voice instruments,” I was also dismayed as to the vocabulary used in these songs. Not only is it unscriptural to use the voice to make a sound like a regular instrument, but the message was unscriptural. It made me shudder to think these are going to be the songs that will be sung in years to come in worship unto God! This is an innovation that will have far-reaching effects. Songs are a valuable teaching agent (Col. 3:16) and that is the reason we are instructed to “teach one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” While the activities of these groups may not be in the worship services now, the point is that our young people will be affected by the kind of message that is being sent forth. This can only have a debilitating effect for now and in the future.

CONCLUSION

Unless we are “sober and vigilant” to many of the efforts to modernize, update, and alter the worship services, the “trojan horse” will come in unaware. It is true that one must be careful not to yell “Wolf,” when there is no cause for alarm. One must study to know what is an essential and what is an incidental. Our young people are a special treasure and we must be ever watchful that they are guided in the way of all Truth, and that Heaven will be their home.

QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

Winfred Clark



Winfred Clark has preached the gospel for over forty years. He has degrees from Alabama Christian College, Jacksonville State University and the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He has taught sermon classes for several years and continues to do so as Director of the Alabama School of Bible Emphasis. For several years, he served as Director of Public Relations and as an Instructor for the Alabama Christian School of Religion in Montgomery, Alabama. He is very active in writing and speaking on lectureships and in gospel meetings. He and his wife, Polly, have one son, Jimmy, who is also a gospel preacher, and a daughter, Phyllis, who is an administrator in the public school system of Athens, Alabama.

The assignment for these lectures will involve at least three questions. They will focus on the matter of singing and its place in the worship. We are to discuss, “What Is Included In The Command To Sing?”, “What Is Excluded By The Command To Sing?” and “Is Instrumental Music In Worship A Matter Of Opinion?” All of these are set in the form of a question.

These are not the first questions to be asked about the matter of worship, nor will they be the last questions to be asked about worship. One could take a journey through the Bible and find a number of questions that are either stated or implied. One such case would be found in the book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas are in Lystra. There Paul would heal a man who had been impotent in his feet from birth (Acts 14:8). When this was done, the people thought the gods had come down in the form of man (Acts 14:11). The priest of Jupiter and the people were about to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. At this point it is said, “Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sire, why do ye these things?” (Acts 14:14-15). They would not allow themselves to be placed in such a position where men worshiped them. They know these men could give

no scriptural reason why they would worship men. So, they did indeed raise a question concerning worship. You would have to agree that such a question was a legitimate one. They would surely have the right to ask such a question. Another thing would also need to be taken into account. Such a question should cause those, of whom it is asked, to stop and ponder the matter.

We would conclude it is right and proper to ask questions concerning worship. It is also right and proper to seek the right and proper answers to those questions. Such we will attempt to do.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE COMMAND TO SING?

There is no question as to whether there in the command to sing. This is clearly spelled out by an apostle when he said, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Again he said, "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" (Col. 3:16). These passages will serve as a basis for our discussion concerning this command.

First, there is something **IMPORTANT** about the command to sing. Webster says, to sing means: "To produce musical tones by means of the voice." Thayer says, "The lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful soul." This would mean that devout and grateful souls would be happy to sing. Such people will am the importance of such a command. If you go back to the first mention of the word sing, in the KJV, you will see that such takes on the place of importance. Notice,

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. the hone and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Exo. 15:1).

Here, the children of Israel stand on the other side of Red Sea. They have been delivered from the hand of the Egyptians. They are no longer in bondage and are no longer in danger of the army of Pharaoh. God had saved them that day (Exo. 14:30). They have been redeemed. It thus will become very important that they express such

in song. Such would surely become “the lyrical emotion of grateful souls.” You will notice the singing is said to be “unto the Lord.” This song will become a song of praise to God for all that He has done for them in their redemption. They would not think of doing less than this. It was important that they sing. But isn’t it always true that redeemed people will want to sing? You will find the last time the word sing is used in the KJV, it will be used in connection with redemption. Notice what is said, “And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:3). When they sing of the Lamb, they are singing of redemption. There can be no doubt about the importance of the command to sing.

There is something very important about the content of our singing. Notice, Paul will tell us what kind of songs to sing. They are described as psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). These would surely set before us the idea of spiritual music or singing. This would surely differ in content with the songs of a worldly nature.

There is something also very important about the intent of our singing. You will notice that Paul will say, “making melody in your heart to the Lord,” or “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The intent is to worship God. It is in singing that we render with the sacrifice of our lips to the Lord. Surely this sort of thing would go a long way in helping our singing. When we intend to praise God in song, we will focus more and more upon God. It is so very important that we do this.

In the second place, the command to sing is seen as IMPERATIVE. You will notice that Paul is not suggesting that we sing. Some have argued that “singing” is only a participle and is not a command. But does not the participle take the form of a command? Notice that Paul will say, “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19). Does this carry with it the force of an imperative? Is this something that can be ignored as though it is of no value? Could those at Ephesus conclude that such was merely a suggestion? Would this be something that they could just ignore? Look at another phrase in this context. “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the

Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20). Does that sound like something that is other than imperative? Surely not. But look at another phrase that will appear between the two just noted. “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Paul will say to those at Colosse, “Singing with grace in your heart to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Now, stop and ask yourself some questions. Is it imperative that we sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? If so, what makes such imperative? If what we sing is imperative then would not the singing itself be imperative? Is it imperative that we sing unto the Lord? Did not Paul say that we are to sing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord? Can we sing without grace in our hearts? If we cannot do so and please the Lord, then why can’t we do so? What would make it impossible to do so? Would we not find ourselves going against a command that makes such imperative? Are we allowed to sing without making melody in the heart unto the Lord and at the same time please him? You would say you must make melody in the heart to the Lord. But why am I to make melody in the heart to the Lord? You say, because such is commanded. You would be absolutely right. So we can see that singing is indeed imperative.

In the third place, there is to be something INTELLIGENT about the singing. This is surely implied in Paul’s language to the church at Colosse. Here he would say, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). The fact that we are to teach by singing would surely imply that such should be intelligent. It should be something that would convey a message to admonish and teach others. When we read of Moses and the children of Israel singing, we are told what they spoke in the songs (Exo. 15:1-19). You can read the words of the song and will see that such words convey a message. These are words that can be understood.

The apostle Paul would surely add his support to the fact that singing should be that which is intelligent. In the midst of the controversy, concerning the use of spiritual gifts, Paul would say, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15). No doubt, Paul speaks here of an inspired song, but he would be sure that people could understand that song. An apostle

know that his singing was to be the kind that could be understood by those who heard. For it to have the desired effect such would have to be understandable.

So what can we say about “What Is Included In The Command To Sing”? We can say there is something important. We can say there is something imperative and we can say that such ought to be intelligent.

WHAT IS EXCLUDED BY THE COMMAND TO SING?

When we find a thing specified, we conclude some things are excluded. When a generic command is given, one may have choices within the area of that command. However, when you have a specific command, only that which is commanded is authorized. Specific commands demand that which is specifically commanded. They not only demand that which is specifically commanded but they demand only that which is specifically commanded. This, within itself, will exclude certain things. For example, a blueprint may call for a certain kind of material to be used in the construction. When such is specified then only that kind of material is to be used.

We have used this sort of principle for many years. One of the best examples has to do with Noah and his building of the ark. Listen to the instruction given. God said to him, “Make thee an ark of gopher wood, rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6:14). Here, we have a specific kind of wood demanded. Gopher wood is the only kind of wood that could be used in the ark. To have used any other kind would be to use that which was without authority. If only gopher wood is to be used, then any other kind is to be excluded, The very fact that you have a certain kind of wood specified means all other kinds are excluded by that which is specified.

This point can be illustrated in a number of ways. Paul used this kind of reasoning in the letter to the churches of Galatia. In the third chapter, you will find a discussion concerning the matter of the inheritance which concerns man’s redemption. Here Paul will say, “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal. 3:18). Paul points out the fact that inheritance would come through the promise God made to

Abraham and not by the law of Moses. Since the inheritance came only by the promise then this would exclude such coming through the law. Thus, the law of exclusion.

This is also seen in other passages such as Hebrews 7:11-14. This discusses the matter of the priesthood. It will focus in particular on the priesthood of Jesus. Note, if you will, the argument Paul will use

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance to the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Heb. 7:13-14).

The writer will set this as a fact that should be known to all who read. He said "it is evident." That means the information was available to all. But what is he saying? He is saying that Moses specified the tribe out of which the priest should come. Such would be from the tribe of Levi. He specified the tribe of Levi (Exo. 28:1). Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. Therefore one would have to conclude that such would exclude Christ from being a part of the Levitical priesthood. That is exactly what the Hebrews writer was doing in reasoning after this fashion. He shows there in a law of exclusion where you have a specification. There would be no biblical authority for Christ being a part of the Aaronic priesthood. Only those who were of the tribe of Levi would be authorized to function as such. This being the case, all others would be excluded.

That which we have found to be true in the biblical cases above is also true with reference to the command to sing. When Paul commanded "singing," he commanded only singing. That would be a specific thing to be done and would exclude anything else. Singing would surely exclude whistling in addition to singing. It would exclude whistling in connection with the singing. Only singing would be authorized.

The thing specified in this case is singing. This would mean that playing is not authorized. But why would playing be excluded? Because only singing is authorized. Only vocal music will meet the command to sing. Mechanical instrumental music is music of a different kind and is thus excluded. It is not authorized. It is without divine authority.

Not many people would question whether or not only gopher wood was authorized. They know this to be the case because of what God said to Noah (Gen. 6:14). Not many people would argue that only those who descended from the tribe of Levi would be authorized to function as a priest. This is because of what God said to Aaron (Exo. 28:1). They would all agree with the Hebrews writer in his assessment of the matter (Heb. 7:13-14). But, there are a number of people who would tell you that singing would not exclude playing or humming in spite of such passages as Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. But, the line of reasoning has to be the same. They can see the law of exclusion applied in other cases, but when it comes to the matter of the kind of music that is to be found in the worship, they beg that they cannot see that which is so evident in so many other places. It may not be the case that they cannot see it. It may be that they will find themselves in the place where they cannot afford to say they can see it. You know there were some people who said to the Lord, "We cannot tell" (Mat. 21:27). You see, this discussion involved the question of authority. It also involved the baptism of John. Jesus asked them if it were of heaven or of men. When they would not admit that his baptism was from heaven, they said, "We cannot tell." Yet, they could tell, but what they meant was, "We cannot afford to admit that this is the way it is." That may very well be the case even in our day. So, we are able to see that there are some things excluded by the command to sing since it is specific. We find that such reasoning is consistent with other cases in both the Old and New Testaments.

IS THE USE OF MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP A MATTER OF OPINION?

When we say that a thing is a matter of opinion, we are saying there is no law of faith to command it, there is no example that demands it, and we are saying there is nothing to infer that it must be done.

Does the use of mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship fall in this category? Can it be seen as only a matter of opinion? There is no question in the minds of many that such is only a matter of opinion. One has said. "Within churches of Christ

if we continue to cling to the argument that instrumental music in worship is a matter of faith (doctrine), therefore sinful, we will forever have disunity.” To his mind, there is no doubt about such being a matter of opinion.

To many people, it is not a matter of opinion for they will try to state that the Bible authorizes it. This is done by quotations from the Old Testament. They are, thus, trying to find a scriptural precedent for such. They will also refer to the idea that playing is involved in the word “psallo.” All such attempts have proven to be folly and feeble. They do not prove that such is a matter of faith, but this is what they attempt to do, all the while maintaining that it is a matter of opinion.

Maybe we can more clearly focus on this matter if we look at some other things that are similar. Suppose we take the case of Noah and the ark. We have already seen that God commanded him to use gopher wood. This was a certain kind of wood. But suppose he had added another kind of wood, other than gopher wood, or in addition to gopher wood. Would the addition of another kind of wood, or the substitution of a kind of wood be only a matter of opinion? Is not the kind of wood a matter of faith? Did not God prescribe the kind of wood to be used? This is clear from the reading of Genesis 6:14. Suppose you had been there and Noah had used another kind of wood. What would you have said? Would you try to get him to use the kind God specified? If so, where would you go to try to describe the kind of wood to be used? Suppose Noah had said, “In my opinion, I think another kind of wood would be the same.” How would you try to convince Noah that he was not using the right kind of wood? Wouldn’t you read him the instructions that the Lord had given concerning the matter of the kind of wood he was to use? Couldn’t you say sincerely that this is the kind of wood that should be used if he is going to build in faith? Wouldn’t you have the Word of the Lord to support you in what you had to say?

Look at another example. When the children of Israel were about to leave Egypt, they were told to select a certain kind of animal for the passover feast. Listen to what they were told, “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from

the sheep, or from the goats” (Exo. 12:5). You will notice the kind of animal to be used is very specific. They are not left to use their own reasoning or opinions in the matter. God described the kind of animal to be used. Surely, we all know that God had a particular reason in mind for such a command. But, suppose a man did not want to select the kind of animal described. Suppose he said, “The kind of animal is a matter of opinion.” What would be the response of people who wanted to follow the Word of the Lord? Could they read the distinct and definite instructions that were given and then decide the kind of animal was only a matter of opinion? Would it be right for them to say the kind of animal to be used is a matter of faith? You know it would be right, for that is what the Lord had to say about the matter. Surely one can say what the Lord had to say and be right. But, suppose someone were to ask, “Is the use of a two-year-old female a matter of opinion?” What would your response be to such a question? You would say, “Absolutely not.” It would be the substitution of that which God had authorized. Rather than being merely a matter of opinion, such would be a matter of perversion. We all can see that the kind of animal to be used is not a matter of opinion. God did not just say, “Your animal shall be any kind you choose.” He specified the kind. That kind of animal can be selected by faith. To select any other kind is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of going beyond that which God has authorized.

You are aware of those elements Christ authorized to be used in the Lord’s supper. When he instituted the same you will find that,

Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this in my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it (Mat. 26:26-27).

Suppose someone wanted to substitute something for the bread. What would your response be? Wouldn’t you say, “This would be a perversion of that which the Lord ordained?” You would be absolutely right in saying such. But, suppose a person were to say, “The use of cake on the Lord’s table is only a matter of opinion.” How would you respond to such an assertion? Would you not try to show that person the element to be used on the Lord’s table in prescribed? You would surely be correct in trying to do so. When

the Lord told us of the kind of elements to be used on the table, this took it out of the realm of opinion and placed it in the realm of faith. An addition or substitution of such cannot be viewed as merely a matter of opinion.

The people at Ephesus were told to worship God by, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). To allow a substitute for such would not be a matter of opinion. Such would be as much a perversion as that which was practiced in the long ago by Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. You will remember that they offered another kind of fire that was called strange fire (Lev. 10:1). That fire was not seen as only a matter of opinion. It was seen as disobedience and such exacted a fatal consequence. But, suppose someone were to say to the Lord that the kind of fire was only a matter of opinion. Do you think such would cause the Lord to change His mind about the matter? But these two boys used their own thinking in deciding what kind of fire to offer and somehow or other they came to the conclusion they could offer this kind of fire. They lost their lives in the process. Surely, such ought to teach us a lesson. We ought to be able to see God will not tolerate our additions, substitutions or perversions for that which He has ordained. After all, God knows how He is to be worshipped and He has told us how (John 4:24). We need to be sure we are willing to follow the dictates of His will. When we do this, we know He will be pleased with our doing what He has told us to do.

If someone were to ask us the question Paul and Barnabas asked of those at Lystra, we would want to be able to tell why we are doing the things we do in worship. As we follow the Word of the Lord we will have no doubt we are doing those things that are to be included in our worship. We will eliminate those things that should be excluded and we will not add anything to this nor take anything from such. We will indeed be able to say that we worship the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

PROBLEMS IN THE PULPIT

B. C. Carr



B. C. Carr graduated from Freed-Hardeman College in 1938 with a B.A. degree and from David Lipscomb College in 1948. He has preached for over forty years and has been associated with South Florida Avenue Church In Lakeland, Florida for over twenty-eight years. He has been the director of Florida School of Preaching since the beginning of the school. He has spoken on a number of lectureships and continues to be very active in spreading the gospel. B. C. and his wife, Sybil, have been married for over fifty years. They have one daughter, Linda, who lives in Memphis, and one son, B. C. Jr., who resides in Lakeland.

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about problems in the pulpit, let it be understood that we are not talking about the literal place where one stands to preach. This is but a figurative expression that represents the preaching or teaching itself. Those who know anything about the church today are aware that we have preaching being done that is causing serious problem for the Lord's church. Most of the blame for the current crisis can be attributed to the pulpit. The expression often heard, "As goes the pulpit, so goes the church," is true. If the preaching is wrong, the church will go astray. When an eldership tolerates false teaching it too becomes guilty of sin. Elders are to feed the flock (Acts 20:28). They are also to exercise oversight (1 Pet. 5:2). In the end they must give account of their stewardship (Heb. 13:17).

Members of the church have a responsibility to demand faithful preaching. There should be the constant searching of the Scriptures to see that the things taught are true. This did the Bereans when Paul and Silas preached (Acts 17:11). We cannot blindly follow false teachers without becoming guilty ourselves. Second John 9-11

teaches we are not to bid them Godspeed. We must individually be judged for our own deeds (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Some might think getting rid of the pulpit would solve our problems. (I would hate for this to be given a vote by some members of the church). This we cannot do. God has ordained preaching. Before ascending back to heaven our Lord commanded with all authority, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Mat. 28:19). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Paul charged Timothy to "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). Even our Lord was sent to preach.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

It is clear that God's plan to save fallen man is by preaching, but it must be the right kind of preaching. Faithful preaching can save people. This is its design. Listen as Paul instructs Timothy, "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. 4:16).

The opposite is also true. Unsound doctrine can cause the preacher and those that hear to be lost. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Preaching for any purpose other than to save is the wrong kind of preaching. It will not please God.

Error taught can cause people to be lost. This is true because only truth can make us free (John 8:32). A lie taught and believed will result in damnation. Some who do not love truth will be allowed to believe a lie and be damned. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 The. 2:11-12).

As an example of what can happen when one believes a lie and acts accordingly, please recall the case of the young prophet of

Judah who was sent to Bethel to cry against Jeroboam's altar. This man of God had been warned by the Word of the Lord not to eat bread nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that he came to Bethel. But, he listened to a lying prophet, who claimed to be instructed by an angel who spake the Word of the Lord. As a result of believing this lie the prophet was slain by a lion. He had disobeyed God. Read 1 Kings 13.

Jesus rebuked the false teachers of His day and told what would happen to those who followed them. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mat. 23:15). It is very evident that the kind of pulpits we have in the church can determine the eternal destiny of those who hear from the pew. The kind of preaching done can either make the church stronger or weaker.

We are living in a very crucial time for the survival of the Lord's church. This is no time for uncertain sounds from weak-kneed preachers. I believe the church is much weaker today than it was a generation ago. Many preachers have listened to the popular cry of those about us and have failed to stand on the cutting edge of truth. I believe this can be seen as we proceed to give evidence as to what is taking place in the church today. There are special times and circumstances that should determine the tone and severity of our preaching. Paul indicated he would use that which was required for the good of the Corinthians when he came to them. He would administer a rod or love, depending upon their need. "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness" (1 Cor. 4:21)? It is sad to note that today we have so many who occupy our pulpits, in the present crisis, who can only preach on love. They are afraid to be negative. Everything they preach must be positive. Instead of using the sword of the spirit they are waving a butter paddle. Can you imagine Jonah going to Nineveh to preach nothing but love, or commendation? Can you imagine Stephen preaching to the Jews on "How to feel good about yourselves" or giving some counseling lessons?

There are wolves among the flock. Preaching is being done in some of our pulpits that has caused problems for the Lord's people. More trouble is ahead unless someone sounds the alarm. If we are to be justified in our sayings and if we are to overcome when we are judged, we must let God be true, but every man a liar (Rom. 3:4). Let us now look at some examples of problem preaching.

PROBLEMS IN THE PULPIT

When there are problems in the pulpit, it is not long until the church is influenced to turn in the wrong direction. Many congregations once known for their soundness are not the same today. Those preachers who preached the word faithfully and built good-sized churches would not even be welcomed to preach in the same pulpits today. Why? There are many reasons. Because of time and space we can only deal with a few.

1. Men Pleasers

There are men who preach to please men. Paul warned about those who had itching ears, who would obtain teachers, who would scratch where they, itched (2 Tim. 4:3). There is always the temptation to preach what men want to hear. A preacher once told me that he did not preach on giving, because the brethren did not like to hear it. Another preacher stated he could say nothing against a false teacher in the same city because his elders had forbidden him to say anything. When asked if they should object to his preaching against instrumental music, what he would do, he replied, "I would have to avoid teaching against such." This kind of preaching causes problems. Forget about the itching ears. Preach the truth! Those who preach to please men cannot please God. "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" (Gal. 1:10).

When a preacher starts listening for praise from his audience he is in danger. He wants his ego built up. I wonder about some preachers who want to be "cheerleaders" for the audience. They call for frequent "amens" and often wait for applause. We do not need to encourage this sort of thing in our pulpits. This seems to lower the dignity of the pulpit to that of some form of worldly entertainment. When John the Baptist did his best preaching he was not applauded,

but beheaded. Why do you think Jesus and the apostles were killed? It was not because they pleased their listeners. We could learn a lesson from Herod about vainglory. When he failed to give God the glory he was eaten of worms (Acts 12:21-23). Some preachers seem to be so filled with pride and vainglory they can almost strut while sitting.

2. Worldly Wisdom

Another cause of problem preaching is seen when men value the wisdom of men above the wisdom of God. From some pulpits today we hear what some present day scholar (?) has written. Denominational preachers are quoted as though they were an authority. Too many sermons are filled with current events or a discussion of some political issue. Several months ago I heard one of our brethren preach in a meeting. The lesson was almost ended before he used one passage of Scripture. Another preacher used his time, while preaching to a large audience on Sunday morning, telling his personal experiences and giving human testimony instead of preaching the Word of God. Paul said,

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

3. Hireling Preachers

When men occupy our pulpits because they are hirelings, the church is in trouble. There must be such. Jesus warned about this.

I am the good shepherd: The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep (John 10:11-12).

When I see a preacher who regards himself as a professional I wonder. When a preacher gets the "Big Buck" syndrome and would quit preaching unless he can find a big church I question his convictions. When preachers tuck their tails and ran when the wolf in sheep's clothing makes an appearance it is no wonder we are having problems in the church.

4. Bashing the Church of Christ

There are preachers known for bashing “The church of Christ.” They speak of the church in denominational terms. They would blame it for things caused by a few false disciples. One well-known preacher says, “The church of Christ has made the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage the unpardonable sin—one can commit murder and be forgiven, but if he marries again this is unpardonable.”

Another has said, “The church of Christ has been guilty of teaching salvation by works. There is not one thing man can do to save himself.”

Still another preacher says “The church of Christ is guilty of thinking they are the only ones to be saved. They need to repent and confess this sin.” A group of men, our brethren, have decided the church has been wrong in its interpretation and teaching regarding the role of men and women. We are told this needs to be re-evaluated. By such statements people, especially the young, are being taught to despise the church of our Lord. They are encouraged to seek to change the church. If such men are ashamed of Christ and His church they need to go out from us and quit trying to deceive us by pretending to be of us.

5. Commending Denominationalism

Other problems are coming from pulpits where it is being taught that the church is just another denomination. Lynn Anderson taught this years ago. So teaches Leroy Garrett. Rubel Shelley has taught that there are sincere, devout and knowledgeable Christians in all denominations. He would even pervert the teaching of Mark 9:35-40 in an effort to support this view. The Bible still teaches there is but one body (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:20). All the saved are in that one body (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:13). Such false teachers need to have their mouths stopped, yet they continue to be used and encouraged. Men who recognize their false teaching have their lips sealed. May God have mercy on them!

6. Deficiency in Distinctive Preaching

Problems are caused by pulpits where the preaching is always in broad generalities and never in specifics. Many of the sermons heard could be preached in any denominational pulpit without raising a feather of opposition. Sin is rarely ever described by name—no one feels guilty. Brother Jim Woodruff says we need to preach more from the gospels than from the epistles. He thinks we go to the epistles to deal with problems. Why not? Do we not have similar problems today? It is useless to think that sin will go away if we just ignore it. Some think that the epistles should be viewed as just love letters. They fail to accept anything by way of rebuke.

7. Deficiency in Doctrinal Preaching

Many pulpits have ceased to preach the very fundamentals of the faith. Men have assumed the listeners already know these and have grown weary of such preaching. Sermons on the plan of salvation; faith, repentance and baptism still need to be preached. Lessons on the church and how to identify it are still needed. We need preaching on acceptable worship. Why is it when some of us who still preach these sermons hear the listeners say, “We haven’t heard lessons like that in years”? Every generation must be taught. Christians need to be often reminded of these matters.

8. Dramatic Performers

There is an increasing effort being made to substitute dramatization for preaching. To create interest we are told men need to put on a dress, grow a beard and pretend they are Paul. Others need to pretend they are Timothy or Luke or some other character. These Bible men are not always quoted accurately. Words are put in their mouths. Wrong expressions are made. Why are we so ashamed of preaching that we have substituted the words sharing and witnessing and now to get attention some feel compelled to put on a play instead of teaching God’s Word. Could it be we are so set on being entertained we have lost faith in the power of the gospel? (Rom. 1:16).

9. Improper Preparation

Lack of proper preparation of the preacher presents another problem that hurts the church. We have always had some who thought very little knowledge was necessary for one to preach. Recently I heard a man preaching on the radio. He was reading Acts 18:24. Noting that the passage said Apollos was an eloquent man, he commented that he had never known what the word meant, but he thought it had to do with pulpit manners. He further stated he knew one preacher who pulled at his nose while preaching. His conclusion was that this man lacked eloquence.

Men must prepare if they are to be effective in the pulpit. There is a mistaken notion that the most important task of a minister is to be a public relations man for the church. One group of elders told their preacher to spend his time visiting with the people. If he did not have his lesson prepared on Sunday, one of them would get up and say something. Paul told Timothy to study (2 Tim. 2:15) to give attendance to reading (1 Tim. 4:13). In so doing Paul expected the audience to benefit therefrom (1 Tim. 4:15). In order to prepare himself one should carefully select a school where the Bible is respected. He should have teachers who love the truth and who are able to motivate their students toward diligent study. I heard of one Bible teacher, in one of our schools who told the class that some New Testament writers grossly misunderstood what some Old Testament writers said. A case in point was that Matthew misunderstood Isaiah 7:14. With such teaching as this, how can men be properly trained to preach? Small wonder we have so many problems in the pulpit.

10. Immoral Messengers

Finally we must admit that another great problem found in the pulpit is that there are men preaching who are guilty of great moral sins. There are preachers who have had problem with women. I could list at least a dozen men who have been found out and embarrassed by such sins. Such men as Swaggart and Baker have drawn attention to this, causing preachers in general to be despised. Distrust has resulted. Preachers must not give room for people to suspect them of being immoral. The Chinese proverb, "When going

through a melon patch, do not stoop to tie your shoe,” could well apply here. Paul said, “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

Other preachers have sinned by the use of strong drink. At least two former college presidents lost their good influence through this means.

Some preachers have been exposed for practicing homosexuality. I know of one who closed a gospel meeting, but before daylight the next morning he was arrested and put in jail for making nude pictures with another man. Such things ought not to be.

Preachers must practice what they preach or they will cause people to blaspheme the truth (Rom. 2:21-24). As preachers we must be examples. We must keep ourselves pure: “But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

These are but a few of the problems being seen from our pulpits today. They are more than enough to cause concern from all who believe in holding the form or pattern of sound words (Tit. 2:1).

GOOD PREACHING: THE KIND THAT PLEASES GOD

I believe the Bible given insight into the kind of preaching that pleases God. After all, it was God who authorized preaching that man might be saved.

1. Biblical Preaching

There is a great need for scriptural or biblical preaching today Enough of what men have said. Like Zedekiah of old, I want to know if there is any word from the Lord (Jer. 37:17). Jesus read from the book of Isaiah and gave the meaning thereof (Luke 4:17-18). Apollos used Scripture, “For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28). Paul used the Scriptures when he preached “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). One could search the Scriptures in vain today trying to find what some preachers are saying. Peter commanded, “If any man speak, let him speak as the

oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We need to get back to giving book, chapter and verse preaching. Let those who never do this be ashamed. Perhaps one reason some do not give Scripture citation is they use so little of it.

2. Confident Preaching

We need preaching from those with conviction. John the Baptist preached with conviction. Listen to Jesus as He evaluates John. “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?” (Mat. 11:7). John was no shaking reed. He preached the truth which led to being beheaded (Mat. 14:10). We need men who will not be tossed to and fro by every new doctrine that comes along (Eph. 4:14). Like Paul we must preach the truth, even though all men might forsake us (2 Tim. 4:16). We need the conviction of Stephen who died preaching the truth before those who resisted it (Acts 7).

Preachers with conviction will not be told what to preach by their wives nor from elders who want the truth compromised. If this means moving, then so be it. Let the truth be heard.

3. Bold Preaching

We need bold preaching today. Bold preaching leaves no doubt about where we stand. One is impressed when he reads through the book of Acts underscoring the word bold or boldness. The apostles were bold preachers. “Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant man, they marvelled; and they **took** knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Later they prayed that they might with all *boldness* preach the word (Acts 4:29). Later when they were filled with the Holy Ghost they spoke the Word of God with **boldness** (Acts 4:31). The apostle Paul preached **boldly** at Damascus (Acts 9:27). At Jerusalem he spoke **boldly** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians (Acts 9:29). When writing to the Ephesians he requested that prayer be made for him that he might speak **boldly** as he ought to speak (Eph. 6:19-20). This is no time for cowards. Dare we pray for boldness today for ourselves and for our preacher?

4. Rudimentary Preaching

We need simple preaching today. Paul used simple preaching. He did not try to impress his listeners with his learning. He wanted their faith to stand in the power of God, not personal admiration (1 Cor. 2:1-5). He feared that the Corinthians might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Marshall Keeble used to say, “We need to put the hay in the calves trough, then all can benefit.” N. B. Herdsman used to warn the preachers against trying to impress the audience with their scholarly ability. He urged them to use simple language that people could understand. A display of big words usually shows stupidity, not wisdom.

5. Balanced Preaching

We need balance in our preaching. This means men ought to avoid hobbyism. Avoid extreme positions. There needs to be a balance between meat and milk (Heb. 5:12-14). There must be balance between rebuke and encouragement. Some think they are unsound if they are not skinning the “sects” or the brethren. There is a place for rebuke but the church also needs encouragement. We need balance as to using different parts of the Bible. Some use the New Testament almost exclusively. It would help to use every book of the Bible for our lessons. By keeping a list of sermons preached for each year we may be able to see wherein we are weak as to balance.

6. Preventable Preaching

We need preaching today that will warn, vaccinate and indoctrinate. Some do not like to hear warnings against the errors prevalent in the church today. They would wait until an epidemic of sin is raging and then try to cure the evil. Paul believed in warning the brethren. To the elders in Ephesus he said, “greivous wolves [shall] enter in among you, not sparing the flock...Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31). Paul wrote Timothy to warn that some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-6). He identified some of their false teaching, refuting their error. He concluded by saying, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 4:6).

See also 2 Timothy 3:1-5. A church properly vaccinated is in lose danger of departing from the faith.

7. Compassionate Preaching

We need compassionate preaching. Our Lord was a preacher filled with compassion. He looked upon a sick multitude and His heart was moved. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Mat. 9:36). This caused Him to request that His disciples pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking what to do that he might have eternal life, our Lord knew he was lost He lacked one thing. Before he was told what to do the Scripture says, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him" (Mark 10:21).

Paul had such concern for his kinsmen according to the flesh that he could wish himself accursed from Christ if they could be saved (Rom. 9:1-5). When Paul was about to send Timothy to the Philip-pians he said, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phi. 2:20-21).

Unless one really loves the souls of men, he does not deserve to preach. Perhaps Jonah's greatest weakness was this. God taught him a lesson by giving him a gourd vine, then sending a worm to cut it down (Jon. 4: 6-11).

8. Ardent Preaching

We need preaching with a sense of urgency. Too much preaching today lacks a sense of urgency. We do not preach with fervency. We must realize that whether men respond to the gospel is a heaven or hell proposition. Those who do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 The. 1:7-9). Do we really believe this? Does the church believe this? If so, why do we manifest so little zeal in preaching?

People dislike extended invitations to obey the gospel. Persua-sion is frowned upon. This prolongs the service. Paul said, "Know-ing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). In New Testament times they baptized people the same hour

of the night (Acts 16:33). Today is the day of salvation. Let us restore a some of urgency in our preaching if we expect to baptize more people.

9. God Extolling

All the preaching we do should be to the glory of God, not to glorify self, “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). Paul speaks of some who would make a show in the flesh but he concludes, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the arms of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). When the Galatians heard that Paul preached the faith he once destroyed they glorified God in him (Gal. 1:23-24). May it be so of all of us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRONG PULPIT

It would likely be impossible to know all the benefits that can come from having a strong pulpit where the Word is faithfully proclaimed on a regular basis. I will list only three.

1. Steadfast Congregations

Preaching as we have just described will help keep the church from going astray. The church at Pergamos was able to hold fast the Lord’s name even where Satan’s seat was. They had not denied the faith. Antipas a faithful martyr had been slain there (Rev. 2:12-13). Because of the faithful leadership of Joshua Israel served the Lord. “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel” (Jos. 24:31). Thus we see the results of faithful service to God. Those churches that remain strong and faithful today are not that way by accident. Someone has stood firmly proclaiming the truth in days past.

2. Lighten Elder’s Burdens

Faithful, strong preaching will make the work of godly elders much easier. They will only need to stand by that truth publicly proclaimed. Those who would digress will be warned. They will know what to expect from the church. Many will be taught so they will never need the strong hand of discipline. It will be a joy for elders to give account of their stewardship when the flock has

followed their leadership which has been supported from the pulpit (Heb. 13:17).

3. Soul Saving

Last, but not least, the preacher will be able to deliver his own soul by his faithful service. When Paul was about to say farewell to the Ephesian elders he could say, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). May all of us so preach and live that many will be able to enter heaven because of us. Let us pray that not one soul will be lost because of the way we have preached.

“YOU NEVER MENTIONED HIM TO ME”

When in the better land before the bar we stand,
How deeply grieved our souls will be;
If any lost one there should cry in deep despair,
“You never mentioned Him to me.”

O let us spread the word wher-e'er it may be heard,
Help groping souls the light to see,
That yonder none may say, “You showed me not the way,
You never mentioned Him to me.”

A few sweet words may guide a lost one to His side,
Or turn sad eyes on Calvary; so work as days go by,
That yonder none may cry,
“You never mentioned Him to me.”

“You never mentioned Him to me,
You helped me not the light to see;
You met me day by day and knew I was astray,
Yet never mentioned Him to me.”

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH?

Bobby Duncan



Bobby Duncan was born in Jacksonville, Alabama, in 1934. He was baptized by Joe S. Hyde in 1945, and began preaching in 1951. He has attended Freed-Hardeman College, Jacksonville State, Birmingham-Southern, and Alabama Christian School of Religion, B.A., M.A. He has done local evangelistic work with only three churches: Munford, Alabama (1956-1958). Sixth Avenue, Jasper, Alabama (1978-1983), and Adamsville, Alabama (1958-1976 and 1983-present). Bobby has conducted daily radio and television programs and edited *Words of Truth* for seven and one-half years. He now edits *Vigil*, a him monthly publication begun by himself and the Adamsville church in 1973. He has preached in numerous meetings and lectures and has authored: *The Elders Which Are Among You*; *The Inspiration of the Bible*; and *The Gift of the Holy Ghost*. He is married to the former Lois Ann Elliott and they have two children, Mrs. Raymond E. (Jill) Wallace and Robert Timothy Duncan.

In preparing this lecture I have scrutinized my assigned subject carefully. My subject is not, “What is the Role of Women in the Home,” or “What is the Role of Women in Our Society?” There are many good works in which Christian women can involve themselves in various aspects of their lives. Certainly, many lessons are needed with reference to the importance of godly wives and godly mothers. But, I am to speak on the role of women in the church.

I strongly suspect the reason those who planned this lectureship included this subject is that some in the church of Christ have departed from the New Testament with reference to this matter. Let me give you an example or two. I have in my files a twenty-page document sent by the elders of a church in Alabama to the members of that church. This document was under date of January 1990, and it told about plans to change what they referred to as “traditional” roles for women. Among other things, they said they would appoint some deacons, and then the statement is made: “Deacons will be male and female.” The document further stated that the elders would

“initiate gradual change in the Sunday morning worship assembly.” Notice that word *gradual*. We cannot do it all at once; it has to be done gradually. Those elders knew that some of the members of that church, liberal as it is, would still rebel against what those elders were about to instigate if they did it all at once.

We need to learn a lesson from this. Departures from the faith usually come rather gradually. Little changes take place; they are so little that nobody pays much attention. But, pretty soon we look around and realize we are a long way from where we were.

This document goes on to say that by 1994 women in that church would be reading Scripture, serving communion, leading prayers, presiding at the table, leading singing, and, yes, preaching. All this would be done with the support of the elders.

Another church in Alabama advertised in its bulletin a “Community Enrichment Seminar,” with one of its members, a woman, speaking on “Grief, The Road to Recovery.” The bulletin urged the members to “use this as an opportunity to invite a friend to visit the [blank] church.” I have an idea the preacher and elders of that church would say this woman was not preaching, since her subject was “Grief, The Road to Recovery.” If that is the case, then what was the preacher doing just a few weeks before when he preached on the subject, “How to Heal a Broken Heart”? Why is it that when the preacher, on Sunday morning, spoke on “How to Heal a Broken Heart,” he was preaching, but on Monday night, when a woman spoke on “Grief, The Road to Recovery,” she was not preaching? If the preacher himself had spoken Monday night on “Grief, The Road to Recovery,” would he have been preaching? If the woman had spoken on Sunday morning on “How to Heal a Broken Heart,” would she have been preaching? Would it have been wrong for the woman on Monday night to have said exactly the same thing the preacher said in his sermon on Sunday morning? If you say what she did was all right because it was on Monday and not on Sunday, then you are saying a woman can preach any time except on Sunday.

One other thing I want to notice before I begin to answer the question, “What is the Role of Women in the Church?” Some months ago a “Youth Workers’ Enrichment Conference” was held

in Nashville. I noticed that the list of speakers included the name of a youth worker employed by still another congregation in Alabama. Also on the list were two women, at least two known liberal preachers, and at least two Independent Christian Church preachers. The preacher for that Alabama church was and is a good friend, as is one of the elders. I wrote a short article expressing my concern that that church would allow its youth worker to participate in that conference. I wondered if this meant that church would now teach their children that it really does not matter about women preachers and instrumental music. I sent the article to the preacher and asked him to pass it on to the elders. I told him the article would not be published for at least six weeks, and I hoped the elders of that church would correct the situation, in which event the article would not be published at all. All this was ignored until after the article was published. Then I received a call from two of the elders of that church assuring me that I need not be concerned; they definitely would not allow women preachers or instrumental music in their congregation. But before the telephone conversation had ended, those elders were arguing there is nothing wrong with a woman's speaking to those youth workers on "Using Drama in Your Youth Ministry."

I realize I have taken a great deal of time to give you some examples of the kind of problem we are facing with reference to the role of women in the church. But, we need to understand that the problem is very real and very close by.

As a basis for answering the question, "What is the Role of Women in the Church," please turn in your New Testament to 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Dr. Rex Turner, Sr., in the introduction to an article in the January 1991 *Spiritual Sword*, wrote,

One point that should be emphasized in the outset of this study is that without Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, and especially I Timothy, the church of the Lord would have been left in a confused state. There would be no guidelines or standard of qualifications for those to be chosen for the work of elders; nor would there be a standard of qualifications for those to be chosen for work of deacons. Further, there would be no instruction relative to a husband/father's obligation to provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, and

there would be no instruction relative to the place and function of woman in both the church and the home.

If what brother Turner said is true—and there is no doubting it is—then this passage is the battleground on which this matter must be decided.

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

There is some confusion with reference to what is taught in these verses, but the confusion is not necessary. There are extremes in both directions. Some would forbid a woman's asking a question or making a comment in a Bible class. They would not allow her to teach even a class of women or little children. Others, as we have already seen, would allow her to teach a mixed class of adults, lead singing, lead prayer, serve as a deacon, or even preach. Let us analyze this passage very carefully to see what it teaches.

Notice, in the first place, that what Paul here writes he writes as an apostle of Jesus Christ. In verse seven he says: "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle." The very next verse begins with the words, "I will therefore." The therefore refers to his apostleship. It must be remembered that the Holy Spirit, not Paul himself, is the author of what he here writes. What he says he wills or desires is not merely his personal preference, but his deliberate purpose as an inspired apostle. Compare this to verse 12: "But I suffer not a woman to teach." That is, "I do not allow," or "I do not permit." Paul is here referring to his apostolic will, or to what we sometimes call apostolic authority.

Now just what is it that Paul, as an inspired apostle, here enjoins? He enjoins that men, not women, lead the prayers in the public assemblies. "I will therefore that men." In the Greek it is literally *the men*. The word *men* is from the Greek *andras*, a form of the word

aner. Now, I do not intend to start speaking Greek but there is an important distinction between this Greek word and another Greek word sometimes translated by our English word *man*. The word used here is in a word that means men as opposed to women. Another word, *anthropos*, is sometimes translated by our word *man*, but it means mankind, or humanity. It is the word from which we get our English word *anthropology*, which means “the study of man.” When Paul says, “I will therefore that men pray” he is saying that men, and not women, are to lead the public prayers.

Those who insist women should have leadership roles in the public assemblies of the church sometimes argue that this Greek word *aner* may include women as well as men. The argument goes something like this: James 1:8 says, “A doubleminded man [*aner*] is unstable in all his ways.” In not the same true of a double-minded woman? If so, then the Greek word *aner* must include women also, and James was really saying that a double-minded human being is unstable in all his ways. Also James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man [*aner*] that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” Now, does that verse furnish no encouragement to the woman that endures temptation? Is it not true that the woman who endures temptation will also receive the crown of life? Well, certainly it is! Then the Greek word *aner* must sometimes mean men and women. How do we know it does not mean both men and women in 1 Timothy 2:8?

Sounds pretty convincing, does it not? But let us analyze this argument carefully. Arranged syllogistically, the argument would go like this.

Major premise: Men who endure temptation are blessed.

Minor premise: Women who endure temptation are blessed also.

Conclusion: Therefore, the word *men* means “men and women.”

Now, in case you have not recognized it, this is the same type argument one would use to prove a horse is a cow “Cows have four legs and a tail. Horses have four legs and a tail also, Therefore, a horse is a cow.” We can see the fallacy in that.

Well, what does the use of *aner* in James 1:8 prove? It proves that some of the things true of men are also true of women. Some of the things that can be said of men may also be said of women. But what James said in these verses, he said concerning men.

The word *aner* occurs 215 times in the Greek New Testament. The King James Version translates it *man* 156 times, *husband* 50 times, *sir* six times, *fellow* one time, and twice it is not translated at all. It is never translated by the word *woman* in any of its forms or by the phrase *men and women*. If Paul, in 1 Timothy 2, had meant to exhort both men and women to do what he there exhorts men to do he would have used the Greek word *anthropos*.

Next, look at the words *every where*. "I will therefore that men pray every where." This is not something limited to the area where Timothy was at the time Paul wrote this epistle. It is not something governed by local custom. What Paul says about the matter is an apostolic injunction for churches of Christ wherever they might be found.

Now look at verses 9 and 10:

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

As verse 8 is addressed specifically to the men, verses 9 and 10 are directed to women. The word *women* is translated from a Greek word which never means men. So it is quite obvious that the apostle addresses first the men, and then the women. In these two verses he discusses their apparel. In this context he obviously is referring to the way they are to dress when they assemble for worship, but the principles mentioned here would govern the woman's dress at other times as well. And if women adorn themselves, both body and soul, in the proper way when they go to worship, they will dress properly when they go other places as well. While the apparel of women is not a part of my subject, I will say in passing that I doubt if preachers generally are saying as much about the importance of modest apparel as they should be saying. You see, it is a great deal easier for me to lambaste the liberalism in the congregation over in the next county than it is for me to talk about the sins of the members of the

congregation that pays my salary. Some preachers are intimidated by that fact, and neglect to preach the truth as strongly as they should on subjects that are unpopular.

In verse 11 the apostle says, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." The word *silence* is translated from the Greek word *hesuchia*, which is defined by Thayer as meaning "quietness: descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and don not officiously meddle with the affairs of others." It is the same word used in 2 Thessalonians 3:12: "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness [*hesuchia*] they work, and sat their own broad." It does not mean she cannot utter a sound in the assembly. This word does not forbid a woman's asking a question or making a remark in a Bible class, as some of our brethren teach. If it did, then it would also forbid her singing or confessing Christ. I actually heard of a situation years ago of a woman's coming forward to be baptized, and she was allowed to confess Christ only when the preacher had taken her out on the front steps. He thought if she confessed Christ in the assembly it would be a violation of this verse. At least, he was consistent.

When Paul, in this verse, said, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection," he was setting the stage for the next verse "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Notice how the verse begins: "But I suffer not." It is very much like verse 8: "I will therefore." Verse 8 states what Paul, by apostolic authority, commands; verse 12 states what he, by apostolic authority, forbids. The American Standard Version says, "But I permit not." The New Berkeley Version says "I do not allow." Some today, even in the church, will allow women to do the very thing Paul said he, as an inspired apostle, would not allow them to do. Now, this verse does not say she cannot teach, period. Notice: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," The kind of teaching she is not to do is the kind that would put her in a position of authority over the man. This is precisely the kind of situation she is in when she preaches to or teaches an audience which includes men. "Usurp authority" is

from the Greek *authenteo*, which means to exercise dominion over one, or to govern one. When she teaches a class of ladies, she exercises dominion over them. When she teaches a class of children, she exercises dominion over them. There is nothing wrong with that. But she is not to exercise dominion over men. That in the thing the apostle does not permit.

Now, for many of us, a great many women included, that is sufficient. We do not have to be told why. If God said that's the way it is, then that's the way it is. Needless to say, some want to know why. And so the inspired apostle tells us. He gives us in this very chapter, not one, but two reasons for God's arrangement. What are they? Because women are inferior to men? No. Because of First Century culture? No. Because of local custom? No. Because of Paul's Jewish background? No. Because of Paul's celibate state? No. Some have tried to do away with what these verses teach by offering these as reasons for what Paul here wrote. But Paul lists two reasons, and neither of them corresponds to any of these we have mentioned. What reasons does Paul give for God's making the woman subject to man?

Reason number 1: Adam was created before Eve. Verse 13: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." Well, what does that have to do with it? I don't know, but that is what God's Word says about it. And remember that it was God who created Adam and Eve, and what He did He did not do by accident. What He did He did according to purpose and plan. There was a reason why God created Adam before He created Eve. In 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 Paul wrote: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Not only was she created for man and after man, but she was created from man, was brought to man, was named by man, and with man's name. Paul, by inspiration, says the mere fact she was created after man was created is reason enough that she should be in subjection to man.

Reason number 2: The woman was deceived, while the man was not. Verse 14: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The words *was deceived* is

translated from a Greek verb form which means she was completely beguiled. *Was in the transgressionis* from the Greek perfect tense, which usually signifies a present condition which exists because of a past action. Here is the way it is now because of something that took place in the past.

The word *parabasei*, “transgression,” refers not merely to sin, but to the high-handed disregarding of God’s law. Thayer says the word signifies “absolutely the breach of a definite, promulgated, ratified law.” Eve was deceived, but she was not deceived about what God had said. His law was fresh on her lips when she violated it. She was deceived all right, but deceived into thinking God did not really mean what he said. This is precisely the kind of high-handed sin being committed by those who insist on women preachers, women song leaders, women deacons. They know exactly what the Bible says about the matter, but they have convinced themselves, as did Grandmother Eve, that they do not have to be bound by what God has said. Just as soon as everybody decides we all must be governed by what the Bible says, our problems in this area will be solved.

Does what we have said mean that woman is without any work to do in the kingdom, or that her work is not equal in importance to that of man? No, not at all. Look at the next verse: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” This verse is sometimes thought of as being hard to explain, but I think its difficulty largely disappears when we consider it in the context of what is contained in this chapter. Is bearing children what makes a woman a Christian? No, no more than preaching, leading prayer, teaching Bible classes, or leading singing makes a man a Christian. But while the roles of leadership in the kingdom fall on men’s shoulders, think where the church would be without the wonderful work done over the years by godly women. I’m thankful for a father who became a Christian when I was about ten years old. I heard him lead prayers, teach Bible classes, even try to lead singing and preach occasionally. He served as an elder in the church at Jacksonville, Alabama, until his death. But long before my dad ever obeyed the gospel my sainted mother was taking me to worship and trying to instill in me

principles of truth and righteousness. It was through her godly influence that my father became a Christian, and without her great work as wife and mother it is likely I never would have preached the gospel. I also have a brother, a nephew, a great nephew who preach, and several nieces who are wives of preachers.

Let me give you one more personal illustration of the important work women do in the kingdom of God. I have a daughter who is the wife of a deacon in the church at Adamsville. I have a son who is a third-year student at Faulkner University. The other day I got to counting up how much time I was away from my children while they were growing up. From the time one was born until he reached age eighteen I would preach in about 150 meetings. This means my wife had the sole responsibility of rearing our children for nearly three whole years. How important is the work of women in rearing children? More important than preaching the gospel, so far as I am personally concerned. In preaching, I am trying to save the world. But my wife was taking care of the teaching and training of my son and my daughter. Do I need to tell you whose salvation I am more interested in? Yours or theirs?

In view of all these things, why would any woman want to abdicate the great responsibility God has given her? It was more than a hundred years ago when a man by the name of William Ross Wallace wrote the familiar lines: "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." A proper understanding of Paul's discussion in 1 Timothy 2 will lead one to conclude that, while leadership roles in public worship are reserved for men, the hand that rocks the cradle measurably effects the welfare of God's people in every generation.

I realize what I have said in this lecture will not make me very popular with those who sympathize with the feminist movement. But what I have said is what God's Word says. May God help us all to believe it and conform our lives to it.

IS THE CHURCH LACKING IN SPIRITUALITY?

Guss Eoff



Guss Eoff, Jr., was born March 7, 1923 in Fort Worth, Texas. In February of 1942, he married Lla Laline Norris. They have one son, Larry; also a gospel preacher. Guss attended Pepperdine College in Los Angeles and Southwest State Teachers College in San Marcos, Texas. He has preached for local congregations in California, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina and Missouri. He also has preached in twenty countries and twenty-four states, serving as a missionary to Hong Kong for two years. Guss has been preaching for forty-nine years and now works with the church in Independence, Missouri.

I have just discovered the reason for the lack of growth in the churches of Christ. No doubt, you have been puzzled as to why congregations are declining in membership. It is alarming to see so many congregations disbanding and selling their buildings. Many congregations have merged in a desperate attempt to salvage members, cut expenses, and maintain their present programs. But in most instances, the one congregation made up by the merging groups is little larger than before. Contributions are not increasing, in fact they are decreasing in great numbers of congregations.

Church attendance is not increasing throughout our brotherhood, but to the contrary. When you look over congregations, most of the heads are gray or white. Where are the young couples? Where are the teenagers? We are told that we are losing half of our young people to the world. All we have to do is look at our audiences during worship services. It is obvious, it is true!

Our brotherhood is divided and splintered. The two main groups are referred to as liberal and conservative. Then there are the ultra-liberals and ultra-conservatives. What has happened to the good old days when the Bible was our authority? Has a segment of the church compromised with denominations? Have most of the church allowed the influence of the sinful world to change their minds about

sin? Are we now accepting things that we once condemned as sinful? Have we winked at the things the Bible calls sin? Have we made alibis and excuses for fornication and divorce? When our children or our family becomes involved in sin do we change our position? Is the Bible really our standard?

When I say that I have just discovered the reason for the lack of growth in the churches of Christ, I just wanted to get your attention. I have known the problem for years. The answer to the question, “Is the church lacking in spirituality?” Is certainly, “Yes!” This is not a new problem. When one reads the Bible, he finds this was a great problem with Israel and the New Testament church. It is the glaring difficulty that we must deal with today. The church is lacking in spirituality!

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

What does Webster say spiritual means?

Pertaining to, or consisting of spirit; not material; incorporeal; as, a spiritual substance or being. Of or pertaining to the moral feelings or states of the soul, as distinguished from the external actions; reaching and affecting the spirit. Of or pertaining to the soul or its affections as influenced by the divine Spirit; controlled and inspired by the spirit; proceeding from the Holy Spirit; pure; holy-, divine; heavenly minded; opposed to carnal. Of or pertaining to sacred things or the church; sacred; as, spiritual songs; not lay or temporal.

Spiritual means consisting of spirit, not material, pertaining to the soul or its affections as influenced by the divine Spirit; controlled and inspired by the Spirit.

Spiritual things come from God. Paul states to the Christians at Corinth: “But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:12). The Christians in Corinth had not become spiritual. They had not allowed the divine Spirit to rule or direct their lives. They were yet carnal, they were infants spiritually. The Apostle had some cutting words for them:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ I fed you with milk not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it. nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

This carnal condition that divided the Christians in Corinth was not peculiar to them alone. One of the reasons the church is failing to grow today is this same divided condition. The cause of it today is the same cause as almost two thousand years ago—carnality. The lack of spirituality in the church today causes us to be divided. Following after men is nothing new. It was done in Corinth, and it is done today. One of the great reasons for the lack of spirituality in the church today is that brethren side with and follow certain brethren. This carnal condition has split congregations. It has caused elders to be removed from office and preachers to be dismissed, and has divided our brotherhood.

It is far past time we learn that spirituality does not come from the wisdom of men. Listen to Paul's statement, "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). The person who is spiritual is one that is guided by the Word of God.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, gives us insight as to that which is carnal and that which is spiritual. He stated:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that in, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which in good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:14-25).

There is a constant warfare going on inside each of us. The spiritual man desires to serve the law of God. The carnal man desires to serve the flesh or that which is against God. This does not mean that man is born totally depraved as the Calvinists teach. It does teach

that the man who loves God and has God and His law upmost in his life, is a spiritual man, desiring to do God's will. But, even this man has a carnal part of him, a part that desires to do that which is against God's law when he is tempted to do that which is evil. Jesus told Peter, James, and John, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat. 26:14).

In spite of the fact that we desire to serve God with our inner man, we still have appetites, passions and lusts. Regardless of how spiritual we may be, we still fall short of God's law. If we kept that law perfectly we would never sin, but only Jesus lived that sinless life. By the sinless blood of Christ we are made clean. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14).

The more spiritual we are, the less carnal we are! Surely no one will disagree that the church is lacking in spirituality.

IS THE CHURCH DEAD?

Some claim the church is dead, cold and uninviting. Are they right? The church is not dead! But it certainly is lacking something! Where is the interest, the enthusiasm, the zeal we had at one time? Many congregations are cold and uninviting! Many of our own congregations never speak to visitors. They gather with their near friends and talk and laugh, but they ignore strangers in their midst. I travel and hold meetings all over our country. I speak on quite a few lectureships, and I consider myself pretty hard to be ignored, but I have been. I have preached in meetings where members made no effort to speak to me. I have visited congregations where I had to do the speaking. Members passed me by and never gave me a chance to speak to them. They were too busy gabbing to some of their own members to even acknowledge my presence. You talk about cold and uninviting! I am a member of the church but I would never care about going back to those congregations. How would a non-Christian feel? I will tell you how I am going to treat those cold, unfriendly people. I am not going back.

I was asked to lead the opening prayer for a very large congregation in Fort Worth, Texas, and only the preacher and one elder spoke to me. I didn't run out the side door. I tried to introduce myself to several groups, but they wouldn't let me. I even stood by the back door to meet some of the brethren. They wouldn't even look at me, much less speak. I asked the preacher if my prayer was offensive? He said, "Certainly not!" I asked him if I had B.O.? He laughed and said, "Why do you ask that?" I told him that he and one elder were all that spoke to me, and the rest wouldn't even let me speak to them. I am pretty hard to keep from speaking to! He was embarrassed and said, "That's the way they are."

Have our services become cold and ritualistic? Have you noticed the lack of spirit and enthusiasm? How about our singing? Do we drag the song leader down? Do we mean, or even think of the words we are singing? Where is the pleading in our prayers? Where is the joyous thanksgiving? Where are the "Amens" we used to hear? I asked a group of preachers during a lectureship why they never said amen? One preacher smarted off by saying, "My sermons don't have to be resoled." After I heard him preach, I am convinced his sermon needed something. Maybe a few "Amens" would have kept many eyes open and heads from bobbing.

Years ago when I became a Christian, I heard "Amens" when the preacher would make a point of truth. Back then the New Testament church in America was in a largely unsophisticated society. Have we become so sophisticated that we feel it is undignified to speak out and let people know what we agree with and stand for? We have been buttoned-down by restraints of middle-class good taste, and our worship frequently is a mirror of that good taste—non-involvement, sitting on our hands. Why have we rejected saying "Amen" during a sermon? Are we afraid we will be accused of being "Pentecostal" if we say "Amen?"

When Nehemiah called for a commitment from the congregation of Israel, "And all the assembly said, Amen, and praised Jehovah. And the people did according to this promise" (Neh. 5:13b). Paul mentions about saying "Amen" at the giving of thanks in 1 Corinthians 14:16. "Amen," meaning "so be it," is used 13 times in the Old

Testament and 48 times in the New Testament in praise or worship of God. Why have we quit saying “Amen?” It is not because it is unscriptural, but because it might commit us? Brethren used to say “Amen” during a sermon, but now we don’t want to get involved. If we speak out publicly, it may demand a risk of commitment.

SQUELCH EMOTIONS

Emotion is a part of the heart! This part of the heart is the fountain of love, hate, sorrow, happiness, and excitement. Where does the Word of God teach that we must squelch our emotions to be spiritual? When the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, under the direction of Nehemiah, they were dedicated with great joy and rejoicing.

And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off (Neh. 12:43).

The Psalmist certainly did not subdue emotions. “But let all those that take refuge in thee rejoice, Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee” (Psa. 5:11). “Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, ye righteous; And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psa. 32:11). Notice again, “Her priests also will I clothe with salvation; And her saints shall shout aloud for joy” (Psa. 132:16). Isaiah said, “Sing unto Jehovah, for he hath done excellent things: let this be known in all the earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 12:5-6). We read in Zephaniah, “Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem” (Zep. 3:14). When Zechariah wrote concerning the coming of Jesus, he said, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee, he is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zec. 9:9).

Our Lord Jesus certainly did not tell His disciples to restrain their emotions.

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as

evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy for be hold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).

When people are happy, it is manifested. When the lame beggar was cured, he did not repress his emotion. "And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8). Then we notice the words of Paul: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13).

What kind of an impression do we make on those who visit our services? One visitor said:

Your services were orderly, but it appeared so mechanical. People were talking and visiting, then when the man got up to pray, everyone seemed turned off. Everything became quiet, and at the close of the prayer no one said "Amen," except the one praying. The song leader got up and led the singing, but the congregation seemed like wound up toys, they went through the motion, but seemingly without any feeling. When they sang "Power in the blood," they would never have convinced me.

This man was not trying to be mean, but he was not impressed. He said, "I saw some of your members at the high school football game Friday night. They certainly got involved there. They were jumping and screaming to the top of their lungs—even at the referee."

Have we become cold, ritualistic, and formal? Where is our excitement, our enthusiasm, in our praise to God? Sitting in services today seems much more subdued than when I became a Christian fifty years ago. Well do I remember the joy, the happiness and excitement in our services. Could it be that we are so afraid of showing emotion that we have dampened the thrill out of our worship to God? Have we become so enamored with "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), that we have drained emotion from our worship?

It is true that people can have emotion without jumping and shouting. Emotion does not have to be outwardly demonstrated by excited, out of order display. But it is not anti-scriptural to be enthused, excited, and happy in our praise to God. That excitement certainly can be noticed in the way we act in worship services.

Are those who manifest their emotions more spiritual than those who are unemotional in actions? Certainly not! Are those who are unemotional in actions more spiritual than those who manifest more emotions? Certainly not! Some preachers are very low key. They never raise their voice or appear excited. Are they more spiritual than the preacher who shows excitement and puts a great deal of enthusiasm in his sermon? Certainly not! In fact, neither one may be spiritual. Those who are spiritual are guided by the Word of God. They seek to put into practice what God has taught them by His Word.

ARE THOSE CLAIMING TO BE MORE SPIRITUAL TRUE TO THE WORD OF GOD?

In most cases, those who claim to be more spiritual are liberal. They claim to have greater insights to the grace of God. Because of their “spiritual depth,” they are not as “Weight laced.” They feel that their greater spirituality allows them to not be so conservative. Actually they are not more spiritual, but far less. They are willing to compromise God’s Word. Look at the preachers today who claim to have a greater spiritual insight to the teachings of our Lord. They are compromising with denominational teachings. They are claiming that there is no pattern in Christianity. They are having fellowship services with denominations. These liberals are not true to the Word. They are not spiritual, but servants of Satan “fashioning themselves as ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15).

HOW MAY WE GROW SPIRITUALLY?

To grow spiritually, we must allow the Spirit to guide us. The Spirit only guides us through the Word. The teachings of Jesus are spiritual, and when those teachings are put into one’s life, he becomes spiritual. Jesus told His disciples, “It in the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life” (John 6:63). In order to live spiritually, both here and hereafter, we must accept God’s Word and put it into practice.

Why in the church not spiritual today? Far too many in the church are carnal minded. They forsake the assembly, which violates Hebrews 10:25. Things are more important than the success of

the church. Carnal people will not support the church. They will not sacrifice to give as they have been prospered by the Lord. Most congregations are not meeting their budget. A few faithful members are doing most of the work and giving the most of the contribution. It is a lack of spiritual growth' We have too many spiritual nubbins in the church. They are stunted. They have been Christians long enough that they should be strong spiritually, but they have not grown.

For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God, and we become such an have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of an have their senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

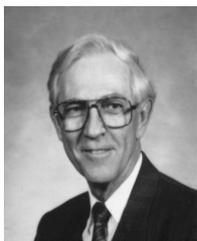
WHAT ARE THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATIONS OF GROWTH?

Spiritual growth is evident! When people love the Word of God and seek to follow its teaching and when the Bible is their rule of authority, they have a true start to being spiritual. When they study and learn what God would have them do, and then they seek to do it, they will become spiritual. They love God first They love their brethren and the souls of mankind. They strive to reach the lost. They seek to attend every service possible and love to fellowship with the brethren. These Christians give as they have been prospered. They are willing to sacrifice. They keep the right company, and they prefer fellow Christians. Spiritual brethren love to worship. They are excited and enthused, and that is manifest in their worship. Spiritual brethren shun the very appearance of evil. You can trust what they say. They are visiting and trying to convert their friends and neighbors. Spiritual people do not have corrupt speech proceeding from their mouths. They dress in modest clothing, they do not allow their bodies to be displayed to excite passions. Spiritual Christians live examples for their children and guide them to be faithful to God. Spiritual people have their hope set on heaven as their reward, and they lovingly strive to reach that goal.

Intentionally Left Blank

IS SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE?

Garland Elkins



Garland Elkins, a native of Tennessee, was educated at Freed-Hardeman University, Middle Tennessee University, and the University of Tennessee. He has done local work in Tennessee and Virginia. He has conducted gospel meetings in several states and appears on numerous lectureships throughout the brotherhood each year. He is a member of the faculty of the Memphis School of Preaching. He serves as Co-editor of the journal *Yokefellow* and is in charge of Public Relations for the school. He has written several tracts and many articles for leading publications. He was Associate Editor of the *Spiritual Sword* for fifteen years. He was selected Outstanding Alumnus of Freed-Hardemen University in 1981. He appeared on the Phil Donahue show in 1984 defending what the Bible teaches on church discipline. He lives in Memphis and is associated with the Knight Arnold church of Christ.

What is the meaning of grace? The word *grace* is defined as “unmerited favor.” We cannot be saved without the grace of God (Tit. 2:11-12), therefore that means that we neither *deserve* nor *earn* our salvation. Likewise, it is absolutely certain that the Scriptures teach that one cannot be saved without obedience to the gospel of Christ, and yet it just as emphatically teaches that we are saved by the grace of Christ (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 The. 1:7-9; Rom. 5:1-2). Several years ago the writer preached on a Sunday evening in a Northern Ireland city. The brother who was in charge of the service simply said, “Brother Elkins will introduce himself,” and he sat down. In acknowledging what the brother had said I pointed out that my introduction would be very brief, and then quoted Luke 17:10 which says, “Even so ye also, when he shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). I pointed out that though I considered myself to be faithful, nevertheless, I neither deserved nor earned my salvation, that when we “do all the things that are commanded” it is still the case that “we are unprofitable servants, we

have done that which it was our duty to do.” What I said on that occasion *could* and *would* be said by every *faithful* Christian. We all know that we cannot be saved without obeying the will of the Lord (Mat. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9); yet, that in no way obligates the Lord to save us. We are saved by God’s grace. God owes us nothing, but His great love prompted Him to offer us the privilege of being saved by Him. We are saved by God’s grace (God’s part), through faith (man’s part) (Eph. 2:8-9). The faith that saves is not “faith only,” but *saving* faith is an *obedient* faith (Acts 10:34-35, 39). Christ’s coming into the world was by grace (2 Cor. 8:9). His death was an act of God’s grace (Heb. 2:9). The gospel of Christ is also a matter of grace (Acts 20:24, 32). All of these things are appropriated by men when they obey the gospel of Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness, but righteousness entails the doing of the Will of God (Psa. 119:172; 1 John 3:7). It is through God’s grace that He teaches us (Tit. 2:11-12). One cannot be saved by grace until he gets into Christ “Be strong in the grace that is **in** Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1-Emp. mine. GE). Having sinned, man, to be saved must be redeemed, but redemption is extended by the grace of Christ. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is *in* Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-Emp. mine. GE). Salvation in in Christ, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is *in* Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10—Emp. mine. GE). *Question:* Since salvation is *in* Christ, how does an *alien* sinner enter *into* Him? Paul informs us, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). The blessings of God can be possessed only when God’s law has been obeyed (Luke 6:46; Rev. 22:14).

The New Testament affirms that salvation in by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). We do not *earn* it (Luke 17:10). Through the grace of God salvation is offered to *all* (Heb. 2:9; Tit. 2:11). This does not mean that all men will be saved, even though by the grace of God Jesus died for all (Heb. 2:9). Only those who through obedience accept that grace, will be saved (Heb. 5:8-9; Mat. 7:21; Luke 6:46). It was grace on God’s part that motivated Him to send His only begotten Son to die on our behalf, and it was grace that caused the Son to

become poor that we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9; 9:15; Rom. 8:32). We must keep in mind that grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). To be saved by grace means that it is necessary for one to become a Christian, and to be a Christian one must be in Christ (2 Tim. 2:1; Rom. 3:24; 2 Tim. 2:10; Acts 11:26; Rom. 6:3-4).

GRACE (GOD'S PART) FAITH (MAN'S PART)

Many have little difficulty in accepting the conditions of faith, repentance, and confession as necessary, while at the same time believing that one is saved by grace. It is tragic that many of the same people erroneously contend that, since we are saved by grace, baptism is, therefore, excluded. Paul taught that the sinner must get into Christ where salvation by grace is to be obtained (2 Tim. 2:1). How did he say this must be done? Hear Him!

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6: 1-4).

SALVATION BY GRACE EXCLUDES WORKS OF BOASTING—NOT WORKS OF OBEDIENCE

Since Belief, Repentance, Confession, and Baptism are all works of the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:6; 16:26), and yet they are not works of merit which result in boasting (Luke 17:10), it follows that they are *necessary* in order for the sinner to be saved by grace. The Scriptures make it clear that there is no more ground for boasting in baptism than there is in faith, repentance, and confession (Acts 10:34-35, 48). *Faith* is as much a work as baptism (John 6:28-29). When used in the *comprehensive sense* faith has steps in it (Rom. 4:12). Belief is a step of faith, repentance is a step of faith; confession is a step of faith; and baptism is a step of faith. We are not saved by the works of the *Law of Moses* (Acts 13:38-39). We are not saved by *meritorious* works (Eph. 2:8-9). However, it must be emphasized that we are saved by *works of obedience*. We are saved by the obedience of faith.

RUBEL SHELLY TEACHES ERROR RELATIVE TO SALVATION BY THE GRACE OF GOD

As a speaker on both the Denton, and the Memphis School of Preaching lectureships, I discussed this matter in some detail. Brother Bobby Liddell has requested that I include some of that material in this book. Following is that material:

RUBEL SHELLY CHALLENGED TO DEFEND HIS ERROR IN A PUBLIC DISCUSSION

The April 15, 1991, *Yokefellow*, a journal published by Memphis School of Preaching, contains much material and information relative to the error taught by Rubel Shelly. In fact his entire article (“ARBEIT MACHT FREI!”) is printed, along with an excellent article by Thomas B. Warren entitled “Salvation Is By Grace—But Not By Grace Only.” Other important articles are also included.

Following are an article by Curtis A. Cates, Director of the Memphis School of Preaching, and Co-editor of *Yokefellow*, and also the correspondence between the elders of the Knight Arnold Church of Christ (Memphis, Tennessee) and the elders of the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ (Nashville, Tennessee). The articles and letters in which the proposed propositions and proposals for debate are set out are revealing. We trust that you will peruse this material carefully. The Cates article reads as follows:

A BROTHERLY APPEAL FOR A PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON A CRUCIAL MATTER

This appeal is being made with Christian love, in utmost sincerity and with a fervent dean for what is best for the church of our Lord. The time has come (and it is beyond time) when for the Truth’s sake a series of public discussions is needed with prominent members of the church whose efforts are resulting in the Lord’s church drifting into apostasy.

A few years ago when, by and large, brethren were still willing to contend earnestly for the faith in public discussions, there seldom arose a serious problem either within or without the church that was not partially solved through public discussion. Numerous of our most faithful and capable preach successfully met and exposed the “Goliaths” of denominationalism. Faithful brethren publicly exposed (through debate) digressive, premillennial, and “anti” errors, which arose within the church. (Be it said to the credit of many of the false teachers of the past, they had the courage of their convictions [though

they were wrong] to the point of publicly defending their views. Has this generation produced a group of antagonists to the old Jerusalem Gospel who do not have such courage?) It is our sincere conviction that the errors some brethren presently teach among us, if unchecked, may send the church into apostasy for a number of generations.

Matthew 18:15-17 Does Not Forbid the Exposure of a False Teacher

Many false teachers seek to remain in fellowship with the church by demanding that they not only be permitted to teach their heresy, but also be granted immunity from exposure. They “wrest” (II Pet. 3:16) the passage in Matthew 18:15-17 which actually teaches that personal matters should be settled in private, if possible. Thus “by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent” (Rom. 16:18).

Such brethren teach their error publicly, and when a faithful brother answers their false doctrine publicly, they often cry, “He did not come to me personally before he publicly spoke or wrote on the subject.”

Question: Did the false teacher come to us and announce what he planned to do before he publicly taught his error? Of course he did not do this! And, the Bible does not demand that he do it. Then, on what ground does he insist that he can teach his error publicly, but that we can reply only in private? Paul knew what Matthew 18:15-17 taught and yet he wrote, “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (I Tim. 5:20). He made public for all time the sins of Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:20) and also of Demas (II Tim. 4:10). He even publicly exposed Peters error at Antioch (Gal. 2:11). Brethren, let us ever “Preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2) and be “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). Let us publicly expose false doctrine (Acts 18:28).

A Challenge for a Public Debate

Brother Rubel Shelly has now, for many years, publicly taught much error. Many readers of *Yokefellow* have read his articles, heard him speak in person, or heard his lectures on cassette tapes. He speaks in many places across the nation. For example, he has recently spoken in the following places. Missouri Street Church of Christ, West Memphis, Arkansas; Pepperdine University, Malibu, California; Richland Hills Church of Christ, Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, area; and White Station Church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee. All of his numerous lectures which I have examined are in one way or another basically the same.

The elders of the Knight Arnold Church of Christ are deeply concerned about the error which is being taught in general in the Lord’s church today, and in particular by Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, through their regular preacher, Rubel Shelly. (Unfortunately, there are many purveyors of the “now hermeneutic” in the brotherhood today.) The Knight Arnold elders are convinced that

the time has arrived for Woodmont Hills and Rubel Shelly to allow their teaching to be publicly tested. Therefore, the Knight Arnold elders requested brother Garland Elkins, one of the instructors in the Memphis School of Preaching, to offer to debate brother Shelly. Brother Elkins readily agreed to their request and sent signed propositions to brother Shelly when the elders of Knight Arnold wrote to the Woodmont Hills elders about these matters.

You will see in this issue of *Yokefellow* the correspondence between the elders of Knight Arnold and of Woodmont Hills regarding the proposed debate. The Knight Arnold elders first wrote the Woodmont Hills elders on February 3, 1991. The Woodmont Hills elders replied February 12, 1992. The Knight Arnold elders pursued the correspondence further on February 26, 1991....

The following was stated in the first letter from the Knight Arnold elders to the Woodmont Hills elders. "Since brother Shelly has taught his views publicly, and from coast to coast, we are sure that you will have no hesitancy in endowing him to debate. And, since his views have been widely circulated, we feel sure that you have no objections whatever to our publicizing this communication." In order that all may know the details of these matters, they are made public in this issue of *Yokefellow* .

With all of our hearts and with deep concern and generous Christian love, we urge our brethren in Nashville (the elders at Woodmont Hills and their regular preacher, Rubel Shelly) that they join us in a study of this enormously important subject ("Salvation by Grace").

The first letter from the Knight Arnold elders to the Woodmont Hills elders is as follows:

February 3, 1991

Elders

Woodmont Hills Church of Christ
2206 21st Avenue, South
Nashville, TN 37212

Dear brethren

As fellow-elders in one of the congregations of the Lord, we are writing to you about a most serious matter, one that affects both our and your eternal welfare. However, we want first to assure you of our Christian love and concern for you and the work of the Lord everywhere. We are very eager to follow what the apostle Peter wrote in I Peter 3:8. "Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving an brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded." We are also aware that we have the responsibility to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). The point that we desire to make is, that it is our purpose to practice the golden rule (Matt. 7:12), while contending for the truth and opposing error (Jude 3).

Brethren, we assume that you believe and endorse what your preacher, Rubel Shelly, is teaching. We are convinced that he has publicly, and in many parts of the nation, taught serious error, and we are unalterably opposed to the error that he teaches. We hasten to assure you that we have nothing of a personal nature against brother Shelly. In fact, many of us have known him for a number of years. In the past he has done much good. However, it is our considered judgment that in recent years he has been, and is, teaching the error referred to above. Therefore, as elders of the Knight Arnold Church of Christ, we have requested brother Garland Elkins, one of the instructors in the Memphis School of Preaching, to represent the Knight Arnold Church of Christ and the Memphis School of Preaching in a public debate with brother Shelly, and brother Elkins has agreed to do so, provided propositions are mutually agreed upon by him and brother Shelly. Brother Elkins has been, and is still, a friend of brother Shelly, and has been for many years. He has nothing but good will toward him and we assure that brother Elkins will conduct himself throughout the debate as a Christian gentleman. We have also requested that brother Curtis A. Cates, Director of the Memphis School of Preaching, sign this letter, and he readily agreed to do so.

As elders of the Knight Arnold Church of Christ we proposed that the following propositions be debated:

Propositions For Debate

The Bible teaches that salvation from sin results from the grace of God alone, totally and completely apart from any human activity.

Affirm: _____
 Rubel Shelly

Deny: _____
 Garland Elkins

II.

The Bible teaches that salvation depends upon both (1) the grace of God and (2) the faithful, loving obedience of the individual human being.

Affirm: _____
 Garland Elkins

Deny: _____
 Rubel Shelly

We offer the following formats and would be happy with any of the three:

1. The debate will be comprised of two nights of discussion in Nashville and two nights of discussion in Memphis.

2. Or, the debate will be comprised of four nights of discussion in Nashville.

3. Or, the debate will be comprised of four nights of discussion in Memphis.

Since brother Shelly has taught his view publicly, and from coast to coast, we are sure that you will have no hesitancy in endorsing him to debate. And, since his views have been widely circulated, we feel sure that you have no objections whatever to our publicizing this communication.

Further, in order to accomplish the maximum good for the greatest number, we suggest that a book be printed from the speeches of the debate, and that it be widely distributed. We will be happy to work out the details with you as per the publishing of the book. We also strongly recommend that audio and video tapes of the debate be made available at minimal cost, all of this to be done for the good of the Cause. We will also be happy to work with you regarding the times and places for the debate.

Finally, we emphasize again that each of us should realize the need to have a proper attitude, avoiding all arrogance, humbly keeping in mind the welfare of the church and concern for lost souls. And brethren, may we urge you to recognize that in all the arrangements, agreements, and the actual debate itself, we will be motivated by nothing but the love of God and love for the souls of men.

We all should strive to conduct ourselves in the manner that Paul described when he wrote, "and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). And, we hereby commit ourselves to do this.

Brethren, if you think us to be wrong you will recognize the responsibility to correct us. Likewise it follows that since we believe that brother Shelly teaches error, we have the Christian responsibility lovingly, with Christian kindness, to oppose the error which is being taught. This is especially appropriate since the influence of brother Shelly and of his teaching has been spread among brethren across the United States and around the world.

Brethren, we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Please find the propositions on a separate sheet, which we request that brother Shelly sign and return.

In Christen Love,

(Signed)

James A. Bobbitt, Elder
 Bert Embry, Elder
 Floyd M. Hayes, Elder
 D. H. Kirby, Elder
 Harold Mangrum, Elder

Curtis A. Cates, Director
Memphis School of Preaching

CC: Rubel Shelly

The Woodmont Hills elders replied as follows:

February 12, 1991
The Elders
Church of Christ
4400 Knight Arnold Road
Memphis, TN 38118

Dear Brothers:

We have received your letter of February 3.

Our views, and those of all the people on our ministry staff, are best stated in the following words: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for no to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We hope this clarifies the matter in your minds.

Yours truly,
(Signed)
Roy Newsom
Chairman of the Elders

The Knight Arnold elders renewed their appeal for a debate in the following letter.

February 25, 1991

Elders
Woodmont Hills Church of Christ
2206 21st Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212

Dear Brethren:

We have received your letter of February 12, 1991.

As in our letter to you, we emphasize again that we write in Christian love for you, and for the cause of Christ around the world.

We regret that you did not address the issue about which we are currently corresponding. You stated, “Our views and those of all the people on our ministry staff, are best stated in the following words: ‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it in the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’ (Ephesians 2:8-10).” All people who believe the Bible will affirm that they

believe Ephesians 2:8-10. We most certainly do believe Ephesians 2:8-10, but what brother Shelly has taught in your church bulletin October 31, 1990 does not teach what Paul taught in Ephesians 2:8-10. Among other things brother Shelly wrote, "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity." Webster defines lie as follows: "to utter falsehood with an intention to deceive." He defines scandalous as "causing scandal; offensive and shocking to the moral feelings of the of such a nature as to outrage a sense of decency; shameful." Webster defines the word outrageous as follows: "having the nature of involving, or doing great injury or wrong." Please note what brother Shelly and Sam Morris, a Baptist preacher, have taught regarding salvation. Sam Morris: "All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer, and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger." Rubel Shelly: "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Both Sam Morris, a Baptist preacher, and brother Rubel Shelly teach error in their above quoted statements. If brother Shelly believes what he has taught, let him affirm the proposition "The Bible teaches that salvation from sin results from the grace of God alone, totally and completely apart from any human activity." Brother Garland Elkins has already signed his name to deny that proposition. If brother Shelly prefers to use his own words then let him affirm what he averred when he wrote, "It is a scandalous and outrageous He to teach that salvation arises from human activity." If he will sign to affirm that proposition in public debate, then brother Garland Elkins will sign to deny publicly that proposition. Brother Elkins has already signed to affirm the following proposition for debate: "The Bible teaches that salvation depends upon both (1) the grace of God and (2) the faithful, loving obedience of the individual human being."

For your and brother Shelly's convenience you will find the enclosed signed propositions. We sincerely want to know whether you agree with what brother Shelly taught in your own church bulletin.

We believe Ephesians 2:8-10, but that is not what brother Shelly taught. We trust that brother Shelly will sign the enclosed propositions and will thus allow the doctrine which he taught in your bulletin to be tested in honorable public debate. We assure you that brother Garland Elkins will conduct his part of the debate in a calm, courteous, loving, and dignified Christian manner.

We again commit ourselves to doing everything we do in connection with the proposed debate in sincere Christian love.

We await your reply.

(Signed) Brotherly yours in Christ,
 James A. Bobbitt, Elder
 Bert Embry, Elder
 Floyd M. Hayes, Elder
 D. H. Kirby, Elder
 Harold Mangrum, Elder
 Curtis A. Cates, Director
 Memphis School of Preaching

CC: Rubel Shelly

Propositions For Debate

The Bible teaches that salvation from sin results from the grace of God alone, totally and completely apart from any human activity.

Affirm: _____
 Rubel Shelly

Deny: _____
 Garland Elkins

II.

The Bible teaches that salvation depends upon both (1) the grace of God and (2) the faithful, loving obedience of the individual human being.

Affirm: _____
 Garland Elkins

Deny: _____
 Rubel Shelly

The Woodmont Hills elders refused the second appeal for a debate in their response to the foregoing letter, as follows:

March 25, 1991
 Knight Arnold Road Church of Christ
 4400 Knight Arnold Road
 Memphis, Tennessee 38118

Dear Brothers:
 It is our judgment that there will be no advancement to the Lord's Kingdom by our participating in the debate you propose.

In Him,
 (Signed)
 Roy Newsom
 For the elders
 Woodmont Hills Church of Christ

RUBEL SHELLY'S ATTEMPT TO DEFEND HIS "GRACE ONLY" CONTENTION

In the April 15, 1991, issue of the *Yokefellow* we discussed brother Shelly's article entitled "Arbeit Macht Frei!" which was published in *Love Lines*, the bulletin of the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ on October 31, 1990. It appears that brother Shelly felt the effect of what was written concerning his article, for he followed it with another article under the title, "This Is Heresy?" in which he attempted to explain away the error that he taught in his first article. He wrote,

Several months back I wrote an article under the title "Arbeit Macht Frei!" It was an affirmation of the biblical doctrine of justification by grace. It asserted that human attempts at self-justification through good works are pointless. Salvation does not arise from what we do but what God has already done at Calvary.

This is an absolute misrepresentation of what brother Shelly taught in his first article. In that article he not only taught that we are not saved by earning our salvation, but he taught that all works are eliminated. Jesus teaches that one cannot be saved without obedience (Mat. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9; Tit. 2:11-12; et al.) but Rubel Shelly teaches that no works are necessary. He eliminates all work, for he affirms that "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Thus if Jesus Christ is right on this subject (Mat. 7:21), then Rubel Shelly is wrong. It is just that simple! He continues in his article, "This Is Heresy?" by saying,

The reaction of a few to that essay has been frightening. What their response says about their concept of salvation alarms me both for their own sakes and for anyone who takes them seriously. They charge that such a view of grace negates human responsibility, makes repentance unnecessary, denies the necessity of baptism, rejects the duty of Christian holiness, and otherwise removes human obedience from the divine scheme of things.

Indeed, brother Shelly would most certainly remove the necessity of all human work, including the work of obedience (Luke 6:46; Mat. 7:21; et al.) for he said, "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Now that he has been exposed for teaching such heresy he attempts to make it appear that he never

taught it, and then feebly attempts to make it appear that he is innocent of teaching such error and that we have missed his point.

He says of those of no who have pointed out his error (ie., that he has sought to eliminate obedience), “How utterly false—and revealing—the indictment is.” No, Rubel, we have not falsely accused you, and your attempt to charge us with such does not change the fact that you affirmed that “human activity” has nothing to do with salvation. In fact you contended that “to teach that salvation arises from human activity” (to use your very words) “is a scandalous and outrageous lie.” Further, you wrote, “We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.” You need either to renounce the error that you have taught or to defend it!

It is impossible for brother Shelly to hold to the view that is set out in his article under the title of “Arbeit Macht Frei!” without contradicting the Bible. In fact, when he wrote, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation,” he contradicted both the Bible and some of the things he wrote in his second article, “This Is Heresy?” As proof of this, in his second article he wrote,

Of course we are supposed to bow and heed divine commandments. Every law God ever gave in holy, righteous, and good. None is to be despised by anyone who believes in him. Faith in God involves submission to his will, and grace gives neither liberty to set aside any command of God nor approval for any instance of disobedience.

Brother Shelly cannot have it both ways! Either we must do something, that is, obey God’s will, which in precisely what the Bible teaches, or, as he erroneously taught in his first article, “It is a scandalous and outrageous He to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.”

Brother Shelly attempted to shift the spotlight away from his error when he wrote:

But there’s a problem Suppose we do everything we are told to do? We are still unworthy servants with no right to claim salvation (Luke 17:7-10). The fact is, however, that we don’t do all things divine law requires. “We know that the law is spiritual,” wrote Paul, “but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (Rom. 7:14). I confess the same deficiency.

The Baptists beat Rubel to the false charge that members of the church believe in salvation by works and not in salvation by grace. Neither brother Shelly nor the Baptists can prove their accusation that members of the church believe that we earn, through meritorious works, our salvation. I have been a member of the church since I was twelve years of age, and I know thousands of Christians, but I unhesitatingly say that I have never known a member of the Lord's church who believed that he earned his salvation. However, I hasten to say that I have never known a faithful member of the church who believed that he could be saved without obeying the gospel (2 The. 1:7-9). Rubel is the first member of the church of my acquaintance to affirm that, "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation."

Brother Shelly again seeks to imply that in some way we believe that we can earn our salvation. Do you suppose he thought that he got rid of our need to meet the conditions of pardon when he wrote, "Here is what the New Testament says about the adequacy of our obedience to law: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his eight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:20)? Again, I point out that though we are not saved by meritorious works, we are saved by works of obedience (Acts 10:34-35; Rev. 14:13).

Brother Shelly further wrote, "Yes, we are commanded to repent, be baptized, feed the hungry, minister to prisoners, pray, worship, abhor sin, live in love, evangelize, etc." In his first article he said that "we do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Now it sounds as if he believes there is something we must do! However, he continues by saying, "Nobody does all these things. Nobody does even one of them perfectly." According to brother Shelly nobody does "even one" of God's commandments perfectly. Let us examine his contention. Jesus taught that unless we repent we will perish (Luke 13:3). I contend that we are capable of true repentance, but according to brother Shelly we cannot do "even one" of God's commands perfectly.

Peter taught that the sinner must be baptized for (unto) remission of sins (Acts 2:38). *Question:* Can a sinner do this? About three thousand did this on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). He also said, “So, while no one will go to heaven an a rebel against God, neither will anyone go there because of his prowess at rule-keeping.” Even brother Shelly admits that “no one will go to heaven an a rebel.” Since he has rebelled against the teaching of the Lord as set out in the New Testament, the question, “Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Rom. 2:21) should be answered by him. Having admitted that a rebel cannot go to Heaven, he apparently felt obligated to take a swipe at those of us who believe that man not only can obey, but he must obey in order to go to Heaven. Brother Shelly wrote, “neither will anyone go there because of his prowess at rule-keeping.” According to his contention in both of his articles we have been discussing, and in other of his writings, he attempts to make it appear that if we believe that we must obey the Lord, we therefore believe that we earn our salvation. Nothing could be further from the truth. We cannot earn our salvation, but that does not eliminate the necessity for obedience to the Lord on our part (Luke 17:10; Rev. 22:14). Incidentally, not only is it necessary for us to meet the conditions of pardon in order to be saved from our past sins as alien sinners (Mat. 7:21; Acts 2:36-38), but we must also submit to the teaching of Jesus for an erring child of God, in order to be forgiven (Acts 8:18-24).

Brother Shelly wrote: “In the article already cited, I called it an ‘outrageous lie’ to teach that salvation arises from human activity.” Yes, he did say that, and by doing so he attempted to convey the idea that there is absolutely nothing that we can do to make our salvation sure. To use his words, he said, “We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.” It is interesting that brother Shelly, after attempting (but without success) to explain his first article and defend it, now takes exactly the same position that he took in his first article. Now, near the conclusion of his second article, he still is contending that, “It is a scandalous and outrageous he to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.” In fact, to show that I am not misrepresenting him,

one need only to read what he wrote on the subject. Amazingly, he even misrepresents Paul and claims that Paul went further in teaching his error than brother Shelly did when he wrote: "In Galatians, Paul was even more pointed and called theology which grounds salvation in human activity 'another gospel.'" Paul did no such thing. Rubel Shelly teaches that there is nothing that one can do in order to be saved. He said, "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Paul did not believe such a view, for he wrote that if one does not obey the gospel he will be lost throughout eternity (2 The. 1:7-9). Paul inveighed against the Judaizers, not because they engaged in human activity, but because they had perverted the gospel (Gal. 1:6-10). The difference between Paul and Rubel Shelly pertaining to salvation is that Paul taught that one must engage in human activity in order to be saved by the grace of God (Tit. 2:11-12), while brother Shelly contends that, "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation."

Brother Shelly apparently feels that he must take a final shot at faithful brethren in—the very conclusion of his article. He wrote, "How, then, will anyone be saved? Not by 'doing enough' but by accepting what God has done for him. By grace. All-sufficient grace. Amazing—and apparently intimidating—grace." There you have it. He still believes that, since we are saved by grace, "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." He concludes by saying, "Legalism calls this 'heresy.'" Though it appears that he attempts to cast reflection upon faithful brethren by the use of the word "legalism," nevertheless, it is true that he has taught "heresy." His final sentence is false. He wrote, "Scripture calls it Good News." No, brother Shelly, the Scriptures do not teach that "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation."

CONCLUSION

In Ephesians 2:8-9 the Scripture says, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory."

These verses call attention to the fact that salvation is by grace, that salvation is a gift, that salvation is not of one's self, and that salvation is through faith. The Bible emphasizes certain conditions which must be met before one can be saved. Many assert that, if one must meet certain conditions in order to be saved, then salvation could not be of grace, that it could not be a gift. However, many overlook the fact that salvation is a conditional gift. We are saved only if we do the Lord's will (Mat. 7:21).

IS THE BIBLE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD?

Jerri Manasco



Jerri Manasco was born in 1947, in Carbon Hill, Alabama. He began preaching in 1966, in Fayette County, Alabama, and for sixteen years, preached for the Whitehouse church in Marion County, Alabama. Jerri presently works with the brethren of the Crestview church in Boaz, Alabama. He has served as Editor of *The Christian Sentinel*, and contributes articles to several publications. He and his wife, Sheral, have two sons, Michael and James.

If the Bible is not inspired, it is not the Word of God. If the Bible is not the Word of God, then it is not inspired. If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, then it is a mere curiosity, another religious book among many other religious books. If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, then we are deceived if we believe it and fools if we build our lives upon it! If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, then its contents are no more meaningful than that which flowed from the pen of Plato or Karl Marx. In short, we are left with the choice of the philosophy we prefer and are no better or worse for the choice made.

By the term “Bible” I mean that book which is commonly identified as the “Holy Bible” and read by many. By “inspiration” I mean that the Bible is God’s Book, God gave it to man just as He intends for us to receive it. By “word” I mean that which God has spoken. By “Word of God” I mean that it is not the word of men (1 The. 2:13).

If inspired, the Bible ought to bear the marks of a God who is reasonable, purposeful and relevant. As a reasonable book, the Bible must not be characterized by absurdities or burdened with ridiculous

events and circumstances. If the Bible is the product of a God who Himself acts with design and purpose, then His Book should be a book of design and purpose. If the Bible is the product of the mind of a God who is Himself timeless, then the Bible must be a book that spans the generations and is capable of meeting the needs of any generation at any time.

There are three texts in the New Testament that point plainly to the Bible as the Book of God: 1 Corinthians 2:11-16; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21. These passages point to several conclusions: (1) God is the Author of the Bible; (2) Only God could have given us the Bible; and, (3) God did not lean upon human consultants in the production of the Bible.

We cannot put too much emphasis on a study of the inspiration of the Bible. One's attitude toward the inspiration of the Bible has a direct influence on his or her attitude in general toward life, religion, society and personal responsibility. In *The Case for Christianity* (15th annual lectureship of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions), Ben S. Flatt remarks,

It is a fact, proven over and over by experience, that a person's attitude toward the Bible will color his attitude concerning life in general. If one accepts the Bible to be anything less than the verbally inspired Word of God, he will necessarily make decisions on a much lower level of spiritual thinking than he otherwise would.¹

This should challenge a troubled nation! This should serve as a challenge to a troubled brotherhood! It is no wonder moral relativism with its low of a sense of personal responsibility and accountability has ascended the throne of human hearts!

A denial of the literal verbal inspiration of the Bible is a rejection of divine absolutes. Religious division in the form of denominationalism was one of the earliest fruits of this sort of thinking. The present controversies rending the Lord's church asunder have resulted from a practical denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures. It has become fashionable among some to speak of the Bible as a cultural document, written to meet specific needs of a past age but not necessarily applicable to our times. This attack upon the authoritative quality of the Scriptures is an attack also upon the inspiration thereof Not only churches of Christ, but other religious bodies as

well are fighting this battle of inspiration. Anyone who would minimize the importance of a study of the inspiration of the Bible is assisting in opening the door to greater tragedies.

There are numerous terms that identify the Bible as the divine book. It is said to be “the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12). It is “the word of God” (Heb. 4:12). It is the “word of the Lord” (2 Kin. 20:4, 16, 19; 2 Chr. 11:2; 12:7). God claims it as “my word” (Isa. 55:11) and it is spoken of as “thy word” (Psa. 138:2; John 17:17). Paul identified his writings as “the commandments of the Lord!” (1 Cor. 14:37) and pointed out that what he “delivered” was what he had “received” from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23).

At least four expressions are used repeatedly in the Old Testament to indicate the divine origin of that portion of revelation.² Wayne Jackson has indicated that more than 3,800 times the claim is made that the Old Testament is the Word (or words) of God.³ Commenting on the term “inspiration,” the *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* observes that Paul’s use of the term asserts the documents called Holy Scriptures are a divine product.⁴ Of course, this would include the New Testament, that which Paul and others were in process of committing to writing!

Jesus affirmed the inspiration of the Scriptures. Each time he referred men to the Bible for answers, He was in fact asserting the inspiration of the Word of God. “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). When pointing to His legitimate claim to being Messiah, Jesus invited His detractors to examine the sacred text (Mat. 22:42-45). Even after His resurrection Jesus insisted on the things written as proof of His claims (Luke 24:46). As the authoritative Word, the Scriptures are the *inspired* words of God! Biblical authority and biblical inspiration stand or fall together!

We can establish a reasonable case concerning who did not give us the Bible with its sublime beauty and meaning!

1. *Infidels, agnostics, atheists, and skeptics did not give us the Bible.* “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1). “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). Does this sound like something that unbelievers would promote? The very existence of God is asserted on page one of the Bible!

2. *The morally depraved did not give us the Bible.* God’s Word speaks in the most unfavorable way concerning deficient morals. The flood was a visitation upon a corrupt humanity (Gen. 6-9). Noah’s drunken shame is neither sweetened by literary finery nor softened by editorial comment (Gen. 9:20-24). The Ten Commandments struck at the very heart of contemporary immorality (Exo. 20). The New Testament is a message against immorality (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Cor. 5; 1 The. 4:1-8). David’s adultery is not portrayed as a hero’s escapade (2 Sam. 11, 12).

3. *Troublemakers are not the authors of the Bible.* In fact, trouble-makers are thoroughly warned in the Bible (Pro. 6:18-19; Gal. 5:20; etc.).

4. *The Bible did not originate with the lawless and anarchists.* Really, the Bible is the greatest obstacle to lawlessness. Law and order and respect for the established authority is the Biblical norm (Rom. 13:1ff; 1 Pet. 2:17).

5. *Paganism is not the source of the Bible.* The Bible is absolutely anti-idolatry! The Bible has none of the ridiculous and absurd assumptions of pantheism, animism, or other ancient corruptions of deity and religion.

6. *The Bible is definitely not the child of superstition!* Truth is the key in the Bible (John 17:17). The Bible does not rely upon superstition to get its message across. Such things as astrology, fortune telling, etc., are simply and categorically domed in the Bible!

There are other categories that we could consider, but these are sufficient to stress our point: the Bible was given independently of and quite often contrary to the wisdom of man. This is exactly what is affirmed by Peter (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Varied theories of inspiration have been put forth by men. Some have nursed the idea that the Bible is inspired, but only as a message of, by, and for the past. Some hold that God only put an idea into the writers’ minds and then left them free to develop the idea later in their own words (this notion is certainly incorrect, as plain state-

ments of Scripture indicate). Still others have proposed the theory that inspiration means only that some people have had a higher perception of spiritual insight and have recorded their superior impressions for others to read. Of course, in this came the “superior” insights of these would not really be of any greater eternal meaning than those of lesser insight. It is still nothing more than human perception! Other views contend that only the moral teachings are inspired, or that the “red letters” are inspired, or that the Bible only “contains” God’s Word, etc.⁵ If the Bible is anything less than the verbally inspired Word of God, then we are in a dilemma! In such a case we are left without a valid message from Heaven. We are left without an absolute and objective guide for life. If the Bible is not the verbally inspired Word of God, then one of two things is true: (1) it doesn’t really matter whether God actually has spoken to man, or, (2) we are hopelessly lost and drifting into a terrible eternity unless we can by natural means determine the Divine Will. Denial of verbal and total inspiration of the Bible draws far too many consequences!

The Bible is one of God’s gifts to mankind. It is the revelation of the will of God to man. Only in the Bible can we discover the truth relative to our real purpose for being here and God’s plan for saving us. There are some things that only the Bible can tell us. This is made clear by Paul who penned,

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things we also speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:10-13).

This puts into clear focus the meaning of inspiration. The Bible is not a matter of guesswork. It is not the result of superior human insight. The Bible is, in fact, the revelation of God imparted to chosen agents and recorded with pen and ink for the benefit of every generation of man.

This is agreeable to Peter’s comment.

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).

Far from being the product of human literary genius, the Bible greatly exceeds such human ingenuity! Any theory that fails to regard the Bible as the actual verbal disclosure of the divine will to men must be discarded.

Verbal inspiration means that the very words are given. It is not merely thoughts or ideas that God suggested to His selected penmen, but the text itself came from God. Paul said that the “words” he spoke are God’s (1 Cor. 2:13). Peter said that it was the *prophecy*—not the human development of the prophecy—that came from God through holy men (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Other passages are just as positive on the matter. For example, “The **Holy Ghost** saith” (Heb. 3:7). “The Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake” (Acts 1: 16). “The **Lord** testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets” (2 Kin. 17:13). It is the *Lord* who did the testifying and the speaking! God spoke (Heb. 1:1-2). *God* gave Moses the words to deliver (Exo. 4:12-15). Incidentally, this is the reason New Testament writers can quote Moses as an *authoritative source* (Mat. 8:4; Luke 2:22; 16:29, 31; Acts 3:22; Rom. 9:15; 10:5, 19; etc.). When God called Jeremiah to the prophetic office, He said, “I have put **my words** in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). When Isaiah was commissioned, *he was told what to say* (Isa. 6:9-10). The apostles were comforted by the assurance, “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mat. 10:19-20).

Can you imagine the sublime view into God’s eternal purpose as revealed in the epistle to the Ephesians being nothing more noble than Paul’s own skillful wording of a divine idea? Can you imagine this: God says to Paul, “Now Paul, I have a great idea for you! I want people to know how important the church is and I also want them to know where all spiritual blessings are. Now I’ve given you the idea, Paul. You work out the details for me.” How about that Paul takes the idea and then “composes” one of the most magnificent letters ever penned, the letter to the Ephesians! Is that the Bible

doctrine of inspiration? NO! Paul, in that very epistle, shows that God gave more than an idea to be developed; He explained the whole program (Eph. 3:1-6ff.). God did not leave such a message to human perception, no matter how unique that might be!

The liberal modernist view of inspiration has led many to speak of Pauline theology, Petrine theology, or Johannine theology, as though the writings of these men reflect their own concepts of spiritual truth. It totally disregards the Lord's promise that the Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Such modernist thinking has led some to see a conflict among the writings of New Testament penmen. Such thinking has reduced the Bible from being the consistent revelation of the will of God to an unintelligible assemblage of the works of independent thinkers. How could we possibly use the Bible as God intends for us to use it, citing the Bible as the final word on all spiritual issues, *if it is not His Word?* The Lord's church is seeing as a fruit of this such terms as "our heritage" and "our tradition." Consequently, subtle though unintended denials of the verbal inspiration of the Bible are reflected in this attitude.

When Bible writers warned against tampering with the Word of God, they were affirming the complete inspiration of the text. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deu. 4:2). If inspiration means only "idea inspiration," then why should the WORD itself be left untouched? If Moses had received only the idea to be developed, why could not someone else be allowed the liberty later to express the idea with a more adequate selection of words? "Add thou not unto his words" (Pro. 30:6). That Paul severely censured those who brought "another" gospel shows that *Heaven revealed exactly what is to be spoken and believed* (Gal. 1:6-9).

We often speak of the "writer" or "penman" of the Bible texts, referring to the Bible books that flowed from the pens of human writers. We can say this in an accommodative way, when we acknowledge that the human writers were not the *authors* in the absolute sense. The *author* is the originator of a document; the author reserves the right to communicate his word through the agency of

another, who thereby becomes the agent of transmission. For example, “Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost **by the mouth of** David spake” (Acts 1:16). The Hebrew penman quoted Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7-11. In his quotation, it is clearly indicated that the text was *said* by the Holy Ghost though penned by man. God spoke to the fathers “by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1-2).

In the house of Cornelius, Peter spoke the words of salvation (Acts 10; 11:12-14). Relating this event later, Peter said, “God made choice among us, that the Gentiles **by my mouth** should hear the word of the gospel, and believe” (Acts 15:7). “The word of the gospel” indicates the content; “by my mouth” shows the agency of communication. God used Peter’s mouth, Peter’s vocabulary, to communicate the divine will. Even if it be allowed that Bible writers sometimes used first person in their addresses, this would not mean that they were not under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit! God was simply utilizing their minds and vocabularies for His purpose.

Adapting the words and language of the Bible to peculiar environments or the temperament and status of the human agent in no way detracts from divine inspiration! The God who can move upon the human heart to reveal His will (2 Pet. 1:20-21) can certainly select words compatible both with the message as well as the agent through which the message is communicated.

It is a fallacy to assume that if the Bible is the Word of God, then it must have uniformity of style. Quite the contrary! If the Bible is God’s answer to every facet of human need, is it unthinkable that God could and would reveal His book in an appealing fashion? Does God have the right to select prose, poetry, narrative, epistolary form or symbolism as He deems necessary? Is God permitted to use the stirring words of prophetic imagery as well as the more literal words of direct address? If God is able to use human language, can He not do so in a way that respects the peculiar style and vocabulary of the agent? Benjamin B. Warfield, nineteenth century scholar, made an astute observation concerning this: “If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul’s, He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontane-

ously would write such letters.”⁶ Yet, Paul could “write with many tears” in his personal yearning for the brethren, yet the words were God’s!

The inspiration of the Bible is defended in 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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.

Here it is! The Bible is the inspired Word of God! Paul affirms this in the *unity*, *uniqueness*, and *utility* of the Bible.

THE BIBLE IS INDEED UNIQUE

There is no book quite like the Bible! It is unique in that it does not partake of the spirit of the times in which it became a written reality. Actually, the Bible runs *contrary* to the spirit of the times! The God of the Bible is superior to the “gods” of the nations among which the Bible penmen lived. Just compare the purity, holiness, kindness, love, tenderness, and mercy of the Bible God to the Canaanite, Egyptian, and Babylonian deities! The Bible is uniquely the product of the unique God!

The unique moral stance of the Bible is astonishing. Unrestrained passion and libertinism are not condoned in the Bible. Trivial attitudes toward sex, marriage, family, abuse, human life, etc., are not to be found in God’s holy revelation to man!

The Bible recognizes and emphasizes the deeper spiritual need that neither a perverted religion nor an atheistic philosophy can fathom. Atheistic writings, however scholarly, offer no positive foundation for society. Hedonistic writings offer only a self-destructive lifestyle (witness this in the rottenness of America’s morals). Only the Bible offers a positive and hopeful solution. The Bible insists that man seek a higher and nobler plane of life. If the Bible is strictly a human product, why does it not accommodate itself to human frailties? Can other writings, in their apologetic fashion, improve human character and enhance human relationships as can the Bible? No book presses upon us the moral challenges as does the Bible. Matthew Henry made the comment that while other writings deal

with morals and common justice and honesty, they do not meddle with holiness.⁷

Uniquely the Bible is practical and accurate in all its topics and themes.

1. The Bible is *historically accurate*. No one has successfully refuted this fact!

2. The Bible is *geographically accurate*. The geographical descriptions, which are many, are correct. Directional statements (“went down”; “went up”; etc.) are correct. Archaeology’s spade has discovered many of the towns mentioned in the Bible. Though the location of some of the cities, etc., is unknown, this is not an indictment against the Bible! There is no geographical refutation of biblical inspiration!

3. The Bible is *biographically accurate*. Its references to the characters and their proper placement in time are correct. Important personages such as Cyrenius (Luke 2:1-3), Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 25:13), Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24), Pontius Pilate (Mat. 27:2), and all the rest are in their proper time placement. What is said of them agrees with what we know about them from secular records.

4. The Bible is *sociologically correct*. God’s Word deals quite frankly with the sociological problem of the effects of assimilation into another society (Deu. 7:1-4; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). The importance of maintaining identity in the midst of alien influences is stressed (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 5:15-16; Tit. 2:12; Phi. 2:15-16; Exo. 19:3-6; etc.). The impact of peer pressure and social influence is clearly a matter of Bible revelation!

5. The Bible is *psychologically correct*. It is way ahead of its time in teaching that the heart (mind) is responsible for actions (Pro. 4:23; 23:7; Mat. 15:18-19; Phi. 4:8). It is amazing how the Bible deals with the correlation between stress and anxiety (Mat. 6:24-34; Heb. 13:5-6). The Bible, as any psychological study does, gets to the root of the problem! Sin is the problem (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6; Tit. 3:1-3; etc.). Evil rises from within as we yield to temptation (Jam. 1:13-15; 1 John 2:15-16). The Bible as God’s book does not hesitate to locate the guilt where it really is!

6. The Bible is *philosophically appropriate*. Philosophy aims for the pursuit of happiness and the attainment of excellence. The Bible promotes these very ideals! Only the Bible goes much deeper than any human philosophy. Contentment, peace, joy, and wholesome sense of self-esteem are all fruits of the Bible!

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE SHOWS INSPIRATION

Can you imagine a collection of 66 books, written over a period of about 1500 years by 40 men in scattered environments and different historical periods—and yet that collection of books retain a consistency of thought throughout? That is exactly true of the Bible

The scriptures reveal the development of a single divine thought with several sub-divisions, viz., that of the grace of God in Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners. They show us the bud of the divine promises gradually opening into a beautiful flower. The coming Christ casts his shadow before him, and finally appears in person.⁸

The thread of revelation runs in beautiful harmony throughout the Bible (see Gen. 12:3; Rom. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-2; John 1:45; Mat. 11:3; John 4:25; 11:27; Gal. 3:8; etc.).

The Scriptures as the inspired Word of God are able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:15). Inspiration is stamped on every page of the Bible as it reveals in harmonious fashion the scheme of redemption. There is the essentiality of the sacrificial system in Genesis 4. There is the Abrahamic Promise of Genesis 12:3. There is the type and shadow of the Law of Moses culminating in the cross and the church (Deu. 15:15-18; Heb. 1:1-2; 10:1-10; Acts 3:20-22). There are the prophecies of the Old Testament so obviously fulfilled in the New Testament. It is just not conceivable that such a Book could have resulted from human ingenuity.

Add to this the constant emphasis on monotheism throughout the Bible (Deu. 6:13; Gen. 1:26-27; Exo. 20:1-5; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rev. 22:8-9; etc.). Moreover, there is the evidence of the consistent demand throughout the Bible for pure heart obedience (Gen. 2:16-17; 17:1; 1 Chr. 28:9; Mic. 6:8; Psa. 51:17; Mark 12:30; Acts 1:24; Rom. 6:16-18; etc.). Who can deny the unity of this fascinating and unsurpassed Book of the Ages!?

THE UTILITY OF THE BIBLE SUGGESTS DIVINE ORIGIN

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that the Bible is profitable for equipping the man of God for an adequate work. The Bible is useful in that it dignifies the human state through the moral challenge it issues. The Bible promotes human rights, personal dignity, and societal harmony. The Bible is useful because it teaches what is right, corrects what is wrong, and guides us into the way of peace. It is useful because it gives assurance to man (1 John 1:4; 2:21; Psa. 23). The Bible is useful in the way it builds us up and prepares us for what follows death (Acts 20:32; Heb. 9:27).

THE BIBLE—GOD’S BOOK!

Who can produce a book like the Bible? Men of great literary ability have made outstanding contributions to human culture, but none have equalled or surpassed the Bible. Philosophers have magnified the frailty of the human condition, but only the Bible unlocks the way to life. Only the Bible answers the questions that the philosopher finds unbearable. Unbelievers have a difficulty reckoning with the Bible. Centuries have been invested in criticizing, dissecting, denying, mocking, and in every way slandering the Bible but here it stays and here it stands! It is no wonder that the psalmist exclaimed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa. 119:18)!

ENDNOTES

¹Ben S. Flatt, *The Case for Christianity*, ETSOPM Lectures, printed by PRIMAR of Tennessee, Inc., 1989, p. 184.

²Frank Pack, “The Inspiration of the Scriptures,” *Pillars of Faith*, eds. Herman O. Wilson and Morris M. Womack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 180.

³Wayne Jackson, “The Holy Scriptures—Verbally Inspired,” *Reason and Revelation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, December 1987).

⁴“Inspiration,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*

⁵Flatt, pp. 186-187.

⁶Benjamin B. Warfield, “Inspiration,” *International Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1480.

⁷Matthew Henry, “Comments on 2 Timothy 3:16,” *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, VI:846.

⁸Louis Borkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 54.

MODERN VERSIONS— TRANSLATIONS OR PERVERSIONS?

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Born at Bradford, Tennessee, October 30, 1931. Baptized into Christ in 1944. Began to preach in 1949. Graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, David Lipscomb University and George Peabody College For Teachers. Has done local work for thirty-eight years. For eighteen years has been with the Ripley church of Christ. Each year preaches in about a dozen meetings and some twenty or more lectureships. Has written 22 books and some 25 or 30 tracts. On the staff of several of our gospel publications. For 12 years—1974-1986—wrote scripts and extended outlines for V. E. Howard and *The International Gospel Hour*. In 1978-79 wrote for *Senior Quarterly* for *The Gospel Advocate*.

Between 1979 and 1990 wrote the *Gospel Advocate Adult Quarterly* (called *Foundations*). Since 1990 has written the *Gospel Advocate Companion*. Helps with a prison ministry.

Is married to the former Irene Crump of Nampa, Idaho, and has two children—Rebecca Davis of Seminole, Oklahoma, and Tim of Nashville, Tennessee. Has one grandchild—Ryan Philip Davis.

His late parents were members of the church more than fifty years each and his father served as an elder for a number of years during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Appreciation is hereby expressed to Bobby Liddell and the Bellview congregation for the invitation to participate in this 1992 lectureship. I think this is about the tenth one upon which I have appeared.

INTRODUCTION

In Paul's day there were "gods many, and lords many" as far as his peers were concerned (1 Cor. 8:5). In our day we have versions many and translations in abundance. Oswald T. Allis, a Princeton University professor and early critic of the RSV, said, more than 40 years ago, that we now have a super abundance of versions. Since he made that statement in 1948 we have had many more added to the total English translational picture, There is no end in sight. They come in a host of varieties. By economic demand each new one has

to be different than any of its immediate predecessors else there could be no successful sales pitches for its prompt sales among Bible purchasers. The Lockman Foundation of California is a modern Bible producer. They put out *The Amplified Bible* in the 1950s and *The New American Standard Bible* in the 1960s. The difference in the two are almost beyond calculation. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary aided in the production of *The Reader's Digest Bible* a decade ago and *The New Revised Standard Version* of 1989. A modern computer would be taxed severely to note all the differences between the RDB and the NRSV. Yet, Metzger is happy with both and promotes both. Some of our own brethren are not far behind the Princeton professor in promoting versions that are as opposite and different as day and night!

Moses warned Israel not to add to or take from God's inviolable Word (Deu. 4:2; 12:32). The Inspired Bard of Proverbs does the same in Proverbs 30:6. So does banished John on rocky Patmos as with heavy hand he completed the Sacred Volume in general and Revelation in particular (Rev. 22:18-19). Incidentally, the modern reader of RDB, if he never read another, would never know that John wrote Revelation 22:18-19 as a strict warning for man not to tamper with the divine message of God Almighty. *The Reader's Digest Bible* omits this duet of declarations. They do a gigantic Pass-over here. They, translators of RDB, jump from Revelation 22:17 to Revelation 22:20 as though the intervening duet of valiant verses of weighty warning had never seen the light of printed day. Jesus warns of tampering with God's Word by an adamant allegiance to the doctrines and commandments of men (Mark 7:7, 9, 13). Paul warns of corrupting (making merchandise) of God's Word in 2 Corinthians 2:17. He gives a wise, weighty warning about a deceitful handling of God's Word in 2 Corinthians 4:2. Perversion of God's glorious gospel is at the very heart of His weighty warning and ardent admonition in Galatians 1:6-9. The Judaizers had the same malicious major in mind as do a host of modern translators—perverting the precious Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revision is NOT the problem. Revision is a correcting or an improving as any reliable dictionary of the term will show. Many of

my adamant critics on version matters across the years have said, “Taylor is opposed to revision!” Such is a colossal lie of the deepest magnitude. The accusation is NOT SO!! Taylor is opposed to perversion. This is a point I have tried in vain to get brother Jack Lewis to see. He thinks I am opposed to revision. Repeatedly, I have told him the problem is PERVERSION—not REVISION!! No lover of God’s Word is opposed to bringing a rendering into closer harmony of the original Hebrew and Aramiac of Old Testament Scripture or the Greek text of New Testament Scripture. The ASV did this with *eis* in Matthew 28:19. They translated it *into*—not *in* as the KJV did. I applaud this change for greater accuracy. *The New King James Bible* would have done itself considerable credit in its rendering of Matthew 28:19 had it retained INTO instead of going back to *in*.

Perversion is the problem. It was the problem Foy E. Wallace, Jr., fought so nobly and tenaciously the last twenty-five years of his eventful and courageous life. It is the problem some of us are still fighting during the 1990s when many who formerly fought with us have now joined the enemies in favoring most any translation and doing it in the name of Christian liberty.

FOUR VERSION ELEMENTS IN OUR BROTHERHOOD

(1) One group is filled with APATHY. They do not care whether we have *many* versions, a *few* versions or no versions. They do not *know*; they do not *care*! They are like the man who was told that the two greatest problems we face are ignorance and apathy. To which he promptly responded, “I do not know and I do not care!”

(2) Another group is HAPPY with nearly anything and everything that comes out as a Bible Version. No perversion upsets them. Four or five years ago I had lunch with an adamant admirer of the RSV. He had come to hear me lecture for five days on what is wrong with modern versions of the Bible. He asked to take me out for a meal one day. The RSV was his darling. Every RSV perversion I called to his attention prompted him to say with boring repetition, “That does not bother me at all.” It bothered me that perversions failed to bother at all that young preacher who was preaching every

Sunday to souls on their way to judgment. Brother Ira Rice is right on target with the general observation, “You just cannot warn some brethren!” They will pay no attention at all. This young man was of that poisonous persuasion.

(3) Another group says we should EDUCATE our members to recognize what is wrong in versions and what is right (weaknesses and strengths) and in the name of Christian liberty let them choose the Bible of their own choice. No preacher could ever be equal to this impossible or Herculean task of so educating a congregation. Further, why should people have to wade through a mass of perversions is a poorly chosen Bible when they can have one free of fatal or lethal error? Wisdom is not present in this naive view though able men now advocate it. Some of them would not have advocated it 20 years ago at all!! The versions have not gotten better by and large; these brethren have just left a position they deemed as getting less and less popular!! That is it in a nutshell!!

(4) Some of us recognize we have perverted Bibles in multiplicity. We WARN brethren to stay away from them as their study Bibles and remain with reliable, respected Bibles such as KJV and ASV which have brought the church to us and will retain it for us. Wisdom permeates this approach to the version problem regardless of how few are content to be therein.

THREE ESSENTIALS OF A RELIABLE BIBLE

(1) It must be accurate. In English it must say to the English reader what the Hebrew and Aramaic do in the original of the Old Testament and what the Greek text says in the original of the New Testament. The new versions are lax and loose in this absolute imperative—very lax and very loose!

(2) It must be understandable. This is demanded if readers are to profit from the heavenly-revealed volume. Modern versions frequently fail with this. Examples would be changing Pentecost in 1 Corinthians 16:8 to Whitsuntide or plots in Acts 20:19 to machinations. A five-letter term becomes a twelve-letter term! And this is supposed to be simpler or greater in communicative approach??

(3) It must be dignified and reverent. We are not dealing with newspapers or comic books, we are dealing with the Word of God.

Several years ago some concerned Baptists in Nashville, Tennessee, became deeply disturbed because their big book store there was selling Taylor's paraphrased product—*The Living Bible Paraphrased*. They said it contained vulgar terms and indeed it does. It contains an expression in 1 Samuel 20:30 that I have steadfastly refused to quote in literary or oral refutations relative to translational blunders and perversions. Yes, it is really that bad and then some! People today often say they want a Bible that reads just like today's newspaper. Yes, and when they have such it will be of no greater value to them than a newspaper one day old! Nothing is of lesser value in a household than yesterday's newspaper. This is why we insist on *daily* newspapers.

THE RSV

It came out with a New Testament in 1946 and both testaments in 1952. They said in their initial preface that they were not happy with older versions that followed a more mechanically-exact or word-for-word approach. And sure enough they did not pursue such a *despised* course. Free and reckless became their translational approach. Modernists put it out for modernists and to advance modernism. Without question or quibble this has been its fatal fruit for 46 years now. Professor Oswald T. Allis so charged right after its literary debut. Harry M. Orlinsky, one of its Old Testament translators, has called the RSV "the Bible of the *liberal* Protestant community" (Emphasis mine—RRT). I have him on tape saying that very thing. He knew his poisonous product well and labeled it accurately. I have no quarrel with his assessment at all! I am very seldom on the same wave length as this Jewish translator but here he and I see eye-to-eye on how the RSV ought to be labeled.

Perversion was the literary game they played throughout both testaments. They have Genesis 12:3 reflexive-not passive and contradict their own grammatical blunder with a change to passive in Galatians 3:8. Paul is quoting Genesis 12:3 in the Galatians passage. Abrahamic descendants did not bless themselves. They did not work out the plan of salvation; neither have we. The reference is to the seed or Christ who would bless all earthly families or nations. Galatians 3:16 makes this clear as touching who the seed was.

Perversion was in the fatal forefront when they left Jesus with a divine throne in Psalm 45:6 but removed His Deity. The blunder is compounded when they restored His Deity in Hebrews 1:8-9—a quotation from Psalm 45:6ff.

Perversion was in heyday form when they came to Isaiah 7:14. Virgin is removed from the text and dropped to footnote status. Biblical truth belongs to the Sacred text—not a man-added footnote! “Young woman” modernistically invades this text with reckless fashion. Yet they retain virgin in the quoted reference they give of it in Matthew 1:22-23. In another 7:14 citation (that of Amos) they have the courageous prophet from Tekoa to put a disclaimer on being a present prophet or current mouthpiece for God when that is what he was doing in the Israelite king’s court. How utterly inept modern translators can be!!

In the New Testament they have Jesus denying what they have Paul to affirm (Mat. 5:17; Eph. 2:15).

In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 they have unchastity instead of fornication for rendering the Greek term *porneia*. It should have stayed fornication as our older versions have long had it. A person can be unchaste in language, dress or even in intent and yet may NEVER commit fornication or the overt act with another. Unchaste is unacceptable here.

Mark 16:9-20 ran out of friends in a hurry among the RSV translators. They axed it in 1946. They axed it again for the RSV Bible in 1952. This highly treasured passage was by them relegated to footnote status. They failed to translate for the text some 163 Greek words according to my actual count. This is perversion outright; it is not translational integrity at all. They later restored it.

In Luke 1:1-4 they took an obvious slap at Luke’s inspiration. “Perfect understanding of all things” becomes “followed all things **closely**” (Emphasis mine—RRT). A noted Protestant professor by the name of John Scott was signally displeased with this and made no bones in voicing his opposition.

Monogenes—great Greek compound word for only begotten—becomes “only Son” in the RSV in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9. R. C. Foster of the Independent Christian Church said

this was one of three main slaps they took against the Lord's Deity. The other two were how they dealt with Isaiah 7:14 and the distinction they made in pronoun usage—you for Christ—thee, thou and thine for the Father.

Perversion is rife in their handling of 1 Corinthians 7:36ff and 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

“Married only ones” in the elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and the widow enrollment qualifications of 1 Timothy 5:9, 10 are a reckless handling of what accurate, reliable Bibles have always rendered as “husband of one wife” for elders and “wife of one man” for enrolled widows. An elder left as widower can remarry and still meet the qualification but not if “married only once” is correct. The same is true with the widow in question. She may have lost one husband and married another and then lost him. She still meets this qualification but not if the RSV was right originally in this. Later they changed this and yet *The New Revised Standard Version* resorts back to this earlier blunder of the RSV of 1946 and 1952.

What has been listed is only a small drop in the pail to what could be listed as translational blunders in the RSV. It is a perverted Bible many of our own preachers and professors to the contrary notwithstanding. I have been often in their company when they would defend it with vim and vigor as a reliable Bible. Some of the ones who do so now once had me come to their campus/congregation to lecture on what some of the RSV perversions were. They lied when they called it a reliable Bible!! This is blunt but it is true nevertheless!

PHILLIPS' TRANSLATION

Its exact title is *The New Testament In Modern English*. The one man translator was J. B. Phillips. It came out initially in 1958. He demonstrated promptly in preface and introductory remark his modernism toward God's Word. He was not convinced at all that biblical penmen *knew* they were writing Scripture. Paul, he said, was uninterested in dotting i's and crossing t's or even in maintaining consistency between earlier writings and what he wrote later in life. Such is a blasphemous reflection on Paul and the entire Godhead. Paul

wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit is not an originator of truth, he conveyed what He heard from Father and Son as per John 16:13-15. Hence, Paul's epistles were derived totally from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Phillips has a flat contradiction between Matthew 5:17 and the twin declarations of Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 10:9. He referred to Mark 16:9-20 as "an ancient appendix." Mark did not pen it; someone else added it later! He has Peter use gutter-type language to Simon in Acts 8:20 and compounds his egregious error by a reckless footnote. He rewrote 1 Corinthians 14:22 and compounds his slanderous rewriting with a blasphemous footnote. The aspect of a burial in water is left out of Colossians 2:12. "Not by faith only" is removed from James 2:24. He rewrote 1 Peter 3:21.

Perversion after perversion permeates this poisonous product. Yet some of our brethren have been deeply enamored with it. WHY is a mystery!!

THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

This is a work produced in England. C. H. Dodd was its director. The New Testament part came out in 1962 and both testaments came out a few years later. In his writings, Dodd denied God as author of the Bible, claimed it was not inspired, doubted such a person as Moses ever lived, said he (Moses) wrote no biblical books, said there is much myth in the Bible and that Biblical Finals bear no reality at all. His views are reflected in his modernistic work, *The Bible Today*.

Dodd and his demolition crew tampered with Genesis 1:1 changing it from an independent clause to a dependent clause. They removed Spirit from Genesis 1:2 and preferred "mighty wind" instead. H. C. Leupold, scholarly commentator on Genesis, said such was "not tenable" in his classic work on the opening book of the Bible. They changed virgin to "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14. In this they showed their modernistic kinship to the earlier RSV of 1952. In Luke 1:27, Mary is not referred to by a virginal term but simply as a girl. Genesis 11:1 begins as though it were simply a fairy tale and that is how they viewed the opening 11 chapters of the Genesis account of origins or beginnings.

Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 10:8 stand in hopeless, hapless and helpless contradiction. Peter becomes the rock foundation of the church in Matthew 16:18. Here they “out-Romed Rome and out-Poped the Pope.” Pentecost in Acts 2:1 and 20:16 in the NEB becomes Whitsuntide in 1 Corinthians 16:8. How inept can translators be in seen here in clear fashion!! The first day-of-the-week worship in Troas in Acts 20:7 becomes Saturday night in the NEB.

The NEB is a primer of malicious modernism even exceeding its predecessor—the RSV—in several of its erroneous renderings. F. F. Bruce said it indulged in conjectural emendations (a rewriting of the text) much more than did the RSV of 1946.

THE AMPLIFIED NEW TESTAMENT

It is a product of the 1950s. Lockman of California put it out. This associates it with premillennial proponents. Graham called it “the best study Testament on the market.” This does not say much for Graham’s superficial knowledge of the Bible or his respect for it. William Barclay praised it and his notorious brand of blatant modernism is well known during this generation.

Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:16 and Hebrews 10:9 stand in helpless contradiction. The now Bibles really have problems with these three passages! I am convinced the reason for this is because these translators do not know how the covenant of Sinai and the one that began at Pentecost are to be distinguished. They are inept novices in rightly dividing the Scriptures or handling them aright as touching covenant differences in the Bible. Such totally disqualifies them from able translators regardless of how much they know of Hebrew, Greek and the English language into which they are supposedly translating the Sacred Scriptures. Sharp, accurate Bible knowledge is a MUST!

Mechanical music gets a gigantic plug in Ephesians 5:19. There is so much verbiage in many of the verses that it is nearly impossible to separate text from comments on words in the text. A look at Matthew 5:3ff illustrates this. They object to thee and thou language and yet will capitalize You and Your when Deity is addressed. Verily, the legs of the lame are unequal. Consistency is a diadem among

modern Bible translators for a surety. I have a question. How do we show special respect orally? They tell us how to do it in a literary or written work.

GOOD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN

Robert Bratcher is the one man translator of this 1966 product published by the American Bible Society. Be it recalled that he is the very one who once labeled a believer in the infallibility of the Bible as either wilfully ignorant or intellectually dishonest. At least we know what he thinks of us!! Later, under pressure, he apologized but one wonders how deep the apology went and whether it ever left his lips and penetrated his heart.

The line drawings are, at times, very misleading or filled with assumptions. He has three wise men in Matthew 2 in a line drawing and Saul's falling from a stallion in Acts 9. No one knows the exact number of the wise men; no one knows the mode of Saul's transportation to Damascus from Jerusalem. He rewrites Acts 20:7 changing both the day and the purpose of their gathering. He has them to meet on Saturday and for a fellowship meal—not on the Lord's Day and the breaking of bread. His modernism certainly shows in the way he handles a number of the blood passages in the New Testament. It is a faith only Bible in Romans and Galatians and yet he says the very opposite in James 2:24. Here he places a disclaimer on what he affirmed in Romans and Galatians!! He greatly misses who the recipients of Holy Spirit baptism were in Acts 2. I would hate to meet a Pentecostal in debate if all I had was *Good News For Modern Man*.

Perversion—not accuracy of translation—is a correct synonym for Bratcher's product. The American Bible Society did itself no credit in its publication. Neither have our brethren who have praised it and passed it out as though it were a reliable Bible. They really did this when it could be bought for 25¢ per copy. This is when some of our preachers began to refer to it as the two bit Bible. And this was 24½¢ more than it was worth then or now!

THE LIVING BIBLE PARAPHRASED

It is a product of the 1970s as touching publishing dates. Kenneth Taylor is responsible for it. It is a premillennial and Calvinistic pri-

mer with vulgarisms thrown in extra. It would tax greatly a modern computer to calculate ALL its perversions. They abound and they are glaring. It promotes faith only. It tampers with baptism passages. It rewrites worship passages. It abets the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. It clothes the Bible message in a totally different type of terminology. Ashdodic terms abound in this irreverent, inaccurate and unscriptural work.

Billy Graham gave it national and international recognition with his early endorsement. He bought enough of it in its early stages to ensure it with financial success. These he made available in his crusade work passing them out as though they were harmless candy to babies. He said the LBP would give people a new understanding of the Bible. He left out three letters in his superficial assessment. He should have said it would give people a new MIS-understanding of the Bible. And that it has in countless instances!!

Its perversions begin early in Genesis and continue throughout. It ought to be renamed and called THE LIFELESS BIBLE PRO-POUNDED. It could still be known as LBP!!

THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE

Like its older literary brother, *The Amplified Bible*, this also in a product of the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, California. These people are wedded to premillennial precepts. It is better than its older literary brother though there are renderings that make me think it should be called *The New Amplified Bible*—not *The American Standard Bible*. It is a far, Far, FAR cry from the ASV of 1901.

They do leave Jesus a virgin in Isaiah 7:14 which is commendable. Yet in another 7:14 Old Testament citing, Amos, they have Amos to deny his current status as a prophet when he was actually prophesying in the Northern Kingdom at that very time (Amos 7:15). I find this totally incredible!! Amaziah, his enemy in the king's court, that of Jeroboam II, called him a seer and knew that he was right then prophesying (Amos 7:12-13). I am made to wonder why the Lockman lade did not KNOW he was right then a prophet!!

They have the same contradictory problems with Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 10:9 that their modern version peers glaringly experience. Inept is entirely too tame a term to designate

them in such translational blunders!! They were translational novices in dealing with these verses.

In Luke 1:1-4, *careful investigation* hardly adds up to *perfect understanding* in the KJV or even the accuracy aspect of the ASV. It is hard for modern versions not to take slaps at inspiration claims. The RSV did this with Luke 1:14 in 1946 and 1962. In fact, I would not turn around for the difference in the way the NASB and the RSV rendered Luke 1:14.

Why are thee, thou and thine used again and again in prayer language to the Father but Jesus is addressed as You in Matthew 16:22; John 1:49; 3:2; 6:68-69; 21:12-19 and Acts 1:6? Should Deity be addressed differently on earth than in Heaven by a prayerful approach? At times they will use thou in connection with Jesus such as Matthew 16:16 and Mark 8:29.

The NASB is better than many of this century but hardly adds up to the reliable, accurate nature of our older versions such as the KJV and the ASV.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The NIV New Testament came out in 1973 and the NIV Bible came out five years later (1978). It has become the darling version among many members of the church. WHY is an appropriate question! It is NOT worth that type of allegiance at all. It is a sectarian Bible and especially a Calvinistic Bible. The main thing wrong with the RSV is its modernism; the main thing wrong with the NIV in its sectarianism or plain old denominationalism. Calvinism leaps up from its rendering in Psalm 51:5 with David a confessed sinner at both conception and birth. Yet they stand in flat contradiction of that Calvinistic contention when they get to Psalm 139:14 and have a grateful David exclaim that Jehovah had “fearfully and wonderfully” made him. Is a conception and birth in a totally depraved condition—one of the five cardinal concepts of cruel, cold and calloused Calvinism—the eloquent equal of being fearfully and WONDERFULLY made? The question is rhetorical in nature; it carries its own built-in answer. What is so *wonderful* about being born totally depraved—sinful at conception and a deeply depraved sinner at birth? What is so wonderful about being as bad as a person can be at birth?

The NIV translators utterly failed to get their act together in dealing with Psalm 51:5 and 139-14. I would hate to meet a Calvinist in debate if all he had and all I had were two copies of the NIV. He would really have the advantage over me when we got to the sinful nature renderings in Romans 7, Romans 8 and Galatians 2. One of the main proponents of the “now hermeneutics” is now on record as defending “sinful nature” an accuracy of rendering for the little Greek word *sarx*. Fifteen years ago this same man, in personal correspondence with me, was singing the praises of the NIV. As a professor then in one of our schools he said he recommended to his students the KJV, the ASV, the RSV and the NIV. Reckless men like that have aided some 25% or more of our people to make antiques of their KJV and ASV and get on the NIV bandwagon shouting in unison with other naive people—“Full steam ahead!”

The NIV really messed up Acts 2:27, 31. Were I a J. W., I would strongly prefer the NIV on these two verses than what can be found in *New World Translation Of The Holy Scriptures*—official Bible of the Watchtower or Jehovah’s Witness people. The NIV has grave in these verses—not Hades. This presents a massive problem with Luke 23:43 for Jesus and the penitent thief did not share the same sepulchre or burial spot. But their spirits were together in Hadean Paradise. In Luke 23:46, Jesus commended His spirit to the Father. Does this mean the spirit would be in the grave? The NIV in Acts 2:27, 31 so affirms. Such ineptness is inexcusable. And it is equally inexcusable for our brethren to be enamored with such a perverted product.

Ephesians 5:19 in the NIV is favorable to mechanical music in Christian worship. Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 10:9 stand in pathetic contradiction in the NIV. *Marital unfaithfulness* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is not nearly as accurate as is fornication for the Greek *termporneia*. A man is unfaithful to his wife when he fails to provide for her, abuses her children or beats her nearly to death and yet he may never seek out another woman for sexual intimacy. If he fails to give his wife her conjugal rights, he is unfaithful to her and yet may never be a womanizer to any extent.

They really mess up the plan of salvation with inclusion in Christ at the point of hearing (Eph. 1:13), justification at the point of faith (Rom. 10:10), salvation at the point of confession (Rom. 10:10) and yet one does not come INTO Christ until baptism as per the NIV rendering of Galatians 3:27. Such ineptitude!! Our brethren enamored with such a poisonous, perverted product should be deeply ashamed. Surely, they have taken leave of the good sense with which a Gracious God has blessed them.

THE READER'S DIGEST BIBLE

At least it is correctly named—*Reader's Digest*—not Jehovah's for God's Book it is definitely NOT!! It is a literary product of the 1980s bearing a copyright date of 1982. It is condensed from the RSV. Hence, it is doubly suspect—it is shorter; it is from a defective base. Subtraction was the noxious name of the literary game they played. They must have worn out several cases of Jehoiakim penknives (cf., Jer. 36). They removed about 50 per cent of the Old Testament and 25 per cent of the New Testament as per their own confessions of deletions. This but means a lethal omission of some 300,000 words that should belong in an English text of God's Word. They axed consecutive chapters such as the early part of 1 Chronicles. They axed many of the Psalms. That precious book was not sacred to them at all. They axed both genealogy accounts in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Nobody will have pronunciation troubles with these names if he reads from the RDB!! They are not there to present problems of pronunciation. They axed Revelation 22:18-19 which pronounced a weighty woe and calamitous curse upon the literary theft in which they majored from Genesis to Revelation. Yet its guiding light—Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary—had the amazing audacity to tell the religious world that this wholesale condensing had not tampered with Bible doctrine!! Such is a colossal lie of malicious magnitude. The WHOLE of the Bible is doctrinal. Doctrine is teaching and all God's word teaches. If anyone demurs at this strategic point, just what part of Holy Writ fails to teach?

I obtained a copy of this new Bible in November 1982. I bought it at a Target store on Wednesday afternoon. That night I was sched-

uled to teach a part of 2 Corinthians 11. I decided to see what they had done with that segment of Scripture. It was not there!! They had axed it! I told my Wednesday night Bible class that were we using the RDB, we would have no textual basis for a study—NONE AT ALL!!

Addition is perversion; subtraction is perversion. The RDB has done both. They added such an faith only in Romans 11:20. They subtracted in wholesale fashion. In fact, subtraction or deletion was the major they pursued with their ever sharpened Jehoiakim penknives.

Readers may wonder how they expected to cover their literary crime of subtraction. Would not whole gaps of missing Scripture leap up at each reader with the question, “Why is this omitted?” They anticipated that and employed a crafty stratagem. They numbered neither chapters nor verses! Novices of the Scriptures will therefore not realize that wholesale subtraction is occurring before their very unsuspecting eyes. They surely will not realize that 40 per cent of the Bible is not there for them to read.

Perversion reached a new devilish dimension with the issuance of this poisonous product.

BROTHER McCORD EVEN DEPRIVES US

There are many commendable things about this New Testament version or translation by one of our own number. Brother McCord, in the mid 1980s asked me to be a consultant to him on this. He act me his translation *on* each book an he would finish it. I spent countless hours in the slow, painstaking process of critiquing it very closely. I made many suggestions, some of which he accepted. On one rendering in the book of Acts he said I kept him from making a rather serious miscalculation dealing with a personality therein. But readers of the McCord version will not find the treasured term of *only begotten* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9. He and I battled this point for months with many letters of exchange and each of us presenting his case on how to render *monogenes*. He preferred unique or beloved instead of only begotten. Brother Noel Merideth and I discussed only begotten and other version matters with him and Ralph Gilmore on the Preacher’s Forum at FHU in Henderson,

Tennessee, in December of 1988. It was an all-day discussion. Brother Merideth and I stood on this where the cream of Bible scholarship has stood for nearly twenty centuries. Readers of the McCord Version, likewise, will not find the word church employed. He preferred such renderings as “called-out people” or “congregation (s).” In his first edition he inadvertently left churches in 1 Corinthians 16:1. I asked him about this. He said it, was an oversight and would be removed in the second edition. Church is a remarkably good rendering for *ekklesia* in the more than 100 places it occurs in the New Testament. I have heard brother McCord lecture many times since this version came out. He still uses church in his preaching but does not think it belongs in the New Testament. Old habits, especially GOOD ones, are hard to break as he is finding out!!

THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

It in the moot recent of a major Bible release having come out only two or three years ago. It bears a 1989 copyright date. It is modernistic like its 1952 predecessor. A new translational feature is its feminist approach. The Women’s Movement had pressured the RSV translators for years to put out a product that would remove male-oriented terms like man, men, brethren, etc. They accommodated these radicals to a great extent. I have reviewed it in the Enlarged Third Edition of my book, *Challenging Dangers of Modern Versions*. Some 15 pages are used in this critique of it. I am very displeased with it and spell out such in many of its renderings.

ENGLISH VERSION FOR THE DEAF

This is a fairly recent version. It is a product of World Bible Translation Center, Inc., of Forth Worth, Texas, with Baker Book House as publisher. I have recently spent many, many painstaking hours in a critical look at the Now Testament. It is lax and loose in many renderings. At times footnotes are closer to the Greek text than the English text. The terminology is vastly different. Deaf people are plenty capable of understanding such treasured terms as parable, covenant, repentance, etc. The Feminist influence is quite noticeable as they will place sisters in brackets along with brothers but not always. At times their English grammar is atrocious. Footnotes, at time, are misleading and even incorrect. Its omissions and

deletions are very noticeable. In some verses, great truths from the Greek text are missing or rewritten. Our precious deaf people are richly deserving of a better translation than this one is. It has some commendable parts but many that are not commendable. I am disappointed in it and in good conscience cannot recommend it,

CONCLUSION

How very vital it is that we stay with reliable and accurate Bibles like the stately KJV and the highly regarded ASV.

Intentionally Left Blank

ARE WE STILL A PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE BIBLE?

Garry Barnes



Garry Barnes was born in 1944 in Fulton, Mississippi to Sumpter and Lula Mae Barnes. Married to the former Linda Scott of Sherman Mississippi and they have two daughters, Debra and Sondra. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and International Bible College. He has been preaching since 1963 and began full time work in 1968. He has worked with congregations in four states, and held meetings in six states. He has done campaign mission work in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean Island and the Fiji Islands. His preaching work has included radio and television work and writing Bible class materials and newspaper articles. He is presently working with the congregation in Foley, Alabama.

The simple answer to my topic question is, by large, NO! The overall theme of this very lectureship gives evidence to this truth. Many of the crises facing the church today come from a lack of Bible knowledge by many in the church. I say many, and not all, because we do have some who have great knowledge of God's Word. The lack of knowledge is spread across the whole range of church members from those in the pew to the preachers in the pulpit.

The words of God recorded in Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" should be ample warning to the church today. I am strongly convinced the decline in the growth of the church brotherhood-wide is propagated by a lack of knowledge of God's Word by those who compose the body of Christ

Many problems stem from our no longer being a people who know the Bible, An illustration is a 1984 survey of 500 congregations of the church which reported that 27% of the members of those congregations believed there were saved people in other religious groups. How can one believe that and have even a very basic knowledge of God's Word?

The divorce rate among members of the church is another proof of our Bible ignorance! If not a proof of our Bible ignorance, it is a proof of our unbelief and disrespect for what is written in the Bible. How can members of the church and church leaders accept and condone unscriptural divorce and remarriage with a knowledge of the Bible (Mat. 5:27-32; 19:1-9; Rom. 7:1-4)?

The unity movement with its cry for fellowship with unscriptural churches, doctrines and practices is still another proof of our woeful unlearned state in regard to Holy Writ. How can members (elders, preachers) of the Lord's church purpose to have such fellowship with those who are not in the Lord's kingdom and claim to know what the Bible teaches about the Lord's church and salvation in Christ? In Acts 2:47, Luke writes that God adds the saved to the church. The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 1:3, states that God has blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Paul instructs us to reprove such rather than to welcome them into fellowship. This welcoming into fellowship is also in direct contrast to Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians 6:17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." How can some congregations accept people into membership (fellowship) with denominational baptisms and have a knowledge of what the Bible teaches on the subject of baptism and the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 6:3-7; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16)?

How can one say that doctrine is unimportant, or that we cannot know what to teach, believe, or practice in religion and have even a minimum of Bible knowledge. Jesus says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) and "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). John writes plainly in 2 John 9, "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."

Why do the majority of our young people not know the plan of salvation, if we are still a people who know and respect the Word of

God? In a group of senior high Bible classes over the past twelve years I have had only three high school age members of the church who could give the Bible plan of salvation with book, chapter and verse!

What has caused the problem? I would say there are four major causes: (1) the breakdown of the home, (2) weak pulpit preaching, a result of weak or unscriptural training in many of our schools, (3) a weakness in our Bible School program, from materials used to teachers used, and, (4) not teaching new converts beyond first principles.

The home has to become once again the focal point of the teaching and training of God's Word. Because of the breakdown of the home, the home has ceased to be a teaching and training field of the Bible for members of the church. Some might say: because of a lack of Bible teaching there has been a breakdown of the home. Either way, we have to realize once again and put into practice the fundamental truth that the home **MUST** be the focal point, the foundation of teaching God's Word.

God gave this instruction to His people, the nation of Israel in ages past (Deu. 6:1-12). In these verses, they were instructed to love God with all their hearts, to keep all the words they were commanded, to have them in their hearts, teach them diligently unto their children, and to have them before them. What a contrast that is to the practice of many homes of members of the church today. The book of Proverbs was written in light of a father's instruction to his son. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon gives him instruction in many avenues of life. He gives instruction in fearing the Lord, getting wisdom and knowledge, moral behavior, honesty and fairness in dealing with others. You could say he taught him how to make a living and how to live his life! Paul instructs fathers in Ephesians 6:4 to bring up the children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Today, too many outside worldly interests have taken priority over the church and spiritual concerns in the home. Many parents place more importance on social education, sports, pleasure, and

worldly possessions than they do on spiritual matters and the training of their children for eternal life.

In homes of many church members, the Bible is never picked up from one Sunday until the next Sunday. Bible class lessons are never studied, and unheard are family devotions with reading, singing and prayer, where all family members participate.

Yes, sadly the failure of God's Word to be given its proper and rightful place in the home is one cause why we are no longer a people who know God's Word.

A second cause is the weak pulpit in many congregations today. The pulpit today in many places has become a discourse on social graces, quotes from human philosophers, and warmed-over denominational outlines, and one line jokes rather than a discussion of God's Word. To give book, chapter and verse to prove the message of the lesson has become taboo. The cry and hue from the pew is for shorter and more entertaining sermons.

Our spiritual appetites have become so small and our spiritual interest span so brief that any sermon over twenty minutes is a violation of the command to be decent and in order. Brother Gus Nichols and his Bible rich lessons of an hour and a half to two hours would be a bore to many today. Lessons of doctrine and rebuke of sins are not wanted in many places today, and in some places are all but forbidden. How different this is to the preaching of the 1940s-1960s, and that of Christ, and the apostles in the early church, and of Paul's instruction to the young preachers, Timothy and Titus, in the books that bear their names.

One of the main encouragements of Paul to these young preachers was to *preach the Word*. He exhorted them to take heed to the charge given them of God and to speak SOUND DOCTRINE! To enable them to keep this charge he exhorted them to "meditate upon these things," "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-3).

The problem of weak pulpits arises from a twofold background. First, it comes from the teaching and training that many of our preacher students get in many of our colleges and training schools. Many of our schools turn out educators and not preachers of the

Word. Surely, the “New Hermeneutics Movement” among some in the Lord’s church today is adding much fuel to the fires of unprepared and unsound preachers; preachers who are weak in actual Bible knowledge. This is a philosophy that says we cannot know what is truth and that after all, the Bible is nothing more than a “Love Letter.” This kind of attitude toward the Scriptures is going to do much to hurt our knowledge of what the Bible teaches.

The second background of weak preaching today is weak leadership in many congregations. When a minister does not have a leadership that will stand behind and encourage him in preaching the whole of God’s Word it makes his work very difficult and uncomfortable. And a leadership that actually prohibits the teaching of certain Bible truths is even a greater hindrance.

The elders should rather be an encouragement to preach sound, Bible filled lessons, both from the pulpit and in the Bible class. The elders are charged with feeding the flock, and watching for the souls of those under their oversight and to be able “by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers” (Acts 20:28-32; Heb. 13:17; Tit. 1:9).

The third cause of the decline in Bible knowledge in many of our Bible class programs. I realize this in a “sacred cow” to some, but it is still the truth. Many of our Bible classes teach very little Bible. It is no problem to find materials for all age groups that will have only one or two Scriptures for an entire lesson. More emphasis (and time) in many of our younger classes is put on coloring a picture that has no relation to the Bible lesson, than on Bible truths. We bribe children with candies, treats, and trips to Pizza Hut instead of instilling a love and devotion to God’s Word.

It is “childish” or “silly” any more to learn Bible memory verses, especially above the first or second grades. It is more vogue in the older teen classes to “count down” to your question, or to borrow someone else’s book that has the answers; than to prepare for a Bible class by studying. Many from junior to grandpa don’t even bother to bring a Bible to class with them. New books given out are “lost” before the next class.

In some materials written by our own brethren more importance is put on being kind to our pets than obedience to God's commands.

A closer check of materials used needs to be made by the leadership of the church. Better material selection needs to be made. If good Bible material on the subject to be taught cannot be found, we might well consider developing our own materials.

Often in conjunction with materials that teach very little Bible are teachers who are not qualified to teach. Some are unqualified because of a lack of teaching skills, some because of a lack of Bible knowledge. Some are even unqualified from a lack of both skill and Bible knowledge. In desperation, just to find a teacher, sometimes anyone who will agree to "teach" is given a class without any consideration of ability. We usually do very little to train our members to be prepared to teach our Bible classes. When those who are unqualified are used as teachers, the students suffer, even though the intent is good.

The fourth cause is our failure in most cases of conversion to teach the new converts beyond the point of the first principles. Often, we do not teach beyond the point of baptism. We can link this problem to weak pulpits and weak Bible class programs. This many times happens because we have, to a certain extent, become more number conscious than we have soul conscious; more number conscious than we have conversion conscious! This is not to imply numbers are not important, for they are, each number represents a soul. But, in the final count, it is the number of those baptized that remain faithful and fruitful that is important.

Many members who come into the church come from either non-religious backgrounds or denominational churches where even less Bible is taught than in the Lord's church. Therefore, these converts have little to no Bible knowledge. In the late 1960s, the 1970s and early 1980s many were brought into the church by the use of gimmicks or other means, rather than being taught from the Scriptures and being converts to Bible truths. Theme help add to the Bible ignorance among members of the church.

Many of these new members, because they were not sufficiently taught in the beginning; and then were not taught further after their

baptism brought many of their previous beliefs and practices with them. One of those beliefs is doctrine is not important as long as a person is honest and sincere. This attitude toward doctrine (i.e., Bible knowledge) can foster a general disregard for an in-depth Bible study. Jesus taught the need of continued teaching. In His instructions to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20, He told them to teach those who were baptized. “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The failure to follow this command has been a factor in our growing ignorance of God’s will.

What can be done to stop this decline in Bible knowledge by members of the Lord’s church? A simple answer would be to say reverse the process of the four major reasons for this decline just given. But, it is not that simple. It has come to pass over an extended period of time, and sadly it will take some time to return to our former state of Bible knowledge.

The first thing that must be done today is by some avenue to rekindle a great love, respect and appreciation for the Bible as God’s inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)! We must once again be brought to realize God’s Word in man’s only hope for knowing God and His plan and purpose for man upon the earth. We must once again learn to love the Scriptures as the Psalmist of old (Psa. 1, 23, 119). We must again learn to be a people pleasing and acceptable to God, we must have a knowledge of God’s Word (Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:16-18; Rev. 20:12-15). We must “study to show ourselves approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15), and “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

We must realize for the Lord’s church to once again grow and be strong, we, its people, must again come to be known as “A Bible toting, Bible quoting people.” It was a proud time in the history of the church in this century when it was said, “If you want to know something about the Scriptures, ask a member of the Church of Christ.”

For this to happen there will have to be a major change in the reasons given before for the decline of Bible knowledge. For children in the home to love and study God’s Word, parents must

show, teach, and practice this love of God's Word. We need parents and grandparents like the mother and grandmother of Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). We must have parents who will have a greater concern for their child's spiritual instruction than they have for his physical education.

We must train young men who plan to preach to love God's Word; to study and prepare for themselves, not to depend on the work of others; young men who realize both the privilege and responsibility of preaching the Word; young men who understand the charge given to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-3 is still the charge of every evangelist today! Train young men who will love the truth and God as Paul in Galatians 1; and understanding they must preach the truth and the whole truth to be pleasing to God; and to understand they cannot please man and be a servant of God (Gal. 1:10; Acts 20:20, 27).

With preachers thus trained and desiring to preach, we need elderships and memberships to stand behind the preaching of the truth. Men who are not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16) and who realize the seriousness of the warning to give earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we let them slip (Heb. 2:1).

We must once again understand the strength of the old adage. "As goes the Sunday School, so goes the Church," and revitalize the Bible classes with Scriptures and sincere study of God's Word.

We need planned efforts both in public Bible classes and in individual efforts to teach and strengthen now converts in the knowledge of God's Word. We need to help them to put into practice the commands of 2 Peter 1:1-11, to add the Christian graces, to make their calling and election sure, to go from babes in Christ to full-grown Christians (Heb. 5:12-14). We need to help them go on beyond the "first principles" of Christianity to the meat of God's Word.

Where will the church be in another twenty years if we do not stop this decline in Bible knowledge? I am not a pessimist at heart, but if this decline is not stopped, and very soon, if there is not a sustained renewed zeal for knowledge of the Scriptures, in another twenty years our number will have declined, faithful congregations

will be small and difficult to find and confusion and division will be even more rampant than it is today. Teaching of sound doctrine will be hard to find.

Those who are willing to teach and practice the whole of God's will, will very likely face ridicule and harassment from some in the church and those of the world. We will truly have to learn the meaning of the apostles' words and their prayer in Acts 4 and 5. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29). "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

I do not know a better description to give of what in and will continue to happen to the church than the words of God in Hosea,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt be no- priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. An they were increased, so they sinned against me therefore win I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings (Hosea 4:6-9).

The church will grow weaker if we continue to decline in Bible knowledge among its members. We, like Israel, will continue to sin against God, because we have forgotten His law, and we will continue to be punished for our ignorance.

As I said in the beginning of this lecture, our lack of Bible knowledge is the basis of the majority of the crises facing God's people today. A further decline will only create more numerous and more severe crises within the ranks of the Lord's Kingdom. Our Lord said the Jews erred "not knowing the scriptures" (Mat. 22:29). Paul spoke of those, "who concerning the truth have erred" (2 Tim. 2:18), and Peter spoke of some who "willingly are ignorant of," and others who "wrest" the Scriptures to their "own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:4-5, 16-18).

Yes, brethren, I shudder to think of what could be if we do not stop this decline in the knowledge of the Scriptures. I am reminded of the statement of brother Guy N. Woods in a gospel meeting in Fulton, Mississippi in the late 1970s. His statement was to the affect

that he feared even then the day would come when there would not be enough faithful preachers with sufficient knowledge of the Word left to defend God's truth!

We must heed the warning given by Paul to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. We must look back and see the disastrous results of God's people departing from God's Word and use them as examples to encourage us to be faithful to God. When we look at the similar exhortation of Paul in Romans 15:4, we see that it is through the *patience and comfort of the Scriptures* we have hope (emphasis mine—GB). We can add the New Testament and history of the church to the Old Testament Scriptures they had. All give warning to the great danger of not knowing God's Word.

There is truly a great need that as a people we once become a "Bible toting, Bible quoting people." We must "grow in grace and in the knowledge" of God's Word (2 Pet. 3:18), and search "the scriptures daily, whether those things are so" (Acts 17:11). We must again come to delight "in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:2).

We must change our study habits and practices to those of past generations who loved and adored the Bible, and made it the center of their lives in the home, at work, and in the worship service; where hours each week were spent in family reading and study of the Bible; and, where respect for God and His Word were a natural part of everyday life.

Surely, this is a crisis in the church that *each and every member can* and should have a part in removing. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is my closing exhortation to each of no. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

HAVE WE SOLD OUR HOUSE TO SATAN?

H. A. (Buster) Dobbs



H. A. (Buster) Dobbs was born and reared in Houston, Texas. He attended the university of Houston and South Texas College of Law. Buster is married to Martha DeWoody Dobbs and they have three children and eight grandchildren. His years of preaching have centered in Houston and he now works with the Fleetwood church. He is co-owner and Editor of Firm Foundation. He gives much of his time to speaking on lectureships and gospel meetings as well as to writing and working with congregations that have special needs.

“And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind” (Jer. 7:31).

The practice the prophet abhors is too hideous to talk about. It began as a rite of purification in which little children were put in flames of fire, but not killed. It progressed to mothers throwing their children from the top of the temple wall during the feast of Ashtoreth, and the dead bodies afterwards burned on the altar. It finally resulted in offering living children to be burned to death upon an idol altar.

The idol Molech, meaning King, was worshipped by sacrificing babies on his altar. The exercise was popular among the Jews in the days of Ahaz and Jeremiah. Jarchi, quoted by Wordsword, describes the idol as:

made of brass, having the face of an ox, with arms stretched out, in which the child was placed and burnt with fire, while the priests were beating drums to drown the noise of its shrieks, lest the fathers might be moved with pity.

A religion so revolting in its cruelty could not exist with the pure worship of Jehovah. Therefore Jehovah and His law were forsaken.

It is difficult—almost impossible—to imagine how the Jews could fall so low and their worship decay so completely. Jeremiah is astonished by the development and says, “For the children of Judah have done that which is evil in my night, saith Jehovah. they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it” (Jer. 7:30).

Mothers stilled the cries of their babies about to be killed in the white-hot arms of Molech by fondling and kissing them—for they considered their weeping untimely and inappropriate. Plutarch says, “Mothers stood by, restraining all signs of grief, which would have lost them the honor of their sacrifices.”

Jeremiah weeps over the stench of the burning flesh of the baby boys and girls of Judah. It shattered the heart-broken man of God to know this was happening in the confines of the temple of Jehovah.

Looking back on it even from this distance, we are sickened by the antique practice. We wonder how the chosen people of God could allow themselves to sink to such depths. The heart of a mother who could bring herself to treat the child of her womb with such treachery is a very ugly thing to see. We turn our faces away lest the scene provoke too much rage in us and render us unfit for service and incapable of sleep.

Still, are moderns any better than the Jews who burned their babies? Mull over twentieth century behavior and decide if throwing children into the fire is not more merciful than today’s treatment of the young. Satan is cunning. He knows that lucid people are not going to skin their offspring and lay the bleeding corpse upon his altar. He uses devices to entrap the unsuspecting and cause in a bloodless way the same result.

Fathers are to “provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). The Holy Spirit requires godly parents to educate and train their children by disciplinary correction. The parents who fail to do this sin against both the child and God.

Mothers and fathers have a solemn obligation to teach their brood the wonderful things of the law of the Lord. The children should be expected to live by the divine rule. If they do not, they should be

corrected with proper punishment. “Withhold not correction from the child; For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die” (Pro. 23:13).

The Bible does not command brutality. It is never right physically to abuse the young—or the old for that matter. The Lord is telling us that we must teach our children to respect authority while in the house of their parents, or society and the state will teach them the lesson in a very harsh way. The child who learns to respect the rule of its parents will be able in adult life to control himself.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). “He that soweth iniquity shall reap calamity” (Pro. 22:8). We deceive ourselves and live as if reaping time will never come, but we cannot avoid the grim rule that we must harvest what we plant. The time to garner our ripened crops may be delayed, but it cannot be avoided. If we sow wild oats, we gather wild oats—thirty, sixty, a hundredfold. If retribution for moral decadence does not overtake in this world, there is a coming, inescapable day of judgment. “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment.”

We mistreat our children with the most bitter child abuse when we fail to warn them of the inevitable consequences of evil. We may find it unpleasant to talk about punishment for sin. Still, it is better to learn that lesson in the warmth of the family fireside than to learn it in an unquenchable fire where the worm never dies.

And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee. it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from them it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hall of fire (Mat. 18:8-9).

A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: mothers teach their daughters to dress and behave like harlots, and fathers teach their sons to lie and steal and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? (A parody of Jeremiah 5:30-31).

Girls of all ages parade the streets and public places in skimpy costumes. Their availability is broadcast by their dress, walk, and at-

titude. They have learned this from their mothers, who want them to be popular and catch a husband.

The moral code is non-existent—anything goes. They are taught safe sex and prophylactics are passed out on street corners like chewing gum samples. Twenty percent of our children have lost their virginity by the age of 13, and most have lost it by college age. There are exceptions, to be sure, and thank God for that, but it gets harder every year for pollsters to find enough virgins to count.

We fail to teach our boys and girls to reserve themselves for marriage and the result is that many of them are bed-hopping at an early age, and the rest consider themselves very moral because they have only one sex-partner at a time. Popular talk shows on television reveal frantic parents defending and excusing their children for sexual promiscuity—whether hetero, bi, or homo.

The cry is, “You don’t have a right to judge.” Each person, we are soberly told, has the right to the life-style of his choice. If he wants to be a geek and bite off chicken heads in a sideshow, that’s his business, and don’t criticize him. If the boys want to have sex with other boys, and the girls with other girls, and the boys and girls with each other without benefit of clergy and in groups and gangs, tam your head and shut your mouth.

Mothers and fathers encourage such wild and silly conduct by either. (1) defending it; (2) ignoring and not condemning it; and, (3) sometimes, participating in it.

We deplore the illegal use of drugs, but seal our lips and take no action. “Say not, ‘The days are evil. Who’s to blame?’ And fold the hands and acquiesce—oh shame! Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God’s name.” Parents need to educate their children, and not have them taught these sensitive things by a stranger in the school—a stranger who may or may not know the difference between right and wrong.

One great misery of our time is that fathers and mothers want to shift the responsibility for teaching and directing the affairs of their posterity to the church, the youth director, the school, the community social center, or to other children on the street. We don’t want to be bothered. The work is too hard, too discouraging, too dirty.

Parents must become involved while the children are still very young, impressionable, and teachable. It is often too late to instruct them in the right way after they are hooked. We rush here and there to make a living and under our noses our flesh and blood are whisked into the devil's camp, and we don't even know it until the police call late one night. We then wring our hands and blame the church, the preacher, the elders, the deacons, the Bible school teachers, and the janitor.

You should get your head up and know what is happening in the lives of your children. Be nosy and give your beloved child the firm guidance his age demands. Get in control now before your baby is totally out of control. If you don't want to wake up to a pillow wet with your tears and an aching heart, you must take up the reins and run the show.

Herbert Hoover said, "Children are our most precious natural resource." The Bible says, "Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah, And the fruit of the womb in his reward" (Psa. 127:3). We must not waste this treasure. The young are the hope of today, and they are the future of the nation and the church. We shall not be guiltless if we slop thin prize and waste it.

Moral decadence is bad enough, but our children's greatest misfortune is the loss of their spiritual birthright. Our public school systems, newspapers, magazines, radios, televisions, and billboards are selling our young people on the idea that man evolved from a lower life order, and the lower life order evolved from dead chemical and energy, and the chemical and energy evolved from...well, from nothing! Our kids are being sold this fable, a myth with no basis and no proof.

What about you and me, brother, what are we doing about it? Many of us are willfully ignorant and do not want to be disturbed by the report. Some know what is happening, but sit silent in shameful fear. Still others applaud and encourage this senseless fiction, and seem to think that the young are better off to consider themselves brothers to the ape and cousins to the ass, than to be convinced—to know assuredly, and therefore to believe confidently—that they are in the likeness of an Almighty Creator.

If we are just one jump ahead of the brute beasts, then we have no more need to be concerned about our moral conduct than does the ox or the bull. If we are in the image of a Supernatural Supreme Being, we have dignity, worth, and an absolute, understandable ethical standard. If, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, “All men...are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” then all men are accountable, and better get ready for a day of judgment.

Our dear boys and girls grow up thinking that the theory of organic evolution is an established fact of science, and to be intelligent one must accept it. The sad reality is we don't contradict the lies of the classroom, and point to the truth. The result is that secretly many have turned away from faith in God and His revealed Word. No wonder that so many of them are eager to become volunteers in the sexual revolution.

Children are robbed and left hopeless. They see themselves in a squirrel cage with no exit. One of them wrote:

I haven't a God, I haven't a job, and I haven't a single pink-ruffled ideal. Which in the mental state comparable to the nightmare dream of finding oneself in Times Square without any clothes on...Somebody—it may have been the middle aged scientist, or the bald-headed free thinker—has played Creator to a new heaven, hell and earth, and set us children in an intellectual Garden of Eden. Pronto, we hot-foot it to the apple tree...We are stripped of antiquated ideas and working religious tenets...We're scared...we long for a comfortable God and a hand-painted kerosene lamp for light in our wilderness...The smug assumption of our leaders that youth will be youth and will turn out all right in the end is infuriating. We haven't any faith in anything, so how can we have faith in their Pollyanna conclusions on our ultimate salvation? We are scoffers, drunkards and wastrels, but it is no sin to do the things we do. The sin is we have nothing better to do. We have little to live for, because we have found nothing we would die for. We are flame and we consume ourselves; we are water, and we bubble high to subside in a stagnant pool with no outlet to the sea (Quoted in the book, *Salvation for a Modern Generation*, by Alvin Hobby.)

While this tragedy plays out, we sit dumb and uncomprehending. We must learn to stand up for the right and boldly proclaim a risen Lord, who died for us, and for whom we ought to be willing to die daily.

It is easy to prove God and His power. “The heavens declare the glory of God, And the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

God has left His footprints in the universe. The Bible is His revealed wisdom. The proof of that proposition is in the text of The Book. We read it; ponder it; weigh it. It is its own best evidence. No fair minded person can read it, and fail to see the glory and greatness of God.

How shall the young secure their hearts, and guard their lives from sin? God’s word the choicest rules imparts to keep the conscience clean...Tie like the sun, a heavenly light, that guides us all the day; And through the dangers of the night, a lamp to lead our way. God’s word is everlasting truth; How pure is every page! That holy book shall guide our youth, and well support our age.

We abuse our young and sell our house to Satan when we fail to point out the difference between the church we read about in the New Testament and denominationalism. It is critical for all the faithful to know the dissimilarity between the church purchased by the blood of Jesus and Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, and all other religions of man. It is equally important to know the distinction between the church of Christ and Catholicism, Protestant Reformation, Anglican Reformation, Judaism and other sectarian bodies. We must understand the superiority of the church Jesus built over all other religious organizations.

We must emblazon on the hearts and minds of every saint the teaching of the Bible that: “There in one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6). We must make no bones about it—the church of Christ is solitary and singular! Faithful followers of the lamb of God must make the distinction sharp and clear. The command of heaven is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with a thy mind!” (Mat. 22:37).

We must love the Lord, And therefore love the truth, more than we love life.

Have we sold our house to Satan? Most have sold out to the devil. Yet, a few have not sold out to that scalawag. In all religious history, the minority stand fast by the Word of God, while the majority go, “in the way of Cain, and run riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perish in the gainsaying of Korah.”

Woe unto them!

Isaiah said of Israel, “It in the remnant that shall be saved” (Rom. 9:27). Paul says of the church in the world “even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). The grace of God is more than sufficient, but it is conditional, and only a few receive it. “For many are called, but few chosen” (Mat. 22:14). “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.”

A STUDY OF MATTHEW 19:9

Roy Deaver



Graduate of Freed-Hardeman College. Abilene Christian University, National Christian University. Founding President of Fort Worth Christian College and Academy. Has preached the gospel for 50 years (1990), with 35 of those years having been spent in the classroom, training men to preach the gospel.

Debater and Author. Founder, Editor, and Publisher of *Biblical Notes* and related publications. Former Vice-President and professor in Tennessee Bible College, Cookeville, Tennessee.

Assistant Editor of *Firm Foundation*. Devotes much of his time to writing and publishing in connection with the gospel.

Part One: THE BACKGROUND FOR THE PASSAGE

I appreciate so very much the invitation to be with you and to have part in this great lectureship. It in my assignment to discuss and to emphasize just what the Lord Himself taught and teaches in Matthew 19:9.

I see my assignment as consisting of three basic parts: **PART ONE:** careful consideration of the *background* out of which Matthew 19:9 was spoken; **PART TWO:** careful consideration of the passage itself, and—**PART THREE:** careful consideration of whether or not the Lord's teaching as set out in Matthew 19:9 is applicable to all responsible persons everywhere?

It is not my intention in this series of studies to consider in particular the problems and the persons and the positions that have caused so much trouble during the past fifteen to twenty years. I will be dealing with these problems/persons/positions at this time only by setting forth precisely what the Lord teaches in Matthew 19:9.

We note the text itself. The Lord said (ASV reading)—“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”

Now, let's look at verses 1 and 2, of chapter 19. "And it came to pass when Josue had finished these words, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan: and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them." We observe these five things: (1) Jesus finished these sayings; (2) He departed from Galilee, (3) He came into the borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan; (4) Great multitudes followed Him; and (5) He healed them there.

In the Borders of Judaea

The Lord's personal ministry may be outlined as follows: (1) His Birth and Infancy; (2) The Period of Preparation; (3) The Early Galilean Ministry; (4) The Early Judaeian Ministry; (5) The Great Galilean Ministry; (6) The Later Judaeian Ministry; (7) The Perean Ministry; and (8) The Last Days (of His Personal Ministry).

"And it came to pass" in the formula that a section is here commenced. "These words" refer to the things recorded in chapter 18, but these words were taught in Galilee. Matthew says that Jesus "departed from Galilee" and that He "came into the borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan." Matthew, writing especially for the Jews, was concerned about the Lord's making His way in Jerusalem, in Judaea. Thus, Matthew virtually passes over "The Later Judaeian Ministry," and omits many things that took place between "The Great Galilean Ministry" and "The Last Days." He departed from Galilee, to return no more, until after the resurrection (Mat. 28:16-17; John 21:1).

The land "beyond the Jordan" was called *Perea*, and it was not a part of Judaea. It was ruled over by Herod Antipas, and extended from the river Hieromax on the north to the Arnon on the south—to the middle of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Evidently, the phrase "beyond the Jordan" modifies the verb "came," and is designed simply to stress that the Lord went to Judaea by following the route through Perea—that is, "the beyond the Jordan" route. This is the route which would normally be followed by the Jews on their way to Jerusalem.

Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee had been closed to the Lord. One province remained before Him. He thus began His work of teaching (Mark 10:1) and healing in Perea,

on the east side of the Jordan. This is called “The Perea Ministry,” not because the Lord was in this region *only* during these four months, but because He was there *mainly*. He evidently made several trips into Judaea. Great multitudes followed Him. And He healed them *there*—that is, in Perea. He went through the cities and villages teaching and performing a few miracles.

The Pharisees’ Question

We note verse 3—“And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

Three things: (1) Pharisees came to the Lord, (2) *how* they came; and (3) their specific *question*.

There were Pharisees on the east side of the Jordan (here in Perea) who were just as antagonistic to the Lord as were those on the other side of the Jordan. Their attitude was one of hostility. They were determined to try to destroy the Lord’s influence.

The *how* they came includes the matter of *why* they came. They were not honest. They were not sincere. They were not seeking information. Rather, they were determined to entrap Him. They came to test Him and to *try* Him.

We note carefully that they “came.” “Came” in the Greek sentence is our lead verb. Then, we have the Greek word *petradzontes*—testing, trying. Also, we have *legontes*—saying, speaking. Each of these words is a present active predicative *modal* participle. Each is nominative, plural, masculine. *Present participle* indicates action going on at the same time of the action indicated in the lead verb. *Modal* indicates the *how*, the *manner* in which they came. They came “trying” Him; they came “speaking.” They were trying to entrap the Lord. They wanted to create a conflict for Him. They wanted to hurt the Lord, and to destroy His influence.

It was their aim and determination to entangle the Lord in serious difficulties, inconsistencies, and/or contradiction. The clear evidence is that these Pharisees had in mind at least six problem areas for the Lord. They were thinking about the Lord and His relationship to the following: 1) the School of Shammai; 2) the School of Hillel; 3) Moses and the Law of Moses; 4) The Lord Himself, with regard

to what He had taught about marriage and divorce; 5) Herod Antipas—the Lord was now in the territory of Herod Antipas; and 6) the people in general.

Deep in the minds of the Jews was the concern about the significance of Deuteronomy 24:1. God, through Moses, had said.

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness [unseemly thing, ASV] in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

Shammai placed upon this passage a stricter interpretation than did Hillel. Shammai's interpretation was, in fact, not strict, but was at least stricter than Hillel's interpretation. Shammai taught that "The man is not to release his wife unless he have found something indecent in her." Exactly what he meant by "some indecent thing" is not at all clear. Hillel allowed that a man could divorce his wife for virtually *any cause*. The historical evidence is that the Jews in general followed the teachings of Hillel. But, the Pharisees would like to create a conflict between the Lord and Shammai. Whichever position the Lord took would get Him in serious trouble. At least, so they thought

Further, Moses and the Law did allow for divorce. Under at least *some circumstances* a man could—according to Moses and the Law—put away his wife. Suppose the Lord should now answer the Pharisees by saying that there could be no divorce *for any cause*. This would place Him in contradiction with Moses.

The Lord Himself had taught on the subject of marriage and divorce. If He should now teach that there could be no divorce for any cause, then He would be in contradiction with Himself.

Then, too, there was Herod Antipas. The Lord was now in the territory of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was a man who believed in and who practiced divorce and remarriage. This is the man who had married his brother Philip's wife. This is the man whom John the Baptizer had severely rebuked. This is the man who had murdered John the Baptizer. If these Pharisees could just bring the wrath of Herod Antipas down upon the Lord!

Further, we keep in mind *the people*. To thaw scheming, hypocritical Pharisees, whatever the Lord said would (at least as they

surmised and hoped) result in a lose of His influence among the people.

The Lord's Response

We note verses 4-6.

And he answered and said. Have Ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Thus, the Lord responded: 1) by appealing to the hearers' own knowledge; 2) by referring to the original creation of marriage and the home; and 3) by setting forth and emphasizing two great evident facts

First He made an appeal to their own knowledge of their Scriptures, *their* Scriptures. He add: "Have ye not read?" That is, are you not familiar with your own Scriptures? Is it possible that you do not know what your own Scriptures say? Is it possible that you know what the Record says explicitly, but that you do not understand what it says by what it implies?

Then, the Lord went straight to the Bible record of God's creation of marriage and the home. In a move which His antagonists had not anticipated He would completely avoid becoming involved in any of the traps which they had set for Him. He went back to the original home, the original law of God. It was God who created marriage and the home. It was God who gave the sacred laws by which He intended marriage and the home to be governed.

The Lord referred to the fact that God *created* Adam and Eve. Where some Greek texts have "made" (in verse 4) others have "created"—that is, *ho ktisas*, aorist participle, "*the having created (one)*." It was God who created marriage and the home. Here, the Lord emphasizes that marriage is a creation of God. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, says the same thing in 1 Timothy 4:3. *Ktisma* is "creation, that which is created." God created marriage. Marriage is of divine origin, and is subject to divine rules.

God created them "male and female." One Adam, One Eve; one male, one female. The Lord says: "For this cause"—that is, because

God created them male and female. When Paul, in Ephesians 5:31, discusses marriage and the home, and cites the same Scripture reference that the Lord cited (that is, Genesis 2:24), and uses the same phrase, “for this cause,” Paul makes the phrase refer to the *love* which God desires between husband and wife. But, the Lord (in Matthew 19:5) makes the phrase refer to the fact that God “created them male and female.” Clearly, therefore, the love which God demands, and which He authorizes for marriage and the home, is love which grows out of the fact that God “created them male and female.”

The Lord explained: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife.” For this cause...“that is, because God made them male and female, and because of the consequent love. Two crucial words: “leave” and “cleave.” “Cleave’ is the translation of the Greek *kollao*, which means “to glue, to glue together, cement fasten, unite.” Barnabas “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would **cleave** unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). Paul says: “Abhor that which is evil; **cleave** to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). Those properly joined together in marriage are to *leave* all others and are to *cleave* to each other.

Then, the Lord declares: “and the two shall be [not become, RD] one flesh.” Two individuals they are, two personalities; but they are *one* in love, in aim, in purpose. This in the great basic fact which the Lord shows grows out of the Bible record of God’s institution of marriage and the home.

There is a second great basic fact: the Lord said. “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” Marriage is God’s creation. The Laws to govern it are God’s laws. When the two persons eligible (according to God’s law) for marriage join themselves together in sacred matrimony, according to the laws of God and the laws of the land, they are also *joined together* by God. Hence, the declaration: “*Let not man put asunder.*”

“Joined” here is the translation of *sunedzeuxen*, which means: to yoke with, to yoke together, to unite, to join together. The plain fact is that when God Himself has done this joining together, no human being can change or *un-join*! The injunction *must* have the force of

saying. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man—any man, any person—even *think* that he can disrupt, change, or cancel out this joining” Since this is God’s joining, *only God Himself* can “put asunder” that which He has joined. Any grounds upon which there can be a *putting asunder* (as per Matthew 19:6) has to come from God. Any law by which there can be a scriptural *putting asunder* has to be God’s law.

The Lord proceeded to discuss this matter, but nothing does and nothing can cancel out or vitiate against the fact that it is God’s will, God’s law, that in the marriage as God planned it, ordained it, and wants it to be, there is to be *one husband, and one wife*, joined together in sacred matrimony according to the laws of God and the laws of the land, *for life!* This is the great, basic, beautiful law from God with regard to marriage and the home. This is marriage as God wants it to be, and this is that to which the Lord Sow as He responds to His antagonists.

Let it be further emphasized that it has always been (and now is) God’s will—God’s ideal will—**THAT THERE BE NO RUPTURE IN THE MARRIAGE!**

The Pharisees’ Second Question

We note the reading in verse 7: “They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?”

The Pharisees had asked the Lord. “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” The Lord responded: 1) No, it is not lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, and 2) it is God’s plan that there be no rupture in the marriage. God has *another* law which relates to the subject at hand, but the Lord would wait to discuss it. *Now*, He listens to the Pharisees’ second question.

The Pharisees asked the Lord, in view of His answer that there is to be no rupture in a marriage, “Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?” Their very question shows how pertinent the Lord’s question to them really was when he asked: “Have ye not read?” They had read, but they had not read correctly. From their reading they had concluded that Moses had commanded “to put her away.” But, Moses had not commanded

“to put her away.” He had not commanded divorce. They had been guilty of careless reading, and of drawing erroneous conclusions, and of false teachings which had produced mighty serious consequences.

Time and circumstances do not now allow us to discuss the tragedy of men and among men when they misread a passage or passages, draw unjustified conclusions, and develop and propound false doctrines based upon their careless reading.

The Lord’s Response to the Second Question

We note the reading, verses 8 and 9:

He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

Thus, the Lord 1) states plainly what Moses *did* and *why*; 2) refers to God’s will in the matter, and 3) sets forth His own law (God’s law) on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

The Lord explained that Moses *did not command* divorce (putting away); that he *suffered* (permitted, allowed) “you to put away your wives.” What Moses commanded was: a bill of divorcement, “let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house” (Deu. 24:1). Moses, for the protection of wives, had commanded that the wife put away be given the “bill of divorcement.” Moses commanded *the bill*, not the *divorce*.

The Lord explained what God’s will was in the matter. He says: “but from the beginning it hath not been so.” The words “from beginning” appear in verse 4: “He who created them from beginning.” Now, we have the words again in verse 8: “from beginning it hath not been no.” The “putting away” as contemplated by the Jews and as practiced by the Jews (and as practiced by many today) *was not* in God’s plan for marriage and the home. It was not in the Genesis 2:24 law. It was (and it is) God’s ideal will that *there be no rupture in the marriage*

I want to record here a literal translation of the Lord’s statement in our verse 8. “He says to them that Moses in view of the hard

hearts of you suffered/allowed/permitted you to put away the wives of you: but from beginning it stands in the position of not having become thus.”

The Lord thus stresses: 1) that from the beginning the attitudes and practices characteristic of the Jews have not been in accord with God’s law, God’s ideal will; 2) that such was not according to His will and His law *at the time* the Lord was talking; and 3) that such would *never* be in harmony with God’s law.

It has always been God’s law, and *is now* God’s law, and will continue to be God’s law as long an time shall be—that *there be no rupture in the marriage*

The Lord then proceeded to set forth His law (God’s law) on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He says: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”

Part Two:
THE PASSAGE ITSELF
THE STUDY OF VERSE 9

At this point, let me emphasize two things: First, the Lord was not (as some claim) simply *explaining* the Mosaic Law—for the Law of Moses demanded the death penalty for the adulterer and the adulteress (Lev. 20:10; Deu. 22:22). Second, the Lord was setting forth the teaching which would find application *in His Kingdom*: His law, reaching back to God’s original law concerning marriage. This principle is obviously included in such passages as Luke 16:16, “The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the compel of the kingdom of God is preached.”

This fact is also shown in the obvious *contrast* which the Lord sets forth—the contrast between what the law of Moses said and what the Lord teaches. The Lord said (according to our readings) “And I say unto you.” The “and” is the translation of the Greek *de*, the regular, ordinary, force of which is “but.” In Matthew 5:32, where the Lord discusses the same topic as that under consideration here in 19:9, our English has “but.” “But I say unto you.” “But” is

the correct rendering, and maintains the contrast which the Lord was clearly making.

1. The Analysis

At this point in our study it becomes necessary for us to make a careful analytical study of the Lord's statement here in Matthew 19:9. Here is what we have.

1. *lego de humin*—but I say unto you. We retain “but” instead of “and,” as in Matthew 5:32. The *Nestle-Marshall Literal English Translation* has “but I say to you.” The contrast is significant. The Lord's teaching is here set forth in contrast with the Mosaic toleration. The *humin* is a dative case construction, equivalent to our English indirect object.

2. *hoti*—(that), generally introduces a clause, and in this instance introduces two clauses. These two clauses are *direct objects* of the verb *say*. The Lord says: I say to you (1) Whosoever shall put away his, wife and shall marry another—except for fornication—commits adultery; and (2) the man who marries a woman who has been put away commits adultery.

3. *hos an*—“hos” is a relative pronoun which when used with *an* or *ean* and a verb in the subjunctive mood means “whoever” or “whosoever.”

4. *apolusa*—This is the aorist active subjunctive, third person singular, of *apoluo*, which means: to release, to divorce, to liberate.

5. *tan gunaika autom*—literally, this in “the wife of him”; hence, “his wife.”

6. *es ma epi porneia*—except upon (or for) fornication.

7. *kai gamasa allan*—and shall marry another. *gamasa* must be considered with *apolusa*. These two words together are identically related to *hos an*—“whosoever shall put away...and shall marry another.” The *ei mi* phrase “except for fornication” relates identically to *apolusa* and to *gamasa*. “Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another—except for fornication.”

8. *moichatai*—this verb is in the present tense, the general force of which is continuous action. It means, therefore, “keeps on committing adultery.”

9. *kai ho apolelumenan gamasas moichatai*—*apolelumenan* is a perfect passive substantive participle, accusative singular feminine, the force of which is: the-having-been-put-away (woman). *gamasas*—is an aorist active substantive participle, nominative, singular, masculine, and goes with the definite article which is masculine. The force of this is: “the-having-married—the (man).” The two substantive participles give us: The having married a having been put away woman (man). That is, “the man who has married a woman who has been put away.”

10. *moichatai*—the same word as previously used. It is in the present tense, and means: “keeps on committing adultery.” The man who has married a having-been-put-away woman keeps on committing adultery.

2. Thus, the Lord Said—

Thus, the Lord said (in Matthew 19:9):

But I say to you that whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another [woman]—except for fornication—keeps on committing adultery; and the man who has married a woman who has been put away keeps on committing adultery.

The passage says: “Whosoever...commits adultery.” Now, *what* “whosoever” commits adultery? There are *two* “whosoever” who commit adultery: (1) the “whosoever” which shall put away his wife and shall marry another woman—except upon the grounds of fornication upon the part of his companion; and (2) the “whosoever” who has married a woman who has been put away (ANY woman who has been put away).

This passage says in principle, therefore: (1) All persons who shall put away their companions and shall marry another companion—except upon the grounds of fornication upon the part of the companion put away—are persons who keep on committing adultery; and (2) all persons who have married a having-been-put-away companion are persons who keep on committing adultery.

This passage says by implication: All persons who—because of fornication upon the part of their companions—put away their companions and form another marriage are persons who do not commit adultery (or, are not persons who commit adultery).

3. The Force of the Exceptive Sentence

It is tremendously important that we—at this point—make a brief study of “the exceptive sentence.” Matthew 19:9 is an exceptive sentence.

The logician works with four different types of propositions (in connection with the categorical syllogism): (1) the *A-form* proposition, which is a *Universal-Affirmative*—as, All men are mortal beings; (2) the *E-form* proposition, which is a *Universal-Negative*—as, No men are angels; (3) the *I-form* proposition, which is a *Particular-Affirmative*—as, Some men are teachers; and (4) the *O-form* proposition, which is a *Particular-Negative*—as, Some men are not teachers. These are the *only* types of propositions which will go into our “logical machine” when we are dealing with categorical syllogisms.

The logician must be able to *translate* a statement (any statement) made in ordinary discourse into its corresponding A, E, I, or O form proposition. Such translation is absolutely necessary (1) if the statement is to be subjected to proper logical analysis, and (2) if the statement is to be used in setting up a categorical syllogism. Without this translation the statement will not “fit” into the “logical machine.”

For example, the Lord’s statement “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” translates into an *A-form* proposition (*Universal-Affirmative*) proposition: “All persons who believe and who are baptized are persons who shall be saved.”

But, let’s look at John 3:5. The Lord said. “Except one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” This is an *exceptive sentence*, even using the word “except.” An exceptive sentence is something *very special*, and it has to be handled in a very special way. Its full significance cannot be captured in a single A or E or I or O form proposition. In fact, an exceptive sentence requires three moves. (1) The statement has to be translated into an *A-form* proposition; (2) it has to be translated into an *E-form* proposition; and—then—(3) it has to involve an “*If and only if*” statement. Let’s apply these matters to John 3:5.

The Lord said (in John 3:5): (1) “All persons who are born of water and of Spirit are persons who enter the kingdom of God”—an *A-form* proposition; (2) No person who is not born of water and of Spirit in a person who enters the kingdom of God—an *E-form* proposition; and (3) One enters the kingdom of God IF AND ONLY IF he is born of water and of Spirit. Thus the Lord’s teaching is seen to be emphatic and crystal clear.

Likewise, Matthew 19:9 is an “exceptive sentence.” The Lord thus teaches that (1) All persons who put away their companions—not for fornication—and who marry another person, are persons who keep on committing adultery; (2) No person who puts away his/her companion because of fornication, and who marries another person is a person who keeps on committing adultery; and (3) A person may put away his/her companion and marry another person IF AND ONLY IF he/she has put away his/her companion because of that companion’s fornication.

4. Some Observations

In these comments I have called attention to the regular, general, ordinary force of the Greek present tense—that it normally indicates continuous action. Here in Matthew 19:9 it indicates “*keeps on committing adultery*.” However, let me emphasize that my case in this regard does not depend upon whether or not *moichatai* (in Matthew 19:9) indicates continuous action. That it does in fact have this meaning I have not the slightest doubt. But, the point we make (and continue to emphasize) is this: ALL PERSONS WHO SIN BY ENTERING INTO A SINFUL RELATIONSHIP CONTINUE TO SIN BY STAYING IN THAT RELATIONSHIP. All persons who sin by entering into the Baptist Church are persons who keep on sinning by staying in it. Bible *repentance* does not allow the penitent to *stay* in a sinful Church are persons who keep on sinning by staying in it. Bible *repentance* does not allow the penitent to *stay* in a sinful situation. So, the point here made reaches out to include the Bible doctrine of repentance.

Summary: The Lord has stressed that it is God’s law and His (the Lord’s law) that there be *no rupture in the marriage*. One husband, one wife, for life. But, suppose one of the parties to a marriage

should violate this law—should become guilty of fornication. THEN God has ANOTHER law which steps in, becomes operative, and according to which certain rights are given to the INNOCENT PARTY. What God has joined together, only God can “put asunder.”

According to God’s law, the husband and the wife in a marriage are *bound to each other and they are bound to God*. In the event of fornication upon the part of either husband or wife, God has a second law by which He (together with the innocent party) CAN dissolve this union, and according to which God’s second law gives—the innocent party the right to form another marriage union. But, note carefully, that God’s second law does *not give the guilty fornicator the right to form another marriage*. The having-been-put-away guilty fornicator (1) is not a person who has never been married; (2) is not a person who has put away his companion because of that companion’s fornication; and (3) is not a person whose companion has died. Thus he/she is not a person who is eligible for marriage.

Please let it be observed that the fornication does not in and of itself destroy the marriage bond. The choice of continuing or discontinuing is placed in the hands of the innocent party. The woman of 1 Corinthians 5, though she had become guilty of fornication, was still the “father’s wife.” Herodias had left her husband Herod Philip, had married her husband’s brother, Herod Antipas (Mark 6:17), but she was still the “wife” of Herod Philip (Mark 6:18). If the person guilty of fornication can *genuinely repent*, and if the innocent party sinned against can *genuinely forgive*—then the marriage can be held together.

May God help us all to understand His marriage law, to respect it, to live according to it, and to teach it to others—and especially, to our children.

Part Three:
ITS APPLICATION TO ALL
Matthew 19:9 and the New Testament

That the Lord’s law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage—as set out in Matthew 19:9—does apply to all responsible persons every-

where is clearly seen in the fact that “Yes, it is the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of the New Testament.”

In 1953 I was invited to debate a brother who was working in the Chicago area, on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. This brother was disturbing the churches with his teaching that “There is *no ground* for divorce and remarriage, period!”

I remember that in considering the matter I was not anxious to debate this man, because I could not see that his doctrine would do a great deal of harm. I could see that his doctrine conceivably could force a Christian to have to live with a fornicator, but—otherwise—perhaps it would not do much harm. Would it be worth the trip? the labor? the time? the expenses? Besides, I just did not want to go to Chicago.

But, in my correspondence with this brother I learned that his basic position was that Matthew 19:9 is no part of the New Testament. My reaction was: If Matthew 19:9 is no part of the New Testament, then the book of *Matthew* is no part of the New Testament, and the book of *Mark* is no part of the New Testament, and the book of *Luke* is no part of the New Testament, and the book of *John* is no part of the New Testament. So, I went to Chicago primarily to prove that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are all parts of the New Testament.

This brother was stressing that the New Testament became effective upon Pentecost of Acts 2, and that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John deal with matters prior to Acts 2, and that, therefore, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are no part of the New Testament. His constant hermeneutical cry was: “Find it after Pentecost and I will accept it.” The brother did not seem to realize at all that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all written *after Pentecost!*

In this debate I constantly stressed that even though the Lord lived under the Mosaic law, respected that law, kept that law, came to fulfill that law—that he also *taught* and *exemplified* sacred principles, precepts, and teachings which would find application *in His Kingdom*. For example: if the Texas Legislature should be in session today they could enact laws which would become effective January 1st.

As a specific illustration of this principle, particular attention was given to Matthew 18:17. The Lord said. “tell it to the **church.**” Question: Did this instruction apply during Patriarchy? Did it apply during Judaism? Did it apply during the time of John the Baptizer? Did it apply during the time of the Lord’s personal ministry? Is it going to apply *when we get to heaven?* The brother answered “No” to each of these questions.

If this instruction did not apply during Patriarchy, or during Judaism, or during the time of John the Baptizer, or during the Lord’s personal ministry; and if it is not going to apply when we got to heaven—then it is clear that either (1) it applies *now*, or (2) that it has *no application whatsoever!* But, if it has application NOW, then it is established that the Lord taught at least this one point during His public ministry which did not apply then, but which does apply *now*. And *where is it repeated after Pentecost?*

So often the Lord said: “Ye have heard that it was said...but I say unto you.” In such statements the Lord was *not explaining* the law, and He was not “patching up” the law. He was giving *His teaching—teaching which would become a part of His New Testament.* Again we point out that this is the significance of Luke 16:16 and similar passages.

In 1954 brother Thomas Warren debated this same topic with a brother in the Fort Worth area. In reporting on this debate I wrote (in part) as follows:

1. The significance of this study is this: the marriage and divorce question is not the real issue. The real issue is: What in the New Testament? Brother Warren’s opponent (and those who stand with him) hold that nothing that was prior to Acts 2 is binding upon men today. These hold that the principles of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are no part of the New Testament *unless they are repeated after Pentecost of Acts 2.*

2. Brother Warren emphasized the principle that law can be stated before it comes into effect, as—in John 3:5. Does this passage discuss how men cat into the kingdom? Where is it repeated after Pentecost Of Acts 2? The Lord, while on earth, gave instruction which was to apply after the New Covenant came into effect—as,

the beatitudes, the parables regarding the kingdom, John 14:6; Matthew 7:21; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 22:30. Brother Warren asked. "Do these things belong to the Old Testament? or do they apply today?"

3. Relative to Matthew 5:31-32 brother Warren showed that these passages were *not explanatory* of the Mosaic law. The law (Deu. 24:1) allowed divorce and remarriage for some 94 unseemly thing," which brother Warren showed was *not fornication* (for, the sin of fornication demanded the death penalty). Also, the Greek construction emphasizes *contrast* between the teaching of Moses and that of the Lord. If the Lord was not explaining the law, then to whom does Matthew 5:31-32 apply? If not to those under the law, and if not to those who live now, then when and to whom did this teaching apply? This question produced a great deal of talk about "the dispensation of John."

4. Brother Warren's opponent spent much time talking about the New Testament. He emphasized that "the way into the holy place hath not been made manifest while the first tabernacle is yet standing" (Heb. 9:8). He emphasized Jerusalem and Acts 2 as "the beginning," and that he "was willing to accept anything from Acts 2 to the close of the Revelation—the beginning and the end." He said, "Find a passage between the beginning and the end that says fornication is grounds for divorce and remarriage."

Brother Warren referred to Matthew 28:19, and asked his opponent to find this restated after Acts 2. Brother Warren declared: "You have made a law which God did not make." He replied to His opponent's point on Hebrews 9:8 by asking whether or not John 3:5 and Mark 16:16 revealed the way into the kingdom. He stressed that the legislature can make laws to become effective on a certain later date. He called attention to the fact that Acts 1:8 was stated before Pentecost, but had application later.

Yes, Matthew 19:9 is a part of the New Testament. The Lord meant what he said when He said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. and he that marrieth her when she is

put away committeth adultery.” And, this message applies now, in New Testament Christianity.

Matthew 19:9 and the Great Commission

As recorded in Matthew 29:18-20, the Record says:

And having come, Jesus spake to them saying, Has been given to me all authority in heaven and upon earth. Having gone, therefore, make disciples [disciple ye] all the nations, **baptizing** them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

I have placed “saying” and “baptizing” and “teaching” in bold format. “Saying” is the translation of the Greek *legon*, which is a present active predicative (modal) participle, nominative, singular, masculine. “Baptizing” is the translation of the Greek *baptidzontes*, which is present active predicative (modal) participle, nominative, plural, masculine. *Teaching* is the translation of the Greek *didaskontes*, which is present active predicative (modal) participle, nominative, plural, masculine.

Please observe: (1) each of these in bold words is a participle; (2) each is a present tense participle, (3) each is a predicative participle, which means that it is *not* attributive and is *not* substantive, and that it *is* adverbial in function; and (4) each is *modal*—that is, the adverbial function here shows *how* the action indicated is accomplished.

We must observe further the Greek participle has *no time of its own, but gets its time from the time of the action indicated in the lead verb*. The present tense characteristic of a participle means: action going on at the same time of the action in the lead verb. For example: Jesus *spake* to them. “Spake” is the lead (main) verb. The *modal participle* “saying” shows (1) that the “saying” took place at the same time of the “speaking” (spake), and (2) that the *saying* was the *means* by which—the *how*—the speaking took place.

Now, in verse 19, the *lead verb* (the main verb) is: disciple (verb, make disciples). Related to this main verb are two participles: *baptizing* and *teaching*. Each is *present tense*. Each is *adverbial*. Each is *modal*. Remember: the action indicated in these two participles has to take place *at the same time* of the action of ‘the lead verb.

That is, the *baptizing* and the *teaching* take place at the *same time* that the *discipling* takes place. Remember also that these participles are adverbial and are *modal*. All this means simply that the Lord said: *make disciples* of all the nations *by baptizing them* into the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit; *make disciples* of all the nations *by teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Note. *make disciples by baptizing*; *make disciples by teaching*.

We note carefully that the “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” *is not* teaching which comes *after* the people have become disciples. Rather, this is teaching by means of which disciples *are made*. This passage says disciples are made *by baptizing* and *by teaching* (which here are simply different ways of saying the same thing). The passage does not say: teach, baptize, and teach some more.

Thus, it is clear that “teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you” means that “all things which the Lord has commanded you” is demanded by Him to be taught to all accountable persons *before* they have become disciples, and as the means by which they become disciples.

Obviously, therefore, the teaching of Matthew 19:9 *is included* in “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Therefore, Matthew 19:9 is demanded to be taught to all nations (to all accountable persons everywhere) in connection with the efforts to enable them *to become Christians*.

Clearly, the Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, demands that Matthew 19:9 be taught to non-Christians. Clearly, therefore, Matthew 28:18-20 teaches that non-Christians are amenable to the teachings of Matthew 19:9. It obviously is the case that a person (any person, every person) is *amenable* to that which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him or to her (cf., Rom. 3:19).

In plain fact, Matthew’s account of the Great Commission parallels that of Mark (16:15-16). Both relate to bringing accountable persons to become Christians. Acts 14:21 records “And when they

had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra.”

Clearly, disciples are made by means of the preaching of the gospel. And, clearly, Matthew 19:9 is a part of the gospel of Christ, and an such is to be preached even to non-Christians.

A gospel preacher, or an elder, could say—in exhorting parents—“Make Christians of your children—*teaching* them the way of the Lord; *instructing* them in the way of righteousness. The two modal participles (*teaching* and *instructing*) would indicate the *means* by which the demands in the lead verb would be accomplished. Brother Warren’s illustration: a farmer says to his sons: “...beautify the barn—cleansing it and painting it.”

This is what we have in Matthew’s account of the Great Commission. In his “big Grammar” (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 1128), Dr. A. T. Robertson says, “See *baptidzontes* and *didaskontes* in Matthew 28:19f as modal participles.”

Here, then, is the argument

Major Premise:

1. If (A) it is the case that “all things” which Jesus “commanded” (as per Matthew 28:18-20) are to be taught to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized; and
2. If (B) it is the case that Matthew 19.9 in a part of “all things” which Jesus “commanded”; then clearly—
3. (C) It is the case that Matthew 19:9 is to be taught to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized.

Minor Premise:

1. (A) It is the case that “all things” which Jesus “commanded” (as per Matthew 28:18-20) are to be taught to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized; and
2. (B) It is the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of “all things” which Jesus “commanded.”

Conclusion:

Therefore, (C)—it is the case that Matthew 19:9 in to be taught to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized.

This simply says that the conjunction made up of conjuncts A and B implies C. We have affirmed (and have proved) A, we have affirmed (and have proved) B. We have, therefore, proved the truthfulness of the conjunction made up of conjuncts A and B. We have, therefore, proved C. The conclusion is *demande*.

Further, with regard to Matthew 28:18-20, we consider the following:

Major Premise:

1. If (A) it is the case that Matthew 28:18-20 demands that Matthew 19:9 be preached to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized, and
2. If (B) it in the came that a person is amenable to that which Christ has commanded to be preached to him; and
3. If (C) it is the case that the Bales doctrine holds that the accountable person who has not been baptized *is not amenable* to the teaching of Matthew 19:9; then
4. (D) It is the case that the Bales doctrine is false doctrine.

Minor Promise:

1. (A) It is the case that Matthew 28:18-20 demands that Matthew 19:9 be preached to all accountable persons, including those who have not been baptized (and this we have proved); and
2. (B) It is the case that one is amenable to that which Christ has commanded to be preached to him (Rom. 3:19); and
3. (C) It is the case that the Bales doctrine holds that the accountable person who has not been baptized *is not amenable* to the teaching of Matthew 19:9.

Conclusion:

Therefore, (D) *it is* the case that the Bales doctrine is false doctrine.

This simply says that the conjunction made up of conjuncts A and B and C implies D. We have affirmed (and we have proved) A and B and C. We, therefore, have proved D. The *syllogism* (a modus

ponens form) is *valid*, the *major premise* is *true*. The *minor premise* is *true*. The *conclusion* is demanded. The argument is sound.

Again: to simplify and to emphasize—(1) Is Matthew 19:9 a part of the gospel? (2) Is it the case that the Lord commands that the gospel be preached to “every creature”? (3) In a person amenable to that which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him?

Major Premise.

1. If (A) it is the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of the gospel; and
2. If (B) it is the case that the Lord commands that the gospel be preached to every responsible person in all the world; and
3. If (C) it is the case that a person is amenable to that which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him; then—
4. (D) it is the case that every responsible person is amenable to the teachings of Matthew 19:9.

Minor Premise:

1. (A) It is the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of the gospel;
2. (B) It is the case that the Lord commands that the gospel be preached to every responsible person in all the world;
3. (C) It is the case that a person is amenable to that which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him;

Conclusion: therefore,

(D) It is the case that every responsible person is amenable to the teachings of Matthew 19:9.

The Basic Argument

Herein I shall set forth the component parts of the argument, being careful to set forth the proof of each point, and then—when the points and the proof have been made—I shall set out the sound argument.

1. The Bible plainly teaches that God has *one plan* (and only one plan) for the salvation of men. “The” gospel is exactly that—it is “the” gospel (Rom. 1:9, 16; 1 The. 2:8). This gospel is God’s *only saving power*. This gospel is God’s only saving power *for all men*.

2. This plan of God is clearly identified in Scripture as being “the gospel,” “the faith,” “the way,” “the doctrine,” “the sound doctrine,” “the word,” “the truth,” “the law of Christ,” “Jesus,” “the Christ,”

“the new covenant.” These are different ways of referring to the same soul-saving sacred message of the Christ, the same plan for all men.

3. The gospel is to be preached to every creature (i.e. to every accountable human being in the whole world (Mark 16:15-16). This gospel is to be preached to the *saved* (Rom. 1:15), and it is to be preached to the *lost* (2 The. 1:8). With regard to the lost in Macedonia Luke says: “And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:16). Vengeance will be taken upon those who know not God and who obey not the gospel (2 The. 1:8-9). Clearly it is the case that God has commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature.

4. And, dearly it is the case that a person is amenable to that which God has commanded to be preached to him. If God has commanded all men everywhere to “repent” (cf., Acts 17:30), then all men everywhere are amenable to the divine command to “repent.” This principle is set out in Romans 3:19—“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be brought under the judgment of God.”

5. Matthew 19:9 is a part of the gospel. Some would attempt to distinguish between “gospel” and the “things” to be *taught* those “in the covenant.” Some would attempt to distinguish between “invitation” to come into the covenant, and the “commands” of the covenant. Some would attempt to distinguish between “gospel” and “doctrine.” All such distinctions are unnecessary, arbitrary, and unscriptural. God has but one law—the gospel of Jesus Christ—and this law is for all men. In fact, we have already emphasized that the Great Commission, as recorded by Matthew, stresses that in the very process of *making disciples* (this is the charge) of all the nations there is to be “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.” And, the teachings of *Matthew 19:9* are certainly a part of “all things whatsoever I commanded you.”

So, the argument is as follows:

Major Promise:

1. If (A) it is the case that God has but one law for all mankind, and
2. If (B) it is the case that this law is identified in Scripture as being “the gospel,” “the faith,” “the law of Christ,” etc.; and
3. If (C) it is the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of *the gospel* (the faith); and
4. If (D) it is the case that the Lord has commanded that His gospel (the faith) be preached to every accountable person in the whole world; and
5. If (E) it is the case that a person is amenable to that law—the gospel—which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him; then
6. (F) it is the case that all accountable persons in all the world are amenable to the teachings of Matthew 19:9.

Minor Premise:

1. (A) It *is* the case that God has but one law for all mankind; and
2. (B) It *is* the case that this law is identified in Scripture as being “the gospel” (the faith); and
3. (C) It *is* the case that Matthew 19:9 is a part of *the gospel* (the faith); and
4. (D) It *is* the case that the Lord has commanded that His gospel (the faith) be preached to every accountable person in the whole world; and
5. (E) It *is* the case that a person is amenable to that law—the gospel—which the Lord has commanded to be preached to him.

Note: Thus, we have the truthfulness of the conjunction made up of conjuncts A and B and C and D and E.

Conclusion: Therefore,

(F) It *is* the case that all accountable persons in all the world are amenable to the teachings of Matthew 19:9.

A Medley of Passages

1. *Acts 3:22-23*. Peter says:

Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall come to pass

that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.

Every person is obligated and privileged to hearken to the voice of this prophet, the Christ Himself.

2. *Acts 7:58* and *1 Timothy 1:15*. In connection with the stoning of Stephen, “the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.” This was Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the Lord’s people. But, Saul the persecutor did what he thought he ought to do, and he did even this with a clear conscience (cf., *Acts 23:1*). But, in *1 Timothy 1:15* this man, now Paul the apostle, identifies himself as being the “chief” of sinners.

When Saul of Tarsus helped in the murder of Stephen: (1) Was he acting in violation of the Patriarchal law? (2) Was he in violation of the Mosaic law? Or, was he doing exactly what he thought the Law of Mom demanded of him? (3) Was he in violation of his own conscience? or (4) of Bales’ “law written in the heart”? Would it be possible for one to have a “good conscience” and yet to be in violation of a “law written in his heart”?

If he was not in violation (1) of the Patriarchal law, or (2) of the Law of Mom, or (3) of his own conscience, or (4) of Bales’ “law written in the heart”—then *how did Saul of Tarsus become the chief of sinners?* The plain fact is that he was in violation of the pure gospel of Christ—he was persecuting “the faith,” the same “faith” to which he became obedient (cf., *Gal. 1:22-24*).

3. *Acts 8:6*. When Philip “went down to the city of Samaria” he “Preached Christ unto them” In preaching “Christ” Philip was preaching “the word” (*Acts 8:4*). In preaching “Christ” Philip was preaching (1) things concerning the kingdom of God, (2) the name of Jesus Christ and (3) baptism—*Acts 8:12*. In preaching (1) Christ, (2) the word, (3) the kingdom, (4) the name of Christ and (5) baptism—was Philip preaching “the gospel of Christ”? Or, is it one thing to preach Christ and another thing to preach the gospel of Christ?

When Philip arrived on the scene to begin his work among the Samaritans, were the Samaritans alien sinners? How did they get to be sinners? Were they amenable to the gospel of Christ? Was Philip preaching to them something to which they were not amen-

able? Those who rejected this manage preached by Philip—were they any worse off in their rejection of it? If they war not amenable to it, how could they be any worse off in rejecting it? On the other hand, if they were in fact worse off in their rejection, it must have been because they were amenable to it!

4. *Acts 8:35*. In dealing with the Nobleman of Ethiopia, Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture [Isa. 53:7], preached unto him Jesus.” When Philip preached “Jesus” did he preach the same basic manage that he preached in Samaria when he “preached Christ unto them”? When he preached “Jesus” did he preach the *gospel*? Was the Nobleman a sinner? Was he a person amenable to the *gospel* of Christ, but not to the *doctrine* of Christ? Does the New Testament make any such distinction between “gospel” and “doctrine”? Or, is it the case that “the gospel of Christ” and “the doctrine of Christ” are *exactly the same thing*? Did the Lord say: Go preach the *gospel* to every creature (Mark 16:15)? And did Paul say that he was ready to preach the *gospel* to the *saints* in Rome (Rom. 1:7, 15)? Is the *gospel* to be preached to those outside the church, as well as to those in the church?

5. *Acts 18:5*. When Paul testified to the Jews of Corinth that “Jesus was the Christ,” was he preaching the *gospel* to the Jews of Corinth? According to Acts 18:8 “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.” Was this response made to the preaching of the *gospel*? Or, was this response required by the “law written in the heart”? When the Jews of Corinth “opposed themselves and blasphemed” (Acts 18:6) were they sinning—(1) against the law of Moses? (2) against the law written in the heart? (3) against the law of Christ? When the Jews of Corinth “opposed themselves and blasphemed” (Acts 18:6) were they rejecting a law to which they were amenable? Were they rejecting a law to which they were only partly amenable? Were they rejecting a “law written in their hearts”? Were they rejecting a law to which they *were amenable*? Were they amenable to the *gospel* of Jesus Christ?

6. *Acts 13:6-12*. When Barnabas and Saul

had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same

called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him and said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Observe that (1) Sergius Paul wanted to hear the Word of the Lord, (2) Elymas sought to turn aside Sergius Paulus from *the faith*; (3) Elymas was an “enemy of all righteousness” and a perverter of “the right ways of the Lord”; (4) the proconsul was astonished at *the teaching* of the Lord. Obviously, “the word of the Lord,” “the faith,” “righteousness,” “right ways of the Lord,” and “the teaching of the Lord” all refer to the *same thing*—the gospel of Christ as preached by Paul.

It is clear that Sergius Paulus was a non-Christian, and that Paul preached the gospel to a non-Christian. Paul preached to a non-Christian (1) the Word, (2) the faith, (3) the doctrine. Observe carefully that the teaching (doctrine) is not intended by God to be taught or preached to Christians only. When Elymas “withstood” and sought to “tam aside the proconsul,” he was an enemy and perverter. Why did Paul so severely rebuke Elymas? Why did Paul not say: “You know, you are right in opposing this message. I’m preaching to Sergius Paulus the law of Christ—the gospel—and I should be explaining that the law of Christ does not even apply to non-Christians! And, especially since it may be that you have some marriage problems, I should point out to you that the Law of Christ on marriage, divorce, and remarriage does not apply to a non-Christian.”

7. *Acts 17:30*. It is a fact that God commands all men everywhere to repent. Paul here refers to a divine law (a law of God) which is addressed to all men everywhere. This is a law of God which commands all men everywhere to repent. “Commands” is the translation of the Greek *parangello*—a charge, an order, a command.

This is the same word used in 2 Thessalonians 3:6—“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.” In this “command” of Acts 17:30 to be found written in a Bales’ “law on the heart”? Or is this command to be found written in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would anyone deny that this “command” referred to in Acts 17:30 is a part of the gospel of Christ? I affirm: (1) here is a divine law of God, (2) which in a part of the gospel of Christ, (3) which is addressed to all men everywhere, and (4) to which all men everywhere are amenable (cf., Rom. 3:19).

8. *Acts 24:24-25*. The Record says:

But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.

Note the subject matter of Paul’s preaching upon this occasion. He “reasoned” with regard to (1) righteousness, (2) self-control, and (3) the judgment to come. But, Paul was preaching to theme wicked people “concerning *the faith*”—literally, the into Christ Jesus faith. But, “the faith” (the into Christ Jesus faith) in *the gospel* of Christ.

But, why would Paul be preaching *these things to this man*? Didn’t Paul know that this man was an alien sinner? Didn’t Paul know that the man in the world is not amenable to the gospel? Answer. Yes, Paul knew that this man was an alien sinner, and No, Paul did not know that the man in the world is not amenable to the gospel. And, obviously, Paul knew full well that all responsible human beings are amenable to the gospel of Christ.

9. *1 Corinthians 2:1*. When Paul, on the second missionary journey, began his labors in Corinth, he went there “proclaiming the testimony of God.” In proclaiming “the testimony of God” he was “determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). According to the grace of God which was given him, Paul, as a wise masterbuilder, laid the foundation (1 Cor. 3:10). In laying this foundation, Paul testified that

Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:5). But, in Corinth, and to the Corinthians, Paul preached “the gospel” (1 Cor. 15:1-2).

Thus, it is clear that “proclaiming the testimony of God,” declaring “Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” testifying that Jesus is the Christ, preaching “the gospel”—are simply *different ways of saying the same thing*. It is equally clear, therefore, that the gospel message—the only message the Lord has authorized men to preach—is *addressed to the alien sinner* (to accountable persons outside the Christ) as well as to those persons who are “in Christ.”

Finally, Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:12

Brother Bales holds that Matthew 19:9 applies to the church only—that in, it applies only to the case in which a *Christian is married to a Christian*. It does not apply to the Christian who is married to a non-Christian. It does not apply to the non-Christian who is married to a Christian. It does not apply to the non-Christian who is married to a non-Christian. So, it is clear that while brother Bales claims that Matthew 19:9 applies to the “church only,” his real position is that it does not apply even to all who are in the church. It has no application to the Christian who is married to a non-Christian.

In 1 Corinthians 7:12 Paul says: “But to the rest say I, not the Lord. If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her.” “Say I, not the Lord” simply means that in the Lord’s personal ministry, though he had dealt with the principles relating to marriage, He had not dealt specifically with the questions which the Corinthian brethren had asked. He, Paul, would make that application. Question: If a Christian man is married to a non-Christian woman, and if this unbeliever is “content” to continue to dwell with this Christian man, should the Christian man leave the non-Christian woman? Answer. “Let him not leave her.” It is God’s plan that there be no rupture in the marriage. The Christian husband, or the Christian wife, is not to take it upon himself or herself to rupture the marriage. This is the force of the middle voice verb.

During the very time that I was engaged in the lengthy written debate with Dr. James Bales (with regard to Matthew 19:9) I was

delivering a series of lessons on these matters, in the state of Alabama. After the sermon one night a brother asked me if I could meet with him for lunch the next day. I told him that I would be delighted to meet with him. I made inquiry about this brother, and learned that he was a faithful Christian, a respected business man in the town, but that there was a problem which involved his wife.

This turned out to be a most unusual kind of meeting. The man's love for the truth was obvious. He wanted to do what was right. He had a serious problem about his wife, and was not sure as to what the New Testament said (says) about his situation. He had heard the Bales doctrine that Matthew 19:9 applies only to the case in which a Christian is married to a Christian. This man's wife was *not a Christian*. This man's "wife" spent most of her time in a nearby large city, and was a prostitute. And, she was very "content to dwell" with the man to whom she was married. That is, she wanted to stay in the marriage, but to continue with her work.

Now, if brother Bales is right in his doctrine that Matthew 19:9 applies *only* to the case in which a Christian is married to a Christian, then Matthew 19:9 has *absolutely nothing to say to this situation!* and 1 Corinthians 7:12 tells the man to *stay in the marriage*. I explained to the man that brother Bales was wrong, dead wrong, in his position, and that Matthew 19:9 certainly did give him the right to put away this guilty fornicator and to form another marriage union if and when he desired to do so. Let it be said that all efforts to try to reach this woman with the gospel had failed.

Any doctrine which would force a Christian to have to live with a fornicator is false doctrine. The Bales doctrine is a doctrine which would force a Christian to have to live with a fornicator. The Bales doctrine is *false doctrine*.

CONCLUSION

As indicated in our introductory remarks, it has been our purpose (1) to look at the *background* of the Lord's statement recorded in Matthew 19:9, (2) to show clearly what the Lord said (and says) in this passage, and (3) to show that this teaching applies to *all responsible persons everywhere*. Mission Accomplished!

IS ABORTION MURDER?

Terry Claunch



Terry Claunch was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1958. He has been married to the former Janice Rice of Lineville, Alabama for 10 years. They have two sons, Jeremy and Jesse. He graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1984 and Alabama Christian School of Religion in 1989. He is presently working for the Edgefield congregation in Stevenson, Alabama.

Abortion is defined as the “induced termination of pregnancy before the fetus is capable of survival as an individual.” The same source defines murder as, “the unlawful killing of one human being by another, especially with malice aforethought.”¹

It is imperative to understand that the definitions of men are often at odds with the Word of God.

SUPREME COURT RULING

The U.S. Supreme Court in its January 22, 1973 decision (*Roe v. Wade*) on abortion ruled that: A state is forbidden to “proscribe” (forbid) abortion anytime prior to birth if in the opinion of “one licensed physician” an abortion is necessary to preserve “the life or health” of the mother. What did they mean by “health”? By the Court’s own definition, the word “health” means:

...The medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman’s age—relevant to the well-being of the patient. All these factors may relate to health (*Doe v. Bolton*).

It includes when a pregnancy would: “Force upon a woman a distressful life and future.” Produce “psychological harm.” “Will tax mental and physical health by child care.” Will bring the distress “associated with the unwanted child.” Will “bring a child into a

family already unable psychologically or otherwise to care for it.” Will bring the “continuing difficulties and stigma of unwed motherhood.” According to these rulings, IT IS LEGAL FOR A PHYSICIAN TO ABORT A BABY FOR SOCIAL REASONS AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO BIRTH.²

STARTLING STATEMENTS

Dr. Mary Claderone, a “strong pro-abortionist and propagandist,” has said, “Abortion is the taking of a life.” The founder of the Metropolitan Medical Service, Dr. Neville Sender, has made the statement: “We know it is killing, but the states permit killing under certain circumstances.” A quote from Dr. Magda Dense reads, “Abortions are both a necessity (because women need them) and a sorrow (because a human life is taken).”³ These individuals are not afraid of being convicted of murder because murder is the “unlawful killing” of another. The Courts of our land have said that it is not murder to abort a pregnancy.

From the *Tuscaloosa News* of December 8, 1985 one can read this headline:

Minnesota Court Rules Fetus Not Human Being. The Minnesota case stems from a November 1984 traffic accident in which a car driven by 29-year-old John Soto of St. Paul collided with a vehicle driven by Jannet Anne Johnson, who suffered a fractured pelvis and broken leg in the accident. Although the heartbeat of the 8½ month old fetus was normal when Mrs. Johnson was admitted to the hospital, its heartbeat could not be detected a few hours later and a Caesarean section resulted in a stillbirth.

In a 6-1 ruling the court said the Legislature has never precisely defined the term “human-being.” If the court had recognized the “fetus” as a human being the man could be prosecuted for vehicular manslaughter. The charges against Soto were dropped.

In Florida, the state asked a federal district court judge to review a 1982 injunction against punitive abortion clinic regulations, arguing that *Webster* now gave the state greater latitude. The judge denied the request, ruling that he would permit tighter regulation only when the state could prove that clinics pose a threat to their patients’ health.⁴ It may be true that abortion is not a “threat” to the

clinics' patients, but what about the well-being of the 4,300 babies that are aborted each day in such clinics?

Etiene-Emile Baulieu is a M.D. and biochemist in France. He is well known in pro-abortion circles. He is the discoverer of RU486 the "abortion pill" or mifepristone. Notice some of the statements found in an interview with *Omni* magazine: "I've not dedicated my life to abortion, but two hundred thousand women die in bungled abortions. And RU486 can save them." What is going to save the million and one-half children that are aborted by RU486?

Pro-life groups have fought hard to show that the "death camps" of Hitler are no different than the "abortion mills" of today. The article (*Omni*: Baulieu) reveals that the two are somewhat linked together historically.

Just before the French government approved RU486 and it was on the verge of production, Baulieu was dumbfounded to learn that Roussel (a French pharmaceutical company) had abruptly yanked the drug off the assembly line. Roussel is controlled by the German pharmaceutical company Hoechst A. G., and Hoechst's predecessor company was I. G. Farben, manufacturer of gas used in Nazi concentration camps.

Near the end of the interview Baulieu made one final surprising statement. "Nobody cares about the lives of scientists." Without taking his sentence out of context we might ask, "Who cares for the unborn?"⁵

Another point of comparison is made by Dan Lyons in *Christian Crusade Weekly* (1979):

At Nuremburg, Hitler and his henchmen were condemned by the American judges because they encouraged the killing of the unborn...Hitler was wrong, even though most of the men on our Supreme Court today defend what the Nazis did. If we do not stop killing infants on the promise that they are nothing unless they weigh five or six pounds, we will do what Hitler did. we will kill the handicapped, particularly when those handicapped are aged. Then we will kill the truly handicapped who are retarded: the only "angels" among us, for they have never sinned...Unless we stop the abortion we will go further than Hitler, being "better" educated than the Austrian paperhanger. We will kill infants after they are born. We will do it scientifically, of course....We will call on brilliant scientists who know all about creation....We will ask them to tell us which child is worthy to live and which is not. We will go Hitler one better. We will commit wholesale infanticide, like pagan Rome, where even healthy infants were often put to death if they were not masculine, like their executioners. There

is no doubt scientists will cooperate, as they did for Hitler. We already have many of them clamoring for the death of the elderly and the “unfit.”

Truly to those that forget the past it is destined to be repeated.

Arthur B. Shostak writes these comments about abortion and the now future:

...abortion is too much a part of the American scene to be discarded...By the turn of the century it will have had ten more years in which to become business as usual...Many of the women who choose abortion at present may come to rely on Norplant, a long-term hormonal device implanted under the skin, the first important new contraceptive brought out in the United States in 25 years.

More recently, in 1989, futurists Marvin Cetron and Owen Daives raised a similar moral dilemma. Before the year 2010,

the only difference between a premature baby and an aborted fetus will be whether the parents want it...[Neonatal technology] will make it very difficult even for the most ardent “pro-choice” advocates to argue that a fetus lacks the rights automatically granted to any baby.⁶

Two statements worth considering are found in the June, '91 *Harper's Bazaar*. The article is entitled “Womb Warfare” by Jeremy Weir Alderson. “There is growing medical consensus that RU486 is safe, though not enough time has elapsed to assess long-term effects.” Its being safe must apply only to the mother for the baby, is aborted.

Those opposed to RU486 “are trying to hold back a tidal wave of medical progress,” says Eleanor Smeal, President of the Feminist Majority Foundation—a group that has gathered the support of 2,000 scientists and scientific organizations in a drive to make RU486 available to American women. “When religious doctrines go head-to-head with science,” she says, “they usually lose.”

Four months after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Dr. James D. Watson said, “If a child were not declared alive until three days after birth, then all parents could be allowed the choice that only a few are given under the present system.” In January 1978, Dr. Francis Crick replied, “No newborn infant should be declared a human until it has passed certain tests....” From a *Newsweek* article we find this quote: “The public has got to decide what to do with vegetated individuals who have no human potential.” This response appeared in the same magazine three weeks later.

Life-And-Death Decisions

I'll wager my entire root system and as much fertilizer as it would take to fill Yale University that you have never received a letter from a vegetable before this one, but, much as I resent the term, I must confess that I fit the description of a "vegetable" as defined in the article "Shall This Child Die?" Due to severe brain damage incurred at birth, I am unable to dress myself, toilet myself, or write, my secretary is typing this letter. Many thousands of dollars had to be spent on my rehabilitation and education in order for me to reach my present professional status as a counseling psychologist. My parents were also told, 35 years ago, that there was "little or no hope of achieving meaningful 'humanhood'" for their daughter. Have I reached "humanhood?" Compared with Drs. Duff and Campbell, I believe I have surpassed it!⁷

SACRIFICE ON THE ALTAR

In Leviticus 20, God condemns those who would sacrifice their children to the idol Molech. Through abortion over 4,000 unborn children are sacrificed daily. The altars go by the names of inconvenience, unwanted or unintended pregnancy, sexual immorality, greed or selfishness to name a few. Consider for a moment the magnitude of these sacrifices.

The number of lives given in the Revolutionary war was 25,324. Casualties numbered 498,332 in the Civil War. World War I saw 116,516 American lives lost. Over a half-million died in the next world war. The Korean and Vietnam Wars cost the U.S. over 100,000 lives.⁸ By the end of 1990, an estimated 16.6 million women had had an abortion since 1973, and an estimated 17.8 million since 1967, when states began to liberalize their laws.⁹

A report from the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment gives these statistics:

In 1988, a total of 19,305 induced abortions were obtained by residents of Tenn., an increase of 9.6 percent from 1982.

The induced abortion ratio (the number of induced abortions per 1,000 live births by race of mother) increased from 262.5 in 1982 to 273.1 in 1988.

Almost 77 percent of the women obtaining an induced abortion in 1988 were unmarried.

Of the women obtaining an induced abortion with patient education information during 1988, 83.1 percent had at least 12 years of education and 39.4 percent had studied on the post-secondary level.

32.5 percent had at least one previous induced abortion.

Suction curettage was the procedure used in 99.4 percent of the abortions.¹⁰

These findings will not hold true for every state. They do show that abortion is on the increase. Women are using abortion more as a means of birth-control than any other reason (i.e., rape or incest). The majority of those having abortions have finished high school. One-third of this number have multiple abortions. The last statistic is mentioned to show the type of sacrifice being done. This procedure uses a suction device to tear its victim out of its mother's womb. The body of the child is usually too big; therefore, it must be dismembered to be removed.

The national abortion ratio in 1987 was 29 abortions per 100 pregnancies. Two groups were higher in ratio: teenagers (15-19 years old) aborted 42 times for every 100 pregnancies; women over 40 aborted 44 times for every 100 pregnancies.¹¹

These facts show that many women are sacrificing their children. May we heed the words of Reuben, "Do not sin against the child" (Gen. 42:22).

Science

Is it possible to know when life begins? Can the medical field help us decide the abortion issue? Listed below are some quotations from specialists.

Dr. Alan Guttmacher—late president of Planned Parenthood, even though his duties with Planned Parenthood subsequently altered his perspectives—admitted in his book *Planning Your Family* (Macmillan, 1964) that the "exact moment" in the creation of a baby is fertilization.¹²

Dr. Jerome LeJeune, professor of fundamental genetics at the University of Descartes, Paris, France said:

When does a person begin? I will try to give the most precise answer to that question actually available to science. Modern biology teaches us that ancestors are united to their progeny by a continuous material link, for it is from the fertilization of the female cell (the ovum) by the male cell (the spermatozoa) that a new member of the species will emerge. Life has a very, very long history but each individual has a very nod beginning, *the moment of its conception*.... To accept that fact that after fertilization has taken place, a new human has come into

being, is no longer a matter of opinion. The human nature of the human being from conception to old age is not a metaphysical contention, it is plain experimental evidence [italics added].¹³

Dr. Watson A. Bowes, Jr., of the University of Colorado Medical School reported:

But one thing is clear. Following fertilization there is an inexorable series of events that unfolds with cells dividing, moving, pausing, differentiating, and aggregating with a baffling precision and Purpose. In the early hours, days, and weeks of this development a hypothetical observer, if able to witness this microscopic drama, would find it impossible to identify precisely when major qualitative changes have occurred just as parents observing daily their child's growth and development cannot say precisely when he or she stopped being a child and became an adult... Thus the beginning of a single hum life in from a biological point of view a simple and straightforward matter—*the beginning is conception. In conclusion, the beginning of a human life from a biological point of view is at the time of conception.* This straightforward biological fact should not be distorted to serve sociological, political, or economic goals [italics added].¹⁴

Dr. Micheline Matthews-Roth is quoted as saying: "It is an accepted fact that the life of any individual organism...begins at conception."¹⁵ Professor Hymie Gordon, chairman of the Department of Medical Genetics at the Mayo Clinic says, "Life is present from the moment of conception."¹⁶

Brother M. H. Tucker presented these scientific facts in his lecture on "Abortion and Euthanasia": (A) The heart begins to beat at three weeks; (B) Brain waves can be recorded at six weeks; (C) The unborn wakes and sleeps, may feel pain, suck his or her thumb, breathes fluid, and swims about long before birth; and, (D) The only change that occurs at birth is a change in the external life support system of the child. The child is no different before birth than after birth except that he has changed his method of feeding and obtaining oxygen.¹⁷

Other interesting facts are: (A) At 10 days the new individual has a dramatic display of hormone power, stops his mother's menstrual period and from then on completely controls the mother's body; (B) The first movement or quickening occurs around 6 weeks; (C) At 10 weeks the structure of the human body is completely formed, (D) All organ systems function at the third month; and, (E) In the fourth

month the tiny baby is fully functioning within the mother's womb.¹⁸

From these medical experts and the facts presented, we see that life begins at the moment of conception. Why then do abortions continue? The definition of murder is the UNLAWFUL killing of another human being. The Supreme Court says that abortion is LAWFUL.

SCRIPTURES

Murder is a very serious crime. It is an act against mankind and a sin against God. Murder is a problem of the heart. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mat. 15:19). It is a sin that will prevent one from entering heaven. "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). Those guilty of murder can find forgiveness. Paul "consented" unto the death of Stephen but was later forgiven. Some will not repent of this sin or any other. "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (Rev. 9:21).

Children hold a special place in the heart of God. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psa. 127:3). It is important to note that in this verse there is reference to children and "fruit" of the womb. Adam and Eve were told (Gen. 1:28) to "be fruitful and multiply." God's law of procreation (Gen. 1:11-12) states that seed brings forth after its kind. Some would seek to cloud the issue with terms such as fetal tissue, possible person, brain-birth, mass of protoplasm, etc. This is done to hide the fact that an abortion is the murder of a child. God sees conception as the being of a child.

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did am my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members

were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Psa. 139:13-16).

The phrase “when as yet there was none” points to the time of conception before the mother knows that she is “with child.” With “continuance” the “substance” is “fashioned” or formed. Abortion is the murder of the life that God has started.

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). God know Jeremiah in a personal sense before he was born. God know Jeremiah at the “point of conception.” That is the only time before being “formed.”

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life (Exo. 21:22-23).

In this situation men are fighting and they accidentally “hurt a woman.” It is important to notice that she has been hurt. Because she is hurt, her child or “fruit” departs from her. This means that she has a premature delivery. Neither the woman nor her child die in this accident for “no mischief” follows (v. 22). Because there is no death the man responsible is to pay “punitive” damages. These damages would be of the same type found in verse 19, also the consequence of men striving.

“Mischief” in these verses must refer to death. If “mischief follows” then life must be given for life. Does it mean death to the mother, the child, or both? It could be to either one. Both sides of the abortion issue recognize that life begins at the point of conception. The Word of God testifies that there is life when a woman is “with child.” This passage, by implication, teaches that an abortion is murder.

Before leaving this passage, one more point needs to be made. Moses, by inspiration, uses the term “with child” and “fruit” as meaning the same thing. The Hebrew word for fruit means child regardless of age. It refers to a child seven days old (2 Sam. 12:18). It can mean a child of three months age (Exo. 2:2). A child old enough to wean is translated by this word (Gen. 21:8). Joseph was about

seventeen years old when sold by his brethren. When Reuben said “Do not sin against the child,” he used this same word (Gen. 42:22). This same word is used to speak of a child when he becomes grown (2 Kin. 4:18). If it is murder to kill the seventeen-year-old, it would be murder to take the life of the unborn. God sees them both as the same, a living soul.

The New Testament treats the unborn and the newborn with the same words. Luke records the visit of Mary to Elisabeth. When they met the “babe leaped in her womb” (Luke 1:41). The shepherds were told they would “find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes” (Luke 2:12). Peter, in making a spiritual application, teaches that “newborn babes” should desire the milk of the word. The same Greek word (*brephos*) is used in each verse. These verses prove that a child is a child whether in the womb or not.

Mary, because of her purity, was chosen to be the mother of Jesus. Consider how Mary could have rationalized having an abortion. “I’m pregnant. I didn’t expect this.” “I’m engaged to be married to a wonderful man and this child isn’t his.” “I can’t provide this child with a decent home, education, or life.” What condition would man be in if Mary had aborted her child, the Son of God?

CONCLUSION

Is abortion murder? YES, YES, YES. Abortion murders those who are truly innocent of any crime. God condemns the shedding of innocent blood. “The innocent...slay thou not.” “That innocent blood be not shed.” “Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person.” “In the secret places doth he murder the innocent” “and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters.” “Hands that shed innocent blood.” “They make haste to shed innocent blood.”¹⁹

My wife, Janice, and I have two beautiful boys. Their names are Jeremy and Jesse. Jeremy was born three months premature weighing two pounds and fifteen ounces. Women have abortions farther into a pregnancy than when he was born. When Jeremy prays, he will thank God for a “family that loves him and cares for him.” My prayer is that women will love and care for their unborn.

Many women think abortion is the only answer to a difficult problem. They may be naive but they are responsible for the death of their child. Doctors who perform abortions have gone against their Hippocratic oath to save lives. They are more guilty of murder because they do it for money. Murder is a sin for which there is forgiveness if one will repent.

ENDNOTES

¹William Morris, Ed., *American Heritage Dictionary* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975).

²Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Wilke, Pamphlet (Knoxville, TN: Tenn Volunteers for Life, Inc., 1976).

³John Powell, S. J., *Abortion: The SILENT HOLOCAUST* (Allen, TX; Argue Communications, 1981), pp. 66-67.

⁴Terry Sollom, "Family Planning Perspectives," *State Legislation on Reproductive Health in 1990: What Was Proposed and Enacted*(March/April 1991), p. 84.

⁵*Omni*, Interview—Etienne-Emile Baulieu (Sept 91), pp. 75ff.

⁶Arthur B. Shostak; "The Futurist," *Abortion in America, Ten Cautious Forecasts* (July-August 1991), pp. 20-24.

⁷Powell, pp. 43-46.

⁸Powell, preface.

⁹Stanley K. Henshaw, Lisa M. Koonin and Jack C. Smith, "Family Planning Perspectives," *Characteristics of U.S. Women Having Abortions*, 1987 (March/April 1991), p. 77.

¹⁰Tennessee Dept. of Health and Environment, *Report of Induced Abortions in Tenn.*, 1988 (Division of Information Resources, 1990).

¹¹Henshaw, p. 77.

¹²Powell, p. 66.

¹³Powell, p. 70.

¹⁴Powell, p. 74.

¹⁵Powell, pp. 70-71

¹⁶Powell, p. 71.

¹⁷Jim Z. Waldron, *Is There a Universal Code of Ethics?* (Winona, MS: J. C. Choate Publications, 1986), pp. 167-168.

¹⁸Wilke, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹Exo. 23:7; Deu. 19-10; Deu. 27:25; Psa. 10:8; Psa. 106:38; Pro. 6:17; Isa. 59-7.

Intentionally Left Blank

DOES GOD'S LOVE PROHIBIT PUNISHMENT?

Joe Gilmore, Jr.



Joe Gilmore, Jr. has been preaching the gospel for fifty years and is now working with the church in San Lorenzo, California. He attended Abilene Christian University, East Central State University and San Jose University. A Crook Indian, he lectures for the Federal Government on Indian Culture and has recently been selected by five of the Indian nations as spokesman and representative to Washington for over four hundred Indian nations. This is an even greater honor than that bestowed on his grandfather who was "Chief of Chiefs" of the Creek Nation. Brother Gilmore is a debater, lecturer, preacher, rancher and oil producer. He and his wife, Joy, have one daughter and one granddaughter.

INTRODUCTION

Future punishment is a subject, that has been greatly neglected. This subject has not floated through pulpits in a long time. There was a time when it was discussed, and people gave attention thereto. There has been a decided tendency to ignore the teaching of the Bible concerning this matter. People refuse to hear preaching on the "wrath" or "terror" of the Lord.

We hear much about the "love" of God, so much that most people think it is impossible for God to show anger against anything or anyone at any time. Neither do they think that God causes fear or dread. Yet the Bible teaches that there is another side to God than that manifested by His love. We should fear to sin against God. His eye is always on us. He will call us to account for our sins. Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9).

GOD POSSESSES WRATH

As a basis for our thoughts, let us read Romans 1:18. Here is a plain declaration that God possesses wrath, that such wrath is mani-

festes from His dwelling place, heaven; and further that it is directed against the injustice and wrongdoing of men. (In this present life, there is imperfect retribution. Vice and virtue, obedience and disobedience, do not receive their full deserts. But at the judgment day the imperfection will be remedied.) It will be well for us to consider the teaching of God upon this subject, lest we fall into condemnation and have His wrath poured out upon us (Heb. 10:31).

What kind of conduct will merit and receive the "wrath" of God? Long years ago, Ezra, leader and law restorer of the Jews said,

For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him (Ezra 8:22).

This is plain. If you want the blessing of God, you must seek after God. No one can ignore Him, forget Him, or abolish Him from his thinking and still expect Jesus to be with him.

It would be well for us to pause and ask in this materialistic age if God can bless the world. On the basis of judgment set forth by Ezra, we do not see how He can. How many people in this city have sought the Lord? What trivial excuses we use to keep from worshipping Him. The weather is too hot; we have company; we are too tired from the activities of last week—a hundred things come into our minds to exclude God from our hearts. Will God be with you to do you good, or will His power and wrath be against you, that you may know that it does not pay to forsake Him?

It has ever been an amazing thing to me to note that a lot of people who were once faithful to God have now forsaken Him. Many once lived according to His Word in Oklahoma and Texas, etc. They met with God's people for every meeting. They would not think of going anywhere else without first taking time to worship God. But since coming here, where the attractions are many, they have proven that Satan has a stronger pull on their hearts than God. They have now forsaken the Lord, and His wrath will some day be poured out upon them.

GOD CANNOT TOLERATE SIN

God cannot tolerate sin. It in contrary to His nature, renders those who are guilty unfit for heaven, and despoils the eternal plan which the Father had for the salvation of the world. For that reason, we should flee from sin and follow Christ. Hear what Paul says in Ephesians 5:1-2. I submit to you that this in one of the most touching descriptions of the love of God and Christ that you will find anywhere in the Bible. Christ loved us. He gave Himself for us. He became and died an offering and a sacrifice in our stead. Can you feature a greater love than that? Truly it is beyond the imagination of man. However, Paul does not stop with this description. The very next word is “but.” This suggests that there in another side to this matter. Let us see what it is in Ephesians 5:1-6. Yes, Jesus loved us. Yet, He gave Himself for us! He was an offering and a sacrifice, BUT—there is something for man to remember. In spite of the love of God, in spite of the great devotion to man, God cannot, and He will not, hold back His wrath from sin. “Let no man deceive you with vain words,” says Paul (v. 6). There are many people in the world who will tell you that you can live as you please, for God will not punish man. They scoff at His warnings, laugh at His plain admonitions, and go merrily on their way living after the desires and lusts of the flesh. And many people are just foolish enough to believe such empty counsel. They are being deceived by man with vain words.

THE WRATH OF GOD IS A REALITY

There are some who shall not have an inheritance in the eternal kingdom. Upon such comes the wrath of God. Who are they? They are the children of disobedience (Col. 3:6). You cannot disobey God and please Him. You cannot be one of His dear children and leave undone the things He has appointed for you to do, or do the things He has told you not to do. You cannot have the love of God and the wrath of God at the same time. You must choose one or the other, and the way that you make your choice is by the life that you live. What is your choice? Which life will you live? Which road will you take? Remember the wrath of God is a reality to be dreaded. It will overtake the disobedient.

THERE IS A FUTURE JUDGMENT

Let us turn again to the Scriptures. See Colossians 3:1-7.

Your past life is no excuse for your conduct at present. Neither in the fact that you once did these things without being punished an indication you can do them in the future without receiving for those deeds the punishment that is deserved. There is a future judgment awaiting. You cannot escape it unless you escape from the life of sin here. When John the Baptist saw many of the hypocrites coming to him to be baptized, he said, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mat. 3:7).

Study 2 Corinthians 5:11. Paul refers to the solemn things of the judgment day in the verse before: the judgment seat, the judge; the appearance of every man, and the destinies of each. Holy fear should be produced by the study of these things. Let us observe some terrors:

- (1) The judgment day is spoken of as terrible. "The great day of his wrath is come" (Rev. 6:17). "Doom's day," the day to which all other days now have reference; the day uniting time and eternity. "Great and terrible day" (Joel 2:31).
- (2) The appearance of the judge will be terrible. Arrayed in all the infinite grandeur of His perfections. "The Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire" (2 The. 1:7).
- (3) Some solemnities of the day, terrible: The erection of a great white throne, the sound of the trumpet's blast; the opening of the graves; the sea giving up its dead, the heavens wrapped together as a scroll; the earth reeling as a drunken man; the sun black as sackcloth; the moon red as blood; the globe experiencing all the throes of dissolution; time ready to expire; the heavens and earth passing away. Then the universal convocation. All the generations, and tribes, and individuals of mankind before the great tribunal; the opening of the books, the public declaration of every man's sins; the sentence of eternal death. How fearful will be that awful hour!

In Revelation 6:16-17 is a picture of those who will frantically try to escape, crying out, "Hide us from the face of

him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Even though they cry to the rocks and the mountains, and seek annihilation, there shall be no escape from the officers of divine vengeance.

There is a day of wrath coming! You will be present on that day. Will you cower and stand fearfully wishing that you might be hidden from the face of God and Christ? Will you cry out for refuge when there is none? Will you seek to cover yourself from the face of the great Judge?

THERE WILL BE NO COVERING PROVIDED. You will stand bare and naked of heart. What will your answer be? You cannot plead ignorance. You have lived your life in a world where it would have been easy to serve God. Streetcars and buses take you almost to the very door of a place of worship. The Bible is printed and distributed in your language. You can buy a New Testament for the price of a movie. Yet, you deliberately refuse to read His truth, to obey His commands. You are laying up in store for yourself the wrath of God.

- (4) The infliction of wrath shall endure forever (Mat. 25:46). Total exclusion from the comforts and enjoyments of heaven. From all that can mitigate pain, alleviate sorrow, or soothe disquietude (Mat. 13:41; Mat. 25:41). The wicked will become victims of despair. Despair arising from the impossibility of retrieving what is lost, or of being liberated from the evil that is come (Heb. 9:26; Ecc. 11:9; 1 Cor. 15:24). **IT IS IN MERCY THAT GOD HAS REVEALED THESE TERRORS. IT IS TO DETER US FROM SIN, AND TO INCITE US TO OBEY HIS COMMANDS AND LIVE RIGHT.** We need the courage to encourage sinners to leave sin.

WE PERSUADE MEN

We persuade men (2 Cor. 5:11). Notice, Paul did not say to drive but "persuade." We need to persuade others to hear God's Word. It is His Word, not ours. He wants people to hear it. He wants people

to believe His Word, accept it as true, and obey it. Only by becoming the friends of Christ will we amp the wrath to come (John 15:14; 1 The. 1:10).

There is a duty resting on every one in persuading all to obey the gospel, but so few seem to be engaged in the work. In 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul expresses the idea of persuading men. The Word of God is what is to be used and not worldly ways. The Scriptures are God's method of persuading men. Such was the idea impressed by Abraham (Luke 16:31); also by Paul (Acts 28:23); and Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached, and it needs to be obeyed to be saved, and not some man's teaching or ways. It is all right to persuade so long as it is done in God's way, but so often such is not done.

Some ways used today are enough to make angels weep. The old system of the mourner's bench was bad, and yet if enough Bible is told to the mourner, it might not be a failure. Some persuade by shouting and deathbed scenes or stories. If people would persuade by using the Bible with these then such would not be evil. Again, a woman wants to reform her husband so she makes a pretense of obeying the gospel to get her husband to quit drinking. He does not follow, and she does not believe in the church. What a shame! She sinned because it was not of faith (Rom. 14:23). No wonder her husband stayed out.

So often a husband will neglect services at God's house to go with his wife to a denominational meeting. He thinks this to be a way to persuade. At least one quarter of a thought would get a sensible member to see that this is not holding to what one claims to be.

Some women quit teaching the Bible to their children in order to satisfy the idea of a man who is out of the church and he never comes in. These are enough examples to get the person who thinks to see the difference in such ways and God's way.

If the Word of God, preached and lived by people, will not cause sinners to turn, I know of nothing that will. The gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and this certainly ought to be used. Too many people today are sacrificing the truth to get a lot of people to come in, as they think, when really they may not be gett-

ing in at all. Let us persuade men and never let up, but be sure to do it God's way, and not in any way to attract people such as is being done in our day.

THE NATURE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

"I am tormented in this flame?" (Luke 16:24). For men to say this is figurative language does not destroy its meaning. These words must mean something. People who read the Bible believe they mean something terrible. If figurative, remember that the reality of anything must be as great as the figure which represents it. The words "fire and brimstone?" were not put in the Bible to fill up space. We cannot believe they mean nothing! Men may take "hell" out of their creeds, but they cannot take it out of the Bible, nor destroy its existence.

Why do we say that the punishment of the wicked will be eternal? Because the Word of God so teaches! The Bible says: "The chaff [wicked] will be burned with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17). "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11). We are aware that these passages are interpreted as to mean annihilation. Malachi is often so quoted as to establish this view.

The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch (Mal. 4:1).

This is argued to prove the annihilation of the wicked. There is not anything in this passage to justify the doctrine of annihilation of the wicked; to burn stubble does not annihilate it. Burning decomposes stubble, but cannot annihilate because the same matter is in existence after burning that there was before. "All that do wickedly, shall be stubble," and stubble may be burnt up, root, and branch, without being annihilated. And so may the wicked by the same principle of reasoning. The Sodomites were burnt up, root and branch, as completely as stubble can be, for they and their city were burnt to ashes. Yet it is said of the Sodomites, that "[They are] suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The only way to conceive how the Sodomites can be suffering the vengeance of eternal fire is on

the principle that, like stubble, they were burned without being annihilated!

“I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). Some say this is a parable about the Jewish nation. If the rich man means the Jewish nation, then instead of one man being in torment, a whole nation was in torment. I believe the Lord's account of the rich man and Lazarus is literally true and that similar occurrences have been frequent since that time. God has two ways of dealing with sinners: one is to pardon them when they obey the gospel of Christ, and the other is to give eternal punishment.

Of what sin or sins was the rich man guilty? Surely not because he was rich, wore fine linen, and fared sumptuously. Abraham and David were rich, wore fine clothes, and fared sumptuously sometimes. Honestly obtained riches are not sinful. But riches improperly obtained and ill-used bring a curse instead of a blessing. Jesus was talking of the “unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:13), and then told us about the rich man.

It is suggested by materialists that it is unreasonable to suppose that God would be so cruel as to cause or permit anyone to suffer everlastingly. View the matter in the proper light and nothing is cruel. God would rather bless than curse; rather pardon than punish. The lost prefer damnation to salvation. If men travel the broad way, and go through the wide gate which opens into the rich man's “hell” where the soul-burning flame continues to devour forever, surely no blame can be pointed at God.

Suppose your neighbor were in a starving condition and you went to him with a table laden with the luxuries of life, and invited him to eat and live, giving to him whatever assistance that he might need but he refused your kindness and would not eat. He dies and goes to the grave. Who would say that you sent his body to the grave? As the refusal of the starving man brought death upon him, so the refusal of the sinner to be saved brings death upon him.

Notice, the rich man did not charge God with cruelty in permitting him to sink so low, but realized the folly of his own course in rejecting salvation and wanted his brothers warned not to come to this place of torment.

There are different descriptive titles of punishment given in the Bible for the wicked. This punishment is described as: (1) Lake of fire that burneth with brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 20:14; 21:8). (2) Furnace of fire (Mat. 13:42). (3) Eternal fire (Jude 7). (4) It is described as the hell, Gehenna, of fire (Mat. 5:22).

The intensity of future punishment is described as. (1) Torment (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). (2) Sorer than death without mercy (Heb. 28:29). (3) Tribulation and anguish (Rom. 2:8-9).

I am of the opinion that God intends for us to get the idea that there in going to be a hot time for the wicked. The Scriptures speak of a lot of fire.

THE PLACE OF PUNISHMENT

The place of the rich man's torment is said to be in hell (Luke 16:24). Materialists insist that the word "hell" in this text means the grave. Such reasoning is false. If you substitute the word "grave" for the word "hell" you would rob it of all rational meaning. There are other passages in which the word "hell" cannot mean the grave. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28). "Ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mat. 23:15). "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psa. 9:17). "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (2 Pet. 2:4). "Ye generation of vipers how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mat. 23:33). What propriety in saying "Fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in the grave?" Or, "Ye make him twofold more the child of the grave," or "The wicked shall be turned into the grave," or "The angels that sinned were cast down to the grave," or in saying "Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of the grave?" If the word "hell" means the grave in these passages, then all will be damned, for all go to the grave. This would prove universal, unconditional damnation. The rich man's language is, "I am tormented in this flame." Whoever heard of torment, or a flame, or one wanting water to cool his tongue in the grave?

"And the rich man also died and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." The rich man and Abraham did not

carry on a conversation in their graves. The rich man's body was buried, but his soul or spirit went to Hades. Jesus' soul went to Hades. Jesus was not in torment. This shows that there are two parts in Hades. "Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Hades], neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption" (Acts 2:27). The spirit of Christ did not go into the grave. Jesus said to the penitent thief "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Christ and the penitent thief went to paradise, yet they both went to Hades. Hades does not mean the final punishment, for that will be after the resurrection of the dead at the last day (Gehenna). Hades is a Greek word which represents the death state, corresponds to Sheol in the Old Testament, without indicating the particular condition of happiness or misery that may characterize it.

Sheol and Hades are words that are never used in the plural, but suggest one place. However, the words for grave are often found in the plural because there are many graves. There are no pronouns ever used with Sheol or Hades such as "my Hades" or "your Hades." But we do read of "David's grave," and "Abraham's grave."

Hell does not mean the grave as is seen in Psalm 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." If hell means the grave, then no one will go to the grave but the wicked. But the righteous go into the grave just as often as the wicked!

If Hades means the grave, then what kind of warning could Lazarus have given the rich man's five brothers to have kept them from the grave? Warning might have kept the five brothers out of hell where the rich man was. Abraham said. "Let them hear Moses and the prophets!" (Luke 16:29). What can one read from Moses and the prophets to keep him out of the grave?

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Pro. 23:13-14). If hell is the grave, then mothers could beat their children with rods and keep them from the gravel.

If we throw away the doctrine of future eternal punishment, we would have to likewise throw away the doctrine of future rewards;

for both rest upon the same foundation, and are found in the same chapters and verses in the Bible. How can anyone believe the Bible without believing the wicked will be punished after death?

There is a place of torment, a hell, a smoking, fiery, flaming hell into which the ungodly will be cast. There the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Listen to the words coming from a man in hell: "I am tormented in this flame." "Send Lazarus to cool my tongue." "Tell my brethren not to come to the place of torment!"

Why do some people try to believe there is no punishment for the wicked after death? It is because they would rather there were none. And for the same reason the criminal would rather there were no "death penalty." The thief would rather there were no penitentiary. Hence, they pervert the truth of God to make it appear there were none.

These people remind us of the fable of the animal which was so ugly that it became frightened at its own shadow, and to avoid seeing it, where it went to drink, it would, before drinking, go into the stream backward and tramp about until the water became muddy! So with the people we speak of; they muddy the fountain of divine truth in order to keep it from showing how corrupt, guilty and ugly we are in God's sight. The Bible, like a correct mirror, shows the sinner what he is. It reflects his image and brings to view the corruptness of his heart. Many, rather than be annoyed with this sight, muddy the water, pervert the truth of God, changing it into a lie and cry, "Peace."

It would be better, by far, to obey the will of God now, than to be tormented in the same flame and in the same hell which caused the rich man to cry for water to cool his tongue.

It is the only place where if you go you will never want anyone you love to come. "I pray Thee therefore, Father, that Thou wouldst send him [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them lest they come into this place of torment."

Hell is no more God's will for us than in delirium tremens. God wishes to save everyone from the awful place by saving him from sin, the cause of punishment.

It is said that God is too good to allow eternal punishment. But look at the things that have transpired in this life in the administration of our good God! Fire fell on the cities of the plain, the flood came in wrath. Christ's death for us is without meaning if there is no future, eternal punishment for sin. In plain words, this means that Christ died to save us from absolutely nothing. Not from hell, for they say there is none; not from punishment, for that is only in this life. This is as absurd as throwing ropes and sending boats to people on dry land who are in no danger of being drowned!

THE DURATION OR PERIOD OF THE PUNISHMENT

The punishment of the evil will be eternal. It is said to be: (1) Shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). (2) Everlasting fire (Mat. 25:41). (3) Eternal damnation (Mark 3:29). (4) Eternal judgment (Heb. 6:2). (5) Everlasting destruction (2 The. 1:9). This destruction shall be from the presence of God. It also shall be an eternal one. It shall never be restored. To sin against God is not a light matter. (6) The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever (Rev. 14:11). It is said that this Scripture cannot refer to eternity because there is no night in eternity (Rev. 22:5). While there will not be any literal marking of time by day and night as we count time, yet, according to Revelation 7:15, "They serve Him day and night in His temple," which shows that the expression "day and night" is an accommodating term expressing a continuation of service (Rev. 7:15), and a continuation of suffering (eternal torment) in Revelation 14:11. (7) Everlasting punishment (Mat. 25:46). The Greek word *aionois* qualifies life in Romans 6:23, and qualifies "punishment and life" in Matthew 25:46. If the life is eternal, so is the punishment of the wicked. In the day of judgment, the righteous shall inherit eternal life, the wicked shall depart into everlasting fire. The duration of the two states is exactly the same. If the state of punishment has an end, so has the state of life. If life is eternal, so is the punishment everlasting. If the punishment of the wicked has an end, so has the life of the righteous an end. If *aionois* measures the joys of the righteous there, it must also measure the duration of the punishment of the wicked. The wicked cannot be annihilated

and yet suffer eternal punishment. Eternal punishment cannot be separated from eternal existence. Annihilation cannot be accepted because the Bible teaches that man is by nature immortal (Mat. 10:28).

PECULIAR FEATURES OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

The punishment of the wicked is personal. Vicarious suffering will be unknown in the future life. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it" (Pro. 9:12). The sinner will be forced into a face to face situation between himself and God. The Bible teaches that men are responsible for their sins. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

The punishment of the wicked will be terrible. It is a separation from all that is good. It is death to all that is enjoyable. When Jesus will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:23), this is the last time the wicked will see anything that is good, upright, and lovely. In Gehenna, hell, there will be no cry of a child nor the voice of prayer. No hymns of praise will be heard in hell.

CONCLUSION

Our tenure of life here is brief and transient and we may be called to stand before God at any moment. We should realize that refuge from judgment is provided by obeying Jesus (Heb. 5:8,9). However, the wicked stand in peril of God's wrath. "Because there is wrath beware, lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee!" (Job 36:18).

The penalties of Divine government are not appointed to satisfy the vengeance of the Lawgiver, but to secure the highest happiness of the moral universe by promoting virtue, salvation, and preventing transgression. Prisons do not imply the cruelty of judges and magistrates, nor are scaffolds monuments of tyranny. Men are under obligation to love and serve God.

Inspiration never suggests that the means of salvation, rejected in probation, are afforded to the wicked. The Scriptures portray future punishment as destructive and perpetual. Future punishment

is endless. "Everlasting punishment" (Mat. 25:46), punishment that ends cannot be everlasting. Men do not go to hell, as convicts go to prison, to serve a term and then come out with further condemnation. Millions and millions of years in hell will not bring one any nearer to the end of future punishment than would one hour.

HAVE WE LOST THE DESIRE TO BE SERVANTS?

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



Born August 3, 1917, at Franklin, Texas, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., is the son of Ira Y. Rice, Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. Baptized at the age of 12 by A. R. Holton, at Norman, Oklahoma, Rice began preaching while yet a boy, in 1932. He went, in 1955, to plant the churches of Christ in Singapore, Malaysia and South-east Asia. Having now been preaching for some 60 years, Rice is the editor of two monthly periodicals—*Contending for the Faith* and the *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*—and also the author of several books, including *God's Truth on Elders*, *We CAN Evangelize the World*, and *Axe on the Root—Volume I, II, and III*. Co-founder and second President of Four Sees College of Bible and Missions, in Singapore. he has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968, and as missionary to the Far East under oversight of the Elders of the Bellview church of Christ, of Pensacola, Florida.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seem of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost room at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no an your father upon the earth. for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ But he that in greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Mat. 23:1-12).

SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE SERVANTS OF GOD?

When Jesus predicated the concept of Christian greatness upon service, He was going contrary to everything the Jewish leaders of His day held dear. Descended as they were from those who had been held in bondage centuries earlier by Egyptian Pharaohs, many of the

Jews—particularly the scribes and the Pharisees—equated servanthood with slavery, which to them was both debasing and degrading. Nevertheless, both to the multitudes as well as to His own disciples, Jesus said “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

That Christians should be servants of God is not so difficult. As far back as 1 Samuel 3:9, we have Eli saying unto Samuel, “if he call thee...thou shalt say, Speak Lord; for *thy servant* heareth.” In verse 10, when the Lord came and called, as at other times, “Samuel, Samuel,” then Samuel answered, “Speak; for *thy servant* heareth.”

In the Book of Joshua 1:1-2, the Lord referred to the greatest leader of the Old Testament as His *servant*. The passage reads, “Now after the death of Moses the **servant** of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses my **servant** is dead.” And again, in Malachi 4:4, we read, “Remember ye the law of Moses my **servant**.”

In Zechariah 1:6, the Lord called His prophets “servants,” saying, “But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my **servants** the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?” Even Jesus Christ is called “servant” in Zechariah 3:8, wherein the Lord God referred to “my **servant** the BRANCH.” And Jesus taught the twelve that “The disciple is not above his master, nor the **servant** above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the **servant** as his lord” (Mat. 10:24-25).

HOW SHOULD WE SERVE ONE ANOTHER?

In seeking to impress the idea of Christian service upon His disciples, in John 13:4-17, after the feast of the passover we have this remarkable passage:

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean

every whit, and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he saith unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord. and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet, For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Instead of this passage being an example of ritual footwashing, as some erroneously suppose, rather it is a lesson of how Christ's disciples ought to serve one another. In other words, if their Lord and Master were not too good or too proud to serve *them*, then they should not consider themselves too exalted to serve *each other!*

ARE WE TO SERVE OUR FELLOW MAN?

Not only should Christians be happy to serve *one another*, but numerous passages show that we also should render service to *non-Christians* as well. Take, for instance, His experience with the woman at the well at Sychar of whom we read in John 4. Instead of holding aloof from her, a woman of Samaria, He asked her, "Give me to drink" (v. 7). Taken aback that He, a Jew, should even speak to her, she said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritan" (v. 9). Jesus answered, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (v. 10).

When the disciples returned from the city, where they had gone to buy meat (v. 8) and found the Lord in conversation with this woman of Samaria, verse 27 says, "they marveled that he talked with the woman." Yet, thus, by this example, He was teaching them not to hold back from those of another race or religion.

A similar lesson is gleaned from His encounter with the Syro-phenician woman, in Mark 7:24-30. She certainly was not of the same nation or religion as He, for she was a Greek. When He came into the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, this woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of Him, came and fell

down at His feet, beseeching Him that He would cast the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, “Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs” (v. 27). And she answered and said unto him, “Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs” (v. 28). And he said unto her, “For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter” (v. 29). When the woman went home, she found that the devil indeed had gone out of her daughter. So here, once again, the Lord taught by example that, His followers *should* serve, not just *each other* but their *fellow man* as well!

After the church was established, in Acts 2, we read of many signs and miracles that were done in order to confirm the Word. Whether any of these involved the healing of any non-Christians, in the early stages of the gospel, is uncertain; however, of the healing of the impotent man at Lystra there can be no doubt. The passage, from Acts 14:8-10, reads as follows:

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked. the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

This is an indisputable case of a Christian—even an apostle—rendering service to a fellow man who was not a Christian. Such would be in perfect harmony with Paul’s instructions to the Galatians, wherein he said, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto *all men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

ARE WE FACING A CRISIS IN SERVICE?

As a brotherhood, although we *teach* according to the foregoing, in *practice* we may have been far more affected by the contentions of the anti-cooperation brethren than many of us have supposed. Well do I remember the old days, before 1946, when brethren and congregations seemingly *sought* opportunities for Christian service. We did not have to wait for a hurricane, a typhoon, or a volcanic eruption to be moved to action. If a neighbor’s house burned down, a tornado struck, or some type of catastrophic illness incapacitated

a family—Christian or not, we didn't care—we all just pitched in and helped in every way we could.

Was the father of a family killed or ill, we'd all contribute food, clothing and other necessities of life to tide over the widow and orphans or otherwise dependents until they could get back on their feet and able to help themselves once more—no questions asked.

I still recall seeing J. D. Tent and C. G. Casey making the rounds of all 19 of the churches of Christ in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, collecting food and clothing for Sunny Glen Home, at San Juan. Were some of those children non-Christians or from non-Christian homes? Of course, they were! But what did *that* matter! An opportunity to do good existed—and as we had “therefore opportunity,” we tried to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who were of the household of faith.” Was this kind of religion all right? James 1:27 says it was: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

Until the anti-cooperationists came along in 1946 and tried to teach us the way of the Lord “more perfectly,” churches of Christ everywhere, as far as I knew, not only *believed* such “pure and undefiled” religion, but were happy to *practice* it, as well. It seems to me that ever since those days, however, there has been a growing crisis in Christian service—not just among the “antis” but among many of *us* who are so fearful we might do something wrong that oftentimes we do *almost nothing at all!*

If you think we do not face a crisis in Christian service, just announce a “work day” around the building and see which ones come and which ones don't. You may be surprised at the excuses many will make in order not to be of service.

Or, when it comes to door-knocking and bell-ringing inviting others for a gospel meeting, many times it is practically a lost cause. Talk about the “faithful few”—we may not realize just *how* few until folks are asked to serve in this capacity. Most will run in every direction to keep from performing this particular service.

WHAT IMPACT HAS ONE'S AVERSION TO SERVICE ON THE LOCAL CONGREGATION?

Although it is a fact that we hire gospel preachers to minister to local congregations, it is not true that such preachers should be expected to “do it all.” I am reminded of a story I heard years ago regarding old brother Foy E. Wallace, Sr. This goes back either into the late 1800s or the early 1900s. It seems that the church at Paragould, Arkansas, had invited him to come be their preacher. He accepted their invitation. However, in so doing, he wrote them a letter, saying to the effect that “I am willing to come work *with* you, but not entirely *for* you.” It seems to me even now that this sums up the proper relationship that *should* exist between the local preacher and the congregation that he serves.

The preacher no more can do my *service* as a Christian for me than he can do my *assembling*, my *singing*, my *praying*, my *giving of means* or my *partaking of the Lord's supper*! Can he take my place when Judgment Day finally arrives? Not if I read the Bible correctly. What did Paul say, in 2 Corinthians 5:10? “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” We shall receive the things done in *whose* body? Our *own* body—not the preacher's body, not the elder's body, not the deacon's body, not someone else's body, but *our own* body!

What can such passages as Matthew 6:33 refer to, if not to Christian service? Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Earlier in this same chapter, He had said,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

How can we lay up such treasures in heaven, except through Christian service?

Truly, the preacher in a congregation must do his partright along with the rest; and, as such, he must be both honored and supported. Likewise the elders: as Paul instructed, in 1 Timothy 5:17-18,

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

Any who do not understand that “treading out the corn” truly is Christian service never has prepared a manuscript for a lectureship lesson, such as this! The same is true of those who “labor in the word and doctrine” regularly within each local congregation. Those who expect the preacher just to drop everything he is doing to look after the physical needs of the members do not understand the teaching in Acts 6:1-7. Truly, in verse 7, it says that “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the truth.” But what was it that *produced* this marvelous result? The six verses immediately foregoing make clear that it was Christian *service* that did it. In other words, if those involved had been averse to rendering such service, then such a thrilling result never could have happened. Let us read it and see:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daffy ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost and Philip, and Prochcorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

And what was the result of all this that we have just read? Verse 7 concludes, “And the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” If, instead of reading this passage

just as a factual narrative, we would study it as cause leading to effect, it seems to me that we should get a great deal more out of it.

IS SERVICE DEGRADING?

Rather than Christian service being degrading, it not only is the secret of *church growth* but is the true basis of *Christian character*. No wonder that Jesus cautioned His disciples to observe and do whatsoever the scribes and Pharisees bade them do, “but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” In other words, they failed to *practice* what they *preached*.

It used to be a common saying among us that “I’d rather *see* a sermon than to *hear* one any day.” Of course, the *practice* of Christianity in no wise supplants the *preaching* of it. As Paul wrote the Corinthians, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Nevertheless, the Scriptures are replete with examples in honor of genuine service whether to God or man.

Take, for instance, the woman who brought an alabaster box of expensive ointment and began to wash Jesus’ feet with tears, to wipe them with the hairs of her head, to kiss his feet and to anoint them with the ointment. The Pharisee in whose home this occurred, as we read in Luke 7, inwardly was critical of Jesus even for allowing this to happen, which provided Jesus the occasion for teaching the parable of the creditor, saying to His host,

Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with a thou didst not anoint but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much. but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven (Luke 7-40-48).

In Matthew's account of this same incident, he further quotes Jesus as saying, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Mat. 26:13). Thus we see the premium that our Lord places on service.

Then consider Dorcas—a woman whose life was filled with good works. Acts 9:36-42 honors her with the Mowing story:

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was them they sent unto him two men, dashing him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber. and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Damoas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them forth. and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up. and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

In the very next chapter, we are told of Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. He is described, in verse 2, an "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which save much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." God so honored this man for his service to the people and his prayers that He sent an angel to him, saying, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." And the rest of the chapter is devoted to a rehearsal of this first Gentile conversion to Christianity.

HOW MAY WE IMPROVE OUR SERVICE?

If the churches of Christ are to improve the quantity as well as the quality of our Christian service, it is high time that we devoted greater study as to *why* we are Christians in the first place.

Jesus, our exemplar of Christian greatness, surely taught, in Matthew 20:20-28, that such is founded in service to others rather than to being ourselves served. In this passage, when the mother of Zebedee's children came with her sons to him desiring a favor, she

asked, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” Jesus replied that she knew not what she asked, explaining that, “to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”

When the other ten of the apostles heard it, they were incensed at the two brethren. Jesus made clear to them all, however, that

the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. **But it shall not be so among you:** but whosoever will be **great** among you, let him be your **minister**; and whosoever will be **chief** among you, let him be your **servant**: even as the Son of man came **not** to be **ministered unto**, but to **minister**, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Rather than *being* served, we must keep always in mind that, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Paul taught Timothy that to be “sanctified, and meet for the master’s use,” a man not only must purge himself of dishonor but be “prepared **unto every good work**” (2 Tim. 2:21). He said, that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all **good works**” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He exhorted Titus in all things to show himself a “**pattern of good works**” (Tit. 2:7). In fact, he included service right along with all other attributes of the Christian life, saying,

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:11-14).

It is up to us, as individuals, to study to show *ourselves* approved unto God by improving our Christian service. Jesus Christ himself, of course, is the only foundation upon which to build; but every one of us must “take heed how he buildeth thereon.” Whether what we build upon this foundation is gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble,

Every man's work shall be made manifest for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it in. If any man's **work** abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loom but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

We not only can put ourselves to work by watching for opportunities to serve (Gal. 6:10), but Hebrews 10:24 admonishes, "let us consider one another to *provoke* unto love and to *good works*." Hebrews closes with a benediction,

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in **every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is well plowing in his might, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

Rather than viewing Christian service an mundane, ephemeral and of little consequence, in fact, this is how we prepare for a "better resurrection." Paul exhorted the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always **abounding** in the **work** of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your **labor in not in vain in the Lord**" (1 Cor. 15:58). As John was instructed by a voice from heaven to write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may **rest from their labors**; and their **works do follow them**" (Rev. 14:13).

Intentionally Left Blank

CREATION VS EVOLUTION

Garry K. Brantley



Garry Brantley was born July 22, 1961 in Pensacola, Florida. He is married to the former Carol Allen, of Macon, Georgia, and they have three children—Amber Rose, Allen, and Zachary. He is a graduate of the Bellview Preacher Training School and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He began preaching in 1985 and has served the church in Fort Valley, Georgia, and is presently working with the church in Byron, Georgia, which he helped to establish in 1986. He conducts numerous gospel meetings each year.

INTRODUCTION

Some twelve centuries ago, David, an innocent shepherd boy, while keeping night vigils over his father's flocks often gazed upon the velvety black hemisphere pierced by moonlight and studded with thousands of twinkling stars. Perhaps while reflecting upon such idyllic scenes, the sweet psalmist of Israel mused; "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him" (Psa. 8:3-4)? Through the intervening centuries, men have gazed upon those same heavens with the same awe an eloquently articulated by inspired David.

Intrinsically, men have a deep-seated urge to explore the universe with the desire to explain their place within it. Why are we here? How did it all happen? Is there any real purpose to life? Where are we heading? Far-reaching consequences, both temporally and eternally, accompany our answers to these basic, fundamental questions.

Shift In Perspectives

Two hundred years ago, most teachers, scientists, and philosophers explained the intricacies of nature within the framework of a creation model espoused by the Bible (cf., Gen. 1). To them the ini-

mitable contrivances of nature were the veritable fingerprints of a Supreme Being (cf., Psa. 19:1). They considered the Genesis model, including the account of creation by Divine fiat (Gen. 1, 2) and the global Noachic flood (Gen. 6-9) to explain adequately and accurately all features in nature.

Within the last two centuries, however, men emerged with a completely opposite perspective relative to the origin and features of the universe. Though glimpses of a purely naturalistic approach to the origin and development of the universe appeared before Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859, this infamous volume profoundly impacted the scientific community, proffering a totally different approach to the question of origins. Darwin denied that God was largely responsible for the diversity of life on Earth but averred that all plant and animal life was the result of a long evolutionary process controlled by chance variation and natural selection.

Darwin's evolutionary doctrine created a tremendous sensation in scientific and philosophical circles and amazingly was soon universally accepted and heralded an proof that life is the result of evolution.¹ This shift from a theistic to an atheistic cosmogony (study of ideas about the origin of the cosmos) provided impetus to a heated debate that continues to rage to this date—Creation vs Evolution. Are this universe and man the result of Divine creative activity or are they merely a fortuitous combination of molecules assembled and augmented by pure blind chance? These two alternatives serve as the pivotal point around which our discussion will revolve.

Purpose and Methodology

To some, the particular stance we take relative to the origin of the universe is a rather benign affair. "It really makes no difference about our origin; our destiny is what really matters," are the sentiments held by some Bible believers. There is, however, a very fundamental problem with such a non-committal position. If the Bible is wrong relative to the origin of the universe and life, how can we be sure God has correctly revealed matters concerning our destiny? If we consider the Genesis account of creation to be rooted and grounded in myth, by what rational standard may we confidently

assert that the death of Christ on our behalf is founded in reality? And if we are not sure about our origins, how can we be certain about our destiny? In short, repudiating the biblical account of creation is to call into question the remaining sections of Holy Writ and, ultimately, God Himself!

The purpose of this lecture, therefore, is to endeavor to underscore the seriousness of the Creation/Evolution controversy and to demonstrate the rationality of the creation cosmogony over its evolutionary antithesis. To accomplish this, I will discuss the nature of the Creation/Evolution controversy; the role of science, in this controversy; and, present a case for creation. Space and time constrictions demand a limited discussion of each of these points.

CREATION VS EVOLUTION: AN EITHER/OR PROPOSITION

First, I would like to reemphasize that the nature of this controversy is very polar—everyone fits into one or the other camp. Hence, there is no room for complacency regarding this matter. Nor should the question of origins be relegated to a “Peripheral issue” to be discussed when and if all other matters are resolved. Our perspective on this issue will inevitably influence our conclusions on other issues. As Dr. Bert Thompson cogently contended:

The question of man’s origin is, of necessity, THE MOST BASIC [emph. in original] of all considerations. This in, obviously the first significant issue of man’s questionings. The outcome of our thoughts on this, the matter of origins, will undoubtedly influence the final outcome of our thoughts on a myriad of other greater and lesser issues.²

The question of man’s origins is inexorably linked to the question of God’s existence, stressing the sensitive nature of this controversy.

Neither is there any room for compromise on this issue as has been attempted by those of a “theistic evolution” bent who manipulate the biblical text in a lame effort to harmonize organic evolution with the creation account.³ Yet, to accept an evolution cosmology in any form is, in reality, to reject the historicity and credibility of the Divine Disclosure. Hence, such a compromise thrusts one into the same skeptical camp as the rank atheist. A humorous poem by Humbert Wolfe, accentuates this very point:

Observe creation mercifully hidden
 either in an imaginary Eden,
 or buried in some absent-minded spasm
 of a self-generated protoplasm.⁴

Whether we opt for a mythological treatment of the Genesis account of creation (imaginary Eden) or an outright repudiation of God (a self-generated protoplasm) is but to presume too much. Either way, we exalt ourselves above God which is a most precarious perch (cf., 2 The. 2:4).

Definition of Terms

To appreciate fully the sensitivity of our discussion, a clear definition of terms is imperative. First, the term “evolution” may be used in a variety of innocuous senses. “Evolution” (from the Latin *evolvere*) literally means to “unroll, unfold, change.” Hence, the term may be employed legitimately to describe the development of the automobile through the decades or the progression of languages.

There is also a sense in which the word “evolution” may appropriately be used to describe changes within species. This is known as the “Special Theory of Evolution.”⁵ Palpably, limited alterations can be observed within phylogenetic boundaries (eg., Shetland ponies compared to the huge Clydesdales, miniature Chihuahuas in contrast to the Great Dane, etc.).⁶ That which I am emphatically and categorically denying to have occurred in the “General Theory of Evolution” which argues that life initially arose and has since developed, divergently and progressively, by a purely naturalistic process. This alleged theory, therefore, demands that one species of plant or animal gave rise to a new, more complex species of animal or plant.

“Creation,” as I employ it, is to be taken to mean that act of Divine power in which the universe with all its innumerable aspects (including of course and in particular the planet Earth and its life forms) was created “ex nihilo” and fashioned by God in six, literal days as described in Genesis 1 and 2 (cf., Exo. 20-11). There is absolutely no cause to “reinterpret” the biblical account of creation in light of the atheistic theory of general evolution. If God created our vast universe (and He did) and, if He knows how He did it (and

He does), then why can't we accept His Record of how He accomplished it?

Limited Choices

At the heart of this controversy is the presence of our universe. The universe exists; therefore, inquiring minds want to know why and how. There are only three options that would explain the existence of our universe: (1) the world of matter and energy arose out of nothing (i.e., it created itself); (2) the universe (matter/energy) in eternal; and, (3) the universe was created by something (someone) anterior and superior to itself.⁷ The alternative suggested by Sir James Jeans that the universe is not real but illusory is absurd.⁸ We do not drive in illusory cars across unreal highways formed of mental concepts!

These three choices, when fully examined, fall into either the creation or evolution category. Alternatives 1 and 2 attempt to divorce the universe from God, approaching origins from a purely naturalistic perspective. Hence, they both fall into the evolution category. Choice number 3 coincides with the creation model. Therefore, in reality, we are faced with only two alternatives which can be examined as explanations of the universe and its contents—creation or evolution.⁹

Creation/Evolution: Mutually Exclusive

To accept one or the other cosmogonies (i.e., creation or evolution) in to repudiate logically the other. There is no middle ground. Either God created the universe (thus, creation is true) or He did not (thus, evolution is true). Evolutionists have long recognized the strict polarity of these two options. For example; Sir Arthur Keith, an eminent British evolutionist and key spokesman for the cause, candidly admitted that the reason evolution is believed in because the ONLY [emph. GKB] alternative is special creation which, to him and colleagues is “unthinkable.”¹⁰

Just as “no man can serve two masters” simultaneously (cf., Mat. 6:24) we cannot successfully hold to “creation” and “evolution” for we must “hold to the one and despise the other.” In this same vein, G. Richard Culp observed:

We stand either with God and His teaching of creation, or we stand with the evolutionist in opposition to Him. The issues are sharply drawn; there can be no compromise. You are either a Christian or an evolutionist; you cannot be both.¹¹

The Creation/Evolution controversy is, therefore, an either/or proposition. There is no room for an oxymoron “Creation/Evolutionist” Where we stand on this issue determines where we stand in relation to God. Either we are on His side (creation) or we are not (evolution).

THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE CONTROVERSY

Generally, evolutionists have very little regard for creationists who, according to them, “dabble” in science. To them the concept of a “scientific creationist” is beyond the realm of possibility—a blatant contradiction in terms.¹²

Boasts of Evolutionists

Evolutionists proudly boast that they operate in the realm of facts, whereas creationists, they charge, deal in matters of “faith” (recognizing that such is an erroneous definition of true, biblical faith, cf., Heb. 11:1). In other words, according to atheists’ contentions, evolution is a proposition founded upon reality but creationism is rooted and grounded in myth. Thus, to many scientists, evolution should no longer be presented as a theory, but heralded as an apodictic fact. For example, Sir Julian Huxley, a world renowned evolutionary biologist, advocated:

The first point to make about Darwin’s theory is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact. No serious scientist would deny the fact that evolution has occurred, just as he would not deny the fact that the earth goes around the sun.¹³

Consonant with Huxley’s remarks, Dr. Stephen Jay Gould, the famed paleontologist of Harvard and indefatigable crusader for organic evolution, boldly affirmed.

Facts are the world’s data; theories are explanations proposed to interpret and coordinate facts. The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth about the sun), though absolute certainty has no place in our lexicon.¹⁴

Both of these statements smack of egregious effrontery and egotism. Do not be deceived by Dr. Gould’s ostensible humility for, in

fact, his lexicon strictly forbids any other explanation of origins than that of organic evolution. In fact, in this same article, Dr. Gould engaged in a vicious diatribe directed against those who advocate "Genesis literalism."¹⁵ The two above quotes imply: (1) creationism is patently false; and, (2) those who embrace the creation cosmogony trifle with science. Is evolution, however, a fact of science as so boldly proclaimed by Gould, Huxley, and a host of other evolutionists?

Limitations of Science

To proclaim any explanation of origins to be a scientific fact is to evidence a total disregard for the true nature of the scientific method. Succinctly stated, science is "the broad field of human knowledge, acquired by systematic observation and experiment, and explained by means of rules, laws, principles, theories and hypotheses."¹⁶ Two principle words in this definition beg emphasis; "observation" and "experiment."

The "scientific method" begins with the observation of a certain natural phenomenon. After this initial observation, the method progresses accordingly: (1) observations are compiled and data studied; (2) a scientific hypothesis is formulated, generally explaining the data in summary form; (3) experiments are performed which will either confirm or counter the hypothesis; (4) if experiments confirm hypothesis, it graduates to a theory, if experiments conflict with hypothesis, a new hypothesis is formulated, (5) once the hypothesis becomes a theory, further experiments are performed confirming theory; and, (6) once theory is duly confirmed, it becomes a scientific law.¹⁷

The "scientific method," by its nature has inherent limitations. True science operates in the realm of natural phenomena that can be empirically observed, i.e., with the sense organs. Hence, among other constrictions, scientific inquiry is limited to observable, present, and, recurring phenomena.

Implications of Scientific Limitations

There are profound implications of these scientific limitations relative to the question of origins. In fact, these limitations imply that the question of origins is beyond the realm of science and, thus,

could never be definitively addressed through pure scientific investigations. Evolutionists recognize the validity of this contention. For example, evolutionist Dr. G. A. Kerkut, in his book, “The Implications of Evolution,” candidly admitted and presented seven ASSUMPTIONS on which the evolutionary model is founded.¹⁸ The first two delineated were: (1) spontaneous generation (or abiogenesis) occurred; and, (2) spontaneous generation occurred only once.

It is obvious why these two points must be presupposed by the evolutionist—they cannot be experimentally verified. Why? Abiogenesis does not presently occur as was duly demonstrated by Francesco Redi in the 17th Century and Drs. Lazzaro Spallanzani and Louis Pasteur in the 18th Century.¹⁹ But, in order for life to have just “happened” there must have been a point in the history of the universe at which non-living matter produced a living organism. Remember, however, that, due to the nature of the “scientific method,” science is powerless to address unique phenomena. Since no one was present to initially observe this alleged abiogenesis (which is a constituent element of the scientific method) and, since abiogenesis is not an actual regularity in nature (therefore cannot be presently observed) and, since the occurrence of abiogenesis is imperative for evolution to be true, it is sheer sophistry to contend that evolution is a fact of science! Abiogenesis can no more be scientifically verified than fiat creation can be scientifically proved—the question of origins is beyond the capabilities of science.

Let us not be deceived nor intimidated into believing that science is a megaphone through which the doctrine of evolution is legitimately proclaimed. Though evolutionists would have us believe that the evolution cosmogony is as much a fact of science as the revolution of the earth about the sun, in reality, this atheistic system is but a product of their fertile imaginations. Since Darwin, the coveted piece of real proof confirming the veracity of organic evolution continues to evade the most diligent detective for their cause.

A CASE FOR CREATION

Though the question of origins transcends the delimited domain of the scientific method, science does supply us with many answers

to the perplexities of nature. Bible believers should, therefore, recognize the legitimacy of science in the overall accumulation of knowledge. I would caution, however, against the growing belief that science is the sole purveyor of absolute knowledge. There is a growing tendency among the “intelligentia” to suspend judgment on any matter until science offers its dictum, and to regard any matter with which science is powerless to deal as an insignificant peripheral issue.²⁰ Nothing is farther from the truth. Science can supply many valuable answers, but it cannot supply all answers. Other fields such as psychology, history, philosophy, and religion also are legitimate contributors to knowledge. Along this line of reasoning, Thornton Whaling commented:

For natural science, history, psychology, or religion to affirm that there is only one mode of cognition, and that way its own, is to betray a fatuous pride which convicts of lack of good culture in the court of high reason.²¹

Science, therefore, should not be shunned nor feared by Christians. Rather, science should be recognized as a powerful avenue through which biblical creationism may be explored and defended.

Science and Religion

Though evolutionists attempt to drive an inextricable wedge between science and religion, true science and true religion are not antagonists, but counterparts. True, some scientific theories and erroneous religious concepts violently clash, but when both fields are properly examined, remarkable harmony between the two prevails. Science is the process by which we “subdue” the earth and exert dominion over it” (cf., Gen. 1:28; Psa. 8:6-8). And religion involves our worship and service of its and our Creator (cf., John 4:24; Jam. 1:27). Since the principles of science and the revelation of religion both owe their existence to God, why should they not, when correctly contemplated, be in attractive agreement?

Also, there are (were) many eminent scientists who believe(d) in God. Sir Isaac Newton considered the Scriptures to be the “most sublime philosophy” and James Dana, geologist of Yale, proclaimed his amazement in the “degree of accordance between science and the Bible....”²² Lord Kelvin, the famed English thermodynamicist

and whose name is immortalized as the designation of the unit of temperature of the absolute scale,²³ candidly claimed that “science positively affirms Creative Power.”²⁴ To these could be added the names of many other scientific greats (e.g., Johannes Kepler, Robert Boyle, Louis Pasteur, Matthew F. Maury, Werhner Von Braun, et.al.).²⁵ Be assured, evolutionists do not monopolize the field of science! A quote from Dr. Werhner Von Braun, the principle missile expert of the 20th Century, clarifies the true relationship between science and religion:

I deplore the attitude that scientific enlightenment and religious belief are incompatible. I consider it one of the greatest tragedies of our times that this is so widely believed...Through a closer look at creation, we ought to gain a better knowledge of the Creator, and a greater sense of man's responsibility to God will come into focus.... Science and religion are not antagonists, but sisters. Both seek ultimate truth.²⁶

Example of Religious and Scientific Conformity

Indeed, the laws of science and religion are compatible. The evolution system, however, blatantly contradicts many fundamental laws of science.²⁷ Time and space constrictions forbid a thorough discussion of this point. I will, however, briefly allude to a particular scientific law that bears directly on this controversy and which is causing no small unrest in the evolutionary camp—the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

The two most fundamental and universally accepted laws of modern physical science are the first two laws of thermodynamics. The first law, succinctly stated, is the law of energy conservation. In other words, although energy may be converted from available to unavailable forms, it nonetheless, remains a constant quantity—energy is neither being created nor destroyed.²⁸ Incidentally, this is exactly the state of affairs described in the Biblical Record subsequent to the creation week (cf., Gen. 2:1-3, ASV). In typical Hebrew prose, Moses repeats that God “had made” the heavens and earth to emphasize that His creative work was completely finished. This is in complete agreement with this first law of thermodynamics.

The second law is the companion to the first law. The second law states that:

...although the total amount [of energy, GKB] remains unchanged, there is always a tendency for it to become less available for useful work. That in, in any closed mechanical system in which work is being accomplished through energy conversions, the “entropy” increases; where entropy is essentially a mathematical formulation of the non-availability of the energy of the system.²⁹

A major consequence of this second law is that all actual processes progress toward an increase in entropy, or disorderliness.³⁰ Evolution, however, demands that an overall progress from the simple to the complex or from disorder to order occurs. One can readily see the disharmony between this law of science and the hypothesis of evolution.

Evolutionists attempt to resolve this discrepancy by presenting two arguments: (1) the earth is an open system (energy from an external source, the sun, is being forced into the system) and as such does not necessarily conform to this law; and, (2) there are “islands” of decreasing entropy within our system, i.e., the growth of a plant from a saw or the maturation process of a human, hence, the second law can be reversed.

There are, however, insoluble difficulties with these attempts to circumvent the second law. Regardless of how unpalatable the implications of this law are to the system of evolution, nonetheless, “...for our tiny solar system and the planet earth, the Entropy Law still holds the supreme position among the laws of nature.”³¹ The effects of this law are readily observed on earth. Thus, the second law applies to open systems.

Second, referring to “islands” of decreasing entropy an evidence for the retardation or reversal of the second law is specious. These “islands” of increasing order develop at the expense of even greater “oceans” of disorder. Illustrating this principle, Dr. Stephen Hawking, the highly regarded theoretical physicist of Cambridge University, remarked:

If you remember every word in this book, your memory will have recorded about two million pieces of information: the order in your brain will have increased by about two million units. However, while you have been reading the book, you will have converted at least a thousand calories of ordered energy, in the form of food, into disordered energy, in the form of heat that you lose to the air around you by convection and sweat. This will increase the disorder of the universe

by about twenty million million million million units—or about ten million million million times the increase in order in your brain—and that’s if you remember everything in this book.³²

To this I might add that, over a period of time, our minds will no longer be able to assimilate ordered information. That which, for a limited time, increases in order does so at the expense of greater disorder and will eventually decrease in order itself. Therefore, the second law is never fully reversed—it does reign supreme in nature!

The second law of thermodynamics expressly forbids organic evolution, regardless of the protests of evolutionists. Actually, the principles of evolution (lit. “out-rolling”) and entropy (lit. “in-turning”) are diametrically opposed, both conceptually and pragmatically. The tune of this law and the melody of the biblical account of creation, however, produce a euphonic overture. The creation model suggests that the universe (all matter and energy) was created and, subsequent to the fall, began to “wax old an a garment,” i.e., entropy began its inexorable increase (cf., Heb. 1:10-11; Rom. 8:20-25).

The Divine Record in no way attempts to circumvent known laws of science as does its evolutionary foe, but accepts and expresses their legitimacy. If evolution is so “scientific” and creation is so “unscientific” then pray tell, why do evolutionists attempt to ignore basic laws of science while creationists accept and promote them? In this same vein of thought, Dr. Henry Morris bemoaned in disbelief,

No one has ever seen anything evolve, no one knows how evolution works, the fossil record shows no evolutionary transitions taking place, and the basic laws of science show it to be impossible. Yet evolutionists insist that this is “science” and should be taught an proved fact to school children.³³

Science, once considered the bastion of evolutionary thought and invincible opponent to creationism, has proved to be evolution’s nagging nemesis and creation’s greatest ally.

Teleological Considerations

As scientists continually probe into the terrestrial and celestial components of today’s universe, they are continually confronted with universal balance and astonishing precision that are quite de-

trimental to the evolution cosmogony. The reality of careful contrivances that are ubiquitous in our universe bolsters one of the most effective arguments in support of creationism—the teleological argument. Teleology is derived from the Greek word (*teleos*) for “end” or “purpose.” The teleological argument, therefore, is simply the argument from design. Though evolutionists label obvious design in nature as “cosmological coincidences” or “Contrived appearance,” nonetheless, science has demonstrated purposeful design in the cosmos. Of course, if there is design, then there must be a designer—a most unpalatable implication to the evolutionist!

Long before modern philosophers coined the word “teleology,” inspired men articulated its principles, giving Divine endorsement to the validity of the argument (cf., Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). William Paley (1743-1805), an English philosopher of religion and ethics, popularized and cogently presented this argument in his book, “Natural Theology.”³⁴ Paley artfully employed the analogy of a watch to argue for purposeful design in nature. Just as a watch, due to its evident design and workmanship, demands a designer, so the earth’s life forms, due to their evident design, demand a designer, so argued Paley.³⁵ This argument continues to be a constituent element of the case for creation.

Science, rather than dismantling the teleological argument has contributed to its potency. On a microcosmic level, the earth has proved to be unique in all the universe. For example, the earth’s delicate tilt at 23 per cent allows for its change in seasons, without which life would be unable to exist. Concerning the importance of this angular phenomenon, Dr. Jerry Bergman postulated that if the Earth were exactly perpendicular:

...the poles would be in eternal twilight, and water vapor from the oceans would be carried by the wind towards both the north and south, and would freeze when close enough to the poles. In time, huge continents of snow and ice would pile up in the polar regions, leaving most of the Earth a dry desert. Eventually the oceans would disappear and rainfall would cease. The accumulated weight of ice at the poles would cause the equator to bulge and, as a result, the rotation of the Earth would drastically change.³⁶

The Earth's distance from the sun, its orbital path, its carefully measured atmosphere, its distance from the moon, etc., are precisely calibrated for the existence of life, evidencing purposeful design.³⁷

On a microcosmic level, purposeful design is the more evident. Biologists continually marvel at the complexity of the human body which is composed of multiplied trillions of cells. In the nucleus of each cell, are hundreds of thousands of genes, each consisting of the complex chemical deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). Scientists now recognize that DNA houses a very complicated code that actually directs the overall development of the human body.³⁸ Could such a complex code have originated by pure chance?

From the delicate interchanges between the human body's respiratory and circulatory systems³⁹ to the intricate optical, muscular, and cleansing functions of the human eye, design is evident.^{40 41} Neither Darwin's variation and natural selection hypothesis nor the neo-Darwinian "helpful mutation" approach can adequately explain the existence of such purposeful design in nature.

A Rational Approach

The creation model is the most rational approach to the question of origins. Logical reasoning demands that something (Someone) both anterior and superior to the universe has perennially existed and is responsible for its creation. The universe could not have created itself out of nothing. Nothing can produce nothing but absolute nothingness! The laws of science demonstrate (e.g., 2nd Law of Thermodynamics) that the universe is finite for it is running down (eternal things do not run down). The only viable alternative, therefore is that something (Someone) anterior and superior to the universe created it.

It is the epitome of presumptuousness to attempt to explain God's creation apart from its Maker. The system of organic evolution, far from being the rational approach to origins, is fraught with fallacious logic. The basic tenets of evolution (e.g., life from non-life, morality from amorality, intelligence from non-intelligent matter, design with no designer) are untenable. Which seems more rational, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" or, "In the beginning an infinitesimal particle decided to 'inflate'

itself and in the process just happened to produce man with the intelligence to observe and experiment upon itself"? You be the judge.

CONCLUSION

The cancerous theory of evolution has spread its insidious and noxious tentacles into every dimension of our existence. The deterioration of our society is, I am convinced, directly commensurate with the promulgation and acceptance of the godless theory of evolution. And the remarkable paradox relative to this theory is that many who pride themselves on reasoning from the facts have blindly accepted a system for which there is no genuine evidence. No wonder the Bible kindly but forcibly indicts the atheist as a fool (cf., *Psa. 14:1*). Evidence for fiat creation, however, is irrefragable. Therefore, may we perennially proclaim in the face of all infidelity: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (*Gen. 1:1*)!

ENDNOTES

¹Henry M. Morris, *Science and the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), p. 44.

²Dr. Bert Thompson, *Theistic Evolution* (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, Inc., 1977), p. 17.

³One of our own, a prolific writer and lecturer in this area, advances this compromise. Cf., John N. Clayton, *The Source* (Mentone, IN: Superior Printing, 1978).

⁴Quoted by Dr. Evan Shute, *Flaws In The Theory Of Evolution* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1966), p. 1.

⁵G. A. Kerkut, *The Implications of Evolution* (London, England: Pergamon, 1960).

⁶These examples taken from Dr. Bert Thompson, "A Study Course in Christian Evidences," *The Problem of Origins: Part II* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1983), Lesson 5.

⁷These alternatives were taken from Dr. Frank Allen, "The Origin of the Word—By Chance or Design?," *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, ed. John C. Monsma (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), pp. 19-20.

⁸Allen, p. 20.

⁹This was also observed by Thompson, 1977, p. 21.

¹⁰D. M. S. Watson quoted by Thompson, 1977, p. 25.

¹¹G. Richard Gulp quoted by Thompson, 1977, Title page.

¹²Dr. Stephen Jay Gould considered the label of a "scientific creationist" to be an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. He further charged that struggling with those who insist that Genesis adequately explains the matter of origins in a political exercise rather than an intellectual contest, implying, of course, the ignorance of those who believe in the Bible. See, Stephen Jay Gould, *Discover*, "Darwinism Defined: The Difference Between Fact and Theory," January 1987 (New York, NY: Family Media, Inc.), p. 64.

¹³Huxley quoted by Dr. Henry Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 25.

¹⁴Gould, p. 64.

¹⁵Gould, p. 64.

¹⁶Robin Kerrod, *The Concise Dictionary of Science* (New York, NY: Arco Publishing, Inc., 1985), p. 199.

¹⁷R. L. Wysong, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (Midland, MI: Inquiry Press, 1984), p. 44.

¹⁸Kerkut, p. 7.

¹⁹For a more thorough discussion, See: Dr. Bert Thompson, "The Mythology of Science—Spontaneous Generation," *Essays In Apologetics*, eds. Thompson and Jackson, (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1984), 2:61-67.

²⁰Dr. Bert Thompson, "The Problem of Origins, Part I," *A Study Course in Christian Evidences* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1983), Lesson 4.

²¹Thornton Whaling, *Science and Religion Today* (University of North Carolina Press, 1929), 12, 14. Referenced in *Ibid*.

²²Quoted by: Wayne Jackson, "Spiritual Realities," *Christian Courier*, Vol. XXV, No. 6 (Stockton, CA: East Main Church of Christ, Oct 1989), p. 21.

²³Kerrod, p. 127.

²⁴Lord Kelvin quoted by Dr. Bert Thompson, "The Revelation of God in Nature," *Essays in Apologetics*, eds. Thompson and Jackson (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1982), 1:106.

²⁵List taken from: Dr. Bert Thompson, "Logical Illiterates and Scientific Simpletons," *Essays in Apologetics*, eds. Thompson and Jackson (Montgomery AL: Apologetics Press Inc., 1988), 3:43.

²⁶Quoted by Dr. Bert Thompson, "The Problem of Origins," *A Study Course in Christian Evidences*, I (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1983). Lesson 4.

²⁷For a thorough treatment of these matters see Dr. Bert Thompson, "The Scientific Evidences for Creation," *Essays in Apologetics* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1986), 2:137-151.

²⁸John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1986), p. 222.

²⁹Whitcomb and Morris.

³⁰Harold Blum, "Perspectives in Evolution," *American Scientist* (Oct 1955), 43:595 made this observation. Referenced in Whitcomb and Morris, p. 223.

³¹Jeremy Rifkin, *Entropy* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1990), p. 46.

³²Dr. Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1988), pp. 152-153.

³³Dr. Henry Morris, *Science and the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), p. 61.

³⁴William Paley, quoted in: Joel Feinberg, "The Argument from Design," *Reason and Responsibility* (Encino and Belmont, CA: Dickenson Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), pp. 25-29.

³⁵Donald B. DeYoung, "Design in Nature: The Anthropic Principle," *Impact* (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, November 1985), No. 149.

³⁶Dr. Jerry Bergman, "The Earth. Unique In All The Universe," *Impact* (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, June 1985), No. 1.

³⁷For a more thorough discussion, see: Wayne Jackson, *The Anthropic Principle* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc.); Dr. Donald B. DeYoung, No. 149; and, Wayne Jackson, *Fortify Your Faith* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1974), pp. 17-20.

³⁸For more information, see: Wayne Jackson, “The Existence of God,” *A Study Course in Christian Evidences II* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc.), Lesson 3.

³⁹For a more thorough discussion of the delicate balance between the circulatory and respiratory systems, see Dr. Thomas Warren, *The Warren-Matson Debate* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), pp. 218-228.

⁴⁰For detailed information on the functions of the eye, see Dr. Bert Thompson, “The Design Argument—‘Eye’ of the Storm,” *Reason and Revelation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., October 1988), p. 42.

⁴¹Darwin acknowledged the absurdity of supposing that the eye could have been formed by natural selection, see Charles Darwin *The Origin of Species, The Harvard Classics, Vol. II* (New York, NY: P. F. Collier and Son, Co., 1909), p. 190.

Intentionally Left Blank

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A CULT?

Stephen P. Waller



Stephen Waller was born October 27, 1948 in Murray, Kentucky to Paul J. and Floy Dell Waller. He graduated from Mars Hill Bible School in Florence, Alabama in 1966. He attended the T. B. Larimore School Of Evangelists (Florence, AL, 1966) and Freed-Hardeman College (1966-68). He has preached for churches full-time in Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, and Missouri. He has appeared on the South Louisiana Lectureship in New Orleans and the 1989 Bellview Lectures. He has done extensive radio work, has worked in the mission field in the United States, has helped organize state-wide gospel singings, hold gospel meetings, and is a staff writer for the *Firm Foundation*. Steve was baptized in May 1959, and began preaching while still a senior in high school in 1966. He is married to Susan Clemmons of Florence, Alabama and has two daughters, Amy and Tricia. He has been working with the West End congregation in St. Louis since August 1988.

Sincere gratitude goes to the elders of the Bellview congregation and their preacher, Bobby Liddell, for offering me the opportunity to be involved in this lectureship. We appreciate the Bellview congregation and its faithfulness to the doctrine of Christ.

All authority both in heaven and on earth has been given unto Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mat. 28:18).¹ He has the right of command as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). Jesus exercises His authority through His last will, the New Testament. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Jesus has been set forth as the Spokesman divinely appointed by the heavenly Father. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mat. 17:5). God has spoken to us through His Son in these last days (Heb. 1:14).

Just before His ascension to heaven to be coronated King of kings and to sit at the right hand of God the Father and rule over His kingdom (the church), Jesus commissioned the apostles to go into

all the world preaching His death, burial and resurrection (Luke 24:44-49). He instructed the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. He further discussed the kingdom of God and its eminent beginning (Acts 1:1-8).

In the mind of Almighty God the church, or kingdom (Mat. 16:18-19), was planned from eternity.

To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the sternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).

The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the immoveable spiritual kingdom of the Lord.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume-all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14).

John the baptizer came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:1-2). After Jesus was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness (Mat. 3:13-17), Jesus went forth preaching, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). Prior to His transfiguration Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That then be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). When Jesus questioned His disciples as to whom the people thought He was, Peter declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:16). Jesus pronounced a blessing upon Peter and said,

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [confession that Christ is the Son of God, SPW] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mat. 16:17-19).

Jesus used the terms "church" and "kingdom" synonymously.

Ten days after the ascension of Christ to heaven the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14) and the church was established. This same institution is referred to by Paul as "the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13) and

the “kingdom which cannot be moved” (Heb. 12:28). John wrote that he was “in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9). The book of Acts records many of the activities of members of the church established by Christ in the first century. The inspired letters, from Romans through Revelation, were written to guide congregations of churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16) and individual Christians, and to lead them more perfectly in the way of the Lord (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The New Testament church, which is the blood-bought bride of Christ (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-27), is the only one authorized and established by Jesus; and, the only one which existed in the first century. It is the only church recognized and preached by the apostles and Holy Spirit-inspired men in the New Testament (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:15).

In order to evaluate properly the question which serves as the subject of this lecture, “Is The Church Of Christ A Cult?”, one must accept the aforementioned facts. One must accept that Jesus Christ exercises His authority through the New Testament. Since this is the case (Heb, 9:14-16; 10:9-10), one must be guided by the New Testament in determining the answer to this important question. Also, one must recognize the church revealed in the New Testament as the only true church of which Jesus Christ is the head and foundation (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). Any deviation from the Headship or authority of Jesus as set forth in the New Testament or from the divine pattern revealed for the church, its organization and work, brings upon one the disapproval of God and condemnation (Gal. 1:6-8). Jesus declared in Matthew 15:13-14, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Any religion, denomination, sect, cult or group which exists in opposition, contradiction, competition or substitution to the church of Christ as set forth in the New Testament and which claims Jesus Christ as leader, savior, king, head or authority does so contrary to all that is revealed in the New Testament.

Did Jesus plan to establish a “cult” when He planned the church? Did He have reference to a “cult” when He said, “Upon this rock I

will build my church”? When Paul, John, Peter and all the other writers of the New Testament referred to the church, the brotherhood, the kingdom or the assembly, were they referring to a cult? When one is baptized into Christ is that one added to a cult by Jesus (Acts 2:47)? Such questions may sound absurd to some, but it is possible that some believe it to be so. When one considers the damage done to the Lord’s church as a result of the influence of the Boston Church of Christ cult, one might erroneously think that the church of Christ is a cult. Thus, it is quite fitting to be concerned with the question, “Is The Church Of Christ A Cult?”

In order to arrive at an intelligent answer to the question, one must first define a cult. A number of researchers and authors have defined the term “cult.” Webster’s Dictionary defines “cult” in part as: “A system of religious beliefs and ritual; a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; great devotion to a person or idea, or thing.” Some regard the term “sect” as synonymous. In his book, *These Also Believe*, Charles S. Braden writes:

A cult, as I define it, is any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief and practice from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture.²

Walter Martin adds: “...cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person’s mis-interpretation of the Bible.”³

Edmond G. Gram defines a cult as

...any religious movement which claims the backing of Christ or the Bible, but distorts the central message by 1) an additional revelation, and 2) by displacing a fundamental tenet of faith with a secondary matter.⁴

Lowell D. Streiker wrote:

A cult is a movement of social protest and personal affirmation. It offers a total way of life to those who are alienated from their families and the attitudes by which their families prepare them for successful adulthood. Cults attract the dispossessed, the bored, the lonely. Neither poverty nor youth is a necessary precondition for feeling the lure of a cult.⁵

In order to more firmly and definitely establish in the mind the definition or meaning of a cult one should consider the various char-

acteristics of a cult as set forth by Marcia Rudin, an anti-cult writer. Note fourteen commonly accepted characteristics of a cult:

1. Members swear total allegiance to an all-power leader who they believe to be the Messish.
2. Rational thought is discouraged or forbidden.
3. The cult's recruitment techniques are often deceptive.
4. The cult weakens the follower psychologically by making him or her depend upon the group to solve his or her problem.
5. The cults manipulate guilt to their advantage.
6. The cult leader makes all the career and life decisions of the members.
7. Cults exist only for their own material survival and make false promises to work to improve society.
8. Cult members often work fulltime for the group for little or no pay.
9. Cult members are isolated from the outside world and any reality testing it could provide.
10. Cults are anti-woman, anti-child, and anti-family.
11. Cults are apocalyptic and believe themselves to be the remnant who will survive the soon-approaching end of the world.
12. Many cults follow an "ends justify the means" philosophy.
13. Cults, particularly in regard to their finances, are shrouded in secrecy.
14. There is frequently an aura of or potential for violence around Cults.⁶

While no one group may be characterized by all of the above, at least some of them are part of all cults. In addition to the above, Walter Martin mentions certain characteristics which should inform and raise warning flags:

1. Cults redefine texts and clear meanings of Scriptures...the vocabulary of the cults is not the vocabulary of the Bible by definition...The cults capitalize on the almost total inability of the average Christian to understand the art of redefinition in the realm of Biblical theology...Let it never

be forgotten. that cultists are experts at lifting texts out of their respective contexts, without proper concern for the laws of language or the established principles of Biblical interpretation.

2. They are characterized by close-mindedness. They are not interested in a rational evaluation of the facts. The organizational structure of the cult interprets the “facts” to the cultist, generally invoking the Bible and/or its respective founder so the ultimate source of its pronouncements.
3. Genuine antagonism on a personal level which is exhibited toward both the message and the messenger who holds opposing beliefs. This antagonism is based upon the belief that anyone who opposes their beliefs is Satanic, blindly prejudiced or ignorant. They accuse Christianity of being the religious exploiter from which they have been freed.
4. Almost all cults practice isolationism and compartmentalization to prevent too much knowledge of information being disseminated. Thus, they keep a strong control over the lives of their adherents while declaring to have the “divine message.”
5. Cults have a dogmatic and intolerant attitude for any position but their own. Whatever beliefs or doctrines the cults hold, generally, they claim a supernatural revelation for them or a special leading of the Holy Spirit, which they use to gain mind-control over their disciples.⁷

[One should note at this point that the New Testament without addition, subtraction or substitution is man’s only safe guide when handled aright (1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Mat. 15:13; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 2:15). The gospel must be declared and defended (2 Tim. 4:2; Phi. 1:17; Jude 3). This is the only authoritative doctrine about which man has any right to be dogmatic—SPW]

The following groups are generally considered cults: Zen Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation (TM), The Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, Rejneeshism, Unity School of Christianity, The Children of God, The Way International, The Local Church Of Witness Lee, The Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, The

Church of Scientology, Spiritism, Bahai Faith, The World-Wide Church of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventism, The Boston Church of Christ and many others.

The proliferation and influence of cults in America in the past few years has been astounding. The growth of such groups may be attributed to a number of factors among which is the personal need to "belong," to be accepted by others and to enjoy a type of fellowship. Another factor is the need to "find God" which can lead one in many directions. But, without proper knowledge and guidance one is susceptible to the lure of the cults. One critical factor is the breakdown of the home and the need for a family. Included in this factor is a feeling of not being loved or wanted, or one may be far away from home in college or seeking a career and in need of personal attention. All of these factors have made multitudes prime prey for cult conversions.

The various cults offer some type of salvation, whether from sin, guilt, loneliness or something else. They offer freedom, happiness, eternal life, but are in fact, like those described by Peter. "(They) shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:9-17). They offer salvation by perverting one or more of the biblical doctrines of the Godhead, the nature and deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the immortality of the soul, atonement by means of the blood of Christ, worship, the nature of man, righteousness, the lost things (heaven, hell, resurrection, judgment, eternity), and the authority and all-sufficiency of the Bible alone. To examine all these topics as taught by each cult in light of the Bible would require volumes of material too detailed for this discussion.

In contrast to the cults, the church of Christ as revealed in the New Testament, is characterized by the following

1. Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of the living God (John 3:16; Mat. 16:18). He is the second Person of the Godhead, referred to in John 1:1-18 as the Word which "became flesh and dwelt among us." He is not a created being as taught by the Jehovah's Witnesses, but has existed eternally. He was conceived in the

womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit and became God in the flesh or Emmanuel (God with us) (Mat. 1:23). He is the great "I AM" (Exo. 3:14; John 8:58). He was not and is not a created "angel," nor merely one god among many. He is the foundation upon which the church is built (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:6-9). He is more than a caricature or abstraction of deity. He is the brightness of the glory of the Father and the express image of His person. He it is who purged our sine by shedding His precious blood on the crow of Calvary and who in now on the right hand of God the Father with angels, principalities and powers being made subject unto Him (Heb. 1:14; 9:22-28; 10:10-13; Phi. 2:5-8).

2. In contrast to the cults being characterized as discouraging or forbidding rational thought, the church of Christ has been taught through the Holy Scriptures and is characterized by encouraging rational thinking and reasoning. Jesus taught in John 6:44-45,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Acts 17:11 shows that the Word of God must be received with all readiness of mind, and the Scriptures must be searched daily to see if what is taught is indeed the Word of God. The faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) comes to the mind of man through an intelligent process: hearing, studying, meditating, learning and searching (1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15). Jesus encouraged an intelligent understanding and proclamation of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-47). The understanding of the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the Christ and His kingdom, and their fulfillment as revealed in the New Testament, involves rational thought. An understanding of the purpose and design of baptism requires rational thought (Rom. 6:3-11; 17-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Understanding God's law on divorce and remarriage requires rational thought (Mat. 19:1-9; Gen. 1:27; 2:22-23). In fact, rational thought is required in understanding and teach-

ing all of God's Word. No so-called "leap of faith" or "blind allegiance" to a more Messiah-like man is involved in one's service to God, but faith which works through love in obedience to the New Testament (John 14:15; Gal. 5:5b).

3. While the recruitment techniques of cults are often deceptive and involve much peer pressure, the cases of conversion to Christ in the New Testament were always characterized by a simple, forthright, logical presentation of the truth regarding Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior, His authority, His kingdom, and the need for faith, repentance, confession and baptism in order to receive remission of sins (Acts 2; 34; 8; 9; 10; 16). In the case of those on Pentecost, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian, Saul, Cornelius and his household, Lydia and the Philippian jailer, never once do we read of the encouragement nor practice of deception in persuading people to come to Christ and be saved. In fact, Jesus taught, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Paul stated that the Colossian Christians had obeyed "the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5-6). Paul declared that his preaching among the Thesalonians was not deceptive (1 The. 2:3-6, 13). Christ's church does not use deceptive practices to increase church membership.

4. The church of Christ does not seek to weaken disciples psychologically by making disciples depend upon the group to solve their problems. Though Christians may seek help from one another in time of trouble, each Christian is a priest of God in the spiritual temple of God (the church) (1 Pet. 2:5-10). As a priest, a Christian may read, learn and repent of his sins and personally go to God in prayer asking forgiveness of them (Jam. 4:2-3). Christians are encouraged to be strengthened in the inner man, to be courageous, to live in hope, to seek to do and be the best they can with what they have, to seek the welfare of others before self, to put the sins and guilt of the past behind and to treat fellowmen as they would like to be treated (Mat. 25:14-16; 2 Cor. 8:12; Col. 1:5; 1 Cor. 13:4-13; Rom. 12:9-21; Mat. 7:12; Phi. 3:13-14; Gal. 6:10). Trust and dependence on God for the solving of problems is encouraged (Phi. 4:13). Spiritual growth in Christ is likewise encouraged (1 Pet. 2:1-2;

2 Pet. 3:18). Following the New Testament not only brings one to Christ, but also improves one's mental health.

5. In the church Christ built, guilt is used only to make one ashamed of his unforgiven sins in the effort to persuade him to repent of such sins and live for Jesus. It is not to be used as a means of taking advantage of another person for personal material profit, a feeling of psychological superiority, nor for intimidation purposes. In the case of Simon, the sorcerer who sinned, Peter resorted to a very strong rebuke of Simon for the sin he committed. Simon's sense of guilt led him to repent and he asked Peter to pray on his behalf for forgiveness (Acts 8:18-24). The apostle Paul strongly rebuked the church in Corinth for its puffed up attitude toward harboring a fornicator and for failing to discipline him in order to make him ashamed and bring him to repentance (1 Cor. 5; 2 The. 3:6-15). Their feeling of guilt and sense of responsibility toward the brother under consideration motivated them to follow Paul's orders in the matter of withdrawing fellowship from him. When they repented and obeyed Paul's commands, the result was that the erring brother repented and came back (2 Cor. 2:1-11). There is no place in Christianity for the misuse or abuse of guilt.

6. The church of Christ has no earthly headquarters nor earthly leader who can manipulate the minds of Christians or make life and career decisions for them. Each Christian is encouraged to use his talents and abilities to acquire an education and work to make a living to support himself, his family, the cause of Christ and those who are in need (Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:22-24; 1 Tim. 5:8). Secular work is to be looked upon as a service to Christ. And, it is to be done honestly. But, no one makes these decisions for Christians.

7. The church of Christ is not isolated from the outside world as are cults. The church exists in the world and Christians live and work in the world, but are not of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15-17). "If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above...Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-3). It is through the church's coming in contact with people of the world in our daily work and other activities that the gospel and its in-

fluence is spread. The church does not exist in a shell or a vacuum. Truly, Christians and their faith are tested daily (Jam. 1:2-7; 2 Cor. 11:24-30).

8. While cults exist for their material survival, the Lord's church exists to preach the gospel to the whole world and help bring lost souls to salvation from sin through faith and obedience to Jesus. In such activity, God is glorified (Eph. 3:10-11; Mark 16:15-16). A by-product of the influence of the gospel of Christ is the improvement of society.

9. Far from being anitwoman, antichild and antifamily, churches of Christ follow the prompts of the Scriptures in exalting women and giving them a place of honor, "giving honor unto the wife" (1 Pet. 3:1-7) and in recognizing the precious heritage of children (Psa. 127:3; Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:18-21). The family is the foundation of society, and a solid home-life founded upon the teachings of the Bible will strengthen the nation and bring happiness and blessings (Eph. 5:23-33).

10. The philosophy of some cults is "the end justifies the means." This false philosophy is a matter of situation ethics. We are not to do evil that good may come (Rom. 3:8b). The practices of Christians and congregations are to be in line with New Testament principles. The end or result we seek to achieve may be just or holy, but our method of achieving it must be in accord with the Bible. The manner or attitude with which we go about the Lord's work must be open and aboveboard. Paul wrote, "Let your conversation [deportment, SPW] be without covetousness" (Heb. 13:5). Further, "Provide things honest in the night of all men" (Rom. 12:17). One's behavior is to be up to the high standard of the gospel (Phi. 1:27; Eph. 4:1).

11. The church of the New Testament follows the principle ad forth by Jesus when He was on trial: "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). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, thus spiritual in nature (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 6:10-17). While there is often an aura or potential for

violence around some cults, faithful Christians are to be at peace among themselves. They are to seek peace and pursue it (1 The. 6:13; 1 Pet. 3:11).

In this lecture we have seen the following matters: the deity of Jesus and His authority; the establishment of His church; the definition of a cult; the characteristics of cults; a listing of some of the more well-known cults; and, a contrast in the characteristics of cults, in general, from the church of the New Testament. In view of the foregoing facts, one must conclude that the church of Christ is not a cult, nor can it in any way be compared to a cult. While cults tear down and destroy people spiritually and psychologically, the Lord's church seeks, through proper study and application of biblical principles, to build up and provide spiritual strength and stability to honest and sincere people who seek the truth. Let none of us ever seek to manipulate, intimidate, nor coerce anyone to follow some course. Through love and respect for God, His Word and our fellowman let us patiently teach the gospel of Christ in its purity and simplicity, and give God all the glory for the results. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

ENDNOTES

¹All Bible quotations and references are from the King James Version.

²Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1949), p. xii.

³Walter Martin, *The Kingdom Of The Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985), p. 11.

⁴Edmond G. Gruss, *Cults And The Occult In The Age Of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 3.

⁵Lowell D. Streiker, *The Cults Are Coming* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1978), p. 9.

⁶Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook Of Cults In America* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Co., 1986), p. 5.

⁷Martin, pp. 24-29.

DO WE CARE THAT MILLIONS HAVE NOT HEARD OF CHRIST?

Ronnie Hayes



Ronald Ethbert Hayes was born November 26, 1964, in Birmingham, Alabama. Finished High School at Carbon Hill, Alabama and has since attended Freed-Hardeman College, Memphis School of Preaching and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He married Cynthia Reaves and they have three children: Leah, Kyle, and Anna. His first full time work was in Aubrey, Arkansas, where he stayed over six years. From Aubrey, he moved to Barn Creek, where he has now started his eighth year.

If the question were not so serious, it would almost be laughable, but **DO WE CARE?** It will be difficult to find someone to say, “We don’t care,” yet our actions speak louder than our words.

Maybe we should ask the question this way, “Should we care that millions have not heard of Christ?” Well, should we? One doesn’t have to read much in the New Testament to know that Christ cared.

In the mean while him disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, Then are yet four months. and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life sternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours (John 4:31-38).

Christ could look at the world and see a harvest which was ready to be gathered. He knew what His mission was on this earth. “For the Son of man in come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke

19:10). And it was the prayer of Christ that labourers would be sent into the harvest.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Mat. 9:36-38).

Christ recognized the importance of accomplishing the task which was before Him and the brevity of time which one has. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it in day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Christ was not the only one to recognize the importance of seeking the lost He instilled this vital principle into the lives of His apostles. Paul had a tremendous love for the lost.

I say the truth in Christ I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3).

Look at what was Paul's heart desire. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Is that the heart's desire of Christians today? Are we so concerned about the lost? Or is our desire spent on pleasure, power and property? Paul was willing to do what it took to save someone. "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

We have seen that Christ and His apostles were concerned about the lost, the question is, SHOULD WE BE? To ask the question is to answer it, YES!!!! We should be for several reasons. We should care that millions have not heard of Christ, because of the COMMISSION, COST AND CONSEQUENCES.

THE COMMISSION

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat. 28:18-20).

You can compare this with Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:45-47 and John 20-30,31. We are commissioned to GO, TEACH AND TEACH ALL NATIONS.

Go, whether next door or to the other side of the world, means for us to “move on a course.” It seems we understand GO in every aspect of our life except when it comes to our responsibility to the lost. Peter and the other apostles were told by the angel of the Lord: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). It is not amazing they understood and went.

TEACH, not just anything but we are to preach and teach the gospel. “And the gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:10). Paul told Timothy this way,

Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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 tam away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:24).

Why must we be so concerned about preaching the Word? Because it has the power to save. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Because we win be judged by it. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Because it is quick and powerful.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Paul in saying farewell to the Ephesian Elders said, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the 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). Only the gospel can make that statement, why teach anything else?

ALL NATIONS, whether black or white, big or little, short or tall, we are to show no respect of persons. “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). From this passage one can see God is not persuaded by skin color. It is not important to God what nationality you may be, but what is important is whether or not you have been obedient to the gospel.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

God’s plan for man to be saved has always included everyone.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

God wants all to be saved. “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). We would have no right to tamper with God’s plan. Since it includes everyone, we better be doing our best to get the gospel unto all nations.

THE COST

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27).

What is it going to cost me? Isn’t that the question everyone wants answered? Christ said if you are going to be his disciple, it is going to cost. The cost will be **PERSONAL, FINANCIAL AND SPIRITUAL INVOLVEMENT**.

How can I personally be involved? Some are already saying, “I can’t leave my family, home, job, security and besides all that I can’t do the work.” God has never asked you to do something you can’t do!! And you may not have the ability to preach, but there are ways that you can carry the gospel to the world. You can carry the gospel by your support. “And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:45). Paul thanked the Church at Philippi for this very thing, “I thank my God upon every

remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;” (Phi. 1:3-5).

You can carry the gospel by your steadfastness. “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46). You can also carry the gospel by your shining. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16).

Not everyone will be a missionary, but we can all support those which are in the mission field! When one speaks of financial involvement it always boils down to who controls what. Either we control our money or our money controls us. Now, which is it? I have seen brethren who would not attend services because a missionary was coming by to discuss a work. These brethren are so afraid someone is going to ask them to give that they refuse to even be there when mission fields are discussed. Many of these brethren use all kinds of excuses to justify what they are doing.

They accuse all missionaries of being gold diggers, living in luxury, driving cars which are too expensive and, my personal favorite, “They are just taking vacations at the expense of the church.” I am sure in times past that some men have not been what they should have been, but that doesn’t lessen our responsibility to support missionaries!!! “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). “For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:18).

You can tell where one’s heart is by the usage of their money.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steel: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mat. 6:19-21).

While millions are dying without Christ, we are more concerned about our new cars, bigger houses, designer clothing, savings, lands, boats, vacations and the list could go on forever!!! You want to know

how you can help millions dying without Christ, give, give and give more!

In the third place, what does it Cost? It costs spiritual involvement. By this I mean prayer. Everyone who is a child of God can pray, but do we? Do you pray everyday for those you know are lost? Why not? We are instructed to pray. “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17). Paul said this was his heart’s desire and prayer, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Can you truly say this is your heart’s desire and prayer? Prayer is one of the greatest blessings a child of God has, yet many times this blessing goes unused.

I think Nehemiah is one of the greatest examples of the use of prayer. In chapter one, when Nehemiah saw the magnitude of the work, he prayed. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” (Neh. 1:4). In chapter two, when he accepted the responsibility of rebuilding, he prayed.

Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it (Neh. 2:5).

Then in chapter four, when faced with adversities, he prayed. “Hear, O our God, for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity” (Neh. 4:4). “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them” (Neh. 4:9). It looks like we should be able to learn the importance of prayer, but we don’t. I doubt very seriously that 10% of all Christians pray for the lost every day. Do you? I can’t help but feel we are missing wonderful opportunities to help evangelize, when we fail to pray!

THE CONSEQUENCES

What are the consequences if we don’t care that millions have not heard of Christ? There is no doubt these will be far-reaching and eternal. I think there are at least three consequences you can see: Excuses offered, Enemy prevails and Eternity missed.

First of all, let's examine excuses offered. Certainly this in a consequence of not caring or of trying to get out of some responsibility. Many either try to Justify their actions or excuse them. Of course this is nothing new, from the very dawn of creation Adam said it was Eve's fault (Gen. 3:12). When God wanted to send Moses back to Egypt to deliver His people, Moses offered three excuses. First Moses said, who am I, "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exo. 3:11). Then Moses said, they will not believe me. "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (Exo. 4: 1). Next, Moses offered the excuse of I'm not a very good speaker. "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo. 4:10). None of these excuses did any good.

God will not be fooled by our lack of concern for the lost. Some try to say today, "I just don't have the money." It seems strange to me that we have money to do anything we want to do, but when it comes to God's business, we just don't have any. And by the way, you may think you can come up with an excuse God hasn't heard, forget it. God has heard them all. Gideon said, "My family is too poor." "And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family in poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jud. 6:15). Some have tried, "It is too dangerous." "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets" (Pro. 22:13). Jeremiah said, "I am too young": "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6).

Others blame their weaknesses on the master.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I know thee that thou art an hard man, reaping whom thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that in thine (Mat. 25:24-25).

Some will try to say, "We never saw the need."

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and

did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me (Mat. 25:45).

Then one that God and everyone else has heard too often: “I had to work.”

And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and am it I pray thee have me excused. And another add, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another a” I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come (Luke 14:18-20).

So before you offer God your feeble excuses, remember He has heard them all.

Another consequence of not caring that millions have not heard of Christ is the enemy prevails. I am afraid we have lost sight of our mission.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:18-20).

This is what Christ’s mission was. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). And if we lose sight of our mission, then Satan will prevail. Satan preys upon the souls of men. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan and his servants promise liberty, but in truth seek to put you in bondage.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allan through the lasts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto

them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:18-22).

Christ offers life. “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Satan offers life, but gives destruction. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Don’t be fooled by the enemies of the cross.

The ultimate consequence of not caring about all the lost in that eternity will be missed. First of all, all those who are not in Christ will spend an eternity in a devil’s hell. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). Secondly, for all those who have not cared about the lost souls throughout the world—we are watchmen and watchmen which will not warn will be held accountable.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and ad him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the mound of the trumpet, and took not warning-, his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he in taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand. So thou, O son of man, I have ad thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul (Eze. 33:1-9).

All of a sudden the consequences of not caring hit home. Are you honest enough to look at your life and see if you are doing what you should be doing toward those who are lost?

DO WE CARE THAT MILLIONS HAVE NOT HEARD OF CHRIST? We better, our eternal destiny depends upon it!!!!

IS THE FAITHFULNESS OF TODAY THE ANTI-ISM OF TOMORROW?

H. Daniel Denham



H. Daniel Denham was born in Pensacola, Florida. He is married to the former Barbara Stancliff and they have two sons, Shawn Daniel and Trevor Christopher. He graduated from the Bellview Preacher Training School, under the direction of William S. Cline, in 1977. Daniel has served as evangelist for churches in Florida and Texas and spent two years in Taiwan. He currently serves the church in McMinnville, Tennessee. He is a staff writer for *Firm Foundation*, has authored numerous articles for *Defender*, and has appeared on several lectureships.

Sometimes truth is to be found in what may be classified as an “extreme” position. The word “extreme,” as used here, refers to a position that, given all other opposing views, would stand at the farthest point (hence “extremity”) from the mean. The existence of God is an example of this. There are three basic positions taken on the subject: atheism, agnosticism, and theism, which holds that God does exist, constitute the “extremes” on the matter. Agnosticism, which holds that the knowledge of God’s existence is not known and may be unknowable, stands in the mean or middle position. In this case, the truth on the existence of God is not to be found in the middle position, but rather in one of the extremes—theism!

However, while truth may sometimes appear in a position that is extreme, it does not follow that truth is always to be found in an extreme view. In fact, more often the extreme positions are the false ones. Extremism in the Church has frequently been a source of much sorrow. The extreme views of liberalism and anti-ism have brought discord and division to the disciples of the Lord almost since the beginning of the Church in Acts 2.

The difference between these two views (liberalism and anti-ism) concerns the attitude of their adherents toward Bible authority. The liberal view refuses to abide by the limits of such authority, and thus seeks to set aside as being matters of option what are in reality matters of obligation. Matters of faith (better, difference) are treated as matters of opinion (or indifference) by the liberal. What has been bound by Heaven has been loosed by his liberalism! The liberal rails against the idea of a pattern. He rejects the existence of a moral and religious standard in the New Testament. He strives to exalt the concept of absolute liberty in religion, while contending that there are no absolutes! He disdains the idea that men are amenable to divine law. The liberal mindset encourages him to live above the privileges that God has granted him, and he feels compelled to “liberate” others through his anti-nomian doctrines.

The view called “anti-ism” is of the opposite extremity from liberalism, though both views are alike in that: (1) they fail to respect the means by which the Bible authorizes; and, (2) they each substitute human standards for the divine! The “anti” mind-set involves an effort to bind where Heaven has NOT bound. It emphasizes man-made restrictions and prohibitions, as opposed to the man-made liberties and privileges of liberalism. Anti-ism treats matters of indifference as though they were matters of difference. The “anti” brother seeks not only to live beneath his privileges, but also to bind his restrictions upon other brethren. He is not satisfied with unduly restricting himself, but he feels compelled to extend his reservations to others. His self-imposed prohibitions become hobbies in his teaching and fetters for his followers. It is the spirit of the ancient Judaizing teachers revived (cf., Acts 15)!

Brother Thomas B. Warren, in his excellent work entitled **LECTURES ON CHURCH COOPERATION AND ORPHAN HOMES**, provides a classic illustration of the difference between the extremisms of liberalism and anti-ism. On pages 12-14 he writes:

Now in order to set forth the fundamental difference between “liberalism” and “anti-ism,” I want to call your attention to a very simple illustration. Let us suppose there is a farmer who has three sons. The farmer wants his cow staked out in a field so that she will be able to eat within this particular area. He doesn’t want her to eat beyond it,

neither does he want her to be tied so short that she cannot go all the way out to here, because there are many valuable plants that she needs to eat within this particular area of this middle circle. On the other hand, he doesn't want her to go out to the outer circle, because there are some things that are poison. The farmer doesn't want her to eat that. So, he gives his boys a long rope and tells his boys exactly how far he wants the cow staked. Let us suppose, for the sake of illustration, that it is 100 feet. The farmer says, "When you stake out the cow, be sure you use a length of 100 feet." Well, the first boy goes out and decides he will take the liberty of making it 110 feet. And so the cow can roam all the way to this outer circle. That means that the cow can eat some things that the farmer does not want her to eat. Then, the second boy goes out, and he decides he will take the liberty of cutting the length down to 90 feet. This means the cow can only roam around in this small circle. So, there are many things that the farmer wants the cow to eat that she isn't going to be able to get. The third boy went out and tied the cow the length the father wanted him to use, 100 feet, so that the cow could eat everything the farmer wanted her to eat. This is the "truth" rope—the rope that represents what is authorized.

The "liberal" rope is different from this. This is the attitude that we are not confined to what the Scriptures authorize. That we may practice things "beyond the word." The very thing condemned in 2 John 9. The Bible declares, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teachings of Christ hath not God." The "liberal" is a man who treats a matter of *faith* as if it were a matter of *opinion*.

On the other hand, an "anti" is a man who takes a matter of *opinion*—it is simply his opinion in the matter—and treats it as if it were a matter of *faith*. We are going to be studying some of these examples. "Liberalism" is found in men who flaunt the law of Christ, but "anti-ism" is found in men who seek to *make* laws. The role that a man should occupy in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ is to be an *obeyer* of the law. Christ is the one, the only law giver. We can do, with God's approval, only those things that are authorized in His word,—but we *are* free to do what He *does* authorize! The church has ever been faced with men who would shorten the "rope" and say, "No, you cannot do this!"—even though such is authorized by God's word. There have always been brethren who would condemn and deny such.

The contrast and conflict of the truth with these two extremes furnishes the backdrop for our current study. The title of it is expressed in the form of a query, "IS THE FAITHFULNESS OF TODAY THE ANTI-ISM OF TOMORROW?" The study will consist of five key points.

- I. The DEFINITION of Faithfulness.
- II. The DEMAND for Faithfulness in the Bible.
- III. The DISTINCT NATURE of Truth.
- IV. Some DEMONSTRATIVE EXAMPLES bearing on the Subject.
- V. The DIVINE ANSWER to the Question before us.

It should be kept in mind that both extremes, when confronted by faithful brethren, will attempt to justify themselves by portraying their opponent as an extremist himself! (1) The “anti” movement brands as “liberal” any view or practice that does not pay homage to its man-made prohibitions. (2) Liberals, on the other hand, denounce any opposition to their digression from God’s Word as “anti-ism.” The mindset of each philosophy refuses to acknowledge the existence of a position that lies between their extremisms.

1. The DEFINITION of Faithfulness.

What is “faithfulness” in the biblical sense of the word or its concept? What does it mean for one to be “faithful,” as God sees it? The answer to these questions will help provide a basis from which an answer may be deduced for the question posed by the title of our current study.

The word rendered “faithful” in the New Testament text is the Greek term *pistos*. In its passive sense it means, “faithful, to be trusted, reliable,” while in the active it signifies, “believing, trusting, relying” (Vine, p. 412). Of the former usage, Thayer says it means, “trusty, faithful.” He then comments that the word is used in this sense “of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties” (p. 514). On Revelation 2:13, where the word is used of the “faithful martyr” Antipas by the Lord Himself, Thayer says it shows that Antipas was “one who kept his plighted faith” (Ibid.). This disciple paid the ultimate price for his faith, and it is his sacrificial adherence to the faith that made the use of this word applicable to Antipas! The abridged edition of *The Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament* states that there is associated with the word *pistos* “the nuance of ‘obedient.’” (p. 849).

The word is used of God (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; 11:11; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 John 1:9). The chief idea in each place is that God is faithful or reliable in carrying out what He has promised to do. He keeps His Word!

The term is also used with reference to Jesus Christ (2 The. 3:3; Heb. 2:17; 3:2; Rev. 1:5; 3:14; 19:11). The same basic idea of trustworthiness in executing His tasks and fulfilling His promises appears in each **passage**. It is not surprising from the preceding connections to find *pistos* applied to the Word of God itself: as it is in the expression of God's own nature (cf., Acts 13:34; 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Tit. 1:9; 3:8; Rev. 21:5; 22:6). Because its record is true and its promises are sure, the Word of God is the Book of Faith! In fact, it is the source of faith and the certain standard for ascertaining what is of faith (Acts 18:8; Rom. 10:17).

When used in the New Testament of the Lord's disciples, the word "faithful" refers to their fidelity to God through their obedience to His Word! They who are faithful are those who execute the commands He has given; they are those who have discharged their duties as dependable, trustworthy stewards of the Master. In Matthew 24:45, Jesus raises the question, "Who then is a faithful [*pistos*] and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" The Lord was speaking concerning His Second Coming, and was employing a very vivid illustration to stress the need to be watchful—to be prepared—for His Coming! He especially stresses the need for fidelity in the exercise of Christian stewardship. He is the "lord" of the text. The answer to His query of verse 45 is given in verse 46. He says, "Blessed is THAT SERVANT" Which one? "Blessed is THAT servant, WHOM his lord when he cometh shall find 80 doing." The emphasis is upon the word "so." The idea is that when the lord comes to reckon with His servants, the faithful and wise among them will be those who are executing their assigned tasks! They will, as it were, be found in the very act of carrying out their duties and would not be caught idle! Observe, the Master couples together in the illustration the concepts of both obedience and faithfulness. The latter is not found, where the former does not exist!

In Matthew 25:21 and 25:23, it is because of their compliance with the behests of their lord, that the five and two-talent men are addressed at the time of their reckoning as “good and faithful [*pistos*].” Further, it is the failure to obey that earns for the one-talent man the scathing rebuke of his lord in the description “wicked and slothful” (v. 26). Thus, the idea of faithfulness is tied to obedience to what the Lord says!

For one then to be “faithful” to the Lord means that he is one who is obedient to the Lord’s Word. It does not mean that he is sinlessly perfect: for he will not be (1 John 1:8-10). However, it does mean that he is “walking in the light,” as God is in the light (1 John 1:7). The Bible furnishes the light for his daily walk (Psa. 119:105). The word “faithfulness” refers to the state of condition of living in harmony with God’s Word! “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). The Word of God is the standard of moral and religious conduct (John 12:48).

II. The DEMAND for Faithfulness in the Bible.

The nature of faithfulness, as taught in the Bible, would be practically meaningless, if the need for it were not taught as well. The Bible, which condemns all vices and commends all virtues, makes therefore frequent references by way of direct statement to the great and pressing need for faithfulness. It couples the receiving of divine blessing with faithfulness to God!

A few key passages will be sufficient to establish the case that the Bible demands our faithfulness to God. John 14:15 records these words from the lips of Jesus, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” Verse 23 adds, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” In these passages the Lord shows that true love for Him requires the keeping—the practice—of His commandments (cf., 1 Cor. 14:37). In John 15:14, He says, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He thus ties together fidelity to His Word and friendship with Him (cf., 1 John 5:4)!

Two extraordinary references in the Book of Revelation clearly impress the need for faithfulness. The first in Revelation 2:10. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” This

statement was made to people who were facing the advent of a very brutal persecution. Many of them would dial The close proximity of this verse with the reference to Antipas (v. 13) evidences the degree of faithfulness that God expected of them. They may have to pay the full measure, even as Antipas already had done in wicked Pergamos. The second passage we need to note is Revelation 22:14, where the Lord declares, “Blessed are they who do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” In short, He shows that one cannot go to Heaven without faithfulness gracing his character!

Paul also stresses the need for faithfulness in stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2; cf., 2 Cor. 4:7), in running the “Christian Race” (1 Cor. 9:24-27), and fighting the Christian warfare (Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Tim. 6:12). He presents himself, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as an example of faith and fidelity (1 Cor. 11:1; Phi. 4:9; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

From the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount to the beatitudes of Revelation, Jesus Christ and His apostles and prophets time and again demanded loving obedience to God’s Word! Page after page, verse after verse, breathe the message of the need for faithfulness to Christ. He is “the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:8-9). The stern warning of Scripture is that the people of God can “fail of the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15; Gal. 5:4), and fail to enter our heavenly land of rest through unbelief (Heb. 3:19; 4:11). An evil heart of unbelief will cause one to depart from the living God (Heb. 3:12)! If one wishes to march with the Army of the Lord, then he must be numbered among the faithful (cf., Rev. 17:14)! If you are not faithful, then you are lost If your friendship is with the world, then you are at enmity with God (Jam. 4:4; Amos 3:3). The Bible commands our allegiance to Him who owns us “body and soul” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

III. The DISTINCT NATURE of Truth.

In answering the question, ““Is the Faithfulness of Today the Anti-ism of Tomorrow?,” we must also consider some key points about the nature of Truth, especially the body of truth called “the truth” in the Bible. We need to remember certain facts concerning truth.

(1) Truth is objective. That is to say, that truth is “outside” the mind. It is not dependent upon the thoughts of them who are contemplating it. It does not arise from “inside” the mind of men, but it is true regardless of whether we may know it or appreciate it as truth! Truth is not subjective. Something is not true simply because “I like it,” or because of my personal preferences or wishes. Truth involves an objective standard given by “the one, the *only law giver*,” as brother Warren has referred to Christ!

(2) Truth is absolute. It is final. There is no court of appeals that can overturn the declarations of the heavenly tribunal. It defines what is right and denies what is wrong; it delineates between what accords with reality (and is true) and what does not (and is false).

(3) Truth is universal. It does not change from person to person, nor from culture to culture (the “New” Hermeneutics notwithstanding)! 2×2 is 4 in the United States as well as anywhere else in the world. The answer is the same, regardless” of what language one may speak. In base 10, it will always be the same answer for all and to all!

(4) Truth is static. This means that not only is it universal in scope, but truth will not change through the passage of time. It would be a position of absolute absurdity for one to contend that, say for instance, murder was evil in 1991 but is not evil in 1992. The result of such a belief system built upon the shifting sands of relativism in that civilization, under the system, would fall into a quagmire of chaos from which it could not extricate itself short of massive and universal reform. Truth is not altered by the mere passage of time.

(5) Truth is also knowable. It can be known. It is the height of arrogance and stupidity for a man to affirm that he knows that no one can know anything! What a self-contradiction he commits whosoever holds that view of knowledge! I can know, by virtue of contemplation, that 2×2 is 4. The Bible also affirms that we can know (John 8:32; 2 Tim. 1:12; etc.).

IV. Some DEMONSTRATIVE EXAMPLES Bearing on the Subject.

By way of illustration, let us now consider a few cases in point that bear upon the subject at hand. These can reflect real situations with which this speaker is familiar. They will serve to provide some con-

crete examples by which we may be able to bring into focus the question before us—“Is the faithfulness of today the anti-ism of tomorrow?”

(1) Congregations A, B, C, D, and E have long maintained fellowship with one another on the basis of New Testament teaching. They have been “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). They have walked “by the same rule” and have minded “the same thing” (Col. 3:16). In time past, they have even withdrawn themselves from churches F and G for their refusal to abide in the doctrine of Christ. Congregation F introduced the use of the piano into their worship services, while congregation G began teaching and defending the doctrine of Premillennialism. These two churches identified themselves with the “Independent Christian Churches” many years ago. Now congregations B, C, D, and E have all decided to introduce new innovations in teaching and/or practice into their respective works. Congregation B decides to make use of the cultic practices of the Boston Church heresy. Congregation C has begun teaching that “there are Christians in all denominations.” They believe and teach that the Church of Christ is but one denomination among many denomination, a doctrine which before they had long repudiated! Congregations D and E have both introduced on Sunday morning the use of the practice known as the Children’s Church. Congregation A, quite reasonably, has become concerned with such departures from New Testament teaching! After repeated efforts to correct the matter short of withdrawal of fellowship, congregation A reluctantly follows through with that form of discipline. Immediately churches B, C, D, and E respond from the pulpit and through their bulletins that church A is now guilty of “anti-ism.” The preachers of these churches publicly bemoan what they term “the new anti-ism” of congregation A! They denounce any rebuke of their teachings and practices as “unloving,” “mean-spirited,” etc.

Is the charge made by these churches against church A justified? Has it become a form of “anti-ism” for congregation A to withdraw from B, C, D, and E, because of THEIR refusal to repent of THEM errors? If so, then was it a form of “anti-ism” when ALL OF THESE CHURCHES in concert withdrew from churches F and G some years

ago? Which churches have changed? Here are 5 churches (A, B, C, D, and E), which all formerly had stood together in the truth and had all walked together in the same way! Who moved out of the way? Who has turned aside from the narrow way of the truth, and who continues to abide in that way in keeping with what the teaching of Christ holds to be true?

(2) In another region of the country, brother Z has begun to appear on workshops and other programs with preachers from various denominations. He even has helped to conduct growth seminars for the Methodist and Baptist churches in his area. Brother Y informs the brotherhood of brother Z's departures from "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints." He does so through the means of the printed page and by use of the pulpit in his preaching. Brother X immediately labels brother Y an "anti" in the matter, and accuses brother Y of being "too severe and unloving." He states that brother Y is being judgmental and even says that the brotherhood would be better off if brother Y were dead! Both brothers Z and X teach that no one should ever teach anything that could be construed as being "negative."

Are the attacks on brother Y well-founded? Has brother Y taken a position that fits the definition of "anti-ism," as we have defined it? Has he made any law that God did not make? Has he tried to compel anyone to live beneath the privileges granted by Bible authority? Who in this scenario is guilty of upholding a self-contradictory position? Have brothers Z and X really shown a "loving" spirit—to brother Y? What about to the truth (2 The. 2:10; Pro. 23:23)? Are not brothers Z and X guilty of some of the things they try to ascribe to brother Y?

(3) Prof. M begins teaching at a particular school, which is owned, operated, and supported by members of the Church of Christ, that man "evolved over millions of years from some primordial slime." Other teachers are in sympathy with him, and have taken positions that would accommodate his views on the origin of man, which include his belief and teaching that Genesis 1 through 11 are mythical in nature. Brother P becomes alarmed at the influence Prof. M's teaching has upon impressionable young minds left in his care by unsuspecting brethren, who assume that because Prof. M is teaching in

one of “our” schools he must be sound in the faith! Brother P writes a book exposing the errors of Prof. M and the cover-up orchestrated by the school through key members of the administration, faculty, and board members, charged with the care and training of the young minds in question. Almost immediately efforts are mounted through theme powerful forces to extend the cover-up and to begin a massive “smear-campaign” against brother P for his “meddling.” Brother P is branded a “radical” and “troublemaker.” He is accused of being an enemy of “Christian” education. The sacred cow of “academic freedom” is trotted out, and the school prostrates itself before it. In the midst of their genuflections to the notion that a professorship or degree excuses one from compliance with Divine Law, the participants in the cover-up pay great homage to the professor as a “free-thinker,” “an innovative instructor,” etc. Prof. M is portrayed as a martyr, who has sought to broaden the thinking of his students. Meanwhile, accompanying the strains of praise for the professor, who would convince our youth that they are but the fifth cousin to Bonzo the chimp, there arises the sound of the school’s publicity machine as it strives to pillory brother P for his exposing the error of Prof. M! The cry of “anti-ism” is raised!

Is the cry justified? Is to make the accusation implied within the word “anti-ism” to prove that here is a specific case of it? What law has brother P made? What Bible freedom has he encroached? What right or privilege granted by edict of Heaven has been denied? What liberty has he circumvented? Who in reality has violated the law of God and turned aside from the truth to follow the vain doctrines of “science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:20)?

V. The DIVINE ANSWER to the Question.

Inasmuch as we have now defined faithfulness from the Bible to mean “trustworthy, etc.,” and that it involves the idea of fidelity to God and obedience to God’s Word, and inasmuch as we have seen that God demands faithfulness on our part, and inasmuch as we have set forth basic axioms concerning the nature of truth—including the truth of God’s Word, especially noting that truth is static and therefore does not change with the passage of time, we are now, by virtue of the preceding illustrations, in position to answer the question, “IS

THE FAITHFULNESS OF TODAY THE ANTI-ISM OF TOMORROW?"

As it in the came that faithfulness involves fidelity to God and obedience to the Bible, and as it is the case that faithfulness is demanded—it is necessary for salvation—by the Bible, and as it in the case that the Bible is the truth and is therefore true, and an it in the case that truth does not change but is static, it must therefore be the came that faithfulness today and tomorrow are the name thing! That is to say, the nature, extent, and obligation of faithfulness has not changed, nor will change!

One may show that a particular act is no longer a part of Divine Law by what the Bible teaches, but that does not rule out the fact of that law, the obligation to keep the permanent requirements of that law, nor the need for faithfulness to the law. The mere passage of time or the change from culture to culture will not annul what God has commanded! Only He who is True and from whom truth emanates can *establish* truth. Man's duty is to *ascertain* what in true (hence, truth), and abide by it!

In the faithfulness of today then the anti-ism of tomorrow? NO! A thousand times, NO! When brethren digress from God's Word, the cry of "anti-ism" against those who would expose them is a hollow charge designed to frighten the timid and deceive the simple. The servants of God should not be terrified by their semantics.

CONCLUSION

In example #1 congregation A, following New Testament teaching on church discipline, were not the ones who moved away from the gospel of Christ. They were not "anti" in insisting that the other churches walk by the same law which God made! They stood, and yet stand, where they always have stood, and where God told them to stand almost 2,000 years ago!

Brother Y was not the cause of division over brothers Z and X in example #2. He is not "anti" for defending what God commands him to defend (Jude 3; Phi. 1:17). May God give us more like brother Y, who have the courage to say what is right even when it is not popular and to do what is right even when it in not fashionable!

Brother P is not guilty of “anti-ism” in example #3, but rather there is a school who must bear the shame of disloyalty and treason to the God of Heaven! May God bless men like brother P, who will in the face of great opposition and virulent hatred from the enemies of truth continue to be “for the right and against the wrong always!”

Intentionally Left Blank

IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE?

Larry Middlebrooks



Larry Middlebrooks was born December 7, 1941 and baptized into Christ by James Alexander in 1967, at Willisville, Arkansas. Happily married for 32 years to Lyli Arlene Hodge of Stephens, Arkansas. They have four daughters and seven grandchildren. A graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching, he preached for the Bakerville Church of Christ near Bragg City, Missouri while attending the two-year program. After graduation, he accepted the work with the Pensacola Boulevard Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida. Now living in Katy, Texas and a member of the Fleetwood Church of Christ Houston, Texas.

I deem it a privilege to have been asked to speak on this lecture-ship. I wish to express my admiration and appreciation to the Bellview elders, brother Liddell, and the members of this congregation for their firm stand for truth and their untiring defense of the gospel of Christ.

The inspired Scriptures decisively teach that the Lord's church must have God-fearing leadership. These men must be knowledgeable men of wisdom, blameless men of God. Elders must have the ability to lead, to teach, and to direct the congregation. Elders, preachers, and all Christians should be well tempered with righteous judgment to make sure the church of our Lord remains pure. The topic assigned to me, "IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE?" is very important. Most gospel preachers have been accused of judging others in their duty of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Let us look at some of the demands placed on Christians to judge.

The Bible is the inspired Word of Jehovah God, both verbally and plenary, from the six literal twenty-four hour days of God's special creation (Gen. 1) to the last "Amen" in the book of Revelation. The inspired apostle Paul stated,

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, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is not a fallible story written by fallible men that can be either true or false. It is inspired of God. It in truth, the divine truth by which man is to direct his life; however, someone may disagree and charge that these are judgmental statements and judgment calls not authorized by God.

IS RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT A COMMANDMENT?

The church of our Lord is at a point of crisis. Uninspired men stand in pulpits denying inspiration, special creation, the authority of elders, the presence of the kingdom, etc., and espouse every false doctrine and practice imaginable. The Lord's church must be purged of these false teachers and their doctrines, if it is to survive. The division these false teachers bring is evident, yet, some brethren do not see any problems. Many brethren refrain from making any judgment calls doctrinally and are content to go along with the majority. Faithful Christians should step forward and defend the precious gospel of Christ. The church of our Lord is in a battle against the Deceiver of this world. Paul said he was "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phi. 1:17). It is time the faithful brethren set their defense of the gospel. The liberals and modernists have no qualm as they try to force their philosophies upon unsuspecting Christians and are quick to cry foul, if anyone objects. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). False teachers and the false doctrines they teach are to be judged and marked. It is commanded.

Some members of the Church are very quick, and at times very cruel in their judgment of others, especially those who disagree with them. They judge others by their appearance, speech, education, type of clothing worn, the color of their skin, and the list continues, but Christians are commanded to "Judge not according to the appearance" (John 7:24). Other brethren are quick to point out, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mat. 7:1). They apply this inspired verse to every religious decision that elders, preachers, or faithful members make in pointing out sin or religious error.

God does condemn certain types of judging. However, man must make judgments daily, for without good judgment our lives would be in constant turmoil and confusion. Parents, in their God-ordained duties, make judgments or decisions to the betterment of their family. The duties of the eldership demand that judgments be made, that in the Lord's church "all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). God condemns judgments that are made selfishly, pridefully, hypocritically, hard-heartedly, and with the wrong attitude. However, to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24), tempered with love, should be a part of every Christian's life.

God made man a free moral agent and man can choose to serve God or reject Him. Sinful man needs to know the truth to make acceptable religious decisions. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). However, the truth of God received in the wrong attitude will condemn us. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 The. 2:10).

When Christ stated, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mat. 7:1), he was not condemning the judgment of the civil courts, the disciplinary judgment of a congregation when forced to withdraw fellowship from an erring member, or the judgment necessary to condemn and preach against sin. He was condemning hypocritical judging. God commands preaching against drunkenness, murder, lying, thievery, and all mine. This cannot be done without judging the sinner.

Christ did not forbid the pointing out and judging of religious error or unscriptural practices. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men... Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:9, 13). Paul did not hesitate in pointing out the religious errors of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:16-18). We are not judging men when we reveal their religious error. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mat. 7:16).

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Some congregations neglect to expose doctrinal error and sin. These brethren overlook and paw off sine as though they were just insignificant discrepancies of belief and traditions of the past. The Lord's church stands on the threshold of disaster. Why is this the case? God states, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (Hos. 4:6). The church has become biblically ignorant because of the watered-down gospel that has been preached. Many Christians don't know what the Lord's church of the first century taught and practiced in acceptable worship.

Today, some people believe the world is in a religious cycle, moving ever closer to God, and are teaching the millennial reign of Christ on earth is near at hand. While man may move in cycles, God and His inspired Word never change. Heed God's Words, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you! (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Men, who try to change God's inspired Word to fit their modern society, are condemning their souls to an eternal damnation if they do not repent.

God's Word cannot be changed. Does God not mean what He says?

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Brethren, when men change the Word of God into a lie, faithful Christians cannot fellowship their error or we become a "partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 11). God said, "Separate yourselves from among

this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment” (Num. 16:21).

Brethren, our lives must be directed by God’s inspired Word and not the philosophies of men. Paul warns, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). Moses said, “Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Exo. 32:26). Can we do less than the Levites? Christians must choose who they are going to serve. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos. 24:15). If you are not serving God, you are serving Satan. “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat. 3:8). Those who have left the Word of God must repent. Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51). “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” (John 6:66-67). Christianity demands a commitment.

When sin is in the camp, righteous judgments must be made if the Lord’s church is to remain spotless and pure. Paul said of sin in the church,

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:2, 5).

These men made judgments in no uncertain tam; do we have any authority to do otherwise?

The inspired apostle Paul demanded isolation and condemned association with those who walk disorderly. “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 The. 3:14). “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicator” (1 Cor. 5:9). “But now I have

written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11). “But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:13). Does the church perceive itself as having matured beyond such behavior? To compromise the doctrine of Christ is to destroy the church of Christ. Jeremiah wrote, “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14).

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT AND THE YOKE OF CHRIST

Have the members of the body of Christ forgotten the restriction God places on fellowship?

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The church of our Lord can neither have religious fellowship with nor remain yoked with those who walk disorderly. The lack of righteous judgment in the body of Christ results in a lack of discipline and an “anything goes” attitude religiously. Neither the immoral members nor the doctrinal error taught are withdrawn from or marked. When elders and preachers stop preaching the Word and water down the gospel of Christ to promote growth, peace, and prosperity, errors go unchecked. The moral decline is evident in many of the liberal congregations, where members rebel boldly against the inspired teachings on unscriptural marriages, fornication, drinking, dancing, etc. These sinners are extended full fellowship. Sin is allowed for the sake of unity. The Bible without doubt teaches unity, but not unity at any cost.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

Christian unity must be according to God's inspired Word.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

Is union with sin and doctrinal error, in a desire to fellowship, acceptable and according to God's will?

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7).

There can be no Christian unity apart and separate from God's inspired word. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Paul said,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Some brethren operate on the premise that whatever God has not forbidden, God has allowed. However, only what Jesus himself authorized in the New Testament is allowed in acceptable worship and Christian life today. "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). Does man have the authority to go beyond what is written?

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another (1 Cor. 4:6).

Fellowship is dependent on our and our brother's "walking in the light" (1 John 1:6-7). Jesus knows the temptation that Satan brings into the path of his disciples. "And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Satan wants to

captivate and capture God's children as they walk in the steps of their Savior. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). There is a grave possibility that one's association with error will cause one to fall.

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness (2 Pet. 3:16-17).

An association with error will ultimately result in that error rubbing off on you. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). James wrote, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4). God demands, God expects total loyalty from His children. He knows that association with error will corrupt one's mind from the purity and "simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

When a brother or a congregation believes, teaches, and practices error, the truth of God's divine Word is hindered and those believing the error are eternally lost. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). All those who bring into the worship error and practices foreign to the Word of God, have "not the love of the truth" (2 The. 2:10-12). When Christians allow conscience and feelings to govern their actions and worship, they are no longer walking by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Human wisdom is an enemy of God. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 65:8).

How can a faithful Christian afford to be a "partaker of their evil deeds" (2 John 9-11) or be a "Partaker with them" (Eph. 5:7) when we are commanded, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11)? Righteous judgment must be a part of every Christian's life.

Christian fellowship is to be extended to those who have been baptized into the body of Christ (Gal. 3:26-28; Rom. 6:4; Acts 10:48). However, some teach that Christians are to fellowship all who have a common faith in Christ, thus they seek to bring instant and complete fellowship of all religious beliefs and practices in worship. Righteous judgment must be made in regard to Christian fellowship and God's inspired Word sets the boundaries.

1. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 The. 3:6).

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 The. 3:14-15).

2. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person (1 Cor. 5-11-18).

3. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Tit. 3:10-11).

4. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

5. 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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

These and other inspired statements compel a Christian to make judgments and withdraw from brothers who are immoral, disorderly in conduct, or factious in nature. Fellowship should not be extended to those who cause division by their teaching and practicing false doctrines. Those who cause occasions of stumbling contrary to the

inspired Scriptures and abide not in the doctrine of Christ should be marked. Total harmony in the body of Christ can be attained by a “thus saith the Lord” in all aspects of Christian life and worship. Christians must speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. However, some prideful and hardhearted brethren lead away disciples after them, making shipwreck of their faith, by the false doctrine they teach.

Liberal tendencies have plagued the church of our Lord for many years. Liberalism is the opposite of anti-ism. Anti-ism makes laws God did not make, binds where God has loosed, condemns where God has allowed, making matters of opinion a matter of faith. Liberalism loosens where God has bound, disregards laws God has made, allows where God has condemned, and treats matters of faith as matters of opinion. The Liberals, at times, reject the literal word for word translation of the Scriptures, even rejecting the miraculous inspiration, the distinctiveness, and exclusiveness of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To the Liberal, the Word of God is not black and white. He sees some gray areas in truth and states truth is relative and not absolute. Liberals often defend social drinking and forsaking of the assembly; deny the inspiration of the Bible; hold to the doctrine of theistic evolution; and, believe the church cannot withhold fellowship, but must fellowship false teachers and their doctrines.

When gospel preachers, who are faithful to the Word of God, defend the gospel of Christ, Liberals are often quick to condemn them as radical theological robots. The church needs men who emphasize Jesus and His church and who are not afraid to defend the gospel. When preachers do not give book, chapter, and verse in their sermons, the congregation suffers. Many members do not know what constitutes acceptable worship or Christian fellowship. Many preachers do not include the gospel plan of salvation in the sermons they deliver. Do these type sermons have the power to save souls? Paul stated, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). People must hear and heed the gospel plan of salvation given to us by our heavenly Savior.

It would seem that some preachers have received a latter day revelation, another gospel, an anything goes religion; however, a different gospel is condemned (Gal. 1:6-10). These men talk about fellowship with everybody, except those who will not fellowship everybody. They will tolerate everything and everyone, every unscriptural practice and those practicing it. However, they staunchly refuse to fellowship those who will not fellowship their error. God's inspired Word does not teach faithful children of God must fellowship everything and everybody, but to the contrary, judgments must be made in our fight against the liberalism in the brotherhood. May God help us to be determined to "contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The body of Christ is being torn apart by treacherous doctrines and religious practices. It is error to teach or believe that Christ ever wanted the union known as "unity in diversity." The Liberals are bringing the instrumental sounds into the worship of God. Some say the non-use of the instrument in worship is just a matter of judgment and tradition. They advocate fellowship with the Christian Church which has retained the instrument. The Liberals teach that the only unity attainable, is unity in diversity because of the liberated people of our day. Thus, fellowship should be extended to all who have a "common faith in Christ." It would be a rare occasion, for them, to withhold fellowship or withdraw fellowship from any group or person because of doctrinal differences.

1. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

2. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6).

3. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9).

4. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that

walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 The. 3:6).

Congregations must make judgments as directed by the Word of God. When a congregation does not abide in the teachings of Christ and the apostles it should be marked. False teachers who pervert the gospel of Christ must be stopped.

1. “Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:7-8).

2. “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9).

3. “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall man arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

4. “Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Tit. 1:11).

5. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18).

How long will the Lord’s church stand when many of its teachers and preachers now seeds of doubt in the minds of its members? Religion without biblical authority is vain. The division unauthorized worship is causing in the brotherhood may result in a purging of the church. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Let us earnestly contend for the faith and seek true unity with the Father and the Son. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6). The early church was united, one in heart and soul. How

was this unity attained? “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

True Christian unity is attainable when brethren all speak the same thing, without divisions, and are of the same mind and judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). We must all teach the same Word of truth. Faithful Christians heed the words of Jesus. “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Intentionally Left Blank

THE THREAT OF INFLUENTIAL FALSE TEACHERS AND UNFAITHFUL SCHOOLS

Noah A. Hackworth



Noah A. Hackworth was born in Oklahoma but grew up in California. Educated in California Colleges as with work toward a degree in Speech. In March of this year he completed his twenty-sixth year of work with the church of Christ in San Mateo, California. Served as editor of the *Bay Area Christian*, a monthly periodical, for seven years. Present co-director of West Coast Lectures and Director of the Firm Foundation Northwest Lectures in Washington. Has preached and/or held meetings in several states. Serves as a staff writer for *Firm Foundation*. Noah and Glenda Hackworth have three children and one grandchild.

INTRODUCTION

The very basis for this presentation is found in the following passages:

For as much as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among no, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus (Luke 1:1-3).

“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it” (1 Cor. 11:18). Though inspired, both Luke and Paul were aware of what others had to say about specific things. I am not an eyewitness. No personal investigation has been made by me of any school among us, or its faculty or curriculum, yet I am convinced that many of the things which have been said about them are true. Even though the obligation to be accurate is incumbent upon me, there is no difficulty in believing the reports of faithful brethren concerning the condition of our schools.

The Threat of Influential False Teachers and Unfaithful Schools is the subject to be discussed on this occasion. Treatment of this subject is painful to say the least, because we are not discussing a situation that prevails in the denominational world, but one that exists within our own brotherhood. There is not one serious, knowledgeable, truth-loving individual among us who has not been saddened over the present situation in our schools. False teachers and unfaithful schools! Such things are too unpleasant to discuss, yet too important to ignore. Under careful analysis our proposition affirms several important things: first, that there are unfaithful schools within our brotherhood; second, that there are false teachers within the walls of these schools; third, these false teachers are extremely influential in the classroom; fourth, the unfaithful schools, along with their unfaithful faculties, do indeed pose a threat to the future of Christian education, and the relationship of the church and the school.

THE FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL

It is grossly unfair to accuse a school of being unfaithful unless we know it is not doing what it should be doing. But unless I have completely misunderstood the concerns which have been expressed by knowledgeable brethren, the schools have not been faithful to their task. Many are wondering if Christian education is really the answer.

Christian education is the answer. It is the only answer. It must start with the child's birth and, with wine Christian parents as teachers, continue daily. An formal schooling is begun and the influence of secular teachers comes into the young life, the parents' responsibility is greatly increased. A Christian school from kindergarten through college in the surest guarantee of godly training for our children, and this could be provided if Christian parents would become aroused to the real danger of secularism.¹

This statement from a college president is extremely significant. He says Christian education is the answer, and there is no real disagreement here. He further says "A Christian school from kindergarten through college is the surest guarantee of godly training for our children..." This apparently was the answer some years ago, but it is no longer true in the eyes of Christian brethren who know something of the approach to education taken by some of our schools today. College professors simply cannot be ignorant of the challenges being

made to the faith of our young people today. What are these challenges, and are they being met?

The Christian teacher in a Christian college is not ignorant of the challenges to the faith presented today by the most highly trained skeptics. Neither does he ignore these challenges in his teaching. Rather he is also aware of the answers and is able to show that there is another side and that there are as many intellectual difficulties facing the skeptic as the Christian. The Christian teacher, however, does not stop here, but presents the basis for faith and builds into the student the understandings which make faith triumph over skepticism.²

Brethren, is this true? Are our college professors presenting a true basis for faith, and are they building the kind of understanding in our young preachers that will enable them to triumph over skepticism?

THE COLLEGE AND THE CHURCH

It would be less than honorable to deny the good accomplished by Christian schools, but there are some things about the college and the church which we should understand. First, general education is not the work of the church, but evangelism is (Eph. 4:11-13). Next, the church does not directly have a say in the administration of our colleges; a Board of Trustees does. As goes the convictions of the trustees, so goes the school. Some of our schools are seemingly no longer willing to listen to the counsel of faithful congregations. We should be a people of learning and scholarship. We must not ignore true scholarship. We should appreciate and honor all who have attained places of scholarship in legitimate fields of higher learning, but we must not think that New Testament truth cannot be learned by any except those who have a Ph.D in theology. We are on a course of madness in our colleges when we permit boards and agencies to set the standards and measure the courses taught and decide the field of study for our young preachers. These boards are composed of men who do not know New Testament truth and care little for it. Our youth coming out from such places are not prepared to face the challenges of a New Testament preacher. Every institution among us that has followed such a course and has surrendered itself to the dictates of educational boards has become a worthless institution for training our preachers.³

THE OBLIGATION TO BE FAITHFUL

Paul said, “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). This passage emphatically and unequivocally demands faithfulness on the part of those who teach the gospel. This would surely apply to the subject at hand. The passage demands faithfulness, but faithful to what? To whom? Can anyone explain why this passage would not with tremendous force apply to any school and its faculty? Our schools have been intrusted with the gospel, Paul says, “According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Tim. 1:11). “But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts” (1 The. 2:4). To whom was Paul amenable for the gospel? God Almighty! And there is absolutely no reason to think otherwise. Our schools therefore should employ only those men who will subscribe to the faithful presentation of the first century gospel. A prime example of the path that our schools should follow is seen in the announcement made by brother Thomas B. Warren relative to his assumption of Executive Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School of Tennessee Bible College. Brother Warren said.

President Malcolm L. Hill and I give our word to the brotherhood that we will obtain and retain on the faculty of Tennessee Bible College and Graduate School only such man as we are convinced are sound in the faith and qualified, by both study and experience, to do the job for which they are hired. We give our word that we will not retain on our staff men who believe and teach that which is obviously false doctrine! We further give our word that we will constantly seek out the best men we can obtain to fill positions on our staff as such are needed... The time remaining for us to do something about the situation of growing skepticism from without and growing apostasy from within may be shorter than any of us presently imagine. But, brethren, we at T.B.C. sincerely plan to train young men who can challenge the best that the atheistic, modernistic and denominational world can offer and who both can and will preach Biblical doctrines from the pulpit.⁴

THE QUESTION OF CONTROL

Assuming that we are right in our assessment of some of our schools, we are obligated to recognize that a great portion of the problem can be attributed to the fact that the church has lost its influence with the schools. The schools now influence the church (the dog no longer wags the tail, but the tail now wags the dog). This can be seen in the fact that many of our professors not only hold a position on the faculty (entirely alright with itself), but they also occupy the pulpits of many of our churches. This makes control of the local congregation possible, if indeed control is the thing that is sought. There was a time when a teacher or professor in a Christian school would find it difficult to hold a position on the faculty unless he was a faithful member of some local congregation. Now it does not seem to make a difference. Some of our schools not only have unfaithful Christian professors on the faculty, but also those who are not members of the church at all. This situation is particularly discernible in the emphasis our schools have put on accreditation. A professor who is not a Christian, a member of the church of the Lord, could hardly be expected to uphold New Testament Christianity from a doctrinal point of view. Many good brethren, past and present, have warned us that some of our schools have become a haven for those who are dedicated to restructure.

An elite corps of highly trained intellectuals began in 1967 an effort to turn us around and away from facing Jerusalem. They made it clear that they did not believe the writings of Paul were relevant for our time. He did not live under our conditions, then how would he know how to speak to men of our day? If this is not the clear meaning of those who began this movement among us, then the direction they have taken will reveal what they had in mind. The intent and meaning of the original editorial has been amplified and directed toward a more relevant message for the church of our day apart from the "gospel" and "doctrine" of the apostolic age. We do not believe that these men felt that the New Testament was meant to be any kind of blue print for our time and their present editorials testify to this fact. We would like to remind those who seek such renewal that if Paul were here today, he would not speak to man of science about science, but about salvation. He would not talk to the inner city dwellers about bread for the belly, but about bread for the soul. Here in where these reformers among us have turned away from the truth. It in this moving

away from the fundamental purpose of the New Testament; it in this threat to the authority of apostolic leadership, it is this attack upon the reality of New Testament authority that is our chief concern today.⁵

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS ARE IN DEBT

It is appropriate to suggest, as others have done, that Christian schools and colleges owe their very existence to men and women who believed that the Bible was (is) the inspired Word of God, authoritative and inerrant. Those who are to be credited with the establishment of our schools obviously wanted the Bible to be, taught as the Word of God, and not as the word of men (1 The. 2:13). Those who administer the affairs of our colleges are obligated to see that faculty members believe and teach the “word of God in truth.” The fact that some of our schools have drifted evidences the difficulties now existing in our higher institutions of learning. Many years ago it was said:

Some of the confusion can be traced to the class rooms of our colleges and Christian schools. There is no human institution that has such tremendous influence upon us as the Christian school. Much of what we are, we owe to the dedication of Christian college teachers. When men have sought to faithfully discharge their duty, we salute them but if we have a college that retains men who are theistic evolutionists; when there are those who encourage the ecumenical movement; when we find those who condone the Pentecostal tongue talking fad, then it is time for serious thought. We have all encouraged our youth to attend Christian schools and we have the right to expect these youth to return to us with the same faith and practice they had when they left. If our youth give up their faith, lot it not be said that it came from a college campus.⁶

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Freedom is important whether academic, political or religious. However, freedom obligates us to do right, it never permits us to do wrong. Academic freedom. means the right to teach the Bible, not the, doctrines of men. Academic freedom does not entail the endorsement of doctrines which are contrary to the Bible, nor the retention of brethren who are unsound in the faith. It’s time to examine carefully the trustees and faculty members. One brother again stated.

We as members of the Church are sick of hearing about academic freedom. We believe that there is no honesty in a man who will take money from our youth and will not teach them what their dedicated parents expect him to teach. Let those who are not with no, leave us.

Let none hide behind academic freedom. Our faculties must be Christian and they must not be men who will ridicule the position of the churches of Christ. Have we not the right to have an honest answer from every faculty member among us? Would we employ a preacher in the pulpit who refuses to answer our questions about his position.⁷

Advocates of “academic freedom” are asking (demanding) something that even the apostles of Christ in the first century did not have. “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). If Peter and Paul did not have “apostolic freedom” (the right to choose their own subject matter), we can be sure that the faculty members of our colleges and universities today do not (did not) have the right to follow a course that will (has) led them into apostasy. But change, for better or worse, does not (did not) happen over night. The seeds that have produced the present “crop of unfaithful schools and false teachers” were sown a century ago. Regarding the “drifting of educational institutions.” it is said:

The tendency was for Christian colleges to stray away from solid biblical principles in exchange for “modern theological viewpoints” and “biblical skepticism.” “The student ministers became impregnated with biblical doubts which mingled with the new Disciple ideas of ecumenicity and denominationalism.” Consequently, “these young men could not be dependable teachers to lead men back to the golden age of early Christianity.” Without consistent conviction that the written word of God in authentic and reliable, as Alexander Campbell said, “the mere training of the intellect in to put power into the hands of men without directing it.”⁸

Our brotherhood, which has apparently “sown to the wind” in the matter of “Christian education,” is now “reaping the whirlwind.” A century ago, Benjamin Franklin also said

We did not and could not foresee that colleges could be made a power for evil as well as for good; that all depends upon whose hands they are in; that infidels could be professors; that worldly-minded men could become professors; that men who are not sound in the faith, have not the love of the truth, could get control of colleges, and that they could be turned against the very truth they were built up to maintain...we must open our eyes and see what has been done and what is being done.⁹

THE RISE OF INTELLECTUALISM

Whether they have intended to or not, some of our schools have given us the distinct impression that they are in pursuit of intellectualism rather than Christian education. It seems the schools have become more devoted to intellectual pursuits, and to the conviction that knowledge is derived more from reason than anything else. Intelligence and wisdom are being seen as more important than anything. In the opinion of many we have become intoxicated with the desire to be recognized and accepted in the intelligent circles of the religious world.

The seeds of doubt and division are being planted by our inordinate and unholy desire for prestige and scholarship. We are deliberately following the course of sending our brightest young men into places like Harvard and other institutions of learning and these youth are not prepared to face theological problems that their teachers raise. What happens to these young men? Do your own research and you will find that we are losing about 90% of these young men. What kind of education do they receive in such places? Or, are they not being prepared to face such problem before they go there in the first place? What are we trying to accomplish in this conspiracy of intellectual pursuits that destroys so many gospel preachers? Our records in this field cannot be ignored.¹⁰

Paul's approach to intellectualism is made perfectly clear when he told the Corinthians that he "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (2:1-3).

WHAT DOES GOD THINK?

It is unpleasant to admit the existence of unfaithful schools within our brotherhood, and the presence of false teachers within them. However, the Bible is not silent about what God has said about such man and their influence. What God has said is what He thinks. We, then, are justified in believing what God has said about such matters, no more, no less.

God Demands Change

It does not make any difference who teaches error, or where it is taught, whether it is in the classroom, pulpit, or at home. God will not

endorse wrong-doing. It is obviously wrong for any “brotherhood school” to allow the theory of evolution to be taught in the classroom.¹¹ It is no less wrong for that same school to have Bible professors on its faculty who by their own admission believe and teach that theory.¹² But perhaps the most serious crime of all would be a Board of Trustees which would allow, ignorantly or otherwise, a school’s curriculum to include such a monstrous doctrine as the theory of evolution. But do we have such educational facilities within the brotherhood of the church of Christ? Yes.¹³ Do we have professors on the faculties of such schools who have been, accused of believing and/or teaching the theory of evolution? Yes.¹⁴

There are hundreds of professors who have wiggled their way into universities by saying that they believe the Bible, but who really meant by that, that they believe some kind of inspiration like Shakespearean inspiration, and they had no problem with the Bible containing myth and legend. Theological school faculties are full of professors who are theistic evolutionists, who believe the Bible in their broad definition, but who say that Genesis 1-11 is written in “theological language.” Whenever one uses such term as “hymn,” “theological language,” “myth” and so forth, beware—he is simply saying that it doesn’t mean what it says, that it is not literally true...¹⁵

Have such schools or their professors been challenged regarding the validity of accusations against them? Yes. Have there been denials of those accusations? Have corrections been made? No. What should now be the attitude of churches of Christ regarding such schools?

Mark Them Which Cause Divisions

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18, KJV).

The thrust of this passage is tremendous. It affirms: (1) the existence of “divisions” and “offenses” which are contrary to biblical doctrine; (2) such divisions and offenses should be “marked” (watched, beheld, contemplated); (3) those who cause “divisions” and “offenses” should be avoided, and, (4) this “doctrine” (*didachen*) is “teaching” (ASV) and refers to “the gospel” which is to be obeyed to become a Christian, as well as that which is subsequently to be believed and

practiced in order to remain a Christian. In the face of such a passage, who could successfully deny its application to those who believe and teach the theory of evolution in the classroom of a prestigious brotherhood university?

Too Concerned About “Image”

There is certainly a sense in which we must be seriously concerned with “our image” (Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18), but this is obviously not the “image” we are now talking about. Should the church be so concerned with its image that it ceases to preach the truth? Should our schools and universities be so concerned about their image that they will fill their teaching positions with unbelievers as long as they have the academic qualifications? In the opinion of many the schools among us are too concerned about their public image. It would be far better to be less concerned about what our contemporaries think of us, and to be more concerned about what God thinks of us, and the way we handle His Word. In the end, we know what will really make the difference.

The deliberate effort to change our image is seen in the way we copy the efforts of denominational churches in our gospel meetings. We have quit preaching and gone out to “witness” for Christ. We do not hold gospel meetings but they must be crusades with fancy names, gadgets and borrowed catch-alls from our neighbors.¹⁶

Things Which Must be Emphasized

Surely none can or will deny that there are things of great significance which must be strongly stressed regarding the present situation in some of our schools, and it must be done now. Consider the following.

(1) The Board of Trustees in a Christian college acts in violation of the trust which has been committed into their hands if/when they: (a) hire a man to serve as president of the college who does not know the truth which is the gospel of Christ; (b) hire a man to serve as president who does not live the truth; (c) hire a man to serve as president who will retain faculty professors who teach doctrine which contradicts plain Bible teaching even in the face of proof that the individuals under consideration really do teach false doctrine. (2) The President of a Christian college acts in violation of the trust which has been committed into his hands if/when he (a) hires men to serve on the faculty who do not know the truth (the gospel); (b) hires men to

serve on the faculty who do not live the truth, (c) hires men to serve on the faculty who do not teach the truth (but who teach fake doctrine on such crucial matters as authority, instrumental music in the worship of God, denominationalism, divorce and remarriage, evolution, etc.); (d) retains men on the faculty even after it has been clearly demonstrated that they are teachers of false doctrine in regard to obligatory matters. (3) Any member of the faculty of a Christian college violates the trust which has been committed into his hands when he: (a) does not know the truth (the gospel of Christ); (b) does not live the truth (1 John 1:7; et. al.); (c) does not teach the truth—but teaches various doctrines which violate plain Bible teaching in regard to obligatory matters.¹⁷

It's Time to Clean House

Sometimes the thing to do is to engage in a thorough “house cleaning,” whether it is a private home, the church, or a Christian college. It is obviously time to insist that every school among us (those that need it) clean up its faculty and curriculum. It is time to rid every classroom of every professor who is not sound in the faith (the gospel). It is time to remove every teacher who believes in/or teaches false doctrine. It is time to ask those who do not believe that the Bible is God’s inspired, inerrant, all-sufficient Word to move out and move on. It is only when the voices of the brotherhood can be heard in strong, perpetual protest against the present direction some of the schools are taking, that those schools which have become unfaithful to their trust can once again be proudly accepted as “our schools.”

ENDNOTES

¹F. W. Mattox, *Pepperdine College Lectures* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1958-59), p. 147.

²Mattox, p. 148.

³Glen L. Wallace, Tract, *A Conspiracy To Restructure*.

⁴Thomas B. Warren, *The Spiritual Sword*, (July 1979, No. 4), 4:1-2.

⁵Wallace.

⁶Wallace.

⁷Wallace.

⁸Dave Miller, *Firm Foundation* (February 1991), 106:17.

⁹Miller.

¹⁰Wallace.

¹¹Bert Thompson, *Is Genesis Myth* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 122-123.

¹²Thompson.

¹³Thompson, Preface.

¹⁴Thompson.

¹⁵Thompson, pp. 189-190.

¹⁶Wallace.

¹⁷Thomas B. Warren, *The Spiritual Sword* (October, 1986, No. 1), 18:37.

THE ELDERSHIP: CRITICAL PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH TODAY

William S. Cline



William S. Cline was born in Columbus, Mississippi, and reared in Silverhill, Alabama. He did local work in Mississippi, New Jersey, and Florida. He attended Auburn University; David Lipscomb College, B.A.; and Alabama Christian School of Religion, M.A., M.T.S. He conducted meetings in numerous states and spoke on many brotherhood lectureships. He did mission work in the Caribbean and in southeast Asia. He was the founder and past director of the Bellview Preacher Training School, founding editor of the *Defender*, and was the minister to the Bellview Church of Christ for fifteen years. Prior to his death, December 10, 1991, brother Cline was the editor of the *Firm*

Foundation and co-owner of Firm Foundation Publishing House.

INTRODUCTION

There is a movement underway to remove elders from their rightful place. The current insurrection reminds one of the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16). There are those among us who do not believe that elders have any authority. On the other hand, there are numerous occasions where the problem is not a recognition of eldership authority but, rather, a serious problem of the lack of eldership oversight!

Foes are without and foes are within and if apostasy is going to be curbed, then we are going to have to have elders roll up their sleeves and get to work. We blame a lot of things and people for our problems, but I am convinced that if we lay the ax at the real root of the problem, it will be laid at the eldership. If preachers wage the warfare, elders will have to back them or the battle will be lost. If preachers refuse to do their duty, then elders can see that they are replaced. If preachers utter strange sounds then elders are to stop their mouths (Tit. 1:11).

Paul gave the formula for success in 1 Timothy. In chapter one, he stressed correct doctrinal posture. In chapter two, he emphasized

correct moral posture. In chapter three, he pointed to the need for qualified leadership. Thus, in chapter four, when apostasy comes, the church will be ready. Why is apostasy plaguing the church today? We do not have the doctrine of chapter one, the morals of chapter two and the qualified leadership of chapter three.

We talk a lot about what preachers ought to do. Preachers are to, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). What about elders? If preachers preach something other than the Word, elders can put a stop to it. There is not a congregation where elders stood pat that anti-ism took over. The same is true concerning liberalism, and the same with Crossroadsism. Now, what if the preacher wants to preach against liberalism, but the elders will not allow it? Finally, liberalism gets started in that congregation and the elders say, “Better preach on it” MANY times, it is Too LATE!

Elders need to do the work of elders. “But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you” (1 The. 5:12—ASV). Note: they “labor among you”!! That means more than counting heads and dollars. It involves much more than sitting down once a month to divide the spoil and decide what day to cut the grass. When problems arise, elders need to jump on that problem. Why? For they watch for souls (Heb. 13:17). Elders have a place in God’s scheme (Eph. 4:11). Let us address ourselves to “The Eldership: Critical Problem In The Church Today.”

DISCUSSION

WE NEED RECOGNIZED ELDERSHIP AUTHORITY. Paul, in addressing the Ephesian elders, said: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Elders are “overseers” of the local congregation. “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). Elders “rule over” the congregation. Now, do they have authority? Or, is it negated by what Jesus

said in Luke 22:26? “But ye shall not be so: but he that is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chid, as he that doth serve.”

This is the sugar stick of the anti-elders. They try to drive a nail down right here and say, “Only Christ has authority.” Does man have authority over woman in the assembly? “But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in offence” (1 Tim. 2:10-12). Is this a contradiction of Luke 22 or has someone misinterpreted Luke 22?

Notice, with me, Luke 22:29-30. “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” This is apostolic authority, but such cannot be if ONLY Christ has authority.

What does Luke 22:25-26 say?

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

In the world, the greatest people of all are those of authority, but **NOT SO IN THE CHURCH**. In the kingdom, the greatest is the servant of all. Jesus came to serve. Did he lose any of his greatness? No, Luke 22 shows the contrast between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. Not by the stretch of anyone’s imagination does it say elders do not have authority.

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17). Elders are to “rule.” The anti-eldership authority people attack this verse. They say it means only “lead” and that elders have “no command authority.” If that is true, then what about 1 Timothy 3:4-5? “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?).” According to their reasoning, a father can only lead by example for he has “no command authority.”

What if the preacher teaches error? According to them, no elders have the authority to say, "You are not going to teach that here." All they could do is lead the congregation outside. They could not command the preacher to stop. Neither could they command the people to leave. All they could do would be to say, "Just watch us and do as we do."

One of the critical problems relating to the eldership today is the problem of **RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY**. To refuse to submit to, honor and support the eldership is &in. It in rebellion like that of Korah (Num. 16).

WE NEED REALIZED ELDERSHIP OVERSIGHT.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Elders "exercise the oversight" (ASV). The restructuring of the church begins here. If folks can get rid of the elders, they can do just about what they want.

Rebels always attack the eldership at the weakest point. That is why we need **STRONG** elders. The eldership must be strong. One weak man in the eldership will weaken the entire eldership, and brethren, complainers pick the weak link.

There are three terms used in the New Testament with reference to elders. "Elder" (*presbuteros*) means an older one and refers to age. "Bishop" or "overseer" (*episkopos*) refers to authority. "Shepherd" or "pastor" (*poimen*) refers to work

If elders "exercise the oversight" they must **PROTECT** the flock from those who would destroy it. Our Lord said:

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep (John 10:12-13).

Paul, by inspiration, said a bishop (elder) must be:

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert

whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

Elders cannot protect the flock if they: (1) do not recognize the enemy; (2) are afraid; and/or, (3) are not properly armed.

Elders we to LEAD the flock. Shepherds lead the flock. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psa. 23:2). "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:3-4). "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:3). Elders are to be "ensamples" that others might follow.

What is a leader? A leader is a man. He is a man IN FRONT (not in back, bringing up the rear). A leader in a man in front WHO MOVES. Some just sit. Some desire the office but not the work. Leaders need to move or be removed!!! A leader is a man in front who moves IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. He moves in harmony with the doctrine of Christ.

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another (1 Cor. 4:6).

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth no in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Before a man can lead, he must learn to follow Christ. Christ calls on others to follow HIM (John 10:3-4).

Elders are to FEED the flock. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psa. 23:2). Elders, an shepherds, are to lead the flock to "green pastures" and "still waters." "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseen, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders are to "feed the church of God."

Elders are to WATCH the flock. They are to try to keep the flock from straying, but if one goes astray, they are to seek to bring him back. Notice, from Luke 15, the value of lost things. Luke 15:3-7 shows joy over the lost sheep found (though ninety-nine were safe in the fold). The application is shown in Luke 15:7: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:8-10 shows the joy over the lost coin found. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 16:10). Luke 15:11-32 shows the joy over the lost boy found. "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad. for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

WE MUST HAVE ELDERS THAT HAVE THE CARE OF THE CHURCH AT HEART. What do we usually care about the most? Physical things? Or, spiritual things? "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Elders must be men who have their priorities properly arranged.

Look at Paul. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

Brethren knew he cared for them and they cared for him. "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship" (Acts 20:38).

CONCLUSION

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (Hag. 2:3). How do you see the church now? We need elders who will exercise the oversight. We need members who understand, appreciate and submit to the eldership.

STRANGE AND UNCERTAIN SOUNDS FROM BRETHREN

Allen Webster



Allen Webster was born to Christian parents in Anniston, Alabama and is brother and brother-in-law to preachers. He has served full-time the Oxford, Alabama and Tiplersville, Mississippi churches. He has done campaign work in Scotland, Aruba and Guyana as well as in the States.

When Timothy Dwight penned the lyrics to “I Love Thy Kingdom Lord,” he expressed the unfeigned feelings of thousands of Christians. Nothing in this world has a greater place of esteem for those who would literally die for Christ and His church.

The church was the object of God’s eternal planning (Eph. 3:11), the Holy Spirit’s revealing (Acts 3:24; Isa. 2:2-24), and Christ’s suffering (Acts 20:28). It was the subject of angels’ intrigue (1 Pet. 1:12), prophets’ interest (1 Pet. 1:10-11), apostles’ teaching (Acts 20:26-32), writers’ treatises (Eph.; Col.), and martyrs’ deaths (Rev. 6:9). Paul cried for it (Phi. 3:18; 2 Cor. 11:28); Peter died for it (John 21:18-19). Satan fought it (Mat. 16:18), Jews persecuted it (Acts 17:13; 1 Cor. 1:23), philosophers ridiculed it (Acts 17:32; 1 Cor. 1:23), kings scorned it (Acts 28:28), deserters forsook it (2 Tim. 4:10), but it has survived and flourished (Acts 2:41; 5:14; 8:12; 9:31; 13:19-28).

The “love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14) to build the church (Eph. 2:21). We are concerned about its purity (Eph. 5:27). But, as Nehemiah of old, we sometimes have to build with one hand and defend with the other (Neh. 4:17). Since the beginning,

Christians have fought error in and out of the body (1 Tim. 1:19-20; Acts 13:10-11). A scientist illustrated a beaker's strength by using it to drive a nail into a plank. He then dropped a small marble into the same bottle, whereupon the container shattered. Resistant to blows from the outside, it fell victim to destruction from within. Just no, what atheists and sectarians have been unable to do from outside the church, false teachers are now accomplishing from inside.

The very nature of fellowship in the church is love, sharing and trust. It seems unthinkable that a dear brother would teach something that would deceive mind, destroy our faith and damn our souls. We do not want to believe he is a false teacher because he is a brother. The fellowship tie makes us want to excuse or justify such a brother. [But]... They are to be treated the same way Paul instructed the church, in Rome to deal with such men (16:17-18; cf., Tit. 3:9-11) (Jimmy Jividen, *Gospel Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 17).

The church would be better off if every false teacher would leave it (1 John 2:19). At least it would be easier to define the enemy.

Though an unpleasant task, faithful elders, courageous preachers and concerned members feel compelled to sound the warning about current fake doctrines (Eze. 3:17). The "care of the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28) is a weight upon their shoulders. Jesus warned of false prophets (Mat. 7:15); Peter commanded saints to "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). Paul said wolves would "enter in among you, not sparing the flock...of your own selves" (Acts 20:29-30). He added,

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things) (Phi. 3:18-19).

As these teachings and teachers are exposed, it must be with this attitude of "weeping" for those who have gone astray. We seek to restore them in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Nonetheless, for the good of the church, these things must be said!

Uncertain sounds are being heard from pulpits and strange words are appearing in religious papers. The Old Testament word for "strange" (*zar, zuwr*) means "to turn aside" (Goebel Music, *Behold*

The Pattern, Music Pub., 1991, p. 100). It is used seventy-six times (usually of gods or women; cf., Lev. 10:1). The New Testament word (*Xenos*) means “foreign, alien, unusual, unfamiliar, that which is without, on the outside and contrary to received thought!” (Music, p. 100). It is used eleven times and is found only in Luke, Acts, Hebrews, 1 Peter and Jude. Strange sounds are those which are profane and foreign to Biblical teaching.

Though many false teachers are certain about their thoughts, they nonetheless speak uncertain sounds. The New Testament word (*adelos*) means “not apparent or obvious; uncertain; not distinct” (Moulton, quoted by Music, p. 106); to “give an indistinct sound, so that the signal cannot be recognized” (Arndt and Gingrich, Music, p. 107). Paul wrote:

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye speak into the air (1 Cor. 14:7-9).

As the church is the Lord’s army, how disastrous, at the critical moment, to doubt whether the trumpet sounds Advance or Retreat (cf., Num. 10:1-10)! False trumpeters are costing soldiers’ souls.

The Bible says, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Heb. 13:9). What is being taught?

STRANGE SOUNDS ABOUT BIBLE INTERPRETATION

Since Bible study is at the foundation of Christianity (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6), it is necessary to begin with it. False teachers are interpreting the Bible differently from what has been done in the past. This is an important matter as God expects us to “handle aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, ASV). The now theory of interpretation builds walls between two truths, and wants to hold to one to the exclusion of the other. Notice in each case that God expects both to be observed.

Spirit versus letter. We are being told that God wants us to keep “the spirit of the law” but does not expect us to keep “the letter of the law.” Any person is labeled “legalistic, if he shows too much

concern for obeying the commands of the Bible. (Does this make the one who does not “illegalistic?!”).

“Legalism” has thus been redefined. Jesus condemned real legalism when rebuking the Pharisees. They were legalists for three reasons (Mat. 23; cf., Amos 5; Acts 5): (1) Hypocrisy, (2) Binding human opinions, and, (3) Omitting weightier matters of the law. Notice Jesus’ words:

All therefore they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers...Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Mat. 23:3-4, 23).

A legalist is one who binds where God has not, not one who insists that God’s Word be obeyed. God is pleased with obedience (Mat. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9). He expects attitudes and actions to be right (Jos. 24:14; Ecc. 12:13; John 4:24; Acts 10:35; Rom. 1:9; 6:17). It is possible to be condemned while keeping a sincere conscience (2 Sam. 6:3-11; Mat. 7:21-23; Acts 10:1-4, 48; 23:1). We see that God wants us to observe both the spirit and the letter of the law.

Progressive versus traditional. “Traditionalism” is out of vogue presently in favor of “progressiveness.” We must “throw out old wineskins to make room for new wine.” Larry James wrote:

More often than we would like to admit, tradition assumes for us the role “Most-Authentic, Only-Authorized, Truly Autonomous Interpreter of Scripture.”...“Give me an example,” you say? Music in worship of Churches of Christ. Only a carefully refined, “quarry-exegesis,” having nothing to do with the heart and essence of the Gospel, can argue for a cappella music only, while insisting that instrumental music is in fact sinful...God help us to discover truth, even when the price will be many “sacred” traditions (Music, pp. 182-133).

As proof that “traditions” should be abandoned, 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17 is given. The traditions here though, are not traditions of men, but of the apostles. They are to be kept (“hold fast the traditions”). Paul commands Thessalonian Christians to obey what he had taught in sermons (“by word”) and letter (“epistle”). Instead of

affirming that Christians should avoid traditions, it; teaches that we should keep the traditions of the inspired writers.

Shelly denigrates the “old paths mentality” (Music, p. 289), but it seems, in the distance, we hear another voice saying, “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). God wants us to be progressive in using new ideas to further the gospel but to stay within the traditions set by Him.

“*Love letter*” versus *pattern theology*. Dr. Thomas Olbricht, a “New Hermeneutics” champion said, “Scripture is not a constitution or code book as envisioned by the old hermeneutic” (J. E. Choate, *Firm Foundation*, Jan 1991, p. 19). Dr. Michael Moss concludes: “A strict pattern theology must be abandoned” (Choate, p. 20). Max Lucado said, “There is no secret code. The Bible is a love letter as opposed to a blueprint. You don’t read a love letter the same way you do a blueprint” (Music, p. 114). Rubel Shelly said, “...when are examples binding? The answer is never, Never” (Music, p. 294).

The gospel accounts are exalted above Acts and the Epistles because they give the model of Jesus. Acts and the Epistles are second and third (lower quality) copies since they are only first century cultural responses to the gospel or “love letters” between Christian friends. These are just casual thoughts and may contain some material worthy of consideration, but certainly nothing very binding today. To go to them for doctrine is to “copy a flawed copy.” What does this say about inspiration? Is not “all scripture inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16; John 16:13; cf., 1 Cor. 14:37)? Since Jesus’ words are more important than Paul’s, so they say, it is easy to do away with teaching concerning church music, the qualifications of elders, the role of women, or the purpose and action of baptism and focus exclusively on the red letters of the Gospels (Howard W. Norton, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 14).

Further, we are told that the New Testament was not canonized until c. A.D. 400, so early Christians could not have “proof-texted” (used Scriptures from many places to explain a subject). This is a false view for three reasons. Selected early Christians had direct

inspiration (1 Cor. 12:8-10) and could know all the truth (1 John 2:20). They could “proof-text” directly from the Spirit. Second, the letters were copied and circulated from the time they were written (cf., Col. 4:16). Third, a book was canonized, in part, because it was generally accepted as authentic by churches. Thus, Christians were already using the books recognized as canonical. They did not need a Roman Catholic Council to tell them what was Scripture and what was not.

When one rejects “pattern theology,” truth becomes subjective instead of absolute (cf., John 8:32; 17:17). Without a pattern, as in the days of the judges, every man is free to do “that which is right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). A Pandora’s Box is opened to every innovation imaginable. Everything from instrumental music to divorce/remarriage becomes: “That’s your interpretation,” and is left in the realm of opinion. Is this the desired aim? Again, no wall is found here. God wants Christians to view the Bible as both a love letter and a pattern.

Holy Spirit leadings versus logic. We are being told “to start with God, not with scripture” (quoted by Dave Miller, Freed-Hardeman Lectures, personal notes, Feb 1992). The “cognitive approach” of the past generation is outmoded in favor of the “spiritual approach.” Preachers feel “energized” in the pulpit. An opponent of McGarvey expressed what we are hearing again today: Proctor responded...that he obtained his best sermon material “by keeping near to Christ and...feeling the beating of His mighty heart” (Earl West, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 30).

The “New Hermeneutics” is vehemently opposed to logic, wanting freedom for the Spirit to move in His church. But God has always demanded valid reasoning (Isa. 1:18; 41:21). The Christian life in “reasonable” (Rom. 12:1) (“belonging to reason,” ASV margin). The Greek translated “reasonable” is *logikos*, defined as “Pertaining to the reasoning faculty, reasonable, rational” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, World Bible Pub., 1981, p. 253).

Gary D. Collier rejects attempts to reconstruct the pattern of the New Testament church through a slavish attention to a *now defunct model* which relies on apostolic precepts, examples, and necessary

inferences (Choate, p. 19). That is strange since Jesus used this model when applying inspired teachings from the Old Testament to His own time and circumstances. He used the direct command as a basis for authority when He condemned the Pharisees (Mat. 15:3). He used the approved example as authority when He defended His disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath by appealing to the example of David (Mat. 12:4). He used the necessary inference as a basis for establishing the resurrection of the dead. He said that if the Sadducees had paid attention to the verb tense spoken nearly 2,000 years earlier, they would have known of life after death (Mat. 22:32) (Norton, p. 12). If we are to follow the model of Jesus, we must use Jesus' hermeneutics!

This three-pronged shorthand version of is based upon the use of common sense and logic. The old hermeneutics is accused of "Picking and choosing" which examples should be used and avoiding those which do not favor "our tradition." For instance, we are told that we follow the example for the Lord's Supper on Sunday (Acts 20:7) but not footwashing (John 13). This fails to follow carefully the context and uncommon sense.

Although the direct command "come before winter" (2 Tim. 4:21) was spoken by Paul, common sense tells us that it does not apply literally to us. We do not literally Obey the direct command to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16), but we in America obey the spirit of that command when we greet one another by shaking hands (Norton, p. 13).

Footwashing was a custom of the first century because it had a purpose then. We do not walk dusty roads in sandals, but we are still in need of other forms of hospitality. So the principle of hospitality is set, not the specific of footwashing. On the other hand, the Lord's Supper is a command of all Christians (1 Cor. 11:23-28), so we must find an approved example to follow as precedent.

Implication and inference are "bad words" to the new theory of interpretation. Did Jesus err when He by implication proved His virgin birth (Mat. 22:42-46)? Paul commanded "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21). He was guilty of "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen

again” when he “reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:2-3; cf., 26:22-25; 18:26-28).

These also have an aversion to “reasoning from silence.” What saith the Scriptures? “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it” (Deu. 4:2). If one is going to add, in what area would the addition come? Would it not come in the area where God had not spoken? Does not the very fact that they were told not to add carry with it the necessity to respect the silence of the Scriptures? (Winfred Clark, *The Expositor*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Sep 1990). God has always demanded that His silence be respected (Gen. 4:4-5; cf., Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17; Gen. 6:22; 7:5; Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6; 2 Chr. 26:16-21). We must have authority for all we do “in word or deed” (Col. 3:17; Mat. 28:18; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9-11). Inspired writers respected God’s silence (Heb. 1:5; 1:13). So should we!

Again, no one denies that the Holy Spirit leads men today. The question is, “How?” He works through the medium of His Word (Eph. 6:17), not in “better-felt-than-told experiences.” This does not rule out the use of logic, but actually includes it. No wall here.

Culture versus relevance. The old hermeneutics is accused of ignoring cultural context. In answer, our brethren have always been the ones who stressed keeping Scripture in its context. We have repeatedly pointed out the differences between the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian Dispensations. We have shown the historical considerations connected with the development of Israel’s history, return from captivity, and the Roman occupation of Palestine. Cultural matters involved in such as the “holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16) and the artificial covering (1 Cor. 11:1-16) have been emphasized.

But, just because the Bible was given in another cultural context does not mean that it is irrelevant today. Rather, “the bread of life” is always fresh! God did not put a wall between culture and relevance.

STRANGE SOUNDS ABOUT SINNER SALVATION

The fruits of the now interpretation are ripening in rotting doctrines about how sinners are saved. False teachers have adapted

the common denominational positions of salvation by grace alone and faith only.

Grace versus obedience. “Grace has been discovered in churches of Christ!”, we are told. Wrong, true gospel preachers have been preaching grace since Paul. What has been discovered is “isolated grace” that saves apart from obedience to Christ. Rick Atchley stated:

And let me say this clearly, I have brothers and misters in Christ who may be in churches where I couldn't worship...But if grace will cover moral error, why we we so afraid to let it cover doctrinal error? (Music, p. 143).

Shelly penned, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises born human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation” (*Lovelines*, Woodmont Hills bulletin, Vol. 16, Num. 45, Oct 31, 1990).

It is true that salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8-10), not by ones own meritorious deeds or by works of Moses' law. But salvation by grace does not rule out obedience. Paul links the two together: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously, and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). Man must save himself (Acts 2.40), while working out his own salvation with few and trembling (Phi. 2:12). Works of obedience to the law of Christ demonstrate faith (Jam. 2:19-26). Grace is found “in Christ” (2 Tim. 2: 1) and a sinner gets into Christ by obedience (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

This emphasis on grace has led men to question the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins. Jimmy Allen, of Searcy, Arkansas, has written a book entitled, *Re-Baptism*. It is an appeal for children of God to accept as saved all who are immersed to please God. This includes Baptists, Mormons, Pentecostals, and others (Dobbs, *Firm Foundation*, Feb 1992, p. 24). He quotes with approval this statement:

That we may have a practical application of our conclusions, let us now suppose that a Baptist presents himself for membership with us, and we attempt to decide upon the validity of his immersion. We find that he was a believer, and a penitent, before he was immersed...He believed that his sins were pardoned before he was immersed, and said

so: but this was a mistake, not an omission of any duty, unless it be the duty of understanding the scripture. But this duty is not peculiarly connected with immersion, and we have seen that its omission cannot invalidate the immersion. Now, then, the man had performed every duty appointed for him in the scripture, and, as we have argued above, it is moot unreasonable to suppose that his mine are still unforgiven...I conclude, therefore, that the supposed Baptist brother is a pardoned man, though he is mistaken as to the time of his pardon, and should be instructed upon that point (pp. 95-96).

Does not the Bible still say, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16)? Is baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)? Does it wash sins away (Acts 22:16)? If the purpose of baptism does not matter, then every time a person dives into a swimming pool he is baptized! “One cannot be half right and all right” (Dobbs, p. 24).

Freedom versus law. There is presently great emphasis on freedom and liberty to the exclusion of obedience. Much is made of “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). This is a great verse, but not when misused. Christians are freed from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2) and Moses’ law (Rom. 8:3), but not from the “law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2). We must keep the law of liberty (Jam. 1:25; 2:8, 12) and are “under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21).

Jesus versus gospel. What is important is not what one does, but his relationship with Jesus, we are informed. The old “Man, not the plan” doctrine has been resurrected. “I am not looking for a pattern; I am looking for a person.” “Lucado admitted that ‘for me, for years, Christianity was a moral code. It is now becoming a love affair. For years there were rules and regulations, now, it’s a relationship...’” (Music. p. 114).

The truth is we have the plan of the man. Jesus is the man who declared Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19-20. The relationship is not some nebulous, indescribable condition. It is determined by covenant (Heb. 8:6; 13:20-21). Undeserving as we are, God offers us a contract based on “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:3-11). We can accept the contract or reject it. When the relationship is formed, He will not leave us or break the contract, but we

can break it and void the covenant (Elza Huffard, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 23).

STRANGE SOUNDS ABOUT CHURCH ORGANIZATION

Toleration or separation. The philosophy of accommodation has invaded our brotherhood. The “if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em” fewer has hit! Walk are coming down in the church faster than in Europe! A common text used in this connection is Mark 9:38-41. Rick Atchley (in a sermon on Mark 9) said,

Let’s not limit the kingdom of God to the size of our brotherhood...I was raised in churches of Christ...maybe it wasn’t said, but this is what I heard...the only people that could go to heaven were in churches of Christ...Fin going to suggest to you not only is that not Biblical, but it is in fact a violation of the very restoration plea to which we are heirs (Music, p. 143).

Shelly said, “There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations” (Music, p. 274).

Does God have children outside His family (cf., 1 Tim. 3:14-15)? Does anyone belong to the kingdom who has not subjected himself to the will of the King (1 Tim. 6:13-16; Rev. 17:14)? The Bible still says, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17; cf., Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11).

Concerning Mark 9, Jesus approved of the man, and we know that Jesus would not approve of a false teacher (cf., Mat. 7:15-27). The man actually cast out devils in Jesus’ name, a thing no imposter could do (cf , Acts 19:13-16) (Hugo McCord, *Advocate*, Sep 15, 1983, p. 560).

Denominational movement or original restoration. The idea of restoring the New Testament church is being denied. Many are referring to the church of Christ in America as a movement. For instance, Stephen Taylor, a former Abilene Christian University instructor, said, “I feel like, in a sense, I am leaving the Church of Christ denomination, but not the church of Christ” (Music, p. 129).

The church is composed of all the saved (Acts 2:36-47), and only the saved. The Bible still teaches that there is only one church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:13). Presently, there are intense pressures to denominationalize the church. But it is not a denomina-

tion! A denomination is something denominated or named (Dobbs, p. 2).

In a church context, however, the word denomination denotes an identifiable group of local churches which share some of the following characteristics: a common body of beliefs and practices, a distinguishing name, a governing structure that ties the congregations together and an awareness that it is a part but not the whole of Christ's church (May, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 26).

While churches of Christ have a common body of beliefs and practices, they have no one distinguishing name, no common government superstructure, and do not feel that they are only a part of the saved. G. C. Brewer put it this way:

Christians who do not compose a denomination...Christians object to denominationalism...They are hostile to all denominations and may as well frankly state it...Of course, we are not antagonistic to the people of the denominations for we love all and have ill will toward none, but I say again tonight that we are hostile to denominations because...denominationalism is wrong...It is contrary to the teachings of the scriptures and opposed to Christian unity (Lecture delivered at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on May 5, 1917, and published in a book called *Murfreesboro Addresses*) (Dobbs, p. 3).

Thank God we have no pope to boas us, no ecclesiastical court to try us and anathematize us, no council, convention, conference, or synod to make laws to bind our consciences, and no human creeds to trammel and hamper us in our search after the will of God (Brewer, quoted by Dobbs, p. 5).

STRANGE SOUNDS ABOUT WORSHIP PARTICIPATION

Women's role. As we face the pressures of the feminist movement we have seen and are seeing more and more its effect on the church. F. LaGard Smith wrote in his book, *Men of Strength for Women of God*,

Changing times have brought a crisis to the church and to the relationship between men and women...[Many] think the time has come to abandon the traditional separation of the sexes in Christian worship...[Others] believe that male leadership in the church is commanded by Scripture...that equality in the kingdom is not a human rights issue but a matter of obedience (Willard Collins, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 24).

“Tongues are wagging and fists are pounding on both sides” (Collins, p. 24).

An Alabama congregation has put into effect a plan that will culminate in having women preachers by 1994.

We will appoint deacons for this church on Pentecost Sunday 1990. Deacons will be male and female. On Sunday nights and Wednesday nights and Sunday morning Bible classes, shared leadership in the services will continue...man and women can occupy any roles in the leadership of our fellowship. For the years 1991-94 we, the elders, will initiate gradual change in the Sunday morning worship assembly. Each year we will increase the freedom of women to participate in the worship (quoted by Collins, p. 25).

Moss writes that one must reject a rigid theology which “transplants religious and cultural forms from the first century to the modern era” (Choate, p. 20). The role of women is supposed to be one of those “cultural forms” (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

This Scripture section (1 Tim. 2:11-14) is a part of the instruction given to Timothy concerning how to conduct himself in the church (3:15). Chapter two pertains to public worship. Men are to lead in praying as Paul said, “I will therefore that men [*andras*] pray everywhere” (2:8). This Greek word denotes male rather than female (Collins, p. 24). If Paul were not referring to public worship, this would necessitate men praying everywhere and women could not pray anywhere.

The direction that the woman is to loam in silence, “quietness” (v. 11 ASV), points to the public assembly. If not, the wife could not ask her husband a religious question in the home...The word translated “silence” refers to “a quiet condition in the general, inclusive sense of quietness” (*Thayer’s Lexicon*, p. 281). The *New English Bible* translation is “A woman must learn quietly in church and be perfectly submissive”...Paul did not permit a woman to teach or usurp authority over men in the teaching program of the church...“permit” is from the Greek word meaning to permit, allow, give leave (Thayer, p. 245) (Collins, p. 24) .

The objection is raised, Women are not usurping when man accept, allow and encourage them to take the lead.” The problem in, “Men cannot give away God’s authority!”

Should men profess to give her this authority, it is not theirs to give. God has the authority and His Word shown this exercise of authority in to be the role of the man. No one can give away God’s authority on thin matter because man has no right to change God’s law (Collins, p. 25).

“Usurp” means “to appropriate wrongfully to oneself (a right, prerogative, etc.); to seize or obtain possession of in an unjust or illegal manner, to assume unjust rule, dominion or authority over, to appropriate wrongfully” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. xi, p. 279). When women take leadership positions they are illegally assuming a place that God has not allowed in His worship.

This is not cultural because Paul goes beyond his culture for this precept. He reasons that since Eve was created second and rebelled first that God placed these restrictions on women. It serves as a reminder to each generation that disobedience and rebellion are serious sins. Present-day “Eve’s” better take note!

This in no way undermines the importance of women to the church of our Lord. They are just as valuable in the kingdom as are men (Gal. 3:28). God has just prescribed different roles for each. Man cannot fulfill the woman’s role and woman cannot usurp man’s role.

Preaching. Just as surely as faith cannot grow without the seed of the Word being sown, apostasy cannot arise without the seeds of error being sown (Jividen, p. 19). There has arisen a new style of preaching among churches of Christ.

Some preachers seem to take their sermons from denominational preachers who preach what people want to hear. When pop psychology replaces a proclamation and application of God’s Word to the needs of people and when “sermons” are a rehash of lessons presented by electronic church preachers, then the “fountain of living water” is being forsaken as preachers and people turn to “broken cisterns” (Jer. 2:13) (Tom Holland, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 15).

Max Lucado credits Chuck Swindoll’s endorsement of his books as the reason for their sales. Swindoll is a staunch Calvinist who preaches total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and impossibility of apostasy. He is a dispensational premillennialist and preaches that the Middle East conflict is the will of God and fulfillment of prophecy (Holland, p. 15).

Christians with “itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3) who always desire “to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21) have created a demand for such weak preaching and, brethren, it “ought not so to be” (Jam. 3:10). There will always be prophets who cater to whims (Jer. 5:30-31).

When churches cease to use preachers who speak strange sounds, false doctrine will die out (cf., Rom. 16:17).

Mechanical music. Marvin Phillips, in a book entitled *Don't Shoot, We Both May Be on the Same Side*, makes the argument that the use or non-use of instrumental music in worship is a matter of conscience. He believes that it is not a matter of right or wrong but opinion and compunction.

He also says, on the basis of Romans 14:1-4, that he who attempts to worship God with the harmonica is the strong brother, but the person who refuses to do so because the New Testament commands only singing is the weak brother. Phillips' book was published and promoted by the Independent Christian Church and in his apology to them piano-playing defectors who frag mented the restoration about 100 years ago (Dobbs, p. 11).

Jeff Walling said:

...in my opinion, I must not judge the state of a fellow Christian who, in good conscience, approves singing with an instrument. To do so would place myself in jeopardy of grievous sin indeed: Judging a brother by my opinion (Music, p. 215).

Is acting without divine approval or authority, just a matter of opinion (Col. 3:17)? Is adding to God's Word no longer a serious matter (Rev. 22:18-19)?

STRANGE SOUNDS ABOUT ETHICAL SITUATIONS

The teaching in classrooms and from pulpits has filtered to a grassroots forsaking of Biblical morality. In many settings, there is now no difference between the lives of Christians and children of darkness.

Marriage, divorce, remarriage. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away" (Mal. 2:16). Jesus commanded:

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder... And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Mat. 19:6b, 9; cf., 5:31-32; Mark 10:11-12).

These truths have been ignored and injured in our generation.

Some in the church are saying that marriage is simply a covenant contract which adultery breaks. Once it is broken, the person who

broke it may “repent” of “Covenant breaking” and, should he/she remarry, then he/she should remain with his/her present state of marriage (Don Shackelford, *Advocate*, Feb 1992, p. 29). This cannot be because adultery is a state in which a person lives (Col. 3:5-7).

Others are applying what was clearly a principle for one who became a Christian while his/her mate remained an antagonistic unbeliever to divorces between Christians for whom the principle has no application (Shackelford, p. 29). First Corinthians 7:15 is not a mandate “updating” Matthew 19:9.

Many pulpits are strangely silent along these lines. May it cease!

Modesty. When churches sponsor “beach devotionals” and “pool parties” where mixed swimming is allowed and encouraged, we have ceased to live above the world (1 John 2:15-17; Jam. 4:4; 1:27). The Bible still commands modesty (1 Tim. 2:9) and states that lust will keep one from heaven’s gates (Gal. 5:19-21). It is better to drown than to cause a brother to stumble (Mat. 18:3).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Smokescreens. The tactics of these “strange sermonizers” are easily seen. They are quick to throw up “smokescreens” to move the discussion away from central matters. They quickly refer to the admonition to, “Judge not, lest ye be judged” (Mat. 7:1), not realizing that Jesus commanded to watch for false prophets in the same context (7:15-16). They accuse those who stand against error of creating division, when actually the one “troubling Israel” is the one who divides with false doctrines (1 Kin. 18:17-18). One said, “A prostitute on drugs, dying of AIDS, doesn’t care about pianos. She needs Jesus” (Personal letter, p. 3). Right, but can she be saved without obedience to the Truth of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:22- 23)? We are accused of “arrogance” for saying we are the only church of which God approves. Remember, “they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:14).

Solution. The solution is God’s Word! It still remains the power (Rom. 1:16). We need bold men who will diligently study, conscientiously live and courageously preach it (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; 2 Tim. 4:2).

Further, the church must cease tolerating false teachers (cf., 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Pet. 2:1, 10, 18-19; Rev. 2:18, 20). Like yeast in broad dough, error spreads from one person to another and from one church to another (Gal. 5:9) (Jividen, p. 17). The church is to be the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), not error.

Let us be alert to the preaching and teaching we are hearing today. Let us go beyond whether the speaker is handsome and Intelligent, young or old, published or unpublished and Baton to what he is saying. If we do not take responsibility of our own souls and do our own Bible study, we and our children will be swept away from our biblical roots (Norton, p. 14).

Elders must take a stand against these doctrines before this “pack of wolves” (cf., Mat. 7:15) carries away the Bock in every community. Their “mouths must be stopped” (Tit. 1:11). This is not the time to temporize or make friends with error (F. B. Srygley, *Gospel Advocate*, 1928).

An Appeal. If you are teaching these doctrines, would to God that you would repent and come back to truth (Acts 18:26-28; 8:22). Your soul and the souls of those who come under your influence will be lost. Study, repent, pray. We do love you.

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDE MEN?

Jerry L. Martin



Jerry Martin was reared in Crossett, Arkansas. He was employed with the United Postal Service before entering the Memphis School of Preaching from which he graduated in 1979. He has preached for congregations in Georgia and Alabama and is currently doing mission work in Meeker, Colorado. Jerry has spoken on several lectureships, is a staff writer for the *Firm Foundation*, and has served on the Board of Directors of Indian Creek Youth Camp. He is married to the former Denise Nordin and they have three sons and one daughter.

Before we can answer the question, “How does the Holy Spirit guide men?” we must know who the Holy Spirit is. We need to train ourselves to refer to Him reverently and respectfully. The Holy Spirit is a divine being. His divine attributes are the same as God the Father’s and the God the Son’s. He is omniscient (all knowing) as stated in 1 Corinthians 2:10-14. He is omnipotent (all powerful) (Mic. 3:8). He is omnipresent (all present) (Psa. 139:7). He is eternal (Heb. 9:14).

The Holy Spirit is a distinct person with all the characteristics of a person. He has a mind (Rom. 8:27). He has knowledge (1 Cor. 2:11). He has will (1 Cor. 12:11). He expresses affection (Rom. 15:30). He has feelings (Eph. 4:30). He speaks (1 Tim. 4:1). Thus, the Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead and is spoken of with equal importance (Mat. 28:19). He is a glorious and divine person who must not be ignored or treated flippantly. It is our purpose in this manuscript to set forth the work of the Holy Spirit past and present. With the proper view of the work of the Holy Spirit, confusion and the mystical cloud that hangs over Him can be removed.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit is first introduced to us with the other two members of the Godhead in the work of creation. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2; cf., Job 26:13). The three members of the Godhead have worked together in every dispensation. The primary work of the Spirit was to bring order to the creation. God the Father planned, the Word executed and the Spirit organized and guided. Order was given to the chaotic mass of material matter and such order will continue till the end of time as the Spirit has arranged. Laws to govern the material creation were instituted by the Spirit to insure balance and stability to all things. It is through such laws that those things created, as recorded in Genesis 1, are preserved and perpetuated. Everything still produces “after its kind.” Though all things were brought into being by “miraculous” means such acts were not natural or recurring. Now, order is sustained in the rotation and path of heavenly bodies by the laws given by the Spirit (Job 26:13). The face of the earthly creation is “renewed” by the Spirit (Psa. 104:30). The governing of the material universe continues through divinely ordained laws (Psa. 139:7-10). Oh, how we marvel at the integral order that governs creation.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is clearly seen in the message and work of the prophets. Since a prophet was someone who spoke forth for God it would certainly be expected that such men would be guided by the Spirit. Peter speaking concerning those prophets said, “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. 1:21). Thus, we see the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets to deliver the message of God. After being anointed king over Israel, Saul prophesied by the direction of the Spirit and his actions were attributed to be the same as was common among the prophets of his day (1 Sam. 10:10-11). In similar fashion, David spoke these words, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). In rapid order, the

prophets claimed to be God's messengers and commonly used such terminology as, "thus saith the Lord God." Such men as Isaiah (Isa. 61:1), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-5), Ezekiel (Eze. 11:5) were used in such fashion. Also, Daniel's ability to interpret king Belshazzar's dream was attributed to the Spirit of him God being in him (Dan. 5:11-14). Not only did the Spirit guide the Old Testament prophets to deliver God's message to the people of their day but He also caused them to speak concerning the last days when the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. No prophecy concerning the last days is more clearly seen than in Joel 2:28-32. On Pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter said it was a fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Joel hundreds of years before. Such examples are plenteous.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Spirit having guided the prophets of old to prophesy concerning the coming Messiah and the details of His birth (Isa. 7:14), we are not surprised that the New Testament opens in Matthew 1:18-23 with the Spirit having a prominent part in the fulfillment of this prophecy concerning the birth of Christ. Neither are we surprised that the Spirit that directed Isaiah to speak concerning the one who would prepare the way for the Lord would also prepare that one for his work (Isa. 40:3; Luke 1:13-17). Matthew records the message of this Spirit-filled preacher as he prepares the way for the Saviour of the world (3:1-3). John the Baptist's message continues with reference being made to the work of Christ and the Spirit. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Mat. 3:11). He was allowed to "fulfil all righteousness" and baptize Jesus. On this occasion John was able to witness the unity of the Godhead.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mat. 3:16-17).

We should never lose sight of this image of all three members of the Godhead working together for the same cause and that being the salvation of mankind.

All four Gospel accounts we are replete with examples of the inseparable nature of the work of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Immediately following Jesus' baptism and just prior to the beginning of His earthly ministry, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (Mat. 4:1). God gave Jesus the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). He cast out devils by the Spirit which God gave Him (Mat. 12:28). The signs and miracles done by Christ during His earthly sojourn were evidences of the Holy Spirit's working with Him.

Having already proven that the Holy Spirit directed the Old Testament prophets to prophesy concerning the then to come Messiah, what a beautiful thing it is to hear the Messiah Himself say He had fulfilled those prophecies. The following Scripture should excite every child of God.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place whom it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to had the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of eight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable yew of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears (Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus further acknowledges the Holy Spirit an the source of inspiration for the Scriptures of the Old Testament as stated in Matthew 22:43. He also prepared His disciples for the guidance of the same Spirit in revealing the New Testament Scriptures (Mark 13:9-11). Christ taught them as much as He could while He was with them. The time for Him to leave them was fast approaching, yet He promised they would not be left alone (John 14:16-18). The Spirit would be sent to the Apostles after Jesus left them. He would remind them of all that Jesus had taught them and teach them all

things they needed to know. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). It is no wonder the Holy Spirit is called the “Comforter” and the “Spirit of truth.” What a comfort it would truly be to the Apostles to have the assurance of the guidance of the Spirit that the Lord would send to them so they would be thoroughly equipped to do His work.

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 (John 16:13).

The final mention of the Spirit in the Gospel accounts is found in Jesus’ closing words to His Apostles just before His ascension in the passages commonly called the great commission. In Matthew’s account the unity of the work and purpose of the Godhead, in bringing salvation, is emphasized (Mat. 28:18-20). Mark records the credentials that would be provided to confirm their words as they preached the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-20). Luke gives us the Lord’s words that would prepare the Apostles for the time and place they would receive the promised Spirit (Luke 24:44-49).

The book of Acts opens in the same setting that the book of Luke closed. We are reminded that the Apostles were instructed to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4; Luke 24:49). They were told they would receive power to be witnesses for the Lord when the Holy Ghost came upon them. Having followed the instructions of the Lord completely, they received the Spirit the Father had promised. What an exciting thing to read the following words:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

As we read of the Apostles speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, we are immediately reminded of the promise the

Lord had made to them earlier in passages already noted (Luke 12:12; John 16:13). The Spirit's presence with and guidance given to these men is evident as they carried out the Lord's commission to be witnesses of Him in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The remainder of the book is a running account of the Spirit directing and equipping men of God to do the work of God. An example of such is recorded in Acts 8. After Philip had preached Christ unto the Samaritans, many of them believed and were baptized. We then have these words concerning how the Holy Spirit equipped the Christians of that day:

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-17).

In the same context, the Spirit directed Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip taught him about Jesus (Acts 8:29).

The Epistles are written instructions from inspired men who continued to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. These books are filled with examples of obedience and of disobedience to the Spirit's teaching. They are also filled with examples of the use and of the misuse of the miraculous power given by the Spirit. A perfect example of such inspired instruction is seen in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, particularly in chapters 12-14. In these chapters, he deals with the miraculous gifts that had been bestowed upon the Christians at Corinth to bring them to a complete understanding of the truth. He begins the discussion this way, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1). In the remainder of the chapter, he reminds them of the oneness of God, Christ, and the Spirit in mind and purpose to bring about oneness in the body of Christ. The gifts were given that the Corinthians might be able to function as one spiritual body. The teaching and direction provided by the miraculous means should prepare them for a "more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31).

Chapter 13 explains without question the temporary nature of miraculous gifts. They were “in part” and would be done away with when “that which is perfect” came (1 Cor. 13:10). “That which is perfect” is the completion of the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing “all truth” promised by the Lord (John 16:13). James refers to the revealed truth as “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25). Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17,

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.

Without question, the Spirit has completed His mission in guiding the Apostles and other inspired men in the revelation and recording of all truth. Peter stated that Christians had been given “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDE MEN TODAY?

Now that we know how the Spirit worked in the Old Testament and in the revelation of the New Testament, let us turn our attention to how He works today. Does He still guide us miraculously today? The answer is an emphatic, “NO!!!” Those who claim the Holy Spirit still works through miraculous means in guiding men today have the same mentality as the theistic evolutionist and, I might add, they have the same problem. It is a contradiction of terms to say you believe in God yet refuse to accept what He says concerning creation. The evidence is abundant that everything continues to produce “after its kind” just as God said He created it. To say things have evolved or continue to evolve is to reject God completely. You cannot believe both.

The same is true in reference to the way the Holy Spirit guides man today. If we accept the Spirit’s own testimony concerning His part in the spiritual creation then we know that He was to guide the Apostles into “all truth” and work with them “confirming the word with signs following” (John 16:13; Mark 16:20). The following inspired words are inescapable.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word

spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divan miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:1-4).

To deny the Spirit has revealed all truth and confirmed all truth is to deny the Spirit. To claim to be guided miraculously by the Spirit today is to do the same thing. What would He direct you to say that has not already been said? In fact, the apostle Paul, speaking under the direction of the Spirit, said if we preach any thing other than what has already been revealed we are to be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Just as the material creation began miraculously and is perpetuated by seed, the same is true of the spiritual. Jesus in describing the different kinds of human hearts in the parable of the sower states clearly, "Now the parable in this: The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). The perpetuity of the spiritual kingdom is further explained in the words of 1 Peter 1:21-22. As the natural world in its reproduction is governed by laws given by the Spirit, the spiritual kingdom functions likewise. There will be no repetition of the miraculous creation and there will be no repetition of the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit known to those of the first century. We certainly do not mean to imply the Spirit does not work in the lives of man and women today, for He most assuredly does. The question that must be correctly answered is, "How does He work today?" I, for one, certainly believe He guides me and actively works in my life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS MAN OF HIS SINS but He does so through the written Word. When Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, one of the purposes was to reprove the world of sin. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Speaking by the power of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter reproved the Jews "out of every nation under heaven" of their sin (Acts 2:22-23, 36). After having their sins described to them and seeing the consequences of their sin in the death of Christ the

following response is recorded. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Notice if you will the Spirit did not personally speak to each individual and convict them against their will. He did as Christ had promised and spoke through the Apostles. You will remember, of course, that they spoke “an the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). You and I are convicted by the same words of the same Spirit. The only difference is that then the words were oral and now they are written. Yes, the Spirit convicts man’s heart but He does so through His powerful Word (Heb. 4:12-13).

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVERTS MAN TO CHRIST but He does so through the Word. Those in Acts 2 who heard the Apostles’ preaching concerning the crucifixion of Christ were “pricked in their heart” and asked the Apostles what they should do (Acts 2:37). The Apostles, being guided by the Spirit, taught those inquiring souls what they had been commissioned to preach to every creature. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Notice, if you will, the ones that were converted to Christ and how such conversions took place. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

When the Lord appeared unto Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul was now convinced Jesus was Lord and asked, “Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” Saul was not overpowered by the Holy Spirit and his life changed against his will. The same medium was used in his conversion as was used on Pentecost. In answer to Saul’s question as to what to do, “the Lord said unto him Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). After becoming the apostle Paul, he recalls clearly the words the Lord sent to him through Ananias (Acts 22:12-16). The Spirit’s words were delivered to Saul through a devout man of God and his obedience to those instructions converted him to Christ and changed his life. Every conversion account in the book of Acts follows the

same process. Men are converted to the same Christ today by the same words of the same Spirit, but now the instructions are written. Thanks be to God for allowing the Spirit to answer man's (and my) question, "Lord what will thou have me to do?"

THE HOLY SPIRIT CHALLENGES MY WORSHIP but He does so through the Word. You hear many people today in the church and out, claim the Spirit moved them in their worship or gave special meaning to their worship. They mean by such statements that the Spirit, separate and apart from the Word, speaks to them and gives them special insight or feelings not experienced in "traditional" worship. I would ask such people what it was the Spirit said to them or did to them that He had not said or promised through the Scriptures. Such attitudes make His written words meaningless and powerless. Listen to the words concerning worship spoken by Christ and recorded by the Apostle John under the direction of the Spirit.

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).

The true worshipper will worship as the Spirit directs and the Spirit directs through the truth. Is that not why Christ said He would send the Spirit to the Apostles in the first place (John 16:13)? Does not the Lord call Him "the Spirit of truth?" No worship is more moving, *more meaningful or more special than the true worship that is directed by plain instruction of the Spirit*. I might add that no worship is accepted by God that is not conducted as the truth directs. Let me also warn that not all "tradition" is bad. *Tradition* is defined by Webster as: "An inherited pattern of thought or action (as a religious practice or social custom)." If the Apostles and first century Christians had moving and meaningful worship because they followed divine instruction, and who would dare say they did not, then why would our worship not be the same if we follow the same "pattern" as they for worship (Acts 2:42). The Holy Spirit speaks to men, guides men, comforts men, motivates men, causes men to rejoice and communes with men in their true worship, but it is through the Word (2 Cor. 13:14; 2 The. 2:13-17).

THE HOLY SPIRIT CENSORS AND CONFIRMS PREACHING but He does so through the Word. There are those who claim the Holy Spirit speaks to them, separate and apart from His Word, and tells them what to say in their preaching. What I still need to know is, “What does He tell them to say?” If it is more than He has taught in the Word it is too much; if it is less than what He taught in His Word then it is not enough; if it is the same as what He has taught in the Word, what good would it be when we already have the Word. After all, did not the Spirit come to guide the Apostles into “all truth?” Did He accomplish His mission? Peter, one of the Apostles who received the promise of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thought the Spirit fulfilled His mission when he recorded these words:

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 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. 1:1-3).

Paul warned that the divine message of the revealed gospel was not to be changed or altered (Gal. 1:6-11). The same Apostle writes these inspired instructions to a young preacher of the gospel,

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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. 2:1-2).

Later, in the same letter, Paul instructed Timothy to study (2 Tim. 2:15). One is not surprised to learn that this young preacher had been taught what to preach from his youth (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Neither are we surprised that he was charged to preach what he had learned.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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. 4:1-4).

Why is it, if the Spirit leads man separate from His Word, that Paul did not tell Timothy to wait for the Spirit to lead him into what he was to preach? The answer is obvious that the Spirit speaks only through the inspired Word and wants only the Word preached. It is the same Word that purifies and saves man's soul (1 Pet. 1:22; Jam. 1:21). It is that inspired Word that will endure forever and be opened to judge us in the last day (1 Pet. 1:23, 25; John 12:48). Such preaching passes the censorship of the Spirit who gave it. Such preaching is also certified and confirmed by the same miracles performed by Christ and the Apostles, the only difference being that they now are written.

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

It behooves all to be careful to heed the sobering words of inspiration recorded in 1 Peter 4:11:

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS MEN HOME but He does so through the Word. There is no sweeter word this side of Heaven than the word "Home." It then is a fitting word to be used to describe the heavenly abode. Jesus calls it His Father's house and promised to prepare a place there for those who follow Him (John 14:1-4). Jesus then states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The Lord, in the same chapter, promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things (14:26). Does it not stand to reason if the Holy Spirit were to teach the Apostles all things and bring to their remembrance what Jesus had taught them that what He taught would be the truth that would lead them home?

The Spirit is called the Comforter and there certainly would not be a more comforting thing than to know how to get to the Father's house where Jesus awaits. I never cease to be amazed at the stories, told by supposedly "religious" people, that describe how they were

“caught up in the Spirit” and how the Lord showed them Heaven and told them they could live there. Such stories draw big crowds when they are told and they are often called “testimonials.” I might add that they are not limited to denominational gatherings. I still have not received the answer to my question, “If the Holy Spirit did appear to one of these folks what exactly would He tell them that He did not tell the Apostles?” Again, let us be reminded that Jesus promised the Spirit would guide the Apostles “into all truth.” That “all truth” would certainly include the way to Heaven and the way is the same for every one since: “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Why, oh why, my friend, is it not good enough for some to accept the Word of God as the only source of divine guidance today? I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to hear the gospel as God’s power to save and have been taught not to be ashamed of it (Rom. 1:16). John, by guidance of the Spirit writes: “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). I got excited and homesick beyond words when I read the Words of the Spirit inviting me home in Revelation 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I feel compelled to say with the inspired writer John, “even so, come Lord Jesus” (22:20). The Spirit does not have to do or say anything else in any other way to cause us to want to go home.

Why not let the WORDS OF THE SPIRIT direct you home?

MUST CHRISTIANS KEEP THEMSELVES PURE?

Willie Bradshaw



Brother Bradshaw has preaching since 1976 and has served congregations in Kentucky and Georgia. He and his wife, Linda, have two sons, Patrick and Gregory. He graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1979 and has had additional studies at Freed-Hardeman University. Well known for both his preaching ability and song leading, he has spoken on a number of lectureships and in gospel meetings and youth meetings in several states and has led singing in a number of them also. He has also done mission work in Antigua, West Indies, Freeport, Bahamas, South Carolina and West Virginia. Willie has also had experience in radio and television evangelism.

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaken of other men's sins: Keep thyself *pure* (1 Tim. 5:22).

- I. Pure: Webster's.
 - A. Free from what vitiates, weakens, or pollutes.
 - B. Free from moral fault or guilt.
 - C. Spotless.
- II. The question is: "Must Christians keep themselves pure?"
 - A. YES!!
- III. Must Christians be perfect?
 - A. Webster's: Faithfully reproducing the original.
 - B. 1 Peter 2:21: "leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
 - C. "Reproducing."
 1. Philippians 3:15: "Let us therefore, as many as be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."
- IV. Must Christians be righteous?
 - A. Webster's.
 1. Acting in accord with divine or moral law.
 2. Free from guilt or sin.

- B. Philippians 1:9-11: “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”
 - C. Righteousness includes works of goodness, purity, moral uprightness, justice. It implies an attitude of obedience to God. If we pattern our lives after His Son, our deeds will be righteous, pure, perfect.
 - D. After looking at the meaning of the word we can say, like the disciples. “Who then can be saved?” (Mat. 19:25).
- V. I wonder if we know when we are pure, perfect and righteous? We must stop deceiving and fooling ourselves.
- A. Example.
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 6:9: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”
 - 2. Think. Who are the unrighteous? Paul had to explain and some still did not think he was talking to them.
 - B. Example.
 - 1. Galatians 5:19: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are theme.”
 - 2. Think. What would the works of the flesh be? “But, he is not talking to me.”
 - 3. 1 Corinthians 6:9: “Be not deceived.”
- VI. Must Christian youth keep themselves pure? YES!!!
- A. Youth must remember God.
 - 1. Ecclesiastes 11:9-10.
 - 2. Ecclesiastes 12:1-2.
 - B. Why remember God?
 - 1. Because the devil will make you forget.
 - 2. Luke 8:11-12: “Now the parable in this: the need is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”

- C. When you are trying to make the right choice about something, then cometh the devil.
 - 1. 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, an a roaring Ron, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”
 - 2. The devil is real, he in the enemy of all righteousness. He has a desire or purpose, and he works to accomplish his purpose.
- D. Because young people need a role model: (someone to look up to). Look unto Jesus.
 - 1. Luke 2:52: “And Jesus increased in **wisdom** and **stature**, and in **favor** with God and man.”
- VII. Some important biblical admonitions about the development of character in youth are:
 - A. Be sober minded (Tit. 2:4-6).
 - B. Be in subjection to older people (1 Pet. 5:5).
 - C. Keep company with proper associates (1 Cor. 15:33).
 - D. Flee from youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22).
 - E. Know the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:15).
 - F. It is not easy to do all of this! But, you need to remember God.
- VIII. Why Remember God? Because He will help you make the right conclusion about:
 - A. Drugs.
 - B. Sex.
 - C. Personal Appearance.
 - D. How to be Popular.
 - E. How to be Happy.
 - F. Drinking Alcohol.
 - G. Dancing.
 - H. Recreation.
- IX. Why Remember God? Because you are going to need Him.
 - A. You cannot understand that now, but later you will; if it is not too late.
 - 1. When you have tried everything.

2. When all your friends have left.
 3. If you make it through all of this you are going to need God.
- X. Why Remember God in your youth?
- A. You may never come to obey your Lord if you wait.
 - B. You may be faced with memory consequences that you cannot get over.
 - C. You may lose your influence for good.
 - D. You may deprive your God and Savior of years of service.
 - E. You may miss blessings of Christianity during the period of sowing wild oats.
 - F. Death may come before you finish sowing your wild oats.
- XI. Must Christians keep themselves pure? YES!!
- A. Put off the sins of the flesh, for works of the flesh are condemned.
 1. Galatians 6:19-21.
 2. Romans 1:18-32.
 3. Lasciviousness: 1 Peter 4:3-5, “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”
 4. Strife (2 Tim. 3:23-26; Rom. 13:13).
 5. Wrath.
 - a. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jam. 1:19).
 - b. “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 The. 5:9).
 6. Factions: “A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Pro. 6:16-19).
 7. Divisions: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned” (Rom. 16:17-18).

XII. Must Christians keep themselves pure? YES!!

A. Man alone is not perfect and pure.

1. "For there is not a just man upon the earth" (Ecc. 7:20).
2. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8).
3. "Not having mine own righteousness" (Phi. 3:9).
4. "Perfect that which is lacking" (1 The. 3:10).

B. Without Christ, man is carnal minded. "To be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6).

C. Purity, perfection and righteousness are through Christ.

1. How do we become pure?
2. Complete in Him.
 - a. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28).
 - b. "And ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).
3. Sanctified by Christ.
 - a. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).
 - b. "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).
 - c. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jam. 1:4).

D. Christ is the source of the Christian's purity.

1. The flesh is crucified if one is in Christ.
 - a. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).
 - b. Hope of eternal life (Rom. 8:11-13).

E. God's Spirit is provided through His Word.

1. The Word is the sword of the Spirit.

- a. “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which in the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).
 2. Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).
 3. Keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3; Phi. 1:27).
 4. Worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).
- F. Plan of Salvation.
1. God’s part.
 - a. The great love of God for man (John 3:16).
 - b. He gave Christ as the Savior (Luke 19:10).
 - c. He sent the Holy Spirit as a guide (John 16:13).
 - d. He gave the Gospel an “the power” unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).
 - e. He provided atonement by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9; Col. 1:14).
 2. Man’s part.
 - a. Hear the gospel (Rom. 10-17; John 8:32).
 - b. Believe the gospel (Heb. 11:6; John 20-31).
 - c. Repent of past ohm (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
 - d. Confess faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10; Mat. 10:32).
 - e. Be baptized (Gal. 3:27; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
 - f. Be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

CONCLUSION:

- I. Must Christians keep themselves pure? YES!!!
 - A. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22).
 - B. Perfection through Christ is an attainable goal. One needs only to look at fallible men of the Bible who, because they followed the Lord, became perfect in Him.