

The Doctrine Of Christ
Versus
The Doctrines Of Men

Michael Hatcher, Editor

1995 Bellview Lectures

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Twentieth Annual
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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST VERSUS THE DOCTRINES OF MEN

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DEDICATION



Elward and Dot Brantley

The names and faces of Elward and Dot Brantley are etched indelibly into the minds and hearts of many people. They have not made such lasting impressions due to their foreign mission efforts, or for any public prominence on domestic soil. Their names most likely never will be uttered with the same breath as those whose work has brought them recognition on a brotherhood-wide scale. Yet, the innumerable people whose lives they have touched acknowledge their unequaled greatness. For both Elward and Dot are supreme examples of humble service, the requisite of true greatness in God's kingdom.

On August 10, 1956 Elward and Dot began their Christian journey together as husband and wife. To this union were born two children: Vicki Rene and Garry Keith. Their children attest to this couple's tireless service for and dedication to the Savior, which continues to be reflected in their family life. His godly example has shaped and

influenced their own understanding of parenting. Elward's gentle, and unassuming life toward his children reflected Paul's admonition: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Elward, who has served faithfully as a deacon at Bellview for over twenty-five years, has spent many hours printing the publications for the Bellview Church of Christ, which continue to exert influence on our brotherhood. He did this humble service in quietness, never seeking the praise of other human beings. Elward's discreet, hard work for the Lord is a mark of his true greatness.

If Dot had lived in biblical times, no doubt she would have been the inspiration behind Proverbs 31. With all her amazing abilities, Dot chose to remain home with her children until both reached school age. From that time, they have seen her shoulder the responsibilities of many roles. Through the years, she has served as secretary for Escambia Christian School, Bellview Church of Christ, the Bellview Preacher Training School, and the Firm Foundation. Currently she works for the Austin McGary company, and assists Ira Y. Rice with his publications. One of her most spiritually rewarding positions was when she served as secretary for the Bellview Preacher Training School. While at this crucial position, she endeared herself to the students whom she affectionately called her "boys." These preacher "boys," many of whom continue to serve faithfully in pulpits both in this and foreign countries, attribute their successful completion of this rigorous educational experience to the love and encouragement of Dot.

Even the most eloquent orator or artistic writer never could do justice to the life and service of Elward and Dot Brantley. Their two children, six grandchildren, and a multitude of friends who deeply love and respect them, are eloquent witnesses to their godly characters. We can think of no better words to end than those of two sacred proverbs, which describes beautifully the life and legacy of Elward and Dot respectively: "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Pro. 20:7). "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Pro. 31:28).

PREFACE

Jesus gave the basis for this lectureship in speaking to the scribes and Pharisees of His day. “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). Jesus warned man of false teachers and teachings. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). Others, likewise, gave us the same warnings. Paul speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus 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). Peter warned, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1-2). It, thus, becomes our responsibility to put doctrines to the test. “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). Man has the responsibility to teach the doctrine of Christ (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:2). The church also has the obligation to defend the doctrine of Christ (1 Tim. 3:15; Jude 3). The truth, the doctrine of Christ, will save (John 8:31-32). When man alters (adds to, takes away from or substitutes something for) God’s Word it will only cause their worship to be vain (Mat. 15:1-9) and lead to eternal damnation (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

It is our intent to examine the different doctrines of men with the doctrine that comes from Christ. It is with this intent that we develop the theme of the Twentieth Annual Bellview Lectures, “The Doctrine of Christ Versus the Doctrines of Men.” We commend and express our sincere appreciation to the elders of this fine congregation (Hairston Brantley, Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancliff) in realizing the need for such a lectureship and overseeing the same. These men along with this great congregation have done a tremendous work in presenting the Bellview Lectures these many years. They are to be commended for their hard work and labor of love. These lectures, along with the other works of the Bellview congregation, have made a significant contribution to the cause of Christ through the years.

Appreciation is also extended to the men selected to prepare and deliver these lectures. They are men whom we know will teach the doctrine of Christ. They are also men who will examine all doctrines, whether those teaching the differing doctrines are members of the Lord's church or some denomination. These men have spent years with the doctrine of Christ in preparing themselves to proclaim the unsearchable riches of God. They willingly gave themselves to study, prepare and write the manuscripts contained in this book. We are grateful for their labor of love.

We present these series of lectures on "The Doctrine of Christ Versus the Doctrines of Men" with the sincere hope and prayer that it will be of profit to each who read it. May it ever be a source of information concerning the false doctrines of men and the true doctrine of Christ to the saving of the souls of men. We hope for this book a wide distribution, both among the brotherhood and also the world to instruct and teach the great principles of Christ's doctrine.

Michael Hatcher
March 30, 1995

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IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN DOCTRINE

Garry Barnes



Garry was born in Fulton, Mississippi, in 1944 to Sumpter and the late Lula Mae Barnes. He married the former Linda Scott of Sherman, Mississippi, in 1963, and they have two daughters, Debra and Sondra and six grandchildren.

He attended Freed-Hardeman College and International Bible College. Garry has been preaching more than twenty-five years and has worked with congregations in four states and has preached in meetings in several states. He has done campaign mission work in the States and abroad. Gary has written weekly newspaper articles along with articles for brotherhood publications.

Garry is presently working with the Foley Church of Christ, Foley, Alabama, and preaches on a daily radio program, Monday through Friday.

My assigned subject is: It Makes A Difference In Doctrine. It seems that this would not be a needed topic for people in the religious world. It seems that all would understand that it is true that doctrine makes a difference. Sadly, this is not true in most of the religious world. Even more sadly it is not true among many elders, preachers and members of the Lord's church. The liberal element and change agents in the church preach the Bible is only a "love letter." They say it gives no definite pattern for any phase of Christianity, whether it is becoming a Christian, the origin of the church, or the worship of the church. Since as they proclaim, the Bible is not the pattern for faith and practice of God's people, doctrine really does not matter; besides the Scriptures are open to cultural and situational interpretation. Thus, the door is opened for acceptance of any doctrine and the fellowship of any who profess a faith in God. This is not a new philosophy. It is a mere redressing of an old mind set that has prevailed in some form since the beginning of apostasy from the New Testament church and the pure doctrine of the New Testament Scriptures. If people in the church understood this truth, then many problems that today are in the forefront of attention would not exist. To this lack of understanding the apostle Paul in a slightly different

context said, “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” (Rom. 3:4a).

Let it be established that all doctrine is either truth or it is error, white or black, there is no *grey area* of neutral doctrine that is either/or dependent upon one’s view point. Thus it is to be established that all doctrine is either; of God and true, or it is of the Devil and a lie. Jesus in Matthew 12:24-30, when the Jewish leaders accused Him of casting out devils by the prince of devils, set forth the truth that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. He emphasized that either one is for Him, or one is against Him. Someone says, “But, preacher, that is not very diplomatic to say.” My reply would be that we are not discussing diplomacy; we are discussing the salvation of precious souls.

The religious division in the world today exists solely because of the **contradictory** and **conflicting** faiths and doctrines. Though most preachers (teachers) of denominational churches will say that doctrine is not important, still these differences of doctrine divide the religious world. **All** (listen closely) of these conflicting religious faiths and doctrines CLAIM they are based on, thus authorized by, the same book—the **Bible!** Let me give you just two examples of the most widely taught doctrines of many that I could give. (1) One group teaches man can fall from grace and be lost eternally. Another teaches man once saved can never fall from grace. This is a direct contradiction. (2) One group teaches baptism is by immersion for believers only. Another teaches baptism can be by sprinkling, pouring and immersion; and it teaches infants (nonbelievers) should be baptized. We have another direct contradiction! I could give pages of similar conflicts.

Truth is always harmonious with itself. This being a fact—it is true in all fields, of all books, and of religion. The fact being true of all books, it is surely true of the Bible. Yet, these examples of doctrine given contradict each other. They claim they are authorized by the same book—the Bible. If this is true, the Bible would have to contradict itself. Therefore, only one conclusion can be drawn. It is:

The Bible is not a true and trustworthy book
because it contradicts itself

or

The Bible is not the source (authority) for these
conflicting doctrines and resulting faiths.

Friends, I take the stand that the BIBLE IS TRUE, that it is the inspired Word of God. That all truth comes from the Bible and that the Bible is harmonious with itself. Therefore, the Bible IS NOT/CANNOT be the authority for these conflicting doctrines. I challenge anyone either by the Bible or common logic to disprove the conclusion drawn above. Someone says, “You know we cannot understand the Bible alike.” I know this is the argument that many make for the claim that the Bible is the authority for the conflicting doctrines. I deny that we cannot see the Bible alike. Why do we not see it alike? It is because we look at it through “tinted eyes.”

This takes us back to our original conclusion. If God permits you to see the Bible one way, for me to see it another way, and someone else sees it yet another. All these views contradict each other and **the Bible becomes a contradiction with itself and is an untrue and untrustworthy book**. If not, why not? Again I affirm the Bible IS NOT the authority for these different doctrines. God does not give us the liberty to see (interpret) the Scriptures as we choose. If so, the Bible would not be an authority—each person would be an authority to himself. We might as well not have the Bible. What if we took a rule book of softball to a game and one team read the rules and saw them one way; then another team read them a different way—and so through all the teams. What kind of authority would you have for a ball game?

It makes a difference in doctrine because of the content of each doctrine. All these different doctrines lead to confusion and division. Jesus died and prayed for unity among His followers.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 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 17:17-21).

This unity is based on doctrine—truth the Word of God.

Satan from the beginning of time has sought in one manner or another to deceive man by changing the will (doctrine) of God. When God told man, “thou shalt surely die,” Satan enters the picture in Genesis 3, and says, “ye shalt not surely die.” Is anyone so bold to say that this slight change in doctrine of only **one word** did not make a difference to Adam and Eve, and to all of mankind? When Balaam taught the people of Israel to commit fornication at Beor and twenty-four thousand dies in one day (Num. 24; Rev. 2:14) did the doctrine taught make any difference?

It is strange that men of all ages have sought to belittle the importance of doctrine when it comes to the field of religion. The opposite of this is true in most all other fields of life. In these fields there is a never ending search for the truth. In religion, in every age, there are many who are like those of whom Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-32: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” (Rom. 1:25).

There are many differences in the false doctrines that come from Satan, who is the father of lies (John 8:44) and the doctrine of Christ. The major distinguishing characteristic is that the truth (the Word of God) is knowable, consistent, and unchanging. While it is unchanging, it ever meets and fills the spiritual needs of mankind. Error on the other hand, is undefinable, duplicitous, and ever changing. When a teacher of error is challenged by truth from the Word of God, he many times will claim to have “been misrepresented and/or misunderstood.” When we speak of the doctrine of Christ, we (and the Scriptures) speak in the singular. Error or false doctrine on the other hand is always spoken of in the plural—doctrines. This is because they are so many, varied and ever changing. There is a new one every time you investigate. The Word of God speaks often of the specific (total teaching) of God or Christ (see Mat. 7:28; Mark 1:22; John 7:17; Acts 13:2; Tit. 2:10; 2 John 9). When speaking of error, unless naming some specific error (doctrine of the Nicolaitans, Rev. 2:15) the plural is used: “doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9),

“commandments and doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22), “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1), “divers and strange doctrines” (Heb. 13:9).

Truly, the doctrines of Satan are doctrines of deceit, as was evidenced in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). John writing of Satan says, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9). Paul was concerned about Satan beguiling the saints at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:3). He writes to Timothy and says, “For some have already turned aside after Satan” (1 Tim. 5:15). The apostle Paul in speaking of his charge to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles speaks of the power and influence of the teaching of Satan. He says he preached the gospel: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18). Paul warning of the coming of the man of sin, the son of perdition says that when he is revealed, that his coming, “is after the working of Satan with all power and sings and lying wonders” (2 The. 2:9).

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus set forth the truth that there are but two ways for man to travel in life. One is the narrow way that leads to life, and the other is the broad way that leads to destruction. Just as there are but two ways for man to travel, there are but two final sources of doctrine, God and Satan. All truth comes from God, and all error—false teaching—comes from the devil. This does not say that Satan will not use the truth—the doctrine of God—or quotes from it in ways to seek to entrap man in his way. Satan used the Word of God from Old Testament Scriptures to tempt Jesus, the Son of God (Mat. 4:1-11). We can be certain if he would use it to tempt Jesus, he will seek to use it on men of all ages. One of his best weapons of teaching error is to mix varying amounts of truth in with his error. Someone has said that rat poison is 98% corn and 2% poison. The D-Con bait box says the “active ingredients (i.e., poison) are .005% and the inactive ingredients (non-poison) are 99.995%. We can see it does not take much error or much poison to kill physically or spiritually. In Genesis 3 Satan added but one word to what God had said, yet that one word changed the entire meaning. Paul speaking

about sin in the church says, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6).

We need to fully understand that there is a doctrine that is of God and is “according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3), and there are doctrines that are of Satan and will cause “divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine” (the Word of God, GB) (Rom. 16:17). These doctrines—teachings—of Satan cause men to love not the truth, and to be made to “believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 The. 2:11b-12). Since one doctrine is of God and one is of Satan, doctrine does make a difference. The difference is between being lost eternally and being saved. Truth and only the truth will save men’s souls; error will damn the souls of men. Jesus says in John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” In John 17:17 Jesus proclaims what is the truth: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Brethren, it behooves us to (1) study to know what is the truth (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15), (2) be ready and willing in firmness and love to teach and stand boldly in the defense of the truth that leads to life (Jude 3; Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), and (3) to mark those who would persist in teaching error, perverting the gospel of Christ (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:7-9; 2 John 9-11).

Earlier, I mentioned that Jesus in Matthew 7, set forth the truth that man has but two paths to choose from in life. One that will lead to ruin, the other will lead to life. Paul sets forth this truth in different words in Romans 6:16, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Each person chooses to follow one of these courses. He either follows truth—yields obedience unto righteousness or follows error—obeys sin unto death. Jesus establishes the truth that it makes a difference in doctrine when He rebuked the Jews for putting the traditions of the fathers above the Word of God. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:8-9). When man chooses tradition or the precepts of men before the Word of God, he has

rejected God (Luke 9:26; 10:16; John 12:48). Peter writes of those who “wrest” the Scripture to their own destruction and warned those to whom he was writing to “beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pet. 3:16-17). Why cannot men today understand that we too can be led away from the truth and fall from our steadfastness? Why can some not see that a twisting of the Scriptures, makes them the ideals of men and not the Word of God. Why would some seek popularity with the world more than to be pleasing to God?

“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). In 1 John 2:14-17 John warns us not to love the world nor the things of the world. John wrote of those who would not confess Christ, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43). John also writes that if one has not the doctrine of Christ, he has not God (2 John 9). Why are so many today seemly ashamed of the gospel of Christ? I am made to think of Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 1 about the wisdom of men being put to shame by the wisdom of God, and how the preaching of the gospel is foolishness to those that do not believe.

When we see the warnings of the Scriptures regarding the changing of God’s Word, we should readily understand that the doctrine taught does make a difference. From the warning given to Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2, to the Lord’s last warning of the Scriptures in Revelation 22:18-19, we are warned we cannot change the Scriptures and still be doing the will of God. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I have 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). “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). When the doctrine taught is changed, there

must be a change—a perversion of God’s truth. Also, any change of the Word of God makes a new doctrine, one that is of man and no longer pleasing to God.

Jesus in John 14:6 says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” In verse twenty-three of that chapter Jesus says, “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.” Here Jesus says if one loves God he will keep **His Word**, not the ideals of some man or group of men. I mention these verses to show that God is concerned with the doctrine that we teach and practice. If there is no difference in doctrine, if one doctrine is as good as any other why would God care what we teach or practice. If God was not concerned, He would never have sent Jesus to die for man and to give a new covenant for mankind to follow (John 3:16; Heb. 1:2-3; 8:6-8). If God were not concerned, He would have left man to his own devices, left man to form his own plan for saving himself. God knows it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). Some of the darkest days in the history of the Jewish nation were when, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25b). Man today, seemly, is bent on following that same pattern of seeking to have his own way. How sad it is that not only the religious world, but also many even in the Lord’s church think they know better that God concerning the path for man to travel from here to eternity.

God’s love and concern for man and what he believes and practices has always been shown by seeking to guide men in the right way since the beginning of time. God showed this concern by His personal contact with man from Adam to Abraham. He continued to show this concern for man by the giving of the law of Moses and sending the prophets to instruct them during the law period of the Old Testament. Jeremiah, the prophet, spoke six times of the fact that God rose early to send His prophets to warn them, but they would not listen (Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4). How like these of old are the false teachers among us today; that when their error is exposed to the world, they cry that those who exposed them are ignorant, unloving

and fanatical. They chide those who seek to follow the truth as conservative, narrow-minded book, chapter, and verse quoters.

In the New Testament God's concern for what we believe, teach and practice continues in several ways. First, and most prominent is His giving of His Son to reveal His will that had been hid until the present age. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2) (See also: Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:25-27; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:8-10).

The second proof of God's concern is the many warnings given from His Word for us to hear, take heed how we hear, and to study and examine what we teach and practice (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 4:1). God gave warning to Timothy and Titus by the apostle Paul that they be careful to speak "sound doctrine" and avoid "foolish and unlearned questions" (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 2:1; 3:9-10). God also exhorts us to contend for the faith and expose and mark those who would teach error (Jude 3; Rom. 16:17).

One of the attempts of the denominational world to justify religious division and the teaching of different doctrines has been that doctrine "is not important as long as the believer is honest and sincere." Today, along come the promoters of the "new hermeneutic" who teach doctrine isn't important. They say doctrine cannot be important, because it is impossible to know unerring truth. They teach that there is no pattern of obedience or worship in the Scriptures. This philosophy requires a denial of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, demands the conclusion that the Word of God cannot be understood. This line of reasoning says that God and His Word do not teach unity in the church, especially in the realm of doctrine. That, brethren, is contrary to every teaching of the Bible. Denominationalism has taught this for centuries. Today many in the church are espousing this same damnable doctrine.

I do not know any faithful gospel preacher that does not teach that for one to be pleasing to God he must be honest and sincere. The necessity of one having to be honest and sincere is not the question. The question is, does the Bible teach that honesty and sincerity apart from the truth of God's Word will save anyone? The presence of the teaching of the need of conversion proves that there must be a change in one's life. A person could be honest and sincere and not even believe there is a God. The fact of conversion—a change in heart, will and action speaks of the necessity of sincerity. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18). Notice, Paul plainly says, "**ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine** which was delivered you." Four points are made here: (1) Obedience is a part of being made "free from sin." (2) This obedience is "from the heart"—that is sincere. (3) This obedience was to a "form of doctrine." (4) This form of doctrine had been "delivered to them." It was something taught, and something that could be understood, obeyed and taught to others. The deafening silence of any scripture even hinting at the teaching that honesty and sincerity alone—apart from obeying the truth—will save, says volumes against this man-made idea.

Paul in Romans 10:1-3, discusses the zeal (sincerity) of the Jews, yet Paul said they were **ignorant of God's righteousness**, and went about to establish **their own righteousness**. Here were a people sincere and honest—zealous—yet were not obedient to God and His Word. Paul was gravely concerned about their salvation (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1-4). In 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9 Paul warns of the coming of Jesus to take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." He states these will be punished with everlasting punishment. If it does not make a difference in doctrine

and if sincerity alone will save; why were the Jews of Romans 9 and 10 and these who obey not the gospel lost?

The apostle Paul, himself, is a strong example that honesty and sincerity separate and apart from obeying the will of God will not save. Paul was a persecutor of the saints (Acts 7-9). Paul stated he did these things ignorantly and in unbelief (1 Tim. 1:13). In view of all Paul had done against Christ and His body, Paul could still say he had “lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1), and that he had exercised himself, “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). Though Paul could say he was always honest and sincere—had a good conscience—he said he was the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). In spite of his clear conscience, until the time of his conversion and obedience to the gospel he was **LOST**. As the apostle recounts his own conversion in Acts 22, he set forth the fact that he was instructed to “arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).

The man Cornelius, in Acts 10, is another good example that honesty and sincerity apart from the truth and obedience will not save. Cornelius was a very devout, religious man. He was one that worshipped God, prayed to God, and gave much alms to the poor. You could add to his honesty and sincerity high morals as well. But, he would be lost without obedience! Cornelius had to be told words “whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). The eunuch of Ethiopia is another proof that even religious sincerity is not enough to save. Here was a man who had traveled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God. The eunuch had to be taught the gospel, believe and be baptized, just as Paul, the Jews of Acts 2 who crucified Christ, and the pagan Philippian jailor of Acts 16.

People of distant lands today may never have heard the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the saving power of His blood. They may be honest and sincere in their pagan idolatry. Are they saved? Does it make a difference in doctrine? Some would say, yes they are saved, but this is not the teaching of the Word of God. If they were, then it would be better to never teach the about Jesus and His church. They must be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. They must believe and obey the gospel to contact the blood of Christ. If it makes

no difference in doctrine, can the Muslims or the Mormons teach these people who have never heard the gospel, how to be saved or how to go to heaven? Can the main stream Protestant religions teach them their various doctrines, and teach them how to be saved and serve God? No, a thousand times no! They must be taught the gospel in its purity and simplicity, without addition or subtraction, for only the gospel of Christ is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). If this is true in distant countries where the light of the gospel has never shown, and it is; then, it is also true here in this country where the Bible is still the best seller, where education is available to anyone who wants it, and where there is a church on almost every corner. It makes a difference in doctrine anywhere man is found.

Those who teach that doctrine is not important, do not truly believe what they say, and they certainly will not practice it in full principle. Sure, they will extend fellowship to most other religious groups to a certain point. They will publicly say, "one church is as good as another." Challenge them to put this statement that "doctrine is not important" into full, open practice. They will not do so. Ask them to take their sign off their building and put the sign (name) of some rival church on it. Ask them to let a faithful gospel preacher come into their services and preach the whole truth of the gospel. They will not do it? If it makes no difference in doctrine; ask them to give up the teaching and practice of their religious faith; to have full fellowship with another faith that has an opposing teaching and practice. Again they will not do so.

This applies not only to the denominational world, but also to our own brethren in the liberal movement within the church. Ask one of these brethren to let a sound gospel preacher come to their congregation and hold a week's gospel meeting, and see what response you receive? Though they teach that doctrine does not make a difference, and that the Bible does not set any pattern of worship and service, they, like the denominational world, will not practice it. They may extend fellowship to the denominational world and speak well of them, but they will not fellowship the faithful in the church unless the faithful are willing to give up their following of the Scriptures.

Let me close with a thought on two Scriptures that should settle the matter forever with those who are sincere and want to follow God. “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). If some teachings are “sound doctrine” (and Paul says they are) then of necessity there are some teachings that are “not sound doctrine.” Then it has to make a difference in doctrine. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). (1) There is a “doctrine of Christ.” (2) This doctrine can be abided in or left. (3) To leave this doctrine is to leave (have not) God. I would say it makes a difference in doctrine!

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CHRIST'S DOCTRINE IS UNDERSTANDABLE

Clifford Newell Jr.



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His preaching has involved radio and television programs, lectureships and mission trips to Scotland. He is married to the former Diane Elaine King and they have two children, Joy Elaine and Clifford III. He has been preaching for more than nineteen years and currently is working with the Pine Street Church of Christ in Bay Minette, Alabama.

We are living in a time when truth is no longer respected and is increasingly being attacked. Those who are attacking the truth are not all from the denominational world, in fact G. K. Wallace said a number of years ago, "The denominational world is leaving us alone because we are leaving them alone." Some, once preached the truth as it was revealed, but now are the leaders of a digression. The digression is being sparked by the contention that one cannot know for certainty what is truth. It is claimed that we cannot understand God's sure Word, nor should we even try.

The apostle Paul heralded, "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. 2:4-5).

Brethren, can you picture the peerless Paul setting forth the proposition that he could not be sure that there were **false brethren**; that they came in our midst with the purpose to **spy out our liberty**; and the apostolic position is, since one cannot know what is doctrine (Christ's or man's), **what harm have they done?** Good people, the

tone and tenor of Paul's response to them was one of conviction. Paul **knew** that he **knew** that these Judaizing teachers were wrong. Paul not only opposed them, he exposed them for what they really were, "False Brethren." Good people, our constant stance, our pointed position must be, we will oppose every false way and expose those who are espousing such.

THERE IS A DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

The doctrine of Christ is clearly and unmistakably the teaching of the New Testament in its entirety. When Christ finished the sermon on the mount, the Bible states, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mat. 7:28-29). The Master teacher had just silenced the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, then the people responded with the sentiments, "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine" (Mat. 22:33). Further, when Jesus confronted the moneychangers in the temple (Mark 11:17) that, "the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine" (Mark 11:18). The gospels reveal that Jesus had a doctrine, for "he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine" (Mark 4:2). "And he said unto them in his doctrine" (Mark 12:38). "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (John 7:16). "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine" (John 18:19).

We read in Acts that on the day of Pentecost the church or kingdom would come. According to Mark, some of them would not taste death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). It must be stressed that when the power would come so would the kingdom. Therefore, when the power did come (Acts 2:1-4) the kingdom did come as well (Acts 2:47). Hence, "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

Further, the deputy Sergius Paulus, “when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:12). John wrote, “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” (2 John 9-10).

It is the case that there is such a thing as doctrine, particularly as applied to Jesus Christ. Doctrine means, “A principle or body of principles presented for acceptance or belief, as by a religious, political, scientific, or philosophic group; dogma.”¹ With the above definition, is it any wonder that the Modernists deny and continue to attack the doctrine? They may mock the idea of doctrine, attack the doctrine, or deny the doctrine, but they have given nothing of substance to replace it, nor can they!

CHRIST’S DOCTRINE IS UNDERSTANDABLE

In a very basic sense, mankind possesses the ability to understand the Bible and when we do we will understand it alike. It is declared, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, 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). Since our being truly the disciples of Jesus depends upon our abiding in His Word, Jesus implicitly teaches that we must be able to learn that Word. It would be impossible to abide in it unless we could first learn it. Further, Jesus implicitly taught that the truth is an instrument of being made free from sin. Hence, that is why the apostle Paul condemned those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). The peerless Paul stated,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 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, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Timothy was to abide in the doctrine or teachings he had received. These teachings are those which he had learned and from a child had

known, the sacred Scriptures. Friends, could it be made any plainer that Christ's doctrine is understandable! Jude, the half brother of our Lord said, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Jude tells us his purpose in writing—"that ye should earnestly contend for the faith" (i.e., the system of faith, the gospel). How could Jude encourage these people to earnestly or intensively contend for that which cannot be known? When Paul wrote to Timothy, he expressed to him these words, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" and "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:13, 16). Timothy was to give attention to doctrine. By giving attention (or adhering) to doctrine he could then continue or abide in it. When Ephesus was a hotbed of heretical coals, Paul left Timothy there and charged him saying, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). Evidently, doctrine was important enough that Paul encouraged Timothy to instruct that there will be no other doctrine taught in this city!

In the divine record we read, "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). Did those Bereans possess a special knowledge? No, their attitude was, "that they received the word," and searched it in order to understand and compare what Paul was saying with what the Scriptures taught. They literally were practicing what John had taught, "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). Not only did they receive the Word, but did so with "readiness of mind," i.e., they prepared themselves to receive what Paul was teaching in order that they could determine whether this teaching was in accordance with God's revealed will.

And when they searched the Scriptures, they did so with the conviction that they could know the sacred writing of God!

The apostle Paul wrote, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). Is this a forgotten command? Many feel insulted if you ask them to prove anything about their religion. Yet, we have not only the right, but the obligation to ask people questions about their religion; and they have the same right and obligation to ask us to prove ours. Peter, placed this responsibility on each person when he said, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Paul, further stated,

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:1-5).

Paul specifically discusses the “revelation” from God which was given unto him, and which included his special mission. What did Paul do with this “revelation” after it came to him? Paul said, “as I wrote afore in few words.” How would the Ephesians relate to the words Paul wrote? Listen carefully, “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; Which in other ages [generations] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:4). We stand in relationship to these words as the Ephesians stood. That is, we can read what Paul wrote, and come to have his understanding of the message which he penned. Good people, that is what each of us should desire—to have Paul’s understanding of the revelation.

In Acts we read,

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through

grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:26-28).

The case is that Aquilla and Priscilla took Apollos aside and expounded or explained the Scriptures unto him, which he did receive and learned. This aided the eloquent Apollos for he mightily convinced the Jews.

John, the apostle of love, wrote, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). John was writing to second generation Christians and stated, **ye know the truth!**

In connection with the matter of ascertaining and understanding God's will for us, it is helpful to recognize that there are three ways in which God conveys His will to man. He teaches us, first of all, by direct statements. For example, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). It is imperative, in order for one to have remission of sins, he must repent and be baptized!

He teaches us, in the second place, by an approved account of action, i.e., "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7). A careful study of this passage reveals that here is what the early disciples practiced in their worship services. This account of action was of apostolic application (1 Cor. 11:23-30).

He teaches us, in the third place, by implication. For example, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:35-36). Obviously implied is, preaching Jesus includes preaching on baptism!

However, we are now being criticized for employing the inductive method of studying and interpreting the Bible.² Professor D. R. Dungan states, "In the uses of this method of interpretation, all the facts are reported, and from them the conclusion is to be reached."³ Paul wrote, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21). How can one prove anything without knowing the facts that govern the case? Some are saying, We need to approach the Bible

as a storybook, and not just study texts.⁴ God intends for Bible doctrine to find application in everyday life situations. For example, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15-17). Doctrine is more than stories, collected and edited by a redactor or redactors. Because salvation is at stake, we should not take Christ’s doctrine lightly.

There are others (Shelly and Harris) who affirm that one can come with only flawed attempts to understand the Bible. They affirm there is no infallible method for interpreting Scripture, all attempts are fallible.⁵ Shelly says (calling for a new way of looking at Scriptures) “I am not sure there is any sense in which the law of Moses is abrogated.” He belittles the hermeneutic principles of command, example, and inference, stating that none of the Bible is written as English case law.⁶ Royce Money stated, “We must determine what the real issues are regarding the role of women in the church” as though the sacred Scriptures will not help. Further, he expressed, “We must decide on the way Scripture should be interpreted.”⁷ How sad are these times, when men of such ability have to stoop to the depths of human wisdom for basic fundamental truths.

Why do not people understand the Bible alike? Some do not understand the Bible alike because they do not love God with all their heart. Others do not understand the Bible alike because they are not hungry enough. Some do not understand the Bible alike because their heart is not honest. Some do not understand the Bible alike because their will is perverse. Others do not understand the Bible alike because they have ungodly lusts. While others do not understand the Bible alike because they have allowed men such as Shelly, Harris, Allen, Weed, Money, Love, Hughes and on and on this list could go, to influence them in rejecting God’s infallible pattern!

There are those who are willingly ignorant. This is obvious in at least three areas: Those who are willingly ignorant of the Bible in general; those who are willingly ignorant of the purpose of biblical preaching; and those who are willingly ignorant of their need to

acknowledge past sins. “For this they willingly are ignorant of” (2 Pet. 3:5).

HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

If God demands of us that we live according to His will revealed to us in the Word of God; that we worship and serve Him according to His instructions; and that we strive to teach others of His will, then, surely it is obvious to us that His revealed will is attainable and understandable! That is, it can be grasped or comprehended by the human mind, and must be so comprehended. That is why Paul so beautifully said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

There are four things that one must keep in mind if he wants to understand God's Pattern or accomplish a goal. (1) Definition—Understand what there is to be done. (2) Plan—Learn how best to accomplish the goal. (3) Attitude—Be willing to tackle it. (4) Action—Show a determination to act upon it. Understanding and learning are vitally important, but that is only half the battle. One must be willing and determined to win.

Christ's doctrine challenges us to live as He lived (1 Pet. 2:21). Man cannot give the excuse that he does not have a pattern. God has given His people a pattern from the very beginning. Note: Noah—“according to” (Gen. 6:22) and all the way throughout the New Testament, Paul—“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them” (Gal. 6:16).

Christ's doctrine challenges us to grow as He grew (Luke 2:52). Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spirituality, and socially. “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12).

Christ's doctrine challenges us to think as He thought, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 2:5). Or as Isaiah expressed it, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher

than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

Christ’s doctrine challenges us to obey as He obeyed (Heb. 5:8-9). He learned obedience through suffering. He humbled Himself (Phi. 2:5-9). Obedience calls for humility! The primary reason that some people are not obedient unto God today is because they are not humble people. Man must obey God and that begins by surrendering his will to the Master’s will. In each case where Christ challenges us, we can understand and carry out our mission!

How can we understand the Bible? By coming to the realization that God has revealed to man His revelation (pattern). This revelation is from Jehovah and, therefore, is infallible, understandable, and authoritative. This revelation is identified from the time of the cross onward as the New Testament. Roy Deaver correctly stated,

A testament is something which is to be taken seriously. It is not to be changed—once it has come into effect. It is not to be disregarded. Its conditions are to be met. The Lord’s testament (or will) relates to the marvelous blessings and benefits which are granted to certain ones when these certain ones (and as long as these certain ones) meet specified conditions.⁸

His revelation, will, or pattern is infallible, i.e., it is not subject to mistake. Although many do mishandle the Word of God, it is possible for mankind to handle it correctly. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth” (by **handling it aright**) (2 Tim. 2:15). Because of its infallibility we also note, “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).

His revelation, will, or pattern is authoritative, i.e., has all authority to back its every precept. “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat. 28:18). Because He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mat. 16:16) and He was transfigured (Mat. 17:1-6) a voice then spoke— “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye him**” (Mat. 17:5).

CONCLUSION

Our basic proposition is: Christ's Doctrine Is Understandable. We are not saying that we are infinite in knowledge—none of us claims to know everything. However, we are saying that we can know the truth of God's Word, which is necessary in order for us to become Christians and to live the Christian life in an acceptable way.

Brethren, we are indeed facing perilous times. This is no time to be faint-hearted. We must valiantly stand for the truth of God's holy Word. David stated, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3).

Here are five things we can do that will help us to understand Christ's doctrine. First, use good common horse sense, which is stable thinking (1 Cor. 1:26; Mark 12:37; Luke 24:45). Second, have faith in the inerrant, verbally inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Third, make mental application of the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:15). Fourth, desire to know and to practice the truth (John 7:17; 8:31-32; Mat. 5:16). And fifth, expect to understand His teaching (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Heb. 4:12).

Yes, dear friends Christ's doctrine is understandable. We can and we must work for knowledge and pray for wisdom!

ENDNOTES

¹American Heritage Dictionary (on diskette).

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³D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 83.

⁴Bill Love, *The Core Gospel: On Restoring the Crux of the Matter* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1992), pp. 2, 14-15.

⁵Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Co., n.d.), 1992, p. xv.

⁶Curtis A. Cates, *The Second Incarnation: A Pattern For Apostasy* (Memphis, TN: Cates Publications, 1992), p. 13.

⁷Roy Deaver, Thomas B. Warren, Mac Deaver, *A Review and Response Relating to Dr. Royce Money's ACU 1993 Lectureship Sermon: "On This Rock I Will Build My Church"* (Austin, TX: Biblical Notes, 1993), pp. 27-37.

⁸Roy Deaver, *Hold The Pattern Of Sound Words* (Wellington, TX: Biblical Notes, May/June, 1994), p. 5.

DETERMINING CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Roy Deaver



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In Romans 12:2, inspiration (Paul) says: “And be not conformed [fashioned according] to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

It is appropriate that we read together the translation of this passage in *The Renaissance New Testament* (by Randolph O. Yeager): “In fact stop allowing yourselves to be conformed to this age, but be ye always transformed by a regenerating of your way of thinking, in order that you may **ascertain** [emp. RD] what that good and acceptable and perfect will of God is.”

We must know and we must believe that the Word of God is “good” and “acceptable” and “perfect”—and then, we must determine, ascertain, what God’s will for us really is—regardless of the question, problem, or circumstance. Whatever the time, the place, the situation, the question, or the problem—I must know that God (in the Bible) has the answer (if human beings need to have the answer), and I must be able to **determine** what that answer is.

The Bible teaches that God has but one soul-saving plan, for all mankind. This plan is variously designated in the New Testament Scriptures. It is called: (1) the truth (John 8:32); (2) the Word (Acts 8:4); (3) the faith (Jude 3); (4) the Way (Acts 9:2); (5) the doctrine (Acts 13:12); (6) the sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10); (7) the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Thus, when we use these various terms we are talking about the same thing—the truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every responsible, accountable, human being has the responsibility before God to seek after God and His will. The Lord says: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Mat. 7:7). He also said: “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself” (John 7:17). The Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica (Acts 17:11). Wherein lay their nobility? “In that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” God has given human beings the obligation and sacred privilege to **seek** after Him (Acts 17:24-28); and He is findable—He wants to be found. With soul-salvation depending upon it, surely it is the case that the honest, sincere person can find, discover, ascertain God's truth. And God, in His own way, will help those who are determined to find, to know, and to do His will.

“Determining the Doctrine of Christ” includes our learning and knowing “How God Authorizes.” This is an area of biblical study in which every accountable human being ought to be seriously concerned. I strongly recommend and have often stressed to my students: “Until you **get this right** in your mind that you obtain and diligently study my book entitled *A Certaining Bible Authority*. That book tries to do this job in thirteen lessons—obviously we cannot do it (as I would like to do it) in this particular lesson.”

1. We must know and appreciate the fact that God has given us the divine pattern for our lives. God has also given us the pattern for the church—its organization, its worship, its doctrine, its practice, its blessings. I stand before you as a firm believer in “Pattern Theology”—though this concept is often (these days) sarcastically ridiculed.

Just as God gave Noah the pattern for building the ark, and just as God gave Moses the pattern for building the tabernacle, so God gave the instructions (specifications) for the New Testament church of our Lord—the New Testament “temple” of God. And, as “did Noah; according to all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22) and Moses did all things according to the pattern that was shown him in the mount (cf., Exo. 25; 40:16; Heb. 8:5), so must we be obedient to the pattern which is set out for us in the New Testament. If this is not God’s plan, intent, purpose—then why do we even have the New Testament?

The plain fact that the New Testament is designed to be our pattern is emphatically declared in numerous passages: (1) “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching [doctrine] of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching [doctrine] the same hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). (2) “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema (Gal. 1:6-8).

Then,

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which 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 from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

God expects us to walk according to and to live in harmony with the divine pattern. The Lord said: “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you” (Mat. 28:20). In Ephesians 5:11 Paul says: “and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them.” John says: “If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh

in his evil works” (2 John 10-11). Further, the Lord stressed: “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He said: “Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you” (John 15:14). John says: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3).

Here is a beautiful note from brother G. K. Wallace.

The church can be restored by taking the Bible and following it as a guide. The church can be, today, as it was in early times, by following the apostolic pattern. The New Testament reveals a pattern for worship and a pattern for doctrine that cannot and must not be ignored. Let us look for a group of people who will call themselves Christians (Acts 11:26). Let us find a group of people who respect the New Testament organization of the church, preach sound doctrine, worship as the Bible directs, and live and worship as God directs. The gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The word **gospel** is the way of God; so let us inquire for it, and walk in it. If we do not walk in the right way, we shall walk over the precipice and fall into the bottomless pit.

2. We must know and respect the great basic authority principle. The New Testament frequently and abundantly declares that we are obligated (and privileged) to listen to the voice of God, as He speaks to us in/through His Son. We hear the Son by hearing His Word. Everything the Christian does must be authorized by the New Testament. We must not go beyond its teaching. We must not fall short of its teaching. We must not seek to change its teaching. We must not attempt to substitute. We must not allow what God condemns, and we must not condemn what God allows. We must not violate the laws which God has made. We must not seek to make laws which God has not made.

To be right with God we must “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7). The Record declares that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Obviously, then, where there is no “word of God” there can be no faith. Then, Hebrews 11:6—“and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him”

We set it forth as an irrefutable proposition: “The Scriptures teach that in Christian work and worship we must do only that which is authorized by the word of God.” A *corollary* to this proposition would be: It is possible for the human being to ascertain that which is authorized by the word of God. An *additional corollary* to this

proposition would be: It is possible for human beings to practice in Christian work and worship only that which is authorized by the Word of God.

3. In order for us to determine God's will for us, as revealed to us in His revealed will, the Bible, we must recognize and respect certain significant distinctions. Each point to be mentioned deserves a careful study—we will be able only to barely glance at each one.

(1) We must clearly understand the difference between the **Old** Testament and the **New** Testament. The Bible itself makes crystal clear this distinction. We cite: Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:8-13; Hebrews 9:15-17; Hebrews 10:9.

(2) We must know that God has dealt with man in **three different distinct** systems of religion, and that we live in the time of the third system. There was **Patriarchy**. In the Old Testament record, this period extended (for all men) from Adam to Moses and Sinai, and for the Gentiles, it extended on to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10-11). There was **Judaism**. This period, for the Jews, extended from Moses and Sinai (the giving of the Law of Moses) to Pentecost of Acts 2. There is **Christianity**. This period (or system) extends from Pentecost of Acts 2 to the Lord's final coming to judge the world. In the early days, from Pentecost to Acts 10, there was a time of "transition"—a time in which God dealt in a special way with both Jews and Gentiles, working to have **all men everywhere** to understand that the church of our Lord and the pure gospel of the risen Savior are God's **one plan** for all men everywhere. This is the time in which everything we do in matters religious must be authorized by the New Testament.

(3) We must recognize the difference between **faith** and **opinion**—between faith and human judgment. For example: I **know** that the Bible says that Nicodemus came to the Lord "by night." I believe that this is the case—that Nicodemus did in fact come to the Lord "by night."

The Bible does not tell us **why** Nicodemus came by night, and any explanation which we might suggest in this connection would be **opinion** and nothing more. I would have no right to try to force the other person to accept my opinion, and he would have no right to try

to force me to accept his opinion. There can never be complete unity in matters of opinion, and the Bible does not demand unity in matters of opinion.

Acts 15:36-41 records a serious difference that arose between Paul and Barnabas. In contemplation of a second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, and Paul definitely did not want to take John Mark. There came a “sharp difference” between them. They parted company, and went separate ways. I find great satisfaction in the fact that God is able to overrule even the frailties of men to the accomplishing of even greater good. Because of this contention, there were two missionary journeys, instead of the one. There were four workers, instead of two or three. There is satisfaction also in realizing the fact that if two of the greatest gospel preachers that ever lived disagreed so sharply in a matter of human judgment, then most likely there will always be disagreements in matters of human judgment. And, the Bible does not demand unity in matters of human judgment—matters of option.

(4) We must be able to distinguish clearly between the **temporary** and the **permanent**. As, there were **apostles** in the early church—men to whom the Lord had promised the miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit, and the men to whom the Lord kept His promise. These were men who possessed the miraculous spiritual gifts, and who were endowed with the power to impart miraculous gifts to others. There were others in the early church who did possess certain spiritual gifts. These were persons upon whom an apostle had placed his hands, thereby imparting a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit.

Certainly it is true that we now have the benefits of the labors and teachings of the apostles, and that they still have a tremendous influence in the church of our Lord. But, the fact remains that we have no living apostle—miraculously endowed—in the church today.

It is also a fact that there is no person in the church today who has the power to perform miracles. Living apostles, miracles, spiritual gifts—these things were necessary in the infant church, but were **temporary** in nature and character. They were never intended to be a continuing part of permanent Christianity.

(5) We must be able to distinguish between **circumstance** and **condition**. In our striving to learn about our duties, responsibilities, obligations, and attitudes, we must be careful to observe this distinction. Acts 16:13-15 records the conversion of Lydia and her household. The record says:

And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Sabbath day, place of prayer, sitting down, meeting of women—these were **circumstances**. The preaching, the hearing, the believing, the baptism—these were **conditions**. Circumstances vary; conditions do not.

Acts 16 also records the conversion of the jailor and his household. The imprisonment of Paul and Silas, “their feet fast in stocks,” the praying and singing at midnight, the prisoners listening, the great earthquake, the shaking foundations, the opened doors, the loosed bands—these were **circumstances**. The preaching, the hearing, the believing, the baptism—these were **conditions**, essential to the jailor’s salvation. I maintain that it is not difficult to distinguish between circumstance and condition, and in this regard, common sense is a vital factor.

(6) We must distinguish clearly between **means** and **principle**. Sometimes we become so involved in consideration of the *means* by which a principle is taught that we obscure or fail to see the **principle** being set forth.

For illustration, we glance at First Corinthians 14:26-40. This is a part of Paul’s great discussion on the subject of “Spiritual Gifts.” In fact, he began this discussion in (our) chapter 12, verse 1. It continues until he changes the subject, in chapter 15, verse 1. The attempt (by many) to study and teach on these verses, without due consideration to the context, has produced (and continues to produce) tragic consequences among brethren. In fact, there are many brethren

who are able to quote verse 34, who have no idea whatsoever as to what is in verse 26.

In these verses, Paul discusses a special meeting of brethren in Corinth. It was a meeting for the purpose of receiving the benefits of the miraculous spiritual gifts. It was a meeting of "brethren." There is no reference to any outsider present. Paul gives specific instructions about those who would exercise the gift of tongues, about those who would exercise the gift of interpretation of tongues, about those men who possessed and would exercise the gift of prophecy, and with regard to the conduct of the prophets' wives. With particular regard to the kind of meeting under consideration, Paul mentions specifically **two conditions** in which **men** were instructed to keep silence. He also issues the instruction: "Let the women keep silence in the churches." Paul explains: (1) It is not permitted unto to them to speak; (2) it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.

Now, in our regular assemblies, our women are allowed and encouraged to sing. When they sing, they speak. When they speak, when they sing, they teach. Women are allowed to "come forward," to stand before the assembly and confess their faith in Christ that they might be baptized. They are allowed to confess their sins that they might be forgiven. All this, without sin, and without shame. Obviously, our meetings are not the kind of meeting talked about in First Corinthians 14:26-40.

Does this mean that 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 has no application to the church today? It does not mean this at all! The **principles** set forth are just as binding now as they ever were; the **means** (the circumstances, the situation) by which Paul set forth these principles do not exist in the world today. The binding, sacred principles, are: (1) let all things be done unto edifying; (2) God is not a God of confusion, but of peace; (3) let them be in subjection; and, (4) let all things be done decently and in order.

(7) We must be careful to distinguish between **custom** and divine **law**. I believe that this is the key to understanding 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. Much of what is written in these verses relates to the custom prevalent in Corinth of women wearing the veil.

It is my personal conviction that Paul, in these verses, does not teach that all Christian women, when appearing in public or in worship assemblies, at all times and in all places, must wear a veil. Paul, in these verses, and in consideration of a particular custom, does emphasize **certain sacred principles** which are just as binding now as they were then. From these verses we learn: (1) The head of Christ is God; the head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; (2) The man is to do nothing which will bring dishonor to the Christ; (3) The woman is to do nothing which will bring dishonor to the man; she is to maintain an attitude of respect and subordination; (4) It is right and good to be in harmony with the customs which are right within themselves; we should not offend others by breaking these customs; (5) We should not bring reproach upon the church by violating customs which are good; (6) We must not dress in such fashion as to become identified with impure people; (7) We must not dress in such fashion as to be offensive to God or to His angels (present in worship assemblies); and, (8) Our dress must indicate a deep and abiding concern about purity and decency.

4. It is crucial that we understand that God will not tolerate that which is not authorized by God.

Whatever is offered as worship to God, which is not authorized in the New Testament, is not acceptable to Him. This is, in fact, the way it was also in the Old Testament. The fact that something is intended to be worship to God does not mean that it will please God. Cain's worship (Gen. 4:2-5) was not acceptable to God. God, through Malachi, sought especially to correct the people with regard to their efforts to worship. God explained that their offerings were not acceptable. In fact, God said: "Present it now unto thy governor" (Mal. 1:8). The Lord applied Isaiah's prophecy to the Pharisees and the scribes, saying, "But in vain do they worship me, Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9).

The Bible often uses the word "strange" in the sense of "not acceptable because not authorized." Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). "And there went out fire from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2). King Solomon married

“strange women”—women whom God had not authorized him to marry. This same kind of sin was a great problem in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 13:27). Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them had “gone after strange flesh” (Jude 7). We are warned about being “carried about...with strange doctrines” (Heb. 13:9).

5. We must stay “on the Mountain Top” of Bible Authority.

The church of our Lord has always been plagued with the problems of (1) liberalism, and (2) anti-ism. Anti-ism makes laws which God did not make. Liberalism disregards laws which God did make. Anti-ism treats matters of opinion as if they were matters of faith. Liberalism treats matters of faith as if they were matters of opinion. Anti-ism seeks to bind where God has not bound. Liberalism seeks to loose where God has bound. In backing away from anti-ism people often fall into liberalism. In backing away from liberalism people often fall into anti-ism. We must be exceedingly careful to stay on the mountain top of Bible authority. We must not fall off this sacred mountain on either side. There is destruction and death on both sides!

6. But, in order for us to stay “on the mountain top” of Bible authority, we must know (1) **how God does not authorize**, and (2) we must know **how God does authorize**. May we at least glance at **how God does not authorize**. I must remind myself constantly that God does not authorize:

- (1) Upon the basis of my personal likes and dislikes;
- (2) Upon the basis of what pleases me;
- (3) Upon the basis of erroneous conclusions which I may reach;
- (4) Upon the basis of my opinion or the opinions of others;
- (5) Upon the basis of what is popular;
- (6) Upon the basis of what may be the consensus in somebody's lectureship;
- (7) Upon the basis of what some well-known and highly respected brother teaches or may have taught;
- (8) Upon the basis of human traditions;
- (9) Upon the basis of my inability to “see any harm in it”;
- (10) Upon the basis of practices of long-standing;
- (11) Upon the basis of the silence of the Scriptures.

7. What about “the silence of the Scriptures”? Many presently argue that mechanical instrumental music in Christian worship is authorized by the silence of the Scriptures. They mean by this that the New Testament just does not say anything about it, and that, therefore, it is authorized to be used in Christian worship. It is interesting (if exasperating) to note that some of these same persons who are arguing the mechanical music in Christian worship is authorized upon the basis of the silence of the Scriptures are also arguing that a thing does not have to be authorized in order to be pleasing to God! It is at least inconsistent for one to claim that a thing does not have to be authorized to be pleasing to God, and then seek authorization for it in the silence of the Scriptures!

This concept of biblical authority is in complete contradiction with the basic authority principle we have already studied. The Bible authorizes by **what it says! not by what it does not say!** The Bible says nothing about counting beads in Christian worship. Does this fact authorize the counting of beads in Christian worship? If it is the case that all things about which the Bible is silent are things which may be employed in Christian worship, and if it is the case that the counting of beads is something about which the Bible is silent; then, it is the case that the counting of beads is something which may be employed in Christian worship. This is a ridiculous major premise. Yet, this is the very position some are taking when they argue that the mechanical instrument is authorized by the silence of the Scriptures.

Inspiration stresses that the Lord Himself could not possibly serve as a priest according to the Mosaic system. Why? Because there was no authority for it! Note the reading: “For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe MOSES SPAKE NOTHING!” (Heb. 7:14).

At Jericho, God taught Israel many great and wonderful lessons, one of which was the significance of the “silence of the Scriptures.” God had specifically authorized specific “shouting.” Joshua was concerned that the people might engage in a different kind of shouting, at the wrong time, in the wrong place. So, Joshua explained the matter. God said: (1) after the marching on the sixth day, and

(2) after the marching on the seventh day, and (3) after the priestly-bearing of the ark and the seven trumpets, and (4) after the priestly-blowing of a “long blast” and the people’s hearing the sound of the “long blast”—THEN the people were to shout with a great shout.

Joshua stressed that with regard to the obligation at hand—the shouting—this did not authorize: (1) shouting at some other time, (2) or making any noise at some other time, (3) or making just any kind of noise. Joshua said: “Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout” (Jos. 6:10).

What a lesson God and Joshua taught Israel about the silence of God’s revelation. God said it, and Joshua explained the matter clearly. The record says: “So the people shouted, and the priests blew the trumpets: and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city” (Jos. 6:20, ASV).

With regard to the obligation before the Israelites (the shouting) what would have been wrong with their shouting at some other time during the marching? What would have been wrong if they had made some other kind of loud noise even at the time which had been specified for the shouting? Answer: They would have been doing something for which they had no divine authority. They would have been walking by their own inclinations and feelings, and **not by what God had said!**

8. God authorizes by **example**.

(1) The word “example,” by dictionary definition, means: “That which is to be followed, or imitated: a pattern.” I mention this to point out that an “example” is intended to be followed, to be imitated. An “example” is **binding**. Often the question is asked: “When is an example binding?” In my judgment, this is the wrong question. Obviously, if it is an example, it is binding, and if it is not binding, it is not an example. The question ought to be (in this context): “When does the Bible account of an action constitution an ‘example’?”

(2) At this point I need to explain the sense in which I am using the word “binding” in relationship to examples. I have in mind the thought that (1) some things are *binding* (and are thus examples) in the sense that they **must** be done (these are demanded; there is nothing optional—this fact being made clear by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching on the subject at hand), and—(2) some things are binding (and thus are examples in the sense that they **may** be done (these are authorized; they may be done; but they may be left not done).

(3) For instance, I am **commanded** to observe the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24-25). I am instructed (by precept and by example) to observe it on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). There is no option here. I am authorized (by example) to observe the Supper in an “upper chamber” with “many lights.” This is **binding** only in the sense that I am *allowed* or *permitted* to do it. This is optional. I learn from other passages that the place is not the essential matter, and I—therefore—conclude that the “upper chamber” is an optional matter.

(4) Further, I am **commanded** to give—as I have been prospered. This is a **must** matter. I must not fall short of giving as I have been prospered. But, in Second Corinthians 8:1-5, I am taught by **example** that I **may** exceed giving as I have been prospered. The brethren of Macedonia gave “beyond their power.” Did Paul refer to these brethren as an example for us? Is this account of this action binding on me? If so, in what sense is it binding? Does it teach that I must, upon every Lord’s day, give beyond my power? Or, does it teach that I **may** give beyond my power? How does the “example” fit in with the “command”?

(5) If the New Testament makes it plain that “going” is the essential matter, and that the method is optional, and if the New Testament records (with approval) that Paul traveled by ship—then I conclude that Paul’s traveling by ship is an example for me (and is binding upon me) in the sense that I **may** travel by ship; but I **may** travel by car or by plane.

(6) In the light of First Timothy 1:3, I believe that it is **binding** (in the sense that it is authorized, and therefore may be imitated) for

a gospel preacher to work with a church where there are elders. But, I also believe (a) that a congregation with elders may exist and work without a local preacher; (b) that a gospel preacher may work with a congregation which has no elders; and (c) that a congregation can exist which has neither elders nor a local preacher.

(7) In the light of Acts 11:29-30, I believe that it is binding (in the sense that it is authorized, and therefore may be imitated) for a congregation to select **two** of its members to constitute a **single** hand by which to reach out and extend blessings to others. But, I believe that a congregation may also use the U.S. Postal system, or UPS, in getting blessings to others.

(8) This special note: Whether an "example" is **binding** in the sense that it **must** be done, or in the sense that it **may** be done has to be determined by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching on the point at hand. Also, we must keep in mind that there are **positive** examples (relating to things we are authorized to do and be) and there are **negative** examples (emphasizing things which we are **not authorized** to do and to be).

In his discussion of *tupos*, Thayer speaks of "a dissuasive example, pattern of warning to others." He cites First Corinthians 10:6,11 (p. 632). Thayer says further: "plul. of ruinous events which serve as admonitions or warnings to others."

(9) The fact alone of the Bible account of an action does not mean necessarily that the account of that action is intended to constitute an example. It is **very important** that we consider "actions classified." The New Testament gives information about:

Actions which were **sinful**. Judas betrayed the Lord. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter bowed to human lawmakers. Obviously, these accounts do not authorize me to do these things.

Actions which were **right** when performed, but which would be wrong if we imitated those actions now. The early church, for approximately ten years, refused to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul (Acts 21) acted in such fashion as to demonstrate that he, himself, walked orderly, keeping the law (v. 24).

Actions which were **temporary** and **obligatory**. Early Christians were commanded to "desire earnestly spiritual gifts," but spiritual

gifts were temporary. Early disciples confirmed the word by signs, but miracles were temporary.

Actions which were **temporary** and **optional**. Paul circumcised Timothy “because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:3). The apostles preached daily in the temple (Acts 5:42).

Actions which were **permanent** and **optional**. The Macedonian brethren gave “beyond their power” (2 Cor. 8:3). This they were not required to do, but which they were allowed to do, and the principle of “going the second mile” is a permanent part of Christianity.

Actions which were **permanent** and **obligatory**. The early Christians were obligated to give of their means. They were required to observe the Lord’s supper.

Obviously, only those actions which were **optional** and **permanent** and/or **obligatory** and **permanent** have any relationship to present-day Christianity. When we find in the New Testament the account of an action (1) which was manifestly right within itself, (2) which was either optional or obligatory, and (3) which related to a permanent element of Christianity—then we have authority for imitating that action. (PERSONAL NOTE: This material on “actions classified” grew out of my privileged studies with Thomas B. Warren, many years ago. My experience is that the importance of this point is seldom recognized).

(10) Perhaps it should be pointed out that an example does not **exclude**. An example authorizes traveling by boat, but does not exclude traveling by car. Acts 20:7 authorizes the observance of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. The point which makes it sinful to observe the Supper on Tuesday night is the fact that **there is no Bible authority for it!** Also, we note that several verses show our obligation (and privilege) to **sing** in Christian worship. “Sing” does not exclude “play.” **It authorizes singing!** The factor which makes it wrong to use the mechanical instrument in Christian worship is: **there is no New Testament authority for it!** The sacred principle of “walking by faith” necessarily involves our respecting the silence of the Scriptures.

(11) Determining when the account of an action constitutes an example requires: (1) application of the principles of Biblical Hermeneutics, (2) application of the principles of **LOGIC**, and (3) due consideration of the **totality** of the Bible teaching with regard to the subject at hand.

9. God authorizes by **implication**.

(1) Brethren often speak of “inference,” but “inference” is a subdivision of “implication.” Inference deals with correct reasoning, but correct reasoning (in this context) relating to what God has **implied**.

(2) Every thing the Bible teaches, it teaches either explicitly or implicitly. And, that which it teaches **implicitly** is just as true, just as binding, just as authoritative, just as important, as that which it teaches **explicitly**.

(3) We are concerned about reasoning correctly with regard to what God has **implied** in His **explicit** statements. And, the authority inherent in that which is implied lies not in the fact that I have reasoned correctly with regard to an explicit statement, but in the fact that **GOD HAS IMPLIED IT!** Note this statement from Thomas B. Warren: “The authority lies not in the fact that I read it, but in the fact that God wrote it; not in the fact that I reasoned correctly, but in the fact that God implied it.”

(4) There is a vast difference between “inference” and “assumption.” Many things are called “inference” which are not “inference” at all, but which are mere assumptions. Acts 16:15 states that Lydia and her household were baptized. It is sometimes claimed that, therefore, Lydia was married, that she had children, and that some of these children were infants, and that, therefore, it is scriptural to practice infant baptism. Here, there is a great amount of “assumption,” but there is no “inference.” In fact, it should be obvious that it is not necessary for us to talk about “necessary” inference. For, if it is “inference,” it is necessary. If it is not “necessary” it is not “inference.” However, because people often make “inferences” (?) which are not demanded, it becomes important at times that we stress “necessary inference.” In fact, **Logic** may be called (accommodatively) “the science of valid inference.”

(5) When an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely **demand**ed by the biblical information at hand—without being specifically stated—then that action, that fact, or that teaching is a matter of **implication**. For example, I am authorized to teach that in his becoming a Christian, Saul of Tarsus repented of his sins. But, we have no explicit statement that he repented. We reason as follows: If (A) it is the case than no person can become a Christian without repenting of his sins; and if (B) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus did become a Christian; then (C) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus, in his becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins.

We affirm the (A), and would set out the proof. We affirm the (B), and would set out the proof. This would give us the truthfulness of the conjunction made of conjuncts A and B. Therefore, (C) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus, in his becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins. But this fact is taught us **implicitly**, not **explicitly**.

To further illustrate: When geometry sets forth **explicitly** the axiom that “the whole of anything is the sum of its parts,” then geometry sets forth **implicitly** (1) that the whole of anything is larger than any of its parts; and (2) that the part of anything is smaller than the whole to which it relates. And, that which is here taught **implicitly** is just as true as is that which is here taught **explicitly**. Just so with regard to the Word of God. In dealing with “inference” we are dealing with **implication**. The Bible authorizes by **implication**.

(6) Let’s go back to the geometry class. It is “given” to us that we are dealing with a geometric plane figure, which figure is a square, and one side of which is 6 inches. Let us identify each of these facts as distinct propositions: (A) We are dealing with a geometric plane figure. (B) This figure is a square. (C) One side of this figure is 6 inches. Since we distinctly **know** these things, what else do we know **because we do know these three things**? Or, to ask the same thing differently, “What are the implications of these three things?” What things are **implied** by the **conjunction** made up of the **conjuncts** here identified as (A) and (B) and (C)?

We know (D) that there are three other **sides**, each of which is six inches. We know (E) that the perimeter of this figure is twenty-four inches. We know (F) that the area of this figure is thirty-six square

inches. And we know (G) that there are four 90 degree angles in this figure. This is saying that the conjunction made of conjuncts (A) and (B) and (C) **implies** (D) and (E) and (F) and (G).

This illustrates **implication**. That which we know by **implication** is just as true, just as factual, just as authoritative, as is that which we know **explicitly** (in this case, that which is "given.")

10. God authorizes by **Direct Statement**.

(1) It is tremendously inaccurate for one to say: "approved example, necessary inference, and command." At this point, I am concerned especially with the word "command." It is not sufficient to cover the situation. Rather, "command" is a part of a larger area of study which we here designate by the words "direct statement."

(2) It is tremendously important that we consider carefully this area of "direct statements." Some of these direct statements are "commands," but many direct statements are not commands. These direct statements must be classified upon the basis of **mood**, and upon the basis of their **nature**. The classification is not made arbitrarily. Rather, it is made in the light of the Greek New Testament. It is simply a matter of recognizing what we actually have in the Greek New Testament.

(3) The grammar of the Greek New Testament has **four moods**: the indicative, the imperative, the subjunctive, and the optative. Basically, "mood" means: the relationship of the **action** indicated in the verb to the realm of **reality**. There are only two basic possibilities: either the action is **real**, or the action is only **potential**. If the action indicated is real, then the mood is indicative. If the action indicated is potential, then the mood is either subjunctive, or imperative, or optative.

A statement the verb of which is in the **indicative** mood may be: (1) declarative, as in Mark 16:16; or (2) interrogative, as in Romans 6:1. A statement the verb of which is in the **subjunctive** mood may be: (1) hortatory, as in Hebrews 6:1; (2) conditional, as in Colossians 3:1 (there are several different kinds of conditions); (3) prohibitory, (4) deliberative, or (5) final. A statement which has its verb in the **imperative** mood may be: (1) mandatory (command), as in Acts 16:31; (2) mandatory-permissive, as in Acts 2:38 (Repent ye...and

let each one of you be baptized”; or (3) prohibitory. A statement which has its verb in the **optative** mood indicates a wish, or wishing, as in Romans 6:2—“God forbid”—literally, “may it not be so!” This statement with its verb in the optative mood authorizes me to teach that we are not to teach that we are to continue in sin that grace may abound.

This gives us **eleven** different kinds of statements. A “mandatory” statement (a command) is only **one** of these **eleven!** Thus, the word “command” relates to an area in which there are (as to nature) eleven different kinds of statements, and it covers only ONE OUT OF THE ELEVEN! I have no right to disregard the other ten.

(4) It is true that there are many “direct statements” in the Bible which we do not use in seeking to ascertain Bible authority in relationship to our “obligations.” But, the fact remains that there **are** direct statements, used by the Holy Spirit, to set forth Bible authority. Certainly I am not authorized to teach that the man whom the Lord had healed was born in sin—just because the Jews said that he was born in sin (John 9:34).

11. Determining the will of God (ascertaining Bible authority) also involves the area of **expediency**. When I prove that something is an expedient, according to a biblical definition of expedient, I thereby prove that this something is approved by God, comes within the realm of faith, and is thus authorized.

(1) In the carrying out of our obligations, there is an area of expediency. Every obligation which God ever gave involved expediency. In connection with every obligation which God ever gave it may be correctly said (with regard to carrying out that obligation) that God did say HOW, and yet, that He DID NOT SAY HOW!

(2) Expediency relates to human judgment. If God specifies the obligation, but does not specify the details with regard to how the obligation is to be met, then we are authorized to involve human judgment. So far as concerns congregational obligations, fully organized according to God’s plan, the elders of the congregation are the authority in this area of expediency.

(3) Expediency is that which expedites—that which gives advantage. There is no expediency where there is no advantage. So

far as concerns the local church, an expedient is that which is in harmony with the Scriptures, in which there is inherent advantage, and which may be selected by the elders in carrying out any obligation of the church—that obligation growing out of that for which there is approved example, implication, or direct statement.

(4) We must keep in mind also that there is **no expediency** where there is no **obligation**. I cannot seek to justify “thus and so” by arbitrarily calling it “an expedient.” The failure to recognize and to respect this fact created serious problems in early Restoration History.

(5) It must be stressed also that when we prove that a thing is expedient—according to a scriptural definition of expediency—we thereby prove that thing to be divinely authorized, and, hence, coming within the realm of faith. If it is truly an “expedient,” then it is a matter of faith.

(6) At this point, some attention needs to be given to the matter of “optionals” in relationship to “expedients.” What, if any, is the difference between “expedients” and “optionals”? In carrying out obligations placed upon us there are “optionals” and there are “expedients.” Consider our obligation to assemble. This obligation makes **necessary** an assembling place. An assembling place is **essential**. With regard to an assembling place there would be at least four optionals: buy a building, rent a building, build a building, meet in a private home. I have been involved in each of these. The expedient thing might be to rent a building. Under different circumstances, the expedient thing might be to **build** a building. It is clear, therefore, that the same thing could be (might be) optional and expedient at the same time. We note that not all optionals are expedient, but all expedients are optionals. But, in an expedient there is the inherent concept of **advantage**.

(7) We must make brief reference to the difference between an “expedient” (an aid) and an “addition.” Anything which is not authorized by the Scriptures, but which is nonetheless employed, is an **addition**. A true aid, an expedient, **is** authorized by the Scriptures (and is not an addition).

God has given us the obligation to “go.” We can go by **walking**, and we can go by **riding**. Walking and riding are different ways of going. These have a direct relationship to the obligation to go. They have no particular relationship to each other. Walking is not an aid—it is not an expedient—to riding, and riding is not an expedient to walking. A walking stick, used in connection with walking, would be an expedient, an aid.

Relative to the area of perception—we perceive by **hearing**, and we perceive by **seeing**. Hearing is not an expedient to seeing, and seeing is not an expedient to hearing. These are definite, distinct, different ways of perceiving. These are “co-ordinates.” Eye-glasses would be an expedient (an aid) to seeing, and a hearing-aid would be an expedient (an aid) to hearing.

In the area of making music—this can be done by singing; it can be done by the use of mechanical instruments. Singing and using mechanical instruments (playing) are two different ways of making music. These are co-ordinates. Either singing or playing can be done without the other. Singing is not an “aid” to playing, and playing is not an “aid” to singing. The songbook is an “aid,” an expedient, to singing. Having someone stand before the congregation to lead the singing is an “aid,” an “expedient.” When we use the songbook in our singing, we are **just singing**. We are **not singing and doing something else!** We are just singing.

(8) The realm of expediency is far-reaching in application. This is the ground upon which we defend: (a) our church buildings, (b) our baptistries, (c) our teaching in simultaneous Bible classes, (d) singing schools, (e) our song-books, (f) our song leaders, (g) singing an invitation song, (h) singing bass, soprano, alto or tenor, (I) using individual communion cups, (j) using contributions baskets, (k) our chalkboards (marker boards), (l) the public address system, (m) and so forth.

(9) Certain brethren are terribly inconsistent in their views with regard to the realm of expediency. They recognize it and respect it in some areas, but fail to recognize it and respect it in other areas. They know that a church building is an expedient, authorized by the obligation to assemble; but they fail to recognize that the Bible class

is an expedient, related to the obligations to study, learn, grow, feed the flock, and obey the elders. They agree that the singing school is an expedient, related to the obligation to sing; but they fail to recognize that the Bible class is an expedient, related to the obligation to teach! Back in the '40s, when L. W. Hayhurst left the anti-Sunday school position, he said: "I have decided that when I build a church building I do the same thing in principle which they do when they have a Bible class. How can I do the same thing which they do, and then condemn them for what they do?"

(10) It is a basic principle in Biblical Hermeneutics that if and when and to the extent that God does specify the **how** in connection with the carrying out of any obligation that the **how** becomes just as binding as the obligation itself; but if and when and to the extent that God **does not specify the how**, then the manner and method are left to the realm of human judgment, the realm of expediency.

Brethren, it has been good to be with you, and to have the privilege (and the attendant responsibility) of studying with you these very basic, very serious, sometimes very tedious, matters. **We must know how God authorizes—how to determine the will of God for our lives.** May God continue to be with us all, and to bless us always, to the accomplishing of the greatest possible good in His service.

CHRIST'S DOCTRINE OF KNOWLEDGE VERSUS AGNOSTICISM

Mac Deaver



Mac Deaver was born in Abilene, TX, in 1946, but spent most of his boyhood days in Ft. Worth. He graduated from Ft. Worth Christian Academy and received the A.A. degree from Ft. Worth Christian College. He graduated from the Brown Trail Preacher Training School and received his B.A. degree from Oklahoma Christian College. Later he received the M.A. degree from the Harding Graduate School of Religion and the Ph.D. degree in Christian Doctrine and Apologetics from Tennessee Bible College.

He has preached for congregations of the churches of Christ in Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Oklahoma. And he has taught in the Brown Trail Preacher Training School in Ft. Worth,

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He is Associate Editor of **Biblical Notes**, a periodical edited by his father, Roy Deaver, and he is a staff writer for **Firm Foundation**.

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INTRODUCTION

“In the most general use of the term, agnosticism is the view that we do not know whether there is a God or not.”¹ “The term ‘agnosticism’ was first used in a work by Thomas Huxley in 1869. Huxley used this term with reference to the existence of the religious object or God.”² However, the term “agnosticism” came to be employed for the alleged impossibility of the knowledge of anything. About the time that God was sending the last of Old Testament revelation to the Jews, over in the Greek community some men in Athens called “sophists” were beginning to attack the very possibility of human knowledge with regard to absolute truth. Protagoras believed that “man is the measure of all things,” that man’s knowledge is limited to his sense perceptions and that there is no way by which to determine whose perceptions are right. He thought

that all moral judgments are relative. Gorgias denied the existence of truth and declared, "(1) that nothing exists, (2) that if anything exists it is incomprehensible, and (3) that even if it is comprehensible, it cannot be communicated." It was against such ideas that Socrates fought in his effort to clarify and justify knowledge. He was put to death around 400 B.C.³

Much later some skeptics, evidently dissatisfied with philosophical efforts at solving life's most perplexing questions, classified truth seekers into three groups: (1) those who think they have found truth, (2) those who admit that they have not found it and who claim the impossibility of anyone's finding it, and (3) those who continue to look for it.⁴

Just here it might be appropriate to point out that the skeptical attacks upon the possibility of actual knowledge of absolute truth might not have been such a crucial affair (though not insignificant) if salvation were not at stake. Even though there would have been a high price to pay (for such assaults on the possibility of knowledge) in the field of ethics, it still would not have been so serious if the eternal destiny of the human soul had not been involved.

By the time the sophists were arguing the question, God had already demonstrated the possibility of human knowledge in two basic ways. He had by revelation shown that human knowledge was both possible by discovery without revelation (cf., Psa. 19:1) and by means of revelation itself (cf., Exo. 20). God's world was available for the consideration of both Jew and Greek, but God's Old Testament, though it concerned non-Jews (cf., Isa. 13ff) was given to the Jews only (Psa. 147:19-20). Unfortunately, some of the Greeks began to deny the possibility of human knowledge, period.

About 400 years after the death of Socrates, John the baptizer was born. In fulfillment of the words of Malachi, he arrived (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). He prepared the way for the Christ who claimed to be the very personification of truth (John 14:6). The apostle John had earlier said that Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Later, Paul claimed that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3) and warned the brethren at Colossae lest they be taken from the truth by false philosophy (Colossians 2:8). And Paul

pointed out that one of the characteristics of the grievous times in the last days was that some would be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). He did not explain why; he merely declared that such was so. Sadly, many today are still “ever learning” but not quite able to arrive at the truth. And the “knowledge of God” issue is still troublesome to the church. If we cannot know that God exists, we cannot know that the Bible is His word and that Jesus is His Son. And yet, for some reason, we have had preachers/teachers who in their own writing have denied the possibility of the absolute knowledge of God.⁵ And regardless of what one does or says later, if he denies that we can know for sure that God exists, then certitude with regard to other Bible doctrines is rendered impossible. Taking the position that we cannot know for sure whether or not God exists, is somewhat like extracting the brain and backbone from the church. We lose intellectual justification for our existence, and we have lost all reason for courageously advocating or confronting anything! The cause is lost, if we cannot know that God exists. For without the knowledge of God, we forfeit the knowledge of His Son, and without the knowledge of His Son, we forfeit the knowledge of the inspired New Testament, and without the knowledge of the inspired New Testament, we forfeit our right to claim that we are members of the one true religion on this earth.

Now, for various reasons many fall into the “no knowledge” trap without understanding the full import of what they do. But, regardless why it is done, when a man says that we cannot be sure of our religious ground, he has made a tragic mistake.

DISCUSSION

At this point, I want us to do three things. I want us to consider (1) why one might not know something, (2) various routes to claim non-knowledge, and (3) how to show that knowledge is possible.

First, let us consider why it is that at any given moment a man might not know something.⁶

Consider that some things are not known and are not knowable because they could only be known by a revelation from God, and God has not revealed them (Deu. 29:29). He has chosen to reveal

some things (Eph. 3:8-11). God has not chosen to reveal all that He knows, and His understanding is infinite (cf., Psa. 147:5).

And in one sense God cannot “reveal” all that He knows because there are certain things that will forever to a man remain incomprehensible (cf., Rom. 11:33-36). Man can only know so much because of his finite limitations. He is not God, and he can only know what is possible given the limitations of the nature of his own being. This is not to say that he can know nothing. It is simply to say that what he is able to know is very limited.

Also, a man might not know something because though it is discoverable by the study of the universe, man has not found it out yet. Man continues to advance in various disciplines of learning. He is continually challenged in every field of intellectual endeavor. Man will keep on expending mental effort in order to learn more and more, and on this earth there is no end to that program. There is no end to study and to the writing of books (Ecc. 12:12). But there is always something else in every discipline that is yet to be comprehended by a human being. And even with regard to God’s revelation, many things remain unknown to us because we have not spent sufficient time and expended sufficient mental effort in order to learn them. There is a price to be paid for knowledge, and for that information which is extremely difficult to comprehend, much mental effort is required. Many are not interested enough to make the required effort. And we must not forget that some things in the Bible are very hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16).

Now, let us consider some of the ways whereby one can fall into a sort of agnosticism with regard to the knowledge of saving truth. There are various routes that one could take.

(1) The epistemological route. By this we mean that one might, because of his study of knowledge theory, decide that it is simply impossible for one to ever really come to a knowledge of indisputable information. After all, there are some very hard questions to ask about the “mechanics” of human learning. How can one know anything? But, there will always be questions to ask in every discipline. It is fortunate that men go on learning even though they do not comprehend the complete “how” of it.

(2) The anthropological route. By this we mean that one could, because of his study of human nature, decide that man is simply so limited by construction that he cannot be expected to know anything for sure. After all, he does make so many mistakes and all the time. Perhaps, he just is incapable of arriving at information that will not ever need to be corrected. Here, man's fallibility is stressed so that he is excused from knowing anything.

(3) The archaeological route. Here we refer to the idea that we may have to alter our concepts of certain Bible doctrines given the fact that men may yet dig up some information of which we are currently unaware. Several years ago, a certain preacher (who is now in the forefront of the liberal movement) expressed this thought to me in a private conversation. He wasn't expecting the brethren to have to make any radical shift in doctrinal position, but he was holding out for the possibility of our having to change our views somewhat because the archaeologists might discover something that would force the change.

(4) The linguistic/textual route. It seems that some would think that since human learning must continue with regard to biblical languages and word studies, and that "new light" is forever being shed by a continual analysis of manuscripts, that we must always suspend judgment with regard to any given Bible doctrine. It might be good just here to remind us all that the Bible by its internal evidences authenticates itself as being God's book, and that it does declare that God's truth will be perpetually protected (1 Pet. 1:25), and it further declares that someone can know the truth by abiding in the word (John 8:32). We cannot afford to suspend judgment on matters of eternal implication if knowledge of them is required.

Now at this juncture, let us turn our attention to the various means of knowledge verification. How can we know that we know?⁷

First, there is the psychological means. By mental reflection, one can comprehend his own consciousness. Human consciousness is a brute fact of ontology. That is, it is a fundamental element in reality, and it is a basic characteristic of the human species. Each of us can probe his own mind (cf., 1 Cor. 2:11). Regardless what another does, I know something because I am comprehending my own mental

state. Regardless of philosophy's continual probe into the possibility of and nature of human learning and the perpetual raising of hard questions, men just go ahead and keep on learning and intellectually grasping certain data. In fact man's psychological awareness of his own mental powers makes philosophical inquiry possible.

Second, there is the empirical means. I can by the utilization of my five senses come to understand certain information. Because my spirit is connected to and housed within my body, I am able to be in touch with some truth by my body's relationship with the physical universe. And while the mind/body relationship will for philosophy remain a constant puzzle, the nature of it **is such** that my body can affect my spirit, and my spirit can affect my body (cf., Mat. 13:13-15; Deu. 4:28; Psa. 115:1-7). Two of the three avenues to sin (lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes) particularly indicate the vulnerability of the human spirit in its attachment to a physical body (cf., Gen. 3:1-6; 1 John 2:15-17).

Third, there is the ontological means. "Ontology" refers to "Being" as such. There is in the nature of being a way to prove the possibility of human knowledge. It is important to consider that no one can criticize or deny the possibility of knowledge without presupposing it. No one can deny the reality of the "laws of thought" (law of identity, law of excluded middle, law of contradiction) without making use of them. This is simply the way that it is. If one says that he knows that no one can know, then he affirms a logical contradiction. If he says that he does not know that no one can know (though he suspects that such is the case), then he admits the possibility of knowledge.

Just here we make mention of the philosopher, Rene Descarte. He rigorously applied mental doubt to everything (at least theoretically) in an effort to justify what, if anything, could be known. He even employed a "Demon Hypothesis" to suggest to himself the possibility of a demon's deceiving him and deceiving him so that he could not know that he was ever being deceived. It would seem that theoretically it is impossible to be sure of anything. But Descarte continued his philosophical investigation and analysis and finally realized that for one to do all this doubting of everything meant that someone was

involved in the doubting. Doubt cannot exist without a doubter. Even if a demon were deceiving him, he had to be existing to be deceived. And so he said, "I think, therefore I am."⁸ One can only consistently go so far in the effort at denying the possibility of human knowledge.

A fourth way of proving the possibility of human knowledge is the revelational means. I know that I can know because God has told me so. God has articulated this concept. Of course, for God to attempt to verbally communicate with man implies the possibility of man's understanding what God is in fact saying. But in certain passages, God makes the point expressly that man can know saving truth and that man must know this truth (cf., John 8:31-32; 1 Tim. 2:4; John 6:69; 1 Tim. 4:3).

Fifth, by falsifying agnosticism one verifies the possibility of human knowledge. It is either possible to know or it is impossible to know. If an agnostic says that he knows that no one knows, he is caught in self-contradiction; if he says that he does not know that no one can know, he admits what agnosticism denies (that human knowledge is possible). Agnosticism cannot be verified; it can be easily falsified. And when agnosticism is falsified, the possibility of human knowledge is proven. Consider that while it is possible for one to know and to know that he knows, it is impossible for one to know that he cannot know. Several years ago at another lectureship, a man suggested that perhaps (1) we can know, but that (2) we cannot know that we know. But this is wrong, for such a mental posture robs one of the possibility of making any knowledge claim whatever. Knowledge claims are possible only because one is aware that he has or possesses certain information. Study carefully the book of *First John* in order to see the knowledge claims that faithful brethren have a right to make.

Brethren, do not let anyone convince you that the obligation of us all is simply to look for truth. Evidently many of our brethren have been convinced that this' is all we can do. Certain teachers within the brotherhood have been so infected with agnostic heresy that they now think that (1) we must search for truth, and (2) get closer to the truth, but they deny that (3) we will ever arrive at truth.

However, while I myself want to continue my search for more truth, I only commit myself to that search with the presupposition that finding more is possible and that the continued search for more truth will result in accumulating more knowledge to be added to what knowledge I already have. After all, doesn't it seem a little bit ridiculous to look for what one cannot find? Would God put anyone under such an obligation? Consider these questions:

(1) Can a man know if there is any sacred literature existing in our world or can a man only get closer to realizing whether or not there is any sacred literature in the world?

(2) If a man finds sacred literature, can he determine whether or not there are any obligations placed on man by means of this literature or is it only possible for him to get closer and closer to actually knowing that there are some divinely imposed requirements?

(3) If a man determines that there are some divinely imposed obligations in the Bible, is it possible for him to determine what in fact the obligations imposed on him are, or is it only possible for him to get closer and closer to this information as he continues his study?

Brethren, denying the possibility of knowing saving truth means (among other things) that we could not possibly know either (1) how to or (2) that we have restored the church. It is significant that some among us now say that we can never completely restore the church. Consider this:

Now, it must be observed that antiquarianism is not a virtue. There is no point in time at which one can say that the church was restored and that now all we have to do is preach it. Restoration, you see, is not something that "happened back then." Restoration is a continuing dynamic plea that biblical norms, responsibly derived, be lived in culturally responsible ways.⁹

In the March 1992 issue of the *Christian Chronicle* we found the following: "Guest editorial: Young profs tell what is good about church." The above heading identified an article that followed by two ACU professors, Jack Reese and C. Leonard Allen. After reading the article I wrote a letter to both men which letter included six true-false questions. I never received answers to these questions.

- True-False 1. I am a member of a movement (Restoration movement), but not a member of the restored church of Jesus Christ.
- True-False 2. I am a member of a movement (Restoration movement), and a member of the restored church of Jesus Christ.
- True-False 3. It is rational to “pursue restoration ideals” if the restoration of Christ’s church is impossible.
- True-False 4. It is only rational to pursue “restoration ideals” if the restoration of Christ’s church is possible.
- True-False 5. It is possible for truth-seekers to learn the truth and know that they know the truth about (1) what constitutes the Lord’s church, (2) what is required to enter it, and (3) what is required to remain in full fellowship with the faithful within it.
- True-False 6. My concept of “unity within diversity” allows for diversity in matters of biblical obligation.

CONCLUSION

Why do we need the Bible if we cannot know truth? Why did God write the Bible, if we cannot comprehend anything it contains? The fact of the matter is that we know that (1) we are existing, (2) our universe is here, (3) adequate explanation for such is required, (4) God (eternal mind) is the only adequate explanation (cf., Gen. 1:1), (5) the Bible is here, and (6) the only adequate explanation for it is that God wrote it. And this book requires that I come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), and that I obey the truth (Gal. 5:7) or abide in the truth (John 8:31-32).

May God help us to appreciate and abide by the biblical concept of knowledge. And may we have the resolve to rightly resist all agnostic efforts to take us away from what God said we must know. It is by knowing the truth that we are intellectually positioned for successful confrontation with error. When we lose the knowledge of what all men must know, we forfeit scriptural justification for our existence as a religious institution; we cease being the faithful people of God.

ENDNOTES

¹Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia Of Philosophy Vol. I* (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1972), p. 56.

²Warren C. Young, *A Christian Approach To Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 61.

³Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), pp. 32-46.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

⁵Consider the author's article, "The Meaning Of Biblical Faith" in Dub McClish, ed., *Studies In 2 Corinthians-The Eighth Annual Denton Lectures* (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1989), pp. 462-475.

⁶This material is discussed in the author's book, *Faith And Knowledge-A Refutation Of Agnosticism* (Austin, TX: Roy Deaver/Biblical Notes, 1991), pp. 30,31.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 49-59.

⁸Avrum Stroll and Richard H. Popkin, *Introduction to Philosophy* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart And Winston, Inc., 1972), pp. 34-43.

⁹Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), p. 14.

BAPTISM

Guss Eoff, Jr.



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 began preaching in 1942.

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 more than twenty countries and twenty-four states, serving as a missionary to Hong Kong for two years. He recently spoke at the 10th Annual Asian Lectureship.

He conducted the first television program for churches of Christ in Northern California and has conducted weekly programs in California and Texas. He also conducted daily radio programs as well as weekly programs in California, Oregon, Texas and Louisiana.

In February 1993, Guss and his wife of fifty-two years, Laline, moved to Mathis, Texas to work with the church there. He speaks on about six lectureships each year.

The theme of the Bellview Lectures this year is “The Doctrine Of Christ Versus The Doctrines Of Men.” In this theme there is a great distinction between the doctrine of Christ, singular, and the doctrines of men, plural. It is a fact that Jesus taught only one DOCTRINE, and that DOCTRINE is made known in the Bible, the Word of God.

Jesus taught only one doctrine on baptism! There is only one commanded baptism in the teachings of Christ! When the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, he said there was ONE BAPTISM. “There is 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).

At the very onset of this lesson we must establish what baptism is. One does not have to know Greek in order to know the meaning of baptism. Baptism is a burial! The element into which one is buried is water. The apostle Paul instructs us: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into 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. 6:4). Again Paul states: “having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). Thus without looking in the New Testament any further we plainly see that baptism is a burial. It is not until you check the doctrines of men is there any other definition. For example: “Let every adult person, and the parents of every child to be baptized, have the choice either of immersion, sprinkling or pouring.”¹

One need go no further than one passage to find the element in which one was to be baptized. “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47-48a). Baptism is a burial in water. It is not being buried in cows milk, or wine, or tomato juice, or any other element. Why did the eunuch ask the question: “here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Notice what happened: “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39). Water was the element in which the eunuch was baptized. How simple! Again I repeat, baptism is a burial in water.

THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM?

Why should a person be baptized? Here again we have no problem understanding the purpose of baptism, until we look at the doctrines of men. The doctrine of Christ makes plain the purpose of baptism.

Jesus commanded baptism! “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat. 28:19). Mark’s account of the great commission says: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). What is the purpose of baptism? It is obedience to a command. People are baptized into and by the

authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The person who believes the gospel and is baptized shall be saved. He that does not will be lost.

Not only does baptism obey the command to be baptized, but it is for remission of sins. Peter told those who crucified Jesus to: “Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). One is to be baptized unto the remission of sins. We have no difficulty understanding this verse until we start listening to the doctrines of men. They tell us we do not have to be baptized. “Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of baptismal regeneration; but it is essential to obedience, since Christ commanded it.”² Notice again: “We believe the scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace.”³ Man teaches justification by faith only.

We believe the scriptures teach that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, **but solely through faith in Christ**; by means of which faith is perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us by God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.⁴

Now there you have what the doctrines of men have to say about salvation by faith. May I say that the Baptist Church teaches the same doctrine as the Methodist Church—Salvation solely through faith. Here is what the *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1856) says: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deserving:—wherefore, **that we are justified by faith only**, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.”⁵ It appears that some have been reading others *Manuals* and *Disciplines*. They both teach that one is saved “solely through faith.” What is so very strange is that this doctrine is just the opposite from what the Bible teaches. Without going into what works the Bible demands; James tells us: “ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith” (Jam. 2:24). The doctrines of men

say that a person is justified by faith only, and the Bible says that a man is justified by works and not only by faith. The question here is, which teaching is right? Both cannot be correct! We are going to be judged by the Bible, so we better do what it teaches. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

The doctrines of men say that we are not saved by works, but only by faith, yet the Bible teaches that faith is a work. It is a work of God! “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). Likewise, baptism is not a work of man, but a command of God to be obeyed. When a person believes in Jesus Christ; that belief is a work, yea, a work of God. Dare man say we are not saved by works, when faith is a work. Man teaches we are saved only by faith, but faith is a work.

Peter told those who crucified Jesus that they were to be baptized for remission of sins. The doctrines of men teach that we are saved without baptism, yet, the Bible teaches we are to be baptized to have sins remitted. How can a person be saved in his sins? Saul of Tarsus was told: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away they sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). The purpose of baptism is to wash away sins, to have sins remitted. One cannot get into Christ without being baptized into Him. “Or are you ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3).

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he stated: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). How can a person be saved out of Christ? In Christ is where all spiritual blessings are: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The doctrines of men tell us that baptism is not essential to salvation, yet, Jesus commanded it!

If a person is in Christ, he is a new creature! The great apostle Paul said: “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new”

(2 Cor. 5:17). If a person is saved before he is baptized, he is saved before he becomes a new creature! He is saved before he is in Christ. Yet the Apostle Paul says plainly: "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into 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. 6:4). Surely no one would contend that Jesus had a new life before He died, was buried, and was resurrected. Jesus was crucified on the cross. He died! He was buried in Joseph's tomb! He was in the grave! God then raised Him from the dead! That is the very form that man goes through. Man dies to sin! "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2). Man dies to sin by repentance! After Jesus died, He was buried. After man dies to sin in repentance he is buried in baptism. "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 into 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). It is made plain that Jesus died, was buried, and raised to walk a new life. Man dies to sin, he is buried with Christ in baptism, then he is raised to walk a new life. Paul explains this plainly in these words: "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). Now according to the doctrines of men, a person does not have to be buried with Christ. Yet Paul says if one is not buried with Christ, he cannot be raised to walk a new life. Now remember, the doctrines of men say that man is saved: "solely through faith in Christ" or "justified by faith only." That would mean he is saved without repentance, or dying to sin. That means he is justified before the old man is crucified, before the old body of sin is done away, before he has died and been buried. It means he is saved without being raised to walk a new life.

Man cannot be saved without being justified! Yet, Paul makes it clear that man is not justified without dying to sin. "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for

he that hath died is justified from sin” (Rom. 6:6-7). As we have also noticed in Romans 6:2, we die to sin. One cannot be justified until he dies to sin! To die to sin is to repent. If one is saved the moment he believes, he is saved without repentance.

Paul says that we die with Christ, so we hope to live with him, Romans 6:8. So when we are dead unto sin we are alive unto God, because we are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). But again how can we be in Christ without being baptized into Him (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27)?

Look at the great parallel the apostle draws in this sixth chapter of Romans. “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of doctrine where unto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). There was a procedure that Jesus went through. He died, was buried, and was resurrected. Likewise, we go through a form of teaching, or doctrine. We die to sin, we are buried with Christ, and are resurrected to a new life. Paul shows that form in Romans 6:1-11. He then shows the similarity of our spiritual death, burial, and resurrection.

The doctrines of men teach that baptism does not save. Yet, the apostle Peter says that it does save. Notice what Peter says: “that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

Peter says that eight souls were saved through water. Water destroyed everything that breathed the breath of life, except that which was in the ark. The water saved Noah! Water was the dividing line between eight righteous souls and the rest of the wicked world, whose every thought and imagination was only evil (Gen. 6:5). Likewise, Peter shows that baptism is the dividing line between the ungodly man and the new creature in Christ Jesus. Baptism now saves us! Now the doctrines of men say that baptism does not save,

but Peter says that it does. Thus, we can see the differences between the doctrines of men and the teachings of God's Word.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

In the commission of our Lord, He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Those to be baptized are those who believe.

There was a ruler of the synagogue in Corinth by the name of Crispus. This man heard the gospel message and believed. "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

It is certainly obvious from the teachings of the Bible that only believers were baptized. Another vivid Bible example of believers being baptized is the eunuch in Acts 8:36-37: "And as they went on there way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (KJV) It was not until the eunuch made the confession of his faith that he was baptized. The apostle Paul makes it very plain that: "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

There is absolutely no Bible foundation for infant baptism. Babies can neither believe in Jesus, nor confess Him. Infant baptism is another doctrine of men and it has no Biblical basis to be practiced.

INTERESTING CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

"Baptize" is anglicized for the Greek word *baptizo*. Baptize has not been translated from the original language. There is no reputable scholar that maintains that *baptizo* should ever be translated "sprinkle" or "pour." Immersion in water is the true means of baptism as it was practiced in the first century. It is interesting to note that *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, by Edward T. Hiscox, contains twenty-six pages about baptism. Therein is quoted Greek scholars, Bible scholars, ancient authorities, church founders,

early church fathers, historians, a great number of commentators, lexicographers, and noted theologians. All of these are quoted, or referred to, for proof that baptism is immersion. The Baptists have gone to great lengths to prove that they baptize by the proper mode. But, what is so strange is they go to so much effort to show that baptism is not essential to salvation. If it is not essential to the saving of the soul, then why be so insistent that it be immersion? In fact if it is not essential to the saving of the soul, why practice it at all? But wait! You see you cannot get into the Baptist Church without being baptized. So baptism is the door into the Baptist Church, but not the door into Heaven, according to their man made doctrine. Why? Because Baptist doctrine teaches that one is saved by faith alone! If this teaching is true, one can go to Heaven without being baptized, but one cannot be a member of the Baptist church without being baptized into it.

Many times in discussing the purpose of baptism, I have had this argument made about Acts 2:38. "Yes, Peter said: '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,' but you must notice the word FOR. The word 'for' means because of the remission of sins, not in order to receive remission of sins." Baptist doctrine teaches that one is baptized because he has already been saved.

Brother Roy Deaver writes:

There are seventeen Greek words of the New Testament which are translated by the word "for." The Greek word in the passage under consideration is the term *eis*. And this word is NEVER used to mean "because of," It is always used to mean "in the direction of, to, toward, unto." It is always prospective and never retrospective. This, Baptist scholars know. Dr. J. R. Mantey, who was professor of New Testament Interpretation in the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago, says in his article in the "Executive" (London) of June, 1923, on "The Unusual Meanings for Prepositions in the Greek New Testament" When one considers in Acts 2:38 repentance as self-renunciation and baptism as a public expression of self-surrender and self-dedication to Christ, which significance it certainly had in the first century, the *eis aphesis ton hamartion humon* may mean for the purpose of the remission of sins.

If we knew nothing about the Greek preposition the fact the "for" in Acts 2:38 does not mean "because of" is clearly shown by consider-

ation of the English. Peter commanded these people to repent and be baptized for remission of sins. Repentance and baptism are joined together by the coordinate conjunction “and.” If “for” in connection with baptism means “because of” then “for” in connection with repentance means “because of.” In this case, Peter would have commanded these people to repent because they had no sins! Thus, it is clearly shown that “for” in Acts 2:38 does not mean “because of.”

In Matthew 26:28 we have the following statement: “For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” “For the remission of sins” in this passage is exactly the same expression (in both English and the Greek) as that in Acts 2:38. The Lord shed his blood—not because of remission of sins—but in order for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38 clearly and emphatically declares that baptism is essential to one’s salvation from past sins.⁶

ENDNOTES

¹*The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1856), p. 103.

²Edward T. Hiscox D.D., *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (1951), p. 20.

³*Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵*The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1856), p. 18.

⁶Roy Deaver, *The Baptist Church and The New Testament Church*, pp. 11-12.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

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The work of the Holy Spirit is one of the most controversial subjects of the Bible. The positions held relative to this topic are as divergent as the people holding them.

The principal areas wherein differences exist are the influence of the Holy Spirit on the human heart and the miraculous. Most every false doctrine related to the work of the Holy Spirit connects with these two areas. These two areas, plus the subject of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are my assignment. Let us look to these.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The work of the Holy Spirit in conviction, conversion, and sanctification is highly controversial. But the question is always: What does the Bible say?

Paul wrote, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). The thing affirmed is **the Holy Spirit leads man**. However, the thing which is not affirmed is **HOW** the Holy Spirit leads man. The question has never been: Does the Holy Spirit lead man? The question is: How does the Holy Spirit lead man **today**?

The answers range from dreams and visions, to the Spirit speaking directly to one. Somewhere in this collage is found some sort of indirect, inexplicable, “better felt than told” way in which influence is wielded upon the human heart.

In the nature of things, the **HOW** of Holy Spirit influence can only be one of two ways: **Directly** or **Indirectly**. It is either “mediately” (through a medium) or “immediately (apart from a medium).” It is either through instrumentality or by a direct contact of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit.

An example of “immediate” influence is the inspired men of the Bible. Peter affirms, they spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). This was a direct influence.

An instance of “indirect” influence is in the spread of the gospel. Paul told the Ephesians that Christ came and preached peace to those afar off and those nigh (Eph. 2:17). We all understand Christ did this through the instrumentality of His disciples. Jesus said, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). It could not be stated more plainly.

Without apology I affirm the Holy Spirit influences man today **SOLELY, TOTALLY, and ONLY** through the medium of His inspired Word. Every influence the Holy Spirit exercises upon man today is **ONLY** through His Word. We affirm that when a person takes His teaching into his heart and allows it to be that which controls, dominates, leads, guides and directs the person, it is to this extent that a person **is influenced** by the Holy Spirit.

There are some things inspiration attributes to the Word of God. However, in other places the same action is assigned to the Holy Spirit. We can conclude such action is either: (1) the Spirit separate and apart from the Word, (2) the inspired Word separate and apart from the Spirit, (3) it is the inspired Word using the Spirit as a medium, or (4) it is the Holy Spirit using the inspired Word as a medium. There is no fifth possibility.

If it is the first, we have inspiration. It is unimaginable anyone would argue for the second or third. Thus, the fourth is the only alternative we have.

Consider the following. The Bible says the Holy Spirit begets (John 3:5). But the same action is also ascribed to the Word (1 Cor. 4:15). Is it the Holy Spirit alone? or is it the Word alone? Are both doing the same thing at the same time? If so, is that which the Spirit does of more validity than what the Word does? Is the action of the Word a *second-rate* achievement? (The reader is encouraged to look at the endnotes for a listing of other actions attributed to both the Spirit and the Word).¹

How can we account for the fact a specific action is attributed to the Holy Spirit and to the Word? Without hesitation, we affirm it is the Holy Spirit influencing through His Word.

Thus, we can more fully appreciate Paul's statement to Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is the Word of God, given by the Holy Spirit, and confirmed by the miraculous. It will make us what God wants us to be. We must allow it to rule in our hearts.

Consider Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Compare this with "Walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). When one walks in the Spirit, he is doing exactly the same thing the one who is being "led by the Spirit of God" is doing.

Let us notice two other passages of Scripture. Paul wrote, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19). The parallel is, "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). What is the difference between being "filled with the Spirit" and letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly"? There is no difference! The Holy Spirit influences man today through His inspired Word.

Stephen told his accusers, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers

did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). Stephen’s words denote all that our word *obstinate* suggests. His accusers were charged with resisting the Holy Spirit, just **as** (term of comparison) their fathers had done. What did their fathers do? God “testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear” (Neh. 9:30). They had resisted the Spirit of God when they rejected the Word preached by the prophets. Likewise, Stephen’s audience resisted the Holy Spirit when they rejected the Word that Stephen preached.

When one is guided by the Spirit’s Word, he is guided by the Spirit. Likewise, when one reject’s the Spirit’s teaching, he rejects the Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MIRACLES

The mention of the word “miracle,” usually elicits a variety of responses. They range from the disavowal of any miracle ever having happened to the thought that everything is a miracle.

Man uses the word “miracle” in a much different way than inspiration used it. Often it is employed to refer to anything the least bit “out of the ordinary.” If one is unharmed in an automobile accident, it is attributed to a “miracle.” If one survives a massive heart attack, it is ascribed to a miracle.

This is not the way inspiration uses the word. We must allow inspiration to establish the meaning of “miracle.”

Thayer says a miracle is, “2. a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e., unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature.”² Arndt and Gingrich agree: “2. a sign consisting of a wonder or miracle, an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature.”³ Harrison says, “we may define a miracle biblically as an observable phenomenon affected by the direct operation of God’s power, an arresting deviation from the ordinary sequences of nature, a divine inbreathing which authenticates a revelation agent.”⁴ Thus, a miracle is an observable event that sets aside, overrules those natural laws established by God in the beginning.

THE DESIGN OF MIRACLES. The miracles of New Testament times were for a specific purpose. God did not perform them to amuse Himself. Nor were they solely for the benefit of those who were helped by them (healing, etc.). They had a distinct purpose.

The purpose of the miraculous can be summarized under three general headings: (1) Revelation, (2) Confirmation, and (3) Exhortation. Let us notice each of these briefly.

REVELATION. In Ephesians 3:1-12, Paul speaks of the revelation of the mystery of the ages. He affirms this mystery was made known to him by **revelation**. He contended they could understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ by reading what he wrote. This is revelation. Revelation implies inspiration, and inspiration is a **miracle**.

He speaks of the same thing in the Roman epistle (Rom. 16:25-26). He asserts the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began was now “made manifest.” This was “according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

This “mystery” was the scheme of redemption that was kept in the mind of God until the time appointed of the Father. It was revealed by inspiration and inspiration is a miracle.

The night of His arrest, Jesus said to His disciples:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:12-15).

This refers to Holy Spirit baptism, which we will notice in the following section (to which the reader is referred). In this passage, revelation is under consideration—and revelation is a miracle!

Jesus told His disciples, “But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (Mark 13:11). This is revelation!

In First Corinthians 2:9-14, Paul points to the same thought (the reader is asked to read the passages). The **things** here refer to the **things** of inspiration (the revelation of the gospel), not to heaven (as some contend). The **natural** man is the uninspired man, specifically

those who made much of the Grecian philosophy of that day. Paul affirms (v. 14) the **natural** (uninspired) man is not receiving the **things** of God (“things” of inspiration, the gospel) through the normal channels whereby man comes to a knowledge of things,

The **spiritual** man is the inspired man. He is “receiving” the things of God. He is speaking these things, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). “Comparing” means “combining.” The inspired man was “combining” the **things** of inspiration with WORDS which the Holy Spirit gave—He was **revealing** the **things** of God by INSPIRATION!

CONFIRMATION. The second general area of purpose for the miraculous was **confirmation**. The miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit substantiated, authenticated, verified, proved, corroborated, **confirmed** the message was from God.

In Mark 16:15-18, Jesus gives the great commission and then promises various miraculous signs that were to follow the believers. After His ascension, Mark records that the disciples went forth preaching the Word, **confirming** that preached Word with those signs (v. 20).

The word translated “confirm” means “to make firm, establish, confirm, make sure...to prove its truth and divinity.”⁵ They were commanded to preach the gospel, and Jesus promised the miraculous signs as confirmatory proof the message was from God. They preached and the signs were given as proof.

The same thought is presented in Hebrews 2:3-4. In this passage, “confirmed” is the identical word of Mark 16:20. How was this “so great salvation” confirmed? God bore witness to the preaching of the gospel by the miraculous.

The miracles were performed in the sight of both believer and unbeliever. They were not hearsay. During the three years plus Jesus was preaching, none denied that miracles were performed. On one occasion they attributed them to Beelzebub—but they did not deny the miracle!

EDIFICATION. The last general category for the miraculous is that of **edification**. The word is defined as “(the act of) building,

building up...in the N.T. metaph., edifying, edification, i.e., the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness."⁶

Twentieth century Christians need edification. So did the first century Christians. Then they received this "building up" by inspired men. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul states the miracles were "for the edifying of the body of Christ." Now, this edification comes from men who hold tenaciously to the Word and fearlessly proclaim it.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he dealt with several problems. One of these was the misuse of spiritual gifts, especially the gift of tongues. In the three chapters dealing with this issue (chapters 12-14), he frequently alluded to **edification**, specifically in chapter fourteen. His basic argument was, if tongues were used and there was no interpretation, there was no understanding by the people. Therefore, no **edification**. The principle is clear.

CESSATION OF THE MIRACULOUS

The Bible clearly teaches God never intended for the miracles to last forever. They had a purpose (cf. with the above section). When that purpose was realized, there was no need for them.

In order to prove this, I cite three Scriptures which demand the cessation of miracles in the first century. We encourage our readers to look at these proof-texts.

THE SAMARITANS—ACTS 8. The events of Acts 8:5-18 prove that only an apostle could bestow the miraculous by the laying on of their hands. Notice the circumstances in this reading. (1) Philip worked miracles there (Acts 8:6,7,13). (2) Peter and John were sent to Samaria that they might receive the Holy Spirit (miraculous, v. 14). (3) When the apostles arrived, they laid their hands upon some of the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit (v. 15). (4) Simon saw that by the laying on of their hands, the Spirit (miraculous) was given (v. 18).

Why did the apostles have to come from Jerusalem and lay their hands upon the Samaritans for them to receive the Holy Spirit? Why not let Philip bestow the miraculous upon them? The answer is: Philip did not have that power. Only the apostles could do this.

If this is not true, then we see the violation of the principle of God's parsimony. That is, God never did anything needlessly. Why make the apostles come from Jerusalem, when Philip was already there? Because only the apostles could bestow the miraculous.

Thus, by the nature of the case, the miraculous had to cease. When the last apostle died and the last person upon whom the apostles laid their hands died, the miraculous would cease of itself. (I personally believe the miracles ceased at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but space forbids enlarging upon this view).

THE CORINTHIANS—1 CORINTHIANS 13. The discussion in First Corinthians 13:9-13 affirms the "in part" miraculous gifts were to cease. This would happen when the "perfect" came.

Some contend the "perfect" has reference to Jesus, and points to the second coming. This cannot be, seeing it is in the neuter gender. When one understands the purpose of the gifts, they will immediately see that the "perfect" refers to the completed will of God (James 1:25).

The time of the miraculous gifts are likened unto a child (v. 11). The "man" of this verse refers to the Church in a mature state, without the gifts. The words "I shall know even as also I am known" (v. 12) refers to the completed will of God.

Paul then refers to those things that would "abide" (faith, hope, and charity). These "abiding" things stand in contrast to the "in part" things (miraculous).

This verse is absolute proof the "perfect" could not refer to the second coming of Christ. Those so contending argue the miraculous is to exist until the second coming of Christ. Notice this important thought: Paul here argues the "abiding things" are to continue AFTER the "in part" things pass away.

Now, if the "in part" things (miraculous) are to last until Christ comes again, then there WILL BE NO TIME for the "abiding things" to exist after the "in part" things have ceased. Faith will become reality and hope will be brought to fruition.

THE EPHESIANS—EPHESIANS 4:7-15. In this section, we read a long discussion of the miraculous. "Grace" (v. 7) refers to the spiritual gifts in the succeeding verses. Verses eight through ten refer

to the victorious Christ (His ascension). The allusion is to a custom of that time wherein the victorious conqueror would march into his own city, with his captives trailing.

Paul then mentions some of the specific gifts (v. 11). In verse twelve, he specifies the design of these spiritual gifts. *Perfect* means to fully equip the saints for service; *ministry* means “service,” and *edifying* denotes the promotion of another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness.⁷

The time frame of these gifts was limited by Paul. **Till** is a particle indicating terminus and that it means “as far as, unto, until...till.”⁸ The **time period** was “till we all come in the unity of the faith.” This is the full, final, and complete revelation of the will of God. The word translated “unity” appears only two times in the New Testament, here in verse three. It is the neuter form of the word normally translated “one,” thus it is the “oneness” of the Spirit.

The word *knowledge* means “precise and correct knowledge.” *Perfect* denotes that which is brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness. The *stature of the fulness of Christ* refers to that state of spiritual maturity to which the spiritual gifts were designed to bring the early Church.

Verse fourteen clearly sets forth the concept of the idea of bringing the Church from its infancy to a mature “man” in Christ.

One last thought which forever proves this cannot refer to the second coming of Christ. Paul says “may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (v. 15). The word translated “may grow” is in the subjunctive mood. This is the mood of possibility and potentiality. Thus, the action described by Paul may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances. But when Christ comes, there will be no “possibility” or “potentiality.”

If that statement refers to heaven, inspiration would have used the indicative mood, not the subjunctive. It would have been stated as that which WILL HAPPEN, not as “possibility or potentiality.”

Thus, the miracles were to cease. Their purpose was to guide the infant Church unto the state of maturity. When it became a **full-grown man**, the gifts had no further purpose. They passed from the scene. They ceased to exist.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's overall scheme to redeem man centered upon that new covenant Jesus came to institute (Heb. 10:5-10). The old covenant was nationalistic, given only to Israel (Deu. 5:3). The new covenant would be universal in scope (Mark 16:15-16). The new was to supersede the old.

When Christ came, He chose twelve men for a specific purpose. They were with Him for some three and a half years. Just before His crucifixion, He told these twelve (whom He had named apostles, Luke 6:13) He would depart and return to the Father (John 14:12,28; 16:10,16-17,28). Jesus promised that He would not leave them "comfortless" (John 14:18). It is this statement which looks directly at the subject of Holy Spirit baptism.

After the last Passover meal with the disciples, Jesus gave a long discourse (John 13:31-16:33). In it, He mentioned some things that can only have reference to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

For instance, Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...shall teach you all things...bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). How many then or now could say they conformed to these parameters?

In the next chapter, He adds, "But when the Comforter is come...he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). How many (then or now) fits this criterion?

Undoubtedly, these words looked some seven weeks into the future at the baptism in the Holy Spirit that would come upon the apostles. This cannot be successfully refuted.

The apostles stood in a special relationship between God and man. It had never been held by any man prior to that time, nor has it been held since that time. Truly, it was distinctive, extraordinary, and exclusive.

UNIQUE AUTHORITY FOR AN ATYPICAL GROUP OF MEN. Just before His ascension, Jesus said "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat. 28:18). This authority was given to Him by the Father. He in turn delegated this authority to His apostles. Many people understand the office of an apostle was

special. But I am convinced that most do not realize just how unique this position was. Notice the following proofs.

Jesus appeared to the twelve on the day of His resurrection. He breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:21-23). How are we to understand the remitting and retaining of sins?

This was not a capricious, flighty, whimsical remitting or retaining of sins. It was not to be determined by the fickleness of the apostles. Jesus had direct reference to the preaching of the gospel.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostles became the first individuals to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ. Some three thousand heard it, believed it, and were baptized. Their sins were remitted. On the same day, untold thousands heard the gospel and rejected it. Their sins were retained. This is what Jesus meant in John 20:21-23.

Near Caesarea Philippi, Jesus told the apostles “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.16:19). The basic thought here is: What the apostles would bind on earth would have already been bound in heaven, and what they loosed on earth would have already been loosed in heaven.

The **keys** denote authority to open. That to which the keys gave entrance was the **kingdom of Heaven, the New Testament Church**. They began to exercise this authority on the day of Pentecost.

The apostles were those special human instruments through which the gospel was first announced. Whatever God had determined to loose or bind in heaven, He would loose or bind on earth—**THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**. The apostolic office was an intricate part of making known God’s scheme of redemption.

Paul wrote, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). How many today can

claim to write the commandments of Christ? How many can command in the name of Christ as Paul did (2 The. 3:6)?

Thus, we see the distinctiveness of the office of an apostle. It was unique. This looks to the baptism in the Holy Spirit which equipped them for their work.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF CORNELIUS. Some contend those of the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) were baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, it has been my deepest conviction for more than twenty years this is not the case.

Our study of this event is found in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts. Let us look at this briefly.

The first passage is Acts 10:44-45. The Holy Spirit fell upon those assembled. If this is Holy Spirit baptism, then we have non-Christians receiving it. Inspiration calls it “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It was the gift given by the Holy Spirit, and had specific reference to the miraculous. This will be shown in a moment.

The second passage is Acts 11:15-17. In this reading, Peter defends his actions of going to the house of a Gentile. He said the Spirit fell “on them, as on us at the beginning.” One question must be asked: Did those at the house of Cornelius receive the same authority as the apostles in Acts 2? If they did not, then they DID NOT receive the same thing as the apostles.

Peter stated that God gave them (Gentiles) the like gift as He did unto us (the apostles). In what way were the events at Cornelius’ house LIKE the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)? None will argue the Gentiles received the same authority as the apostles (Acts 2). So, how was Acts 10 LIKE Acts 2?

According to Thayer, the word translated “like” (Acts 11:17) means “equal, in quantity or quality.”⁹ How was it equal? It cannot refer to the authority the apostles received.

The Bible says the Gentiles spake with tongues and magnified God (Acts 10:46). The apostles likewise spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost. This is how the events of Acts 10 were like the events of Acts 2.

In the first century, the miraculous was bestowed by the laying on of apostolic hands. But in the case of Cornelius’ household, this

was circumvented by God. The Holy Spirit came directly from heaven, not by the hands of Peter.

If the Gentiles had received the tongues by Peter's hands, I suggest the Jews would not have accepted the Gentiles. They would have argued that Peter had overstepped his authority. Remember, he was "called on the carpet" as soon as he returned to Jerusalem.

THE REASON FOR THE EVENTS AT CORNELIUS' HOUSE. The descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10 was for one reason only—to prove to the Jews that God had determined to accept the Gentiles. It was not to convince Cornelius. It was not to convert these Gentiles. It was to CONVINCE the Jews the Gentiles were accepted by God.

Notice the reaction of the Jews who journeyed with Peter. Luke says they were astonished (Acts 10:45). Why were they astonished? Because God had poured out on the Gentiles the miraculous.

Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we" (Acts 10:47)? Of all of those present at that time, there is ONLY ONE group that would want to forbid the Gentiles from being baptized—THE JEWS!

When those at Jerusalem heard Peter's defense, they "glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). We ask: What was it that convinced the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that God had determined to accept the Gentiles? The miraculous bestowed upon the Gentiles, directly from heaven, without the laying on of apostolic hands.

Further proof is seen in "the Jerusalem conference" (Acts 15). In this meeting, Peter arose and spoke. A part of this speech reads:

Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us (Acts 15:7-8).

Whose "heart" is under consideration here? Most would say, "The Gentile's." I suggest there is another possibility which more nearly fits the whole context.

I propose the “heart” here mentioned referred to the obstinate Jewish heart, not to the Gentile heart. The enmity the Jew had for the Gentile at that time is well-known. God realized this and through a series of miracles, fully, completely, and absolutely convinced the Jews that the Gentiles were gospel subjects.

Cornelius and his house did not receive Holy Spirit baptism—only the apostles. Of this we are sure.

ENDNOTES

¹Consider other effects assigned to the Holy Spirit in one passage and then credited to the Word in another (in each of the following, the first passage listed refers to the Holy Spirit): instructs (Neh. 9:30; 2 Tim. 3:16-17); quickens (John 6:63; Psa. 119:30); teaches (John 14:26; John 6:45); convicts (John 16:8; Tit. 1:9); comforts (Acts 9:31; 1 The. 4:18); gives love (Rom. 5:5; 1 John 2:5); saves (1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 11:16); washes (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26); sanctifies (1 Pet. 1:2; John 17:17); makes free (Rom. 8:2; John 8:32); converts (John 16:7-8; Psa. 19:7); strengthens (Eph. 3:16; Deu. 11:8); dwells (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16), and leads (Rom. 8:14; Psa. 119:105).

²Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 573.

³Arndt, William F. and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 755.

⁴Everett F. Harrison, Editor-in-Chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960) p. 356.

⁵Thayer, p. 99.

⁶Thayer, p. 440.

⁷Thayer, p. 137.

⁸Thayer, p. 408.

⁹Thayer, p. 307.

NEW HERMENEUTIC VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

H. A. "Buster" Dobbs



Buster was born and reared in Houston, Texas. He was educated in Houston, having studied at the University of Houston and South Texas College of Law. He is married to Martha DeWoody Dobbs whose mother was a Starnes from which family came a number of elders and preachers. Martha's father and grandfather served as elders. Buster and Martha have three children and eight grandchildren. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather served as elders. His great-great grandfather was a Gospel preacher. His most important training came from godly parents.

He has spent his entire preaching years in Houston, having begun to preach at the age of fourteen. During his teenage years, he preached for the West End, South Houston and Fairbanks (later West 34th Street) churches in Houston. As a full time preacher, he preached eight years at Lyons and Majestic, seventeen years at Memorial, and the past fourteen years, as, first, preacher, then elder, and then preacher, again, at Fleetwood. At present, he is preaching, on a temporary basis, for the Klein Area church in Houston. Buster is a debater and writer. He is Editor of the **Firm Foundation** and is giving full time to speaking at lectureships, Gospel meetings, writing and working with congregations that have special needs (problems).

The English word *hermeneutic* is from a Greek word that means "interpretation" and is sometimes translated "being interpreted." It carries the idea of, "explain in words, expound, translate what has been spoken or written into the vernacular." Vine says of this word it "is used of explaining the meaning of words" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pp. 607-608). The Greek word occurs several times in the New Testament and is translated "interpret" or its equivalent (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:26; Heb. 7:2; John 9:7; John 1:42).

It is ironic that a word, meaning to give a sensible explanation in common language, has been used to muddy literary waters and befuddle the mind of the student. Much of what has been written recently about the new hermeneutic is unclear and mysterious, and certainly does not enlighten the mind of the ordinary person.

Liberals in such forums as *The Christian's Scholar's Conference* and *Restoration Review* have advanced a new way of understanding the Bible. The collection of written articles and oral sermons on the subject are often contradictory and obscure.

When Tom Olbricht went from California to Tennessee to explain the matter, the first words he spoke to the assembly were "I don't know what the new hermeneutic is." Professor Olbricht was regarded as the mentor for all those advocating a new method of studying the Bible. If the master does not understand his own system sufficiently to clearly explain it, what hope does his disciple have of knowing what he is talking about?

We have been overwhelmed by a flood of high-sounding words, but they contribute nothing to our edification. Finally, Gary Collier stepped forward and in two *Christian Scholars' Conference* papers gave an explanation of this new hermeneutic that made sense. The premises he proposed were examined by serious Bible students and found to be baseless and worthless. Collier, himself, was embarrassed by his unfounded propositions and left the field in shame. He now says "there is no such thing as the new hermeneutic." We devoutly wish he had realized that before he attempted to define it.

Others in support and pursuit of the new hermeneutic have done no better. Today, the liberals are saying nothing about the new hermeneutic. They are strangely silent. They introduced it, but when examination showed it to be a blasted nut, they abandoned it.

Still, it is important for us to know what the advocates of the new hermeneutic were trying to sell to the brotherhood because, while they have stopped talking about it, they have not stopped believing in it, and trying to boost it. It is still the guiding principle for liberal teachers who undercut the doctrine of Christ in the New Testament. It will help us to know where these instructors are going if we understand where they came from. It enlightens us, so we may avoid falling into their trap.

According to Gary Collier, who spoke with the blessing of Tom Olbricht and other leading lights of the new hermeneutic movement, the major thrust of this new way of looking at things is entirely negative. It is more against what these folk call the old hermeneutic

than anything else. Gleaning from Collier's paper, *Bringing the Word to Life: An Assessment of the Hermeneutical Impasse in Churches of Christ*, we learn the following about this new understanding of the Scriptures: Collier says the new hermeneutic denies we learn from the Bible by direct commands. He ridicules the idea that positive statements from God's Word informs us. Common sense people know better. When Jesus commanded, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," he was teaching us.

Collier also says that we do not learn from the examples of right behavior in the New Testament. The examples of Jesus being baptized by John in the river Jordan and of Phillip baptizing the Eunuch tell us something about the action involved in Bible baptism. People who possess native good judgment just know this to be the case. The demonstration is too overwhelming for even a liberal to deny it.

Collier also tells us that we do not learn from what God has implied in His Word. If this is so, no one would ever know what God expects of him. My name is not written in the text of the new covenant. How do I know any of it applies to me? It is obvious that I can only know by inference that the commands of the New Testament apply to me.

The statements of Collier and other advocates of the new hermeneutic are self-evidently wrong. His premises are so obviously incorrect that to simply state what they are is to answer them. People possessed of sanctified common sense will not listen long to teaching that is erroneous on its face. When Gary Collier sent this flag up, no one saluted. Even his advisors were ashamed and began to criticize him for stating the matter plainly because it brought an immediate rejection.

Collier's paper also advocates **pluralism**. He insists the Bible teaches different things on the same subject. It should be apparent to all that truth in its very nature must agree with itself. Truth cannot be contradictory. If the Bible teaches different things on the same topic, as Collier says it does, then it cannot be true. If one teacher says one thing and another teacher, on the same point, says a different thing, then one of them is wrong and the other is right, or

they are both wrong, but in the intrinsic and indispensable nature of truth they cannot possibly both be right. This is why the Word of God speaks of **one** body, **one** faith, **one** baptism (Eph. 4:4-5). Jesus said "I am **the** way, **the** truth, and **the** life (John 14:6). The gate is strait, and the way is narrow, which leadeth unto life (Mat. 7:14). The *pluralism* of the new hermeneutic denies the doctrine of Christ.

Collier's proposal for a new way of understanding the Bible advances the notion that truth is **subjective**. He says truth comes from within the individual. Olbricht says that before we approach the Scriptures we must have an experience, apart from written revelation, with God. Liberals endorse the teaching of Bultmann who wrote:

God the mysterious and hidden must at the same time be the God who is revealed. Not, of course, in a revelation that one can know, that could be grasped in words and propositions, that would be limited to formula and book and to space and time; but rather in a revelation that continually opens up new heights and depths and thus leads through darkness, from clarity to clarity (*Existence and Faith*, p. 30).

This is doubtless what Darryl Tippens, an Abilene Christian University professor, had in mind when he advised us to seek "knowing something that cannot be known." Tippens claims "we can, by faith, testify that we have encountered and have experienced the Divine, the 'transcendental signified'" (*The Ethics of Interpretation*, p.10, a *Christian Scholars' Conference* paper). Tippens favors making "mystical contact with the transcendent (Presence)" and once spoke of how the Holy Spirit came to him like wind blowing upon him. Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris in their book, *The Second Incarnation*, promote the notion that in our worship the Holy Spirit can maneuver us, apart from the written Word, into a babble-type service as he blows us with a fresh breeze into unplanned activities (pp. 132,135).

Collier would approve the idea that the Holy Spirit imparts understanding by impression, hint and intuition, and not only by the written Word. The liberals think we can know (or sense) without the use of rational processes, or immediate cognition. They believe in a perceptive insight, something not evident or deducible—an impression.

The problem with the teaching, that truth comes from within the person in dreams and feeling, is that God's Word condemns it. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD" (Jer. 23:28). "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 16:25). "Then said Jesus...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). "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). (The word "scripture," of course, means "writing.") The written Word of God re-proves, corrects and instructs us that we may be perfect before God.

Collier and other promoters of the new hermeneutic are **agnostic**, claiming there are no absolutes. You cannot be sure about anything, according to them. They decry dogmatism and frown on debating propositions. The Bible, however tells us, "ye shall know the truth" (John 8:32). Faith is the "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, ASV). Peter told the congregation on the day of Pentecost to "know assuredly" Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Paul tells us to, "in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:19). Paul prayed that the eyes of the understanding of the brethren be enlightened (Eph. 1:18). The apostle commanded the Ephesians (and us) to "be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9). Paul also spoke of the "riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2). John wrote, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

Collier and his cohorts advertise a doctrine of **relativism**. They say truth changes from one culture to another culture, and from one generation to another generation. The outriders of the new hermeneutic often speak of “what the text **meant**, versus what it **means**.” This denies Peter’s inspired claim that “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 Peter 1:24-25).

The Bible does not change in meaning from generation to generation or from culture to culture. It deals with eternal principles that never change. It deals with human needs and aspirations, and they remain the same in every century. The basic needs of Adam are the basic needs of modern man. The fundamental needs of every person are wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That was true of Adam and it is true of you. Since the New Testament serves the unchanging needs of mankind, what was true then is true now.

The Bible does indeed mean what it says and says what it means. Can any sane person think that the Bible is not clear in its declarations and is therefore a jumble? It is impossible for God, being God, to give us instruction that is so ambiguous the average person cannot follow it. If undying truth changes with every change in the fashion of the times, then there is nothing certain about it. It can never be a reliable guide. The writer of the book of Hebrews reminds us of the time at Sinai when God’s mighty voice shook the earth, and then says:

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:26-28).

The kingdom we receive cannot be moved, according to Hebrews 12:28. The kingdom we receive springs from its seed, which is the

Word of God (Luke 8:11). Therefore the seed of the kingdom (God's Word) is unchangeable because the kingdom is unchangeable.

The new hermeneutic is old-line liberalism and dangerous. It encourages people to turn away from the propositional truths of the New Testament in favor of the nebulous, ever changing, flimsy fantasies and imaginations of soothsayers and wizards. The novelty of supposed transcendence tickles its advocates. A contemporary writer said, "Once you decide to titillate instead of illuminate...you create a climate of expectation that requires a higher and higher level of intensity." This happens to devotees of the new hermeneutic and they go to wild extremes. This is indicated in the Shelly and Harris appeal for a worship characterized by hubbub...loud noise...confusion, and that is raucous...boisterous...disorderly...spontaneous...undisciplined...ecstatic...featuring applause and cheering (*The Second Incarnation*, pp. 132,139-40). All of this is, of course, a far cry from worship that is decent (graceful and honorable) and in order (arranged) as commanded by an apostle of Christ (1 Cor. 14:40).

Having shown the nature of the new hermeneutic and demonstrated that it is not in harmony with the doctrine of Christ, I will now present a sensible hermeneutic. We learn by direct command, by what God has implied in His Word and we infer, and the illumination of the examples of first century saints.

There is much more to the proper understanding of any writing than commands (positive statements), examples (illustrations), and inferences (deductions). The rules for understanding the Bible are the same as the rules for understanding any message given in human language. It is a matter of sanctified command sense.

Alexander Campbell's principles of Biblical interpretation are good. Campbell's rules are helpful not because his teaching is authority in religion but because what he said has substance. He wrote as follows:

Rule 1. On opening any book in the sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.

Rule 2. In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc., observe who it is that speaks and under what dispensation he officiates. Is he a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian?

Consider also the persons addressed, their prejudices, characters and religious relations.

Rule 3. To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, etc., the same philological principles deduced from the nature of language or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books are to be applied to the language of the Bible.

Rule 4. Common usage must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification, but when words have, according to the Dictionary, more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning.

Rule 5. In all tropical language, ascertain the point of resemblance and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.

Rule 6. In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories and parables, this rule is supreme: Ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point—to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory, or parable.

Rule 7. For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the Oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable: We must come within the understanding distance.

There is a distance that is properly called the speaking distance, or the hearing distance, beyond which the voice reaches not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audible fills.

Now we may with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance cannot understand God; all within it can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God himself is the center of that circle, and humility is its circumference. Humility of mind opens the ears to hear the voice of God. He, then, that would interpret the Oracles of God to the salvation of his soul, must approach this volume with the humility and docility of a child, and meditate upon it day and night (*Christian System*, 1839 edition, pp. 16-18).

The remarks of Campbell concerning how to understand writing in human language, whether sacred or secular, are clear and logical. A thoughtful study of what he has to say will convince any reasonable person of its worth. We accept it, not because Alexander Campbell said it, but because it is rational and compelling.

In Bible study we must consider command, example and implication. Context, the foreground, the background, and circumstance all play a part in understanding any message.

The chief rule for understanding the Bible is a sincere desire to know and do God's will. If we, in all lowliness of mind, are consumed by an urgent desire to hear God's Word, understand His

commands, and obey Him in all things, we will be able to comprehend what He says to us. It is not possible that a kind and loving Heavenly Father would speak to us in tones we cannot discern and then call us to account and judge us by words we were incapable of understanding (John 12:48).

Jesus said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). Jesus promised:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Mat. 7:7-11).

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UNITY AND FELLOWSHIP

Eddie Whitten



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INTRODUCTION

The Prophet Amos recorded the words of the Lord, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). The context of that passage indicates God is speaking concerning the departure of the Israelites from their unity with Him. Israel had gone after fellowship with foreign nations. The favor they had known with God (v. 2) had been destroyed by their choice of partners. A passing glance at the history of God’s people shows their fickle conduct. They had cried to God for deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians. God had sent Moses who led them out of that bondage. They had experienced painful years because of their loss of faith in God. Another generation had survived to come to the land of promise. Joshua led them to victory over their foes through the power of God. Canaan was now the home of God’s people through whom the Messiah would come.

A failure of that generation to teach their children about God and His power, love and mercy, led to another apostasy (Jud. 2:10). Then, for more than 300 years, the people vacillated from faithfulness to apostasy. Each time oppression came, because of their unfaithfulness, God would send a deliverer to bring them back to Him. Then came the kings. The people decided they wanted to

be “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). After the reign of Solomon (1015-975 B.C.), the kingdom of Israel divided into the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam I, the son of Nebat, became the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Bible says, “And He shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14:16). A succession of kings ruled Israel for about 200 more years until the time of Jeroboam II, the son of Joash. During this tragic period, the people of Israel, once the proud and prosperous children of God, drifted further and further from the influence and principles of God. It was during this time that Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa in Judah, about twelve miles southeast of Jerusalem, was called by God to go to the palace of the king in Bethel and declare the message of God (Amos 7:14). To a degenerate and rebellious people, Amos uttered the sad question of God, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

The same question arises in our time and because of the same reasons.

UNITY

1. Unity in Purpose. Those who would change the church to fit the wisdom of men have lost sight of the purpose of the church. Jesus came from heaven to establish His church through which obedient, submissive, faithful mankind could be saved. He suffered a horrible death to provide the blood sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of the sins of men. Only the blood of the Son of God was sufficient to effect the remission of sins (Heb. 10:4). Jesus accomplished His victory over Satan’s power when He burst forth from Joseph of Arimathaea’s new tomb. God raised Him from the dead, and in doing so, conquered the prince of this world. His resurrection gives hope to a world dying because of the power of Satan. Without the resurrection of Jesus, man could only hope for a time when Satan could be overcome. Now, Paul says that victory over death and the grave is ours because of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15).

It was firmly promised by the Lord that He would build His church (Mat. 16:18). The church was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). The apostles were promised a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5,8). They were given the truth through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and they spake the truth in the languages of the people (Acts 2:6) gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Acts 2:41 says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

As the days passed, many more were convicted by the preaching of the gospel. The Word of God produces faith (Rom. 10:17). Acts 2:47 states simply, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The church which Jesus promised had finally become a reality. Jesus had conquered Satan in His resurrection. Now He makes it possible for all men to conquer Satan (Titus 2:11). Sin is the weapon of Satan, and death is the reward of sin. Jesus gives to every man who will let Him be his Lord the antidote for sin. The cleansing power of His blood, when applied to the sin-sick soul through baptism, places one in His church. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, said Jesus would "present it [the church] to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

The purpose of the church can also be seen in the passage in which Paul states, "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 eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11).

The church is unique in its purpose. There is no human organization that compares to the church in purpose. It is not a human-founded, human-governed, human-designed nor human-owned organization. It is human-oriented in that its purpose is to provide a means through which man can be saved from the power of Satan and the ravages of sin.

Unity of purpose can only be achieved when the worshiper understands the proper relationship of man with God. God loves

man to the extent that He “gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). It was through His grace that this salvation could be received. The means through which man might receive salvation is the church.

Unity in purpose requires that men recognize the singularity of the church; the price paid for the church, and the destiny of the church. It requires that faithful men **promote** the church through the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4); through the scattering of the “seed of the kingdom” (Luke 8:11), “preaching the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). It also requires that faithful men **protect** the purity of the church. False teachers abound “teaching for doctrine the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). Many are teaching that the church is just one of many denominations. Some are saying the church is fragmenting itself because some of its leaders are “sectarian.” “Sectarianism,” to Carroll D. Osburn, “Carmichael Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University,” is reactionary fundamental traditionalism. He states under the section dealing with “fundamentalism”:

This emerging “liberalism” so restructured the contours of the Christian faith that a vigorous reaction developed to affirm traditional postures, and “fundamentalism” gathered momentum. Emphasis was placed upon biblical infallibility. The “plenary verbal inspiration” of the Bible was mandated. Truth was equated with the King James Version. Evolution was denied angrily and science became viewed as a threat to the faith. Against literary- historical criticism, interpretations derived by “proof-texting,” i.e., understandings derived apart from historical and literary criticism, emerged due to doctrinal necessity....Denunciation of culture abounded, along with strong anti-philosophical, anti-theological, and anti-educational stances.¹

Under the section dealing with “conservatism,” he states:

While retaining belief in the existence of the supernatural and emphasis upon the historicity of the Christian faith, other matters are viewed differently. The authority of the biblical text is maintained, for instance, but “verbal” inspiration has given way to “full” inspiration, the use of the Greek text has supplanted the KJV, and texts are studied in their literary and historical contexts. Emphasis is placed upon the humanity of Jesus, as well as the deity. While view-

ing conversion as important, there is also great interest in Christian maturity and ethics, as well as in the social problems that beset contemporary society. Rejecting arrogant exclusivism, Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.²

Therefore, the distinguished professor is merely stating the words of the Bible are to be amalgamated with literary-historical criticism and cultural and social factors to determine authority. He includes those outside of the church as part of the Christian community. What professor Osburn seems not to realize (or, perhaps he does) is that his philosophy closely parallels the practice of the Roman Catholic organization. Catholic doctrines are the products of the Bible (so long as it is not considered all-sufficient and inerrant), long established traditions (of men), and as the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (from the chair). Osborne's conclusions places the Bible in the same subsidiary role the Catholics place it. The inclusion of social, cultural factors and literary-historical criticism renders the Bible subject to traditions of men and the resulting interpretations are tantamount to determining authority by human wisdom. Truth, however, does not allow itself to be equal with any doctrine. It will occupy a place of honor and supremacy, or it will be, as the Catholics have done, relegated to secondary importance.

The Word of God is the basis for our judgment in the day of the Lord (John 12:48). Therefore, it is impossible to have unity with any philosophy that will not protect the integrity of the Bible. There can be no unity in purpose with those who embrace the denominational posture of biblical compromise as does professor Osburn, Rubel Shelly, Mike Cope, Max Lucado, Marvin Phillips, and many others.

2. Unity in principle. Understanding the purpose of the church is vital to unity. There is a second consideration as well, in enjoying unity among brethren. That is, understanding the principles involved in man's relationship with God. It is one thing to claim to be a Christian and have good morals. It is another thing completely to understand the basis upon which such a claim can be made.

Christianity is a way of life controlled by attitude emanating from deep convictions derived from knowledge (2 Peter 1:3). One does not accidentally become a Christian. Man acts according to his own wisdom until he responds to teaching. Faith is developed through study of the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 10:17). Bible faith, saving faith, comes in no other way. Men may teach otherwise, but that does not change the truth of the matter. It is only when the teaching of the Bible is compromised by the teaching of men that basic principles are altered. If there are differences in basic principles, it simply means one or both have not understood the principles set forth by the Word of God. The fault does not lie within the pages of the Sacred Book; it lies in the faulty understanding of men.

Man's wisdom has played a major part in rejecting the wisdom of God. This matter was the topic of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:18-3:23). When men make such statements as, "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation,"³ it shows clearly they are ignorant of the teaching of the Bible. The Bible says Jesus became "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**" (Heb. 5:9). The principle involved in this contrast is man's responsibility and amenability to God. Does God expect man to do what He says, or what the wisdom of men says? There can be no unity with those who set themselves against the counsel of God regarding the principle of obedience.

FELLOWSHIP

1. The Foundation of Fellowship. Fellowship requires certain areas of common interests. In the context of biblical application it encompasses a common conviction and the sharing of mutual interests and activities. Unity of belief is paramount to fellowship.

The very essence of fellowship is the common bond wrought by the experience of obedience to the gospel of Christ. Every Christian has experienced the joy of learning about Jesus, the Christ. He is humbled by the knowledge of the nature and character of Jesus as He left the glory of Heaven to become the obedient servant of His Father. He also learns the blackness of sin and the horrible

consequences of continuing therein. The flames of torment become a torrent of terror in the heart of the convicted one. The love of the suffering Savior on the cross of Calvary becomes a beacon of light to the penitent believer. He exults in the knowledge that he can be spared the horror of Hell because Jesus died in his stead. He eagerly responds to the Savior's command to be baptized for the remission of his sins and he becomes a Christian. The Lord adds him to His church and he is saved, free from the guilt of the sins that would have sent his immortal soul to eternal torment. He has obeyed the gospel of Christ which the apostle Paul described as "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). He has now become a part of the body of Christ with all others who have followed the same process of belief, repentance, confession and baptism that makes one a Christian. This process has placed him in fellowship with all others who have followed the same procedure. The apostle John wrote:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;...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 1:1,3).

When we speak of fellowship within the church, we must have within our understanding the very foundation upon which we make our claim: God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His Son.

Fellowship with God and Jesus depends entirely upon our loyalty and devotion to God's Word. Paul identifies the Word of God as the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-2). He defines the gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus (vs. 3-4). Therefore, to have fellowship with God and with Christ is to obey the gospel of Christ (Heb. 5:9).

There are false teachers in the world. Many come near to the fellowship of God and Christ but fail, for whatever reason, to do that which is required to enjoy that fellowship. The thoughts and wisdom of men come in conflict with the teaching of the Bible. Men contrive doctrines of their own which are not in harmony with the doctrine of Christ. Fellowship with God and with Christ is

impossible when the doctrines of men are not in agreement with the Bible. This is a sad fact that has plagued men since the garden of Eden. The history of man is a catalog of disobedience, punishment, repentance, reconciliation, favor, apostasy—a never-ending cycle.

Every denomination and all world religions are examples of forfeiture of the fellowship of God. Although sincere and perhaps with pure motives, terms of fellowship are not followed; the gospel is not obeyed, and addition to the church is not attained. God has determined the terms of addition to His church. For man to enjoy His fellowship, he must adhere to those terms.

2. The Maintenance of Fellowship. Once fellowship has been established between man and God through his obedience to the gospel of Christ, it is maintained through observing the terms of worship and conduct. John warned, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). Doing that which puts us in fellowship with God (obeying the gospel), is only the first step in our Christian experience. It is the beginning of the most wonderful life man can live. Paul described it “for me to live is Christ” (Phi. 1:21), and “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul called this fellowship of Christians “the church.” Jesus had promised to build His church (Mat. 16:18), and assured His disciples that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it.

John wrote further: “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 1:7). Therefore, we can conclude that Christ Jesus adds to His church all of those who have obeyed His will, the gospel, and continues His fellowship with those who do His will with regard to worship and conduct of life.

3. Unity and Fellowship. The context of Christianity is based upon the love of God for His people; Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for the sins of man, and the reconciliation of man with God through

that sacrifice. God has decreed by inspiration through the Holy Spirit to His penmen the rules, or law, by which His creation can be redeemed. God cannot be overruled by those over which He rules. He caused the apostle Paul to record:

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).

He also wrote:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 1:6-8).

Throughout the New Testament, the requirements for obedience rings clear. Obey the voice of God (His Word), or suffer the wrath of God in the final Judgement (John 12:48).

In spite of the clarity of the terms of fellowship stated so plainly and unmistakably, there is a noticeable element in the church which holds to the untenable position that there must be “Unity in Diversity.” That is, even though men disagree among themselves regarding the law of God, or even whether there is a law of God, there must be fellowship even in the face of evident diversity with regard to matters of faith.

Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). In John 8:12, Jesus states, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Jesus says that those who follow Him (His teaching) walk in the light (cf., 1 John 1:6). Those who do not follow His teaching walk in darkness. Paul admonishes, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). It should be obvious even to the casual reader that there cannot be unity with those who walk out of step with the teaching of Jesus.

With regard to baptism, the Bible teaches that one must be baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Carroll Osburn says we should have fellowship with those who “differ on...soteriological

matters such as whether baptism is ‘for’ or ‘because of’ remission of sins.”⁴ Rubel Shelly says baptism for remission of sins is a reason for baptism, but not the only reason. Denominations baptize for different reasons, but since baptism for remission of sins is not the only reason for baptism, the baptisms of denominations are valid.

It should be obvious that fellowship cannot be extended to those who hold to such blatant disavowals of Bible teaching.

The Bible teaches that the church is to sing. The teaching is clear that singing is for the purpose of “speaking,” or “teaching” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The instrument to be used in accomplishing this part of our worship is “the heart.” The practice of using a mechanical instrument of music in worship is commonplace today. “Christian” universities are advocating the use of instrumental music in worship. Abilene Christian University hosted the “Unity Forum” on their campus in 1994, in concert with the Independent Christian church. The principle of using mechanical instrumental music in worship was not a matter of concern to either the representatives of the Independent Christian Church or the churches of Christ.

Again, if we are to follow the basic definition of fellowship and the irrefutable illustrations and teachings concerning fellowship, it should be impossible to extend the right hand of fellowship to such participants.

CONCLUSION

The church of our Lord has come full circle in the cycle of service in the kingdom of God. History is repeating itself again as it has so many times in the past and as it will for as long as God allows time to continue. We have been privileged to see the good time of faithfulness, growth, loyalty, peace and reward. The time is upon us now of the departure, apostasy and unbelief (Heb. 3:12). How far it will go and how long the apostasy will last, only time will tell. However, as the Bible also reveals, there has always been a faithful remnant through which the seed of the kingdom survives. It is through those faithful servants who walk with the Lord in

wonderful fellowship that the church will rise sometime, somewhere in the future to bless the lives of honest men.

May God help us to have the courage, strength, faith and dedication to remain a part of His fellowship in these frightful times.

ENDNOTES

¹Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration perspectives, 1993), p. 57.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

³Curtis A. Cates, *The Second Incarnation, A Pattern For Apostasy* (Memphis, TN: n.p., 1992), p.10.

⁴Osburn, pp. 90-91.

EMOTIONALISM VERSUS PROPER EMOTIONS

Dub McClish



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INTRODUCTION

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines "emotionalism" as "unwarranted expression or display of emotion."¹ The same dictionary defines "emotion" in the following words:

Any of the feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love, etc....any strong agitation of the feelings actuated by experiencing love, hate, fear, etc., and usually accompanied by certain physiological changes, as increased heartbeat, respiration, or the like, and often overt manifestation, as crying, shaking, etc.²

Clyde Narramore defines emotion as follows: "An experience or mental state characterized by a strong degree of feeling and usually accompanied by motor expression often quite intense. Any of various complex reactions with both psychical and physical manifestations as fear, anger, love and hate."³

The Bible student immediately recognizes the validity of emotion in Christianity in such terms as joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love, and even

anger. These all have their part in the thinking and behavior of Christians. Emotion is also related to such elements as sincerity and enthusiasm. However, another term in the definition that catches our attention is “feelings.” Surely, none can confuse with Christianity a religion which does not involve the feelings of the individual!

The question, then, is not whether one’s emotions ought to be involved in his life as a Christian, but to what degree should they be involved?

EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONALISM IN RELIGION IN GENERAL

An illustration of emotionalism and the excesses to which it can lead is seen in the antics of the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:25-28). They cried unto Baal an entire morning, they leaped about their altar, and they cut their flesh in their religious frenzy. Another illustration of ultra-emotionalism in religion is Shakerism, the sect founded in England in the mid-eighteenth century. It is so called because of the frenzied dances its devotees practiced when they became emotionally stirred. A great religious “revival” took place on the Kentucky frontier at Cane Ridge in 1801. An estimated 20,000-30,000 people came from all directions to hear eighteen Presbyterian preachers, plus several Methodist and Baptist preachers. The “conversions” were more like “convulsions.”⁴ The preaching produced excessive emotionalism which resulted in bizarre behavior in the hearers. This included screaming loudly, then falling to the ground for several minutes as if dead, violent jerking of various parts of the body, causing one to grunt loudly and which usually evolved into dancing to the point of collapse, and a laughing and singing session.

In more modern times emotionalism in religion is generally identified with Pentecostalism. When I was a child, Pentecostals were commonly called “Holy Rollers” because they would sometimes get down on the floor and roll about in their unrestrained emotionalism. Such practices in their assemblies as swaying back and forth, raising the arms and vibrating the uplifted hands, crying out spontaneously with “hallelujahs” and “praise the Lords,” and speaking in an unintelligible gibberish which they describe as “ecstatic utterance”

(and mistakenly identify with the gift of tongues in the New Testament), are all manifestations of emotionalism gone to seed.

EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONALISM

AMONG BRETHREN

Some General Indications

Sad to say, the church of the Lord is not free of those who thrive on emotionalism and who cannot seem to rise above the sensual and animal level of emotionalism. One of the earliest excuses made for introducing instruments into worship in 1851, was that organs and bass fiddles would “add greatly to the solemnity of worship, and cause the hearts of the saints to be raised to a higher state of devotion.”⁵ This demonstrates how the attempt to stir the emotions has been confused with “spirituality” in the minds of some for a long time. Since at least the late 1960s, some brethren have been aping the sects in their religious emotionalism, bringing these into congregations where they were allowed to do so. The imbibing of false doctrines concerning the direct operation of the Holy Spirit was behind much of this. Some alleged that they were “nudged” by the Holy Spirit to go to a certain street corner where they would meet a stranger they could teach. Sheer emotionalism (rather than spirituality or the Scriptures) led them to such things as dimming the lights, lighting candles, burning crosses, humming during the Lord’s supper, having “responsive readings,” “testifying,” changing the order of worship every week, and doing away with a Gospel sermon in the assembly in favor of an insipid panel discussion. An elder in one church even suggested moving the Lord’s supper from the assembly to the Bible classes because the small groups would make it “more spiritual.” Clearly, such folk could not distinguish between “spirituality” and “emotionalism.”

Emotionalism and Worship

The drift away from respect for biblical authority over the past twenty-five years has precipitated a major digression and apostasy from the Truth in every direction. A prominent part of this falling away has been the assault on scriptural worship by the liberals, an assault which springs to a great degree from emotionalism. The rantings of two of these outspoken religious rebels are representative

of many. At the 1990 Nashville “Jubilee,” Marvin Phillips went out of his way to ridicule and destroy respect for structured scriptural worship. In this speech he really set the benchmark for advocating that we operate solely on the emotional level in worship. His topic, “Putting Celebration Back Into Worship,” gave to the perceptive, a clue to what he would say. According to one brother who heard the tape of this lecture and wrote a review of it, he spoke as follows:⁶

1. He talked about the “special singing” by the “Heaven Generation Singers” and “Spirit” that performed during the Sunday morning worship at the Garnett Church in Tulsa, where he preaches. He also told of the presentation of an American flag by a Boy Scout troop in the same assembly and declared that God wanted such things there.

2. He ridiculed the five items of scriptural worship and said, “Deliver us from whoever taught us that.”

3. He ridiculed the idea of saying, “It’s time to begin our worship.” (Apparently he believes in the heresy that suggests that everything a Christian does is worship.)

4. In a blasphemously revealing statement, he said, “Church is always supposed to be a party.” He went on to make a mockery of worship by saying that while someone was singing “Amazing Grace” someone else might, in the same assembly be hugging Grace and telling her how much he loves her.

5. He declared that the return of the prodigal son in Luke 15, was really a description of a “church service going on.” He used this to advocate music and dancing, claiming that of the twenty-three times dancing is mentioned in the Bible, only five times is it condemned, and then only because the dancers had the wrong attitude! (Guess who the elder brother who objected to the music and dancing represents in the church today? You are right if you suppose it to be all of us who oppose the liberal agenda of these apostate innovationists.)

6. He held the Pentecostals and other charismatics up as examples of how to grow. He said they were growing, not because of their doctrine, but because of “celebration, warmth, love, feeling.” (The reader is urged to note how he is pushing unvarnished emotionalism

here.) In the same context he implied that doctrine is unimportant because people do not care about it as long as they are made to feel good.

7. He pontificated that it is scriptural both to tithe and to clap the hands while doing so. However, he urged people to **really** turn their emotions loose when a congregational financial goal is exceeded. Not only is it fine to clap, but to jump up and down!

8. He said we need to “rethink” music in worship and “reconsider special music in our worship services.” By this he means the use of such things as solos, quartets, and choirs. He made some of the same arguments against congregational singing that those who use the instrument have used for generations. Why does he want to use the special music performances? My judgment is that he wants to use this as a means of breaking away from what he perceives to be drab and boring worship. In other words, he wants to put some spice and some excitement in it. In a word, he is aiming at what will appeal to the senses and the feelings—raw emotionalism.

9. He praised the Acappella singing/instrument-imitating group and Jeff Walling, pointing out how they could draw crowds. All who have kept up with these fellows know that their chief appeal is that they are adept at stirring the feelings and emotions, especially of the youngsters who attend their performances. Those in the Acappella audiences are encouraged (and often comply) to dance in the aisles, sway, and clap to the “gospel music” of the group. Jeff Walling is somewhat like a religious cheer leader at a religious pep rally. The emotions are stirred, but the souls are not fed with the bread of life. In fact, what they are fed at such rallies is often downright poisonous.

The other reprobate who has done his part to move the church toward unmitigated emotionalism, especially in worship, is Rubel Shelly. He has made enough heretical statements in the last twelve years to serve as subject material for a large set of books, but we will notice some excerpts from only two sources: (1) the speeches he made at Richland Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, February 3-4, 1990⁷ and (2) *The Second Incarnation*, a book he co-authored with Randy Harris.⁸ Consider the following forays into absolute emotionalism:

1. He talked much about the need for “renewal” and “invigoration” from the Holy Spirit, saying, “we’ve got to be open to the Spirit of God and we have to seek the fulness of the Spirit of God.” He went on to say that whole churches must be open to the Spirit and move among the members.

2. He depicted the church’s worship practices as “tired” and “uninspiring” and said we must make way for an “exhilarating experience.”

3. He opined that worship should be an existential moment, an existential experience, an existential event. (For “existential,” read “subjective,” “feelings-oriented,” “the event or experience of the moment,” all of which heavily depend upon sheer emotionalism.) He called worship “a mysticism” and said that “rationalists” (referring to us old mossbacks) have forgotten that the heart must be in worship.

4. He said that worship must become an “encounter experience” with God, a “holy **WOW**.” He contrasted this with getting to the assembly and “going through a boring routine, predictable, you know what’s coming next...the sermon is about as remote from life as can be. It addresses the 1940s **Head On**.” He continued: “If you understand who God is, worship is spontaneous and unavoidable...it’s [for the second time] the holy **WOW**.”

5. He denigrated the songs we sing in worship, calling them the “stuff we do in our music.” He said many of them were not worth doing because they are “theologically abhorrent and obscene” (There’s nothing subjective or emotional about that outburst, is there?). In place of the old songs he praised “contemporary Christian music” as “wonderful” and said we needed to get it into our worship.

6. His description of the confession period, followed by the pronouncement of absolution is a combination of the emotionalism of a Pentecostal meeting crossed with the high church dogma of Roman Catholicism. Here is his description of how they do it at Woodmont Hills in Nashville: Shelly announces there will be a period of confession and tells God there are some who need to “do business” with Him and that He needs “right now” to listen to them. Shelly then confesses to God for those who are doing wrong things in their families, for those carrying such “secret vices” (he dare not

say “sins” lest someone feel guilty) as alcoholism, homosexuality, and greed. After confessing their “vices” for them, he then does a “priestly absolution” (his words) over them. This is followed by a song, such as “It Is Well With My Soul” (What, an old “traditional” song rather than a “contemporary Christian” number), sung by a choir, a soloist, or the congregation (which, it matters not to Shelly). I would not be a bit surprised if they dimmed the lights and had the choir do a little humming to create just the right atmosphere for this “community confessional”! Such things, he avers, will “break some calcified molds.” I trust that the reader will not miss observing the foundation of utter emotionalism, rather than Scripture upon which this idiocy rests.

7. He and Randy Harris write that our “tired, uninspiring event called worship...must give way to an exhilarating experience of God.” Furthermore, worship in churches of Christ (except Woodmont Hills and similar superior congregations, of course) is “scandalous” and “dull and boring” to him and his ilk and “unattractive to non-Christians.” The way to overcome this is to replace it with “raucous celebration,” “spontaneity,” “hubbub,” “shouts,” “dances,” “Jubilation,” “applause and cheering,” singing by “one person or a small group to the larger,” “dramatic celebration of God,” and “a narcotic trip into another world.” Again, please note that all of these are grounded in subjective opinions which confuse what pleases God with the selfish desires of men, all of them rooted in emotionalism.

8. Whom is responsible for all of this nonsense suggested in the name of “worship”? Why, the Holy Spirit, of course! To those who would object to such foolishness, they say that we must not “stifle, close off creativity arising from the Spirit of God.” All of these wonderful innovations in worship are due to the “invigorating presence of the Spirit’s fresh breezes.” They go on to say: “When the Spirit of God is present, it will not always be possible to determine the atmosphere in advance. Leaders may intend and prepare for a service of one sort, and God may bring about another end to his glory.” They declare further: “We must allow the Spirit of God to quicken our assemblies with freshness and life.” Only those who are utterly blind spiritually can fail to see that they are taking the traits

of unbridled emotionalism run amuck and ascribing them to the Holy Spirit of God.

Emotionalism in Preaching

In addition to the injection of emotionalism into worship by the liberals, there is the excessive use of emotionalism by some preachers. This influence is also coming from liberals, as I have already demonstrated in the discussion of the push for emotionalism in worship. The instance in which Shelly described his confessing the sins of the congregation and then absolving them is a case in point. The appeal of many liberal preachers, especially of the younger set such as Jeff Walling, is that they are “so dynamic”! Never mind the shallowness or outright error of their message, there are some who must have an entertaining and what they consider to be a “dynamic” man in the pulpit to hold their interest. All of this is based on emotionalism in both the preacher and the hearers. However, to be fair, not all of the emotionalism in the pulpit is coming from those who are trying to turn the church into a “do your own thing” religious democracy. Preachers who are doctrinally sound have also been known to engage in antics and exercises aimed more at the emotions than the intellect.

Emotionalism in Reaction to the Truth

A third manifestation of emotionalism is seen in the reactions people register to various doctrines and practices of the Bible. All who have studied the Bible with those who believe and/or practice some sort of religious error have often observed such reactions. Upon learning that one must be baptized in order to be saved a man may vehemently argue with the plain statement of Jesus and the apostles (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; *et. al.*). Such will often then argue that they **feel** that God is too good to condemn all those who have not had an opportunity to be baptized. So also with the Truth on instrumental music in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), observance of the Lord’s supper every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; *et. al.*), or any number of subjects.

The typical response of Pentecostals who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit or to possess spiritual gifts (e.g., speaking

in tongues) is for them to say that they **know** they have experienced these things because they **feel** it is so. They may even go so far as to say piously that they would not trade the **feeling** they have “right here” (with hand over heart) for a stack of Bibles! Likewise, the Mormon “elders,” who ring our doorbells, testify that they **know** that Joseph Smith is a prophet and that the *Book of Mormon* is inspired because they **feel** a “burning in their breast” confirming these things (of course, it may just be indigestion!). Frequently a person who has been brought to a recognition of the Truth and what he must do to be saved will refuse because in his mind it will be some sort of condemnation of his beloved father or mother who died outside of Christ. All such reactions are entirely emotional and represent an actual desertion of rationality.

Through the years I have seen many brethren react totally on an emotional rather than a rational level to a given truth or practice in the law of Christ. Several years ago, I worked with a church that supported a Bible chair director at the local university. I learned, after moving there, that he had sometime before said from the pulpit that he could not tell the students that instrumental music and such things as drinking and smoking were wrong. Further, I learned that he was making periodicals from liberal brethren and even Pentecostal sources available to the students. When I insisted that this man either be called upon to publicly repent or be dismissed, the atmosphere in the elders’ meeting became very heated. One of the elders was a prominent local attorney and a close personal friend of the Bible chair director. When it became evident that there was some strong sentiment among the other nine elders to deal with this man, the elder-attorney finally said, “I don’t care what he has done. He is my friend and I’m going to defend him. I will resign if you are determined to confront him.” At that, he walked out the door of the meeting room. (Of course, he was allowed to come back to the next elders’ meeting without a word being said about his “resignation.”) Ironically, here was a man who was trained in his profession to think rationally and logically, but it is evident that he was operating on one level only in this matter—emotionalism.

The same reaction often occurs when it is necessary for the church to withdraw fellowship from one of its members. I well remember a case of this sort a number of years ago where I served as the local preacher. A brother who was a notorious heretic had repeatedly disrupted Bible classes with his false doctrines and had even written letters to many members of the church, seeking sympathy and sowing discord. He refused the repeated pleas of the elders that he repent or else be withdrawn from. Accordingly, I was asked to preach on “church discipline” on a given Sunday morning, after which the withdrawal announcement was made. At the end of the announcement one of the members of the church stood up in the assembly and challenged the right of the elders to lead the church in the withdrawal proceedings without consulting the entire church. This man and his wife and another family or two then took the withdrawn-from brother out to lunch that day in a show of support for him, in spite of the Bible teaching they had just heard, which included the admonition, “with such a one no, not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11)! This brother completely disabled his rational faculties and reacted solely on the basis of his feelings for someone who he thought was being persecuted.

Anyone who preaches very long and stands for the Truth is going to encounter irrational and emotional reactions to what he preaches. The social drinkers and dancers often react this way to doctrine that exposes their practices as sinful, even to the dividing of congregations in some cases. The couple living in an adulterous marriage will rarely listen and submit to what the Son of God says about their spiritual condition, but will throw up all sorts of emotional smokescreens as to why they should remain together. The list of such subjects and the emotionalism that prevails in the hearts of brethren concerning them could be extended almost indefinitely.

LIBERALISM, EMOTIONALISM, AND RATIONALITY In the Secular World

One of the building blocks of liberalism, whether social, political, or religious, is unbridled emotionalism. The political liberal does not live in a real world. He lives only on a “feelings” level. He has a “bleeding heart” for every sob story. He professes a desire to feed all

of the hungry, provide a house for all of the homeless, clothe all of the naked, and give everybody a guaranteed annual income. While compassion is one of the beautiful traits of the Master we are to emulate and we are certainly given the mandate to help the helpless (Gal. 6:10), we are not to do so without qualification or condition. The liberal would help all of these unfortunate ones without questioning their worthiness as long as he can do it with someone else's money. He is oblivious to the Bible principle of "no work, no eat" (2 The. 3:10). He does not hesitate to give a man money for food when he has wasted his money to buy tobacco, alcohol, or some other kind of drug.

The attitude of the liberal is that every person should be able to choose to waste his own life and even the lives of others and suffer no consequence for it. Rather than being held accountable for his own behavior, he should be rewarded, supported, and even honored. The super-emotional liberal has not enough sense to know that the victim, not the offender, needs to be helped and the offender, not the victim, needs to be punished. Because of sheer emotionalism the social and political liberal opposes just punishment, including the death penalty, for convicted felons. To liberals down is up, out is in, black is white, left is right, and evil is good, all because they live in their touchy-feely, warped little dream world that defies rationality and realism.

In the Religious World

Emotionalism long ago took over "Christendom" in general. I can confidently rest my case for this assertion by citing one well-known slogan: "It makes no difference what you believe, as long as you're sincere." Several generations have now grown up on this teaching. Many of those in our time have taken it one step further by reasoning, "If it makes no difference **what** I believe, then why should it make any difference **if** I believe?" Hundreds of theological seminaries have for years been staffed with thousands of infidel theologians, who have produced tens of thousands of infidel clerics, who stand in pulpits every seven days and vomit up their unbelief on those assembled. Thus millions, in a nation once founded on faith in God and the Bible as the Word of God, are at worst seeking to make Him an outlaw and fugitive from this republic, or at best are living as if

He does not exist. These are some of the bitter fruits of the exaltation of emotionalism, which breeds liberalism in religion.

The same culprit is responsible for the wildfire of liberalism in the church of the Lord. Liberalism is little more than universalism with a thin skin pulled over it. In his heart the liberal does not really believe in Hell. If he does, he does not know anybody who is bound for it. Furthermore, he cannot bring himself to condemn any doctrine as false or any behavior as bad, or, at any rate, damnable. He is an ardent advocate of the "I'm okay, you're okay" philosophy. He has turned his back on rational and logical thought which excludes any middle ground between Truth and error. You see, he believes what he does and believes in religion is right, but he also believes that what others do and believe in religion is just as right, never mind that they are directly contradictory!

What is right for one may be wrong for another and vice versa. This is precisely the ground occupied by some on the subject of instrumental music in worship. Some say that, while it would be wrong for them to use the instrument, it is right for those in the Independent Christian Church (or other denominations) to use it. It is by such irrationalism that Carroll D. Osburn, of Abilene Christian University, can write the following:

There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether...the Lord's supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories such as premillennialism, ecclesiological matters such as congregational organization, or soteriological matters such as whether baptism is "for" or "because of" the remission of sins.⁹

If you do not understand the learned doctor's high-falutin' terminology, the translation is this: "Anything goes." Errors about worship, the Second Coming, church organization, or the plan of salvation are of no consequence. The social liberals responsible for our lax U. S. Immigration laws could learn much from Osburn and those like him. In effect, Osburn has opened wide all of the borders, repealed all of the laws, and dismissed all of the officers charged with enforcement of the same in the kingdom of Heaven! One of the things that drives Osburn (and doubtless others, especially those in academia) is the

fear of being ostracized and ridiculed by their academic peers outside the kingdom for their narrow-mindedness. He gets close to admitting as much in the following statement of his ideal: “Rejecting arrogant exclusivism, Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.”¹⁰ (I wonder if he rejects Buddhists and Muslims, and if so, would this make him guilty of “arrogant exclusivism”?) The emotionalism behind this statement is evident. He cares not what the Book says about the exclusive borders of the kingdom of God in a hundred passages. His view is based solely on how he feels about it and how he wants others to feel about him. Consequently, his arena is broad enough to embrace just about everybody, but it is not God’s “arena” if the New Testament means anything at all.

The hundreds of preachers who have adopted one or more of the dozens of loopholes for Matthew 19:9 on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (as erroneous as they are ingenious) serve as glaring examples of emotionalism gone to seed. Appeals are made to the difficulty of a celibate life, or how “terrible” it would be on children to break up a marriage for the sake of purity and salvation. Someone once told me that, if we did not relax our views on this subject, we would soon run out of anybody we could teach and baptize, since so many are living in unscriptural marriages. This fellow actually professed to be a Gospel preacher! How’s that for “grade A” emotionalism?

A couple once came to see me to ask me to marry them. The young man had been a Christian for several years, but the young lady had learned the Truth and been baptized only a short while before. When I asked if either of them had been married before, he said that he had not, but she said that she had. If fornication had been committed by her husband, she was not aware of it—at least this was not the cause of their divorce. When I called their attention to Matthew 19:9, the young man said, “We know what the Bible says, but we have decided to get married anyway and just throw ourselves on the mercy of the Lord.” I told our elders of the conversation and their plans. They visited with them and urged them not to get married. They got married (but not by me) and the week afterward our elders led the church in withdrawing fellowship from them. The entire

atmosphere surrounding the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage among so many brethren is one of “how do I and others feel about it?” rather than “what does God say about it?” As with these areas of liberalism, many, if not most others can be traced to emotionalism as their root.

THE PROPER USE OF EMOTION

As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, emotions are not innately harmful or evil. God made us with emotional capacities and abilities and even instructs us, sometimes by precept, sometimes by example (and sometimes by both) concerning how to use them. Therefore, just as we have noticed the abuse of the emotions, we must also notice the proper and scriptural use of them.

Sincerity is an emotion that is required of us by God. The Roman saints were commended because they obeyed the Gospel pattern they were taught “from the heart” (Rom. 6:17-18). God seeks men who will worship Him in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). To worship “in spirit” refers to the involvement of man’s spirit in the act of worship. This involvement of one’s spirit has to do with sincerely approaching God. The opposite of sincerity is hypocrisy, which is detestable to God (1 Peter 2:1). However, we need to notice the balancing force to the emotion of sincerity: the reverence for and obedience to the Truth of God’s Word.

We are to love our families (Rom. 1:31; Eph. 5:25-6:4), our brethren (1 Peter 1:22), and all men, even our enemies (Mat. 5:44-46). However, God gives us some restraints to balance this love. Our ultimate love must be for God with all of our being (Mark 12:30). This means that in any conflict of love or loyalty, even with our family members, love for God must come first (Mat. 10:37; Acts 5:29). It also means that we cannot encourage them in anything that is contrary to what God wills (2 John 9-11). To do so would be to express more love for men than for God.

We are to be kind and compassionate (Eph. 4:32), but not so much so that we practice partiality and respect of persons (1 Tim. 5:20-21) or help the undeserving (2 The. 3:10). There are many things to cause the Christian to express the emotion of joy (Acts 8:39; Phi. 3:1; 4:4); however, our rejoicing is not to be without restraint. We are forbidden

to rejoice in unrighteousness, but are commanded to rejoice with the truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Even the emotions of hate and anger have a useful role when properly directed (Psa. 97:10; 119:104; Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26). Each of the emotions could be thus dealt with. The common thread running through them all is that they are not to govern us, but we must govern them. This implies the use of the rational and reasoning faculties of the mind which God has given us. It is no coincidence that, when one lets his emotions have complete mastery, he by definition has become “unreasonable,” “irrational.” Emotionalism wars against rationality. In expressing the completeness with which men are to love God, the Scriptures teach us to love Him “with all thy mind” (Mark 12:30). This is not the same as the Bible “heart” in this passage, for it is listed separately in the same passage. The mind, in this verse, must refer to man’s intellect, his power to think and to reason. It is the mind with which one understands and initially responds to the Word of God, which teaches us how to live. It is only by the rational use of the minds that God has given us that our emotional capacities can be kept under control and used to the glory, rather than the dishonor of God.

CONCLUSION

Human emotions are extremely powerful. They are powerful for good if we control them with our God-given minds in harmony with the Word of God. They are a powerfully destructive force if we lay aside our rational powers and let them control us. The danger lies not in the emotions, but in emotionalism.

ENDNOTES

¹Webster’s *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (New York, NY: Barnes L. Noble, Inc., 1992), p. 467.

²*Op. cit.*

³Clyde M. Narramore, *The Psychology of Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1961 reprint), p. 279.

⁴Earl I. West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1949), 1:23.

⁵West, 1:309.

⁶Virgil Hale, “Marvin Phillips and ‘Jubilee,’” in *Light for Living*, East Corinth Church of Christ Bulletin, Corinth, MS, 11/19/89.

⁷All quotations are from Goebel Music, *Behold the Pattern* (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Pub., 1991), pp. 284-322.

⁸Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1992).

⁹Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), pp. 90-91.

¹⁰Osburn, p. 64.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Less attention would perhaps be given to divorce if more attention was paid to marriage in the first place. The marital relationship should be attended by rewards instead of consequences. Unfortunately, it is the latter in too many cases. We are presently experiencing a tremendous acceleration of moral and political liberalism in America. Divorce is currently more widespread among members of the church of Christ than at any other time in its history, because the looseness that characterizes the world has “run over” into the church. Strong, worldly trends affect the church to some extent.

Within the past few years the problem of divorce and remarriage has become more acute in the United States. The divorce rate has not merely climbed; it has soared. This fact can be attributed at least in part to the espousal, by so many people, of the philosophical doctrine known as Hedonistic Utilitarianism (which says, in effect, that men and women are under two masters, pleasure and pain). It holds that people not only ought to avoid pain at any cost and get all the pleasure they can, but that they will do such...It is my conviction that false doctrines regarding divorce and remarriage have been a basic “key” which has opened the “floodgates” of liberalism in the Lord’s church today.¹

One might be equally correct in reversing the order of the last portion of the above quotation to read: “Liberalism in the Lord’s

church has been a basic ‘key’ which has opened the ‘floodgates’ to false doctrines.” It is not necessarily wrong to seek pleasure and avoid pain, because this is a “basic instinct” in life. The Creator put this in man. Why should any right-thinking person choose to live in pain when he could be enjoying things that bring pleasure? The wrongness of this approach occurs when the pleasure that is sought is sinful. The hedonistic approach to domestic relationships is wrong because it seeks to lay hold on pleasure in spite of the “rightness,” or “wrongness” of a situation. Moral justification receives no consideration in the doctrine of Hedonism.

THE SOURCE OF APPEAL **Church Doctrine**

Divorce and remarriage are not regulated by the church. The question is not what the church teaches about these items, but what the Bible teaches. Marriage is not a “church institution.” The marital relationship was established by God long before the church was established upon this earth (Gen. 2:24). Marriage was established for mankind, not members of the church only. The marriage law was given by God to Adam. He represented the human race, i.e., mankind in general. The marriage law was not given to Adam because he was the son of God, but because he stood at the head of the human race (Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:12).

The Church Fathers

If we cannot appeal to church doctrine for the regulation of divorce and remarriage, we certainly cannot appeal to the Apostolic or Church Fathers (uninspired men of the second and third century). To appeal to these men for justification for our marital views would be like appealing to Alexander Campbell for justification for our views on baptism. At what point in Campbell’s life should we interrogate him about how to become a Christian? Certainly not when he was a Baptist, though Campbell was not ever, in reality, a Baptist.² Campbell, like the uninspired men of the past, obviously held some erroneous views at certain times in his life. The “Church Fathers” likewise held views that we would reject because they, too,

were uninspired and there were no real traces of uniformity among them. Some of their views would today be rejected.

The Bible

To continually set forth the Bible as the infallible standard by which divorce and remarriage are regulated may sound trite to some, but it is tremendously important. Once the Bible is rejected as authoritative, every man in the kingdom of God will do that which is right in his own eyes (cf., Jud. 17:6). The Bible must be the absolute standard which determines the validity of divorce and remarriage.

AMENABILITY

There will be less difficulty in the church and in private life when we understand the extent to which all men (saint and sinner) are amenable to the law of Christ (the gospel). If people would understand this, they would not entertain the idea of marriage or divorce so quickly, even though marriage is honorable and divorce is allowable under the rules laid down by Jesus (Mat. 19:9).

The Law of Christ

Matthew 28:18-20 and Romans 3:23 show that unconverted men are amenable to the gospel. Otherwise, the Lord would not have said, preach the gospel to them. When Paul entered the ancient city of Athens, he beheld the city full of idols (Acts 17:16). He quickly pointed out that the Athenians were worshiping in ignorance (v. 23). What they were doing was unlawful. They were in violation of a law, but what law? It was not Athenian law because their law did not prohibit idolatry, but the law of Christ does (Gal. 5:20). Idolatry is a violation of the law of Christ, and the people of Athens stood in violation of that law, which would not have been possible if they had not been amenable to it. Nothing could be more obvious. No man is accountable to a law to which he is not amenable, and no man will be judged by a law he never lived under (cf., Rom. 2:12; 4:15).

The Law of Moses

The fact that the Judge of all the earth will do right will ultimately answer all questions and settle all disputes regarding divorce and remarriage (Gen. 18:25). God gave the original marriage law two thousand years before He gave the law of Moses (Gen. 2:24; Exo. 20). For more than two thousand years marriage was regulated by the “spoken word,” not the “written word” (Heb. 1:1). For more than two thousand years man was amenable to the instructions (law) given by God. Then came the law of Moses, for the Jews, which covered the next fifteen hundred years (Gal. 3:19). It was not given to change the marital relationship, but it did expand it. God’s original intent in marriage has never been erased; it was designed to last as long as man is restrained by the boundaries of the flesh. Twentieth century Christians are not bound by the law of Moses concerning divorce and remarriage (Rom. 7:1-4), but they are bound to the law of Christ, the gospel.

FOR ANY CAUSE?

“And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” (Mat. 19:3). These instructions would, of course, apply equally to the woman. Divorce is in most cases a very traumatic experience and very costly in terms of money and feelings. People with good judgment are always very slow to enter the divorce courts, but sometimes it is necessary to protect the interests of the soul and secure a portion of happiness in this life. Some of the “reasons” for divorce are in definite need of exploration.

Irreconcilable Differences

Irreconcilable differences within a marriage involve the inability to bring two people into harmony or adjustment. These differences contemplate a situation where agreement or compromise cannot be effected. It is not expected that the likes and dislikes of couples will be exactly the same, but marriage was never intended to destroy identity. However, in a good many relationships, one of the parties will totally consume the other, which is nothing but an overt act of selfishness. Consequently the dominating party will rule, thereby

destroying the identity of the other person. It is dreadfully wrong for one of the parties to become enslaved to the other. In many instances, unless a program of adjustment is effected, the next stop will be the divorce court unless one of the parties is willing to tolerate the other in order to survive. Devotion is one thing, slavery is another. Irreconcilable differences, how-ever, as important as they may seem, do not constitute grounds for divorce and remarriage. The teaching of Jesus is unmistakably clear on this point.

Domestic Violence

Abuse is common in divorce. In fact, it is a factor in a great percentage of cases. Wife-beating is currently a serious problem, so much so, that the only apparent way for some battered wives to survive is to secure an order of restraint or file for divorce. When domestic violence becomes a part of the marital relationship, divorce is seen as the only way out of an unbearable situation. Verbal abuse also ranks high on the list of things that contribute to divorce. As terrible as it is, domestic violence is not the cause Jesus listed for divorce and remarriage.

Abandonment

Abandonment is a frequent cause of divorce, and from the human standpoint, it is accepted as legitimate. But we must not forget that our thoughts and our ways are not the Lord's (cf., Isa. 55:8). The Holy Spirit gave instruction regarding the departure of an unbeliever from a believer. The Spirit says, "let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Cor. 7:15). It is not likely that "under bondage" refers to the marriage bond, so this passage cannot be used to prove that a deserted brother or sister is free from the one who departs. Several views of this verse are held, but the most plausible one is that the believer is not so bound to the unbeliever that he must give up Christ to hold the unbeliever. I am intensely aware of the fact that this passage refers to a believer being married to an unbeliever, but since non-Christians are also amenable to the gospel of Christ, it would apply to them as well. Like the preceding things, abandonment does not leave the innocent one left behind with the freedom to remarry.

DIVORCE

We have thus far explored some of the reasons why divorces are obtained. Now we come to consider what the Bible says about divorce.

And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 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. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? 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 (Mat. 19:3-9).

The teaching of the Lord in this passage is relatively simple, but men somehow have misread it, misunderstood it, and misapplied it. A divorce followed by remarriage is permitted by the Lord only on the grounds of fornication. People who divorce for any reason other than fornication must remain unmarried or be reconciled to each other (cf., 1 Cor. 7:10,11). It is important to realize that every divorced person is not an adulterer. The act of putting one away does not make one guilty of adultery. An analysis of Matthew 19:9 is in order.

First, is the word “whosoever.” To some, this is a “covenant passage,” i.e., it applies to those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. This is a contention, however, lacking in proof. There is no reason to consider this a covenant passage. The “whosoever” of Matthew 19 means anyone, everyone. It has the same force as the “whosoever” of Revelation 22:17, (KJV). The “whosoever” of Matthew 19:9 is the “every one” of 5:32. The laws of biblical interpretation demand this conclusion. “If language may be used arbitrarily, and words applied capriciously, there is an end to all confidence among men.”³ “The words of a law are generally to be understood in their usual and most known signification.”⁴ “When we once begin to withhold from words their ordinary and natural

signification, we must not complain if infidels charge our religion with mysticism, or its expositors with fraud.”⁵ “Words and phrases must not be taken in some recondite sense, which men of learning and ingenuity, in support of a hypothesis, may devise; but in the ordinary sense of the words.”⁶

Next, is the phrase “put away.” This of course means divorce. It involves a “writing of divorcement” (Mat. 5: 31), Deuteronomy 24:3 says “a bill of divorcement.”

When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's [wife]. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Jehovah: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance (Deu. 24:1-4).

This “bill of divorcement” was given into the hands of the wife because the husband found some “unseemly thing” in her. The King James says “some uncleanness,” with the marginal reference rendering “matter of nakedness.” We must remember that footnotes and marginal references are not inspired, unless an actual word or phrase out of the Hebrew or Greek text is retained, but what is the “unseemly thing” for which the “bill of divorcement” was given? The “unseemly thing” was obviously not adultery, as some think, because punishment for such was death by stoning (Lev. 20:10). Divorce was unnecessary. Therefore the “unseemly thing” was obviously something for which the woman was not stoned. Others think pre-marital promiscuity was the issue, but since the truth about such a charge could be determined by following a prescribed course (Deu. 22), it would seem that this was not the meaning of the phrase. “We may safely conclude that it included such things as were unseemly, unclean, unbearable in the husband's sight.”⁷

Next, Matthew 19:9 uses the word “committeth.” There is strong disagreement among brethren as to the meaning of this term. What the brethren think, however, does not determine truth. What does,

in this case, is uniformity and lexical definition. The action demanded by the word is unquestionably “continuous.” Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, keeps on (continuous action) committing adultery. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:32, “that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress.” We must repeat: every divorced person is not an adulterer! The act of putting away does not make one guilty of this sin. The person who has been divorced becomes an adulterer or adulteress only if a remarriage occurs.

WHO MAY MARRY?

There are only certain people who are eligible for marriage. (1) Those who have never been married. (2) Those whose mate is deceased. (3) Those who have divorced their mates because of fornication. We need to explore the possible remarriage of the one whose mate is deceased. According to Paul, “A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Here is another passage where there is disagreement; not over the fact that a mate is bound to the other as long as he or she lives (permission to divorce and remarry because of fornication understood), but over what the phrase “only in the Lord” means. It would be in order for the reader to review the application of the laws of language presented earlier in this article before advancing further. There are only two possible interpretations of this passage. (1) The widow is free to marry, but only in the Lord, i.e., a Christian. (2) The widow is free to marry, but only in the Lord, i.e., only within the will of the Lord. “Only in the Lord” translates *monon en kurio*, which is a restrictive clause no matter how the passage is understood. Brother James Meadows⁸ makes some excellent observations in his analysis of the text, but if his interpretation of the passage is correct, all others will be false. It is my persuasion that the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a whole passage, cannot always be determined by grammar or the original text. For example, it cannot be proved by the Greek text that a woman must have a covering on her head when engaged in public worship. “The words of a law are generally

to be understood in their usual and most known signification, not so much regarding the propriety of grammar, as their general and popular use.”⁹ There are many commentators who say “only in the Lord” means a fellow Christian. “*Monon en kurio*, only in the Lord, i.e., within the limits of Christian connection, in the element in which all Christians live and walk; ‘let her marry a Christian’ ”¹⁰ “Let her marry a Christian.”¹¹ “He therefore commands Christian men to marry Christian women.”¹² “Let her marry only a Christian.”¹³ “She, being a Christian, should marry a Christian.”¹⁴ “That is, only to one who is a Christian.”¹⁵ “Only in a Christian way, i.e., only to a Christian”¹⁶ “‘Only as a member of Christ,’ which implies that she marries a Christian.”¹⁷ “That is, her second husband must be a Christian.”¹⁸ Concerning the phrase “in the Lord,” Jackson says:

But some have stated, ‘We have the same language in Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:1, and children should obey parents only if they are Christians and wives are to submit to their husbands only if they are Christians?’ But these are not the same, the passage in 1 Corinthians 7:39 being restrictive as to a union yet to be formed, and about which the widowed person has a will to be exercised in the forming of it. In the case of wives with husbands, and children with parents, the unions are already there, and the parties are already together in the union; in all circumstances the Lord’s will must apply in their behavior. Still, 1 Corinthians 7:39 restricts the widowed person regarding a union not yet formed, but in contemplation.¹⁹

PRESENT DOCTRINES CONCERNING MARRIAGE

Never before in the history of the churches of Christ have there been so many diverse views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. When I came into the kingdom of God almost 45 years ago, the gap that separated believers over divorce and remarriage was considerably smaller. Today, it has widened beyond imagination. New schools of thought about these matters are born almost on a daily basis, so much so that it is impossible to reconcile all the marital views that now exist. There is hardly a local congregation to be found where marital problems have not created more than a little confusion. Observe some of the doctrines that presently exist.

Aliens Are Not Amenable

This doctrine says, in effect, that only children of God are subject to God's marriage law. If this were true, a person could be married any number of times before obeying the gospel, and then at that point simply stay married to the man or woman one had. This is a doctrine very "full of comfort." When Paul came to Athens, Greece he informed the Athenians that "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). Does this not indicate that non-Christians are subject to the gospel? What causes one to become a sinner? Is it not because of violating the law of Christ? Paul said, "Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). Before obeying the gospel some of the Corinthians were guilty of some specific sins. These sins were not condemned by Corinthian law, but they were by the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Where there is no law, there is no sin.

Cannot "Live In" Adultery

It is held that adultery is an act. This is quite true, but marriage is a state or relationship. Paul told the Colossians to "deaden their members" against fornication, uncleanness, passion, etc. (3:5), "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them." (v. 7). Fornication includes adultery. If one can "live in fornication," one can "live in adultery!"

Matthew 19:9 is A "Covenant Passage"

This passage has been one of the "hottest texts" in the Bible for the past several years. It has already been affirmed in this presentation that the "whosoever" in Matthew 19:9 is "anyone," "everyone." It is held that this passage does not apply (1) to a non-Christian who is married to a non-Christian; (2) to a non-Christian who is married to a Christian; and (3) to a Christian who is married to a non-Christian. If Matthew 19:9 applies to a Christian, but not to a non-Christian, then would it not follow that in a marriage where one is a Christian and one is not, that the marital status of the believer

would be recognized, but the status of the unbeliever would not? If not, why not?

Abide in The Same Calling

The contention in this situation is that one should (must) abide in whatsoever state one is in when one obeys the gospel (1 Cor. 7:20). If you have been married five times when you become a Christian, you stay married to the mate you have at the time. This is a weak argument, because it demands, if one is consistent, that the person who is a drunkard or a liar must remain such at the time of obedience to the gospel. No one is really prepared to admit this, but the case demands it.

Baptism Washes Away All Sin

The efficacy of baptism depends upon repentance (Luke 13:3). Baptism will not wash away any sin that is unrepented of (Acts 2:38). When Saul was told to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,” he was prepared to do so because he had repented (Acts 22:16). An approach that holds that baptism will remove unrepented of sins is putting too much emphasis on baptism, and not enough on repentance. Those who put this much emphasis on baptism are indeed guilty of doing exactly what denominational people say we do. We deny the charge!

Repentance Does Not Demand Restitution

Some things simply cannot be restored, but some things can. If I should, God forbid, kill a man, I could not restore his life. If genuine repentance demanded such, then there could be no repentance for me, though I should seek it diligently with tears (cf., Heb. 12:17). But on the other hand, if I should steal money from a person I could return it. Would not repentance demand it? Zacchaeus had the right idea. He said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold” (Luke 19:8). This publican was willing to attempt restitution to whomever he had possibly been unfair in his dealing. How can we entertain anything less? Adam Clark candidly stated:

No man should expect mercy at the hand of God, who, having wronged his neighbor, refuses, when he has it in his power, to make restitution. Were he to weep tears of blood, both the justice and mercy of God would shut out his prayers if he make not his neighbor amends for the injury he has done him.²⁰

There seems to be some mix-up about the role godly sorrow plays in repentance. Is godly sorrow a part of repentance? Yes, indeed! Is it actually repentance? No, it is not! Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a reformation of life. If one truly wants to cease the habitual practice of sin and reform his life, he must not only be sorry, he must repent. The difference between godly sorrow and repentance is made clear by Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10.

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent [*metamelomai*, regret], though I did repent [*metamelomen*, regret], for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance [*metanoian*, reformation]: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing; for godly sorrow worketh repentance [*metanoian*, reformation] to salvation not to be repented [*metameleton*, regretted].²¹

No Exception Theory

There is a school of thought in the brotherhood that says divorce and remarriage are not allowed under any circumstances, not even for fornication. Those who hold this view are probably small in number, which is totally irrelevant because the number of people who believe something does not make the thing believed true or false; however, to believe the no-exception-at-all theory is to deny what the Lord plainly stated (Mat. 19:9). Such a belief must also bear the responsibility of binding where the Lord has not bound, as well as the brand of irresponsible exegesis. How can we deny what the Lord allowed?

CONCLUSION

Marriage is not an invention of society. It is God-given (Gen. 2:24). Marriage is optional, but it is an honorable estate. There can be situations, however, where marriage is not expedient. The “present distress,” for example, of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 7:26-34. Divorce is allowed only under the condition described by Christ (Mat. 19:9). Remarriage is permissible under three

conditions: (1) the one cause mentioned by Christ; (2) only in the Lord as stated by in 1 Corinthians 7:39, and (3) if the mate is deceased (Rom. 7:1-3). Marriage, divorce and remarriage! ‘Man’s happiness on earth and in heaven may be determined by these three words.’²²

ENDNOTES

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THE DIVIDED ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCTION

In clear and concise language our Lord stated that commandment keeping is the only acceptable proof of our love for him (John 14:15). Many have derided those of us who regularly emphasize works of obedience, but their mocking does not change the teaching of the Christ. By inspiration James candidly questioned some in the church of his day with, "But wilt thou know, O vain [empty, pointless] man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). As obedience is the only true proof of one's love for Christ, in like manner, obedience is the only genuine proof of one's faith in our Lord and His teaching (James 2:14-26). Furthermore, the apostle Paul stipulated that we are to do only those things that are authorized by the Lord (Col. 3:17). Hence, those who truly love God are those who are determined to do only what Christ has authorized them to do. This also means that they will not engage in things unauthorized as well as things prohibited (John 12:48; Gal. 5:19-21). Therefore, all of us must be interested in what the will of our Lord is regarding "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). Has He left us any directions concerning said assemblies?

May we assemble or not assemble according to our own likes or dislikes? Having convened for the religious purposes of Hebrews 10:25, may brethren with impunity, regulate said assemblies according to their own wills? In a book concerning Christian education published in 1937, R. C. White mused, “How long before we shall adopt the custom of some of the denominations around us, and have the older and younger members on Lord’s day in separate assemblies, I cannot even guess. But will any deny we are in danger?”¹

THE ORIGIN OF “THE DIVIDED ASSEMBLY” IN RECENT TIMES

During the apostasy of the nineteenth century the divided assembly came into being among those who became the Christian Church. Such assemblies were then known as “Junior Church.” Among churches of Christ in recent times “busing programs” have been the primary reason for the division of the assemblies discussed in Hebrews 10:25. These programs reached their peak around the mid to late 1970s. Many of the children who were “bussed in” were untaught in the Bible and untrained in proper conduct in worship and Bible classes. Hence, it was thought, by some well-intentioned brethren, that it would be expedient to divide such assemblies as those of Hebrews 10:25. Seemingly, as the case is with many well-meaning brethren, they never thought to see if the Lord had given any directions regarding the assemblies of the saints. Therefore, problems arose over these matters that continue to plague the body of Christ to this very hour.

This chapter is concerned with the practice of dividing the assemblies discussed in Hebrews 10:25. We are, therefore, not necessarily discussing Bible classes, youth gatherings, men’s training classes, and such like. Under consideration are the assemblies of the saints as discussed in the following Scriptures. We begin our study with an examination of the Scriptures that have a bearing on our subject.

Hebrews 10: 24-25

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the

manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more,
as ye see the day approaching

The phrase “the assembling of ourselves” translates *Van episunagoganheauton*. Rendered literally it reads, “the assembly of ourselves.” The KJV and ASV (1901) translators considered *episanugogan* a participle. However, it is a noun (accusative, singular, feminine). Of *episunagogan* Thayer writes: “b. (the religious) assembly of Christians” and he cites Hebrews 10:25 for an example. Regarding *sunagoga* Thayer penned: “the name is transferred to an assembly of Christians formally gathered for religious purposes.” As an example Thayer cites James 2:2, which reads “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring.”

In these verses inspiration makes certain demands on brethren. (1) Fraternal concerns and responsibilities demand that we faithfully attend the assemblies under consideration. Every Christian has the responsibility and privilege to exhort his brethren as well as be exhorted by them. It is a necessary part of being faithful to our calling. (2) By apostolic authority Christians are commanded to be present in these assemblies. (3) The “exhortation” is not an exhortation to assemble. The “exhortation” of the passage takes place in the assembly. Concerning the matter of whom is exhorted and where the exhortation takes place Vincent says, “The antithesis is not forsaking assembling, but exhorting in assembly.”² (4) Christians acutely need the exhortation which comes from these assemblies. These assemblies are correctly labeled “assemblies of exhortation.” (5) Therefore, they are commanded not to forsake them. “Forsake” translates *enkataleipo*. Thayer says that it means “to abandon, desert, leave in straits, leave helpless.” Brethren are not forsaking such assemblies when they miss them because of illness or anything else **over which they have no control.**

Any doctrine that teaches one to ignore the demands of Hebrews 10:25 is a false doctrine. In other words, if what I believe causes me not to discharge the obligations laid upon me by this or any other passage, then such a belief is palpably false. Truth always implies truth. Truth by its very nature cannot imply a falsehood.

1 Corinthians 11: 18-22

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that heave not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

Before directly analyzing the preceding verses we need to note the use of the word "church" as the Holy Spirit has used it in the Scriptures. It is employed in the following ways: (1) the one institution or realm of all the saved (Mat. 16:18); (2) the realm of the saved in any geographic location designated or not (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16); and, (3) in an assembled sense (1 Cor. 11:18, 20).

Hence, in First Corinthians 11:18-22, Paul is discussing an assembly of Christians convened for religious purposes. Notice in verse 18 that there is a coming together "in the church." Literally it is a coming together "in the assembly." In verse 20 the KJV reads, "When ye come together therefore into one place." The ASV (1901) reads, "When therefore ye assemble yourselves together." Verse 22 reads: "or despise ye the church of God." Rendered literally the verse would read, "or despise ye the assembly of God." By not properly observing the Lord's supper, which supper is to be observed within the assembly of the saints on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7), they had despised "the assembly" in which the supper of the Lord was observed. Under discussion in First Corinthians 1:18ff, is one single, solitary assembly. The Corinthian brethren were accustomed to coming together in one place, (one assembly) for the purpose of observing the Lord's supper.

Epi to auto is the phrase rendered "When ye come together therefore into one place" in First Corinthians 11:20. It literally means "Upon the same." On page 60, the *Analytical Greek Lexicon* states that *epi to auto* means "in one and the same place." Let us note the translation of *epi to auto* in other passages. (1) Matthew 22:34—the Pharisees "were gathered together." (2) Acts 1:15—"the number of the names together" ("there was a multitude of persons

gathered together”—ASV, 1901). (3) Acts 2:1—“they were all with one accord [“together”—ASV, 1901] in one place.” (4) Acts 2:44—“And all that believed were together.” (5) Acts 4:26—The “rulers were gathered together.” (6) First Corinthians 14:23—“If therefore the whole church be come together [“assembled together”—ASV, 1901].”

Regarding First Corinthians 14:23, Thayer writes: “for as appears from 1 Cor. 14:23, the whole Corinthian church was accustomed to assemble in one and the same place.” Furthermore, under the heading of *ekklesia* he states: “4, in the Christian sense, a. an assembly of Christians gathered for worship; *en ekklesia*, in the religious meeting.” Thayer cites First Corinthians 14:19,35 and makes reference to *sunnerhesthai in ekklesie*, meaning literally “to come together in assembly.” He then cites First Corinthians 11:18. Surely, these are the same kind of assemblies as those under consideration in Hebrews 10:24-25, i.e., **assemblies of exhortation**.

Combining the totality of the information available regarding our subject, we may conclude that the assembly in which the exhortation transpires is an assembly of (1) a church in any geographic location such as the one in Corinth; (2) assemblies in which all members of said church are commanded to be in attendance; including, but not limited to, the first day of the week assembly wherein the Lord’s supper is observed and a collection taken from those in attendance, along with the observance of the other avenues of worship; and, (3) any assembly of the church as herein defined and described whose elders have called it together for the express purpose of exhortation (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7,17).

Of what is the “exhortation within the assembly composed?” Praying, preaching (Bible reading, teaching, etc.), singing, and, as previously stated on the first day of each week the observance of the Lord’s supper as well as a contribution for the work of the church. Of course, there can be other assemblies of exhortation on the first day of the week wherein the Lord’s supper is not observed. Furthermore, the elders could convene assemblies of exhortation on any day of the week. Hence, assemblies of exhortation are designed for

every member's spiritual well being, and all members are commanded to attend. To forsake an assembly of exhortation is to sin.

Surely it is easily seen in the light of the foregoing material that the "special needs" of any group of brethren are not grounds for violating anything the Bible authorizes—the assemblies of exhortation included (Heb. 10:25). If the children in such assemblies, as well as the adults who supervise them, are not obligated to be in the assemblies described in Hebrews 10:25, who is?

If "parallel worship" is authorized by the New Testament, why could not the following categories of persons have their own "parallel worship" assemblies to meet their specified needs: retired persons, unmarried singles, babes in Christ, widows, widowers, newly-married couples, college age, junior high, etc. If children who are "bussed in" may have their own assemblies to meet their needs then all the rest of these persons may have their own assemblies to meet their "felt needs." Of course, the thinking person can readily see that such would destroy the teaching of Hebrews 10:25, i.e., "the assembling of ourselves together" whereby all are edified.

Roy C. Deaver summed up the matter by stating:

The argument is simply this: (a) The concept that there can be parallel worship for YOUTH *implies* that there can be parallel worship for *all* other groups which have special needs. (b) But, if there can be parallel worship for *all* other groups which have special needs, then there is NO NEED for an assembly (assemblies of exhortation, as demanded by Heb. 10:25). (c) But, assemblies of exhortation, as per Heb. 10:25, ARE *necessary* (they are demanded by apostolic authority). (d) Therefore, it is *false* that there can be parallel worship for *all* groups which have special needs. (e) Therefore, it is *false* that there can be parallel worship for youth.³

WHAT ABOUT AN ATTENDED NURSERY?

To set up an assembly that runs parallel to any assembly of exhortation is to act without New Testament authority (Col. 3:17). From time to time all infants and children must be taken out of the assemblies of exhortation to take care of needs peculiar to them. Of course, for personal reasons every person, regardless of age, has had to leave the assemblies of the saints. However, common sense dictates that when the need that took one out of the assembly has been alleviated, one should return to the assembly. If not, why not??

Please be patient with me while I engage in the ridiculous in order to make my point on this matter clearer. Rest rooms are provided for obvious reasons. Should adults be allowed to congregate in rest rooms simply because necessity (“felt needs”) demanded they leave the assembly to use them? Surely, if we can understand that when a rest room has fulfilled its purpose that we are then to return to the assembly, we should be able to understand the same regarding leaving the assembly to take care of infants and children.

Children need to learn how they should behave themselves in the assemblies. But, they never will, if they are not taught and disciplined to do so. In fact, for a number of years little discipline of any kind has been employed to train infants and children how to properly conduct themselves in such assemblies (for that matter just about anywhere) as are herein discussed. Over and over again we have watched parents train their children to leave the assemblies rather than to remain within them. The scenario goes something like the following one. The child frets, fusses, and squirms. The parent threatens (sometimes this does not happen) the child with dire consequences if it does not cease its disruptive conduct. The child continues. After several exchanges of like nature between parent and child, the parent acquiesces to the child’s demands and takes it out of the assembly to the nursery where it can just about do what it wants to. When such has been repeated a few times the parents have done nothing less than train the child to fret, fuss and squirm (or worse) until it gets its way. If the first time the child tried to “show out,” the parents would make its visit outside the assembly a most unpleasant one, it would take but few trips outside before the child would enjoy the surroundings of the assembly better than the “great outdoors.” But, alas, the situation that prevails today is more like adolescents attempting to bring up infants, rather than mature adults bringing “them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). If the elders would make it clear to the young parents that the “cry room” is to be used with the same discretion as the rest rooms are, the assemblies of exhortation would be respected, reverence would exist therein, and children would learn how to properly conduct themselves within them.

ELDERS' AUTHORITY AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF EXHORTATION

With the elders' permission, may those who have worshiped on the first day of the week in an earlier assembly of exhortation miss a later assembly of like nature in order to gather in a parallel assembly designed to meet the "felt needs" of certain brethren? The answer is **NO**. Let us note the reasons for the negative answer.

1) Elders have authority only as it has to do with expediting (getting done the quickest and best way possible) what the Lord has already authorized in the New Testament by direct statements, implication, or examples (Acts 20:28). There can be no expeditious action where there is no New Testament authorization.

2) Hebrews 10:25 teaches that Christians are not to forsake the assemblies contemplated by the writer. No one can limit the assemblies of Hebrews 10:25 to one assembly on the first day of the week. The assemblies of Hebrews 10:25 may only be understood on the basis of assemblies of the church discussed elsewhere in the Bible. In First Corinthians 11:20 and 14:23, the inspired apostle states that the church at Corinth had come together in one place for the purpose of the worshiping of God. By engaging in the acts of worship in said assemblies, the Christians were thereby exhorted to greater faithfulness (Heb. 10:24-25).

3) Again, let it be emphasized that we do not have a direct statement, implication or example of said assemblies being divided. Hence, elders who desire to be pleasing to God may not arbitrarily set up unauthorized assemblies that run parallel with the assemblies of exhortation. When elders set up assemblies of exhortation, they must abide by the New Testament pattern (instruction) for such assemblies.

4) It is the responsibility of elders to do all that is within their power to get those under their oversight into all the assemblies of exhortation; **not make ways for them to violate Hebrews 10:25**. Hence, elders are at liberty to set up assemblies of exhortation only according to the teaching of the New Testament.

5) By implication this doctrine is teaching that once all Christians have met to worship in at least one assembly of exhortation elders

may set up all sorts of parallel assemblies of exhortation for doctors, lawyers, mothers with infants, senior citizens, people of the same race, etc. Of course, if that is the case, each family might as well worship in their own home. After all, families know more about their intimate and private needs than anybody else. Thus, this false doctrine by implication has authorized only one assembly of exhortation from which one may not absent himself/herself. According to this erroneous doctrine Hebrews 10:25 would apply only to that one authorized assembly of exhortation (worship). Hence, the shepherds could call the sheep together as much as they wanted, but if the sheep have assembled at least once on the Lord's day, they do not have to obey the call of the shepherds to assemble for exhortation at any other time.

CONCLUSION

No member of the church is to forsake the assemblies of exhortation. Whether they are explicitly mandated by the Scriptures or convened by the elders (Heb. 13:7,17); all are expected to be present together. There must be biblical authority for one to miss the aforementioned assemblies (Col. 3:17; Rom. 14:23).

Listed below are five reasons for opposing parallel assemblies as defined and studied in this chapter. They are...

- 1) not authorized (Mat. 4:4; Col. 3:17);
- 2) a violation of Hebrews 10:24-25;
- 3) a detraction from the exhortation God desires among brethren;
- 4) opening the floodgates for further division of indivisible assemblies,
- 5) a hindrance to children witnessing true New Testament worship.⁴

ENDNOTES

¹R. C. White, "Reminiscences of the Nashville Bible School," in *Let Us Make Man*, R. N. Gardner, ed. (n.a., 1937), pp. 33-34.

²Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 502.

³Roy C. Deaver, "Difficult Texts From First And Second Corinthians, I Corinthians 11:18ff Are Parallel Worship Services in Conflict with this Passage?," in *Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained*, Wendell Winkler, ed. (Ft. Worth, TX: E. Edwin Manney Co., 1981), p. 278.

⁴Bob Berard, "What the Bible Teaches About the 'Assemblies of Exhortation' (Hebrews 10:25)," in *The Church Enters The Twenty-First Century*, David P. Brown, ed. (Spring, TX: Bible Resource Publications, 1993), pp. 114-117.

HISTORY OF MAN'S DOCTRINES

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HISTORY **Background**

The history of the intrusions of man-made doctrines into churches of Christ is as old as the church itself. The theological term, **Dogma**, designates a particular ecclesiastical doctrine, or the entire structure of the doctrinal system of a church. A dogma is the formal expression of the truth held by a church at large, or a particular church. These lectures proceed under the truth that the church of Christ is patterned after the New Testament church as the one true church. The departure of any group or church from this biblical norm is herein regarded as an apostate church. This statement should be acceptable to any sincere believer in the inspired Word of God.

The history of Christian doctrines must employ the strict historical method which means what really happened and how it came to pass. There is no room for prejudicial biases in such an objective study, e.g., the first man-made doctrine which was formulated after the apostolic era which has endured, is the *Nicene Creed*: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father" (324 A.D.). The immediate task at

hand is to examine the man-made doctrines which troubled and divided the apostolic church (33-96 A.D.)

Apostolic Church (33-96 A.D.)

The Key which will unlock the door and provide a view of the forces which challenged the "apostles' doctrines" is phrased in Galatians 4:4ff: "but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The first factor to take into consideration is that the church was born in a period of Greek-Roman Heathenism of strange gods with strange rites of worship and their wonderful tales and legends. Such beliefs prevailed that even then "Man is a sacred object to man. All have God in themselves." "A happy life consists in this one thing, that reason be perfect in us." And further "trust thyself and be happy." "None of us is without fault, but let man do that which is good." Do these ideas sound familiar and modern? Just listen to a modern electronic evangelist!

The second factor which challenged the first century church is summed up in Judaism. It is the ideas of later Judaism which is of interest to us here. And this is because the forces of Judaism were mounted in all their fury and might to wipe out every trace of the influence of Jesus by way of the cross. But it is the influence of Judaizing Christians outside of Judea which will interest us most.

It is common knowledge to any reader of the New Testament that the combined forces of the pious Pharisees and the Sadducees, hand tools of Rome, were joined with one mind which was to stamp out the Christian religion in its incipient stages.

Judaism thought of man's relation to God as framed in a legal system. God commands and man obeys in order to merit the reward. This connection of faith in and strict obedience to law explains the importance which the Jews attached to the Mosaic law and the "traditions of the elders" (Mat. 23). The Jews believed in the coming of the Messiah and they longed for the establishment of the golden age of the Messianic kingdom. The Messiah was thought of as a mighty king who would crush the enemies of the Jews and restore the Davidic kingdom.

It is of supreme importance to observe the combination formed by Judaism with Greek philosophy in which is foreshadowed much of early Christian dogma which surfaced in the apostolic period. This is especially brought out in the writings of John which mirror, in contrast, many of the developments of earlier Christian dogma.

The contrast between the Jewish ideal of the Messiah and the Christian ideal of the Messiah are as far apart as the spirit and the flesh though cojoined. The prophecy of the Old Testament culminates in the “new covenant” which would replace the “old covenant” (Jer. 31:31ff). Herein is embedded the promise that God shall reign as a king over His people in righteousness and grace. Jesus Christ and His gospel would constitute the realization of these hopes and aspirations. He claimed for Himself absolute authority. His words take the place of equal dignity by the side of the declaration of law (Mat. 4:7), and would fulfill the law and will outlast the heaven and earth. Jesus Christ is pictured as the very essence of light, the life, and the truth.

Thus, in the person of Christ and His gospel is embodied the full Messianic hope. He rules with divine dominion for the salvation of men in the world imparting to them life and righteousness, and gathering them into the kingdom of God. Jeremiah phrased the doctrine that the law is written by the power of the Spirit in the hearts of men, and their sins are to be forgiven. The Messiah is pictured as coming into the world to minister, and His ministry emphasized the surrender of His soul unto death. Jesus designated the giving of His life as a means of delivering from the penalty of death, and as a means for the forgiveness of sins. The fidelity of Jesus even unto death and His obedience to God constitute the ground God forgives the sins of many.

The Christian gospel promises the manifestation of the risen Lord in His glory, and this revelation of Christ in His life gives shape and substance to the whole Christian faith. Christ accomplished the salvation of men by means of His shed blood on a Roman cross, forgiving the evil and bestowing the good on all who are obedient to the gospel. In faith, man bows before his Saviour, and by love brings into practice his new attitude in the kingdom of God. These

doctrines embrace the whole divine revelation of the New Testament in the redemptive powers of Christ to bring about the salvation of man.

The Powers Of The Forces Of Darkness

That ancient foe of man is his ever present adversary, Satan, called by many names in Scripture, ranging from an “angel of light” to a demon of darkness and the keeper of the bottomless pit. The chief instruments for working the will of the Devil, the accuser of man, are evil men who would do despite to the grace of God.

The forces of evil in the apostolic church wore many faces. And as often is the case, many as did Paul, worked great evil with a good conscience. Paul was a Pharisee, who were the harshest critics of Jesus.

The origin of the **Pharisees** is obscure, but were undoubtedly the spiritual descendants of the Hasidim (pious ones) who date from the Maccabean period. They were the scholars and keepers, in the strictest sense, of the Law and the traditions of the fathers. They possessed both virtues and failings. And they were held in the highest honor by the people.

The **Sadducees**, on the other hand, formed the priestly hierarchy, whose descendency dated from the time of King David's appointment of Zaddok to be high priest. The priests were men of highest reputation. However, their influence lay with the wealthy and the powers that be. The high priest was the highest ruling authority under Roman rule. As a matter of fact, the Romans designated the preferred priest to hold the office of high priest who answered to Caesar.

With this history in mind, it is easy to put all the pieces together and to understand why the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Roman governor conspired to put Jesus to death. This was intended to remove Jesus as a Jewish heretic from the Jewish scene, and destroy a rival claimant who was challenging the might of Rome.

Judaism And Paganism

Judaism and paganism were the two primary sources of “man-made” doctrines in the apostolic church, and it is the letters of the New Testament where these diverse elements are revealed. The

conflicts are discovered early in the new church. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the external and vigilant foes in Judea and beyond, which would end in the destruction of Jerusalem. However, a major source of early church problems were caused by Judaizing Christians who would graft elements of the law on the body of Christ.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINES IN THE EARLY CHURCH, AND THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Background

Judaism is first to be considered because the first Christians were Jews who came from all parts of the Roman world to constitute on Pentecost (33 A.D.) the New Testament church of Christ. The conversion of Cornelius became a later sticking point between Paul and Peter over the dissimulation of Peter when they of the circumcision had come to Galatia (Gal. 2:11ff). Even Paul would keep peace with the Jews on occasions by personally respecting ritualistic traditions. However, the apostle drew a clear distinction between the rituals of the law and the Christian faith.

The influence of the law on Jewish Christian is highly focused in the Galatian and Hebrew letters. However, the cases are different. In the Galatian letter, Paul is confronting first generation Jewish Christians who would hold on to elements of the law. On the other hand, the Hebrew Christians were dangerously close to falling back into the religion of the Jews. Scripture does not divulge the specific names of Judaizing Christians and parties who were foes within the churches. However, a variety of beliefs and practices are enumerated in both Galatians and Hebrews. Paul becomes explicit in the Colossian letter wherein he warns against practices whose origins are in paganism: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, and after the traditions of men, the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

That the influences stemming from Judaism are uppermost in Paul's mind is evidenced in these warnings: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon or a sabbath day" (Col 2:16).

Pagan influences were all around, and even more pervasive than Judaism. Paul is faced with the dual Forces of Judaism and paganism

as reflected in the Roman letter with major emphasis placed on the sins of the flesh. However, there was one pagan doctrine of ancient origin which would plague the church well beyond the first century. We are here addressing the problems which the Christian **qnostics** posed for the first century Christians and thereafter.

Problems Created By The Judaizing Christians

The classic case of the problem was focused in the Jerusalem conference detailed in Acts 15. Certain men had gone up from Judea saying that Jewish Christians should be circumcised after the custom of Noses. Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them. This led Paul and Barnabas and others to go to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. Paul and Peter rehearsed their experiences. The issues were defused, and only two elements of the law were enjoined that they should abstain from things offered to idols, from blood and things strangled, and from fornication. The meetings were dismissed in peace, and Paul and Barnabas returned to preach the gospel among the Gentiles.

Problems Created For The Church In A Pagan World

In the chapter one of the Roman letter, Paul described in specific words the pits of immorality in the Roman world. Nothing is left for the imagination. It does not appear in Scripture that pagan practices invaded the churches in a widespread manner. Some churches by name, however, were contaminated by pagan influence and are identified by name.

In the second chapter of Revelation, a group in the church at Ephesus was identified as the hated Nicolaitans. John further identifies the group by associating them with some who held to the teachings of Balaam which caused Christians to participate in the sacrifices of pagan cults and to commit fornication.

A heretical group in the church at Thyatira was under the spell of a Jezebel, a woman who claimed to be a prophetess. She led a group in the church to participate in the most abominable of heathen practices. John indicted the church for tolerating those who practiced the deep things of Satan.

The Man-Made Doctrine Of Gnosticism

We can deal in specific terms with a major cultic influence which surfaced in the first century, and grew in magnitude to cause deep problems in the apostolic church. **Gnosticism** designates the belief held by Christian sects in the first and second century which developed mystical systems based on the *gnosis* (knowledge) of God. These systems were mixtures of pagan and magic beliefs from the Roman and the Greek-Babylonian worlds which also included Jewish forms of gnosticism.

The term **Gnosticism** designates a wide spread philosophy in the early Christian era characterized by the doctrine that salvation is achieved through knowledge. God is contemplated as the absolute essence of perfection totally beyond the comprehension of man. God in this respect represents the absolute dualism that God, who is pure spirit, and the material universe are unalterably opposed as light is from darkness.

The creator of the universe was known as the **Demiurge**, a lesser being in the hierarchy. There are other lesser powers, which descend in position from the Demiurge, who rule over the spheres of the universe. These demonic powers are pictured as ruling over the world of matter, and they are primordial evil resulting from their separation from God They are absolute darkness as contrasted with light.

Paul describes this state of Christian struggle as those who wrestled “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The influences of both Jewish and Greek forms of gnosticism on the apostolic church are apparent; however, it is not particularized. There are three Scriptures supporting this contention. Paul addresses the nature of Christ in writing “who existing in the form of God...emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men...humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death” (Phi. 2:5-8).

The influence of Greek gnosticism on the first century church is exposed and combated by John who wrote that the incarnate “Word

[*logos*] became flesh and dwelt among us.” John is clear in affirming that the Word is God, who was seen, touched, and heard by the apostles (John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:3).

The Old Catholic Church/ Post-Apostolic Age

We choose to designate the church in the post-apostolic period as the “Old Catholic church” as it existed in the Roman empire before the fall of Rome, and before the gradual evolution and emergence of the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Other lectures will document Catholic and aspects of Protestantism dogma. We will address only a few of the man-made doctrines which were developed in the post-apostolic period which are set forth in the writings of the so-called church “Fathers.”

Some of the heresies threatening the first century Christian became fully developed in the post apostolic period. The documentation for this information is provided by the post-apostolic “Fathers” who wrote from 100 A.D. to Augustine and Rome’s fall (476 A.D.). Their writings are significant because their writings date “back-to-back” with apostolic writings.

They addressed such important issues as the Trinity, deity, the deity and eternity of Christ, and salvation. Aberrations of the Christian faith also appeared during the era. Jewish sects sought to retain elements of the Mosaic law. The gnostics sought to tie Christianity to a philosophical system that proclaimed spirit good and matter evil.

Some of the man-made doctrines created in that period were destined to become major religious forces. What were fissures early on developed into chasms and widened into gulfs. The definition of church dogma had been defined by the Roman Catholic Church. Life and death lines were drawn between heresies and acceptable church doctrines. The Roman Catholic Church came apart in 1054 with the pull away of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Protestant revolution started by Martin Luther proliferates in each generation in major dimensions. At the present time, a small coterie of our liberal brethren would start another revolution on a mini-scale among the churches of Christ.

We will briefly outline some of the doctrines which developed into *magnus opus* of theological dogmas whose influences are clear and present in contemporary church dogma.

Marcion, a second century (140 A.D.) practical genius and a heretic, rejected all Scripture except ten of Paul's epistles and parts of Luke. He distinguished between the Old Testament Creator God, regarded by Marcion as evil, and the God of the New Testament, who became Christ incarnate in the New Testament. Marcion would be an editor of *Wineskins* today. One question burned in him, how to pour new wine into old bottles.

His final views were resolved in his first learning of **gnostic** philosophy. This developed into a dualistic doctrine of a double God. This was the teaching of Marcion—the contrast of the law and the gospel, Judaism and Christianity, nature and grace, the just and the good God who dominates in all of His utterances.

Arius (336 A.D.) initiated the major dogma which denied the eternity of Christ and stated that Christ had been created by the Father. He was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. Arius denied the doctrine of the Trinity. God alone is the unoriginated without beginning. The Son had a beginning and was from a non-existent state created by the Father before the beginning of the world.

The formulation of the *Nicene Creed* which was phrased and accepted by the assembled representatives of the whole church, would have put an end to the Arian heresy. This great event marked the fact that the Roman (Catholic) Church had now come into power. Thereafter, the emperor would summon the councils who would debate and formulate church dogma.

The **Council of Chalcedon** (451 A.D.) was called to resolve the unity of God and His Son in one godhead (christology), and to deny that He was a dualistic fusion of two separate natures—one human and the other divine. One view in the great debate was that the *Logos* came upon Jesus, the man, at the time of His baptism, and left His earthly body on the cross. The final summation was that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully human as an inseparable part of the unity of the godhead.

Pelagius (360?-420? A.D.) formulated the view that every soul was created directly by God and therefore innocent. Man, therefore, as a free moral agent, has the ability to initiate salvation by himself. Pelagianism brought to the forefront the greatest of the church "Fathers" and theologians on the eve of Rome's decline. Augustine was the foe of Pelagius.

Augustine's influence was second only to Thomas Aquinas in the ancient and medieval world. Augustine's theological doctrines permeated the whole of Calvinistic dogma which was a counter balance to Lutheran dogma. Augustine's opposition to the Pelagian concept of the free will of man and that he is born uncontaminated by the original sin, was far more than a polemic against Pelagianism.

Augustine is reputed to be the greatest of theologians who stood between Luther and Calvin largely because of his influence on Protestant dogma. He formulated doctrines of the original sin and total depravity of man including infants; predestination and irresistible grace; the concepts of the confessional and purgatory; deliverance from the original sin through baptism including infants. No one theologian lived upon the whole of Augustinian doctrine, but all lived upon the fragments of his spirit.

What some mistake as unadulterated Calvinism has its roots in Augustinian theology. The original sin is defined as the sum total corruption of man's nature; the "double election" that only a fixed number are saved; and the elect do not die until they have been regenerated and sanctified; the irresistible grace of God is total and absolute; the church is the totality of all the regenerated; and the sacraments are external symbols of the real presence of Christ.

Summary Appraisal

We have dealt here with only a minimum sampling of the man-made doctrines of the apostolic and post-apostolic periods. Libraries are filled with learned volumes on the subject. When we compare the naive proclamations of the "change agents" of the liberals in the churches of Christ; were it not for the harm being done to unsuspecting churches the whole matter could be dismissed as ludicrous. But this cannot be done. The proliferations of man's

doctrine have accumulated over the centuries which require volumes just to list and to provide a meager level of definition.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINES IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST TODAY

Introduction

There are antecedents and a recognizable continuity in the ongoing history of the fellowships related to the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. The churches of Christ, the Independent Christian Church, and the Liberal Disciples of Christ are separately and officially recognized as such in the current United States Religious Census.

We will locate and analyze the “man-made doctrines” which caused the separations of the Christian Church/church of Christ, twice in this century (1905 and 1968). And a third division is imminent in churches of Christ. The causes have their antecedents in older causes which will be set forth and documented.

In 1907, David Lipscomb in response to a direct question put to him by S. D. M. North, reported that two distinct fellowships of the Disciples did exist, which could be traced from the 1809 “Declaration and Address” of Thomas Campbell. North, who was the Director of the Bureau of the U.S. Religious Census, had already reached the conclusion that the two fellowships were divided and going their separate ways.

However, these happenings revealed only the tip of the iceberg. After the official recognition that the Christian Church and church of Christ did exist as separate fellowships, the tensions within the Christian Church continued to escalate. The mounting tensions grew into bitterness and alienation between the conservative and liberal elements in the Christian Church which climaxed in the 1968 Restructure.

The liberal Disciples had mounted a ten-year study to come up with the plan to restructure and to identify what is now recognized in the U. S. Religious Census as the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church), which is a fully organized denomination.

Current Status Of The Restoration Churches

As the old century faded away, the 20th century rolled into view. The names Christian Church and church of Christ were interchangeable. However, in less than six years, all of this abruptly changed. The U. S. Religious Census of 1906, as mentioned, listed the two churches as forming two different churches, with no tangible ties linking them. The Disciples of Christ denomination would wait some sixty years for its birth.

Following the 1968 Restructure, the conservative Christian Church was identified soon thereafter as the Independent Christian Church. The Restructured Christian Church (1968) assumed the title—Disciples of Christ (Christian Church). The three fellowships today are as divided as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Lutheran Church. The fifty years of controversy and struggle for the control of the Christian Church remain vivid and divisive in memory.

The churches of Christ had no contact with the Christian Church until the Murch-Witty Unity meetings held in the late 1930s and 1940s, with nothing of substance accomplished. The organ and organized societies, which had divided the churches in the beginning, were still in place and non-negotiable. The churches of Christ have never had any connections with the Disciples of Christ denomination.

However, the attitudes are changing in a growing liberal element in churches of Christ who are demanding changes in the organization, worship, and practices in the conservative churches. That the churches of Christ are troubled and facing a third division in the churches related to the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement is mounting almost daily.

A Century Of Man-Made Doctrines (1890-1990)

Destructive Criticism: A deadly theological virus invaded the Christian Church in the late 19th century, which was identified by John W. McGarvey as “Destructive Criticism.” John W. McGarvey perceived early on that the major threat to the Christian Church/church of Christ lay coiled up in the bosom of the new theology. In

1893, he initiated a department in the *Christian Standard* under the title of “Biblical Criticism” in which he brought liberal theology under sustained attack.

The substance of the new theology was first put in place in the Yale and Harvard Divinity Schools before the 1890s. The Yale Divinity School early on became the training ground for Christian Church preachers.

The roots of the new theology are traced back to the late 19th century to the Graf-Wellhausen Documentary hypothesis of the Mosaic law, and Form and Source criticism of the New Testament. The first heresy denies that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. The second heresy denies that the four gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Old Modernism at the turn of the century ascribed the authorship of the Pentateuch to four unknown writers reputed to have lived after the time of Moses. Form and Source Criticism viewed the gospel as already existing in floating traditions and myths termed the “Q” source before taking the form of the four gospels. The Darwinian hypothesis was worked into the gospel message, and eventually metamorphosed into the Social Gospel.

The new theology attained even higher sophisticated levels in the post World War I era in the forms of a theology called Neo-orthodoxy. This was the time slot dominated by Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, and Paul Tillich. It is one of the strange quirks in church history that the new theology would first find a firm footing in the Christian Church.

The Robert C. Cave story: There was an early warning signal that the new theology would pose dangerous problems for the Christian Church in the years ahead. One hundred years ago, a news story broke in headlines across the nation under the headline—“Clerical Sensation.” The story first appeared December 8, 1890, in the Saint Louis *Republic*.

Cave was then preaching for the Central Church in St. Louis. From the pulpit, he made such statements which denied the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of Christ, and much more. He described the Bible as an evolution, not a revelation from God. His

sermons shocked the church members, and he was forced from the pulpit.

McGarvey's College of the Bible and the *Christian Standard* stood as early bulwarks against "Destructive Criticism" as McGarvey chose to label liberal biblical criticism. Thousands of Disciples came to understand over a twenty-year period that Modernism posed a deadly threat to the Christian Churches and the College of the Bible.

David Lipscomb's name for "Destructive Criticism" was "Rationalism." He wrote no less than fifteen articles on liberal German theology, laying bare the anatomy of Modernism: "Rationalism is a most insidious form of infidelity. It flatters human reason, exalts man's own powers and feeds his pride."

The **Campbell Institute** was the main conduit through which the new theology wormed its way into the Christian Churches. A new source of anxiety to the conservative Disciples came into being with the organization of the Campbell Institute. The idea for the Campbell Institute was first conceived in 1892, by five young Disciples, then Yale divinity students. The Institute was formally organized in 1896, during the National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. The membership was restricted to college graduates. The charter group comprised 14 young men. The "big guns" of the liberal element were made honorary members, namely Herbert L. Willett, Winfred E. Garrison, and E. Scribner Ames.

The Campbell Institute went unnoticed by J. W. McGarvey until a copy of the *Scroll*, the publication of the CI, came into his hands, in 1906. McGarvey launched an immediate harsh and sustained attack on the Institute and the *Scroll*, which McGarvey said had been inspired by the three evil spirits of evolution, higher criticism, and the new theology.

Thereafter, the opposition to the CI grew unabated until its demise in 1978. As a liberalizing force in the Christian Church, the influence of the organization was way out of proportion to its size. In 1917, the evaluation of the Campbell Institute was published that—"During this period it has split churches, wrecked colleges, shattered the faith of young people whose lives were dedicated to the ministry,

deprecated the work of our missionary societies, and kept the entire brotherhood in a state of turmoil.”

The Lexington Earthquake: The Christian Church was shook on its foundation during the spring and summer months of 1917. McGarvey’s beloved College of the Bible was lost to a small group of liberals led by its president, Richard Henry Crossfield. The charge was made, proved, and not denied by the liberal leaders that, “Destructive Criticism” was, in fact, being taught in the College of the Bible.

The liberal Disciples would in a course of sixty years take control of all their colleges with the exception of Milligan College. The same leaven which corrupted the school of the Disciples is already deep at work in schools identified with the churches of Christ.

The **Christian Scholars Conference** bears many striking resemblances to the Campbell Institute. The annual Christian Scholars Conference had its beginning in July 1981, with Thomas Olbricht, as its organizer. The CSC is hosted annually by one of the church of Christ universities. Each institution selects the theme and appoints its director.

By way of analogy, history repeats itself in that the leading spokesmen in the CSC annual meetings have their academic roots in the same liberal theology which drove the Campbell Institute men a century ago. To date, the liberal spokesmen on the CSC document their papers with copious citations from Bultmann, *et al.*, short of acceptance.

We are anxiously awaiting to see how our liberal brethren will address the influence of the latest round of outrageous liberal theology, which especially is set forth in John Dominic Crossan’s *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant*. This makes the “myth” theology of Bultmann pale in comparison with his suggestion that Jesus died the death of a common criminal, and was buried in a shallow grave in the polluted crucifixion grounds, and continues that His body was dug up and eaten by wild dogs. Would it not be interesting for Andre Resner to write a review on Crossan’s book and publish it in *Wineskins*?

The **North American Christian Convention**: Except for a handful of church historians, our brethren know little of the reasons and causes which brought the NACC into existence, and which stymied and greatly hindered the schemes of the liberal Disciples to increase their control over the Christian Church. The “villain on the staircase” turned out to be the organized societies and conventions with new faces and new agendas.

W. Fortune, author of *The Disciples in Kentucky*, wrote that twenty five years after its founding, the American Christian Missionary Society did not have a single missionary in foreign fields. The Foreign Christian Missionary Society, which was founded in 1875, had only partial success. The distrust for the “old” was transferred to the “new.” The problem from the beginning centered in the control of the Christian Church by the officers of the societies and conventions, who were pressed to maintain a steady flow of revenue for the organizations.

Seemingly, there was no direct relationship to the 1917 Lexington “earthquake” and the FCMS. The International Convention of the Disciple was organized in 1917. This was not a cause of concern, at the moment, since it was thought a new organization with broader powers would solve old problems. The International Convention soon proved that it was cut from the same old cloth. The liberals were acutely aware of the fact that parliamentary bodies could exercise control on every level of the church, and the conservatives were also aware of this.

Another move was made by the liberal Disciples to exercise even greater church control. The United Christian Missionary Society was organized in 1919. Then an old charge surfaced. In 1908, the FCMS appointed Guy W. Sarvis to the China mission field, who was an exponent of the new theology and an ardent supporter of “open membership” in foreign missions. The wide spread practice of open membership in foreign fields was the new charge that UCMS endorsed.

The charges were substantiated, and the “fat was in the fire” again. This triggered a chain reaction of opposition among the conservatives in the Christian Church, which mounted between 1922

and 1925. When the International Convention met in 1926, in Memphis, the storm flags were out and whipping in the gale.

The conservatives were finished and done with the machinations of the liberal Disciples. The conservatives met on November 12, 1926, and set up a Committee on Future Action. They issued a call for the first meeting of the North American Christian Convention to meet the following year October 12, 1927, in Indianapolis. And met it did, in large numbers and great enthusiasm. There were no business meetings, no resolutions, and no official and convention machinery, and there was no protesting, bitterness and wrangling.

The one great event on the calendar of the Independent Christian Church is the annual meeting of the NACC, with upwards of ten thousand in attendance. Disciples of Christ are generally agreed that the “liberals” and the “Conservatives” came to a “parting of the ways” during the 1925 Memphis convention. However, it was not until the Restructure of 1968, that the division became official.

The conservative Christian Churches began closing ranks and shutting out the liberal Disciples because they were fully confident they were on the right track. The Disciples did not back up one inch. Legal battles ensued to determine control of church property and finances. Nine court cases were filed and fought out in the courts in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Northern courts did not always rule in favor of the organ and society factions as had been the case in the Newbern, Tennessee court battle.

In 1946, the *Christian Standard* mounted a campaign under the banner bearing the words—STAND UP AND BE COUNTED in open opposition to the liberals. And stand up the conservative Christians did by the thousands and the churches by the hundreds. Church historians are generally agreed that June 7, 1947, marks the decisive date for the separation of the Christian Churches.

Pardon the “baby boomer” rhetoric, the liberal Disciples knew that the “fat lady had sung.” In an action of the International Convention in 1960, they set up committees to study and to come up with the plan to re-structure the Disciples of Christ denomination.

Before the plans for the Restructure were completed, they were caught up in a “Napoleonic-like” retreat. James DeForest Murch

mounted a counter attack. Two open letters were circulated and mailed to all Christian Churches. The caption of one read, "Freedom or Restructure," and the other read—"Truth About Restructure."

So great was the suspicion created in the churches who feared the loss of their property that they did more than to stand up and be counted. They pulled out in droves to escape the 1968 Restructure dragnet. The plan for Restructure was brought to fruition in 1968, at the meeting of the International Convention meeting in Kansas City. Thereafter, the U. S. Religious Census, as in the *Yearbook of the American Churches*, would list the three Restoration churches separately.

Man-Made Doctrines And Change Agents In Churches Of Christ Today

Elders and leaders in churches of Christ should do more than regard this prolonged account as the story of forty years of controversies and divisions in the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ. The churches of Christ learned their lessons well over a period stretching from 1906 to 1968. The churches of Christ escaped the influences of modern theology and the "man-made" doctrines which had unstrung the Christian Church, by avoiding all contacts with the Digressives.

However, a new generation has arisen, who know not past history. They have drunk deeply at the fountains of liberal theology, and they now are advocating innovations and practices in the churches of Christ that make the past practices of the Digressives seem tame in comparison. Our liberal brethren are found in well-marked camps across the country, and we shall address them in areas of high profiled vulnerability.

The Digressives carried on a campaign lasting thirty years (1890-1923), to invade the churches in the Southern region. We will use the dates 1960-1990, to mark off another thirty years to track the strategies and the agendas of the liberal agents in churches of Christ, who are advising on means and methods to infiltrate and to seize church property and fellowship, and who use stealth tactics to accomplish their ends. (Lynn Anderson fancies himself to be a wise guru in his role of writing books and articles on tactics and

stratagems to capture churches from honest and naive brethren, regardless of moral and ethical principles.)

Mission magazine, which was started in 1967, was planned by its editors and writers to modernize the churches of Christ. They, for the most part, had earned liberal arts degrees in psychology, sociology, Philosophy, etc. Some had graduate degrees from schools of religion. They were presumptuous to think they had all the answers. They failed in most part because their ideas were fed from such sources as sociology and liberal theology, and not the Bible.

Informed brethren were quick to perceive that their programs were aimed to discredit faithful brethren. These early liberals were looking at Scripture through the lenses of their liberal ideas and agendas. And they could not agree, even among themselves. The *Image* journal can be thought of as the natural child of *Mission*. The writers are far more sophisticated. A number have graduate degrees in religion of one kind and another.

They are well aware of the location of the “theological mine-fields,” and they use guarded rhetoric for precautionary reasons. However, as time has gone on, the case is easily made that the editors and writers, for the most part, endorse many of the positions in modern theology. The *Wineskins* magazine first appeared in May of 1992, and, that its first publication came out prior to the 1992 Jubilee is most interesting, and leaves little for the imagination, but that the new magazine was planned to be a companion to the Nashville Jubilee. One item of its editorial policy is, that the church of Christ was born of the Restoration Movement as one of three sects which has attained a denominational status. It is alleged that the church of Christ is not patterned after, and is not like, the apostolic church.

The *Wineskins* editors endorse the doctrine that the forgiveness of sins precedes salvation. The Foster article—“The New Birth and Christian Unity”—was printed because it was supposed that David Lipscomb taught the doctrine. That the editors endorse the full Baptist doctrine of grace-faith-salvation can be amply documented throughout printed articles in *Wineskins*.

The principle of open membership and open fellowship is taught in print and in practice by the editors of the magazine. Undoubtedly,

the most outrageous article printed in the magazine is “Christmas at Matthew’s House,” which blasphemes the virgin birth. The editorial policies coming out of this Pandora’s box continues to mount.

Nashville Jubilee, Inc., has become the most controversial phenomenon on the church of Christ scene today. In spite of the fact that Jubilee is dividing and leaving troubled churches in its wake, the churches promoting Jubilee, knowing this, don’t seem to care. This writer thinks that he sees the attempt by its patrons to put the Christian Jubilee in a comparable role with the influence of the American Christian Convention and its objectives. Whereas, the conservative Christian Church leaders sought to blunt the edge of the aggressive liberal Disciples, our devious brethren seem to have in mind to promote and impose their liberal agendas on to unsuspecting churches all over the country.

Rubel Shelly denigrated the conservative churches of Christ in an essay published in the Tennessean, July 22, 1991, titled “God Never Alters—But the Church Must Change.” Shelly sees the churches of Christ withering and dying on the vine, and he has prescriptions to halt the decline. His qualifications and documentation for this are unknown. The churches in this area judge Christian Jubilee by its bitter fruits, which is dividing and wrecking churches across the country. Jubilee has suffered major reverses in recent months, and its popularity is in the ebb stage.

Miscellany: The champions of the “man-made” doctrines of our liberal brethren are articulated in such places as the Tulsa workshop, annual college lectureships, Bible departments in our schools, and in pulpits of liberal churches. The liberal ideas are promoted in such contexts as “unity in diversity.” Our universities have provided fertile soil beds for the planting the seeds of liberal theology in the minds of their students. And the list goes on and on.

Full Turn Of The Circle

The strangest of the maneuverings of our liberal brethren is that they are now seeking amalgamation, not unity, with the Independent Christian Church and the liberal Disciples of Christ. This all started in the Joplin “Summit” unity meetings which began in 1981. The meetings are continued on an annual basis now, called the Restora-

tion Forum. A sleek new magazine titled the *One Body* is being published as an adjunct of the Restoration Forum. Pepperdine University and ACU hosted the last two meetings.

Calvin Warpula poses as the self-appointed leader in churches of Christ to promote unity between the Christian Churches and churches of Christ. He takes himself seriously, but we do not. Warpula has expressed the disposition to compromise, e.g., the acceptance of instrumental music in worship, and the endorsement of open membership.

The story takes a different turn in the case of Rubel Shelly who has taken unusual and dramatic steps to show his approval of the practices which attend the principle of bringing all churches together, regardless of doctrine and sectarian differences.

This is first documented with the fact that on April 10, 1994, Dr. Shelly spoke from the pulpit of the liberal Disciples's Woodmont Christian Church in Nashville, in a Post Easter Celebration union service with two Methodist Churches, two Presbyterian Churches, and one Baptist Church.

The next foray of brother Shelly carried him into Johnson City, Tennessee, where he spoke to the 165th annual meeting of the Christian Churches and churches of Christ, which is believed to be the oldest continuing gathering of leaders from the 19th century born of the Restoration Movement on the American frontier. Dr. Shelly told the assembly that there were more important things for churches of Christ to do than for them to fight over music.

Twenty-three churches of Christ in the East Tennessee area issued an open letter disavowing any endorsement of the 165th annual meeting of the Christian Church and church of Christ. (It needs be kept in mind that the Digressives in East Tennessee use the two church names to mean the Independent Christian Churches.) In such meetings, Shelly always manages to tell funny stories, with the conservative churches taking the butt of the joke. He seems to enjoy the laughter and the applause.

However, it was not until he spoke on November 11, 1994, during the course of the 12th annual Restoration Forum meeting on the ACU campus that Shelly opened himself up for scrutiny. It is nigh

unto impossible to get the meaning of Dr. Shelly in a first reading. His explanations are, namely, that you misunderstood me, or that you must read the next paragraph, or have you read this and that, or did you hear my previous speech on the subject.

Shelly's ACU address is titled "A Call to Bible Action." Of course, Dr. Shelly always slides into this stance when he knows there are innocent and naive brethren who will hang on to every word he says. He is not addressing his peers who see through his religious charades. There are no surprises in the speech for those who have listened to Shelly over the past fifteen years. One must be practiced in the art of reading between the lines to understand his tactics.

What brother Shelly does, among other things, is to doctor his papers with footnotes using citations from obscure writers which appear to bear the marks of scholarship, but which actually prove nothing. Dr. Shelly puts down the average Christian inferring that he does not know Restoration history, but that he does. (This writer does command an understanding in areas of Restoration history, if published books and articles mean anything, and especially as it pertains to David Lipscomb, the *Gospel Advocate*, and adjacent areas.) Dr. Shelly is not regarded as a Restoration historian, and should not pretend that he is.

On the other hand, Douglas A. Foster and Robert Hooper are especially advantaged to understand Restoration history in this region. However, the two authors only partially succeed because they are trying to make Restoration history conform to their theories and opinions.

Brother Shelly, says some things in his ACU Restoration Forum address that only he can interpret what he means by such analogies as "drinking wine versus teetotaling." Is he here drawing an analogy that instrumental music versus a cappella music is a matter personal choice such as drinking a little wine, and listening to organ music during worship? We never quite know precisely what brother Shelly means to say because he is prone to leave rhetorical "dangling participles."

Look at another example where he says that the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ has more in common with the First Christian

Church of Nashville than with the Jackson Park Church of Christ. It is common knowledge that the Trinity Lane and Jackson Park Churches of Christ have marked the Jubilee patron churches for causing division in area churches.

This is a partial summation of Rubel Shelly's track record in Nashville. He divides churches over Jubilee, and puts brethren at odds with brethren. Two churches have disappeared in his wake—the Green Hills Church of Christ and the Ashwood Church of Christ. The Woodmont Hills Church of Christ is now without a home, and uses the facilities of the First “Digressive” Church in Nashville for its worship and all other church activities. Dr. Shelly is a marvelous and versatile player, who plays on both teams at the same time, fields all balls, and touches all bases, and keeps a winning score card with the victory shared by both sides.

Summary Appraisal

The agendas of the liberal leaders in churches of Christ are now making their intentions sufficiently clear. This writer was present for the Post Easter Celebration in the Woodmont Christian Church who witnessed the organ, piano, a brass ensemble and mixed choirs in the worship service, and much more. It was a typical joint union service. Dr. Shelly spoke to a “wall-to-wall” audience. He ridiculed the conservative churches of Christ for their exclusive worship to the great amusement of his audience who laughed and applauded. And this was in the sight of the college that David Lipscomb built. The meeting was attended by DLU faculty and staff. The present administration of David Lipscomb University aggressively supports Dr. Shelly and his activities.

What are some of the “new things” now being practiced or suggested for worship in churches of Christ today? We will look at a sampling of proposals, which are already being practiced: churches can be led by a plurality of women elders and served by women deacons. Women may don the clergyman's robe and preach from pulpits in the public assemblies. Women now lead singing and pray in the public worship, and much, much more. Already churches of Christ are practicing open fellowship, and a scriptural baptism is not made a condition for membership. To put all of this into a broader

context, the practices of the Holiness Churches, or other denominational practices are now common in some churches of Christ. Brethren, are there any man-made doctrines and religious boundaries which are off limits to the liberals? The answer is no! The parameters and paradigms of the “new hermeneutic” leave open the gates for whatever fad may please a local church at a given time.

Joshua gave the children of Israel a clear choice to make. Churches of Christ have a clear choice, to go or not to go with God. The choice today still remains to go with God, or to go with sectarian churches which abound everywhere. Dr. Shelly's conservative brethren know what he knows, and there are those far ahead of him in knowledge of Scripture, Restoration history, and the cultural, social, and religious traditions of Western civilization. We choose this day to follow God, and not the “change agents” and these “Church of Christ” gurus.

CALVINISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Daniel Denham



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The doctrinal system known as Calvinism forms the foundation for much of the teachings of Protestant denominationalism. This system is named after the French theologian and reformer John Calvin, who was born July 10, 1509, at Noyon in Picardy. He was but eight years old when Martin Luther posted his famous ninety-five Theses in protest of a number of Roman Catholic abuses. The work of Calvin centered in Geneva, Switzerland. His belief system is embodied in his work on *The Institutes of The Christian Religion*, which was edited in several forms during his lifetime, in numerous commentaries, pamphlets, and treatises on various subjects. Calvin was a brilliant man, and well educated in several disciplines, which included theology, law, scholastic logic, and linguistics. He was skilled in Latin, Hebrew, and both Classical and Koine Greek. He possessed what one writer calls "a severe turn of mind," for which he was nicknamed "The Accusative Case" (Fisher, *History of The Reformation*, p. 193). Calvin, by virtue of his early advantages, was more polished and accomplished as a theologian than Luther, though the latter possessed a broader appeal among the masses, especially in Central Europe. While Luther laid much of the groundwork for the

Protestant movement, John Calvin served to codify certain ideas arising from that movement and to make them more palatable to the academia in Protestant lands. Calvin himself actually did not invent the tenets of Calvinism. He, like most of the Protestant reformers, drew heavily upon the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A. D.), a former Manichaeian, whose sensual excesses derived from the foregoing heresy, influenced his views of man and, subsequently, of God, by virtue of God's dealings with man as viewed by Augustine. Augustine's chief contribution to Calvinism was the doctrine of Original Sin, that man is born a sinner bearing the guilt of Adam's original transgression, and that man therefore is totally unable to do anything toward his own salvation. Man, according to him, possessed at birth a fallen nature that rendered him absolutely incapable of good; man was inherently and totally depraved. This warped anthropology of Augustine affected his view of God and led to a theory of Predestination, which precluded the presence of free moral agency in human beings prior to regeneration. Free will, including the exercise of faith, was viewed as a **result** of regeneration and not as a necessary antecedent to it. Calvin, schooled in his formative years at the College de la Marche and the College Montaigu, in Latin, was enamored with Augustine's writings and their theology, which exerted the most profound influence upon the reformer. He also fell under the influence of a German professor named Melchior Wolmar, whose Protestant ideas were introduced to Calvin and often adopted.

As noted earlier, Calvin possessed a severe bent of mind, even at an early age. The most profound thought, that attended his mind from youth until his death on May 27, 1564, was the awesomeness and exaltation of God. Nothing could be entertained that would seem to clash with the Sovereignty of God. God's universal control seemed to him to be best accommodated by the necessitarian theories of Augustine relative to Predestination, which to Calvin was the correlate of human dependence and the counterpart to Divine grace! Under the purest form of Calvinism, even the original sin of Adam and the consequential Fall of Man, were involved in God's sovereign decree before the world was created. This supra-lapsarian view of

the origin of sin itself has been rejected or modified by later Calvinists, who have found it exceedingly difficult to uphold the holiness of God while espousing a doctrine that makes Him the author of sin! Calvin's assumption that Divine Sovereignty precluded human free will is the fundamental premise of his system. It will be observed that, whereas Augustine developed his theology from his errant anthropology, Calvin arrived at the latter by way of his theological views. When one assumes a false view of either principle (whether it is concerning God or man), he will inevitably arrive at false conclusions concerning the other. This result will then in turn affect every other major doctrine pertaining to either, especially christology ("the study of Christ"), pneumatology ("the study of the Holy Spirit"), soteriology ("the study of salvation"), and ecclesiology ("the study of the church"). Even eschatology ("the study of last things, or final things," e.g., the Second Coming of Christ, the doctrines of Heaven and Hell) will be affected adversely. Any doctrine that implies a false doctrine must necessarily itself be false!

CALVINISM'S BASIC TENETS

Calvinism has been popularized under the acrostic "T-U-L-I-P." Let us look at each point carefully.

I. T—Total Depravity. Calvin taught, like Augustine, that man by virtue of the Fall in Genesis 3 has a depraved and sinful nature from the point of conception. Calvinism holds that the entire race has inherited the guilt of Adam's sin, and this guilt is passed on to succeeding generations at birth. It implies that sin is an inherited, as well as committed, danger for the human soul. All are "born sinners"—"hereditarily, totally depraved." Inherent in this doctrine is the idea of the total inability to do good toward their own salvation. Some Calvinists say that unregenerated men can do nothing that is good at all! Everything they do is said to be evil! Relative to salvation, man is totally passive. Salvation is solely, wholly, and totally of God, according to Calvinism.

II. U—Unconditional Election. This tenet holds that God decreed from Eternity (before the Creation) all things whatsoever to come to pass, both evil and good. Hence the fatalistic phrase "what will be will be." It says that God's decree has predetermined or

predestinated some men and angels to eternal life, without condition or cause, and all others to eternal damnation or “reprobation.” This is all done as a sovereign act of God. Some Calvinists hold that such is purely arbitrary as well. The number of them who are elected to be saved is set and secure and will never change. Those who are subject to “reprobation,” also called “preterition,” cannot do anything at all about their plight. They cannot be saved, even should they desire to be! Strict Calvinism then holds that those thus elected will be saved regardless and those who are of the non-elect cannot help but to sin and be lost! All of this, supposedly, is by the good pleasure of God. The decree of God therefore is said to be UNCONDITIONAL, INDIVIDUAL, and UNCHANGEABLE. The elect will be saved despite what they may do or want to do, and the non-elect will be lost despite what they do or want to do! Some Calvinists contend that if one is of the elect, then he will behave accordingly, but it is amazing how many of the “elect,” as the Calvinists invariably classify themselves, behave just like the “non-elect!”

III. L—Limited Atonement. In keeping with the preceding tenet, this avers that the blood atonement of Jesus Christ was limited only to them who are unconditionally elected. The atonement in scope is not universal, but limited, according to Calvinism. It implies consequently that Christ did not die for everyone, as the Scriptures teach! The atonement is viewed as being effectually only for the elect, as proscribed by Unconditional Election.

IV. I—Irresistible Grace. This doctrine maintains that the elect cannot resist the decree of salvation and the subsequent “call” of God for their salvation. They will receive a direct and immediate infusion of saving grace into their soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit before and without the agency of the Word of God! Calvinism involves the idea of a direct, immediate, and miraculous influence of the Spirit on the heart of the alien sinner. Conversion itself is miraculous, with the naked Spirit of God, as it were, operating on the naked heart of man! The Holy Ghost through the baptism of the Holy Spirit then takes control in justification and sanctification. The operation of the Spirit continues to work in the life of the elect, directly after initial salvation, by sanctifying and preserving him

throughout life, and this despite what he does or wants to do! Jacob Arminius, who has been described as a “reluctant critic” of Calvin, paid some “lip service” to free moral agency in man, which is—as we have noted—totally denied by Calvinism prior to regeneration. Arminius taught that the Holy Spirit opens the heart of the alien sinner, enlightens his understanding (which was previously darkened by his inherited and total depravity), and enables him to receive and believe the Word of God. At the very point of belief alone, he is regenerated by the Spirit. Arminius held to a very limited view of “free will.” He also affirmed that the Scriptures required “illuminating,” so they could be understood and believed. His view of salvation is summarized under the dictum “salvation by faith only,” whereas Calvinism affirms “salvation by grace only.” Both claim to be the true reformed doctrine as opposed to Roman Catholic dogma on salvation.

V. P—Perseverance of the Saints. This tenet holds that because the number of the elect is set and secure and will not change, then one who has been elected can NEVER be lost. It is reasoned by Calvinists that the elect can do nothing to be saved and therefore can do nothing to be lost. Their salvation is unconditional and so is their preservation unto God. The same Spirit who miraculously and irresistibly regenerated them is the same Spirit who miraculously and irresistibly keeps them! They will persevere regardless. They cannot so sin as to be eternally lost. Some Calvinists go as far as to affirm that the elect once saved cannot even commit one act of sin, despite 1 John 1:7-10! Others say that the body may sin, but the spirit of the elect is still sinless and pure, despite his attitude to the sin thus committed!

This last tenet, the Perseverance of the Saints, is also known as the doctrine of “Once Saved, Always Saved,” “the Eternal Security of the Believer,” “the Impossibility of Apostasy,” and “the Preservation of the Saints.” Many Calvinists (and Arminians) maintain that the child of God can commit sin, but that God will not “let him die in that condition.” God, they say, will ultimately win him back, so that he will never be lost in Hell. This error implies that the secret of immortality in this world is simply to practice a particular sin and

stay in it! God, for instance, will not let a child of God die as a drunk. So, if you are of the elect, get drunk, stay drunk, you can live forever! You can use any sin to illustrate this absurdity and the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of this heresy. Also, this admission by Calvinists (and Arminians) undermines the notion of Irresistible Grace by implying that a child of God can sin and resist the influence and operation of the Spirit in his own life for some time, if not forever.

A REFUTATION OF CALVINISM

I. Total Depravity. This doctrine is false for several cogent reasons. (1) Man does not inherit sin or the guilt thereof. The Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Eze. 18:20). Sin itself is the transgression of God's Law (1 John 3:4). It, therefore, is something which is committed. Romans 4:15 says that "where no law is, there is no transgression." If there is no transgression, then it follows there is no sin! What sin is committed by the baby at conception or birth? (2) If one could inherit sin, then why could not one also inherit at conception or birth the righteousness of believing and godly parents? If depravity is inherited at conception, then why could not one inherit holiness? Are we to start teaching now the doctrine of "Hereditary Total Piety" or "Hereditary Total Godliness?" (3) If one could inherit the guilt of Adam's one act of transgression, then why could he not also inherit the guilt of the individual transgressions of ALL his forbearers? Why are we not all responsible for the sin of drunkenness committed by Noah in Genesis 9:20-21? or any other progenitor? (4) As God is the giver of all life and the One who fashions our spirit in our body—as He is indeed "the Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9), would it not follow, from this doctrine of total depravity that God gives DEPRAVED spirits: thus effectually the author of sin? Zechariah 12:1 teaches that Jehovah God "formeth the spirit of man in him." Does God fashion a depraved and wicked spirit in man at conception? (5) If a child (an infant) is totally depraved from birth (even from conception), then it follows that he cannot become any more depraved. He is already

as depraved as he can be! He is already as mean as he can be! He is as mean as the Devil from the very point of conception, and cannot become any meaner! This is a necessary implication of this doctrine. The word “total” means the “entire, whole, complete, or utter.” The adverb “totally” would imply that the baby is entirely, completely, and utterly depraved. Can you believe it? The adverb shows the degree of the depravity. It is complete depravity. Thus, this doctrine of Hereditary Total Depravity implies that children at conception became, and from birth are, miniature versions of old Beelzebub himself. They cannot get any worse! One Baptist preacher in McMinnville, TN, says that a baby is born with “meanness of heart.” (6) Just think about the preceding objection to the doctrine of Total Depravity with respect to the bearing of the doctrine’s implication on the subjects of Abortion and Capital Punishment. Why could one not “justify” the evil of abortion on the grounds that one is executing depraved, mean, and wicked people in its process? Or, to take the transverse of that, why could not one logically oppose capital punishment for an adult who is a mass murderer on the grounds that morally and spiritually he is no different from the “depraved” infant? If one is opposed to aborting depraved (wicked) babies, then why defend capital punishment? One may quibble that the adult in this case is guilty of his own evil as well. However, the words “total” and “totally” would preclude the quibble. The doctrine holds that he at conception was already as vile as he could ever be; any further acts of evil would not alter that one whit! (7) The Bible uses children, especially infants, as examples of innocence and purity. They are used as examples of the kind of character (particularly the attributes of humility and meekness) that attends genuine conversion (cf., Jonah 4:11; Heb. 5:12-14; Mat. 18:3; 19:14). They are portrayed in Scripture as anything but “Junior John Dillingers” in the eyes of the Saviour. The Lord apparently did not know what the local Baptist preachers claim to know, that these innocent, meek, and humble infants are really *diabalo*i in disguise! (8) Good and evil are not inbred, but rather are learned concepts. Moral conduct is learned behavior not reflexive behavior. We teach children to love, be thankful, be honest, *et al.* One is not born inherently dishonest. In

fact, at birth he is unable to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14). He is unable to discern between his right hand and his left hand (Jonah 4:11), but Calvinists would have us to believe that babies are intrinsically dishonest and wilfully deceitful! (9) If, by Adam's one act of sin all are born sinners, then why does it not follow, as well, that by Christ's one act of obedience in His death at Calvary are not all now born righteous? Remember, Christ is "the Second Adam" or "the last Adam" (cf., 1 Cor. 15: 45-47). He came to offset the effects of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12-21). Is the transgression of Adam more far-reaching in its effects and more powerful in its efficacy than the blood atonement of Jesus Christ, which was designed to remedy these effects and negate its efficacy? If total depravity is an effect of the Fall of Adam, then why would not total piety be the corresponding effect of the atonement? This implies the doctrine of Universalism. It is interesting that many former Calvinists wind up ultimately in Universalism! The basic premises of the two views (Calvinism and Universalism) are very similar, and in many points are the same!

II. Unconditional Election. This doctrine fails on several counts. (1) It makes God a respecter of persons. God is made to be arbitrary in His dealings with men, especially relative to salvation! God, as per this view, said in Eternity, that I will save Bob regardless of what he will ever do or desire to do, because this pleases Me, but Joe I will forever reprobate his soul regardless of what he will do or will desire to do, because this too pleases Me! But the Bible teaches us, in the words of Peter, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34-35). To this agree the words of Paul that God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6), and "there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11). He (Paul), who so often is mis-quoted to try to prove that salvation is "unconditional" or "by grace only," teaches quite clearly the necessity of works of obedience (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Phi. 2:12; *et al.*), and the fact that the Judgment will be "according to works" (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). James by inspiration also teaches the necessity of a working faith in salvation (James 2:18-26), and John (the Apostle, not Calvin) informs by

inspiration, that the dead will be judged “every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:12-13). Such a concept of the Judgment in the Scriptures is at odds with the tenet of Unconditional Election. (2) This dogma makes God implicitly the author of sin. If everything happens because God wills and even decrees it to happen, then evil (sin) is an active product of God. This is blasphemy! Calvinism implies that God desired and purposed the existence and progress of evil for His own good pleasure. Further, not only did God purpose sin’s existence, but decreed it to occur. Man sins, thus, because God made him to sin! The infra-lapsarian attempts by some Calvinists to remove sin actively from the decree of God in Eternity only delays the indictment of God until the beginning of the world in the Creation. (3) Election is not unconditional. It is conditional. Salvation itself is conditioned on faith (Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:6; John 3:16), which itself is a work (John 6:29). It is conditioned on repentance (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30,31; 2 Peter 3:9). It is conditioned on confession of Christ (Mat. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10). It is conditioned on one’s being baptized “for [in order to obtain, *eis*] the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38, cf., Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16; Mat. 28:19). Election is conditioned on one’s being “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3-4,7), which is the Church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), where the saved are (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). When one obeys the Gospel of Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation unto all them who believe” (Rom. 1:16) and the means by which God’s righteousness—the means by which God makes man righteous (Rom. 1:17), he is baptized **INTO** Christ and becomes a child of God (Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 6:3-5; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:37-47), and an heir of the Abrahamic promise (Gal. 3:13-39; 4:28; Rom. 8:14-17; 9: 6-8). As a child of God, he is now a part of a “chosen generation” (1 Peter 2:9). The marginal reading is “elect offspring.” Remember, it is “in Christ” where election, and the benefits thereof, are accessed and experienced. It is also “in Christ” where the forgiveness of sins “according to the riches of His [God’s] grace” (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) and subsequently salvation (2 Tim. 2:10) is found. Hence, Jesus says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). (4) Election is not individual.

The fact is that God elected to save a **class** of people, namely the church, whose members are described according to the **character** exemplified by their conduct and standing (e.g., “saints of God,” “Christians,” “disciples of the Lord,” “the righteous,” “the godly,” “the elect ones,” *et al.*). (5) Election is changeable. It is contingent on the free moral agency of man. God has so designed His plan to redeem man as to account for his freedom and will not circumvent it. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself,” the Lord declares in John 7:17. If any wills to do God’s will, the Lord shows that he can and will know what that will is and implies that he can then do that will! Judas Iscariot was an Israelite (a child of God under the Old Testament economy) and a follower of Christ, a disciple, a believer; yet the Bible says that, Judas “by transgression fell” (Acts 1:25). Jesus Christ was foreknown and foreordained to die for the sins of the world (Acts 2:23), but He still exercised free will (Mat. 26:53; John 10:17-18). Predestination of foreordination does not implicitly nullify or infringe upon free will. God, in His wisdom, is able to account for human free will, which He created! Calvinism impeaches that wisdom. Foreordination is dependent upon God’s foreknowledge. God’s foreknowledge, which word is accommodative language as adapted to man’s condition and limitations, contemplates God’s knowledge. It is a matter of God knowing fully (from our time-oriented perspective) before-hand what men will freely choose to do or not do. Thus, God could declare centuries in advance of a moral action through His prophets with absolute certitude and, yet, not encroach upon the will of the actor(s).

III. Limited Atonement. This is also false for several reasons. (1) It implies that Christ did not really die for everyone, while the Bible affirms that He did. Observe the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ, when he said of Him, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf., John 3:16; 6:51; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2). (2) The doctrine of a Limited Atonement is contrary to the many express statements that show God’s desire that all be saved by turning from sin. Ezekiel 33:11 reads, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” Paul says in First Timothy 2:4, that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The reprobation of the wicked, the Calvinist tells us, is according to the good pleasure of God, and the salvation of a predetermined number without condition was His desire from Eternity! Were Ezekiel, Paul, and Peter mistaken? Is the Lord “just pulling one on us” by offering a glimmer of hope to men in sin, but really has sealed everyone’s destiny unconditionally before the world began? (3) This doctrine makes the Great Commission a farce, and, not only that, it makes it a cruel hoax. Why even bother preaching or teaching the Word of God? The elect will be saved without it. The non-elect can never believe it and live. The invitation of Christ in the Gospel is rendered meaningless (cf., Mat. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17). Every Calvinist who seeks to further his doctrine by persuasive speech or seeks to fashion a formally valid argument to set forth a defence of his views **IMPLICITLY** contradicts and rejects the idea of Limited Atonement, as well as the doctrine of Irresistible Grace! Logically, how could he possibly, “debate [his] cause with [his] neighbor” (Pro. 25:9) or “give an answer to every man that asketh a reason” for his positions as a Calvinist, and not contradict the basic assumption of utter moral inability on behalf of his audience. The reasoned defence of the Gospel, evidenced in the New Testament (Acts 13:43; 17:2-3,17; 18:4,19,24-28; 19:8; cf., Phi. 1:17), is out of keeping with a notion that the auditors of such are utterly unable to accept or reject it or, for that matter, even understand it! Such is the dilemma of Calvinism. Sinners are offered a chance for salvation and redemption by means of words they cannot receive or understand, by propositions that they can neither believe nor reject, and by emotional and intellectual appeals that cannot move them! The preferred hope itself, is illusory, a mere phantasm for the human mind. (4) The Bible says that Christ died for the man who could be destroyed (Rom. 14:15) and the one who could perish (1 Cor. 8:11).

If Jesus died only for those who were going to be saved unconditionally and those who thus could never be destroyed nor perish, as Calvinism teaches, then again we must reject the words of Paul. Which will you believe, Paul or John Calvin?

IV. Irresistible Grace. This dogma of Calvinism is false as well. (1) It invariably contradicts and repudiates the biblical doctrine of the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures in the salvation and sanctification of the soul of man. The Bible affirms, by inspiration, that it is all-sufficient to convict and convert the sinner, to sanctify and equip the righteous (Psa. 19:7-9; Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:16,17; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; James 1:18,21; 2 Peter 1:3). Faith, which is essential to salvation (Heb. 11:6), comes from hearing, studying the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; cf., Acts 18:8). The Word illuminates the mind, and does not illumination (Psa. 119:105,130). It is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) by which the Spirit effects moral change. It is not therefore done miraculously, but by the medium of the all-sufficient Word of God given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2:9-16). (2) As noted in the preceding, the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work through the Word and not separate from it in salvation and sanctification (John 17:17; Psa. 119:9-11; 1 Peter 1:22). Note also the fact that the Word is the seed by which one is begotten unto God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Cor. 4:15; Phm. 10). Other key verses stress the power of the Word of God to cleanse, draw men to Christ, *et al.* Some of these are: John 6:44-45; 15:3; Second Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 8:2; John 8:31-32. The call of God is by means of the clarion call of the Gospel, and not by some better-felt-than-told emotion or feeling! (3) The fact is that the grace of God can be resisted and rejected (Neh. 9:30; Isa. 30:10; Jer. 6:16,17; Mat. 23:37; John 5:39, 40; Acts 7:51; 13:46; Eph. 5:30; Heb. 10:29). Some Calvinists, like W. G. T. Shedd, have taught that there is the lower (common) and upper (higher) grace of God, and that it was the **rejection** of this lower grace that led to the reprobacy of the non-elect. This view is in reality an infra-lapsarian attempt to get around the problem of the origin of sin. However, it presupposes the presence of some measure of free will prior to regeneration on behalf of the elect, who had to accept the "lower"

grace to be predestinated for salvation. Does not this establish a condition? It also presupposes the free will rejection of “lower” grace by the non-elect. If one quibbles that the elect and non-elect reaction to this “lower” grace was predetermined without free will, then the view retreats back to the battered and broken battlements of supralapsarianism. If not, then one must face the dilemma of explaining how the “lower” grace of God can be resisted and rejected, but not the “upper” or saving grace of God!

V. Perseverance of the Saints. This doctrine ought to be rejected. It too is false. (1) The Bible warns more than 2,500 times against the danger of a child of God sinning and being lost. Surely, these warnings were not given to occupy space on the pages of Holy Writ without any purpose and devoid of factualness! The Scriptures clearly affirm the possibility of apostasy (cf., Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 9:27; 10:1-13; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 3:12-4:6; 10:22-31; 12:15,28-29; 2 Peter 2:20-22). (2) In the Parable of the Sower Jesus describes certain soil as they who hear and “receive the Word” with joy (Luke 8:13; cf., Acts 2:41), but they “have no root,” and thus they “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Now, you cannot fall from something without having been on or in it! Furthermore, the fact that these folk were initially saved must be logically admitted by both Calvinists and Arminians: for the presence of faith, given their respective systems, evidences this point! Yet these folk “fall away,” just like those in Galatians 5:4, where Paul says to certain Christians that, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you, are justified by the law; YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE.” (3) The Bible records many examples of those who did “fall away” from God’s grace or “favor.” We read of King Saul, the young prophet of First Kings 13, Judas Iscariot, Demas the forsaker of Paul, Simon the Sorcerer, Ananias and Sapphira, Hymanaeus and Alexander, etc. The Bible shows that the Israelites believed (Psa. 106:12) and were delivered, but later believed not and were destroyed (Psa. 106:24; cf., Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-14). (4) Faithfulness is a requirement for entrance into Heaven (cf., 1 Cor. 15:58; 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Mat. 24:45-51; 25:14-30,31-46). Jesus promises in Revelation 2:10, “be thou faithful unto death, and

I will thee a crown of life.” The construction means “a crown which is eternal life.” You will notice that Jesus attached a condition to receive this promise. One must be faithful! The word stresses the ideas of loyalty and fidelity to the Lord and His Word! Hebrews 12:14 commands, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” The privilege and pleasure of seeing the Lord, in a good sense, are contingent on following peace and holiness! How one lives, even while a child of God, will have some bearing on where he will spend Eternity! Earlier in the Book of Hebrews, the Hebrew writer exhorts, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. 10:35-36). (5) This doctrine implies the absurd position that, if one were of the elect, he could therefore commit any sin whatsoever—no matter how heinous, no matter how destructive, no matter how frequently engaged in, no matter how much pain it may produce, and no matter how long in life, even to the very moment of death—and yet not be lost! Sam Morris, former preacher of the First Baptist Church in Stanford, Texas, maintains,

We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing to do whatsoever with the salvation of his soul. All the prayers that a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, 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 bit safer and all the sins he may commit, from idolatry to murder, will not make his soul in any more danger. The way a man lives has nothing to do whatsoever with the salvation of his soul.

This position is nothing short of ANTI-NOMIANISM, the doctrine or belief that men are not amenable to law. It is “anti-law,” and especially relative to the law of God! This doctrine encourages sin. (6) The coming Judgment will be “according to works” and this includes the child of God's works (cf., Ecc. 12:13-14; Rom. 2:6; 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Rev. 20:12-13). Woe be to the one who practices what Calvinism teaches!

CONCLUSION

We have examined the doctrine of Calvinism in the light of God's Word. Let us stand against its encroachments among our brotherhood. The current Holy Roller movement being advanced from many pulpits and practiced in the pews, the fawning endorsement and use of the modern speech perversions advocating the doctrines of demons, and the "grace only" craze of the Shelly-ites, pose great trials for the church of Christ as we face the dawning of a new millennium. The same weapons that have for generations vanquished such enemies we now face are still at our disposal. The great panoply of Ephesians 6:10-18 has all of the God-given power it ever has. Let us put it on and do battle!

The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). There are those who would surrender the field to the Devil and give back the precious hard-won trophies of conflicts past; they would betray those generations who have gone before to battle and, though not unbloodied, have triumphed and paid the price for us and the Lord that bought them; and these Nabobs, who ridicule the Old Paths and scoff at the Word of God, would ultimately betray the Lord Himself, crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame! Let us not let them pass!

ENDNOTES

Recommended Reading:

George Park Fisher, *History of the Reformation*

Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vols. VII, VIII

George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*

James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*

Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*

G. K. Wallace, *Lectures on Denominational Dogmas*

Joe S. Warlick, *Baptist Blunders and Methodist Dynamite Exploded*

C. R. Nichol, *The Possibility of Apostasy*

C. A. Feenstra, *Calvinism in the Light of God's Word*

H. Henry Neeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*

Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism*

Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*

William G. T. Shedd, *Calvinism—Pure and Mixed*
Tom Roberts, *Neo-Calvinism in the Church of Christ*
Foy E. Wallace Jr., *The Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*
E. R. Harper, *The Holy Spirit Issues in the Twentieth Century*
Franklin Camp, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption*

Also the following debates are especially helpful:

Porter-Bogard Debate
Hardeman-Bogard Debate
Warlick-Bogard Debate
Dehoff-Davis Debate
Campbell-Rice Debate
Cayce-Srygley Discussion

PREMILLENNIALISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

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THE ROOTS OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism is a long term difficult to verbalize and to comprehend. However, its complexity does not diminish its popularity among so-called Christendom. It is estimated that about 75 percent of all Protestant religious people hold to some form of premillennialism! Where did this doctrine originate? Who is the father of this heresy? Is God the originator of premillennialism? Can premillennialism be found in the Bible? Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. made the interesting observation that severs any ties that one might seek to find between premillennialism and the Bible. He said that "even if one did not have a complete concordance to see if the word is used in Sacred Scripture, there would exist very strong reasons to suspect its extra-Biblical derivation. Premillennialism has sixteen letters and that is a mighty big word for a Book whose average length of each word is only five letters. About 95 to 98 per cent of all recorded words of Christ are one and two syllable terms. The Bible majors in the language of simplicity and not in six syllables as this term contains."¹ Premillennialism is not a native of the Bible, but rather a foreigner to inspiration! Therefore, we must go to secular

sources to find its roots. When one places a “tracer” on premillennialism, he is brought to the latter part of the second century A.D.² It then slowly dissipated after the third century A.D. until it regained power in modern times. Some attribute this doctrine's birth to Cerinthus, who lived during the days of the apostle John. John did not believe nor did he ever teach the doctrine of premillennialism. To emphasize that this doctrine was not held by John, Polycarp tells that when John saw Cerinthus in a bath house he fled from the door saying, “Let us flee, lest the bath house fall in, for Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is within.”³ However, there are other historians, such as Eusebius, who lays the blame for the invention of this doctrine at the feet of Papias, who wrote about the year 140 A.D.⁴

In addition, McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia*, 12 Volume Edition, Volume 6, page 264, makes this statement: “This doctrine is generally attributed to a Jewish origin.” In addition, on page 265, it says: “The idea of a resurrection of the saints, and of their participation in a temporal, millennial reign of Christ, was early adopted, especially by Jewish Christians.” Next, consider Mosheim's *History of Christianity*, Volume 2, page 245: “The doctrine of a future reign of Christ on the earth, a thousand years, with the saints, was undoubtedly of Jewish origin; and was brought into the church, along with other Jewish notions, by those Jews who embraced Christianity.” Also, observe in Philip Schaff's 8-volume *History of the Christian Church* the following. In Volume 2, page 614, in reference to “the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment,” *Schaff's History* reports: “It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian Methodius and Lactantius; while Caius, Origen, Dionysius the Great, Eusebius (as afterwards Jerome and Augustin) opposed it.” There you have it! The trail of premillennialism winds itself back to man. The word itself, and certainly its teachings, cannot be found at all in the Word of God! It was founded too late to be included in that marvelous message of the Master! Premillennialism was not composed with the ink of inspired

penmen! Premillennialist's have no footing when trying to find the origin of their doctrine in the firm bedrock truth of the Bible.

RECALLING WHAT PREMILLENNIALISM IS ALL ABOUT

What exactly does premillennialism mean? It is a word containing four distinct ideas: *pre* means *before*, *mille* means *thousand*, *annum* means *year*, and *ism* means *teaching*. The premillennial doctrine can be defined as follows: The Old Testament prophecies point to the establishing of a kingdom when the Messiah should appear. However, they claim the Jews rejected Christ, therefore, the various prophecies regarding the establishment of God's kingdom were delayed or put on hold until Jesus' second coming. The church was established as a substitute or an after-thought by God. Thus, we are now in the church age. When Christ returns to the earth, He will establish the millennial kingdom. There will be the resurrection of the righteous who shall meet Him in the air for the "rapture season." At the same time, on earth, will occur "the great tribulation." At the conclusion of the rapture and tribulation period, the Lord will bring His saints to the earth. He will then establish the kingdom for a thousand-year reign. During this millennial reign, the Jews will be converted, Christ will reign on David's throne, and there will be a thousand years of splendor on earth. At the close of the thousand years the Devil is to be loosed for a little time. The length of time is indefinite. During this time the devil gathers a great army to fight against the Lord. Suddenly, Christ will destroy the devil and his army. Following this will be the resurrection of the wicked, Christ on the throne of His judgment, followed by heaven for the righteous and hell for the wicked. The entire theory rests upon the twisting of Revelation, chapter 20, verses 1-10.

To say that the definition of premillennialism is confusing, complicated, and challenging to the comprehension of the mind of man would be an understatement! By its very definition, we can see that this theory is the working of man and not the teaching of God! God's Word is that which can be understood by man. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:3 "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted

from the **simplicity** that is in Christ.” It is evident that the serpent has beguiled many with the language and philosophy of premillennialism! When the Lord taught during His personal ministry, it was said that “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). The language that came from the mouth of the Lord was understandable then and certainly understandable today. However, premillennialism, with all of its different variations from historical premillennialism to dispensational premillennialism, spouts forth language that is difficult to comprehend. The doctrines of men are filled with lengthy terminology but they are destitute of truth! May every accountable person always manifest the heart that desires to “hear the Lord gladly” and turn from godless, grievous, and great error such as premillennialism!

THE RUDIMENTS OF PREMILLENNIALISM

The rudiments or the teachings of premillennialism are broad in scope. We will attempt in this lecture to simply present some of the more prominent and major errors of the false doctrine. In so doing, we will present an overview of the subject of premillennialism. We will examine it by putting it “on trial.” We will personify this terrible teaching and allow inspired writers of the Bible to question its beliefs. In so doing, we will prosecute premillennialism with the sword of the Spirit and come to the conclusion that it is to be condemned in every shape, form, and fashion! Therefore, imagine that you are in a courtroom, ready to listen to the arguments at hand!

We call premillennialism to the stand. Premillennialism, is it true that you believe that the land promise that God made to Israel under the Old Testament is yet to be fulfilled?

Yes, that is correct. “God is not finished with the Jewish nation, nor with the land which He gave them to possess fully...Moreover, restored Israel shall inherit the land God gave to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession.”⁵ “The Israelites have never possessed more than a tithe of the land promised to them)) as yet.”⁶

Joshua questions premillennialism: Have you not read Joshua 21:43-45? There the Scripture states:

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

Nehemiah joins in the questioning. Have you failed to study Nehemiah 9:7-8? There we are assured that the land promise of Canaan that God made unto Abraham and his seed in Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17; 15:1-7,18; 17:1-18 was fulfilled completely. Nehemiah states:

Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and **hast performed thy words**; for thou art righteous.

The premillennialists argue from their literal interpretation in reference to Palestine being promised to them forever in Genesis 13:15 and 17:8 that for God to be true that Israel must return to the land and possess it eternally.⁷ However, premillennialists would do well to study what the word *everlasting* can mean. The word *everlasting* does not necessarily and unconditionally mean *endless*. A better meaning for the word *everlasting* is *age-ending*. It emphasizes *the entire period* under consideration.⁸ For example, consider that the Scriptures speak of circumcision as an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:13). However, we learn from the New Testament that physical circumcision is not a step that males have to complete to be saved (Acts 15:24; Gal. 5:1-4). Therefore we understand that in that connection, that *everlasting* does not mean eternal! We also note that the land promise was conditional according to Deuteronomy 8:19-20; 28:1-32:47; Joshua 23:14-16 as well as other Scriptures. We can see from the evidence of the Bible that premillennialism completely ignores and contradicts what the Scriptures reveal! Premillennialism is guilty of the death sentence on point one!

Point number two. Premillennialism, is it the case that you assert that the Jews, as a people and a body, will be restored to Palestine as a nation?

I certainly affirm that proposition. “For centuries the Jews have been scattered among many nations. In preparation for the return of Christ and the beginning of the millennium, they are being gathered back to their own land, according to prophecy, in a national restoration.”⁹ “Once they are...returned to their land, they shall never again be rooted up out of it.”¹⁰

In replying to the statements of premillennialism, we note the following: Israel was said to have possessed the land of Canaan under Joshua, the son of Nun. In the calculation of time, this occurred some fourteen to fifteen centuries before the Savior's birth. The Jews continued to inhabit and possess the land of Canaan until the Northern Kingdom was carried away into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and the Southern Kingdom was carried away into Babylonian captivity in 587-586 B.C. The prophets who prophesied about the restoration of Israel to her homeland did so before or during the exile period and before their return beginning with Cyrus the Great. Now listen to inspired writers of the Bible as they reveal the dispersion, exile, and return of Israel under the Old Covenant. Their statements will prove that premillennialism has no regard for truth and right, the Holy Word of God!

Moses states:

When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you (Deu. 4:25-27).

Furthermore,

If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their

uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses (Lev. 26:40-46).

Now Nehemiah informs premillennialism,

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand (Neh.1:8-10).

Premillennialism, the truth of the matter is that Israel's restoration to Palestine occurred in the Old Testament some five centuries before the birth of Jesus. Premillennialist's are way behind in knowledge of Old Testament history! On count number two, premillennialism has been proven guilty of rejecting what the Bible has said!

Point number three. Premillennialism, what do you teach about the kingdom and the church?

I and those who believe my teaching propose that Jesus did intend to establish His kingdom while on this earth. However, the Jews would not allow Him to do so. Therefore, He returned to heaven, had the church set up as a substitute, and when He comes again He will establish His kingdom on earth reigning for a thousand years in Jerusalem on David's throne.

Isaiah asks premillennialism, "have you read Isaiah 53 that presents my prophecy of the rejected Messiah? I prophesied this hundreds of years before the actual event transpired. It was not

astonishing that the Jews would reject Christ. I also prophesied concerning the 'house of the Lord' which is the church in Isaiah 2:1-4. Therefore, the church was not an afterthought or some emergency measure by God because the Jews rejected the Christ."

Paul, that great defender of the Faith, asks premillennialism to read Ephesians 3:10-11. Premillennialism reads "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then Paul said to read Colossians 1:13. Premillennialism begins reading "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Paul then inquires if premillennialism will give an ear to First Corinthians 15:24-26. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

John joins in the refutation of premillennialism by reminding all that he was in the kingdom while exiled on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). "If there was no kingdom, where was I?" asks John.

Peter informs premillennialism that Jesus is now sitting on David's throne)) not in Jerusalem, but in heaven (Acts 2:30-36)! If one has a throne, he certainly has a kingdom! Therefore, to say that the kingdom has not been established is to oppose the very Word of God!

The Hebrew writer speaks boldly to premillennialism and says "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). "Have we received a kingdom or have we not received a kingdom?" inquires the writer of the marvelous book of Hebrews.

Jesus Christ, our Lord would simply say to premillennialism, "Remember what I said unto Peter?" "...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). Do the words of the Lord have any importance to the premillennialists of this world? Christ used the terms “church” and “kingdom” to refer to the same institution! While they refer to different aspects, they are not separate entities. To even further refute the claims of any premillennialist, our Lord said “My kingdom is not of this world...” (John 18:36). Still, our Lord said in Mark 9:1 “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.” If the kingdom has not come, there are some ancient people still living! Is there a premillennialist alive who would affirm that any person alive then is still a resident of this earth? Once more, premillennialism has been crushed by the hammer of truth! Brother Robert R. Taylor has observed in regard to premillennialism’s denial that the kingdom has come that “proponents of the premillennial persuasion make false witnesses out of more than eighty New Testament preachers.”¹¹

Point number four. Premillennialism, do you assert that the righteous dead will be raised when Christ returns, and that the unrighteous dead will be resurrected at the end of His one thousand-year reign?

I most assuredly do.

John, the apostle of love brings Revelation 1:7 to the attention of premillennialism. “Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Premillennialism contends that the righteous dead will initially see the Lord and then the unrighteous dead will not see Him until one thousand years later!

Jesus the Christ answers the premillennialist’s quibble concerning the resurrection in John 5:28-29 when He said “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Observe that Jesus said “for the hour is coming!” The premillennialists teach that some will hear and come forth first, and then the rest will be resurrected one thousand years

later! Premillennialism has too much time in the resurrection truth that is found in the Bible. He has 8,759,999 more hours than the Lord in the resurrection! Those who line up with premillennialism will be raised to eternal damnation!

Point number five. Premillennialism, are you saying that Christ is not on David's throne that was prophesied in the Old Testament, but that He will reign and rule on that throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years when He comes again?

That is correct.

Isaiah responds to the belief of the premillennialist by quoting Isaiah 9:6-7.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Peter remarks to premillennialism by saying "Therefore being a prophet [David, HB], and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30). When would Christ begin to rule on His throne? By going to Zechariah 6:12-13 we learn that the sitting on a throne and ruling are to be done at the same time. Zechariah states, "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." If we learn when Jesus began sitting then we learn when He began ruling! Looking at Peter's statement in Acts 2:30 again, we notice that Jesus began sitting on the day of Pentecost when He was raised to sit upon the throne of David (Acts 2:30-33). Therefore, since our Lord was to sit and rule (Zec. 6:13), it is evident that He is ruling now!¹² Premillennialists all over the world have dethroned the King of kings and the Lord of lords only in their minds!

Point number six. Premillennialism, is it your contention that after Jesus Christ's second coming, that He reign with His saints on this earth for a period of a thousand years?

That is what I believe.

Premillennialists go to Revelation, chapter 20 to find support for their belief. But observe that in Revelation 20 there is no mention of the following: the Lord's second coming; a reign on earth; a bodily resurrection; the literal throne of David, Jerusalem of Palestine, us, and it does not mention Christ on earth! Those who adhere to the concept of premillennialism are guilty of reading into the Scriptures what is not there!

Jeremiah strikes a lethal blow to premillennialism by making the following statement. He said in reference to Coniah (Jer. 22:28): "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:29-30). When we read the genealogy of our Lord in Matthew, chapter one and notice that He is of the lineage of Jechonias or Coniah (Mat.1:11,17), the premillennialist must come to the astounding conclusion that Jesus, of the seed of Coniah could never prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, ruling in Judah! Therefore, why would they want a King who would be ineffective reigning for the long, long time of a thousand years?

The only verdict that could be issued to premillennialism would be that it is guilty of death—nevermore being able to raise its terrible head and send forth its poisonous errors into the hearts of humanity!

WHAT PREMILLENNIALISM REJECTS

Premillennialism is a doctrine that is marching and militant against truth. It seeks to destroy and make waste of so many Biblical teachings. If left unchecked by the Word of God, it can go on a rampage that will do untold damage to the cause of Christ!

Premillennialism rejects the sinlessness of God. It says that God did not tell the truth when He said that the land promise was fulfilled. If God failed to keep one promise, would he break another? It denies that God is all-wise. Premillennialism contends that the Godhead

purposed to establish the kingdom when Christ came to this earth the first time. However, because of the Jews who rejected the Redeemer, Jesus was not able to set up His kingdom. Therefore, what would the Godhead do? God has to go back to the drawing board and come up with the church as a substitute! In the future when Christ would come back to the earth, then He would set up the kingdom. The system of premillennialism strikes at the very wisdom of the Creator. It has God as one who did not plan very well for the existence of the kingdom. It makes a mockery of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Ephesians 3:10-11!

Premillennialism also rejects Christ. It makes Christ out to be one who preached one thing but who will do another. Christ said "My kingdom is not of this world..." (John 18:36), but premillennialism contends that the Lord's kingdom most definitely will be of this world!

The doctrine of premillennialism also rejects the Bible. It cuts away from the very fiber of Scripture those precious passages dealing with the kingdom. According to the premillennialist, we have not received a kingdom that cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28)! According to their concept, John was not clear headed when he said that he was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9)! The premillennialist would have to propose that Paul was a false teacher because he said that we have been delivered out of darkness and had been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13)! Furthermore, those who espouse the doctrine under consideration are those supporting a teaching that rejects clear Bible teaching regarding the spiritual over the material. God's Word emphasizes that we are to seek those things which are above (Col. 3:1-2), and lay up treasures in heaven (Mat. 6:19-21). However, premillennialism, teaches that Christ will have an earthly reign of a thousand years. It is a materialistic, man-made doctrine, instead of a spiritual, God given doctrine. Premillennialism denies the Bible's teaching concerning Christianity. It would have us to go back to Jerusalem and Judaism. In so doing, one would be lost. In addition, premillennialism flatly contradicts scores of passages in the Bible and crushes the faith that we have that the Bible is the Word of God, with all 66 books completely woven together in

unity, without a single error. Do you want to support and encourage such a ruthless doctrine as premillennialism? It needs to be crushed to earth and buried with the other teachings that have originated from hell.

REPERCUSSIONS OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Can one believe in premillennialism and be a Christian? Can one believe that the kingdom has not come and be in that kingdom? Can one believe that Christ is the King of kings and yet say that He is a King without a kingdom? Can one obey the Gospel and live the Christian life with the expectation of going back to the old law? Can a Christian pervert and twist Bible passages as does the premillennialist and be pleasing in the sight of God? My conclusion is that premillennialism and Christianity are diametrically opposed to one another as is hell and heaven, God and Satan. The title of this lesson "Premillennialism Versus Christ's Doctrine" is correct! Premillennialism is in direct opposition to the doctrine that our Lord sets forth in His Word! Premillennialism and the Lord and His teaching are on different sides. One cannot believe in premillennialism and be a Christian who is faithful to His God! Brother Foy E. Wallace remarked "No man can believe premillennialism and believe the gospel."¹³ To this we add Amen and Amen!

ENDNOTES

¹Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *Prophecy And Premillennialism*, Freed-Hardeman College Lectures (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), p. 208.

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³Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1961), p. 116.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Richard W. DeHann, *Israel and the Nation In Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), pp. 67, 100.

⁶John Phillips, "Contracts Signed By God," *Moody Monthly*, June 1982, p. 46.

⁷The Oliphant-Rice Debate (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1935), pp. 13-14.

⁸Terry Varner, "Renewal Of The Covenant)) Discussion Re Ishmael And Isaac," *The Book Of Genesis*, Spiritual Sword Lectures (Lebanon, TN: Sain Publications, 1985), p. 200.

⁹James A. Nichols, Jr., *Christian Doctrine: A Presentation of Biblical Theology* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1970), p. 279.

¹⁰H. Leo Boles and R.H. Boll, *Unfulfilled Prophecy: A Discussion on Prophectic Themes* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 14.

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¹²Hoyt H. Houchen, *The Houchen-Tatum Debate* (Amarillo, TX, 1951), pp. 181-182.

¹³Foy E. Wallace, Jr. *God's Prophetic Word* (Oklahoma City, OK: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications, 1960), pp. 317-318.

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

I am indeed grateful to have this privilege to be one of the speakers on this great lectureship, and this great congregation and its mighty leadership should be commended for this great work. It is my prayer that lectureships of this caliber should continue so that men and women will know if it's right or wrong. Notice what God said by Ezekiel, "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Eze. 44:23). Our Lord said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth can make one free, but error will condemn. Paul said, "(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men" (Col. 2:21-22)? I believe that Catholicism is one of the greatest obstacles to the truth of Christianity and to the progress of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore with a great deal of satisfaction that I have the opportunity to bring to your attention some things that have to do with Roman Catholicism and why I left the Roman Catholic church. The purpose of this study is to show that Catholicism originated in an apostasy, that it is not just a religious institution but is political

as well, that its cardinal doctrines are false and its aims are un-Christian. It is not the purpose of this discussion to arouse prejudice upon the part of anybody or incite any hatred of any kind, religious or otherwise. David said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:104). I believe that ought to be the attitude of God's people. Yet God loves the souls of men and women and desires the salvation of the soul of every individual (1 Tim. 2:4). We enter this study interested in the souls of men and women, in teaching those who are in error the truth that they may come out of error, and in saving those who know the truth from being deceived by the error that is being taught.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The first point that we consider is that religious system known as Roman Catholicism originated in apostasy. Christians are familiar with the pattern of church government as it is revealed to us in the Word of God. We understand and know, that the church of Christ is congregational in government. There is no confederation, synod, association, organization larger or smaller, or other than the organization of the local congregation in New Testament history. It is the only government that God has given His church. With the Lord Jesus Christ as the only head, every congregation conducting its own business under the authority of Christ, with elders to oversee the work of that local congregation, deacons to assist, with evangelists to preach the Word, teachers to teach, and members to carry on the work as the Lord ordained that it should be carried on. Every congregation was a free, independent, self-governing unit. That was the church in the first century. It is the church of the Lord now, and any corruption or modification of the form that the church had in the beginning would represent an effort to improve upon God's arrangements, which men are unable to do (Isa. 55:8-9). The New Testament church was set forth in divine revelation, having originated in the mind of God. Jesus Christ built it in accordance with the divine pattern that God gave Him (John 12:48-50; 17:4-8). The New Testament reveals it by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10). Saved men and women composed it (Acts 2:47;

Gal.3:26-29) and it was given a special mission in the world to accomplish (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Historians of the church readily confirm the fact that the government of the church was soon corrupted. The devil knew exactly where to begin to lead the church into apostasy, and he began at the same place he has always started. Back in the Old Testament in his efforts to deceive and mislead the people of God and to provoke unfaithfulness and disloyalty, the devil started to corrupt the government of God's people. This was the initial effort. He knew until he could corrupt the government of God's people he would not be successful in introducing any innovation or any kind of false teaching. But the devil was wise enough to know also that if he could succeed in corrupting the government of the people of God it would then be an easy matter to lead them into false ways and turn them completely away from God. So he set into provoking them to demand a king that they might be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8:5-6). God has considered their demand for a king a complete rejection of His rule and government as so stated. After the devil succeeded in corrupting this government it was easy for him to lead them in the complete apostasy and complete rebellion to God and finally into complete destruction as a nation. The same thing was done in the New Testament age. When the church was established in accordance with divine wisdom, the devil immediately set about to corrupt the government of the church of God. He knew if he could succeed in that, it would be easy to introduce human innovations, and false teaching, but, he knew that until he could corrupt the government of the church the rest of it would be an impossible task. He sought the disintegration of the church in its God-ordained government first, and having succeeded in that he immediately began the introduction of false doctrines and false practices until the results were a complete corruption of the church from the pattern of the New Testament, complete rebellion against the will of God. The Roman Catholic institution grew out of the apostasy.

At first there was a plurality of elders over every congregation. Paul said, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on

whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). Those elders that were appointed in every church were the bishops (Tit. 1:7) and pastors of the Lord’s church. Paul uses these terms in Acts 20:17-28 to designate the same group of men in the congregation at Ephesus; men who complied with the same standard of authority, who had been appointed, all of them, in exactly the same manner and were undertaking to do the same work in the church of God. Paul called to him the elders of the Ephesian church and he said to them, “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” (Acts 20:28). He told them to “pastor” the church of our Lord, “which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Bishops, then, to begin with, were the elders of the church. You can find all the historical authority for that that you might care. Such men as Mosheim and Geisler in their ecclesiastical histories tell us that this was the form of the government of the congregations of the church of Christ in the beginning. But they also cite to us that this form did not long endure. Mosheim said that the elders of the church were called either **presbyters** or **bishops**, which two titles are in the New Testament, undoubtably applied to the same order of men. He goes on to say that during the first two centuries a bishop was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, but he warns again that we are not to confound the bishops of this primitive age of the church with those of whom we read in the following ages. Although they were distinguished by the same names, yet they differed extremely in many respects.

Those bishops, in the corruption of the church, came to mean the chief elder—the outstanding elder—the elder that had assumed a chief place in the congregation. Church history further tells us that the elders in the chief cities began to exercise authority over congregations round about. When Christianity, for example was planted in the city of Ephesus, out of that congregation that was thus established, there came an effort to plant Christianity in a great many cities in the surrounding territory. Gradually, Ephesus began to assume control over these congregations. The elders of Ephesus, who had begun that work, continued the oversight of it, a thing which in

the Scriptures you cannot find. Peter said, “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” (1 Peter 5:1-2). It was not long until these large churches found that the chief elder who had become the bishop of the larger church was soon the Bishop of a diocese (district), exercising control over other congregations. These bishops of the chief cities soon began to confer one with another. The bishop of Constantinople, the bishop of Rome, the bishop of Alexandria, the bishop of Jerusalem, and the bishop of Antioch, soon began to collaborate. Out of their meetings came the Church Councils, and out of that grew Roman Catholicism. That is the way Catholicism developed. The New Testament predicted that this would happen. Paul wrote,

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: Who opposeth and exalteth 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. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let , until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 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. 2:3-10).

Now let us connect with reading another: “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; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, (and commanding) to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-3). In these two passages of Scriptures we have several points worthy of note. **First**,

there would be a falling away or a general apostasy. **Second**, that apostasy would result in the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. **Third**, that apostasy would not come until one restrained was removed. **Fourth**, when once revealed the man of sin would continue until the coming of the Lord, at which time he would be utterly destroyed. **Fifth**, the man of sin is described by various traits which have been, all of them, peculiar to the system of Catholicism. Those traits are: (1) He shall sit in the temple of God and show himself forth as God. "Lord God the Pope" sounds a little like it. (2) That he would forbid to marry. (3) He would command to abstain from meats. (4) He would exercise all power, signs and lying wonders. **There is not a system that men have known in all of history that has exercised as many lying wonders to deceive the minds and corrupt the hearts of people as has Catholicism.**

DEPARTURES FROM THE APOSTOLIC WAY

EVENTS	YEAR
1. Prayers for the dead, began about A.D.	300
2. Making the sign of the cross	300
3. Wax candles, about	320
4. Veneration of angles and dead saints, use of images	375
5. The mass as a daily celebration	394
6. Beginning of the exaltation of Mary, the mother of God	431
7. Priests began to dress differently from laymen	500
8. The Doctrine of Purgatory, established by Gregory I	593
9. Latin language for worship imposed saints by Gregory I	600
10. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angles . . .	600
11. Instrumental music introduced in worship	600
12. Title of pope, or universal bishop, given to Boniface III by Emperor Phocas	606
13. Kissing the pope's foot, began with Constantine . . .	709
14. Temporal power of popes given by Pepin, King of France	750

- 15. Worship of the cross, images and relics
authorized 786
- 16. Holy water, mixed with salt, and blessed by
priest 850
- 17. College of Cardinals (now 70) established 927
- 18. Canonization of dead saints, by pope John XV 995
- 19. Fasting on Fridays and during Lent 998
- 20. Celibacy of the priesthood decreed by pope
Gregory VII 1079
- 21. The Rosary begun by Peter the hermit 1090
- 22. Sale of Indulgences 1090
- 23. Transubstantiation proclaimed by pope
Innocent III 1215
- 24. Auricular Confession of sins to priest instituted
by pope Innocent III in Latin Council 1215
- 25. Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the index
of forbidden books by the Council of Valencia . . . 1229
- 26. Pouring officially substituted for baptism 1311
- 27. Cup forbidden to the people at communion
by Council of Constance 1414
- 28. Purgatory proclaimed as a dogma, Council of
Florence 1438
- 29. Tradition declared to be equal in authority
to the Bible by Council of Trent 1545
- 30. Apocryphal books added to their Bible,
Council of Trent 1546
- 31. Immaculate conception of Mary 1854
- 32. Infallibility of the pope, Vatican Council 1870

**ROMAN CATHOLIC FALSE VIEW CONCERNING
WHO GAVE US THE BIBLE**

The Roman Catholic Church has for years made the claim that it is the one who properly interprets the Bible. They make the claim that if any other religious group cares to know the meaning of Scripture, it must listen to the authoritative Roman Church, because they gave the world the Bible. Notice this saying: “The church existed before the word of the New Testament Scriptures were

written, after they were written, the church determined the canon; therefore, the church is the authoritative voice that must be obeyed, for without the church we would not have the Bible.”¹ To prove their point, they start by saying the Scriptures do not assert their own inspiration. That none of the Scriptures asserts its own inspiration in their boastful assertion. If you were talking to a priest, he would ask, “How do you know that what you have is the Bible?” They say the Bible was declared to be inspired by the Roman Catholic Church. These books in the Bible were not inspired until they were declared to be inspired by the Roman Church, and that they were not inspired until the fourth century when Jerome translated the Bible. Jerome, in about 385 A.D., translated the New Testament from Greek into Latin. They say that Jerome gave us the Bible and they declared it to be inspired. Does the Bible assert its own inspiration? When we read (2 Tim. 3:16), yes, even in the Catholic Bible, Paul says all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. It is inspired of God, not by the Roman Church regardless of what they claim. Peter wrote “some things hard to be understood” and in Second Peter 3:16, he calls all that Paul wrote “Scripture.” Paul wrote fourteen books of the New Testament and Peter says that all that Paul wrote was Scripture. Then Paul says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” All the New Testament writers finished their books by 96 A.D.

When John laid down the pen of inspiration, having written the book of Revelation, all of these other men had sealed their testimony with their blood. Do you mean to tell me that their writings were uninspired, and for four hundred years we had to wait for some man to declare them to be inspired? The Bible asserts its own inspiration. In John 20:30, John wrote that we might believe. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). He wrote these things that we may believe and then he declared in John 21:24 that these things are true. We did not have to wait two or three hundred years for these things to be true. They were written that we might believe. In Second Peter 1:16-17, even in the Catholic Bible, Peter says that he was an

eyewitness of what he wrote. Jesus said to His apostles, “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mat. 10:20). It was the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, who spoke through Peter and the other apostles. Note this in Acts chapter two,

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).

They spoke as the **Spirit** gave them utterance. Then Catholics have the audacity to tell us that they were not inspired until later on when some man down here three or four hundred years declared it to be inspired. The Bible asserts its own inspiration and no man made it inspired. The writers of the Bible spoke by the Spirit of God.

Now listen to what Paul says in First Corinthians 14:37; even in the Catholic Bible he says, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” Then they go out before the world and say, “The Bible was not inspired until we so declared it. We gave you the Bible.” No, they did not give us the Bible, and we are independent of the Roman Catholic Church for the Bible. How do I know? Well, it is a well-known fact that the first translations of the New Testaments were from the old Syriac Scriptures which very closely represented the language which Jesus spoke. Then came at an early date, the Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Gothic versions of the Eulfilas, the bishops of the Gothic tribes about A.D. 350. Toward the close of the fourth century, the old Latin versions were found to be so full of errors of early and imperfect scholarship that Eusebius, better known as Saint Jerome, was chosen to prepare the Latin version, which is known today as the “Vulgate.” I am talking about the Latin version which was declared by one of the Popes to be the perfect version.

Let us now see what is involved in their claim that they gave us the Bible. Did they give us the Bible? No! What did they give the world? They gave the world a Latin translation. A man by the name

of Jerome, who was not a Catholic in the sense we now know Catholics, even though he was an apostate from the early simplicity of the gospel of Christ and the New Testament church, translated the Bible in Latin. He took the Greek and translated it into Latin, and the Catholics say he gave us the Bible. They did not give us the Bible; they just gave us a Latin translation. "What about those disputed books?" They have books in their Bible that we do not have in ours. Every book that they have in their Bible that is not in ours is in what they call the Old Testament. Christianity is a New Testament religion and every disputed book, every book they have in their Bible that is not in ours, is in their Old Testament. Then, may I suggest this, that Jerome, who translated the "Vulgate" upon which they depend so much, rejected those disputed books. Then, too, the Old Testament was completed four hundred years before Christ. When Christ was on earth, the Old Testament was here in its fullness. The Jews had it as we now have it. The Jews rejected those disputed books. They were not in the Old Testament that Jesus used. They were rejected by Jerome. In the New Testament there are two hundred and sixty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament and not one time did the New testament writers quote the disputed books. There are three hundred and seventy allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures, and not once did the New Testament writers allude to those books. Further, the Maccabees were not put in the Catholic Bible until the sixteenth century. We are independent of the Catholic Church for our Bible. The disputed books were not in the book used by the Jews. They were rejected by Jerome who translated the Latin version that they use, and parts of them were not even put in until the sixteenth century. From this, one can see that the argument given by the Roman Catholic Church that they gave the world the Bible, is false.

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING "THE POPE"

He is the head, the supreme ruler, and claims to derive his power from no man, set of men, or a council, but from God, and he decides the extent of that.

His powers. He is responsible to no human being, and no set of human beings in the exercise of his powers. He makes laws, he

inflicts censures, he absolves sin, he excommunicates, he creates religious orders and dioceses, dispenses vows, infallible in faith, in morals, in philosophy, in doctrine, and even in thought, who speaks without error or the possibility of error. He is a monarch, a sovereign, both temporal and spiritual. That is the place the pope holds in the hierarchy of the Roman Church.

His titles. First, “pope,” is from the Latin word *papa*, a childhood word for father. In other words he claims to be sovereign father. Second, “pontiff,” is from the Latin *pontife*, originally meaning, “a bridge builder.” The Roman pontifexes guarded the bridges over the Tiber River entering into and coming out of the city of Rome. Nobody could enter or exit Rome without the authority of the pontifex. So when the pope assumed all authority temporal and spiritual, he adopted the name “pontiff,” sovereign pontiff, signifying all authority. Third, “holy father,” is from the Latin *beatissime pater*. It means that the pope claims to be the holy father. Fourth, “the servant of the servants of God” is from the Latin, *Serus Servorum Dei*, that is the preeminent servant of God, above all the servants of God. His name is selected after he is elected by the cardinals. He chooses the name of a pope before him, whose life he admires, whose position and office he himself would like to imitate, and calls himself by the name of the former pope. His government is at Rome, and is called the “Holy See,” from the Latin *sedes*, which means “a seat,” a holy seat! Now all of this is found on one of the blank pages in your Bible.²

Seven assumptions must be proven if there is infallibility. (1) That the church was ever built upon Peter. (2) That Peter was given the sole authority to bind and loose. (3) That Peter was ever made the head of the church, the vicar of Christ, or the rector of the universe. (4) That Peter was ever the “Prince of the apostles.” (5) That the authority of Peter and his successors is universal. (6) That such authority is supreme and independent of all earthly authority. Finally, (7) That the office of Peter has passed to all successors though all ages.³ Leaving the assertions of the pope, and referring to the Scriptures in search of evidence, we find nothing said of the pope, a supreme earthly head of the church. Let us list a few passages

bearing on that question. Jesus said, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Mat. 23:8-9). Paul said, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). But no pope! Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). Thou art Peter (stone)...and upon this rock (Christ). Notice "thou stone"—"this rock"—Peter was the stone, Christ was the rock, and it takes the pope's only passage away from him. The whole end and aim of the question of Matthew 16:18-20 was not Peter, but Christ. Paul, the apostle of Christ, settles that question for sure. Note: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth there. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:10-11). There is no other foundation, no other head than Jesus Christ.

If Christ had established such an office, He would have defined it. When God appointed the Levitical priesthood, He defined its qualifications and its powers. When God appointed a civil government, He gave a code of laws by which to administer it. When God appointed elders in the New Testament church, He named their qualifications and duties. But there is no appointment mentioned and no provision made for a pope in all the New Testament. Is it not strange, if his office is divine?⁴

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING QUALIFICATIONS OF A BISHOP

The Roman Catholic bishops are not permitted to marry and have children. Yet in their own Bible, the qualifications are given for a bishop. They just disregard the Bible. Let us notice what God said concerning this matter.

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then **must** be blameless, **the husband of one wife**, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **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? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

The Bible says that he must be married, husband of one wife, with children. They may have children but they are not married!

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Transubstantiation means to “change into another substance.” This is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Roman Church. They call this the sacrifice of the mass. For many years I believed that the bread and the wine were changed into the literal body and blood of Christ. At mass the priest would say the words of consecration, this is my body. The Bible does not teach this view. It is man-made in origin. If this were true, would not this make them a group of cannibals?

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS NOT TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Some one thousand years after the death of Christ, the Council of Trent, in Session XIII, declared: “In the Eucharist are contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ” (Canon 1). “The whole substance of bread is converted into the body and the whole substance of the wine into the blood” (Canon 2). *The Roman Missal*, page 9, stated that the priest through an official act “places the body and blood of Christ under the appearance of blood and wine upon the altar.” They are then turned into the literal body and blood of Christ by the priest’s prevailing on God. The priest then “makes an oblation of this victim to the Eternal Father on behalf of the people, and the victim undergoes a destructive change” “Not only is it the true body of Christ, to wit: All that is proper to the human body—the bones, the nerves—contained in the sacrament—but farther, Jesus Christ, whole and entire.” It is incredible that this doctrine, this blasphemy would be taught to intelligent men and women. The priest again, repeatedly kills,

sacrifices Christ, as an offering, eats Him, and offers Him again and again for the sins of the people—Transubstantiation.

God is not working such miracles, any miracles, today (1 Cor. 13:8ff; Eph. 4:8ff, *et. al.*). Furthermore, Christ was offered but once for the sins of the world (Heb. 8:27; 9:26; 10:12,14). The language is figurative. As bread is the staff of life, so likewise, Christ gave His body, flesh, for us. "This is my body" and "this is my blood" is figurative, like other language often used—"seed," Luke 8:11; "vine," John 15:1-6; "seven good kine," Gen. 41:26; "door," "good shepherd," "sheep," John 10:9. It can be compared to the picture of one's wife, mother, father, child—"This is my Mother." Note that Christ was not yet crucified when He instituted the Lord's Supper—"This is my body." It could not have been literal. The Lord's Supper, as portrayed in the Scriptures is not a sacrament, but a memorial. Speaking of the kingdom, Isaiah prophesied, "Unto them [Gentiles, even eunuchs] will I give in my house and within my walls [the church] a memorial [Lord's Supper] and a name better than of sons and of daughters ["Christian"], I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 56:5, ASV). Our Lord said, "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). As Christians eat that bread and drink of that cup, they "do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper, therefore, looks backward to His death, forward to His coming, and inward as a man examines himself in connection with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28).

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING PURGATORY

The propitiation or satisfaction, which men are due God for sins, which cannot be made up during life, are made up in purgatory. When God is satisfied, the Christian is released from purgatorial punishment, and is ready for heaven. All men, no matter how devout in life, must go to purgatory. The only exceptions to this are Catholic saints, the Christian martyrs, and those who die immediately after baptism. The devil has many false teachings that are used by his ministers and his churches (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 4:1, Rev. 3:8), to satisfy his children (John 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:10). Notice

what the Catholics advocate about purgatory. Purgatory (from Old French, *purgatoire*) is the state in which souls exist for a time after death to work out the temporal punishment due to venial sins or forgiven mortal sins. The soul is purified in this state to prepare it for its entrance into the delights of heaven and the Beatific Vision. “It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins” (2 Mac. 12:46).⁵

With the above point, we would first observe that this false teaching is based on an apocryphal (disputed) book (2 Maccabees) which is not considered to be inspired Scripture except by Catholic-oriented religious groups. Moreover Judas Maccabeus was not an inspired man, and his practice is irrelevant for establishing religious truth. Even so these passages do not say that Judas believed in a state of purgatory. (Notice 2 Mac. 12:39-46). 1. The Doctrine of Purgatory, established by Gregory I...593 A.D. The Council of Trent declared: “There is a Purgatory, and souls there detained are helped by the prayers of the faithful and especially by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar.” 2. Purgatory proclaimed as dogma, Council of Florence...1438 Where is purgatory? “The location of purgatory is in great doubt—whether in the world or under the earth; in the air or a part or precinct of or in the vicinity of hell.” It seems an infallible pope should know! At least, it would have been as easy for the Catholic Council of Florence that invented it, in 1438, to have located it, and satisfied curiosity—for it is a creature of their imagination, anyway. It is a relic of ignorance and superstition, handed down from vague delusions possessed by some fanatics as early as three centuries before Christ. Out of such pagan mythology the grotesque doctrine of purgatory was developed by the prelates of Rome, and bound by an ecumenical council on the consciences of Catholic victims the whole world over.⁶ When one listens to the Roman Catholic Church and reads God’s Word, many questions will arise. Remember that the Bible is right. The case of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:20-31 (the great gulf, and no crossing hence or thence, reverses the Catholic idea of praying to the saints to get souls out of purgatory), echoes eternal—all the walls and arches of the Hadean world reverberate the echo eternal, eternal, eternal! The

inspired John penned these words: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev. 22:11). Paul declares that absent from this earthly state we shall be at once home with the Lord, (2 Cor. 4:1-6)—without passing through purgatory, and if there is any such place en route, or in transit, this would have been the time and place for Paul to have said so. Finally, Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 4:8), that after departing from this world “henceforth...the crown of righteousness”—henceforth means, from then on, nothing intervening. The Bible does not teach an intermediate state of purgatorial purification for Christians en route to heaven. The doctrine of purgatory is an invention of the hierarchy of the Roman Church that its members can live and die a sinful life, go to purgatory for the temporary punishment, then go to heaven and be with God throughout all eternity. That sounds good, but this is false and the Bible does not teach or indicate any such place. If you are a Roman Catholic, please listen before it's too late!

CATHOLICISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE CONCERNING ORIGINAL SIN AND INFANT BAPTISM

“**Original sin**—One of the consequences of the sin of our first parents which is passed on to their descendants. As a result of their sin, man was denied original justice and instead was made subject to death and concupiscence. Original sin also meant the deprivation of sanctifying grace. This teaching of the church is based on St. Paul (Rom. 5:12-14).”⁷ Beginning here and continuing through several verses is a comparison, or better yet, a contrast between Adam and Christ, and the results of the actions of Adam and Christ. By one man, Adam, sin entered the world. The result of sin was death, spiritual as well as physical, but more important, spiritual (Rom. 6:23; Jas. 1:14-15). This result of Adam's sin was “passed upon all men.” The meaning of this phrase is of great importance and consequence. The idea of the word “passed” shows that which took place was of such significance that none could escape its power. There has not lived a person since sin entered the world that has escaped certain results of Adam's sin. We must keep before us that

guilt of sin is one of the consequences of sinning, but, not the only one. There are other consequences as well. Did the guilt of sin pass upon all men because of Adam's sin? Or does this refer to other consequences of Adam's sin that "passed" upon all men? In other words, are you and I guilty of Adam's sin? The answer is found in the definition of sin the Holy Spirit gives in First John three, verse four.

Sin is transgression. Not until one does transgress the law of God does he become guilty of anything. The preposition "for" of verse twelve is to be understood as "because or inasmuch as." Certain results of sin have passed upon everybody. But why have they passed upon everybody? Some things have passed upon everybody unconditionally. For instance, due to the sin of Adam we all die physically. Because the first couple was driven from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life, we all must die physically. But this has nothing whatever to do with our personal sins. Nonetheless, we physically die. Even the infant, who does no sin, dies. This is a result of Adam's sin and what sin introduced into the world. But remember, Paul is discussing spiritual death primarily. Spiritual death has "passed upon all men," but why? It is not because we are guilty of Adam's sin, "for that all have sinned." Spiritual death came into the world through the sin of Adam. Spiritual death was suffered by Adam the day he sinned (Gen. 2:17). Spiritual death is suffered by everybody who sins, but because of his own sins and not because of Adam's sin. Adam's sin introduced sin unto men, but each one must partake of sin for himself before he is counted guilty of sin. This is either true, or First John three and verse four contradicts this passage, which is in tenable. Many other people, other than the one who commits sin, may suffer consequences of a person's sins, but not the consequences of guilt. But one suffers the guilt when he himself sins.

The main theme continues at verses eighteen and nineteen informing us how by the offense (sin) of Adam, judgment (condemnation) came upon all men (because all men partake of sin). But righteousness (making man a righteous being or at least counting him so) came by Christ. The system or plan to make man righteous came through the One (Christ) as a gift from God, and justifies man,

granting him life instead of death. One man's disobedience introduced sin into the world, and all have partaken of it and became sinners. But the obedience of One (Christ) makes the many sinners righteous by introducing life through justification. This is a gift, but the gift must be received. It is received by our obedience. It was provided by the obedience of Christ. Christ was obedient even to the death He suffered on the cross (Heb. 5:8; Phi. 2:8). What a contrast! By one (Adam) came death, but by the other (Christ) came life. By one (Adam) came condemnation, but by the other (Christ) came justification. "If you and I are guilty of Adam's sin, unconditionally, then we are justified by Christ, unconditionally. This would mean universal salvation with nobody being lost. But, this would not be in harmony with scriptural revelation. Nothing is made clearer in the Bible than the fact that some will be saved but some will be lost."⁸ If it were true that all of the descendants of Adam are born with original sin, what about Jesus Christ? Is He not a descendant of Adam? (Mat. 1:1-7; Luke 3:23-38). In other words, "Total (Hereditary) Depravity." No man in his right mind would say that Christ's soul was stained with sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:22); ***not even the Catholic***. But remember one false view leads to another one.

They also teach that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the only person born after Adam and Eve that was not born with original sin. That's what they say, not the Bible. The truth of the matter is, Mary was not born with a sinful nature. The Bible teaches us that God is the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9) and we are also His offspring (Acts 17:28-29). He formeth the spirit of man within him (Zec. 12:1) and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). If man is born with a sinful nature and his spirit is from God, is God sinful or corrupted also? Who would say yes? The Bible teaches us that sin is a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). I can't think of any law that an infant has broken. The record also says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Eze. 18:20). The soul that sinneth "IT" shall die, not "they." A person becomes a sinner when he breaks God's law

(1 John 3:4). Since they teach that babies are born with original sin, the need for remission of sin is important. Therefore, an infant needs to be baptized to have the original sin removed.

For many years I believed this false teaching, and my only son was so-called baptized in the Roman Church. But I am grateful for Billy Sasser, who made me mad by teaching me the truth. It took a while for it to work, but honest people who really want the truth will submit. We have proven that infants are not born in sin. So what would be the purpose for baptism? Baptism is for a person who has faith (Heb. 11:6) and has repented of sins (Acts 2:38). For what sins can an infant repent? Not any. One must confess faith in Christ (Acts 8:37). Baptism is for the remission of sin (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16). Babies do not have sins, therefore, there is no need to baptize an infant. An infant is not a fit subject for baptism.

CONCLUSION

Why did I leave the Roman Catholic Church? For many other reasons more than we have discussed. But to sum it all up, notice: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). **I found out that Catholicism is corrupted and the ones that are in it are lost and need to come out before it’s too late!**

ENDNOTES

¹*The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), pp. 387ff.

²Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *Bulwark of the Faith* (Oklahoma City, OK: Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, 1951), pp. 100-101.

³L. R. Wilson, *Roman, Catholicism: Facts or Fabrications* (Nashville, TN: Freedom Press, Inc., 1965), pp. 1-2.

⁴Wallace, pp. 169-172.

⁵Albert Nevins, M.M., *The Mary Knoll Catholic Dictionary* (New York, NY: Dimension Books, Grosset and Dunlap, 1965), p. 474.

⁶Wallace, p. 191.

⁷Navins, pp. 422-423.

⁸James William Boyd, *System of Salvation, Comments on Romans* (Nashville, TN: Williams Printing Company, 1990), pp. 76-79.

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METHODISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Bobby Liddell



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INTRODUCTION

Methodism is one of the larger and better known systems of religious faith. Where did it begin? What is its history? How is it organized? What are the particular doctrines it upholds? Is salvation to be found in Methodism? Does Methodism differ from the doctrine of Christ and, if so, how? The aim of this lecture is to answer these questions by presenting, with kindness and in pursuit of truth, an unbiased and factual account of Methodism and that which distinguishes Methodism from the doctrine of Christ. In addition, I will give reasons why I left the Methodist Church and Methodism for the Truth of God.

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

A study of the origin of Methodism cannot be made without a study of John and Charles Wesley. Methodism was founded by John Wesley, who was an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church. John, along with his brother Charles, and George Whitefield were the early leaders of

Methodism, but of these three, John was the predominant one. The story of Methodism begins in November 1729, when a small group of students at Oxford University in England began to meet together several nights a week. At these meetings, they read the New Testament and prayed.¹

These young men formed themselves into a society whose purpose was to increase spirituality and piety in its members and to overcome the “deadness” of the religious world of that day, as they perceived it, and especially of the Episcopal Church. Their lives were to be given to study and to benevolent works.² The young students sought to assist each other in moral improvement and began to practice such by aiding the poor, instructing the unlearned and children, visiting the sick and those in prison, and by strictly observing the rituals of the Episcopalian Church. Some who observed their actions thought them overly pious, while others treated them with scorn and contempt. They were called by their fellow students such names as Sacramentarians, Bible-bigots, Bible-moths, and The Godly Club.³

John Wesley began as the unquestioned leader of the group and remained as such until the day of his death in 1791. Wesley came from a family of distinguished churchmen, his father having taken orders in the Church of England. John was an educated man, having obtained a master's degree from Oxford in 1724. He became a deacon in 1725, and, in 1726, he was elected a fellow of Lincoln College. He was ordained to priesthood in 1728, and for a short time served under his father. From his work with his father, he was called back to Oxford where he organized and became the leader of the group later to be called Methodists.⁴

The name, Methodist, was given because their way of life was so methodical. A student of Christ-Church College once observed their methodical manner and said that a new sect of “Methodists” had sprung up.⁵ Wesley accepted the name, often referred to “the people called Methodists,” and frequently used the name in early official documents.⁶ From this time, Methodism may be said to have started and the name given in derision to twelve young men is now shared by those all over the world who adhere to Methodist doctrine.

In 1735, John and Charles Wesley went to the New World. John went as a missionary to the Indians, and Charles accompanied him as a secretary to General Oglethorpe. On the voyage, they became acquainted with members of a religious body called the Moravians. The Moravians were followers of Count Zinzendorf and were Dissenters from the Lutheran Church.⁷ John was deeply impressed with them and their conduct. The poise and trust of the Moravians was something which Wesley had not before encountered. On board the ship, “Simmonds,” the passengers were terrified by a series of gales. Wesley discovered his religion did not dispel his fears and his faith was shaken.

He noticed, furthermore, that his Moravian fellow passengers sang their hymns and repeated their prayers with unruffled calmness, even when the green seas were boiling over the rail and the main sail split with a noise of thunder. They went about the ship, devoid of fear and intent on serving those who were worse off than themselves. Wesley was profoundly impressed with their composure under such conditions—these Dissenters! “Weren’t you afraid?” he asked. “I thank God, no,” said the Moravian leader, “our women and children are not afraid to die.”⁸

Wesley, himself, accounted his two years in Georgia as a failure and returned to England depressed about his own religious condition. One reason was that his faith had been questioned by August Spangenburg, a leader of the Moravians in Georgia. Spangenburg asked Wesley if he had the witness within himself and then if the Spirit of God bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. Finally, he asked Wesley if he knew Jesus Christ. Wesley had never been faced with such questions and was unprepared to answer. It would be two years before his heart would be “warmed” and he could affirm his “salvation.”⁹

On February 3, 1738, John Wesley came back to England. He had by this time become so concerned about his own spiritual well-being that he was tempted to give up preaching. How could he preach a “saving faith” to others, he reasoned, when he himself was devoid of it? To this, Peter Bohler, a Moravian, replied, “preach faith until you have it; and then because you have it, you will preach it.” So, on March 6, 1738, Wesley began preaching the new doctrine of

“salvation by faith alone,” one which later would become the best known article of faith in the Methodist doctrine.¹⁰

Wesley sought out a Moravian society in Aldersgate Street, London, and began to attend their meetings. At one of these meetings on May 29, 1738, while listening to Luther's preface to the Roman letter being read, in which Luther explained salvation by faith, John finally found what he accepted as the answer to the questions which had troubled him for two years. Of this time, he said, “I felt strangely warmed; I felt that I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”¹¹

HISTORY FROM 1739

Prior to John Wesley's return from Georgia, Charles Wesley, along with George Whitefield, had already begun to preach salvation by faith to thousands in the open air. Having been reared in a spirit of formalism, such a thing was new to John, but because the people were eager to hear his message, he followed the example of Charles and George and began to address the multitudes in the countryside. The Church of England would not accept the converts of the Wesleys, so they were associated with a Moravian congregation in Fetter Lane, London.¹²

The purpose of the movement was to “spread holiness over the land,” according to John Wesley, and not to form a separate religious body. Because the Episcopal Church would not have them, the Methodists began to build their own chapels, the first of which was in Kingswood, England.¹³ Members, or lay men, were appointed as leaders of classes, and later, many of these were licensed to preach. Besides these local preachers, there came to be a group of traveling preachers who gave all their time to the work. These men traveled regular circuits preaching in several towns. Some assistance was given by the Anglicans and some Anglican churches permitted the group to preach in their pulpits. In later years, opposition from the Episcopal Church would cease and more pulpits would be open to the Methodist preachers than they could fill.¹⁴

In five years, John Wesley was able to gather a group of forty-five preachers to carry forward the revival. At this time, there were more

than two thousand members of the Methodist societies in London.¹⁵ George Whitefield had separated himself from Wesley and his followers because of differences in doctrine. Whitefield held to Calvinistic principles regarding grace while Wesley held to the Arminian view. Whitefield became the leader of the group known as the Calvinistic Methodists and Wesley's group was known as the Wesleyan Methodists.¹⁶ This was the first of many divisions to occur in the Methodist Church.

In 1744, the first annual conference was held. John and Charles Wesley with a few cooperating Anglican clergymen and a number of the "lay preachers," met to discuss the problems and the future of Methodism. Although many meetings had been held prior to this one, this was the one which would be the beginning of the yearly conferences. From this time until his death in 1791, John Wesley met with his preachers on an annual basis. He made it clear that such a conference was assembled in an advisory capacity only and that his decisions were the ones that would control Methodism. This autocracy caused many of the most effective preachers to withdraw from the societies.¹⁷ For all practical purposes, the Methodist Church was organized as a separate religious body at this time, but the members of the conference were careful to express their allegiance to the Church of England and to declare that they were not Dissenters.¹⁸

John Wesley had taken the principle of the religious society, which was a familiar thing in the Church of England and had been for nearly a century, and from this had formed a set of rules suitable to his needs. The Fetter Lane Society had developed dissensions, and in 1739, John had led a group out from it who accepted his leadership. This group joined with another and became the nucleus of the United Society which was meeting at a place called the Foundery. In order for the spiritual leaders to keep informed of the moral and spiritual condition of those in the group, they were divided into "Classes," with smaller groups called "Bands." This was one of the essential institutions of early Methodism, and provided for the overseeing of every convert and for the purging of those members who did not "run well."¹⁹

One other important new aspect brought by the Methodists was the fact that they came singing lively tunes which corresponded with

the lively and emotional preaching of the Methodists. The first English "Gospel Song Book," was *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, which the Wesleys brought out in 1739. For the first time, Charles Wesley's hymns were printed. From that time until the present, these songs would be sung in Methodist Churches, as well as many others, all over the world.²⁰

Methodism spread throughout the English-speaking world. Where Wesley's converts went, Methodism would soon follow. The Methodist movement had been under way in Britain for more than twenty-five years before it came to America, introduced by immigrants who had been local preachers in England. These men, without the knowledge of John Wesley, formed Methodist societies in the colonies. By 1768, little groups of Methodists were meeting in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland.²¹ When Wesley learned of what had happened, he sent two of his English preachers, in 1769, to help establish societies. In 1771, Wesley sent two more, one of which was Francis Asbury. The work was growing, and so in 1773, Wesley appointed Thomas Rankin to superintend the societies. It was under the direction of Rankin that the first American Methodist conference came together in Philadelphia in June 1773.²² There were ten preachers present and they had six circuits to oversee with a membership of 1,160 members.²³

The Revolutionary War broke out and all the English preachers with the exception of Francis Asbury, returned to England. This gave opportunity for a group of native preachers to take over the leadership under the direction of Asbury.²⁴ With the withdrawal of the Church of England, the Methodists in the United States felt the need to unite into a church which would be a self-governing, independent religious body.²⁵

On December 25, 1784, a conference of Methodist preachers met in Baltimore. This conference, called the Christmas Conference, was to decide the entire future development of American Methodism. The conference adopted a name, The Methodist Episcopal Church. The name indicated the church would be Methodist in its doctrine and Episcopal in its form of church government. A prayer book known as the *Sunday Service* was adopted also. This contained the Articles

of Religion, which the church still holds, and also contained directions on how to conduct the worship, especially the “sacramental services,” marriage, burial, and other services, which until this time had been done by the ministers of the Episcopal Church.²⁶ The *Book of Discipline* prepared by Wesley, cut the thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopal Church down to twenty-four Articles, then put in one to deal with the church rulers in the United States. The Apostles’ Creed, which was brought over by the Episcopal Church from the Catholic Church was also added to the form of Methodist worship.²⁷ Since the *Sunday Service* was a shortened form of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England, this accounts for the similar worship and ritual of the Methodist Church and the Church of England.²⁸ It was at this Christmas Conference also that two men were selected and appointed as superintendents of American Methodism. Wesley’s appointment of Coke and Asbury as superintendents was confirmed by election of the Conference. The name “Superintendent,” soon was replaced by the title “Bishop” which has been maintained.²⁹

The Methodist Church had begun as a new and separate religious body. A name had been adopted, leaders were selected, and a form of government had been formulated. The Articles of Religion and the *Sunday Service* would be their guiding light.

THE BEGINNING OF METHODISM VERSUS

THE BEGINNING OF THE LORD’S CHURCH

TIME OF BEGINNING. Methodism began in November 1729. The Lord’s church began on the first Pentecost after His ascension (Acts 2). Thus, Methodism began at the wrong time and is about 1,700 years too late to be the church of Christ.

PLACE OF BEGINNING. Methodism began in Oxford, England. The Lord’s church began in Jerusalem (Acts 2; cf., Isa. 2:2-4). Thus, Methodism began at the wrong place to be the church of Christ.

FOUNDER. Methodism was founded by John Wesley. The Lord’s church was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47). He paid the price with His blood (Acts 20:28), and gave himself for the church which wears His name (Eph. 5:25). Thus, Methodism began with the wrong man to be the church of Christ.

NAME. The name "Methodist" was a name given by men. The Lord's church wears His name (Rom. 16:16), and its members wear the name divinely given (as shown by the Greek word *chrematizo*), Christian (Acts 11:26). Thus, Methodism wears the wrong name to be the church of Christ.

CREED. Methodism has its own peculiar creed, the *Discipline*, and operates according to the teaching of men. The Lord's church has no such creed book, but operates according to the teaching of Christ, the New Testament of Christ (Heb. 8:7-13; Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:13-17; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thus, Methodism has the wrong creed to be the church of Christ.

ORGANIZATION UNDER METHODISM

The basic unit of the organization is and has always been the local church or "charge" as it has always been called in Methodism.³⁰ These charges are grouped according to their geographical location into what are called "districts," each of which is supervised by a minister who is known as the district superintendent. Districts, likewise, are grouped into Annual Conferences which are presided over by a bishop. Annual Conferences are grouped into six larger regional divisions in the United States, which are known as jurisdictions. The supreme governing and lawmaking body of the Methodist Church is the General Conference.³¹

General Conferences are composed of ministers and laymen in equal numbers, who are selected as delegates by the Annual Conferences. Every Annual Conference is allowed to elect one ministerial member and one lay member for every seventy ministers which it has. The business of the General Conference is to revise the *Discipline*, make laws, and determine all important matters concerning the church.³²

The Jurisdictional Conference meets once every four years within a month or two after the General Conference. Each Annual Conference is allowed to send their delegates to the General Conference, plus a number of additional ministers and laymen, so that there would be one ministerial delegate and one layman for every thirty ministers of the Annual Conference. The duty of the Jurisdictional Conference is to elect the bishops and the members of the boards and agencies

of the church. The Central Conferences are Jurisdictional Conferences which are outside the United States. These conferences have power of election and direction of their own affairs as the General Conference gives them the authority.³³

The Annual Conference is the basic body of the Methodist Church. It is made up of all the ministers and of certain lay members within a certain area. An Annual Conference determines who will be ordained and who will be admitted to its membership. It votes on constitutional amendments and elects delegates to the General Conference, but its chief duties have to do with the ministry and its work. A bishop presides over the Annual Conference as the “conference president.”³⁴

The District Conference is held once a year in each district superintendent’s area. It is composed of all the preachers and a certain number of lay delegates from the district. The district superintendent presides over the conference. Its main function is the licensing of properly qualified persons to preach.³⁵

The Quarterly Conference is the governing body of the local church. The members of the Quarterly Conference are all the officials of the local church. It meets every three months and is presided over by the district superintendent. The Conference decides internal affairs, elects delegates to the Annual Conference, and the District Conference, and recommends those who wish to become preachers. Also, of great importance is the selection of the commissions and committees of the local church.³⁶

The Official Board in every church is composed of “the pastor,” the trustees, the stewards and other church officials. It is the administrative agency of the Quarterly Conference and obtains its power from that body. The Board meets monthly, with its main work to manage the finances of the local church, and many other responsibilities of lesser import.³⁷

Deacons are the lower of the Methodist Church’s two orders. A deacon can perform all the ministerial practices of the church, except administer the “sacrament of Holy Communion.” He may preach the gospel, bury the dead, marry people, baptize, and assist in the administration of the Holy Communion.³⁸

Elders are the highest ministerial order in the Methodist Church. An ordained elder has all the rights and privileges of a minister in the church. The ordination of elders is an elaborate ceremony in which the "laying on of hands" is practiced, and the bishop ordaining the elder prays that he may be "imbued with the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder in the Church of God."³⁹

The "pastor" is the "preacher in charge"—one who has been appointed as a regular minister. He has twenty-seven specific duties which are outlined in the *Discipline*. He is the key man in the local church and is to preach the gospel, administer the "sacraments," marry, bury, visit, instruct, and have general charge of the worship of the church.⁴⁰

The District Superintendent is a very important administrative officer in the Methodist Church. He is in charge of the Annual Conference body in his district and is also in charge of the Quarterly Conferences in his district. The chief duty of the district superintendent is to travel through his district preaching and overseeing the temporal and spiritual affairs of all the churches.⁴¹

The Bishop is the highest officer of the church and is elected by the Jurisdictional Conferences. Bishops are consecrated and not ordained. The chief duties of a bishop are: to oversee the affairs of the church; preside over the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences; appoint preachers; form districts; ordain elders and deacons, and travel through his area checking on the districts.⁴²

Also, among the officers are the Stewards and the Trustees. They are officers of the local church. Stewards are in charge of the finances of the local church, as well as being in a serving capacity. The Trustees are officials of the local church who manage the church property.⁴³

THE ORGANIZATION OF METHODISM VERSUS SCRIPTURAL ORGANIZATION Organization

Methodism has a complicated system of a man-made organization which eliminates congregational autonomy and causes its members to look to men and conferences of men for authority (see above). The

Lord's church has a scriptural organization in which qualified men (plural, for there is no one-man rule) are selected and appointed by each congregation to serve as overseers of that congregation (according to God's inspired Word, 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Deacons are chosen and appointed to serve (1 Tim. 3). There is no earthly headquarters for the headquarters of the Lord's church is where the Head is, and that is Heaven (Col. 1:18). Thus, Methodism has the wrong organization to be the church of Christ.

Lawmaking

Methodism has its General Conference, which is the supreme governing and lawmaking body of the Methodist Church. Yet, no man has the right to put himself on the throne of God and make laws to regulate God's people. God is the great lawgiver (James 4:12). Thus, Methodism has the wrong lawmaker to be the church of Christ.

DOCTRINES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

In 1788, John Wesley declared:

There is no other religious Society under Heaven which requires nothing of man in order for their admission into it but a desire to save their souls....The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship....Now I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed, since the age of the Apostles.⁴⁴

Methodism does not have a rigid theology. (As explained to me, it is just a matter of different views or interpretations; thus, I may read the Bible and have one interpretation and you may read the Bible and have a completely different interpretation. Based on these differences in understanding, we may do differently in practice. Yet, we may have "unity in diversity" {an impossibility} and as I have heard so many times, "we are all going to end up in the same place anyway.") Methodists are strongly Arminian or free-will in their views as opposed to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Methodism puts the emphasis on the personal consciousness of salvation.⁴⁵ Methodist theology has been characterized as realistic and idealistic, but not rigid. The fact that John Wesley never developed a rigid doctrinal position led to tolerance of other points of view and of other religious bodies. It is natural, therefore, that the Methodist Church has taken

an active part in interchurch movements such as the World Council of Churches and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.⁴⁶

The ten propositions given by Bishop John H. Vincent express, in essence, the beliefs of Methodists.

1. I believe that all men are sinners.
2. I believe that God the Father loves all men and hates all sin.
3. I believe that Jesus Christ died for all men, to make possible their salvation from sin and to make sure the salvation of all who believe in him.
4. I believe that the Holy Spirit is given to all men to enlighten and to incline them to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. I believe that all who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ receive the forgiveness of sins. This is justification.
6. I believe that all who receive the forgiveness of sins are at the same time made new creatures in Christ Jesus. This is regeneration.
7. I believe that all who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus are accepted as children of God. This is adoption.
8. I believe that all who are accepted as the children of God may receive the inward assurance of the Holy Spirit to that fact. This is the witness of the Spirit.
9. I believe that all who truly desire and seek it may love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbors as themselves. This is entire sanctification.
10. I believe that all who persevere to the end, and only these, shall be saved in heaven forever.⁴⁷

Methodist beliefs are also embodied in the Apostles' Creed in a terse and concrete way. The Apostles' Creed is Methodism's creed. This creed is repeated every Sunday as a part of the Methodist form of worship.⁴⁸ Methodist standards of doctrine are more definitely stated in *The Twenty-five Articles of Religion*; the *Fifty-two Sermons of John Wesley*, and *Notes on The New Testament* by John Wesley.

The Articles of Religion were selected by John Wesley from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. No Methodist or group of Methodists, not even the General Conference has a right to change any of the articles even by a word. They can only be altered by a long process of amending the constitution which requires four years and all but unanimous consent of the whole church.⁴⁹

The Methodist Church has emphasized certain doctrines so much that they have come to be descriptive of Methodism. **Regeneration** or the new birth is, according to them, the foundation of everything for a Christian. They say this is not something one does for himself, but something that God does for him. Some of those among us who once preached the Gospel are now preaching what is nothing more than denominational doctrine as per the above. The Bible still says we are to DO what God says to DO (Luke 6:46; Mat. 7:21-23). Harmon says, "Being regenerate and born again is one thing; **knowing exactly when** one has been born again is something else. Many sincere Christians have not been able to tell when they became Christians. But they know they **are**."⁵⁰ Did the eunuch know when he was saved (Acts 8)? Certainly. When? When he was baptized to have his sins washed away (as Paul, Acts 22:16). We may surely know when we are saved, and do. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

The Witness of the Spirit means, according to them, that the Holy Spirit in the heart of a believer can and does give him a firsthand assurance that he is a child of God. The question is: "Can a man know that he is a child of God?" Harmon says, "Methodism with all the force of personal testimony has put together Bible doctrine and its own experience to say that one certainly can."⁵¹ Again, see 1 John 2:3-4 as to knowing we are His. The Holy Spirit operates through the medium of the inspired Word (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

Universal Redemption is simply, the doctrine that Christ died for all men and that man may come to Christ. It was the war cry of early Methodism in their fight against Calvinism, but is a secondary argument today.⁵²

The Possibility of Final Perfection is the teaching that it is possible and intended that everyone will live a sinless life and be “made perfect in love” in this life.

Justification by Faith Alone is the great affirmation of the Protestant Reformation. It is a “most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort” according to Article Nine of the Methodist Discipline. Harmon says, “we are justified—that is, made right-by God’s grace and not by what we do.”⁵³ See comments below.

The Methodist Church has two “sacraments,” baptism and the Lord’s supper. The Lord’s supper has been ritualized into a ceremony with fifteen parts. (What a contrast to the simplicity of what God intended and commanded.) Only those who are members in good standing are to partake of it, although, closed communion is not practiced. Only those who have been duly ordained to do so may administer the “Holy Communion.” It is observed at stated intervals, either monthly or quarterly.⁵⁴ The Bible shows Christians partook of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; cf., 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Every week has a first day; thus, Christians partake of the Lord’s supper on the first day of every week.

Methodists say baptism “has always been the gateway to the Christian Church.”⁵⁵ Yet, the Methodist Church practices sprinkling, calling it a “mode” of baptism, and will allow immersion if an adult is extremely desirous of such. (I never witnessed anyone being immersed, nor did I ever hear of such.) The “baptism” (sprinkling) of infants is upheld with the statement that it was practiced from the beginning and that there are examples of such in the New Testament such as Acts 2:39,41; 10:48; 16:15,33; 1 Corinthians 1:16; and 16:15.⁵⁶ Only those who are of maturity of understanding that they may: (1) Hear, with understanding of what they hear (Rom. 10:17); (2) Believe, having faith produced by their hearing the Word of God (John 8:24); (3) Repent of sin, understanding what sin is and that it stands between them and a right relationship with God (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31; Luke 13:3); (4) Confess their faith in Jesus as the Christ (Acts 8:36-38); and, (5) Be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), are those who may be saved. Obviously no infant ever

met the above conditions. Nor has any infant ever needed baptism for infants are not guilty of sin.

MY ASSOCIATION WITH THE METHODIST CHURCH

Until age nineteen, I was associated with the Methodist Church. It was the church of my father's family for generations. Having attended it all my life, I became a member of the United Methodist Church and was sprinkled when a young teenager. I remember well those days when I was united religiously with my family and the pleasant associations with my many Methodist friends—but I had to leave the religion of my fathers.

That Which Was Not Reason To Leave Methodism

Sometimes people leave a particular church or a religion because of some bad experience, personality conflict or strong resentment. None of these precipitated my leaving the Methodist Church. I still appreciate and love my family and the many kind friends I have, who continue in Methodism to this day.

Nor did I leave Methodism because I grew tired of “organized religion” as some claim they do. I did not leave because of “hypocrites” or because the church did not call on me enough (or called on me too much). No one made me leave the Methodist Church; that is, I was not kicked out.

I did not leave Methodism because of lack of support from my family. I deeply appreciate their interest in my soul and their seeking to instill within me a knowledge of right and wrong and a determination to do right. Were it not for this, who knows where I would be today. Thus, I will always be grateful.

Though some make it their practice, I did not leave Methodism because of some financial, political, social or other such benefit to be obtained by my so doing. Nor did I leave a “small” church for a “big” one, or a “big” one for a “small” one.

I did not leave Methodism because I hated anyone nor because I was mad at or with anyone. I did not just “swap” churches nor did I “join” another denomination. I did not leave the Methodist Church to gain the favor of man nor did I follow some other who left.

None of the above-mentioned factors had any significance in my decision to leave the church of my fathers.

I Left Methodism Because I Had To

I had to leave Methodism because, to be saved, I had to put aside the doctrines of men for the doctrine of Christ. The Methodist *Discipline* is a creed book, a compilation of doctrines of men, and, as such, contradicts the Bible. As one said, if a creed book contains more than the Bible, it contains too much. If it contains less than the Bible, it contains too little. If it is the same as the Bible, we do not need it, for we already have the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19). Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9). Paul, by inspiration, urged: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). John, the great apostle of love, penned: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). The doctrines of men will not save; thus, salvation is not to be found in Methodism.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to forsake the false idea of salvation by faith only for the truth of salvation by an obedient faith. Salvation by faith alone is the watchword of Methodism. Yet, God said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Faith demands expression and is shown by works, not of the Old Law, nor of merit, but of obedience (v. 18). What is faith alone? It is an unprofitable faith (v. 14). It is a dead faith (vv. 17,20,26). It is a faith that can neither be shown nor seen (v.18; cf., Mark 2:5). It is an imperfect faith (James 2:22). It is a faith that does not work (v. 22). It is a faith that does not result in righteousness (v. 23). It is a faith that does not bring justification (v. 24). Therefore, it is a faith that cannot save. A faith that will not act is a faith that will not save (John 12:42-43; Gal. 5:6). Salvation is not to be found in Methodism for it teaches a faith that will not save.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to quit obeying men and start obeying God. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Obedience to the Gospel of Christ will secure our salvation and prevent our

destruction. Jesus will come, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 1:8). Of Christ himself, the Word says, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). “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 Peter 4:17). The Word of God, not the words of men, will judge us at the last day; therefore, we should obey God, not men (John 12:48; 14:15; Luke 6:46). Salvation is not to be found in Methodism for it teaches obedience to men above obedience to God.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to quit wearing a name given by men to begin to wear the right name—the one given by God—the name Christian. Of that name, Isaiah prophesied more than seven hundred years before it came: “Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 56:5). “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isa. 62:2). Notice the new name would be an everlasting name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name; that is, it would be given by God, not by man. Saul (Paul) was the “chosen vessel...to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15; cf., Isa. 62:2) When Barnabas had found Saul, “he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). Nowhere in the Bible does the name Methodist appear, nor was anyone in the New Testament age ever instructed to be a Methodist. Why should one be a Methodist when all he has to be, and must be, is a Christian? Salvation is not to be found in Methodism for it teaches a name different from that name in which salvation is (Acts 4:12).

I had to leave Methodism because I had to stop supporting divisive and damning denominationalism and begin to use my time, ability and material resources to promote the one true church for which Christ died (Eph. 3:21; 5:23-25; Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Rom. 16:16). One may “join” the Methodist Church, but one cannot “join” the Lord’s church. When one is saved, the Lord adds that one to His church, not to some denomination (Acts 2:47). Salvation is not to be found in Methodism because it admits being denominational and not the one body of Christ (Eph. 4:4).

I had to leave Methodism because I had to cease worshipping according to the will of men and worship in accordance with God’s will (John 4:24; 17:17). Contrary to the Word of God are Methodism’s ritualistic ceremonies; mechanical instrumental music and choirs in worship (Eph. 5:19); women worship leaders (1 Tim. 2:12); and, Lord’s supper observation monthly or quarterly (Acts 20:7). Salvation is not to be found in Methodism because it authorizes worship contrary to that which God has authorized.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to quit encouraging people by my teaching and example to be Methodists and begin encouraging people to become and be just Christians. When Paul had preached to Agrippa, his response was: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Obviously, Paul was trying to teach men so they would be Christians. How could I do differently and be right? Salvation is not to be found in Methodism because Methodism teaches men to be Methodists, not just Christians.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to quit thinking of convenience and start thinking of conviction. If Methodism were true, it would be so very convenient, but it is not true. Methodism tolerates a lot and requires a little. Surely, it would have been convenient to stay with the religion of my family and friends. Felix’s sad response to the preaching of the Gospel was, “When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). Salvation is not to be found in Methodism for Methodism teaches convenience, not conviction.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to give up the pleasant ties of time for the eternal and blessed ties that bind. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat.

10:37). Likewise with friends. Salvation is not to be found in Methodism, for it will not stand the test of eternity.

I had to leave Methodism because I had to leave the doctrines and the church approved by my earthly fathers for the doctrine and the church approved by my Heavenly Father. I knew that after hearing just one Gospel sermon. Salvation is not to be found in Methodism because it is not approved by the Heavenly Father.

What about YOU? Do you need to leave some man-made doctrine and man-made church for the Lord's church? Salvation is not to be found in any denomination of men. If a religious body is different from the one body, it is the wrong body. All who are saved will be saved through obedience to the one faith for there is no respect of persons with God. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

ENDNOTES

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 147-152.

¹M. Phelan, *Handbook of All Denominations* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1927), p. 113.

²L. G. Tomlinson, *Churches of Today* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1975), p. 57.

³John McClintock and James Strong, "Methodism," *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* 1969 reprint, 4:151.

⁴Phelan, p. 114.

⁵McClintock and Strong, p. 151.

⁶William Warren Sweet, "Methodism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1957 ed., 15:357.

⁷Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of The Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), p. 146.

⁸James Richard Joy, *John Wesley's Awakening* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Pub. House, 1937), p. 43.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 56,57.

¹¹Phelan, p. 115.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹³McClintock and Strong, p. 151.

¹⁴Sweet, p. 358.

¹⁵Phelan, p. 116.

¹⁶K. R. Hagenbach, *A Textbook of The History of Doctrines* (New York, NY: Sheldon and Co., 1868), 2:393.

¹⁷Sweet, p. 358.

- ¹⁸McClintock and Strong, p. 153.
- ¹⁹Joy, pp. 80-81.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ²¹Sweet, p. 359.
- ²²*Ibid.*
- ²³Nolan B. Harmon, *Understanding The Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Pub. House, 1955), p. 19.
- ²⁴Sweet, p. 359.
- ²⁵Harmon, p. 19.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ²⁷Alvin Jennings, *Traditions of Men Versus The Word of God* (Fort Worth, TX: Star Publications, 1973), p. 58.
- ²⁸Harmon, p. 19.
- ²⁹Hurlbut, p. 166.
- ³⁰Harmon, p. 102.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, p. 103.
- ³²*Ibid.*
- ³³*Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 106.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.
- ³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.
- ³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 115.
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 123.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 125.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 128.
- ⁴⁶Vergilius Ferm, *Classics of Protestantism* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 165.
- ⁴⁷Hurlbut, p. 167.
- ⁴⁸Sweet, p. 361.
- ⁴⁹Phelan, pp. 136-137.
- ⁵⁰Harmon, p. 25.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 43.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 140-147.

PRESBYTERIANISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

I have been asked to discuss why I left the Presbyterian church and have included a brief history of that conversion along with the errors of Calvinism inherent in Presbyterianism that lie behind my leaving that sect. However, nearly thirty years have passed since my departure and any study done and any spiritual growth attained will necessarily affect what is written here. Thought processes and knowledge expand over time and so the reasons for leaving Presbyterianism in 1965 are, necessarily, explored in greater detail now. However, no dishonesty is intended when the **original motives** for departing are explored more deeply for this lectureship. It is my intent, only, that the reader will better be able to grasp Calvinism's horrors as understood by me then and now.

BACKGROUND: CONVERSION

Initial contact with the gospel of Christ occurred in August 1965 through the influence of my wife. Two young people from Abilene Christian College (then) knocked on the door; asked Dorothy if they

could “talk to her about Jesus”; taught her the gospel; and that same week immersed her into Christ for the remission of her sins (Acts 2:38). The first Lord’s day following her baptism, Dorothy arose, got our eighteen-month-old son, Keith Jr., ready and announced to me that she was “going to church.” Since she had not yet informed me of her conversion, I assumed she meant the Covenant Presbyterian Church where we were members and I replied that I would accompany her. Trembling, she immediately informed me that she was now a member of the “church of Christ!”

As we arrived at the simple, small, white, concrete block building of the “Church of Christ” my mind was racing with thoughts about “cults” and “holy-rollers” and this “strange” thing that Dorothy had done. I knew that she had searched for the truth for a long time, even had studied with Jehovah’s Witnesses; but I also was aware that we had decided to join the Presbyterian Church in which I had been raised and to which doctrine I had been confirmed. Dorothy and I, and possibly many others, had come to feel that no one really held to the truths we had been finding in the Bible, so we had compromised by joining a known denomination.

In front of that small building in Erie, Pennsylvania, where about forty Christians met, was a sign that read: “The Church, Established A.D. 33.” That sign struck home with me, for I had studied Catholicism and knew its claim to being the “first” church. But, here was a group claiming to have ties to the first century! Another thing, which to me stood out as unusual, was the absence of an organ or piano for worship. I thought that “these people must be so poor that they cannot afford one!” The strangest occurrence that day of my introduction to the truth was the presence of a Christian whom I knew to be a second cousin to me, whom I knew was a member of the church of Christ. He asked me that very Sunday if he could study with me from the Bible and I said, “Yes.” He was at my house within the week, showed me the Jule Miller film strips, and then studied the conversion of the eunuch with me (Acts 8). I was baptized into Christ immediately after reading that chapter; for in the Presbyterian Church, I had only had water sprinkled on me

when a baby, which sprinkling was labeled “baptism.” The Covenant Presbyterian Church had now lost two members. Why?

BECAUSE GRACE WAS PICTURED AS TERROR!

Is God’s grace a terror or a help? Some dear reader may wonder at such a question, but the persistent doctrine of Calvinism that permeates the Presbyterian Church leads to such an inquiry. Calvinists believe that every minute thing that happens is caused by God. Listen to Boettner:

It is almost universally admitted that God determines when, where, and under what circumstances, each individual of our race shall be born, live, and die, whether it shall be male or female, white or black, wise or foolish. God is no less sovereign in the distribution of His favors. He does what He will with His own. To some He gives His favors. He does what He will with His own. To some He gives riches, to others honor, to others health, to others certain talents for music, oratory, art, finance, statesmanship, etc. Others are poor, unknown, born in dishonor, the victims of disease, and live lives of wretchedness. Some are placed in Christian lands where they receive all the benefits of the Gospel; others live and die in the darkness of heathenism. Some are brought through faith unto salvation; others are left to perish in unbelief. And to a very large extent these eternal things, which are not the result of individual choice, decide the person’s life course and eternal destiny. Both Scripture and everyday experience teach us that God gives to some what He withholds from others. If it be asked why He does this, or why he does not save all, the only available answer is found in the words of the Lord Jesus. “Yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.” Only the Scripture doctrine of the fall and redemption will give us any light on what we see about us.¹

Notice that God is said to be responsible for every failure and/or success of man! Every horror in life and every help in life is the selective result of the sovereignty of God (according to the above) and man can do nothing to alter these events. Man cannot according to **Calvinism**, nee **Augustinianism**, and now **modernism** even in churches of Christ, contribute one whit to his situation and/or salvation! Read further with Boettner:

This doctrine of eternal and unconditional election has sometimes been called the “heart” of the Reformed Faith. It emphasized the sovereignty and grace of God in salvation while the Armenian view emphasized the work of faith and obedience in the man who decides to accept the offered grace. In the Calvinistic system it is God alone

who chooses those who are to be the heirs of heaven, those with whom He will share His riches in glory; while in the Armenian system it is, in the ultimate analysis, man who determines this—a principle somewhat lacking in humility to say the least.²

Please, dear reader, peruse the above paragraph long enough to become aware that those who teach that man has anything at all to do with his salvation are said by Calvinists to denigrate the sovereignty of God and to exalt the efforts of man and are therefore **not humble!** When a Calvinist is asked why God saved some and not others, the answer is that such information belongs to His secret counsels.³ It is somewhat a mystery to those who study the phenomenon of Calvinism to note that every one of them is one of the elect. How would they know they were elect if such belonged to God's "secret counsels?" The Calvinistic system has an answer for how one knows whether he is one of the elect—God just tells him in some **convulsion or experience!** Too, is one not humble who obeys God and accesses grace (Rom. 5:1-2; Heb. 5:8-9)? The theory also teaches that:

...Calvinism is nearer to the facts, however harsh and forbidding those facts may seem. When all deserve death it is a marvel of pure grace that any receive life; and who shall gainsay the right of Him and whom He will to harden? This is admittedly an unpleasant doctrine. It is not taught to gain favor with men, but only because it is the plain teaching of Scriptures and the logical counterpart of the doctrine of Election.⁴

Is it not clear by now that Calvinists believe (even insist) that God, for no revealed reason, just plucks up some and puts down others? Some He condemns to evil and others to good. There is nothing man can do to escape this arbitrary system. Boettner adds:

Luther also certainly as Calvin attributes the eternal perdition of the wicked, as well as the eternal salvation of the righteous, to the plan of God. "This mightily offends our rational nature," he says, "that God should, of His own mere unbiased will, leave some men to themselves, harden them and condemn them; but He gives abundant demonstration, and does continually, that this is really the case; namely, that the sole cause why some are saved, and others perish, proceeds from His willing the salvation to the former, and the perdition of the latter, according to that of St. Paul, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom He will He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." And again, "It may seem absurd to human wisdom that God should harden, blind, and deliver

up some men to a reprobate sense; that He should first deliver them over to evil, and condemn them for that evil; but the believing, spiritual man sees no absurdity at all in this; knowing that God would be never a whit less good even though He should destroy all men." He then goes on to say that this must not be understood to mean that God finds men good, wise, obedient, and makes them evil, foolish, and obdurate, but that they are already depraved and fallen and that those who are not regenerated, instead of becoming better under the divine commands and influences, only react to become worse. In reference to Romans IX, X, XI, Luther says that "all things whatever arise from and depend upon the Divine appointment whereby it was preordained who should be delivered from their sins and who should be hardened in them, who should be justified and who condemned" (He quotes Luther from Profit).⁵

The convoluted reasoning of Luther and Calvin is quoted as the true way in which God acts in all matters of life and salvation. God is not to be said to cause evil but that God is to be seen as selecting a few to salvation. Yet, Boettner argued earlier above that everything that took place God did! The Calvinist wants his election and his ejection to harmonize with his view of the sovereignty of God and when pressed to explain such confusion, the Calvinist says that all of this is a secret and cannot be known. Calvinists start their argumentation with the thought that if any perfection in God's divine (to them predestined) plan is denied, then no stopping place can be found in thinking about God short of atheism. God did not need to create, says the Calvinist, but since God **did** create even the sinful acts of man have to be included in God's plan! The Bible verses usually quoted to "prove" this theory by Calvinists are Acts 2:23; 4:28; Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; and 1 Peter 1:20. Those who argue for man's part in salvation are said, by Calvinists, to deny God's eternal purpose. Further they say that man's fall in the garden changed God's purpose, which fall "drove" God to the expedient of a scheme of redemption. That is, if the crucifixion of Christ was in the eternal plan, then all the acts that made the crucifixion necessary were also planned by God says the Calvinist and any other teaching is atheism!

Note the following quote carefully: "The fact that the Scriptures often speak of one purpose of God as dependent on the outcome of another or on the actions of men, is no objection against this doc-

trine” (of Calvinism, KM).⁶ Oh, so it does not matter that the Bible teaches against this doctrine of election, predestination, and the horror and help of grace! Well, it does matter and no Calvinist on earth has the authority to say that those verses that do not agree with his doctrine are just “man-talk” and not significant; that is, those Scriptures are just **figurative** and not **literal** that mandate some action on man’s part in the scheme of redemption (cf., Heb. 5:8-9; John 14:15; Acts 2:38; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; *et al.*).

Is it a wonder then, that one would want to leave a system where God was said to be arbitrary and that taught that one could not know whether one had been elected or rejected without some “convulsion” or “experience” directly from God! A child, growing up under such teaching, lives in fear—not knowing whether God loves him or not! The grace of God becomes a terror rather than a help. It is a tremendous relief to learn that the Bible teaches that anyone can respond to God, and that God desires all men to be saved (Mat. 11:28-30; Rev 22:17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). One leaving Calvinism knows well what is meant by being transformed out of the power of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

BECAUSE BIBLE AUTHORITY WAS NOT FOLLOWED

The creed of the Presbyterian Church to which this writer had confessed stated:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth:...not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.⁷

Man is totally depraved and cannot respond to God, yet is called so to do (Mat. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17; *et al.*) according to the creed above.⁸ So, God must call one elected before creation to be saved! When asked, “Is not God unjust in requiring of man in God’s Law what man cannot do?” the answer given is that God did create man with the ability to obey but man lost that ability in the fall of Adam

and Eve.⁹ Did Adam and Eve then “obey” God and leave the garden? Presbyterianism (i.e., Calvinism) denies man’s self-will and denies clear Bible statements. Man can obey God (1 John 2:3; 5:3; etc.) and must obey God (Heb. 5:8-9).

Presbyterianism sprinkles water on infants (only the “elect ones” of course) and labels the act as “baptism.”¹⁰ Baptism is seen by them as not necessary to salvation, but as an outward joining to the church and as a sign of a covenant with grace already accomplished by God.¹¹ The Bible teaches that baptism is immersion or burial in water in order to receive salvation (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 2:38, etc.). Only those who can believe are to be immersed (Mark 16:16). Infants cannot believe. Therefore, are not candidates for baptism.

Presbyterianism teaches that there are only two “sacraments” ordained for the church by Christ and that only ordained ministers may dispense them—baptism (sprinkling) and the “Supper of the Lord.”¹² All the elect who profess Christ and observe the two sacraments are in fellowship regardless of other beliefs for all churches are “more or less pure.”¹³ The Bible calls for fellowship on the basis of continuing in all the doctrine from Christ (John 8:31-32; 17:17; 2 John 9-11).

If some of the above sounds familiar to members of churches of Christ, it should. Some of “our” preachers have insisted lately that one cannot contribute “one whit” to his salvation and that only some “big F” doctrines are necessary to fellowship. It is extremely sad to hear from “our” pulpits what Calvinism has long taught.

Bible students familiar with Calvinism will know the acronym, TULIP and the errors for which it stands: Total hereditary depravity (i.e., one is born a sinner); Unconditional election (i.e., the saved are eternally saved—the “elect”); Irresistible grace (i.e., man has no self-will); Perseverance of the saints (i.e., once one is saved, he can never fall from grace).¹⁴ Ezekiel 18:20; Hebrews 5:8-9; John 3:16; Hebrews 4:2; and Galatians 5:4-6 contradict every aspect of Calvinism.¹⁵ One who stays in Presbyterianism after reading the Bible must stop and smell the tulips! The “odor” from the aforementioned

false precepts caused my departure and hopefully will cause many more to escape the clutches of Calvin.

BECAUSE GOD'S METHODS OF CHOICE WERE MISUNDERSTOOD

Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 are a parenthetical statement in that great treatise on the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17) by the apostle Paul. Paul pauses in his defense of the new covenant to assure the Jews that God had not forsaken them, but that in fact the Jews had rejected the only message that could save anyone—the gospel (Rom. 10:1-4). All men, from Adam to this writer, are saved (if they are saved) by the gospel of Christ (cf., Heb. 9:15; Rom. 3:21-31). No one was actually righteous under any other covenant because the “blood of bulls and goats” could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4).

The teaching of the new covenant or gospel caused the Jews to question God's selection process. (Whether unsaved Jews literally asked such or whether Paul assumed such a question would be asked is moot; Paul discussed the question in Romans 9.) The question might have been something like: “Since God chose the Jews (Rom. 9:5) to bring the Christ, how can any of God's ‘selected people’ be lost?” In other words, “How can God choose anyone for some purpose without affecting that person's salvation? If God uses someone for God's purpose, how is it possible for that person to be lost?” Romans, chapter 9, is written to answer such an inquiry. Presbyterianism misunderstands this “choosing” as had the Jews of Paul's day.

First of all, Paul assures the Jews that he has no personal animosity toward them. He even wishes (the original language is idiomatic imperfect, or having tentative force; i.e., what Paul wished was impossible) he could be “accursed” if such would save all the Jews (Rom. 9:1-3). One must stand in awe of a Christian who would love his fellowman to such limits! Paul was in no sense personally opposed to the salvation of the Jews.

Paul is careful to explain that the “brethren” (Rom. 9:3) for whom he could wish himself accursed were indeed chosen by God (Rom. 9:4-5). They had been “adopted” as national sons of God

(cf., Deu. 14:1); they had known God's glory or *shekinah* (cf., Psa. 63:2); they were cognizant of the "covenants" (with Abraham, Gen. 12; Israel, Exo. 20; and David, 2 Sam. 7); they were familiar with the "service of God" (the priesthood, Heb. 9:1,6); and they knew the Messianic promises and the fact that Christ came as a Jew (Rom. 9:4b,5). Certainly the Jews had been especially chosen by God.

"Not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Whiteside noted concerning God's **process of choosing** that "the selection...is regarded as having reference not to the final salvation of persons but to the execution of the purpose of God."¹⁶ God **did choose Israel** in order to execute God's purpose, but that selection did not "automatically" insure the final salvation of every Jew. In fact, argues Paul, not even those who lived during the time of national Israel were "of Israel" (Rom. 9:6b). Why? Because as concerning salvation, the purpose of God has always been to include only those persons who are "**of faith**" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 11). Spiritual Israel today includes only those persons who have faith "in" Christ. In order to have faith "in" Christ, one must be baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27). The national Jews often argued with Christ that "they had Abraham to their father" as if mere birth in Israel insured salvation (e.g., John 8:33). Jesus' answer to the Jews on that occasion was that since they operated by such thinking, they were actually children of the devil, and not children of Abraham (John 8:44)! God, who is sovereign, can choose anyone for whatever purpose God has in mind; but that choice does not insure salvation to such an individual nor does that choice interfere with a person's free moral ability to choose to obey or disobey God (Mat. 23:37-38; 2 Pet. 3:8; 2:10).

God made choice of Isaac over Ishmael (Rom. 9:7). Why? To save Isaac and to send Ishmael to hell? No! God chose Isaac to perpetuate the seed of Messiah. Someone might say, "Well, I can understand that choice, for after all, Isaac was the legitimate son." So, Paul brings up Esau and Jacob (Rom. 9:8-13). Paul proves that fleshly descent did not insure salvation (Rom. 9:8b,9) and before

Jacob and Esau were born (Rom. 9:10-11) God chose Esau to "serve" Jacob. However, it was the nations that proceeded from Esau that later served Jacob or Israel (Mal. 1:1-4). If God's choice of Jacob over Esau had been for personal salvation, such a choice would have condemned every descendant of Esau to hell! But, God is no respecter of persons as concerning salvation (Rom. 2:11). As individuals, Jacob gave gifts to Esau (Gen. 33), but as nations "Esau" (Edom) served "Jacob" (Israel, 1 Chr. 18:12-13).

The President of the United States will often choose someone to be on the President's team. Such a choice does not alter the character of the one chosen, nor does such a choice insure that the selected one will still be on the team as long as the President is in office. God made many choices in the completion of God's plan to bring the Messiah through Israel and for the world. Not one of those Divine choices affected directly the personal character of the one chosen, nor did that choice insure the salvation of the person.

God is not "unrighteous" in any choice that God makes in order to achieve His purposes (Rom. 9:14). God's "choices" do not interfere with human "choices" and in fact the bringing of the Messiah enhanced all peoples "chances" at salvation! "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Tit. 2:14). Even though Israel had been the instrument through which God brought Messiah, Israel no more deserved individual salvation for every citizen of that ancient nation than did or does any other nation or individual (Rom. 9:1-6).

Sometimes, God's ancient leaders would become very discouraged about Israel. Moses, especially, was concerned about the rebellion of his people and God's attitude after the people sinned concerning the golden calf. But God assured Moses that the Divine purposes would be accomplished for God is "gracious" and "merciful" to whom He will (Exo. 33:19; Rom. 9:15). Presbyterianism has tried to make the statement in Romans 9:15 to mean that God chooses some to salvation but not others.¹⁷ The context, however, has to do with God's purposes in the future of Israel and the coming Messiah for all mankind. Individuals wanting God's mercy or forgiveness of their personal sins should heed the following: "He

that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro. 28:13). “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). “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). “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22), which was said to one **already** a Christian.

God will always bring His plans to conclusion: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). The ancient promise to the faithful Abraham had been of a **promised seed** (Gen. 12:1-3) which promise was fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3:23-29). That promise was not fulfilled in the Jewish nation but the Jews wanted to “will” otherwise and find their own righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). But God is the one who is in charge and God shows that His mercy is never a product of man’s will or man’s striving, but man must accept the mercy **found in Christ** whether he is Jew, Gentile, or anyone else (Rom. 3: 21-27). God did choose the Jewish nation to bring the Messiah, but God will show His mercy only to those who meet the conditions for faith in Messiah (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). Even today many would rather just be “good” and “earn” their way (**they think**) to heaven!

No better illustration of how God can use a person to fulfill God’s purpose and yet not interfere with that person’s ability to choose or reject the salvation of God could be located in all history than Pharaoh. “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might be declared throughout all the earth” (Rom. 9:17). Pharaoh openly defied God. Therefore, God’s will hardened Pharaoh (Exo. 9:16). God intended to show mercy to the Israelites through Pharaoh, but Pharaoh hearing the same messages from God that Moses and the Israelites heard, rejected God’s plans and so was said to be hardened by God and at the same time said to harden Pharaoh’s own heart (Exo. 9:7, 12, 34). Truly the Word of God is a “two edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).

God chose Pharaoh to show mercy to Israel, **not** to **condemn** Pharaoh. Pharaoh condemned himself by refusing to be a part of God's purposes. The sincere Bible student will recognize that even Moses was in the same position before God when Moses was called to lead Israel (Exo. 3-4) as Pharaoh was when God called that ancient Egyptian to show mercy to his Hebrew slaves. Moses responded in a positive way, but Pharaoh did not. Pharaoh could have been a part of salvation's plan, but he chose to rebel. The sincere Bible student will also recognize that God would have accomplished His purposes whether Pharaoh obeyed or did not obey and that is the whole point here. God works His purposes through man, but such working does not affect man's individual choice of obedience or rebellion (cf., Rom. 6:16-18).

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). When one is involved in God's "purposing" (and in a sense all men are purposing), God's message either **hardens** or **softens** depending on how one reacts to it. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all to realize that to hear the plan of God for salvation and not to respond is to place one at risk to have one's heart hardened. This is the reason that Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart as well as God's hardening that same heart. God's Word "cuts" two ways—it will either cut the heart or prick the heart (cf., Acts 7:54; 3:37). "Cutting" the heart produces spiritual "scars" that harden, but "pricking" is said of the soft heart that responds.

God has the power to use individuals and nations as He chooses: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor" (Rom. 9:12)? However, each person has the power to choose the character of the vessel so chosen by God. Romans 9:21 is not teaching that God chooses some to be saved (honor) and some to be lost (dishonor),¹⁸ but does teach that in working out God's purposes certain individuals were used.

Paul's clear claim is that God has the right to use men that are already sinners for God's purposes. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much

longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:” (Rom. 9:22). This principle Paul applied to the Jews who were used by God to bring the blessed Messiah to the world, but which Messiah the Jews (for the most part) rejected (Rom. 9:7). God used wicked nations against His people on many occasions trying to get rebellious Israel to repent of her idolatry, and such activity on the part of Deity was questioned (Hab. 1:13). God’s answer to Habakkuk was the wicked would not go unpunished either (Hab. 2:4-19) and that all men should be made to understand that God rules in this world (Hab. 2:20: “But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”) Sinners and saints, especially saints who worship a loving God, often find it very hard to understand how God can use **both** groups for His purposes. Saints have learned to trust the righteous government of God but sinners seem predisposed to question such control.

Before the time of Christ, the Jewish nation had long been “fitted” (*katertismena*—state of readiness) for destruction (Rom. 9:22). The Jewish nation, through her leaders, had also executed the Son of God (Acts 2:36). But God “endured” (Rom. 9:22b.) Why? Because God was doing exactly what God intended to do, bring in the Gentiles and those Jews who would obey the gospel—“vessels of mercy” (Rom. 9:23-24). The Jewish prophet, Hosea, had foretold of God’s purposes in these matters of salvation (Rom. 9:25) and Paul uses that Old Testament passage (Hos. 2:23) as his proof-text for arguing that the intentions of God always supersede the character of the human vessels involved. God intended that Gentiles hear the gospel and used the Jews to bring the message. That fact never did mean that God must save every Israelite, nor does God’s usage of any person mean that automatic salvation is due the one so used. Everyone must obey from his own heart in order to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; Hos. 1:10; Rom. 9:26).

BEFITTING CONCLUSION

Because I had never been baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and because of countless doctrinal errors in every area of Presbyterianism, my wife and I left. We were not angry at any individuals, nor were we “judging them,” we simply

believed that Bible authority not Calvinism must be followed. We came out of bondage into light. We realized that God “chose” to save only those who **obey** the gospel (Rom. 6:16-18).

ENDNOTES

¹Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), p. 36.

²*Ibid.*, p. 96.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷“The Westminster Confession of Faith 1647” (Revised 1903), Articles III and XI, Philip Schaff *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969), pp. 9:623-27.

⁸*Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism*, translated by Allen O. Miller and M. Eugene Osterhaven (Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1962), p. 17.

⁹“The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647,” p.28:662.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 27:61.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 25:658.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 24:656-57.

¹⁵See T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation* (Richmond, TN: n.p., 1874) for an extensive discussion of TULIP. Also see C. A. Feenstra, *Calvinism in the Light of God's Word* (Burns, TN: C. A. Feenstra, 1983); John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992); and John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, *A Reformation Debate*, ed. John C. Olin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

¹⁶Robert L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Saints at Rome* (Denton, TX: The Manney Company, 1945), p. 195.

¹⁷“The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647,” p. 9:623-37.

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

Jehovah's Witnesses have been known by various names such as "Russellism," "Millennial Dawn," "Zion's Watchtower," and "International Bible Students." The movement is a "cult" and was founded by Charles Taze (Pastor) Russell. J. F. (Judge) Rutherford was his successor and carried on his work. Russell and Rutherford gave strange definitions to such Bible words as soul, spirit and death. Many of their teachings are taken from Unitarianism, Universalism, Adventism, Swedborgeanism and Materialism.

Many errors are taught in this false religion. Yet the word "religion" is one they detest as they believe it came from the devil.

THEY TEACH THAT MAN IS WHOLLY MORTAL

If you were given a piece of paper and a pencil and asked to write the most valuable thing connected with your life, what would you write? The correct answer would be "the soul." Man is a two-fold being. He is a soul, and he has a body. Some think that man is a body and has a soul. This is wrong. Man is a soul and lives in a body.

What does the word soul mean? This will have to be determined by the context. Sometimes it means the entire being, inner and outer.

In other places it is something in the body. It is defined as: any, lust, appetite, life, pleasure, an essence that differs from the body and is not dissolved by death. The soul freed from the body, a disembodied soul, the principle of animal life which men have in common with the brutes.

Why Is the Soul So Valuable?

1. Because you can never get rid of it. "The dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). You may change your car and get rid of your clothes; you can even get rid of your body by suicide. You may swap, sell or trade your property, but there is one thing you can never get rid of here or in the world to come. That is your soul.

2. Because it is pronounced so by Christ. Making an application from a set of weighing balances, Jesus placed the world on one side and the soul on the other and declared the soul outweighed the world in importance (Mat. 16:26). If you were to gain all the skyscrapers and oil wells in the world and die without Christ you would be a failure.

3. Because as a living soul you must spend eternity in one of two places. Houses will decay, money will be lost and the earth will pass away, but the soul must spend an eternity in one of two places.

4. Because if it did not live, there could be no resurrection from the dead and life eternal. Men would have to look for a passage that calls for a re-creation instead of a resurrection (cf. Gen. 2:5).

The Meaning of "I," Is it the Soul?

(Shortest word, most used, I this, I that, I ought, I will, I can, I do, I remember, What is this I?)

1. Is it my body? Only the outward garment woven and worn by me can measure and label portions of lime, silica, iron, water and other elements that compose the body. Changes, body today, not the body of seven years ago, have had several bodies since born, but "I" am the same. "I," the real self, stands behind the body looking through windows of eyes, receiving through portals of ears. "I" rules, possesses the body. A thing belonging to me, my body.

2. Is it my brain? If so, which brain? Its tissues (cells) have been changed repeatedly, but this "I" is the same in spite of all these

changes of the brain. Like my body, my brain is something that belongs to me, who “I” am. The brain decays, I remain. The brain is but the instrument of the “I” who is the spiritual being behind it. Everything involved in conscious personality is related to the brain, but not originated by it. The brain can be the seat of thought without being the source of it. “I” not only use the brain, but educate and fit it for its work. The brain itself has no knowledge or thought, no power to originate either. The difference between the brain of an ape and a man is in the being behind it. It is not the brain that thinks, remembers, wills. On the dissecting table the brain is a mass of cells, nerve centers suffused with blood. Does this bleeding organism originate high intellectual efforts, noble thoughts of man? No, “I” am not the brain, the brain is not “I”—I possess it, it is mine, but it is not me. No thoughtful student of science can be satisfied with the notion that it is what thinks, remembers, and wills—looking on the bleeding mass before him.

3. Is it thought—Feeling and Emotion? No, the real “I” is the conscious person behind all of these, greater than all—possessing them all. They are mine, but they are not me. They are passing phases of my being, constantly changing, but “I” remains the permanent being behind all these—a separate person—self conscious of itself. This self has conviction: I ought—I ought not—to do certain things—no man outside a lunatic asylum is without that conviction. Paul calls it the law of God “written in their hearts” (Rom. 2:15). John calls it the light in every man (John 1:9). Conscience when disobeyed, drags self up for judgment and remorse for wrong no one else knows, and for which no one else can punish him.

4. Is it not the Soul? Adam became a living soul. Instead of saying I have a soul, I am a soul (“became a living soul”). The Supreme Spirit touched, with His finger, the body of Adam, as an electric spark flashing into his body, Adam became a living soul. Gain the whole world—lose your own immortal self (Mat. 16:26). I am the invisible immortal being clothed in a material body in this stage of life. “I” am an emanation from God’s nature, intended to be in harmony with Him. Can “I” be destroyed? If “I” have survived the physical emergency at birth, and sustained all subsequent changes of every part of

the body, will “I” not survive the putting away of the whole body at death? You—“I”—must live forever and ever—whether exalted or degraded in character—you are forever—you never can get away from yourself. Let the soul feel its dignity, measure its value by what God has done. He created it. He stamped it with His image, redeemed it by the incarnation and death of His Son. God’s value is set on your soul.

Man’s Soul Places Him in a Higher Kingdom than Animal

Man is differentiated from the animals in several ways:

1. God formed man of the dust of the ground. We are not told that any animal was so formed. This is man’s first distinction.

2. God breathed into man’s nostrils. No animal received either its breath or its life in that way. This is a distinction.

3. The thing breathed into man’s nostrils is called the “breath of life.” Here the Hebrew always makes a distinction between men and animals. The term, “breath of life,” is frequently applied to animals in the early Hebrew Scriptures. Whenever animals are said to have the breath of life, the Hebrew term is always *ruach-hayim* of life. The Hebrew term, literally, is always “wind of life.” Whenever man is said to have the breath of life, it is always *nishmathhayim*, literally, the “breath of life.” There is no exception to this. Both men and animals have the breath of life, but it is not by any means the same breath of life.

4. “Man became a living soul.” This is equivalent to saying that man became an immortal soul. The term “immortal soul, or immortality of the soul,” is not used in the Scriptures; the favorite term being a living soul. We are often asked to show or produce a passage of Scripture for “immortal soul.” We just turn the handle around and ask for the passage showing the soul is mortal. This shows the good sense in which inspired men wrote. The soul is naturally immortal. You do not say a frozen ice-berg, or a liquid river, or a round globe. These are naturally so. But we can show that the soul is incorruptible, and this means not “subject to decay.” Is not the soul then immortal? I can show where the body is mortal (Rom. 6:12; 8:11; study 1 Peter 3). In desperation, the Materialist cites Job 4:17, “Shall mortal man be more just than God?” This passage, though recorded in the Bible,

does not contain the words of that patriarch. It occurs in a speech made by Eliphaz, the Temanite, one of the alleged friends of Job (see Job 4:1). It was Eliphaz, and not Job who said, mortal man. Of these so-called friends, Job said, “Be ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value” (Job 13:4).

5. The soul was created in the likeness of God. In what respect is the soul like God? First determine what this image is not:

A. This “image” did not consist of material substance, for God is neither a material form nor a gaseous being (John 1:18; Luke 24:39; John 4:24).

B. This “image” did not consist of the attributes of God—such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience—because man does not possess these infinite attributes. (Note: thus, since this “image” must represent that which is common to both God and man, and since God is not material form as man is, and since man is not endowed with infinite attributes as God is, the “image” cannot be either matter or infinitude. What then, is common to both God and man?).

(1) Both are personalities. Both God and man are self-conscious beings with self-determining wills. This characteristic is found in all beings above animals, whether faithful or fallen angels, whether regenerated or rebellious men. Personality is not matter, physical. Herein lies the difference between man and beast.

(2) Both are moral beings. This moral image, which was corrupted by sin, is referred to by Paul. “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the IMAGE of Him that created Him” (Col. 3:10). It does not follow that when man sinned, he lost this image and became like a beast, because at least he retained his personality. In fact, he did not even lose his moral nature; he lost only the God-likeness of his moral nature. Man’s dusty nature (body) did not give man either his personality or his moral nature. Dust cannot give that which it does not possess. Animals are creatures of dust only; hence, they have neither personality nor moral nature. Since like begets like, man derived these two characteristics from God. This image of God is housed in a tabernacle of clay, but it is to be distinguished from the tabernacle.

(3) Man is like God in that he has power to think. That which thinks we call intellect. Man's intellect is like God's, a finite copy after the infinite Original. A being without intellect could never be a companion of God.

(4) Man is like God in that he is capable of feeling; pleasure, pain, joy, sorrow, and the like.

(5) Man is like God in that he has power to choose, to act, to perform, and thus to bring things to pass. This power we call will. Thus, man is like God in that he has powers of thought, feeling, and action that are similar to those powers in the Divine Being.

Does Man's Soul Go Upward or Downward?

“Who knoweth the spirit of man that it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecc. 3:21). See Ecclesiastes 3:18, “I said in mine heart.” This is the language of human doubt. But in Ecclesiastes 12:7 the answer is found. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

We are told that God only has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). However, what about the Father and the angels? Angels cannot die (Luke 20:36). Christ's immortality is eternal; ours had a beginning. His is original; ours is conferred. He has only immortality, no mortality.

Does the Soul Die, Cease to Exist?

We are told that the soul can be destroyed. They also say destroy means to kill or cease to be. See John 10:10.

Ezekiel 18:4 is cited to prove that the soul that sins will die (cease to exist). Answer: If the wicked turns will he live forever? (Eze. 18:23). See also (John 8:53; 11:26; 1 Tim. 5:6). Notice “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Mat. 8:22) who have ceased to be? Absurd! In James 2:26, we read that the body without the spirit is dead, not the spirit without the body.

Does the Soul Go to the Grave?

We are told that hell is the grave. However, notice Psalm 9:17. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” If hell means the grave, then the wicked and those who forget God will be the only ones that have a grave. Again, “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). Then, if you give your children correct training, they will never enter hell, the grave—if hell is the grave. Also, study Luke 16:27-31. What can one read from Moses and the prophets to keep one out of the grave?

They deny the Bible doctrine about hell. They say there is no hell and yet, do more preaching about it than anyone. Where there is no penalty there is no law. They are determined to disregard the law of God and, like Robert Ingersoll, try to ease their conscience by preaching that there is no place of everlasting torment. However, all their preaching and writing cannot destroy the force of one single passage of the Word of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Mat. 25:46). The Lord says the wicked will be punished eternally. Paul says this punishment will consist of tribulation and anguish (Rom. 2:9).

The Proof of the Soul’s Immortality

Souls are purified by obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Obedience does not purify the flesh. (1 Peter 3:21). Therefore, man is more than flesh.

The heart will live forever (Psalm 22:26). The conscience of man is in his heart (Rom. 10:10). Therefore, the conscience of man lives forever. See also First Corinthians 2:11.

The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). Our life “is soon cut off and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).

“I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ” (Phi. 1:23). If Paul expected to go into the grave, cease to be, it is hard to understand his “strait.”

“To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). This is what Paul said of his death.

God is “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mat. 22:32). This was our Lord’s controversy with the Sadducees about the resurrection. The Lord was not a Materialist! A Materialist would

have said "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not living; their bodies have rotten in the grave and their souls ceased to be."

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Mat. 10:28). The death of the body does not involve the death of the soul.

Paul was caught up to the third heaven and did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body (2 Cor. 12:2). How did Materialists find out he was in the body when Paul says he didn't know?

Read Matthew 17:1-8. Fifteen hundred years after Moses had died, and 750 years after Elijah had been translated, they both appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Their souls were not in any grave. Materialists say this was a vision, Hence, they say it was not real. Jesus called it a vision. When we see anything, we call it a sight. When the Greeks saw anything, they also called it a sight, a *horama*, a thing seen. This is what Jesus called the Transfiguration, and that is also the word that Stephen called the burning bush which Moses saw (Acts 7:31). Luke records concerning Peter, James and John, "And when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him" (Luke 9:32). See also Acts 26:19; First Corinthians 15:8.

In Revelation 6:9-10, it is not souls that had been slain, but souls of THEM that had been slain. These souls were conscience. They could talk, and understand. Revelation 6:11, teach that others were to be killed and join them.

What Can Be Done to the Soul?

- (1) It can be lost; Matthew 16:26.
- (2) It can be saved; James 1:21.
- (3) It can be converted; Psalm 19:7.
- (4) It can be purified; 1 Peter 1:22.

The gospel is God's power to save the soul of man; Romans 1:16.

Before Jesus can be your Savior, you must hear the facts of the gospel and obey them. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, worked miracles, and was crucified for the sins of the world. When people believe these facts they will turn from sin in repentance, confess that Christ is God's Son, and be buried in baptism. Then all the sins of their past life are forgiven by the power of the blood of

Christ. If this person will continue to live as Christ will have him live, as a living soul, he can live with God forever. However, remember that in this life he must keep the soul anchored down (Heb. 6:19). However, someone might say, “Preacher, I don’t believe I have a soul; I can’t see it.” There is something within the grain of corn that makes it come up, and yet it is unseen by the eyes of men. Likewise, there is something in the hen’s eggs that makes them hatch. There is a spark of life in the acorn that makes it grow into a giant oak. There is something within the soul of man that although the body perishes and returns to the dust of the earth, man will not die. He will be raised and live forever. The death of the body does not mean the death of the soul.

Moses died and was buried by God, but Moses was alive at the Mount of Transfiguration. Abraham passed away, but Abraham will live forever.

Some Great Questions Are:

1. What do you think of your soul? Is it worth anything?
2. Fathers and mothers, what do you think of the souls of your children?
3. Members, what do you think of the souls of your neighbors and friends?

(Purify your soul and Anchor it down with this strong anchor.)

THEY TEACH THAT DEATH MEANS “NON-EXISTENCE”

“Death means nonexistence” (Rutherford, *Reconciliation*, p. 296). Rutherford believed that when a man dies he no longer exists. He is as dead as a dead dog! According to Rutherford, death always means “non-existence.” This definition contradicts Paul’s statement, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; where-in time past ye walked according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2:1-2). Can those in “non-existence” be quickened? If they were not in existence, how could they sin? How could they walk in sin when they were not in existence? If to die is to become non-existent, how could Paul affirm that “to die is gain” (Phi. 1:21-24)? Paul referred to some false teachers who were “teaching things they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11). The word “sake” in this passage is

the same word rendered "gain" in (Phi. 1:21-24). How would death be gain to Paul? He would be with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). Also, he would not have pain or suffering, he would not have to endure temptations anymore and would be free from toils.

THEY TEACH THAT THE EARTH WILL ABIDE FOREVER

Jehovah's Witnesses contend that the earth will continue to exist through all eternity. They teach that "for ever" in Ecclesiastes 1:4 means a never-ending period of time. This assumption is utterly false.

It is a cardinal rule of Bible interpretation that any statement must be considered in relation to its context. Failure to observe this rule is probably the most fruitful cause of religious error. Many false doctrines would immediately perish if those who maintained them gave honest consideration to the rule.

1. **What is taught in Ecclesiastes 1:4?** Simply this: that man's labor (v. 3) and life on earth (v. 4) are but momentary when compared with the continuity of the earth. To force teaching concerning a never-ending earth into verse four, is to put something there that Solomon never intended.

2. **What is the period covered by forever?** The period in view is consistent with the statement preceding it, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." So long as generations come and go, the earth abides. "For ever" governs the existence of the earth while that process (the coming and going of the generations of men) continues. It teaches nothing at all about what will happen when that process ceases. That this is the correct understanding of the passage will be seen from the following observations.

The term "for ever" is a translation of the Hebrew word *olam*. This does not mean, as is often assumed, a period without end. Literally it means "age-lasting, or age-abiding." Rotherham renders it thus: "The earth unto times age-abiding remaineth." Note some Old Testament examples of the use of the word.

(1) **Concerning the Passover.** Through Moses, Jehovah gave the following instruction on the occasion when the Passover was instituted. "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall

keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever” (Exo. 12:14). Note: the Jews were to observe the Passover “for ever.” Did that mean for a “never ending period of time”? Of course not. It was to be observed for an age, so long as the dispensation of the Law continued. The Lord Jesus died to take the Mosaic Law, with all its ceremonial observances, out of the way (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:13-17; Gal. 5:1-4,18).

(2) **Concerning Hebrew slaves.** The same Moses delivered the laws of the Lord concerning slaves among the Hebrews. Such, were to be given opportunity of freedom after serving six years. Provision was made for any bondman who did not desire to leave his master. “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (Exo. 21:6). Note: such a bondman was to remain his master’s slave “for ever.” Did that mean “for a never-ending period of time”? Obviously not. It was to be “for an age,” so long as the relationship between the two was maintained. In other words, “for ever” was for the period of the man’s natural life. “For ever” ended when the slave died!

(3) **Concerning foreign slaves.** The law of the Lord governing non-Hebrew bondmen gave this instruction to the Israelites. “And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever” (Lev. 25:46). Note: these foreigners were to be Israel’s bondmen “for ever.” Did that indicate “a never-ending period of time”? Again, and just as obviously, certainly not. Such a suggestion is altogether ridiculous.

It is clear then, that the idea of the perpetuity of the physical earth is not in the “for ever” (*olam*) of Ecclesiastes 1:4. It has been well said, “the specific extent of the thing or idea to which it (i.e., *olam*) is applied must be determined by the nature of that thing itself” (E. M. Zerr Commentary).

That the Word of God plainly teaches the physical earth will one day go out of existence cannot be successfully denied.

1. **The Testimony of the Savior.** In the prophetic statement made by the Lord Jesus to His apostles on the Mount of Olives, these words occur. “Heaven [the sky] and earth shall pass away, but my words

shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35). Those words constitute a contrast, that is, something which denotes "opposition or unlikeliness in things compared." In what respect is the physical creation (heaven and earth) opposite to, or unlike the words of Jesus? In this: the former will pass away, and the latter will not. As "shall not pass away" undeniably means "shall continue for all eternity," then it must follow that the heaven and earth will one day go out of existence. If this is denied, there is no contrast in the statement, and it ceases to have any meaning at all!

2. **The Testimony of Peter.** This apostle foretold that there would arise those who would scoff at the promise of the Savior's return (2 Peter 3). He referred to the Flood, showing how human wickedness brought a catastrophe upon the world (note vs. 4-7). It was the world that perished, not the heavens and the earth. These remained, and are "reserved unto fire" against the day of judgment. What will happen to the heavens and earth when the day of judgment, or the day of the Lord comes? He says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief...in the which the heavens shall pass away...the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burned up...all these things shall be dissolved" (vs. 10-11). Observe carefully the words: "shall pass away," "melt with fervent heat," "burned up," "things shall be dissolved." It would be impossible to state more emphatically that the sky and earth will cease to exist when Jesus comes.

THEY CLAIM TO BE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

God's people since the establishment of the Lord's church have worn the name of Christian (Acts 11:26). A witness is one who has seen and can testify of something. There are no witnesses today! One must see and hear Jesus after His resurrection to qualify as a witness. The apostles were chosen by the Lord to be His witnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). Men today are not witnesses. Christians preach the testimony of the witnesses. The apostles were the witnesses. We today preach the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

THEY TEACH THAT CHRIST WAS A CREATED BEING: THEY DENY THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus has not always existed. They deny His equality with the Father, Jehovah. This theory was first advocated by a man who lived during the fourth century by the name of Arius. This man was one of the most famous heretics of that age. The people known today as Jehovah's Witnesses are keeping his doctrinal error alive. They speak of Christ as a creature. If Christ is only a creature, man is separated from God. No creature can redeem other creatures, and unite them with God. Revelation 3:14 is manipulated to set forth the position that Christ is not eternal. The passage teaches that Christ is the Beginner of creation, not that He was created. Jehovah's Witnesses do not read this part of John 1:1, "The word was God."

Jesus is from eternity. "But thou, Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth...that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from **everlasting**" (Micah 5:2). The margin reads: "From the days of eternity." Nothing could be plainer than this last statement. The Bethlehem Babe pre-existed, even from the days of eternity, co-existent with the Father. The Father called Jesus "my Son" (Heb. 1:5). Thomas, an apostle, referred to Christ as "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Jesus was not created, but "in him were all things created" (Col. 1:16-17).

THEY DENY THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Rutherford taught: "The doctrine of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is from Satan" (*Let God Be True*, p. 93). "The Holy Spirit is not a person" (*Let God Be True*, p. 81). "Jesus is a man and nothing more than a man" (*Reconciliation*, p. 125). Read and study Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19-20; John 20:28; Philippians 2:5-7; Matthew 4 and John 17.

THEY DENY THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Jehovah's Witnesses tell us that the body of Christ may have been dissolved into gases or somehow may be preserved. Yet Jesus said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see;

for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing” (John 20:27). The Bible teaches a bodily resurrection. To reject the physical resurrection of Christ is to destroy the entirety of the Bible. If one insists that it was the spirit and not the body that rose then there was no resurrection, for the spirit does not die. Jesus also ate with His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:30).

THEY DENY THE EXISTENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the kingdom is not yet established. However, both John and Jesus preached the kingdom was at hand in their day (Mat. 3:2; 4:17). Jesus said some in His generation would not taste death until the kingdom should come (Mark 9:1). The kingdom exists today and was in existence in the days of the apostles. This is too plain to deny. Paul says the brethren at Colosse were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13). John tells us plainly that he was already in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9).

THEY TEACH THERE IS NO ASSURANCE OF A PRESENT SALVATION BUT THERE WILL BE A SECOND CHANCE OR OPPORTUNITY TO BE SAVED AFTER DEATH

Jehovah's Witnesses have much to say about the second chance of salvation, but never offer any Scriptures to support this theory. They will quote Jeremiah 31:15-17, and try to manipulate these passages to teach a second chance. It is certain the rich man did not have a second chance (Luke 16). We will be judged by the things done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), not by things done in the spirit world.

CONCLUSION

Jesus taught that a tree is known by its fruits (Mat. 7:20). What fruits have you found growing on Jehovah's Witnesses? Where is the orphan home? What interest do they take in civic righteousness?

Jehovah's Witnesses need to throw away their books and just take the Bible. They cannot take both!

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Kenneth J. Chumbley



Ken J. Chumbley was born and educated in Coventry, England. In 1964 he emigrated to Australia. He became a member of the Associated Churches of Christ (Christian Church), and preached for them while attending their training school from 1966-1967. In 1967, he renounced the errors of the Christian Church and began preaching for the Lord's Church.

Ken returned to England in 1968 and was involved in mission work there until 1972. He has also done mission work in Canada from 1974 to 1976 and, again in England from 1985 to 1992. He has worked with congregations in Texas, Michigan, Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri. Ken edited the **Old Paths** magazine, produced mainly for Christians in Great Britain, since its beginning in 1977 until 1985. He began preaching for the Washington Street Church of Christ in St. Albans, West Virginia, in 1994.

Ken is married to the former Orinda (Linda) Thomas of Gonzales, Texas, in 1970. They have three children, Stephen, Thomas, and Ellen.

INTRODUCTION

In the course of this study, I will briefly discuss the history of the Independent Christian Church and why I left, but will spend the most part in dealing with the errors of the Independent Christian Church and to show where their doctrines are in opposition to the doctrine of Christ. In many instances, brethren are not fully aware of the matters which divide the Independent Christian Church from faithful congregations of the Lord's church. Too many believe that the only differences that exist relate to the use of instrumental music in worship and the missionary society. While both of these are major differences, there are other differences which, I believe are equally important and need to be considered. This is particularly important today when there are brethren who are involved with the so-called "unity forums" who are teaching that the things that divide us should not be a cause for division and that such

matters as the use of instrumental music in worship are simply matters of opinion.

My own association with the Independent Christian Church dates back to the mid-sixties in the land "down under" (Australia) where I was living following my emigration from England early in 1964. It was in that year that I came into contact with what is known in Australia as the "Associated Churches of Christ," becoming a member of that church later that year. The Associated Churches of Christ in Australia trace their roots back to the Restoration Movement of the last century, which occurred both in the United States and in Great Britain. At the time, there had not been any official split between what is known in the United States as the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) and the Independent Christian Church, although, as I later learned, churches were aligned with either the Disciples element or the Independent element. In later years there has been a separation with some congregations now being associated with the Independent Christian Church in this country. The churches in the state of New South Wales, with which I was mainly associated, were closely aligned with the Independent Christian Church. During this time I attended the Woolwich Bible College, a preacher training program operated by the Associated churches in the state of New South Wales, located in suburban Sydney. Whilst there I completed two years of a four-year course of study before learning the truth and becoming a member of the Lord's church.

HISTORY

As far as the history of the Independent Christian Church is concerned it can, in part, be traced back to two events which occurred in the middle of the 19th century, which eventually changed the course of many congregations that had originally been established as congregations of the Lord's church. The first of these events was the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849. The second event was the introduction of instrumental music into the worship of the church. The first occasion that this was done was in 1858 or 1859 in Midway, Kentucky where L. L.

Pinkerton was preaching. Although there were objections that were raised to the introduction of the society on scriptural grounds, it was the use of instrumental music in worship that was to bring about division in the Restoration Movement with the “Progressives,” as they were called, accepting both of these innovations into the work and worship of the church. The “Progressives” became the Christian Church (Disciples) while those who rejected these innovations remained in the “old paths,” with the New Testament as their only authority. This division was recognized in 1906 in the United States census which listed two separate religious groups.

Later, the “Progressives” were to divide as a result of theological liberalism and modernism that invaded the churches. Some of these matters were already causing problems in some areas prior to 1900. One of these issues was the adoption by some churches of “open membership,” whereby the unimmersed were accepted into full fellowship with the congregation. Incidentally, the first person suggested for open membership came about the year 1868, from the same L. L. Pinkerton who had introduced the instrument at Midway, Kentucky, but little more was said about this until near the turn of the century. Another of these issues had to do with the rejection of the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and again it is interesting to note that the same L. L. Pinkerton was an early advocate of its rejection. These and other issues gradually brought division into the ranks of the progressives as a result of their impact on the mission field, through the United Christian Missionary Society, and the other societies and agencies that were formed to do the work of the church.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century all of these matters were discussed vigorously both in magazines, at the various conventions and meetings of the societies. When these efforts had no effect in changing the direction of the theological liberals and modernists, following the Convention at Memphis, Tennessee, those who were opposed to these changes in teaching and practice called a meeting on November 12, 1926, to set up a committee for future action. This committee later called for a separate convention to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, October

12-16, 1927. The gathering was proposed to be a mass meeting of "believers" rather than the delegate that was the format of the official convention of the Christian Church. Although its purpose was not to form a separate church, the net result of the action was to eventually bring a dividing of the ways between the liberal Disciples and the Independents, as they became known. The date of June 7, 1947, has been marked as the time when the decisive separation of the Independent Christian Church from the liberal disciples occurred. This was the result of an article under the headline "Stand up and be Counted" that appeared in the *Christian Standard* of that date. For several weeks after this, the *Standard* printed names of preachers, church leaders, and churches opposed to the International Convention under the title "Honor Roll of the Faithful." The Independent Christian Churches usually are known as Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

DOCTRINES

We will now examine some of the doctrines of the Independent Christian Church which place them in opposition to the doctrine of Christ.

Instrumental Music in Christian Worship

For many, this is the first, and often the only difference, that is recognized between the Independent Christian Church is a matter of indifference, a matter of opinion and that one can worship with it or without it and be equally acceptable before God. Many of them will teach that God has not legislated on the matter, that He is silent and, therefore, one is free to choose whether or not to use the instrument in worship to God. However, when the instrument was introduced in the last century, its advocates, while maintaining such was optional, preferred the use of the instrument to fellowship with their brethren, who could not consciously worship God with it. The same is true today with many in the Independent Christian Church. They would not give up the use of the instrument for the sake of unity. They prefer the "ensign of Baal" to unity.

When one turns to the Bible, he sees that every reference to Christian worship authorizes Christians to sing, with **no** reference

to the playing of an instrument. Thus, for one to use a musical instrument is to **add** an unauthorized element to the worship (i.e., playing an instrument). By so doing, one rejects God's authority and is not adhering to the doctrine of Christ. There is no more authority to add instrumental music as a part of Christian worship than it would be to put jelly on the bread at the Lord's table. God has told us what He wants, He does not have to say, "Thou shalt not use instrumental music in worship." Having told us what He wants, He does not have to give us a list of all those things that He does not want. In telling us what He requires, He **eliminates** all others and they are thus **unauthorized**.

While still maintaining that the use of the instrument is an optional matter, some members of the Independent Christian Church have insisted that the Greek word (*psallo-psallo*), as used in Ephesians 5:19, has the instrument inherent in its meaning. However, if that were true then the use of the instrument would be commanded and thus, **not** an optional matter and Christians would be sinning if they did not use an instrument of music in their worship. Furthermore, **every** Christian would have to play and sing since all are to "make melody in their hearts to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). When a study of the meaning of the word is made in the lexicons, it becomes clear that an instrument does **not** inhere in the word as it was used in New Testament times.

Further, some have sought to justify using mechanical instruments of music in the worship by appealing to the Old Testament for authority. Perhaps the most thorough effort to do so was made by Victor Knowles (currently editor of the *One Body* magazine, which promotes the "unity movement" and is published by the Independent Christian Church and is distributed amongst our brethren, and indeed many of the articles are written by liberals among us). The title of his series of articles was "Trumpets in The Temple" which was published in the *Restoration Herald*, a magazine published by members of the Independent Christian Church, in the September, October and November 1983 issues. In that treatise, he gives two fundamental reasons in an effort to substantiate his case that Christians can worship God acceptably

when musical instruments are used. The first was, "There is no prohibition of their use either in the Old or New Testament."¹ The second was, "There is divine authorization for their use in both the Old and the Testament."² He then proceeds to seek to prove these points by giving twenty reasons related to the Temple, both from the Old Testament and from the fact that Christ and the early Christians were, at various times, found in the temple area.

At the time, I wrote a response to that article and sent it for publication in the *Restoration Herald*, but they refused to run it. (It was later run by Gary Workman in *The Restorer*, in August 1984.) Although they would not run my response, they did publish a letter that I had sent in along with the article. In this letter, I offered to send my response to those interested, and a few did respond, resulting in some lengthy correspondence. Further, I sent a copy of my response to Victor Knowles requesting his response. His reply of February 7, 1984, thanked me for my letter and then stated:

I don't know what I can say that I didn't say in the series that will help you any. It appears I could not convince you further. In your response you charged me with selective quotation, misquoting, castigation, irrelevancy, conjecture, assertions and making points that have no bearing. I don't know why you anti-instrument people always have to impugn the motives of those with whom you disagree. It gets a little old after awhile.³

This was the totality of his response. He was unwilling to deal with any of the points that I had raised, and even though in his letter he accused me of falsely charging him, he would not give me **any** examples of where I had done so. Remember, this same Victor Knowles is the one who for the last several years has edited *One Body* magazine and who wants us to join with them without them forsaking their errors. I cannot speak for others, but I for one will **NOT** join this effort which seeks to destroy true New Testament Christianity with compromise.

That those of the Independent Christian Church are in no way willing to cease their use of the instrument and returning to the doctrine of Christ, with respect to music in worship, is seen in this quotation from the January 1995 issue of the *Restoration Herald*, written by Elder Tibbs Maxey, B.A., B.D., "retired minister/edu-

cator, living in Joplin, MO.” One who writes frequently for the paper:

Midway is famous for another scene, the movement to start the Church of Christ, of no piano. In 1859, he [that is L. L. Pinkerton, KJC] introduced the melodeon in the worship service. Unable to get the church to purchase one, he and a black friend, in the dark of night, put a melodeon in the church. The next Sunday confusion reigned. One elder was so angry that he took the musical instrument out “in the dark of night.”⁴

It is significant to note how the instrument was introduced. Obviously L. L. Pinkerton thought he could do as he pleased, in spite of the fact that the congregation would not purchase the melodeon. What does that say about his respect for the authority of the elders? Sad to say, from time to time, there are preachers in the Lord’s church who will not respect that authority.

More could be said on this matter, however, this is sufficient for us to see that the Independent Christian Church is opposed to the doctrine of Christ in the matter of worship in song since they would seek to add the instrument without any authority from the Scriptures.

The Missionary Society

A second area in which the Independent Christian Church is at variance with the doctrine of Christ, is in the use of the missionary society to do the work of the church. It needs to be clearly noted that the division that occurred between the Independent Christian Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) had nothing at all to do with the **use** of the missionary society, but rather as a result of what the Independents saw as an **abuse** of the society. They were opposed to some things that were occurring in the society rather than the society itself. That this is so is clearly seen in the fact that they set up alternative societies which were smaller in nature, yet designed to accomplish the same thing, namely the work of the church as it respects missions and benevolent work either in the U.S. or in other countries. Some of these societies are the Christian Restoration Association, White Fields Evangelism, Tri-States Evangelistic Association, as well as many others that I have come across. These organizations have their own organiza-

tional structure with a president, secretary, treasurer, etc., and its members come from various congregations. These organizations then raise funds to support mission work and missionaries in the field, which are then under the oversight of the mission organization and **not** an eldership in a local congregation. As an example of this, note the following from the "Concerned Christians' Clinic":

Concerned Christians' Clinic Guidelines
Why The Clinic?

The purpose of the Concerned Christians' Bible Clinic is to: (1) Set the church in order, (2) encourage and strengthen weak congregations of the Lord's church, (3) establish new congregations of Churches of Christ, and (4) promote Christian love, brother hood and fellowship **ONLY** on the basis of a "thus saith the Lord" in all matters of faith and obedience to God.

The Director

The founder-director of the Concerned Christians' Bible Clinic is Bro. O.D. Wilson, who was chosen, unanimously, at the close of the first session of the clinic held at Ft. Pierce, Fla., February, 1972. Bro. Wilson shall serve in this capacity as long as it is possible for him to do so. In the event a proven need arises to appoint a different director, the existing board of Trustees shall appoint a successor. This shall be done at the regular session of the clinic. In the absence of a director, the present chairman of the board of Trustees shall serve as the Director.⁵

The document continues by outlining the duties of the director and board of trustees, including the appointment of a general treasurer to receive funds given to the organization and to distribute the said funds in support of its aims. This concept violates the Scriptures concerning the autonomy of the local church and its work as authorized by Holy Writ. The attitude which is often expressed by the members of the Independent Christian Church is that, "The Bible does not say that we cannot do it this way." This is, basically, the same response that is often given with respect to the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship. They believe that since God has not said, "Thou shalt not," that they are free to do as they please, regardless of the fact that what God has actually said would prohibit that which they do. God has told us how the church is to carry out its work with regards to missions and other areas of

the work of the church. He does not have to tell us all the ways that we are not to do these things.

Premillennialism

Many of those who are members of the Independent Christian Church hold to the false teaching of premillennialism. Some have estimated that up to 80 percent of the members of the Independent Churches accept this teaching. They are unable to see any problem in holding to such a teaching that makes the church of our Lord simply an after-thought in the mind of God. Premillennialism teaches that the kingdom was postponed because Christ was rejected as King, and as a result the church was substituted until He shall return to establish His kingdom. The Bible teaches that the church was **not** an “after-thought” but rather was in God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10-11).

That premillennialism is a doctrine that is espoused by some in the Independent Christian Church let us notice some articles that have appeared in the *Restoration Herald*. In one two-part article, the writer clearly deals with the millennial question and shows the false nature of such a position. In the issue that followed the one in which the second part of the article appeared, the editor saw fit to publish a response, as a front page article with the sub-title of “Another Viewpoint.” This “viewpoint” is written, according to the notation at the bottom of the article, by one Kenneth J. Nichols who, “ministers with Northern Hills Church of Christ, Cincinnati, OH, “ he concludes his article by stating:

These problem passages have been posed to prove a point: it simply will not do to suggest that the church is clearly the kingdom and vice-versa everywhere in Scripture. At best, the honest Bible student must concede that there are problems no matter which side of the issue he chooses. We all need to take greater care in studying the Scriptures and make less of an effort to attack the views of others. One can be an intelligent, sincere, Bible-believing Christian and understand the Scriptures to predict a literal kingdom on the earth!⁶

That issue of the *Restoration Herald* has no refutation of the false teaching, not even an editorial comment or note indicating the error of the position taken by Kenneth J. Nichols. This indicates, very clearly, that one could be recognized as a faithful member of the

Independent Christian Church, even a preacher, while teaching and upholding such false teaching, and still be held in fellowship.

Special Services and Fund-Raising

These are two other areas in which the Independent Christian Church has departed from the doctrine of Christ. Whilst I was a member of the Christian Church in Australia, the churches were always willing to participate in special services at "Christmas" and "Easter," not only in their own congregations, but in interdenominational services, and their preachers would fully participate in these services. They were also active participants in fund raising activities, as a means of gaining income to carry out mission work, etc., in addition to the first day of the week contribution and in violation of the teaching of First Corinthians 16:1-2. In 1978, whilst I was working with the church in Elkhart, KS, I received the bulletin from the local Independent Christian Church. The bulletin for the week of March 16 that year contained three announcements for special services. One was for a community "Easter" service in which several of the children from the congregation were to be part of a Community Children's Choir. Then there was to be a special "Good Friday Concert" in which the choir of Midwest Christian College was to perform. The third was an announcement of their "special RESURRECTION CELEBRATION" with a "Sonrise Service." In addition, there was a special article entitled, "EASTER: What does it mean to you?" Since I knew the preacher quite well, I wrote to him shortly after. I first complimented him on his front page article about the movie "Oh! God" and then, in part, I wrote to him the following:

However, as I looked to the back of your bulletin, I was surprised to see your widespread endorsement of the "Easter" period. Knowing that you are one who is concerned for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, I find the two impossible to reconcile. I might ask, where do you get your authority from for observing "Easter" as a religious occasion? From heaven or from men? "Easter" is not a biblical word, as I am sure you are aware, it does occur once in the KJV as a mistranslation for "Passover." Rather than in the New Testament, its origin is in Roman Catholicism. Should we not remember our Lord each Lord's Day in the way that He has appointed, in the partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of His death and

resurrection (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Where has He instructed us to remember on one special day each year? Why have a "Sonrise Service" on only one particular Sunday each year, that which the world calls "Easter Sunday"? Having a dawn service is, in and of itself, not wrong for we can remember the Lord in His appointed way any time on the first day of the week. It seems to me that celebrating "Easter" along with the rest of the religious world is not in keeping with the plea for a restoration of New Testament Christianity. Further, I would be interested in any proof that you might have to show that March 26, 1978 marked the anniversary of the resurrection from an annual point of view. If my Bible serves me correctly, I read that Jesus was crucified during Passover week and if that be so, then March 26, 1978 cannot possibly be the correct day for the Passover is on April 22nd this year.

That about this Community Children's Choir? Is this not again accommodating the world? Also, is not participating in this making the Christian church to be just another denomination among denominations? Furthermore, those with whom you participated do not preach the truth regarding immersion, in most cases, let alone that it is for the remission of sins. How do you reconcile this with the plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity? Are the unimmersed members of the Lord's body? Is the Lord's body divided into numerous denominations?

These things That I have mentioned are some of the further departures from the plea for New Testament Christianity that I am seeing in different places amongst the Independent Christian Churches. Ron, I would plead with you, Re-examine these things in the light of God's word, as well as the other areas wherein we differ, in order that you might be sure that what you are seeking to do and promote is for the unity of the Lord's church and the restoration of New Testament Christianity.⁷

He didn't take much time and thought to consider my letter, for a few days later, he replied in the following manner.

Since your letter arrived, I have given a lot of thought to just how I should reply. Several years ago I promised myself that I would never again even attempt to discuss such things. Therefore, I will reply but only to say that I'm truly sorry you have to feel the way you do toward me in these matters. Perhaps I'll just pull your address card to save you the worry. Ken, this need not affect our friendship in any way, since you are welcome to your opinion.⁸

That was all that he wrote! He refused to deal with these matters and instead past them off as simply a matter of "opinion" and removed the Elkhart church from his mailing list (incidentally, he had at one time been a member of the Lord's church). The church

letterhead that he used had the following statement on it, "*Preaching and practicing primitive Christianity.*" In responding to his "response" I appealed to this statement in an effort to get him to look at the matters that I had raised, as well as others, in the light of the doctrine of Christ revealed in His Word. However, I heard no more from him. Evidently the statement on his letterhead was simply that, a statement, and he was not willing to practice it.

In the last few years it seems that more and more that many of the Independent Christian Churches are becoming like the other denominations around about them and less and less are they following the doctrine of Christ. In January 1992, a news article in the *Daily Journal*, the local newspaper, announced that a new Independent Christian Church was to be established in Farminton, Missouri, during the month of April, by a preacher who had moved to town in December. (Where he had worshipped between December and April, I never did find out!) In that article, he was reported as saying, "We do not want to attract people from other churches," "We're looking for people who do not have a church home."⁹ Incidentally, they have called themselves a "Community Christian Church," which seems to be appropriate, as they are certainly more community centered than biblically based.

Church Organization

Some brethren are sufficiently aware of the teachings of the Independent Christian Church to acknowledge that in the matters of instrumental music and the missionary society, they err from the doctrine of Christ as revealed in the Word of God, but with many, that is all they know. Over the last decade or so a number of brethren, who consider themselves to be "informed," have sought to get us to believe that we do not know the difference between the Independent Churches and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and that, in reality, we are close to the Independent Christian Churches. That may indeed be true of these "informed" brethren, but faithful brethren, who know of the numerous differences between us, will recognize that those of the Independent Christian Church do not hold true to the doctrine of Christ. Let

us continue to notice the errors that are espoused by Independent Christian Churches.

Whilst I was in Australia, there were congregations among them that had men serving as elders who did not have children and deacons who had never married. However the Scriptures show that the qualifications for both indicate that they must be married men and that elders are to have believing children (2 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). That this practice is not confined to Australia is seen in the following, taken from the local newspaper in 1974, when I was working with the St. Joseph, Michigan church:

Buchanan—Richard Walkeden has been re-elected president of the congregation of the Buchanan Church of Christ. New officers include Robert Mahan Sr., vice president; Mrs. Fred Conelley, secretary; Mrs. John Beehler, assistant secretary; Mrs. William Thomas, treasurer; Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Blackmun, financial secretaries; Lene Taube, Bible school superintendent; Forrest Gardiner, trustee; Kenneth Blackmun and Clifford Kingery, financial advisors; Robert Mahan Sr., and Carl Herdt, elders; August Littrell, Kenneth Blackmun, Wiley Wallace, Fred Conelley, Chester Walkden, Wayne Castle, Forrest Gardiner, Clifford E. Pruett, Elmer Adolph, Leigh Raven, Russell Elwood and Donald Bumstead, deacons; Mrs. Kenneth Blackmun, Mrs. Steve Balog, Mrs. James Cronin, Mrs. Leigh Raven, Mrs. Fred Keller, Mrs. Forrest Conelley and Mrs. David Bragdon, deaconesses; Howard Lahrng, John Heller, Roger Quick, Dale Hover Sr., Henry Coffinger, John Raven, Charles Day, Ronald Batterson, C.J. Kublick and Clifford Kingery, assistant deacons.¹⁰

At the time, the congregation in Buchanan was considered to be the largest among the Independents in Southwest Michigan. Further, the preacher for the congregation always referred to himself as “Pastor” and even had a sign on the door of his office to that effect! That this is now a common practice among the Independents, is seen in the following statement, “Why do our preachers in ever-increasing numbers, persist in calling themselves pastors when the New Testament is quite clear that a pastor is an elder, an office separate and distinct from the office of preacher/evangelist?”¹¹ Also, note that those positions mentioned, from the Independent Church in Buchanan, were “elected” positions, a common practice amongst them. They are elected by majority vote and **not** appointed because they fulfill the scriptural

qualifications. Did you also notice that the election included **deaconesses** and **assistant** deacons? Where in the New Testament do we find qualifications for such and, indeed, the authority for such? It is also common practice among the Independents to have elders and deacons, as well as their extra-biblical positions filled by popular election for a specific time period. In many instances, they operate with a board of elders and deacons who make decisions by majority vote, thus giving the deacons equal authority with the elders, and since in many instances, there are more deacons than elders, it becomes a case of the deacons running the affairs of the church. Further, a common practice among them is that of taking a congregational vote on important matters where even the women participate with equal voice in making decisions. Sometimes they have a greater voice when they outnumber the men.

The problem of the preacher calling himself “Pastor” or members calling the preacher “Pastor” is becoming more and more of a problem in Independent Christian Churches. Following a front page article, entitled, “Pardon, Did You Say ‘Pastor’?”, the editor of the *Restoration Herald* wrote the following in his editorial:

Frankly, I am frightened by what I am seeing—the pragmatic philosophy that says, “If it works, do it.” Some preachers, calling themselves pastors, are virtually running the show in many of our churches. In doing so they are relegating the elders (the true overseers of the church) to a secondary position. Young preachers, even those still in their 20s, are being called pastors (elders) and are functioning in the decision-making roles reserved by God for older and wiser men. This is not only unwise; it is wrong.¹²

You may be asking, “How long will it take for them to move farther away from the doctrine of Christ in the matter of church government?” Well, some have already taken the next step. Note the following from an editorial which appeared in the *Restoration Herald* during 1990:

For sometime now I have thought it was all but a foregone conclusion that it would happen. It was just that I didn't know the specifics of it—the who, when, and where. Now these details have been filled in, and I share them with you. The Memorial Christian Church in East Tennessee, has recently chosen a woman as an elder, the first independent Christian church/church of Christ to my knowledge to so act. Two significant factors need to be mentioned: (1) The person chosen

as an elder is Dorothy Keister Walker, widow of the late Dean Walker, well-known educator and leader among us, a woman known throughout the brotherhood as a lady of education, charm, and culture who has contributed a lifetime of useful service to the kingdom. I am saying it is not some flighty, but ambitious, novice who has stumbled into this role, but a brotherhood figure who obviously is cognizant of the implications of her action. (2) The congregation which chose Mrs. Walker, the Hopwood Memorial Christian Church, is not some insignificant congregation hidden away in a remote area of the world, nor an inner city mission lacking in man-power and Scriptural knowledge. Hopwood is located at the edge of the campus of Milligan Christian College, an ancient and honored institution with deep roots in the Restoration Movement. Because of its geographical proximity to the college, many incorrectly associate the two. Although the church is separate and distinct from Milligan College, naturally a number of college personnel are members and leaders of the church. Others, besides, Mrs. Walker, have moved into this new area with eyes wide open. It seems to me that in making this decision, the Hopwood Memorial Church has closed its ear to the voice of early church history, the plea of our movement, and the teaching of Scripture. Of course, as an autonomous congregation this church is accountable to no one but the Lord, and has, as an essential part of this autonomy to chose whom it will as its leaders. That part is not being challenged. But as an autonomous church, it also has the duty to act in a responsible manner, honoring the Word of God and upholding the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). Let it be remembered that autonomy operates only in the realms of opinion and expediency, not in matters of faith and doctrine. An autonomous church does not have the right to alter the Word of God no matter how many vote in favor of doing so. If the Bible restricts the eldership to men with specific qualifications (which is the position we as a New Testament people have consistently maintained), this policy cannot be reversed by majority vote.

That one congregation has chosen a woman elder concerns me, but my deeper concern is for how many others will follow her example. And with what effect upon our unity? How will brotherhood organizations respond to day to what a score of years ago they would have condemned? Will invitations to participate in national gatherings be extended Mrs. Walker as our first female elder? To others of this congregation who made the choice? Will Hopwood Memorial Christian Church be held up as a model for other churches to imitate, or condemned as a poor example to be avoided? We can only wait and see.¹³

Let it be noted, as the editor informs us, that the congregation that took this action is a prominent one among the Independent

Christian Churches, being located close to Milligan College, Tennessee, and that many of the faculty of the college attend that congregation. It should further be noted that this same college has served as the "host" for one of the so-called "Unity Forums" between some of our brethren and members of the Independent Christian Church.

It is tragic that the editor of the *Restoration Herald* was unable to see that the argument he made, that the congregation "has the duty to act in a responsible manner, honoring the Word of God and upholding the faith which was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3)" could be applied equally well to the use of instrumental music in worship and to the other matters wherein the Independent Christian Church has departed from the doctrine of Christ. He continues, "an autonomous church does not have the right to alter the Word of God no matter how many vote in favor of doing so." Again, this would be applicable with respect to congregations "voting in" the mechanical instrument of music into the worship service. Note one other statement from this editorial, "If the Bible restricts the eldership to men with specific qualifications [which is the position we, as a New Testament people, have consistently maintained], this policy cannot be reversed by majority vote." The Scriptures are equally restrictive regarding our worship in song. The Bible teaches us that we are to sing. The same principle that would prohibit appointing women to the eldership, namely that Holy Writ does not authorize such, since it specifically states that they are to be men, and not simply any men but those who meet specific qualifications, would apply to the matter of Christian worship. The Bible specifically says, "sing," this would prohibit playing, or singing and playing, as clearly as that same Bible prohibits women elders or male and female deacons.

We should also note that the editor of the *Restoration Herald* concludes his editorial musing over whether other Independent Christian Churches will follow the example of the Hopwood Memorial Christian Church and appoint women elders, whether she will be asked to speak at national meetings or whether it will be "condemned as a poor example." There is **NO** call from this

editor for the congregation and this woman “elder” to repent or for other congregations to withhold fellowship, if the Hopwood church continues to violate Scripture and refuses to repent. How strong a stand will he take, or will he allow such activities to continue without action?

It did not take long for it to be seen which direction some of the Independent Christian Churches were taking. Notice the following from the pen of the same editor in the July 1992 editorial, as he puts out “A Multiple Choice Exam,” regarding some of the practices of the churches with the first question being: “Question # One: Why are some women in some of our churches being selected and ordained as elders?”¹⁴

Other departures from the doctrine of Christ with respect to church organization that we had noted above are continuing unabatedly. In the April 1993 editorial of the *Restoration Herald*, the editor writes:

A lot of present-day preachers, in calling themselves pastors (which they aren't) instead of evangelists (which they should be, but unfortunately often aren't), contend that it's just a little thing, nothing worth getting excited about, merely a means to a more efficient ministry—the same kind of reasoning which Ignatius probably employed. [Ignatius of Antioch in making a distinction between an elder and a bishop, KJC] I suspect that those who forget the distinction between the function of service and the office of deacon, and place women in the diaconate argue that it's just a small thing which they are doing. “Function or office—six of one, half-a-dozen of the other—who cares? The important thing is to keep everyone happy, keep the wheels spinning, make sure the work is done!”¹⁵

Baptism

There are many that have the assumption that all of those associated with the Independent Christian Churches still immerse for the remission of sins. This assumption is **not** accurate. It was common practice among the Christian Churches in Australia, and I am persuaded that it is true in this country as well, to put off baptism until the next Sunday or some special service. If nothing else, this shows a lack of appreciation of the importance of baptism. Additionally, there was, and indeed is, their acceptance

into fellowship of all who have been immersed, regardless of the purpose of that baptism. This is seen in the following:

Let me give you an example: the Los Gatos (CA) Christian Church has recently called Daniel Henderson as its 'pastor-teacher.' In a letter to Robert Pritchard, in which he deals with some of Pritchard's inquiries, Mr. Henderson states: "I do not teach that baptism is a necessity for the remission of sins, but that it is a public declaration of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in baptizing us into the body of Christ."

In the fall issue of its publication, *The Church Builder*, the Southern California Evangelistic Association issued a warning to churches to be on guard against church thieves. The article says: "There are sects and groups who are now plotting to send in a preacher into a small struggling congregation then gradually week by week their people start joining the church and in a short time they have enough members to out vote the others and then turn the church into what they want and capture the building and grounds free of any money."

It is a wise warning, one we should all heed. But shouldn't we be equally concerned, or more so, about churches such as Los Gatos that pose as Christian Churches while teaching and practicing doctrines which are contrary to what we as a Bible people hold as essential elements of the faith? From my vantage point I view this as a greater threat.¹⁶

From a Christian church newsletter: "These are busy days, but oh, so rewarding as we see souls saved, the saved baptized, and the baptized growing."

From a letter from a preacher (pastor-teacher) of a Christian Church responding to an inquiry about his position on baptism, "I do not teach that baptism is a necessity for the remission of sins, but that it is a public declaration of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in baptizing us into the body of Christ."

From a letter by a letter by a Campus Crusade minister working on the campus of a major mid-western university, and at the time a member of a Christian Church in the area, "My own stand on baptism is that it is an outward expression of an inward change that it is not necessary for salvation, for forgiveness of sins, nor is it necessary to receive the Holy Spirit."¹⁷

Probably those preachers who accept everybody's immersion without one word of inquiry as to the motive for baptism, justify themselves by saying, "Who cares about why? The important thing is they have been." Besides, "We can take 'em now and teach 'em later" And from this little negligence it's only a small step to the accepting of the pious unimmersed into fellowship. "After all, isn't it the possessing of a Christ-like spirit that is truly important?"¹⁸

Because of this lack of respect for the doctrine of Christ with regards to baptism, they have, on occasion been associated with denominational groups in campaign type efforts. As a member of the Christian Church in Australia, I was trained as a counselor for one of the Billy Graham Crusades, as they were cooperating with other denominations in that effort. Pulpit exchanges with other denominations was also accepted practice along with having denominational preachers speak at special meetings and conferences (conventions). I remember on one occasion, speaking for a Baptist Church wherein there was full fellowship. In 1967, the speaker for the annual meeting in New South Wales was Dr. John Watson, a Methodist preacher, from the British and Foreign Bible Society in London. That this is a practice of the Independent Churches in this country is seen in the following quotation from the *Restoration Herald*.

Charles Colson (Chairman of the Board, Prison Fellowship Ministries) spoke at the Friday afternoon session of the NACC. President Richard Hogan presided at the session, and Kenneth Bennett, in the absence of Paul Benjamin, introduced him. Colson's list of accomplishments (many of which were read by Bennett in his introduction) is truly outstanding. I did not get to hear 'Chuck' Colson speak, but have been told by a number of those whose opinion I prize that he had one of the finest messages of the convention. My son, David, for one, was appreciative of his sermon and specifically spoke of the beliefs he holds which are solid New Testament doctrines and hence in harmony with what we in the Restoration Movement hold dear. David (a preacher and strong in his understanding and practice of New Testament doctrine) wanted me to hear the message, and so he provided me with a tape of the session.

I listened. I was impressed, thrilled, challenged, motivated, as I thought I would be. His understanding of the problems of America and the world, and his solutions are right on target. In a strong conclusion, Colson urged upon his audience, as members of the church, to do four things: (1) Be people of truth; (2) Be doers of the Word; (3) Be servant people; (4) Be transformed people. It was a great message, one I'm sure he gives frequently, and one which I pray will be used by God to help move America in the right direction. There is, unfortunately, another side to this picture, and we need to view it as well. Some months ago I received a letter from Reggie Thomas in which he said: "I have just been in an all-day board meeting of American Rehabilitation Ministries. A most disturbing fact came to light. Quite some time ago Joe Garman gave a baptistery-communion table to Chuck Colson.

Chuck Colson refused it and stated he would not be involved in baptizing any prisoners.

Yet many, many Christian church members support Chuck Colson's prison ministry, while Joe Garman and ARM are suffering for a lack of support.

We have experienced the same problem in supporting orphans. While we suffer trying to feed and clothe the 59 orphans at Mapou, Haiti, thousands of Christian church people support World Vision and other inter-denominational groups that do not believe nor practice the New Testament plan of salvation. Could you, as editor, sound another warning to members of Christian churches to please support our own missions and missionaries?"

I am doing so because, like Reggie Thomas, I am opposed to all denominationalism. I believe in the church found in the New Testament, and I know that in order to become a member of that church one has to be immersed for the remission of his sins. Indeed, our Lord Jesus both directly and through His agents taught the necessity of baptism. Why then should we teach less or support those who do? I do not presume to tell you not to listen to the Charles Colsons, not to admire them, not to fellowship with them as far as that is possible for you to do. I do, however, plead with you not to support them. Independent missionaries who are dedicated to all the principles of New Testament Christianity deserve the support of all of us who, with them, are "Christians only."¹⁹

Did you note that the editor, who wrote the article, did not indicate that it was sinful for the members of the Independent Christian Churches to fellowship these denominational people? His only concern it seemed was that members and churches not provide monetary support for these denominational efforts.

This flirtation with denominationalism has brought about its fruit and has contributed to the further departure of many Independent Christian Churches from the doctrine of Christ. This is seen from their own papers:

But the problem is much deeper than semantics. The real problem isn't one of terminology, but of theology. With the emergence of the use of the title "pastor" by more and more preachers we are really seeing an acceptance by them of a church polity that is foreign to the New Testament. Some of us have long felt that our preachers have been reading too many Baptist books, preaching too many Baptist sermons and adapting too many Baptist methods. Now we have clear evidence that this is so.²⁰

At a recent NACC a friend of the convention, a well-known brotherhood figure, a man not noted for his conservative views, said, "You know, the North American is really a Baptist convention."

I'm not certain what the learned brother meant by his statement. Maybe it was no more than a passing reference to the increased usage of the term "pastor" by some of our preachers who have a hankering to run "their" churches ala Baptist "pastors," but I doubt it. Maybe his statement was a hyperbole referring to the presence of Baptists on the convention's program, but I don't think so. Maybe he had in mind the growing influence of Calvinistic theology in the content of NACC presentations as well as in hallway discussions. Maybe, just maybe that's what he meant.²¹

Why do our Bible colleges persist in bringing in denominational singers to entertain students and prospective students (and faculty and staff)? Are there no musicians among us? What will happen to Restoration convictions when evangelical participation is held forth as the model?²²

Why are "outsiders" brought into our conventions and rallies, often at considerable cost, to perform services which could be rendered equally well by brethren in our Restoration churches free of any charge? Are we "name" conscious or "Name" conscious?²³

The editor returned to the same theme in his editorial for the February 1993 issue, under the title of "Let's Use Our Own." I would like to have included the whole editorial, but space limitations prohibit. In this editorial he quotes an article written by another member of the Independent Christian Church about the use of speakers from other denominational groups under the title "Where Are Our James Dobsons, Charles Swindolls, Billy Grahams and Tony Campolos?" The final sentence of that article states: "Do we sound a trumpet cacophony by teaching and preaching one plan of salvation, while endorsing those that teach and preach a different one (Galatians 1:8)?"²⁴ That is a very significant question and one which some in the Lord's church need to consider very seriously. However, the editor's comment, immediately after this quotation, is significant since it "takes the sting" out of the question. He writes:

I don't believe that Brother Nay is saying that there is never a time for hearing evangelical speakers or for using their ideas. But let those times be limited and, yes, under controlled conditions. And by all means let us cease the practice of making heroes out of

denominationalists while ignoring talented men and women who are Christians only.²⁵

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this chapter with another quotation from a former editor of the *Restoration Herald*, which he made in some personal correspondence that he had with me in 1977, and then make some brief comments relative to it. He states:

The matter of "fellowship" does not begin and end with attending worship services together. The "fellowship" in question in this issue is the matter of eternal life. The "test" aspect has been imposed by those who choose not to use the mechanical instrument, etc., while maintaining that those who do possess no eternal life. There is no way we are all going to get into the same building and there is no way we are all going to have the same likes and dislikes. And the side by side existence of the 'likes' and 'dislikes' during the last half of the nineteenth century should be viewed carefully and prayerfully in the light of the real issue of fellowship.²⁶

According to this editor, all of the differences that exist between the Lord's church and the Independent Christian Churches, are matters of "likes" and "dislikes." This is the same position that has been taken by those among us who would seek to bring about a union with the Independent Christian Church without their forsaking those doctrines that they hold, which are contrary to the doctrine of Christ. The truth of the matter is that many of the differences that do exist are far more than matters of "likes" and "dislikes," but rather concern the acceptance of the authority of God's Word and adherence to the doctrine of Christ. The reason that I left the Independent Christian Church was because of their failure to adhere to the doctrine of Christ and the more that I have studied about them over the past years, I am convinced they are moving further and further from the doctrine of Christ and are simply another denomination among denominations. It is true, as this editor states, there is "no way we are all going to get into the same building" until such time as those in the Independent Christian Church cease to practice and renounce those teachings and practices that are contrary to the doctrine of Christ. Unless such takes place, there is **no way** that faithful children of God can fellowship members of the Independent Christian Church. I, for

one, will **NOT** be a part of the phony “Unity” movement that is being carried on through these “Restoration Forums,” which are nothing more than an attempt by some leaders in the Independent Christian Church, being helped along the way by apostates among us, in an effort to “draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Brethren, may we take heed of the warning and not follow after their pernicious schemes to deviate us from the doctrine of Christ and may we ever “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

ENDNOTES

¹Victor Knowles, “Trumpets In The Temple,” *Restoration Herald*, September 1983, p.3.

²*Ibid.*

³Victor Knowles, Personal letter to the writer dated February 7, 1988.

⁴Tibbs Maxey, “Midway Second Christian Church,” *Restoration Herald*, January 1995, p. 14.

⁵O. D. Wilson, director, “Concerned Christians’ Clinic Guidelines for 1974.”

⁶Kenneth J. Nichols, “Is The Kingdom of God the Church, Another Viewpoint,” *Restoration Herald*, April 1989, p. 4.

⁷Personal letter from Ken Chumbley to Ron Wilson, preacher for the First Christian Church, Elkhart, Kansas, March 29, 1972.

⁸Personal letter to Ken Chumbley from Ron Wilson, preacher for the First Christian Church, Elkhart, Kansas, April 3, 1978.

⁹“New Minister Plans to Begin Church Here,” *Daily Journal*, Flat River, Mo., January 1992.

¹⁰News Report in the St. Joseph, Michigan, *Herald Press* 1974.

¹¹Thomas D. Thurman, Editor, “Some Questions,” Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, November 1989, p. 2.

¹²Thomas D. Thurman, “Call Bible Things By Bible Names,” Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, June 1987, p. 2.

¹³Thomas D. Thurman, “And Now It Has Happened!”, Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, June 1990, p. 2.

¹⁴Thomas D. Thurman, “A Multiple Choice Exam,” Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, July 1992, p. 2.

¹⁵Thomas D. Thurman, “Little Things Mean a Lot”, Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, April 1993, p. 2.

¹⁶Thomas D. Thurman, “Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?”, Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, February 1990, p. 2.

¹⁷Thomas D. Thurman, “A Return To The Baptists?”, Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, January 1991, page 2.

¹⁸Thomas D. Thurman, “Little Thins Mean a Lot, Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, April 1993, p. 2.

¹⁹Thomas D. Thurman, "Let's Support 'Christian-Only' Missionaries," Editorial, *Restoration Herald* November 1990, p. 2.

²⁰Thurman, "Call Bible...."

²¹Thomas D. Thurman, "The North American Convention," Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, July 1991, p. 2.

²²Thomas D. Thurman, "Some Questions," Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, November 1989, p. 2.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Thurman, "A Return...?"

²⁵Thomas D. Thurman, Editor, "Let's Use Our Own," Editorial, *Restoration Herald*, February 1993, p. 2.

²⁶Personal letter to Ken Chumbley from H. Sherwood Evans, Editor, *Restoration Herald*, and Director of Development, The Christian Restoration Association, September 30, 1977.

PENTECOSTALISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Stephen P. Waller



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Steve was baptized in May 1959, and began preaching while still a senior in high school in 1966. He has preached for churches full-time in Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, and Missouri and has appeared on the South Louisiana Lectureship in New Orleans and the Bellview Lectures. He has done extensive radio work, has worked in the mission field in the United States, has helped organize state-wide gospel singing, held gospel meetings, and is a staff writer for the **Firm Foundation**. He has been working with the West End congregation in St. Louis since August 1988. He is married to the former Susan Clemmons of Florence, Alabama and has two daughters, Amy and Tricia.

INTRODUCTION

There is only one doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), but there are many doctrines of men (Mat. 15:9; Col. 2:22). The doctrine of Christ, when obeyed from the heart, will nourish, strengthen and save the soul (Rom. 6:17; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:3; Heb. 6:1). The doctrines of men will leave one without God and lost (2 John 9; 1 Tim. 4:16). Our purpose in this lecture will be to examine the history of the Pentecostal movement and some of its major doctrines, which are the doctrines of men, in light of the doctrine of Christ.

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of old Pentecostalism wrapped in modern attire. It has become a strong part of the contemporary religious scene, not only in America, but around the world. The Pentecostal movement, operating under such sectarian titles and terms as the Holiness Church, Church of God (Holiness), United Pentecostal Church, Assembly of God, and the charismatic movement and others, has gained many followers and much respect in certain religious and social circles. Over the years the Pentecostals

have been the objects of jokes, ridicule and slander. But now, partly due to the gaining of many followers, many of whom are national celebrities, and partly because of their liberal and ecumenical tendencies, and partly because of their television and radio broadcasts, they are very prominent in religious activities in the United States.

Although relatively young in age, the Pentecostal movement has been gaining momentum, expanding congregations, and erecting grade schools, colleges and universities. Some Pentecostal or charismatic thought and doctrines have made inroads into some churches of Christ and some sympathizers with the movement from some churches of Christ can be found in various places. Evidence of this is seen in the defection of such brethren as Ben Franklin (whom Guy N. Woods debated in 1974 in Gadsden, AL¹), Pat Boone, Dean Dennis, and others as far back as the late 1960s and early 1970s.²

What is Pentecostalism? One source states,

Pentecostalism is a most inclusive term applied to a large number of revivalistic American sects, assemblies and churches. Many of them have come out of either Methodist or Baptist backgrounds, and the term itself explains much of their nature; they are primarily concerned with perfection, holiness and the Pentecostal experience....Most of them believe in...original sin, man's salvation through the atoning blood of Christ, the virgin birth and deity of Jesus, the divine inspiration and literal infallibility of the Scriptures, manifestations and "blessings" of the working of the Holy Spirit often running into excessive emotionalism—shouting, trances, jerks, hand clapping, "tongue talking," and so forth—the fiery Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit, premillennialism, and future rewards and punishments...foot washing is frequently observed.³

As we study Pentecostalism and what it is, we will notice its history, its man-made foundation, philosophy, and teachings in light of Christ's doctrine, the Word of God.

EARLY DEPARTURES FROM CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

As one studies church history he will find, at widely separated times and places, that there have been instances of the outbreak of ecstatic conduct and so-called "tongue-speaking," which may be related to the same kind of behavior and "tongue-speaking" often claimed in the modern Pentecostal movement.

Pentecostalism is a religious system with a false foundation. The first incident in history that compares to modern-day Pentecostalism involved Montanus, a pagan priest, converted to Christianity. In about 170 A.D., Montanus claimed to be a prophet and the “inspired organ” of the Holy Spirit. He attracted widespread attention, especially in Asia Minor where he was working. He claimed that his ministry was the last period of revelation and the final “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit before the coming of Christ, which he predicted as very soon. He preached that the New Jerusalem would come down from heaven to a place in Phrygia. He applied the promises Jesus made to His apostles concerning the Holy Spirit being given to them (the apostles, John 14-16) to himself. He claimed that he was not only the inspired helper of the Holy Spirit, but that he had received the Holy Spirit in His completeness, and claimed divine inspiration for himself and his associates. He elevated himself to the level of the apostles. Associated with Montanus were two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who claimed to be prophetesses. It is said that these two, along with Montanus, worked themselves into frenzies and claimed that they spoke as possessed by the Holy Spirit, who manifested Himself to them in prophetic ecstasies and visions. This movement, Montanism, taking its name from its originator, spread rapidly over the Roman Empire and into western Europe. It was popular in southern France, and the notable religious leader, Tertullian, became a convert to the movement. The adherents were not referred to as Montanists early on, but were called “Cataphrygians,” or “Pepuzians” from the region and city in which the beliefs and practices originated.⁴

The claims of the Montanists remind us of modern Pentecostalists who claim they are the final recipients of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Or, as they put it, theirs is the “latter rain” after the “early rain,” which they borrow from Joel 2:23. “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.” Slight evidence from the early days indicates that certain Gnostic groups, opposed by the apostle John in his first epistle, may have uttered

speech in what they called "ecstasy." However, we know very little about their practices.

LATER DEPARTURES FROM CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

The line of history which has culminated in the modern Pentecostal movement could be traced through revivalism, Wesleyanism, peitism, the Quakers, radical Anabaptists and spiritualistic mystics (15th-17th century) teaching the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some have claimed that Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic priest, spoke in tongues, but the only foundation for this seems to be in the legends that have grown up about him. It is said that in 1685, ecstatic speaking broke out among a group of French Protestants, the Huguenots. In about the year 1731, a group of Roman Catholics, the Janenists, upon holding nightly meetings about the tomb of a dead leader began to utter ecstatic speech. One writer of Pentecostal history stated that this group of Catholics was the first sect in "modern times" to show any "Pentecostal" conduct.

The Shakers, led by a woman known as "Mother" Ann Lee, founded a Shaker community in 1776, near Troy, New York. "Mother" Lee taught that she was "the female principle in Christ," the head of all women, while Jesus was the "male principle" and head of all men. She taught that the second coming of Christ was fulfilled within herself. She professed supernatural powers, revelations and visions. And, she claimed that she had received a revelation that all sexual intercourse was wrong, even in God-ordained marriage. She instituted the practice of men and women dancing together naked while they all spoke in "tongues." Her delusions of spiritual grandeur, power and magnificence became such that she styled herself "Ann, the Word," signifying that in her dwelt "the Word." She further referred to herself as "the spiritual mother of the new creation, the queen of Mount Zion, the second appearing of Christ."⁵ Her "religious exercises" were such as to subject herself to various torments of the flesh, fits and contortions, clinching her hands in such manner as to bring forth blood, convincing her followers that this was a miraculous phenomenon like unto the "bloody sweat" of our Savior in the garden. Their past and

future numbers have depended upon converting outsiders since those who marry and indulge in the earthly procreative relation are “the children of this world.”⁶ Obviously, the Shakers are a dying religion due to the practice of celibacy.

The Irvingites were followers of a Scottish Presbyterian preacher who believed that all the gifts exercised by the apostles should be manifested in his day as well. A young woman, Mary Campbell, in 1830, was the first of a group to speak in “tongues.” Later, these people were called the Catholic Apostolic Church. The group began in England as “British millenarians who believed in the bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, their meetings characterized by speaking in tongues and prophetic revelations.”⁷ They believed in the laying on of hands, the gift of tongues, and premillennialism. The “gift of prophecy” was looked upon as the best gift. But, this group was soon discredited for several reasons. (1) Their “revelations” contradicted the Word of God, and their “prophecies” went unfulfilled. (2) One of their prominent leaders, Robert Baxter, later renounced the movement and said that all his “gifts” were the results of evil spirits. (3) Mary Campbell later confessed that she had been dishonest and guilty of calling **her own** utterances the voice of God. (4) Supposed miraculous healings were followed by the death of the patients. (5) It was reported that immorality was prevalent among these people. It is interesting to note that this Mary Campbell is the woman from whom came the teaching of the premillennialists concerning the “pre-tribulation rapture.” What an interesting connection then, even as today, between the modern Pentecostal/charismatic movement and premillennialism!

From the very beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints cult (Mormonism), begun by Joseph Smith in 1830, in New York State, “the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, tongues and interpretation of tongues, visions, revelations, prophecy, and healing”⁸ were accepted as part of their belief and practice. Brigham Young claimed to pray in what he called the “pure Adamic language.” It is tragic that we do not have his prayers recorded to place under the light of God’s Word for an evaluation and analysis!

There have been other, smaller, isolated groups which have claimed to speak in tongues, but according to history, no other major movements. Tongue-speaking was reported in Lourdes, France, but that was connected with the occult movement and gross immorality. Also, the sick and lame have traveled to Lourdes over the years, supposedly to be healed miraculously.

ORIGINS OF THE MODERN PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

The "holiness" movement owes its beginnings to John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, and its doctrine of sanctification, or so-called Christian perfection. Various men adapted the Wesleyan movement and produced the late 19th century "holiness" movement, which in turn, gave rise to the Pentecostal movement. This "holiness" movement spread rapidly on the American frontier around the time of the Civil War.

John Wesley...had already made a distinction between the sanctified, or those who has been baptized in the Spirit, and ordinary Christians. This view was adopted and simplified by the evangelists and theologians of the American Holiness Movement.⁹

The modern movement may be traced to the work of revivalist Charles G. Finney (1792-1876). Finney's approach to revivalism emphasized excitability and developed a **system or technique** of evangelism still in use. Finney preached that a person needed an "experience" after being converted. He called this experience the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." There were many in the Methodist Church who were dissatisfied with liberal tendencies in that denomination, so this led to the formation of the Holiness movement. In addition to accepting Christ as Savior, called conversion or regeneration, there was a second important event which took place to make a Christian complete, or sanctified, and that was called "a second work of grace." Some have called this "the second touch" or "the second blessing." There is **no** foundation for this doctrine in the Bible. We will discuss this in detail later.

In eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina, in 1896, a "holiness revival" was begun under the leadership of two Baptist preachers, Richard B. Spurling and R. B. Spurling, Jr. Such men as W. E. Boardman (London), A. J. Gordon, F. B. Myer, A. B. Simpson,

Andrew Murray (South Africa), and R. A. Torrey set forth a system allegedly leading to perfection. Torrey especially stressed the idea of Holy Spirit baptism as the way to sanctification. In 1901 the "Holiness Church" began at a place called Camp Creek, and in 1903, A. J. Tomlinson became its pastor. This developed into what is known as the "Church of God." The headquarters were moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1907.

Charles Parham, who is called the father of modern Pentecostalism, along with Williams Seymour and T. B. Barratt (a Norwegian Methodist minister) were primary leaders of the specific efforts which spawned the modern movement. Parham was the founder of Bethany Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. In 1900, Parham led his student body of about forty to seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with speaking in tongues as evidence that the Holy Spirit had come. After several weeks of such intense seeking, one of the students, Agnes Ozman, a former Methodist, on January 1, 1901, after having hands laid on her, spoke in some syllables no one could understand. This date (January 1, 1901) has been called the birthday of the modern Pentecostal movement because this was the first time that a person had such an experience after especially seeking a baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the expectation of speaking in tongues because of it. From that time on, Pentecostals have taught that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" should be sought and that its reception was shown by speaking in tongues. This point in holiness history is referred to by some as "The Topeka Revival."¹⁰ Others refer to it as "The Modern Pentecostal Revival." Seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the verification of having received such by speaking in tongues are two distinctive points or doctrines of modern Pentecostalism.

In 1905, Mr. Parham moved to Houston, Texas, and established a school there. In 1906, one of Parham's black students, W. J. Seymour, was invited to speak in Los Angeles, California, by the woman pastor of the Negro Holiness Church, Neelly Terry. Seymour began preaching these two cardinal points of Pentecostalism, but he met with strong opposition from various sources including the members of the Church of the Nazarene. All those to whom he

spoke, including Seymour, claimed Holy Spirit baptism as proof of sanctification. Now he was telling them that there had to be an additional spiritual experience, the speaking in tongues. His meeting was closed down. However, some Baptists invited him to speak in their home, and while there it was reported that on April 9, 1906, seven people “received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues.” Many began to be drawn to this religious spectacle. As the group increased in numbers, Seymour rented an old Methodist Church building at 312 Azusa Street. “For three years without interruption prayer meetings took place here with tongues, singing in tongues and prophecy.”¹¹ Thus began the Azusa Street Mission, the “Mecca” of Pentecostalism. Holiness preachers by the scores flocked to this center, especially from the southern United States. This period of time in Los Angeles is called “The Los Angeles Revival.” The movement began to spread across the United States, and then, throughout the world. From the inner cities in America, foreign visitors carried this teaching back to their homes in other countries. T. B. Barratt came to the United States on a fund-raising tour, visited the Los Angeles group, and returned to establish the Pentecostal movement in Europe. He is known as the “European apostle” of this teaching. Swedish Baptists came to America, linked up with W. H. Durham, a Pentecostal preacher in Chicago, and went to Brazil with the Pentecostal doctrine in the early 1900s. Today, the various Pentecostal groups can be found around the world in ever-increasing numbers.

W. H. Durham, who claimed to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1907, in Los Angeles, and who had been a respected and successful evangelist in Los Angeles and Chicago, changed the Pentecostal doctrine of salvation. This caused a great uproar and Durham was expelled from the Apostolic Faith Church by W. J. Seymour. Durham became a leading light of the Pentecostal movement in Chicago.

Until about 1908, the whole Pentecostal movement in America taught the doctrine of a three-stage way of salvation. Like the Church of the Nazarene and other non-Pentecostal Holiness churches it was held that sanctification was a sudden and distinct second work of God's grace, which *followed* conversion and could be distinguished from it. To these two stages (conversion and sanctification) they added the baptism of

the Spirit, which was characterized by speaking in tongues. W. H. Durham...reduced this three-stage pattern to a two-stage one. Under the influence of the Baptists he regarded conversion and sanctification as simultaneous.¹²

It may be of interest to know which groups in this movement are connected with the various types of salvation in stages.

(a) *Pentecostals who teach a two-stage way of salvation*

This group is far and away the largest group of organizations. Representatives of this group are the American and British Assemblies of God...Elim Pentecostal Church...and the Protestant wing of the Pentecostal movement within the existing churches in America...

(b) *Pentecostals who teach a three-stage way of salvation*

This group is represented by the Church of God (Cleveland)...and its missionary churches, the Pentecostal Holiness church and others.

(c) *The "Jesus Only" groups*

These accept only the baptismal formula "in the name of Jesus." The most important representatives of this group are the United Pentecostal Church and almost the entire Indonesian Pentecostal Movement.¹³

Most of the Pentecostal-Holiness groups believe the second coming of Christ is imminent. For the most part they are rabid premillennialists. This isn't too surprising because this doctrine appeals to the fleshly nature of man. Pentecostalism emphasizes sensual feelings and experiences, while premillennialism emphasizes an earthly, material kingdom.

Some of the churches connected with the Pentecostal movement and the dates of their beginning are as follows:

1. Assembly of God. This is one of the largest groups. It began in 1914, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Its founders were former ministers and pastors of evangelical persuasion, who wished to unite in one body in the interest of a more effective preaching and enlarged missionary crusade. They insist that baptism in the Holy Ghost is evidenced by speaking in tongues and believe that all the gifts of the Spirit should be in the normal New Testament Church.
2. Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1898.
3. Pentecostal Fire Baptized Christ Holiness Church, 1911.
4. Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc., 1914.
5. Pentecostal Church of God in America, 1919.
6. International Pentecostal Holiness Assemblies, 1921.

7. Pentecostal Church of Christ, 1917.
8. Calvary Pentecostal Church, Inc., Olympia, Washington, 1931.
9. Elim Missionary Assemblies, 1937.
10. United Pentecostal Church, 1945.
11. Emmanuel Holiness Church, 1954.
12. Pentecostal Freewill Baptist Church, Inc., 1959.
13. Many others, too numerous to mention, that teach the same or similar errors.

MODERN PENTECOSTALS AND PENTECOSTALISM

Among the most well-known Pentecostal preachers from the 1940s through 1967, was A. A. Allen. Allen was a fireball, tent revival, "healing" evangelist who could hold an audience spellbound at his Miracle Revival services. As a child this writer was shocked to see and hear the Pentecostal antics of Allen on television during the 1950s. Allen "died of sclerosis of the liver in 1967, having secretly struggled with alcoholism for many of the years he was supposedly healing others."¹⁴

Perhaps the most well-known Pentecostal evangelist and leader is Oral Roberts, well known for his radio and television broadcasts. Roberts is of American Indian ancestry. His father was a penniless Pentecostal preacher. His story begins as a teenager playing basketball. He fell on the floor at the close of the game, unconscious and bleeding at the mouth. It was discovered that he had tuberculosis in both lungs. He prayed for healing and eventually recovered. He attributed his recovery to a miracle and claimed this was a sign from God that he should begin preaching. He began preaching in 1946, and became a "healing preacher" at the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Toccoa, Georgia. He tried revivalistic crusades, and after one year became so successful, that 25,000 people from 28 states and Mexico assembled to hear him on one occasion in Jonesboro, Arkansas. It was reported that Roberts' personal income in 1955 was \$145,000. He further developed his organization, and in 1956, the "Brother Roberts Healing Waters" organization had 287 employees and a gross income of \$3 million. Roberts began buying real estate: farms, ranches, houses; and, he began writing books. In 1972, Roberts had

a staff of 600, six foreign offices and a \$25 million income. During these years he spoke “every Sunday for a half hour, on 500 radio and television stations, to a potential audience of 80 per cent of the population of the USA.”¹⁵ He traveled around the country preaching in a tent which held up to 12,000 people, all the time claiming to heal the sick and suffering people who came to him.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Roberts built a multi-million dollar administrative building. In 1962, he established Oral Roberts University, which is located on a 500-acre campus in Tulsa. At that time his income was reportedly more than \$3 million. On March 18, 1968, Roberts surprised everyone by joining the Methodist Church. However, his doctrine remained the same, due to the doctrinal relationship between Pentecostalism and Methodism. He established the City of Faith medical center in Tulsa, which included a medical school (1978) and hospital (1981). In 1987, Roberts told his national audience that God had threatened to “call him home” if he could not raise eight million dollars by his creditors’ deadline. Viewers coughed up \$4.5 million.¹⁶ It was at about this time that he claimed to see a vision of a 900-foot tall Jesus. Roberts also received a last minute reprieve in the form of a large check from a Florida dog-track owner. Two years later, Roberts was forced to close the medical center and claimed that God told him to close it down because “the mission has been accomplished in the same way that after the three years of public ministry My Son said on the cross, ‘Father, it is finished.’”¹⁷ When the televangelists, Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, faced exposure of their immorality and hypocrisy in the national press, the contributions to Oral Roberts began to drop. Monthly gifts of \$2.7 million fell behind his \$3.3 million in expenses. Three of his residences in California were quickly sold for \$4.3 million.¹⁸

The Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI) began in 1953 as the brainchild of Oral Roberts and Armenian American Demos Shakarian, a wealthy California businessman. It is said that the sponsors and directors of Oral Roberts University are the managers of the FGBMFI.¹⁹ The headquarters are in Los Angeles, California, with the international headquarters in Franklin Springs, Georgia. This is regarded as a lay organization

devoted to bringing wealthy industrialists and various other successful businessmen into the Pentecostal experience, and thereby, elevate Pentecostalism from a sect to a high sociological plane. It is believed that a businessman "who is full of the Holy Spirit will prove more successful in business, make better tractors and automobiles than his competitors, live in a finer house and, if he is a footballer, score more goals than the person who is not converted or is not baptized with the Spirit."²⁰ Through holding prayer breakfasts and gatherings of men where personal testimonials are given, this group has been very instrumental in spreading Pentecostalism and bringing in converts. Oral Roberts envisioned ambitious programs among non-Pentecostals and devised the ecumenical or cross-denominational FGBMFI to accomplish these results. This group has much money. They publish a periodical, many books and tracts, and keep a very active program.

In 1959, an Episcopalian minister, Dennis Bennett, in Van Nuys, California announced to his congregation that he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. Thus, began the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic movement. Until this time:

Pentecostalism was contained in denominations such as Assemblies of God, Foursquare Gospel Churches, and the United Pentecostal Church....This charismatic movement spread to the Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran denominations. From there it has swollen to encompass Catholics, theological liberals, and even several pseudo-Christian fringe groups.²¹

Time magazine heard of this and publicized it. Out of this has grown the "Blessed Trinity Society," which sponsors "Christian Advance" meetings throughout the United States where the "charismatic" message is taught. The group publishes *Trinity* magazine. A number of prominent Americans are connected with this movement. It has taken on the aura of wealth and respectability, and has become socially accepted.

Some well-known evangelists of the Pentecostal movement with ties to various holiness or charismatic groups today, who have not been mentioned previously in this lecture, are such characters as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch and his wife, Jan, of the Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN), Pat

Robertson (Christian Broadcasting Network), Richard Roberts (son of Oral Roberts), Robert Tilton (who was exposed as a charlatan on a national television news program), the late Kathryn Kuhlman, Peter Popoff (who was exposed as a fraud in 1986, on “The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson” by professional magician James Randi, The Amazing Randi), Earnest Angely, and others too numerous to mention.

There is a newer movement now known as “The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit,” also called the “Signs and Wonders” movement.

The term “Third Wave” was coined by C. Peter Wagner, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission. He is a leading proponent of Third Wave methodology. According to Wagner, “The first wave was the Pentecostal movement, the second the charismatic movement, and now the third wave is joining them....” The Third Wave is a new moving of the Holy Spirit among evangelicals who, for one reason or another, have chosen not to identify with either the Pentecostals or the charismatics....I do not consider myself a charismatic. I am simply an evangelical Congregationalist who is open to the Holy Spirit working through me and my church in any way he chooses.²²

Modern Pentecostalism is old Pentecostalism brought into the marketplace, given a \$700 suit with the utilization of Madison Avenue techniques. Most all denominations have been affected by this new or neo-Pentecostal, or charismatic movement. Even churches of Christ have been affected. Several years ago, a number of congregations were divided, and some well-known preachers and other brethren were led away by the errors of Pentecostalism.

If there is one thing the Pentecostals do not tolerate, is opposition. They seek to intimidate those who try to deal with the issues biblically. The holiness or charismatic preachers do not like to be challenged with scriptural arguments against their false doctrines or their false claims of miracles. They consider it unkind and divisive. They test doctrine by experience, give lip service to biblical authority, and try to top one another by telling the most ridiculous, outlandish and preposterous testimonials of miracles and healings. Woe to anyone who dares to object or tries to expose them or refute their doctrines! John F. MacArthur, Jr. tells about some very un-Christlike attitudes among some of these “Holy Ghost filled”

preachers who were faced with opposition and criticism:

Listen to these comments by Benny Hinn: "Somebody's attacking me because of something I'm teaching. Let me tell you something, brother: You watch it!... You know, I've looked for one verse in the Bible; I just can't seem to find it. One verse that said "if you don't like them, kill them." I really wish I could find it!... You stink, frankly—that's the way I think about it!... Sometimes I wish God will give me a Holy Ghost machine gun; I'll blow your head off!" ["Praise-a-thon" broadcast on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (November 8, 1990).]

Paul Crouch is scarcely more charitable. Of his critics, he said, "I think they're damned and on their way to hell and I don't think there's any redemption for them... I say, To hell with you! Get out of my life! Get out of the way!... And I want to say to all you scribes, Pharisees, heresy hunters—all of you that are going around picking little bits of doctrinal error out of everybody's eyes... Get out of God's way; quick blocking God's bridges, or God's going to shoot you if I don't.... Get out of my life! I don't want to even talk to you or hear you! I don't want to see your ugly face! Get out of my face in Jesus' name." ["Praise the Lord" broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network (April 2, 1991).]²³

The statements above will become very significant as we will see later. Let it be understood that it is not unkind to study and analyze various doctrinal differences in light of Scripture and to refute erroneous doctrines. In fact, we are required to do so! (1 Tim. 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7-8,15; 3:10; 2 John 9-11). The apostle Paul called upon people to account for their actions and their doctrinal errors (Gal. 2:5; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18).

SOME DOCTRINAL ERRORS OF THE PENTECOSTALS

Foundation

From the material thus far presented, it should be abundantly clear that the foundation upon which the Pentecostals, Holiness groups and the charismatics are based is false. Isaiah 28:16 states, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Daniel prophesied of the kingdom of God coming in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44). This occurred in the first century. Paul declared that the church was built upon the proper foundation (Eph. 2:20).

Upon the basis of foundation, the Pentecostal movement is a false system of religion. Its foundation is false as to:

1. **Place or location of establishment.** It was not founded in Zion (Jerusalem) as God said the church would, but in many different places.

2. **Founder or Materials.** Pentecostalism was founded by various men and women, not on Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, nor on the apostles and prophets as the foundation. Paul said no other man could do that (1 Cor. 3:11).

3. **Time of establishment.** Daniel prophesied that God's kingdom would be established in the days of "these kings." He explained that the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar was represented first in the king's dream as set forth in Daniel 2:31-45. He further explained that the fourth part of the great image in the dream represented a fourth kingdom which would rise up. In the days of the fourth great kingdom, the kingdom of God would be established in Jerusalem (Dan. 7; Isa. 2). That fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire. The Lord's church, or spiritual kingdom, was established in the first century in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2). Although the Pentecostals claim to do what was done by the apostles of Christ on Pentecost of Acts 2, they are as foreign to the New Testament church as daylight is from dark.

Sanctification

The whole matter of modern "holiness" or "sanctification" is claimed upon an entirely unscriptural basis. Holiness Churches claim a "two-stage way of salvation." The first stage is **Conversion**; also called regeneration. Stage two is **Sanctification**, distinct in time and content from conversion. It is also called "baptism of the Spirit" or "second blessing." Known as the "Wesleyan understanding" of sanctification. Sanctification is at a definite fixed time. The Parham/Seymour Pentecostals have a "three-stage way of salvation." Stage one is the same as in the earlier described group—**Conversion**, also called regeneration. Stage two is **Sanctification**, distinct in time and content from conversion, and also called "second blessing." Sanctification is at a definite fixed time. The idea is that the Holy Spirit can only enter purified hearts. The third stage is **Baptism of the Spirit**, with speaking in tongues. The Durham "two-stage" Pentecostals also believe that stage one is **Conversion**; also called regen-

eration. But, stage two is **Baptism of the Spirit**, with speaking in tongues. Here sanctification is understood as a process continuing throughout life, known as the "Baptist understanding of sanctification."²⁴

Denominations of the holiness persuasion emphasize the need for a "second work of grace (second blessing)" in order to make a Christian into an entirely "devoted" Christian. This is a kind of second conversion, and people are led by their religious leaders to expect this "experience." After conversion to Christ (regeneration), they are led to possess the various gifts of the Spirit. Especially do they claim tongue-speaking, which is held forth as evidence of the work of the Spirit in a believer.

In order to better understand how this holiness doctrine of conversion and sanctification supposedly works, one must understand that it is based upon the foundation of the Calvinistic doctrine of hereditary total depravity or original sin. They believe that every human being has inherited at birth, or by birth, absolute, complete wickedness and estrangement from God, that one is in a state of spiritual condemnation and wickedness of heart. This is sometimes called "inbred sin," "inherent sin" or "the Adamic nature." John Wesley taught, "Every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires."²⁵ He further said, "We are condemned before we have done good or evil, and under curse ere we know what it is."²⁶ It was Wesley's belief that only a miracle of God could save such a corrupt person from sin, therefore, the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. This also developed the unscriptural doctrine of sanctification, the "second blessing," which eradicates this depraved nature, takes away all sin and makes one perfect before God.²⁷

Hereditary total depravity will, no doubt, be discussed thoroughly elsewhere in this same volume. Briefly though, hereditary total depravity is a false doctrine. Adam's sin is not inherited. Romans 5:12 declares that **death**, not sin, passed upon all men because of Adam's sin. Since Jesus was a direct descendant of the fleshly lineage of Adam (Luke 3:38), would it be correct to say that Jesus

was born a corrupt sinner? Of course not! He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22). In addition, Ezekiel 18:20 states, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” Speaking of the King of Tyre, Ezekiel 28:15 says, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” In Colossians 1:21, Paul wrote, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” These Scriptures clearly show that neither Adam’s sin, nor anyone else’s sin is inherited. The Scriptures teach that one sins when he does wicked works. Stop to consider for a moment that if a father and mother who believe they have eradicated their sinful nature by the process of conversion and sanctification, have a child after said conversions, how can they say that their child has an evil, sinful nature which was inherited. Why has not the child inherited the now sinless nature of his parents?

The “holiness” doctrine of sanctification comes as a result of the belief in hereditary total depravity. A person in the Pentecostal religion is baptized for remission of sins, “gets saved” (converted, regenerated), but he still has the sinful nature or “image of the devil” on his soul which must be removed. He still needs to be “sanctified” in order to be a proper child of God. The “first blessing” is claimed to have taken place in conversion, in remission of his sins, which may also involve an abstract operation of the Holy Spirit, by which he claims to have “got religion.” Where, we must ask, is the “first blessing” to be found in the Scriptures? Nowhere! Conversion in the New Testament is certainly brought about by the Holy Spirit, but not in any abstract operation.²⁸ The Holy Spirit operates through the Word which He gave to men who were guided to write His message, which is the last will and testament of Jesus Christ. The following passages affirm that the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles **all** things and bring **all** things to their remembrance. What the apostles would receive would be divine truth, **all truth**. They further teach that the apostles, at the time of Paul’s writing, were speaking and writing those things given to them by the Holy Spirit, which He

taught them. Peter also affirmed that the apostles were speaking the gospel sent down from heaven as revealed to them by the Holy Ghost (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:6-16; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

Jesus stated, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth...And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17,19). He further declared, "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" (John 6:44-45). From this, one learns that regeneration and sanctification come through the truth which is God's Word. God's power to draw men to Christ and salvation from sin comes by means of an intelligent process—being taught, hearing and learning of the Father. Nowhere do we find in the New Testament anyone being saved through a direct operation of the Holy Ghost separate and apart from hearing and obeying from the heart the Word of truth, the gospel. The apostle Paul taught how that Jesus sanctifies those who make up His church: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 10:10; 13:12). Although Paul states clearly in Romans 15:16 and Second Thessalonians 2:13 that people are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, he also qualifies that by stating that such is accomplished by means of "the gospel of God" and "through...belief of the truth."²⁹ The Holy Spirit operates by means of the gospel in sanctification. Paul wrote, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). The Christians in Corinth were sanctified people, but how had they been sanctified? "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Their sanctification, or being set apart to holy service to God, came by

being “washed.” How was that done? In baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). What kind of baptism? Water baptism, not Holy Ghost baptism nor by an abstract operation of the Holy Ghost. When Paul wrote the church at Ephesus and said that they had been sanctified, he said it was done by the “washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). It was by water baptism in obedience to a command of the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God. At that time, Paul declared to these Christians, there was only one baptism (Eph. 4:5), and it was not Holy Ghost baptism. They had experienced “washing of water by the word.” Thus, “the church is composed of those who are set apart by the Lord through the agency of water and the word—an expression involving faith, repentance, confession, and baptism in water for remission of sins.”³⁰

The false Pentecostal doctrine of regeneration would have one saved from sin by water baptism, then one would have to pray and beg God to send the Holy Ghost upon him to remove that old sinful nature of Adamic corruption in his soul, and thus “sanctify” him or impart the “second blessing.” They claim the “second blessing” is wrought through Holy Spirit baptism and is evidenced by speaking in tongues and by other miraculous gifts of the Spirit. So, one becomes a child of God, regenerated, but still bears the “image of the devil”! This doctrine would make one a believer while still possessed of “original sin”! This would make one a “depraved believer”!³¹

It is important to understand clearly what New Testament sanctification is. Guy N. Woods wrote:

The words sanctify, sanctification, holy, and holiness are all related, and derive from the same root...in Greek, *hagiazō*. The basic meaning of [the term] is to set apart, to make holy. The significance is to be clearly seen in our word *sacred*—something dedicated to holy purposes. While it is often assumed that the words sanctify, sanctification, holiness, and holy represent moral and spiritual qualities, such is not the primary and basic significance thereof; these qualities *result* from the manner of life which proceeds from such separation and dedication; and, when such is affirmed of them, it is only because the cause is put for the effect.

The root idea is simply and merely separation.

Sanctification is not to be mistaken for *justification*. Justification is the affirmation, on the part of God, of the right standing between a formerly alienated person and himself. It does not, of itself, indicate

character or conduct. It simply suggests that the person justified is in an approved relationship with God. The word itself does not show whether such a person has always been innocent, or has been pardoned. It simply denotes the present relationship of the individual to the Father.

Sanctification is not *sinlessness*.³²

Sanctified people are not sinless people. Although the saints at Corinth were “washed...sanctified...and justified” (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11), and had been freed from the dominion and curse of their alien sins, they were not immune to temptations and the resultant sins in the future. The Corinthian Christians were guilty of a number of sins and were rebuked by Paul for those sins in almost every chapter in First Corinthians. Sanctification is a growth to be worked out by the Christian, a status we are commanded to attain. It is not a specific gift from God. It is a matter of degree and it develops as we become more and more consecrated to His service, and as we yield ourselves more fully to His will as expressed in His commands (2 The. 2:13; Rom. 1:7). It involves spiritual growth. “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). “Sanctification involves man’s response to God and not simply or solely an action wrought by him upon us.”³³

It is something to be worked out and lived, not something to be gotten and professed. They take the wrong name. One who professes or pretends to sanctify is sanctimonious, not sanctified. *Sanctimonious* is to profess or pretend to special sanctify.³⁴

Holy Spirit Baptism And Tongue Speaking

Another error of the Pentecostals is their claim to receive Holy Spirit baptism today, accompanied by various miraculous gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues. The Articles of Faith of the United Pentecostal Church (UPC), under the heading of “Fundamental Doctrine” states,

The basic and fundamental doctrine of this organization shall be the Bible standard of full salvation, which is repentance, baptism in water by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. We shall endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit until we all come into the unity of the faith, at the same time admonishing all brethren that they shall not contend

for their different views to the disunity of the body.³⁵

Although another lecture in this volume deals with the subjects of the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit baptism and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, we must here address the matter as set forth by the Pentecostals since it is an integral part of their belief concerning salvation. The Pentecostals claim two baptisms: water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. Holy Spirit baptism had been prophesied and promised (Joel 2:28-32; Mat. 3:11; Acts 1:5). Holy Spirit baptism was to be administered by Christ (Mat. 3:11). It was not to be in the name of the Father, Son or Holy Spirit. It was not for the remission of sins (Acts 11:15). And, it ended before 62 A.D. (Eph. 4:5). Since at least 62 A.D., and for almost 2,000 years, there has only been one baptism. In contrast, water baptism is a command to be obeyed (Acts 10:48). It is to be administered by men (Mat. 28:18-20), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and is to continue to the end of the world (Mat. 28:20).³⁶ On Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel's prophecy and pointed out that what was occurring on that day was the fulfillment of that prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). The Scriptures teach that there were two baptisms on the day of Pentecost in about the year 30 A.D. The apostles received Holy Spirit baptism on the day the church was established, the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4). Those who obeyed the gospel (about 3,000) preached by the apostles on that day were baptized in water unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38-41). Approximately ten years later (41 A.D.) in Caesarea there were two baptisms that took place on the occasion of Peter preaching to the household of Cornelius and their conversion to Christ (Acts 10:47; 11:15-16). However, approximately twenty years after the conversion of Cornelius and his household (62 A.D.), Paul wrote that there was one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Holy Spirit baptism had served its purpose and ceased. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius was referred to by Peter as "the like gift" of the Spirit which the apostles received on Pentecost (Acts 11:17). Peter explained that this outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles was unlike anything that had occurred since Pentecost. There was no other parallel case of this happening. When the apostles received Holy Spirit baptism on Pentecost, the event was

characterized as visible and audible (Acts 2:2-3). The purpose of such was to reveal all truth to the apostles (John 16:13) and confirm the truth which they spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:14-20; Heb. 2:1-4).³⁷ The effect of Holy Spirit baptism was that the apostles spoke with tongues and performed miracles, signs and wonders, which were the credentials of confirmation of the truth taught by them (Acts 2:3-4; 3:1-9; Heb. 2:1-4). The Pentecostals believe that not only the apostles, but all the Jews who obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostals completely ignore the fact that it was not those who were converted on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2 who received Holy Spirit baptism, but the apostles only. This is clearly seen when one applies proper rules of grammar to the Bible text in Acts 1 and 2. In Acts 2:4, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Pentecostals would claim that "all" in this verse refers to all the people discussed in the whole chapter, but that is not the case. Who are "they" in this passage? "They" are referred to as "they" and "them" in Acts 2:1-4. A rule of grammar is that a pronoun refers back to its nearest antecedent. If one traces the pronouns "they" and "them" backwards from verse four all the way through to Acts 1:26, one will find the nearest antecedent. The nearest antecedent is the "apostles." Note the passage: "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven **apostles**. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, **they** were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 1:26-2:1). Matthias and the eleven other apostles were described by Luke as the ones upon whom the events of Acts 2:1-4 took place, not the 3,000 converts that day. Further evidence of this is seen in the text. Verse six points out that the multitude came together after the events of verses one through four. Those who were speaking in foreign languages were "Galileans" (the apostles). Nothing else is said in Acts 2 about anyone else receiving Holy Spirit baptism on that day (v. 7). Modern Pentecostals believe the gift of tongues, as explained in First Corinthians 12-14, "are the same in essence, but different in use and purpose"³⁸ today. A point of great significance is that

although the Pentecostals teach water baptism is to take place first in order, followed by Holy Spirit baptism, “which is necessary to put someone into the kingdom of God...and is evidenced by speaking in tongues which is...the definite, indisputable, supernatural witness or sign of the baptism of the Holy Ghost”³⁹ in the case of the household of Cornelius things were very different!

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days (Acts 10:44-48).

In Acts 10, baptism in water was commanded **following** the Gentiles receiving the outpouring of the Holy Ghost! Holy Spirit baptism was not given as a “birth of the Spirit” but to bear witness that God would accept the Gentiles as He did the Jews (Acts 10:34-35).

Thus the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism at Cornelius’ house was to **reveal** the fact that the gospel is for all people; that God is no respecter of persons....It was also to **confirm** this great truth. But when it was confirmed, it remains confirmed; it does not have to be proved over, and over, again and again, every time somebody wants God’s truth.⁴⁰

Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. Joel had prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. “All flesh” included both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews (apostles) received Holy Spirit baptism on Pentecost (Acts 2), on the occasion of the establishment of the church, and the Gentiles (household of Cornelius) received Holy Spirit baptism about ten years later (Acts 10-11; Rom. 1:16). These are the only two recorded instances of Holy Spirit baptism in the Scriptures.

There were certain clear signs of Holy Spirit baptized men. They had the power of death (Acts 5:1-6); Paul made a man blind (Acts 13:9-12); Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42); Paul picked up a snake (Acts 28:5); Peter and John conferred miraculous power by their hands (Acts 8:17); and, Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-10).⁴¹ Since Holy Spirit baptized men had the power

of death one must wonder why Benny Hinn and Paul Crouch (who claim the special power of the Holy Spirit) do not use such powers (“Holy Ghost machine gun”⁴²) to do away with their critics rather than merely complain about them! The UPC claims that one who has been baptized in water for remission of sins, but has not yet received Holy Spirit baptism is still in a lost condition. It seems incredible that one can have remission, yet not be born again; have forgiveness, but is not yet a child of God; be saved, but not be in possession of eternal life.⁴³

The UPC claims that “the initial sign” of Holy Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues, but they view tongues in another way, too.

Pentecostals believe that tongues can be classified in two ways, according to function: (1) speaking in other tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and (2) the gift of tongues as mentioned in 1 Corinthians....Not all believers exercise the gift of tongues, which is different in function from tongues given by God as the initial witness of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.⁴⁴

Consider the purpose of tongues: tongues were a sign (1 Cor. 14:22); signs confirmed the Word (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4) and there is nothing in these passages that teach that signs were to be permanent, but rather, they were to be temporary; tongues were useful only when they were edifying (1 Cor. 14:5). The Word is sufficient for edifying today (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 20:32). All signs including tongues, miracles, etc., have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13). Signs were given, not as proof of salvation, but as a **sign** of God's representative and as a **seal** of His revelation. They proved that the man who performed them represented Christ and that his revelation was from above. Christ tells us that when these inspired men gave to us the inspired book, the signs would cease. If a man wants a sign today, he can read one (John 20:30-31). All the signs have been written and they create faith (Rom. 10:17).⁴⁵ ⁴⁶ Revelation of God's Word and confirmation of it went hand in hand. When one ceased, so did the other. The New Testament is God's complete and final revelation to man (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). God is no longer revealing new truth or additional truth by inspiration. Thus, there is no need to have any additional signs of confirmation today. Truth once confirmed has no further need of confirmation.

When did the miraculous gifts end? Paul wrote, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:10). The word “perfect” in this passage comes from the Greek word *teleios*, meaning “complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited.”⁴⁷ Paul had earlier listed three miraculous gifts as examples of all the gifts being partial and temporary: prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, all of which were to fail, cease and vanish away (1 Cor. 13:8-13). Then he spoke of those things that were permanent and indicative of completeness: faith, hope and love; these were to remain. The church was in its infancy when the New Testament was being revealed. The miraculous gifts were a part of that infancy. That which was “in part,” God’s revelation of the New Testament which was being given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit over a period of time, portion by portion, would become complete, finished, brought to an end. When this would occur, the tongues and other miraculous gifts of the Spirit given as a means of confirming the Word while it was being revealed, would no longer be needed. The completed revelation is the “perfect” which was to come. It is referred to in James 1:25 as the “perfect [*teleios*] law of liberty.” The New Testament was completed in the first century. Since that time there has been no more need for the miraculous gifts of confirmation for we have the complete, full-grown, final, Word of God to bring us to spiritual maturity. Further, Paul stated in Ephesians 4:11-13 that the miraculous gifts of the apostles, prophets and others in the church in the first century would continue “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). The word “till” in this passage is the Greek word *mechri*, which is a preposition of time, indicating that such miraculous endowments were to continue only up to a point. What point? “till we come in the unity of the faith.” When the early church would finally come in the unity of the faith what will be the results? They would no longer be children, nor would they be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). When the system of faith had been fully revealed, the church being led by that system, would be able to be complete, full grown in Christ. All of

God's Word, by which we are taught, would be available to be used to edify and bring to maturity the church. When that happened there would be no further need for miraculous gifts; their purpose having been fulfilled, they would cease.

There are only three ways in which men have ever been directed by the Holy Spirit—the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the laying on of the apostles' hands, and through the Word which the Holy Spirit gave. It is a false assumption to claim that all those who were baptized in water in the New Testament automatically received Holy Spirit baptism and/or miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It is also a false assumption to believe that people today automatically receive Holy Spirit baptism and/or miraculous gifts of the Spirit following water baptism. In Acts 8, the people of Samaria were baptized in water after hearing the preaching of Philip, an evangelist. Philip was not an apostle because the apostles remained in Jerusalem at this time (Acts 8:1). He had not received Holy Spirit baptism. However, the Scriptures teach that he was full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (Acts 6:3-5). How had he received the Holy Spirit? Apparently, he had received some miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost as a result of the laying on of the hands of the apostles. When he went to Samaria to preach Christ, he had no written New Testament to study to help him preach. He also performed miracles and signs (Acts 8:5-8,13). Although Philip possessed many miraculous gifts, he was unable to impart those gifts to others. Only the apostles could impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. When word came to the apostles in Jerusalem that many conversions were taking place in Samaria, Peter and John (apostles) were sent to Samaria to pray and lay their hands on those converts to impart unto them various gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:14-19). Today, no one possesses such power. There are no inspired apostles with the power to impart such gifts of the Holy Ghost. The last inspired apostles died almost 2,000 years ago. There is a "more excellent way" than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:31).

Not every church member in the New Testament spoke in tongues. "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" (1 Cor. 12:29-30). The answer to these

questions is “no.” Not everyone was an apostle and not everyone spoke in tongues or worked miracles. Since not all in Corinth spoke in tongues, either some in the church in Corinth were not children of God, or else, tongues were not the initial sign of Holy Spirit baptism. Obviously, since not all in the church at Corinth spoke in tongues not all Christians in Corinth had received Holy Spirit baptism. However, it is clear that they were Christians. So, one could be a Christian without Holy Spirit baptism.⁴⁸ And, one could be a Christian and not have to have the ability to speak in tongues.

Jsus Only Doctrine

The United Pentecostal Church believes a false doctrine referred to by some as the “Oneness” doctrine, or the “Jesus only” doctrine. This erroneous belief leads them into a false practice. They believe that the Godhead is composed only of Jesus and that the various names designating the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are nothing more than titles of the same person that applies only to Jesus.

There is only one God...He has revealed Himself to humanity as the Father (Creator), in the Son (Savior), and as the Holy Ghost (indwelling Spirit)....Jesus Himself testified of His identity as God when He said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:7-11) and “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). It took shedding of blood for the remission of the sins of the world (Hebrews 9:22), but God the Father was a Spirit and had no blood to shed. Thus He prepared a body of flesh and blood (Hebrews 10:5) and came to earth as a man in order to save us, for in Isaiah 43:11 He said, “Beside me there is no Savior....” The Holy Ghost is not a third person in the Godhead, but rather the Spirit of God (the Creator), the Spirit of the resurrected Christ.⁴⁹

The proof texts for this error are numerous. Among them are John 10:30, John 14:8-9, Deuteronomy 6:4, Colossians 2:9 and Isaiah 43:10-11. The Bible teaches that there are three persons in the Godhead, not one. There are not three Gods, but a plurality of three distinct personalities. Although these three persons or personalities are distinct from one another, they are still one in purpose or aim. No one has actually seen God at any time, but Jesus made Him known to man. He represented God to man (John 1:18). Each person of the Godhead is referred to as deity. The Father is called God (1 Cor. 8:6); the Son is called God (John 1:1); and, the Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4). One cannot deny deity to any one or more of the

persons in the Godhead, for to do so is to deny God, and to have the spirit of Antichrist (John 2:22; 4:12,14).

In Gen. 1:1, the word for God is *elohim*, the plural form of *El* (god). To it is attached the singular verb *bara*, "he created," to forestall any conclusion of Polytheism (many Gods) from this passage. This construction, not characteristic of the English language, is often observable in connection with this noun, in Hebrew. Literally rendered, Gen. 1:1, runs, "In the beginning Gods, he created, the heavens and the earth." Here is plurality clearly taught with a caution against any conclusion of divergent personalities.⁵⁰

The actual attributes of the whole Godhead dwell in Jesus, but that does not mean that there is only one person in the Godhead. Plural pronouns are often used in reference to the name of God (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:6-7; Isa. 6:8). Very often in the Scriptures one may see the plurality in the Godhead in the personal pronouns (I, me, my, mine, us, thee, thou, thy, thine, He, us) used in reference to deity (Heb. 1:5-13; John 16:7-16; 17:1-26). Just go through these passages in your New Testament and circle the personal pronouns referring to deity. One cannot help but see that Jesus was not speaking to Himself, but to the Father and about the Father and the Holy Spirit! He was not sending Himself to or from Himself! Nor was He going to glorify Himself! The Father and the Son are distinguished from one another and their names are said to be different (Psalm 2:2-12; Rev. 14:1). In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul makes a clear distinction between the three persons of the Godhead when he lists them individually along with the four other separate and distinct points of unity. Is Jesus in heaven appearing before Himself on our behalf (Heb. 9:24)? Is He reigning at His own right hand now (Acts 2:30)? Is He sitting or standing on His own right hand (Heb. 1; Acts 7:55)? When Jesus was baptized, He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him, and a voice from Heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:13-17). Did He see Himself come out of heaven? Did Jesus descend like a dove and light upon Himself? Did Jesus tell Himself how pleased He was with Himself? Was Jesus trying to play a joke on everyone?^{51 52} The "Jesus only" doctrine is an absurdity.

As a result of this doctrine the Pentecostals believe that water baptism is to be in the name of Jesus only and administered by saying

a formula over the baptismal candidate. They mean by this that baptism as set forth in the Great Commission, which is to be administered “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 28:18-20) is incorrect. The names of the Father and Holy Spirit are not to be pronounced in the baptismal act.

The name in which baptism is administered is vitally important, and this name is Jesus. Jesus’ last command to His disciples was, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). We should notice that He said *name* (singular) not *names*. As previously explained, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not names of separate persons, but titles of positions held by God....The apostles understood that Jesus was the name to use at baptism.⁵³

One cannot find anywhere in the New Testament in any of the commands concerning baptism, nor in any examples of anyone being baptized in the book of Acts, where anyone ever said any kind of formula or made any kind of statement of what was taking place immediately before baptizing a person. That does not necessarily mean that they did not say anything before a baptism, but if something is said, it must be a scriptural statement of what is occurring. The Pentecostals are in error when they demand that for which there is no command or biblical precedent. Jesus, Himself, taught that one is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! When this is pointed out to the Pentecostals, they say that since Jesus is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, all in one, that baptism administered in this formula is, in fact, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost!⁵⁴ They argue in circles. It is entirely possible to baptize a person into Christ just as Jesus taught without saying any words over them at all. It is not what one says (as long as it is biblically sound), or whether one says anything over a candidate for baptism, but what one does (the candidate obeying from the heart, Rom. 6:17-18) that counts in baptism.

Only those who baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost are actually baptizing in the name of Jesus. The New Testament gives four instances where baptism is associated with the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). There are three variations out of the four, indicating that there is no uniform use of any phrase describing what happened. But, in none of the

cases is it said that the baptism was in the name of Jesus only. Baptism is to be by the authority of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and,

acting by the authority of Christ from the relationship we sustain to him as our Redeemer and Lord, we are baptized into a state of union and communion with God, the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son; and the Holy Spirit....Unless the act is authorized, regardless of what the preacher says the baptism is not properly administered.⁵⁵

The early Christians baptized in the name of Jesus, and it is proper to do so, but never in the name of Jesus only. It is not what is said that makes a baptism valid, but what is done.

CONCLUSION

Pentecostalism is a cult-like religion full of heresies. Time and space will not permit a more thorough discussion of the subjects treated herein, nor a discussion of foot washing, divine healing, or premillennialism. Let us all study to show ourselves approved unto God and rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

ENDNOTES

¹*Woods-Franklin Debate—1974* (Gadsden, AL: H. C. McCaghren, 1975).

²*The Acts of the Holy Spirit in the CHURCH OF CHRIST Today* (Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, Los Angeles, CA, 1971).

³Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (New York, NY; Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 143.

⁴John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, Reprinted 1969), 6:526-531.

⁵*Ibid.*, 5:319-320.

⁶*Ibid.*, 9:609-611.

⁷Mead, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 141.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, Inc., 1988, translated from the German, 1972), p. 21.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 195.

¹⁵Hollenweger, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

¹⁶*Time*, September 11, 1989. Title and author unknown.

¹⁷"Oral Roberts: Victory Out of Defeat," *Charisma* (December 1989), p. 88.

¹⁸*Time*, *op. cit.*

- ¹⁹Hollenweger, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7, 365.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7. Quoting E. Braselton, *Full Gospel Men's Voice*, 6/2, March 1968, p. 15.
- ²¹MacArthur, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- ²²*Ibid.*, pp. 128-129. MacArthur is quoting Wagner in *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1988), pp. 15, 18-19.
- ²³*Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ²⁴Hollenweger, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- ²⁵John Wesley, *Wesley's Sermons*, 2:266.
- ²⁶John Wesley, *Original Sins*, p. 340.
- ²⁷Waymon D. Miller, speech "Why I Left The Nazarene Church," *Why I Left*, ed. Caskey-Campbell (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1949), pp. 125-126.
- ²⁸David Lipscomb and E. G. Sewell, *Questions Answered*, ed. M. C. Kurfees (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1921), pp. 583-584.
- ²⁹L. L. Brigrance, *L. L. Brigrance's Sermon Outlines*, ed. and comp. E. Claude Gardener (Murfreesboro, TN: Dehoff Publications, 1951), p. 132.
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- ³²Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
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- ³⁶*Woods-Franklin Debate, op. cit.*, p. 76.
- ³⁷James Meadows, *A Study of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Bible* (Jackson, TN: Meadows, printed by Laycook, 1969), pp. 14, 16-18.
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- ³⁹*The Apostles' Doctrine*, publication of the UPC (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, n.d.), pp. 6-8.
- ⁴⁰Gus Nichols, *Lectures on the Holy Spirit* (Plainview, TX: Nichols Brothers Publishing Co., 1967), p. 111.
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- ⁴³Stephen Wiggins, *The Panama Proclaimer*, "Picking On The Pentecostals," (Montgomery, AL: Panama Church of Christ bulletin), 3:33, 9/28/94, pp. 1-2.
- ⁴⁴*The Apostles' Doctrine, op. cit.*, p. 8.
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⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp 253-254.

EVOLUTION VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

In light of our subject matter, the Hebrews writer's words are most appropriate: "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). It is rather axiomatic: for anyone to enjoy divine approbation, he or she must believe that God exists, and that such a God provides real, personal benefits to those who seek Him. Obviously, no one would seek a being in whose existence he or she did not believe. The affirmation of this text, which is corroborated by individual case studies both ancient and contemporary, is that basic to our human existence and happiness is the pressing need to have a relationship with the Creator.¹ Thus, foundational to reaching our full human potential is the question of God's existence.

While recent polls suggest that the vast majority of average Americans hold to a robust belief in a transcendent Creator,² atheism continues to be the dominant philosophical stance of academia.³ And, the voices of the intelligentsia often are loud and persuasive. Though there is legitimate cause for cautious delight in our nation's

continued tendency toward theism, we must recognize the strong influence of atheism in our culture. Thus, the words "He that cometh to God must believe that he is," are most pertinent to our current intellectual situation.

At the heart of the question of God's existence are two diametrically opposed views of origins: creation and evolution. On the one hand, the biblical concept of special creation ascribes to an intelligent, powerful, transcendent Creator the existence of the universe and its basic life forms (Gen. 1; Exo. 20:11). On the other hand, the theory of organic evolution suggests that the universe and its life forms are merely a fortuitous combination of molecules assembled and augmented by pure, blind chance.

SCIENCE, EVOLUTION, AND CREATION

Outspoken evolutionists commonly attempt to equate evolution with scientific investigation while relegating biblical creationism to the realm of religious naivete. In other words, evolutionists profess to operate within the realm of empirical facts, whereas creationists, they charge, deal in matters of blind "faith" (this is an erroneous definition of biblical faith, Heb. 11:1). For example, Stephen Jay Gould, the famed paleontologist of Harvard University, is adamant about the scientific "factuality" of evolution and the religious "fiction" of creation. To him, and others of kindred spirits, evolution is no longer a theory but a well-established scientific truth on the same factual plane as the revolution of the earth around the sun. He caricatured creationism, on the other hand, as simply a political, ideological disposition, whose adherents are not committed to reason and honorable argument.⁴

In his sustained diatribe against creationism, however, Gould candidly admitted that the science of evolution cannot operate within the rigid limitations of the scientific method, which involves prediction and replication.⁵ This confession greatly weakens his confident assertion that evolution and the revolution of the earth about the sun are equally secure facts of science. The latter involves prediction and replication, whereas the former does not. This distinction is important to the creation/evolution controversy. Both creation and evolution deal with past singularities, not present

regularities. Only recurring regularities in nature fit within the empirical domain of the scientific method.

Origin and Operation Science

In recent years, Norman Geisler and Kerby Anderson have attempted to articulate the proper nature of, and the guiding principles for origin research.⁶ Consistent with Gould's admission, these writers drew a distinction between operation and origin science. Operation science, they argue, deals with observable, recurring phenomena in nature. This type of inquiry operates within the rigid confines of the scientific method that tests hypotheses by repeated experimentation. Origin science, on the other hand, is more like a forensic science that provides plausible explanations that best account for all available data relative to a past singularity. These authors cogently argued that origin research can operate legitimately only within the parameters of origin science.⁷ Further, only by recognizing the true nature of this inquiry and its guiding principles, can healthy dialogue occur between creationists and evolutionists.

The distinction between origin and operation science helps clarify the relationship of creationism and evolutionism. It cannot properly be stated that creationism belongs to the realm of religion and evolutionism is the sole potentate of the scientific domain. Evolutionists admit that their conclusions are not based on direct observations of processes at work. Gould candidly stated: "We try to understand the past, but don't pretend to predict the future. We can't see past processes directly, but learn to infer their operation from preserved results."⁸ Yet, creationism operates according to the same principles. Obviously, we cannot observe *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) directly, but learn to infer this process from preserved results. Accordingly, both creationism and evolutionism operate on the same philosophical plain, and it is patently false to leave the impression that evolution is a proved fact of operation science. The real task, therefore, is to determine which approach to origins (creation or evolution) provides the most plausible explanation of the beginning of the universe in light of all available data.

Definition of Terms

Before proceeding further in this discussion, a clear definition of the creation and evolution positions is necessary. First, creationism, as I employ the term, means that act of divine power in which the universe with all its innumerable aspects (including, and in particular the planet earth and its life forms) was created *ex nihilo* (cf., Heb. 11:3), and fashioned by God in six, literal days as described in Genesis 1 and 2 (cf., Exo. 20:11). Accordingly, the universe, planet earth and the life forms inhabiting it owe their ultimate existence to a personal, intelligent, and powerful Creator.

Second, "evolution" refers to the belief that life initially arose and has since developed, divergently and progressively, by a purely naturalistic process. This theory, called the General Theory of Evolution implies that the universe itself is the ultimate reality, and that there is no transcendent, personal God to whom it ultimately owes its existence. As a corollary to this philosophical stance, life on our planet arose spontaneously from nonlife, and one species of plant or animal gave rise to a new, more complex species of animal or plant.

Variation Within Limits

A word of clarification is in order here. There is a sense in which the word "evolution" may be used appropriately to describe limited changes within species. Generally, creationists recognize that restricted modifications have, and do, occur within species. Such a view, however, has not always been the case. The system of zoological classification developed by the Swedish botanist Carl von Linné, inspired the concept of fixity of species. This idea denied any change within species, and eventually led to the mistaken conclusion that God created each species in its own natural habitat (i.e., big-eared elephants of Africa and small-eared elephants of Asia were created separately in their peculiar habitats). Evidence, however, suggests that natural selection can operate on traits already present in a population to facilitate limited variation (i.e., *microevolution*) within species. The English peppered moth is a textbook illustration of this point. This insect, which comes in either a gray mottled or dark melanic variety, has undergone proportional popu-

lation changes in response to environmental pressures. Prior to the industrial revolution, the lighter colored moth was most plentiful. However, the industrial revolution produced soot-covered trees and rocks, which helped camouflage the formerly more scarce dark variety from predation by birds. This eventually caused a decrease in the lighter colored population, and a proportionate increase in the dark colored specimens of this species. With the continued decrease of soot in the air, the light variety is regaining dominance because it is better camouflage. A change definitely occurred, and is occurring within this species in response to natural selection. Yet, the important point is that no new species arose—they began the process as peppered moths, and they continue to be peppered moths!⁹

Biblical creationism allows for such limited variation. In fact, the word “kind” (*min*) appearing in the Genesis account of creation appears to be much broader in scope than allowed by the definitional confines of the term “species.” When, for example, God created the dog “kind,” this does not mean that He brought into existence all varieties of canines from Chihuahua to the Great Dane. He created the basic canine kind, which allowed for such variation. There obviously is a marked difference between the Chihuahua and the Great Dane. But while variation can be tremendous (as in this illustration), there is, nonetheless, an impenetrable phylogenetic boundary beyond which such change cannot extend. Frequently, this is the type of proof evolutionists offer in support of their theory.¹⁰ Yet, as indicated in the above discussion, biblical creationism allows for variation within limits. Thus, creationism does not deny microevolution (limited change), but the concept of macroevolution (large scale change). This distinction is most important to the creation/evolution controversy.

Needless Compromises

Unfortunately, some creationists, succumbing to the pressure of evolutionary scientists, have attempted a compromise between the biblical account of creation and organic evolution. More liberal theologians, for example, have relieved the tension between modern science and the biblical cosmogony altogether, suggesting that the early chapters of Genesis (1-11) were not intended to be primeval

history of the beginnings of the world. Rather, they simply reflected the writer's theological perspective of the nature, and plight of humankind in general. Accordingly, Adam and Eve were not real, space-time characters on the historical scene, but represent the proclivity of every human being to satisfy the cravings of his or her lusts. In this hermeneutical scheme, Cain becomes a personification of our envy when "God's grace is poured out on someone else," and the Babel story is a fictitious representation of humankind's "creativity, and there, when everything is going right, it says, we are most tempted to sin."¹¹

There are several glaring difficulties with this approach to Genesis, however. First, there is no need to place theology and history in opposition.¹² The stories of the creation, fall, global flood, and tower of Babel could (and do) have significant theological meaning. But their theological emphases do not militate against their historicity. Second, the first eleven chapters of Genesis have the same historiographic (history writing) elements as do the remaining chapters. In other words, there is no distinct difference between the writing style of Genesis 1-11 and the remaining chapters. Thus, there is no compelling evidence that the author of the early chapters of Genesis intended them to be less of historical value than the remainder of the book. Third, rejecting the historicity of the Genesis cosmogony reflects on the central claims of the Christian system.¹³ For example, Paul placed the atoning work of Christ on the same historical plane as Adam's transgression (Rom. 5:12-21). If Adam were not a real character in the space-time continuum, Paul's argument, and therefore the subject of his contention (i.e., Christ's atonement), is suspect. Clearly, there are serious difficulties with this approach to the Genesis cosmogony.

Other theorists, desiring to hold both to the biblical and evolutionary cosmogonies, have attempted a harmonization of the two approaches to origins. Among such concordant theories, two are most popular: theistic evolution and progressive creation. While these two theories share several similarities, there is at least one significant difference. On the one hand, theistic evolution suggests that organic evolution was the mechanism by which God accom-

plished His creative purpose. This theory accepts the basic tenets of the general theory of evolution, but ascribes the process to God. On the other hand, progressive creationists believe that God actually performed creative acts, but at different stages in history. In this scheme, God's creative acts correspond directly with the record of astronomy, paleontology, geology, and biology.¹⁴

Theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists share a common task: finding enough time in the biblical record to accommodate evolutionary time-scales. And, one thing is for sure: evolution demands time, and a tremendous amount of it! The genealogies in Genesis, however, place considerable chronological constrictions on the age of the earth. Some have attempted to dismiss the genealogies from the discussion of the earth's age by suggesting familial gaps in these records. Accordingly, there might be enough time within the genealogies to conciliate evolutionary time demands. While some generational gaps might be present in these lists, such intervals would not neutralize the force of the chronologies attached to them. And, genealogical considerations are one thing, chronological matters are another. If, for instance, Seth were a distant relative of Adam and not his immediate offspring, nevertheless, Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born (Gen. 5:3). We cannot dismiss *a priori* biblical chronology by assuming genealogical gaps. Additionally, sandwiching into biblical genealogies the necessary time to satisfy evolutionary time demands would render these records meaningless. And, such an enterprise would not resolve the tension between evolution and creation anyway. Evolution demands much time **before** the first humanoid appeared on the historical scene. Biblical genealogies, however, begin with the first *homo sapien*, Adam.

Recognizing this, many concordant theorists attempt to find the necessary time for evolution within the creation week. To do so, the days of Genesis 1 are given a figurative interpretation.¹⁵ Often finding justification from 2 Peter 3:8, which states that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," these theorists elongate the days of Genesis 1 far beyond a period of 24 hours.¹⁶ By nullifying the chronological force of the creation

week, enough time to facilitate the evolutionary scenario is found. Yet, there are some insurmountable difficulties with this approach. While space constriction forbid an in-depth treatment of this proposal, a few brief observations are in order. First, 2 Peter 3:8 has no bearing on the nature of the days of creation. Peter was simply correcting those uniformitarian scoffers who denied the final return of Jesus. Just as God had intervened in human history with the deluge (2 Pet. 3:5-6), so He would intervene once again at the end of the world. Unlike human beings who frequently fail to meet their obligations, God will fulfill His eschatological pledge—Jesus will return (2 Pet. 3:10-11). And, it makes no difference if He made the promise one day, or one thousand years ago, He will perform His oath. Such is the import of Peter's words. To use these metaphorical sentiments as interpretive lenses for the length of the creation days is reckless exegesis.

Second, the Genesis record defines the length of the days. After each creative act of God at a given time, the text says (literally in the Hebrew): "There was evening (*erev*), there was morning (*boqer*), X day" (cf., Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). While some concordant theorists have argued that these distinct components of each creative time-frame refer merely to the "beginning," and "ending" of an undisclosed period,¹⁷ a natural reading of the text suggests a period of 24 hours. When the term *boqer* (morning, appearing 205 times in the Hebrew Bible) is in a chronological context, it denotes the breaking of a new day, or the end of the previous night (cf., Gen. 41:28; Exo. 12:10; Lev. 7:15; Num. 22:21; Jud. 6:28).¹⁸ Similarly, when *`erev* (evening, found 131 times in the Old Testament) appears in a chronological context, it generally refers to night, or the end of a regular day (cf., Gen. 30:16; Exo. 16:18; Num. 9:15; 1 Sam. 17:16).¹⁹ There must be a compelling contextual reason to interpret these words in a figurative sense, which the language of Genesis 1 does not provide.

Finally, other passages alluding to the creation do not allow for the days of creation to be prolonged, indefinite periods. Exodus 20:11, for example, provides the theological reason for the Sabbath. They were to work six days and rest the seventh. Why? Because

God created the heavens, earth, sea, and all their inhabitants in six days and rested on the seventh. The implication of this passage to the length of the creation days is compelling. God equated the chronology of the creation week with that of the Jews. The initial audience of this message would not have dreamed that Moses had reference to seven indefinite periods. Obviously, a regular, approximately 168-hour week was under consideration in both instances (i.e., the Jewish and creation week).

Other attempts at reconciling biblical and evolutionary time-scales are equally unsatisfactory.²⁰ It seems to me that we are presented with a choice between two options: accept the Genesis account of creation or evolution. Attempts to harmonize the two cosmogonies compromise both to devastating extents. Actually, there is no need to compromise the Genesis record, as evidence suggests that it is the most plausible explanation of origins.

EVOLUTION, CREATION, AND THE EVIDENCE

There is one matter on which both creationists and evolutionists agree: the universe exists. The suggestion by philosophical ec-centrics that the universe is illusory is absurd.²¹ We do not drive in illusory cars across imaginary highways formed of mental concepts! The universe does exist, and, due to its acknowledged contingent nature (i.e., its existence is unnecessary), it must be explained. There are three possible explanations to the origin of the universe: (1) it has always existed; (2) it created itself from nothing; or (3) it was created by a power (being) both anterior and superior to itself.

The Universe Had a Beginning

Interestingly, conventional cosmology among evolutionary scientists holds that the universe had a beginning. Such has not always been the case. The steady-state theory first published in 1948 was heavily debated, and considered a plausible theory among some cosmologists in the 1950s. This theory held that *creatio ex nihilo* was a “naturally” occurring phenomenon everywhere in space and throughout time. This newly created matter condensed into galaxies, and the universe never changed its appearance. The implication of this cosmology was that the universe had no beginning; it had always, and will always exist.

Evidence of an expanding universe, however, has driven scientists to an inevitable conclusion: the universe had a beginning.²² Due to the pressure of the evidence, scientists generally have abandoned the steady-state theory for the now-popular “Big Bang” model of the universe. Speaking of this cosmic incident, Robert Jastrow stated that the universe began in a “blinding event, which defies scientific explanation.”²³ While the “Big Bang” model is part of the evolutionary scenario, and inconsistent with biblical creationism, it does testify to an incontrovertible fact: the universe had a beginning. Of course, this has been the stance of creationists all along (Gen. 1:1). Concerning origins, therefore, the biblical concept of a singular event of creation is consistent with observed phenomena.

There is another reason to conclude that the universe, as the Bible indicates, had a beginning. The second law of thermodynamics suggests that in an isolated, closed system (such as the whole universe), the amount of usable energy is decreasing. Accordingly, there is an inexorable movement from order to disorder (entropy increases with time).²⁴ In other words, the universe is running down. If the universe is becoming increasingly disordered, or running out of usable energy, then it is not infinite. If it were infinite (no beginning and no end), there would be no measurable decrease of available energy, since it could never exhaust an infinite supply of energy. Therefore, the second law of thermodynamics strongly suggests that the universe had a beginning.²⁵

A Supernatural Cause for the Universe

These observations have some important implications for the biblical cosmology, which ascribes to a transcendent Creator the universe's existence. Reversing the expanding motion of the universe leads us back to the point where it becomes increasingly smaller until it vanishes into nothing.²⁶ Hence, the obvious question is: Where did it come from? Operation science simply cannot address this question. That's why Robert Jastrow placed this phenomenon in a category that defied scientific (operation science) explanation. However, there must be an ultimate cause to the universe. If not, we are forced to the illogical (an unscientific) position of affirming that an effect (the universe) had no cause. The cause of

the natural universe must have existed prior to it. Logically, therefore, the cause of the universe cannot be natural (nothing existed before the entirety of nature). Accordingly, the cause must be supernatural.

We can infer from the nature of the universe something about its supernatural cause. Human beings, for example, are part of the universe. 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 have for some time recognized that DNA houses a very complicated code that directs the overall development of the human body. In fact, a single strand of DNA carries the same amount of information as a volume of an encyclopedia. We readily recognize that intelligence is required to produce an encyclopedia. By analogy, only an intelligent cause could produce such an ordered information system as that reflected in DNA.²⁷ The evidence clearly indicates that the universe is the result of an intelligent, supernatural cause. Or to put it in biblical terms: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

CONCLUSION

The above is only small threads in the impressive tapestry of evidence for the existence of God, and the integrity of the biblical account of creation.²⁸ I firmly believe that evolution is a failed attempt to explain the origin and development of the universe. And, this belief system has some unsavory implications.

If evolution is true, then there is no God. Accordingly, humankind is the product of a vague, purposeless process, which conveniently frees us from all moral obligations and responsibilities. Any bad behavior is simply an excusable remnant of our animal heritage. This does not mean that all evolutionists are villainous citizens seeking only to appease their own base desires. Many who hold to this belief are quite humanitarian. However, the fact remains that the evolutionary system, by implication, places moral judgments ultimately at the whims of human beings. Further, we become nothing more than the sum total of our parts, helplessly driven by

the chemical reactions in our fortuitously developed brains. There is no ultimate purpose for our existence, and no hope for our personal futures.

On the other hand, creationism ascribes the existence of the universe and all its life forms to an intelligent, loving, God. Accordingly, human beings have a divine purpose to their existence and are accountable to that God—a God Who demonstrated His inscrutable benevolence on an old Roman cross. Because of that astonishing act, humankind, the very apex of His creation, has hope of an eternity with their Creator. Thus, creationism is more than an intellectual approach to origins; it both defines who we are as human beings, and empowers us to reach our full human potential.

ENDNOTES

¹There is well-documented evidence that living a moral, God-fearing life is most conducive to human happiness. See Harold Cox and Andre Hammonds, "Religiosity, Aging, and Life Satisfaction," *Journal of Religion and Aging*, 5[1/2]:1-21, 1993.

²In its April 4, 1994 issue, *U.S. News* presented the conclusions to a poll regarding the spirituality of the American populace. The poll suggested that a startling 93% of those polled believed in God or a universal spirit. A whopping 76% believed that God is a personal, heavenly father who can be reached by prayers. Interestingly, 65% felt that religion was losing its influence on American life, while 62% affirmed that religion had been increasing in its influence on them personally. See Jeffery Sheler, "Spiritual America," *U.S. News*, April 4, 1994, pp. 48-59. The results of a similar poll appeared in the March 1994 issue of *LIFE* magazine, which corroborated the popularity of belief in and prayer to a personal God. An amazing 95% of those polled believed that their prayers had been answered.

³Jerry Bergman, "The New State Religion: Atheism," *Impact*, No. 257, November, 1994.

⁴Stephen Jay Gould, "Darwinism Defined: The Difference Between Fact and Theory," *Discover*, January, 1987, p. 64.

⁵*Ibid.*, 1987, p. 69.

⁶Geisler and Anderson argue that only when both evolutionists and creationists recognize the proper scientific sphere in which they operate (i.e., origin science) can meaningful dialogue between the two camps occur. See Norman Geisler and Kerby Anderson, *Origin Science: A Proposal for the Creation-Evolution Controversy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, n.d.).

⁷See also Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1989), p. 214-216.

⁸Gould, *Darwinism Defined*, p. 70.

⁹For an in-depth discussion of this concept and its difficulties, see Trevor Major, "Variation Within Limits," *Reason and Revelation*, 1994, 13:25-30.

¹⁰Gould, *Darwinism Defined*, p. 65-66.

¹¹Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching from the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), pp. 71-72.

¹²V. Philips Long labels the common assertion that “the Bible is theology not history” or “the Bible is literature not history” as false dichotomies. The Bible, rather, is interested in the dynamic interrelationships of theology, history, and literary artistry. None of these elements precludes the other in biblical historiography. See V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 57.

¹³For an excellent discussion of the negative implications of rejecting the basic historicity of the Bible on the central claims of Christianity, see *Ibid.*, pp. 93-99.

¹⁴Two recent books by Hugh Ross affirm progressive creationism. See Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1994); *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1993).

¹⁵One of the chapters in Hugh Ross’ book, *Creation and Time*, argues that the biblical text, not only allows, but stipulates that these days were elongated periods. See, Ross, *Creation and Time*, pp. 45-52.

¹⁶Hugh Ross couples Psalm 90:4 with 2 Peter 3:8 to demonstrate God’s days are not the same as our days. Accordingly, the days of Genesis 1 should not be taken as literal days. See Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 45.

¹⁷Ross, *Creation and Time*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁸See Elmer Martens, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 1:125.

¹⁹For a discussion of this word, see Ronald Allen, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:694.

²⁰The Gap theory introduces an enormous time-frame between the first two verses of Genesis 1. Others have opted for a modified gap, and day-age theory. Still others suggest that the days refer to the period during which God revealed His creation to Adam, rather than the actual time-frame of His creativity. For a discussion of these, and other concordant theories, see Bert Thompson, Popular Compromises of Creation—the Day-Age Theory, *Reason and Revelation*, 1994, 14:41-47; Bert Thompson, “Popular Compromises of Creation) the Gap Theory,” *Reason and Revelation*, 1994, 13:49-56; Garry K. Brantley, “Six Days of Creation, or Revelation,” *Reason and Revelation*, 1994, 13:45.

²¹See Frank Allen, “The Origin of the World) 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.

²²John D. Barrow and Joseph Silk, two evolutionary astronomers, discuss the evidence for and the implications of the expanding universe. See *The Left Hand of Creation: The Origin and Evolution of the Expanding Universe* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 30-72.

²³Robert Jastrow, *Until the Sun Dies* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), p. 19.

²⁴Jeremy Rifkin observed: “...for our tiny solar system and the planet Earth, the Entropy Law still holds `the supreme position among the laws of nature.’” See Jeremy Rifkin, *Entropy* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1980), p. 46.

²⁵See Norman Geisler and Kerby Anderson, *Origin Science*, p. 135.

²⁶Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, p. 221.

²⁷For an excellent discussion of the theological implications of the design of the human body, see Wayne Jackson, *Human Body: Accident or Design* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications, 1993).

²⁸Many books have been written on this subject that do an outstanding job of both critiquing the evolutionary model of the universe, and presenting cogent cases for the creation model. Among them are: Marvin Lubenow, *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992); Luther Sunderland, *Darwin's Enigma: Fossils and Other Problems* (Santee, CA: Master Book Publishers, 1988); Wayne Frair and Percival Davis, *A Case for Creation* (Kansas City, MO: CRS Books, 1983); Scott M. Huse, *The Collapse of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983). These, and many other books are available at Apologetics Press, Montgomery, Alabama.

MORALS

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Paul has had a debate with the Independent Christian Church on the "Authority of the New Testament." He has had a weekly radio program for the past eight years. He is the Associate Editor of the **East Kentucky Beacon** and edited **Triumph and Tragedy**, a book on the history of the church in Central and Eastern Kentucky.

In his second epistle to Timothy Paul said, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). This describes the moral crisis in our world today. People are being deceived and led astray by the multitudes.

The principles and standards of right conduct are being attacked. A war is raging for the soul of man. This war is against the young and the old, against men and women, against all that is good. It is time to draw the battle line and look to God and His Word as the standard to follow. Paul admonished the Christians at Ephesus to put on the armor of God. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11).

This once great country has been brought to shame by the moral crisis in the land. America is full of pollution, the pollution of immorality. The wrath of God will come to all nations that grow fat on the sin of immorality. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psa. 9:17).

It is the intent of this writer to examine and expose some of the false standards of morality prevalent in society and show that these false standards will ultimately lead to eternal punishment from God. It will also be shown that the basis for all morality is found in the New Testament, the divinely inspired religious and moral guide for the Christian Age.

DECLINE IN MORALS

During the past fifty years there has been a rapid decline in the morals of Americans. This decline in morals has enveloped almost every facet of life in America. It has even affected some in the church of Christ. In 1990-91 a survey was given to check the moral thinking of America. From 1950 to 1990 a tremendous change had taken place in the morals of America and the rest of the world. In 1950, 58% of the women were virgins at the time of marriage, in 1990, 35%. Religion was important to 75% of the people in 1950 by 1990 only 54% thought that religion was important.

In 1950, 15% of the households were headed by women, by 1990, 27% of the households were headed up by women.¹

This is a critical time of great danger. Most Americans have no moral standard of authority. They are making up their own rules and moral codes to live by. Below is an example of some of the rules that many people live by today that was taken in the Patterson-Kim survey.

1. I will steal from those who won't really miss it, 74%.

2. I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn't cause any real damage, 64%.

3. I will cheat on my spouse)) after all, given the chance, he or she will do the same, 53%.

4. I will procrastinate at work and do absolutely nothing about one full day in every five. It's standard operating procedure, 50%.

5. I will use recreational drugs, 41%.

6. I will cheat on my taxes)) to a point, 30%.²

An absolute standard of authority is unknown to many Americans; most have their own concept of right and wrong. Jeremiah warned the people of Judah against the folly of directing one's own path. He wrote, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is

not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Isaiah called for national repentance because of the sins of the people. He knew that God saw their sin and it displeased Him. “Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment” (Isa. 59:15).

God has richly blessed America. Yet, as a people, America has turned her back on God. The cause for concern is urgent! We must recognize the enormity of this moral decline that is destroying good and right in our nation before it is too late.

Ten righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:16-19:24). It is time to look to God and stand for that which is right in His sight or God will destroy us as a nation. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17).

DECLINE OF THE FAMILY

The traditional family and the moral values that were taught thirty to fifty years ago are being aggressively attacked. The divorce courts echo the death pangs of over half of all marriages. Yet, God’s plan for marriage and the family has not changed. Liberal critics try to degrade the concept of the traditional family. The sexual relationship between husband and wife is lowered to that of the animals.

In the beginning God made one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. It was God who established the boundaries of marriage and the family. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). In the New Testament Jesus said, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19:6). God through the Hebrew writer said, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Despite the teaching from the Scriptures, adultery and fornication are glorified in society. The entertainment world looks at marital fidelity as old fashioned. Loyalty and faithfulness are simply words of a bygone age to the critics of the traditional family.

As a result of divorce and the decay of many families, there is a decline of moral training in the home. Children have not been taught to respect authority. They do not respect their parents, their teachers at school or government. If children do not respect the law of the land, the school system or their parents; they will not respect God or the church. The importance of parents teaching their children and children obeying their parents is plainly taught in the Bible.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).

Solomon wrote, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro. 1:8). For young people to grow into responsible adults who will live moral lives, they must be taught about God at an early age. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon said, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1). Children left to the teachings of the world will experience a decline in moral values.

The elements that hold families together are a love for God and one another. Faithfulness, sexual loyalty, and commitment to the success of the family all mean hard work. It can be accomplished if families will stop looking to the critics for advice and turn to God.

ABORTION, INFANTICIDE, EUTHANASIA

Abortion is a moral issue that divides families and government. Abortion is morally wrong; it is murder! Abortion is the intentional killing of an innocent unborn baby, a human being. One who murders “any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death is morally wrong and should be subject to punishment meted out by duly constituted authorities.”³

The unborn baby has a full-fledged right to live. The Scriptures teach the value of all human life and there is no distinction made between unborn babies and those born. God considered Jeremiah valuable and appointed him as a prophet while he was in his mother’s womb. “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). Through the inspiration of Luke, God said that Elizabeth had a baby in her womb. “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the BABE leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luke 1:41; *emph. PV*). It was a baby that had life, not just a blob of lifeless tissue!

Those who try to justify abortion object to those who value the unborn baby by putting forth the question, “What if the mother’s life is threatened?” The purpose of the medical profession is to save lives, not to murder innocent babies. For example, if a mother had a tubular pregnancy her life would be in danger. While the doctor was trying to save the mother’s life, the baby dies. Note! It was not the purpose of the doctor to kill the baby. His motive was to save the mother. His actions reflected respect for all human life.

Since 1973, when the United States Supreme Court upheld abortion-on-demand with its decision in the Roe versus Wade case, there has been a progressive disrespect for human life in society. Infanticide and Euthanasia are gaining popularity.

Infanticide is the murder of a baby that has been born. This has been practiced in China for the past 4,000 years. In ancient Rome babies born disabled were taken out of the city and left to starve to death. This happens too in America. Parents don’t take babies outside the cities and leave them, but it is documented that a couple let a Down’s Syndrome baby starve to death because it was disabled. The practice of infanticide, letting babies starve to death, is becoming widespread in society.

There has been a steady decline in respect for human life, abortion, infanticide, then euthanasia. Euthanasia is “mercy killing.” Unborn babies are being murdered by the thousands. Disabled infants are considered as not having a quality life. The next logical stage would be the killing of the elderly. The argument that is used to justify abortion can be offered for infanticide and euthanasia.

Christians must take a stand against these moral evils and speak up before it is too late! Mordecai encouraged Esther to stand for that which is right and speak up against evil. He said,

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this (Est. 4:14)?

Christians need to speak out for the weak and have compassion for the helpless. Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Mat. 25:45).

MORAL LEADERS

With the morals of society falling to a low ebb, sin is accepted as that which is right and many call good evil. Isaiah addressed this same problem hundreds of years ago when God's people were corrupted with sin. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20)! Christians must not conform to the wickedness that is in the world. There is a need for strong moral leadership in the church. Elders and preachers have the responsibility to stand for that which is right and be courageous in this moral crisis. The church needs leaders who are "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phi. 1:17).

Sadly, the immorality that is choking the purity out of society, has drowned elders and preachers in sin. Too many times, this writer has heard of preachers and elders who have been involved in sexual immorality. Paul said that sexual immorality will keep one from heaven. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness...that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19, 21).

Sometimes a preacher or an elder will overextend himself in debt. This writer has seen preachers bring reproach on the church because they haven't used wisdom in the handling of money. If a person goes into debt, he is morally obligated to pay that bill! Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid....Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:14,16). God is not glorified when leaders in the church, or any Christian, will let themselves get in debt to where they cannot pay their obligations.

All Christians have the obligation to separate themselves from the immorality in the world. Paul appealed to the Corinthians not to get involved with the world. “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. 6:17-18). This appeal is just as important to Christians today as it was to the Corinthians when it was given!

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

The standard of right conduct for the Christian Age is the doctrine of Christ. John wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Those who are “progressive” in their teaching and abide not in the teaching of Christ lose all the blessings of covenant relationship with God and Christ. This includes all the teachings of the New Testament, Christ’s teaching on the church, worship, salvation and morality.

The life of Christ is moral perfection. His teaching on morality and ethics stands apart from all men. Jesus lived what He taught. The moral standard of the teachings of Jesus is evidence of His deity. The moral teachings of men do not compare to the moral law of Jesus. His teaching on humility, mercy, service and compassion has no equals.

Jesus teaches that man has a moral obligation to God. “Jesus 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 is the first and great commandment” (Mat. 22:37-38). Loving God and putting Him first will bring peace to one’s life. Man cannot love God and yield to the immorality in this world. Paul wrote, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). Man is to mortify, put to death, sin in his life. Discipline the physical desires and passions in one’s life by self-denial. A Christian will discipline his life because of his love for God and his desire to please Him. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “But

seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat. 6:33). One cannot put God first and practice immorality.

Jesus teaches that man has a moral obligation to his fellow man. “...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat. 22:39). This teaches that man is not to harm or injure his neighbor. Under the law of Jesus it is sinful to take your neighbor’s wife, lie to him, or intentionally harm him. Christian morality demands the keeping of the Golden Rule. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat. 7:12).

The morality of the Golden Rule goes beyond not harming anyone; it teaches that one is to prevent harm when possible. In the book of Acts, Paul stopped the Philippian jailer from killing himself. “And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here” (Acts 16:27-28). Paul could have kept quiet and there would have been one less Philippian. But, Paul’s moral obligation kept him from being quiet. He spoke up and saved a life. This opened the door to teaching the gospel and the jailer and his family were baptized. Paul was more concerned about doing that which was good than he was for his own life.

Jesus is the absolute example to follow for the Christian life. Peter said, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (I Pet. 2:21). Christian morals should reflect the character of Christ. Christians can know right from wrong by looking to the doctrine of Christ and living daily according to His teaching. Paul exhorted the Colossians to center their lives around Jesus. “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).

Christian morality is a matter of sowing and reaping. One cannot have a pure heart, free from immorality, unless he sows the doctrine of Christ into his heart. In the Galatian letter Paul wrote, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that

shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8). The Word of Christ sown in the heart will mold the inner disposition of man. A moral effect on man comes about because of God’s Word. The adulterer stops committing adultery, the liar stops lying and the murderer stops taking the life of others; in effect he is a new person. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

To overcome temptation one must obey the doctrine of Christ, then cling to it daily. Christianity is not just external, it is sowing the Word of God in one’s heart every day, then letting that seed grow and spring forth into Christian living.

CONCLUSION

It would take volumes to address all the moral problems that corrupt man’s life. It is not within the scope of this paper to handle all of them. The moral crisis that is deceiving so many can be stopped with the teaching and obedience to the Doctrine of Christ.

There is a need for courage for this is a dangerous time. Paul warned of perilous times in the last days.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

It is time to turn away from those who lower the moral standards of Christ! Turn away from those who disregard sanctity of life! Turn away from those who pervert God’s marriage law! Turn away from those who grow fat on immorality! Turn away from sin and look to God! The choice is yours, God’s standard of morality or the world’s. Joshua pointed the Israelites to God when he said, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land

ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos. 24:15). CHOOSE WISELY!

ENDNOTES

¹James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told The Truth* (New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1991), p. 3.

²*Ibid.*, p. 25.

³Clifford Bajema, *Abortion And The Meaning of Personhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 45.

MODESTY

Robin W. Haley



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Romans. Robin has done foreign mission work since 1988 in India, Singapore, and the Baltic Republic of Latvia and Estonia.

INTRODUCTION

To any and all who have any degree of discernment it is painfully obvious that our nation, yea the world, has the on-going and growing problem of those who seem not to know nor care about what is descent and proper in the moral realm of virtue and modesty. It is therefore again timely that such a lesson on modesty be forthcoming. Some may feel that such teaching and reminding of brethren of these things is like “beating a dead horse,” but I am glad that there are still those who have the attitude of the apostle Peter who wrote, “Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:12-13).

What disappoints this writer are the questions that Christians (who ought to know better) ask such as “What is modest? What does society say? Did God ever tell us ‘how long is long’?” It is my observation that the majority of those who ask such questions are those who are bent on trying to justify their behavior and dress code which their common sense is really trying to tell them is contrary to God’s standards. So long as Christians still ask such questions, it will

continue to be necessary for us to address and teach what God says about these things.

WHAT BRETHERN OUGHT TO KNOW

When we speak of modesty, we speak of that which is moral, of virtue and integrity. Generally speaking, we mean behavior and dress which speak of an attitude of meekness, shyness and goodness before God and men. Modesty in financial matters has reference to that which is not extravagant. In behavior, it refers to not being boisterous, extroverted to the point of being unbecoming, unseemly or odious. In dress, we refer to clothing which does not draw undue attention to oneself, especially to private, intimate parts of one's body.

Immodest dress does not just mean various degrees of **undress**, but also any kind of clothing which draws attention to body parts—to the point of causing impure thoughts in the minds of others. This is where some people will say, “Well, we can't help what some people think!” To some degree, this is true. But we certainly ought to recognize that we contribute to what people think, and we do that many times by means of our appearance. Simply put, clothes that are too tight, too low-cut, too highly-hemmed or too thin are immodest.

Brethren ought to know how some of our country-men are seen abroad. Having traveled much in Eastern Europe and twice to India, I have seen and heard how these people refer to Americans. Read carefully this notice I clipped from a newspaper from Trivandrum, India (1988):

“Where Scanty Clothing Poses Problems Aplenty”

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

This comes from a society which finds most of its children going naked, and many of the old people go naked, or nearly so. Also keep in mind, this was referring to apparel at a beach for swimming. Can anyone conclude that these swim suits were “appropriate?”

Brethren ought to know that their clothing speaks to everyone around them. The world would call this making a “fashion statement.” Brother, sister, your clothes are professing something about you. It is sad that Christians who are to be the light to this world would rebel at the following “dress code” if a congregation’s elders imposed it on members when they come to worship and Bible class:

Men must wear dress shirts, ties, dress slack and dress shoes. Jeans are not allowed. Tennis shoes are not acceptable. Shirts with writing and cartoons are not approved. Hair styles must be neat, trim and clean. Women are required to wear dresses, skirts and blouses and all must be conservative in style. Strapless or spaghetti strap dresses and bare mid-drifts are not acceptable. Dress shoes and hosiery are required. Tennis shoes are not acceptable. Jeans are not allowed. Shirts with writing and cartoons are inappropriate. Hair styles must be neat, trim and clean.

Perhaps you have seen this in some brotherhood bulletins. It is the dress code for Sears! It seems the business world has more regard for the influence of its employees than many Christians have for their influence toward the world. Why will some brethren allow the world to influence them for the devil rather than try to influence the world for righteousness? People are influenced by how we dress! If this were not true, please explain why the ragged, unkempt, unshaved street urchin (having been arrested for some crime), is counseled by his lawyer to clean himself up, shave and put on clean, conservative clothing before coming before the judge and/or jury? **Clothing speaks.** Consider the use of kinds of clothes to describe certain people: “And she arose, and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on THE GARMENTS OF HER WIDOWHOOD” (Gen. 38:19, emp. RWH). Again, “And, behold, there met him a woman WITH THE ATTIRE OF A HARLOT, and wily of heart” (Pro. 7:10).

Brethren ought to know that there are kinds of clothing that are appropriate in some places and situations, but not in others. What one wears to bed is not likely to be fitting for the picnic grounds. What one would wear to play some ball with the kids is probably not proper for the worship assembly. Some have opted to compromise with the world’s standard of decency by wearing sweat clothes for nearly any and every occasion. Last year, the wife of a local preacher

attended Monday or Tuesday night of our Gospel Meeting dressed in a violet-colored sweat suit! I still cannot figure why Christians will dress “appropriately” with a suit, tie, nice clean shoes, and conservative, respectful dresses when attending the memorial service of a friend or loved one who has passed from this life, but “dress down” in jeans, tennis shoes and flannel shirts or T-shirts for the memorial of our Lord’s death on the first day of the week.

Brethren ought to know that our word “gymnasium” comes from the Greek word *gymnos* which means “naked.” In ancient times, those participating in sporting, athletic events, such as the Olympics, did so nude or partially so. It is not sinful to go to the gym, but one **MUST** be cautious what one wears and how one dresses there. Just because it is acceptable to wear short, tight clothing at the gym does not mean that God approves of us wearing it, at the gym or anywhere else!

We have been living in a time where much emphasis has been put on the physique and exercise and being “in shape.” We know what Paul said of this matter, “for bodily exercise is profitable for a little” (1 Tim. 4:8). Yet, some seem to think exercise is the panacea for all ills; physical, emotional and social. The clothing donned by those who have fallen for this line is atrocious and most immodest. Last summer, I helped host a volley-ball and ice cream get together for the young people of the congregation where I labor. One young man, who had obviously been doing a good deal of weight lifting, showed up with very tight short-shorts and a skin tight muscle shirt. Very little was left to anyone’s imagination as to his “manhood,” and his upper torso physique. Embarrassing is an understatement for his appearance. But, the world would see his clothing as “appropriate” for the occasion. The Lord did not!

Sadly, too many have concluded that when engaged in a sport, there is no immodesty when one dresses in the outfit that someone has deemed as “the” outfit to be worn for that sport. There is nothing sinful about swimming. But what one wears to swim, where one swims and with whom one swims are indeed matters of modesty. When engaged in with those undressed, of the opposite sex and in public or private settings, it is a sinful situation. Some may have a

real talent at swimming/diving. But the dress demanded by the sport to participate ought to convince Christians that it would be immodest, thus inappropriate. What is wrong with basketball? Nothing of itself. But where do Christians get the idea that they may dress in some of the abbreviated clothing as is typical for the sport and be pleasing to God?

Worst of all, it seems, are those who try to justify their daughters' being involved in cheer-leading when they flip and flaunt "all they have" before the eyes of the fans in the stands. How much "leg" does the Lord think is appropriate for others to see? He, being the author of modesty, ought to be able to tell us. He does this in several places. Yes, He tells us "how long is long." Here is an example: "Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen" (Isa. 47:2-3, KJV). Is it not obvious what God calls "nakedness" and "shame" here? The uncovering of the leg and thigh are regarded as nakedness and shame. Why else do people pay attention to the cheer leaders? Have you ever seen male cheer leaders? I have. You know that they are not dressed as the girls. Why? Men are not exempt from God's standard of modesty and dress. It is just as sinful for a man to be showing his legs and thighs (his nakedness and shame) as it is for a woman.

I watched a movie the other night where a swim party was being given at a celebrity's house. There was a band playing. The men were all dressed in slacks and shirts. Guess how the girls were dressed? They were not! They were all in skimpy swim suits. I like to watch Star Trek. You know what I have noticed? The male members of the crew on the Starship Enterprise all wear long pants and long sleeved shirts. Guess what the women wear? The shortest of tutus and short sleeves is typical uniform for those gals. Why? This clothing certainly does not fit the definitions of modesty and virtue. By definition, these traits mean "to observe proprieties of sex; chaste; descent and unassuming; moral and pure." ***Brethren ought to know*** that our society is bent on changing the definitions and roles of its male/female members. Many of the devil's "-isms" (feminism being perhaps the leading influence) are being used to dupe us into

believing that men and women are just alike, only different! By this, I mean that roles are being obscured and obliterated. Men are no longer men. Women are no longer women. There are “alternatives” being explored. Such goop as “men ought to be strong enough to be maternal” and “women ought to be willing to stand up and take it like a man” is being injected into the thinking, entertainment and schooling of our entire population! How does the subject of modesty enter? Just so: when the lines between masculinity and femininity are erased, women are no longer encouraged to be modest (having concern for shamefacedness; blushing). Women are being encouraged to act like men in about every unnatural way imaginable. They are encouraged to ogle the male body as crude men would ogle a girly magazine.

More than ever before perhaps, it is important for men to guard their modesty. Some may object by saying, “Oh, women are not attracted to men’s bodies.” This is not what my wife says. They are being encouraged to be so attracted. Consider: why are there such things as “ladies’ night only” at bars? Why are there such things as “male strippers?” (Add to this the gross explosion of homosexuals who have “come out of the closet” and the increase of homosexuality and male rape. Why are young boys being approached by homosexuals in record numbers these days? Part of the problem is a lack of any kind of rule for male modesty.)

With such loss of femininity there is the loss of respect for women. As one good sister has observed, when women walk, talk, dress and act like men, they are treated less and less like ladies. When a woman acts, dresses, and speaks like a lady, she will be treated as such.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

The whole point of this manuscript and these lectures is to learn and/or remind the auditors and readers of this material what God has said about these things. Do the Scriptures address these things specifically? Are there Biblical guidelines that we can use to determine what kind of clothes to wear and how long they must be or short they may be? **YES!** The Scriptures do give us these answers.

Many may not like to hear the answers, but as Paul would say, “let God be found true, but every man a liar” (Rom.3:4).

Some Pertinent Old Testament Passages Let us now investigate some passages wherein these things are addressed, either directly or indirectly. It is appropriate for us to go to the beginning of man’s problem with his nakedness, thus, we will look first into Genesis. In the third chapter we are told of the introduction of sin into this world, the blame that was passed and the record of the beginning of God’s remedy for this sin. We read,

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were **naked**; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves **aprons**...And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was **naked**; and I hid myself...And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife **coats of skins**, and **clothed** them (Gen. 3:7,10,21)

Note that Adam and Eve knew they were naked and needed covering. This covering or “apron” was a loincloth, like a belt or sash. By the description, it seems to have covered more than many bikini bottoms. But then we see that, although they had already covered themselves, they still considered themselves naked, thus they hid from God. This situation is then contrasted with what God provided for them, namely: “coats of skins.” These “coats” were like robes that hung from the shoulder and covered the body, past the thigh and to the calf. What did God do with these coats? He “clothed” the man and his wife. This Hebrew word means “to wrap around; to put on a garment.” This then is what God would call being “clothed.” Anything less is classed by this text as “naked.” God has set the standard for being clothed and covered, not Mary Quant (inventor of the mini clothing rage). It ought to be clear that tube tops, halter tops, spaghetti strapped garments, shoulderless gowns (of any kind), low slung muscle shirts, shorts and mini-anythings are not proper “clothing” and therefore not modest.

Next, consider the instruction given to the priests of the Old Testament. They were not to allow their lower parts to show. They were to be covered, even to the point of wearing “underclothing” so that none could see their lower legs, thighs, etc. This was considered by God to be their “nakedness.” (See Exo. 28:42; 39:28; Lev. 6:10;

16:4). In the Law we read, “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon” (Exo. 20:26). From what we learned earlier, God did not want people to see His priests’ legs and thighs (their nakedness).

We know that much of what we find in these Old Testament things are foreshadows and types of what God will accomplish in Christ and His church. The priesthood answers to the priesthood of believers today. Obviously, God wants His priests to be clothed and their nakedness covered. Let us never forget who we are in the sight of God:

Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 5,9).

Another area of modesty that I myself have not seen nor heard addressed to much degree is that of cosmetics. Take note of the unsavory description of Jezebel, “And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and **she painted her eyes (face, KJV)**” (2 Kings 9:30). It seems that any woman would desire to stay away from anything that would tend to align her with a woman such as was Jezebel.

Our word for “cosmetics” is from the Greek word *kosmos* which has reference to “an orderly arrangement; decoration; adorning; pertaining to the world.” This would obviously be an outward adorning. Remember that Peter instructed women not to be so concerned about outward adorning, but rather the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4).

A related word in Greek is *kosmios* which means “decorous; **modest** (with respect to degree or amount) and well-arranged.” The use of cosmetics is not sinful, but the overuse of them is worldly. Sisters, please refrain from “painting” yourself as did wicked Jezebel. Remember the words of the wise man, “Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; But a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised” (Pro. 31:30).

Again, from the Proverbs we find this gem, “A worthy woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies” (Pro. 31:10). This virtue or worthiness is defined as “a force, whether of men or women; to be of substance; valor, virtue, worthy.” Its Greek counterpart means “moral power, strength.” This describes a person, male or female, who has the character of substance and power to stand against the pressures of society when it comes to morals and modesty. The opposite of this trait is found in the attitude of God’s people as addressed by Jeremiah, “Were they **ashamed** when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they **blush**” (Jer. 6:15). Two words which need our attention are “ashamed” and “blush.” To be ashamed means “to pale (with insignificance); to fall into disgrace through failure.” This “blushing” is associated with the disgrace and shame mentioned above due to any public exposure and humiliation. We can be ashamed at certain behavior. But when the actions become known (public), we blush and are embarrassed. Many of our brethren ought to be ashamed of themselves and how they dress, whether for the world or worship. When in public, they ought to be embarrassed and blush!

Some Pertinent New Testament Passages Next we look into the New Testament. We find an interesting contrast between being naked and being clothed in this account from the Gospel of Luke,

And when he was come forth upon the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons; and for a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in any house, but in the tombs... And they went out to see what had come to pass; and they came to Jesus, and found the man, from whom the demons were gone out, sitting, **clothed and in his right mind**, at the feet of Jesus: and they were afraid (Luke 8:27,35).

What was the result of this man’s being put into his right mind? ***He was clothed!*** Right-thinking people will not go about without proper clothing. We are to be different from the world. Let us be “an ensample to them that believe (of the believers, KJV)” (1 Tim. 4:12). We ought not to be “fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed” (Rom. 12:2), because we are “in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17).

One of the three most quoted passages on this subject of modesty is Galatians chapter five. Let us emphasize two words in particular from the following, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, **uncleanness, lasciviousness**” (Gal. 5:19). “Uncleanness” is the state of being morally impure. This would include actions which are “of a doubtful nature; passive lewdness; immodesty, typified by abbreviated clothing.” Thus, shorts and the attire used for swimming (when both sexes are present) are immodest and considered “unclean.” This is precisely what caused David and Bathsheba’s trouble: passive lewdness which erupted into fornication and adultery.

“Lasciviousness” is seen as “being incontinent (promiscuous); licentiousness; wantonness.” This is “active lewdness; immoral excess; unchecked lust; dancing and petting.” The opposite of these kinds of actions and attitudes would be seen as life in the Spirit (Gal.5:16,25). Notice how the attributes of a lawful Christian life contradict the passive/active lewdness of a sinful life: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, **goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control**; against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). “Goodness” is that quality of “integrity, virtue and beneficence.” “Self-control” ought to be self explanatory. It means “to be temperate; in control of or mastering emotions, appetites and passions.” We are not to “love the world” (1 John 2:15), nor are we to “fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts” (1 Pet. 1:14). Let us “abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11), and “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11).

There are deadly consequences in giving oneself to the works of the flesh such as those of uncleanness and lasciviousness: we will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal.5:21)! In Galatians chapter six and verse eight we learn that we will reap corruption if we give ourselves to the flesh. We ought rather to be determined to live in such a way “That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17), and being “good minister(s) of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). If we live this way, paying close attention to

God's standards of modesty in our speech, actions and dress, we "may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).

The second most quoted passage referring to modesty is in my judgment First Timothy chapter two. Here is the passage:

In like manner, that women **adorn** themselves in **modest** apparel, with **shamefastness** and **sobriety**; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; 10 but (which becometh women **professing** godliness) through good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

There are five words we must consider in this text. To "adorn" means "to put in proper order; to decorate or trim as with garments." This clothing is to be "modest" which means "appropriate and seemly to proper behavior." It seems that dressing for one occasion may not be the "modest" thing to wear for another occasion. As we noted earlier, dressing for a picnic is not "modest" apparel for worship, though the body may be covered modestly.

The next two words to be high-lighted deal with attitudes. "Shamefastness" is not necessarily being ashamed (worthy of blame, embarrassment, or humiliation) of something. Our English word "ashamed" carries with it the meaning of being guilty of something for which we ought to be punished. Just the opposite ought to be felt by those who so dress. Elsewhere it is translated "reverence" (Heb. 12:28). They ought to feel content in the knowledge that they are presenting themselves in a decent fashion. Thus, it means "to be bashful (towards men or God); to show reverence and awe." Some clothing shows very little respect and reverence for God. When Christians dress like they were going to Saturday afternoon bowling, but arrive at worship, are they really showing the proper reverence and awe for God as this word describes? We think not! This word describes the person who would restrain himself from unworthy actions; it is that attitude which would precede and thus prevent shameful acts. It is never worth anything to act or dress disrespectfully, before men or God.

"Sobriety" is that character of "self-control of one's mind; sanity and soberness." When coupled with the preceding "shamefastness" or "shamefacedness" we find a person who has strong control of their will, in that they will not be unduly influenced by the world, and will

choose to put their respect for God above all else. Many brethren may *say* otherwise, but their real attitude shows in their *actions* and *appearance*.

Finally, this kind of clothing and attitude “professes” something. As we before stated, our clothing speaks! This word “professing” means “to engage to do something.” It refers to “something promising to be what it actually appears.” When Paul used this word, he used it in its middle voice. Thus, our clothing is speaking of ourselves and what we think of and feel toward ourselves. What are we to be “professing?” **Godliness!** This word refers to how “devout or devoted” we are to God.

Though much of what Paul teaches here deals with character, it is not merely incidental that clothing helps make up this character. Clothing, like the qualities of our character, is to be regulated in order to present us as godly individuals. Character alone does not exhibit modesty. Modesty alone does not build character. Excess is to be avoided as well as any degree of undress which would arouse lust in another. Such excesses would include those of outward decoration, makeup, jewelry and clothing which is out of place for the occasion; keeping in mind that some occasions (events) are not fit to be engaged in anyway (*i.e.*, swimming parties, dances, etc.).

The third passage with which we must deal on this topic is 1 Peter 3:2-4. The apostle wrote thus,

In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your won husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your **chaste** behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of **wearing** jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a **meek and quiet** spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

The Holy Spirit wants us to know that “chaste” behavior is that which is “proper, clean, *i.e.*, (figuratively) innocent, modest, perfect: chaste, clean, pure.” Interestingly, this word is related to a Greek term *hagios* which is the word from which we get “holy.”

What some confuse with merely putting on a ring is the definition of “wearing jewels of gold.” Some denominations have concluded that their women are not to wear wedding rings, while their men may

do so. God is not so inconsistent. This “wearing” means “a putting all around, i.e., decorating oneself with.” Please note that Peter does not say that one ought not to wear a ring, but speaks to those who would decorate themselves like we might decorate a Christmas tree, with tiaras on the head and rings on each finger—sometimes more than one per finger. Some want to contend that the Lord is instructing us that these outward decorations are not to be the *only* kind of decor, but to *also add* the chaste, meek and quiet spirit. I disagree with this assessment. The conjunction used in the grammar is the word “but” which would put the chaste, meek and quiet spirit **in contrast** with the “outward adorning.” “Meekness” is synonymous with “humility” in this case. A humble person will not draw attention to themselves with their outward decoration, their “loud” clothing. “Quiet” has reference to “keeping one’s seat or place; sedentary; still.” How can any imagine that this can be accomplished while being decorated all about with gold and pearls and fancy clothing not suited to the occasion.

What Have We Learned?

Why brethren will argue with clear conclusions of what the Scriptures reveal is beyond this writer. God knows their hearts. I try not to judge the motives of men, but I certainly cannot help but judge the fruits of their actions. Yea, we all must do so. Those who contend that God has allowed us to draw the lines of modesty based upon what society says at any given “season,” is foolish to say the least. They have failed to really and truly rightly divide the Word of Truth to learn what God really says about this subject.

It seems inescapable that God has set before us a guideline which gives a certain degree of being clothed and covered. Within that guideline, He has set certain limits. Within those limits, He has established precedents to be followed which will lend themselves to any time, place, culture and occasion.

God wants us to be covered, from our shoulders to our calves. To expose the upper leg and thigh is to expose our nakedness. This kind of covering is to express our mind-set which is a willingness to be and show forth our godliness. Though we may be covered in a decent way for one occasion, such dress may not show the proper respect

for God in another occasion. Let us use our common sense and be willing to be instructed in these matters. Let us announce to the Lord and our brethren our intentions when we come into the assembly to worship. Let us show the world that we refuse to join in their “party” if “nakedness” is required.

Finally, let us not fall for the world’s attempts to erase the differences between that which is masculine and that which is feminine. Let our men be, act and look like men, treating women as ladies, whether they want to be so treated or not! Let our women look, act, and behave as ladies. Let us all show forth the excellencies of Him who called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9) by our dress and demeanor.

FEMINISM VERSUS CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Burt Jones



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INTRODUCTION

As is the case with any study, there must first be an understanding of the terms used. There has to be a definition of those words thought to mean one thing, when in fact they imply something totally opposite.

The title assigned me by brother Hatcher is "Feminism Versus Christ's Doctrine." Now, until recently I thought feminism simply meant "having to do with those soft and delicate characteristics ordinarily attributable to females." Brethren, that defines FEMININE but not FEMINISM!

FEMINISM DEFINED

Feminism embraces the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. It supports organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.¹

Feminists **include** some discontented females who will urge good and decent women to sin against God by usurping authority from men as outlined in God's gospel plan of salvation. This I am condemning.

Women are becoming more aggressive while men are becoming more passive. Now, in the broadest sense I am NOT condemning feminism if it is being used simply to insure against being treated unfairly or in an un-Christian manner in the marketplace or at home.

Women, as do men, possess basic human rights that must be equal. Women, as do men, have specific and inspired roles relative to their duties in the home, church and in society as detailed in the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus.

FEMININE DEFINED

Being feminine embodies all those admirable qualities recounted in the book of Proverbs. Being feminine means adding that touch to everyday things (home, business and church) that only a woman can. Being feminine suggests providing that safe haven to which family members can escape from the stress and strain of the world.

ROLE REVERSAL

Feminists suggest a position in society and in things spiritual which would be the antithesis of that pre-ordained since before the foundation of the world.

Roles counter to what our Lord commanded are, perhaps, the single most damaging element to His body. Many congregations are literally dying because of the lack of leadership. Our precious brotherhood today needs no competition to qualify as the prodigal son of Christianity. The problem of this royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9) is in the unwillingness of our leaders within the local congregations to rise to the responsibility and challenge of personal example, the hallmark of Christian intendency.

To the embarrassment of many sound brethren, the church for which Christ offered up His atoning blood has acquired an odious reputation as the home of spiritual scam artists, not the least of which are some irreverent, self-serving femme fatales, grasping for their fifteen minutes of fame on the way out the door to apostasy.

The number of rebellious sisters within the Lord's church will continue to grow until our **brothers** decide to get off their...pews and

fulfill those responsibilities given them by God (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; 1 Tim. 2:12)! Consider the tragic possibility that, as a result of the failure of too many men in too many congregations to uphold a Christian sense of obligation, we may be literally DRIVING godly women toward the condemnation of their souls. Out of complete frustration, they wrongfully assume those Christian duties at the local congregation that some of the men are, quite candidly, too lazy to do.

THE FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

After scanning the contents of several publications dedicated to the feminist movement, there appears to be five major principles that stand behind this warped philosophy. They are as follows: (1) Man is the enemy; (2) Babies lead to bondage (consequently, the feminist will rarely be found who does not vigorously support abortion upon demand); (3) Total equality is a fact, not simply a goal; (4) Marriage must be eliminated, and, above all; (5) Religious belief must be drastically altered (i.e., The 1993 Global Theological Conference for Women with the theme, “Reimagining Jesus”).

The women’s liberation movement embraces that which, under the guise of compassionate concern for the individuality of women and their right to choose things in every arena, both secular and spiritual, has uncloaked a subtle hate for both man **and** woman. In their enthusiastic support of abortion rights guaranteeing every woman their “right” to choose, they, either by choice or design, routinely overlook the glaring fact that millions of **unborn women** slaughtered in the womb are denied **THEIR** right of choice. But, as one voice, they say that under a patriarchal system, the death penalty is tantamount to government murder, while sidestepping the obvious logic that, if that were true, then incarceration in prison is government **kidnapping** and fines levied upon the individual is government **robbery**. These dispensers of all that is politically correct have camouflaged a hatred and envy of males based on **nothing** more than the failure of an all-important maternal identification, grounded and settled in the doctrine of Christ.

AUTHORITY VERSUS ABILITY

Years ago, as I watched our three small children playing, I silently wondered just what societal constraints there would be in the years

ahead that might shackle my daughter for no other reason than that of gender, restrictions which may not be encountered by my two sons as they proceeded to carve their mark in this world. Would she be a nurse (why not a physician)? Would she be a secretary (why not the owner of the business)? Would she be a teacher (why not the principal)? Granted, all of these are honest and decent occupations, but what should restrict my child if she decided on **any** chosen profession not in conflict with God's Word. Our Lord admonished, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecc. 9:10). He did NOT say "EXCEPT IF YOU ARE A WOMAN." He did not exclaim, "AS LONG AS YOU DO NOT THREATEN THE MALE EGO," or, "AS LONG AS YOU ARE WILLING TO SETTLE FOR THREE DOLLARS AN HOUR LESS THAN YOUR MALE COUNTER-PART FOR THE SAME JOB DESCRIPTION."

A mature and healthy woman has the ABILITY to bear the child of virtually any man with whom she may come in contact. Brethren, SHE HAS NO AUTHORITY FOR SUCH BASE BEHAVIOR! A twelve-year-old child may have the ABILITY to drive a vehicle as well as can a professional truck driver, but he or she has no AUTHORITY to do so. It is about AUTHORITY not ABILITY.²

Authority abounds within the purview of all that holy writ allows women to do and to teach. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:3-5).

I read with deep respect of the lives and deeds of those precious women of another day who were, unlike these modern day "wanna be's," secure in their womanhood and in the important role given them by God. Lydia, the first Christian convert in what is now Europe; Priscilla, the faithful helpmeet of Aquila; Eunice and Lois, the mother and grandmother respectively, of Timothy; Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea. All of these women standing triumphantly as they seem to step from the pages of inspired Scripture to demonstrate the importance of that role given them by our Lord. The recorded immortality of so many of our sisters is made manifest

through their progeny or through those they taught. They understood the divine difference between our ABILITY to perform a task or to take part in some function and the AUTHORITY that must accompany that skill.

FEMINIST INTENT

The core principle of the radical feminist exhibits a disturbing development among a group of zealots, claiming to speak for all women, who are promoting a dangerous new agenda that threatens our most cherished ideals secularly and spiritually. It sets women against men in almost all spheres of life.

These extremists have propped up their arguments with highly questionable but well-funded research, presenting inflammatory and often inaccurate information, stifling any semblance of free and open scrutiny. Their “findings” on everything from rape, to domestic abuse, to Christian women being weak-minded incubators for future religious fanatics, perpetuate a view of all women as victims of the supposed patriarchy.

These flawed arguments and the fraudulent facts on which they are based have had enormous influence on our society. They have shaken the foundations of our educational, scientific, and legal institutions and have fostered resentment in the Lord’s church among those spiritually ignorant (Hosea 4:6).

Despite the current dominance of these law-trashing, abortion-supporting, Gloria Steinem-coddling, Lesbian indulging, society-threatening, self-serving, statistic-faking, snake-oil sales **PERSONS**, who cannot distinguish between the truth and a lie, such an outrageous breed of radical feminism is at odds with the real aspirations and values of the vast majority of American women and undermines the cause of TRUE equality for women in any forum.

The radical feminist intent is to convey a false notion that our society is a male hegemony, a sex/gender system in which the “dominant” gender works to keep the weaker sex cowering, submissive, and, as brother Buster Dobbs so aptly described, in the “barefoot and pregnant” mode.³

The feminists who hold this divisive view of a social, spiritual and political reality believe that we are in a gender war, and they are eager

to disseminate stories of atrocity, real or imagined, designed to alert women to their plight. Now, believing that women and womanhood are under siege, gender feminists naturally seek recruits to wage their side of the perceived gender conflict. They seek support. They seek vindication. They seek ammunition.

We now have words like “sexual harassment” and “battered women.” A few years ago these terms sadly described “the way things were.” I am **not** suggesting that these vile acts do not occur, and that those guilty of them should not be thrown into the deepest pit on judgment day. I **am** declaring that today more and more women appear to be undergoing a perverse metamorphosis transforming them into the man whose values they so despised a generation ago.⁴

FEMINIST DEMANDS

In a far gentler time women were expected to finish school, position themselves ever so subtly to catch the eye of some clean-cut young man and go into the “wife” business. They expected to share in their husbands’ good fortune, to grow older amidst the best that his salary could provide, in exchange for something once called homemaking.

With tears in her eyes a sister in Texas recently told me that certain avowed feminists in her circle of acquaintances said that in order for her to be fulfilled and successful as a ’90s lady, she must work outside the home. Now, as I previously suggested, although it is exceedingly difficult to juggle the demands of home and business, we do have biblical authority for women working outside the home (Pro. 31). Some women have no choice in the matter. They must work to pay bills as well as being “keepers at home” (Tit. 2:5). This same young lady anxiously recalled that after having been grilled by these equal rights types, she involuntarily felt a sense of guilt as she told them that she **PREFERRED** being a homemaker and mother at home. She was made to feel as though she was a relic from another time and that being a good and godly wife and mother made her some hand-wringing, whimpering weakling. She mentioned that her husband had no trouble with those calling themselves “women of the ’90s” as long as they meant the 1890s.

Women generally live on a higher moral plane than do men. Women have kept themselves purer than men. A woman as God would have her is the best thing this side of heaven and a bad woman, the worst thing this side of hell. Our homes are on the level with women. Towns are on the level with homes. What women are our homes will be. What the town is, the man will be, and so, courageous and Christian women hold the destiny of America as we approach the twenty-first century.

I believe there is something unfinished in that woman who has not obeyed the gospel. In the name of progress our wives and mothers and sisters and daughters have been persuaded by these fallacious feminists to rush from the home, as was this dear sister in Texas, to the “progress” of a life completely redefined in the image of Gloria Steinem and Susan Faludi.⁵

What paved the way for the downfall of the mightiest dynasties)) Greece and Rome? The downfall of their womanhood! The virtue of our good women today forms the wall of our American civilization. Tear that wall down through this utter foolishness of the National Organization of Women, or the Equal Rights Activists or the National Women’s Movement, and with the bricks thereof we collectively pave our way to the hottest hell.

Wooster College, in Ohio, twenty miles from the congregation where I labored for four years and which now oversees my present work, has a strong and demanding feminist presence. This fact is the subject of many editorials in the local newspaper, both for and against this unfortunate reality. A few of our young adults are acquainted with some students there. In preparation for this article, I asked if they would arrange a meeting between a few upper-classmen and myself. Upon arrival that memorable morning, in Women’s Studies 110, not only were there four senior liberal arts majors in attendance as I had requested, but approximately thirty additional stern-faced males and females **as well as two professors!** The thought occurred to me that there was still time to feign being some lost individual simply looking for the college cafeteria and then beat a hasty retreat. But, I was drawn as is a moth to a flame anticipating what might happen during this rather curious meeting.

Over and over again we heard how awful men are. We listened as ALL men were denigrated. We saw heads nodding in agreement as men were characterized as uncaring, insensitive, shallow types, thinking only with their glands.

Following this somewhat sad gathering one of the two professors present during the session told me that, "It is suicidal to criticize campus feminists in any way. They WANT people to be afraid. Then you keep quiet and they don't have to deal with you." Another sympathetic soul excused his timidity to speak up during our get together on social grounds. He said that being perceived as confrontational in a small town is costly and that "we have to live with these people." The professor then admitted his despair in even being able to voice his concern to the school administration about the radical feminist encroachment at Wooster. "Causing such a stir might be harmful to enrollments."

Where are all these demands and this ill-mannered behavior by these radical feminists leading us? First, this study is not about castigating any woman desiring equal rights as a citizen and as an employee or employer. Their rights here are on a par equal to any man. It is not remotely suggesting that the spirituality of the female is somehow less important than that of the male. I find this nowhere in inspired Scripture.

The essence of this examination of the radical feminist plague now sweeping the country is in the very blatant manner through which it is gnawing away at the body of Christ already punch-drunk and reeling from too many blows to its mid-section.

GOD'S PLAN

There is a reason why old issues (and this feminist issue certainly is, circa-1840) are arising again to divide us) the role of women, the use of instrumental music in worship, the new hermeneutic, the distinctive nature of the New Testament church. We have raised a generation of sissy preachers. Nobody is preaching that the Word of God is the Word of God and that HELL IS HOT. God has not called us to be messengers of GOOD will; He has called us to be messengers of GOD's will.

In the plan of God for woman she began her earthly journey by being glorified in creation (Gen. 2:20). Eve was to be a HELPER, but not a HINDERER, a COUNTERPART but not an OPPOSER, a COMPLETER but not a COMPETITOR, an ADAPTER but not a SELF-SERVER, a PROTECTOR but not an EXPOSER, and a PURSUER but not a TORMENTOR.⁶

God had a discernible design in creation and there were differences between the male and female that must be recognized and respected. These differences DO NOT diminish the worth, value or glory of either the man or the woman.

Man was created first and given the leadership (Gen. 2:7; 1 Tim. 2:13). Man AND woman were given equally to each other and were to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). Man AND woman were to provide the proper place and environment for the birth, preservation and rearing of children (Gen. 1:28).

The fact that man was designed to be the leader in no way detracts from the glory of a woman. He had authority over creation PRIOR to her creation. He was given instruction about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil PRIOR to her creation, and he was given dominion over the animals and named them PRIOR to her creation (Gen. 2:15-20). Later, after their sin, **he** was the one upon whom God called to give an answer (Gen. 3:9). This leadership brought about much heavier RESPONSIBILITY but did not detract from spiritual EQUALITY between the man and the woman.

I have often wondered, were I a woman, how I would react to not being the leader. Would I consider that there was something innately evil about being in subjection? Radical feminists are quite puzzling to this writer when they DEMAND that they not be in subjection to their husbands, as if this were the ultimate iniquity.

Has it been considered that women are already in subjection to so many other things about which they offer little objection? Examine their submittal to society, to styles and fashion, to school systems, to the cry of their babies, to television, to the telephone, to repairPERSONS, and, of course, to the law of the land.⁷

God's plan suggests that woman is glorified in her very womanhood. She has so many advantages over a man! Those clear ad-

vantages ought not to be relinquished nor cast away during a period of feminist impetuosity and then later regained by slow toil.

It is easier for a woman than a man to put their childhood behind them. It is easier for women to personalize their suffering and disease in a world of men who are caught up in ego and pride. It is easier for women not to interpret ruthlessness as statesmanship. They are proud of being domestic, because domesticity is the foundation of the family system and society.

It occurs to me that as more brethren write and preach about just how much responsibility a woman has, and how "equal" our sisters are, the more the distaff side may perceive that rhetoric to be patronizing and condescending. Now, responsible brethren do not intend for this idea to be conveyed, although it cannot be denied that those of us in pulpits and publications have sometimes been very insensitive and clumsy in dispensing what is so smoothly imparted through God's Word.

God's plan and His handiwork consistently progress from the simple to the complex. After matter was created the first thing necessary for life was the creation of light. After that, the seas and dry land, both lifeless, were placed in proper order. Then the vegetable kingdom was brought into existence as the lowest form of basic life. Then the animal world, from the one-celled amoeba to the largest and most complex form of fauna was brought into being by the hand of God.

But God had in mind that which is far greater than all these. In fact, all the wonderful things thus far created were for the purpose of "furnishing the house" for its new occupants. Genesis, chapters one and two, gives the only sensible view of the origin of the human race. **After** the creation of the male of the species, God brought forth the woman. Therefore, all things considered, the conclusion may be drawn that the female of the species was, and is, the greatest of God's creations.

God created EVERYTHING to have its proper place in the scale of nature. Such is true of a woman. May it also be noted that everyone of God's creations has its LIMITATIONS.

GOD'S PLAN CONTRADICTED

Within the last two decades there have been movements that seek to set aside God's order, and, as usual, evil results have emerged. There are those in the church who are advocating the overthrow of what God, by His sovereign power, has ordained. Someone facetiously said that when women begin to swear and wear bald heads and chew tobacco and STILL think themselves good-looking, maybe then they will have arrived at equality!

It is gratifying that not all Christian women bid God-speed to those promoting the feminist movement in or out of the church.

On the other hand, the advocates of feminism within the church want to perform a "tummy-tuck" on the body of Christ by removing His authority, streamlining the gospel and substituting their own will and way. The Old Testament furnishes abundant examples that those who deviate from God's plan have always suffered the consequences. It strikes this writer as being rather sad that spiritual cataracts blind us to the fact of New Testament church history being nothing more than a pendulum.

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent by a Christian mother to the board of regents of an ivy-league feminist institution at the conclusion of the daughter's freshman year:

You duped our Christian daughter into believing that she had been in complicity with the patriarchy. You encouraged her to reconstruct herself through a departure from those Christian values which WE instilled. She has now rejected the Christian and moral codes under which she lived for the first eighteen years of her life. Because of you she will likely distance herself from us and from her lifelong friends. She has already changed her appearance and her sexual orientation.

Since her re-education with what we believed to be a decent and respected institute of higher learning, we are out twenty thousand dollars and, very possibly, one daughter as well. Do we thank you or lynch you?⁸

It has been predicted that by century's end, women will take leadership roles in the common assembly along with men, taking public parts in leading prayers, serving the Lord's Supper, while also singing solos and the like. Well, brethren, because of our weak stand for the truth in too many places that day has arrived! I give you a

portion of an article I received in a church of Christ bulletin while preparing this manuscript:

In our assemblies here in _____ women help pass the Lord's Supper, sing solos, make announcements from the pulpit, lead singing, and pass the collection plates. And no one feels they are taking control or otherwise usurping authority over males. The three shepherds, all men, continue to shepherd and lead. Their functions are not being threatened by what women do. It works out great! Everyone is blessed! There is surely a place for women in the public assembly of the saints.

One of the dear wives in the congregation where I labored told me last Thanksgiving that as she stood in her happy home, covered with flour as proof of her holiday home-baked excess, she wondered, "whether those of us who are bonded by Christ, DNA, marriage, affection, gratitude and commitment, remembered that we were **supposed** to be unhappy, clinging vines insecure in our femininity." Knowing this godly woman it might not be a good idea for some radical feminist to tell her that she was politically incorrect. As I left this home, with the vision of her wiping pastry dough from her hair, a phone cradled between her shoulder and ear, talking to a Christian friend, I savored the contrariety of this scene. The irony of this Christian wife and mother, too busy with the joy of her salvation and of a full family life to be bothered or to even comment on its breakdown and her supposed subservience as a woman.

The Sally Jesse Raphaels and Geraldos and Oprahs provide an endless stream of those '90s feminists, all so seemingly in control, but heralding a profusion of pathological Pollyannas espousing their feminist line.

Somewhere along the way, some good women have lost a sense of proportion. They have come to believe that, ("I'm O.K.)) YOU'RE NOT!"

What these refugees from realism have overlooked is that God's woman is alive and well, functioning and LOVING it!

I am reminded of the little-told account of noble submission by the daughter of Jephthah. Jephthah made a reckless vow in an attempt to give courage to his troops and to sustain his own confidence against overwhelming odds. He made this vow publicly to the Lord: "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my

house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Jud. 11:30-31). Jephthah routed the Ammonites. Elated with his victory he hurried home to Mizpeh, where he had left his daughter. Everyone had assembled to greet Jephthah with songs and dances. Who should be the first to emerge from Jephthah's own doorway but his beloved daughter! Probably he had thought a servant or some old hound dog would precede her. Perhaps not until this moment did he stop to consider how rash and cruel his vow to God had been. She ran to embrace her father. She had known no other protection but his tent, no greater love than his. And so, as the whole land echoed the shouts of freedom, all the glory died out for Jephthah as he embraced his daughter and said, "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back" (Jud. 11:35).

Jephthah's daughter, with submission and utter subjection to her father, gave the answer that has become classic and which would put these latter day radical feminists to absolute shame: "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon" (Jud. 11:36).

Probably unable to initially grasp the depth of her father's predicament, she surely came to a point where she began to know that the future life she had envisioned as a wife and mother was gone. The Scriptures record that as she returned from the two months in the mountains which she had requested of her father, to bewail her virginity (Jud. 11:38), she was obedient to her father and he "did with her according to his vow" (Jud. 11:39).

Now, the argument has been made that Jephthah literally offered his daughter as a burnt offering, while others indicate that this Scripture could have meant offering his daughter to the service of God. But the point revolves around the submissive and obedient attitude of this glorious young woman.

One can only imagine that, given the mind set of some modern day "daughter's of Jephthah," not only would she NOT have been in

subjection to her father as head of the house, but she would have filed a lawsuit for millions of dollars against him, and would have attempted to have him declared as unfit. The “bemoaning of her virginity” would have been the least of her concerns.

There is the story of a man riding as a passenger on a crowded bus. He noticed a young lady standing nearby and so he arose from his seat and offered it to her. She was so surprised she fainted! When she was revived and sat down, she said, “Thanks.” **Then the man fainted!** You see, with the exception of your seat on the bus, nothing is ever lost by politeness and manners. Yet, these fragments of a more genteel day are today misconstrued by radical feminists as only deceptive tools for gaining what one desires from someone else.

Graciousness of manner is built upon quality of character. But, the real test of good manners is to pleasantly put up with bad ones. Radical feminists have yet to learn this.

Radical feminists are predators. They keep their pitiable movement alive by exploiting the fears of those more cerebrally feeble or less crude than themselves. A predator will stalk and pursue and pick out the weak; the ones that stumble, the ones that stray. Feminist predators have an uncanny capacity to home in on the ill-informed)) their prey)) as does an eagle or a cheetah or a barracuda. Satan, the ultimate predator, “walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

The Ghashgar people of Mongolia break their horses for use in tribal life. The conditioning begins when the animals are colts. From their foaling they are treated as pets. When first ridden at a year old, the horse feels at ease and does not buck or rear.

At age two-and-a-half, the horse is conditioned to other things. It is led around bon fires at night until it no longer shies at the heat or flame. It is exposed to the noises of drums and oboes played loudly at tribal dances. Over a series of days it is led closer and closer to rifles being fired. Finally, it accepts a gun being fired right next to its' ear by the rider without flinching. It did not even know it was being broken.

Too many of our dear sisters and an innumerable force of American women are being conditioned by the homosexual and lesbian community and abortion activists and the warped ideology of

those rather queer leaders of the feminist phenomenon. This bunch ridicules everyone not in complete agreement with their satanic silliness. Women from all across this great land are being “broken” to the tribal chants of the times. They are being constantly hammered and hoaxed and hornswoggled by radical feminists until they, as that young horse, do not even know that they are being broken.

Contrary to feminist thinking, the male of the species is fascinated by so many more things in a woman than her “hips, lips and fingertips.” Granted the female “vessel” will draw the attention of the male, but as God intended, it is the CONTENT that will hold his interest and that will raise the woman as God would have her to admirable heights. It is the CONTENT and the innate common sense that will shelter the Christian woman from the transparent gaudiness and self-serving behavior of the radical feminist.

CONCLUSION

The radical feminists will continue to veil the truth in shadowy conjecture. They will attempt to draw away godly Christian women by belittling their role within the church. They will work to subtly erode and undermine the organization of corporate worship by usurpation of authority. They will openly and without shame contradict God’s plan for the salvation of mankind, **BUT THIS DIABOLICAL PLAN WILL NOT SUCCEED!**

Their shameless demands and despicable intention to neutralize gender will cause these marauders of the masculine to reap the whirlwind.

It is tragic that today, on every hand, things which once were obvious regarding the role of the woman in the world and in the Lord’s church are not now so obvious. Feminists obviously feel not the least pang of conscience as they tailor Scripture to suit their movement.

They, for example, redefine the meaning of the word “head” in Ephesians 5:23 in a weak attempt to imply that “head” means “virgin.” They claim that the Greeks never used “head” metaphorically to mean “chief,” “leader,” or “one in authority.” They assert that the original word was often used by the ancients to mean a “source” or “origin.” As a consequence of this mis-applied logic, “the husband

is the head of the wife" REALLY means that he is the SOURCE of his wife, as "Christ is the head of the church" means He is the SOURCE of the church.

The error in this position is made manifest in that Greek OUTSIDE the New Testament indicates no use of the original word as "source" or "origin." Additionally, the New Testament's own use of the term leads to the same conclusion. In Ephesians 5, the husband's HEADSHIP is in direct proportion paired with the wife's SUBMISSION. The wife is to submit to her husband BECAUSE the husband is her HEAD. And so, coupled with submission, the obvious meaning of head is "leader; one in authority."⁹

Feminists argue that 1 Timothy 2:12 records that Paul was referring only to particular situation in Ephesus and that his prohibition was to apply ONLY to that time and place. Feminists suppose, because they wish it to be so, that Genesis 1:27 teaches the "simultaneous creation" of man and woman. Feminists assert that New Testament writers always referred to Jesus with the generic term "human being." The feminist hermeneutic reconstructs history to have Miriam become an INDEPENDENT leader in Israel, and Martha became the "disciple who Jesus loved" and the author of the fourth account of the gospel. Interpretation of the Scriptures through the context of feminine experience has deliberately changed the meaning of Luke 11:27-28 to refer specifically to women, in spite of the fact that "blessed are they" is in the masculine form.

And so, whether a woman embraces GODDESS FEMINISM)) religious history according to them, or: LIBERAL CHRISTIAN FEMINISM)) because they want Christianity their way but do not wish to give up the masculine God, or: BIBLICAL FEMINISM)) belief that the identification of those texts concerning women are descriptive of first-century conditions and is not binding today as eternal truth or, lastly: SECULAR FEMINISM)) all politics and no spirituality. What the Bible says or does not say is irrelevant to them. It is the same old worn-out problem, whether people want to recognize the authority of God or whether they do not.

Brethren, this feminist side-show is a vain exhibition of phylactery. It is permeating every stratum of our society. You can begin with government. Now, I am uncertain as to whether or not that is the

lowest or highest level, but beginning there, the movement continues, as does a creeping river of lava destroying everything and everybody with whom it comes in contact. Homes are dysfunctional, students are demanding from the teachers, the Lord's church is literally in the midst of another major split because of weak leadership. Leadership which could have headed this feminist farce off at the pass if they had been "minding the store."

This charade is not about a woman's right to properly function as a responsible part of society. Make no mistake about it. It is a grab for power and preeminence by a spurious and minuscule group of stern-faced females who have found what they consider the brass ring and they have grabbed it.

Sadly, this brass ring, with which they plan to hitch their wagon to a star, will not be able to hold the weight of all those capricious cynics seeking a place in the new feminine order. And, as the ring breaks, down will come tumbling all the gullible, the disillusioned, the flustered and flailing feminist pawns who had pinned their hopes on a devilish dogma which God never intended and about which the Bible is as silent as the grave.

Someone said, "There is God's plan and your plan)) and your plan doesn't count!" In twenty or thirty years your granddaughters and my granddaughters will benefit because we stood firm today on this issue. May God help them and us if we fail to.

Too many of us are "closet Christians." We need to "come out," as militantly as did the homosexuals. SISTERS, express your doctrinal preference. Is it the doctrine of Sophia, the female goddess of Lesbos, the Greek island once controlled totally by homosexual women and espoused by so many radical feminists, or, is it the doctrine of Christ?

I mentioned earlier that we have raised a generation of sissy preachers. I purposely use the word "WE" because WE have allowed it to happen.

I bring this lesson to a close with something I wrote years ago for the Memphis School of Preaching. It is entitled, "Legacy for a Gospel Preacher." It is framed and hanging in the main hall of the school. It is a humble attempt to express all that encompasses the role of a preacher of the gospel.

I have tried to emblazon these words into my very consciousness, knowing that if I master the idea behind them there would be no difficulty in my combating the fiery darts of the devil, whether it is the feminist movement, the new hermeneutic or any other slap at sound doctrine. You see, the ISSUE is not nearly so much the problem, whatever it may be, as the FAILURE of our preachers to stand in the breach upholding God's truth regardless of the consequences.

Please listen very closely:

LEGACY FOR A GOSPEL PREACHER

No human being could fail to be deeply moved by the knowledge that he was, in some fashion, drawn to prepare for the task, the profound honor, of serving our Lord as a Gospel Preacher.

This legacy is not intended for a particular age, but is to symbolize a great and Heavenly code)) the code of ethics and conduct comprising the very fiber of all those who proclaim His Word. For those who follow us, it is an expression of total dedication to those precepts espoused by sainted souls answering to the name Gospel Preacher.

From one end of the world to the other, they have drained deep the well of courage. As we listen to Gospel songs of old, we see in memory's eye, those weary preachers of Paul's day, and those bone-weary saints of the Restoration, bending under knapsacks filled with Bibles on many a weary trek, from dripping dusk to drizzling dawn, slogging ankle-deep, and on horseback, through the mire of corduroy roads, to form grimly for the defense of the Gospel; blue-lipped, covered with sludge and mud, chilled by the wind and rain, driving home their teaching until, ultimately, all grasped glory to fearlessly await the judgment of their Lord.

Preach the Word. These three inspired words reverently dictate what you are to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points to sustain courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope seems forlorn.

Unhappily, we possess neither that eloquence of diction, that poetry of imagination, nor that brilliance of metaphor to tell you all they mean.

The liberals will say they are but words, but a slogan, but an overdone phrase. Every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and some others of an entirely different character, will attempt to downgrade them to the extent of mockery and ridicule.

But these are some of the things that those words do. They build your spiritual character. They mold you for your future role in speaking as the oracles of God and as messengers of the Word. They make you strong enough to know when you are weak and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid.

Preach the Word. They teach you to be unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for action; not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm, but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to teach others; to have a heart that is clean; a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true character, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

They give you a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions, a freshness of the deep springs of life, of an appreciation for spreading the boundaries of the Kingdom over love of ease.

Always for you: **Preach the Word.** Always your tears, your sweat and knowledge as you seek souls through the way and the light and the truth.

Yours is a profession born of the Promise of our Lord, of the sure knowledge that in this battle the Sword of the Spirit is your ready companion; that if you do not prevail souls will be lost; that the very obsession of your service must be to **Preach the Word.**

You are the leaven which binds together the entire fabric of those inspired words written so long ago. From you come the spokesmen

to the world. Your guidepost stands out as a beacon in the night of sin: **Preach the Word.**

The Davids in our ranks have never failed us as we dispense with the Goliaths of generations. Were you to fail, and were it possible, a million souls of a million preachers clad in threadbare coats and carrying Bibles, rent and torn, would rise with chins set and firm, thundering the timeless phrase: **Preach the Word.**

The shadows are lengthening for us in this place. Our twilight is near. Our days of sitting at the feet of beloved scholars are vanishing. They go glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory will be that of wondrous beauty watered by tears and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. We listen vainly, but with thirsty ear, for the call of our names, as of the sound of far drums beating out a muted roll sending us into battle.

In our dreams we hear again the excited and anxious questions of our first preaching days. And, in the evening of those memories, always we will think of that place. Always there will echo our duty: **Preach the Word.**

Our final roll call is near. But, to our brethren that follow, know that when someday, we pass through the veil, our last conscious thoughts will be that we have been privileged to **Preach the Word.**

ENDNOTES

¹Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.

²Burt Jones, "Women Priests," *Firm Foundation*, Volume 109, p. 8.

³Buster Dobbs, *Firm Foundation*, Editorial, Volume 107, p. 3.

⁴Gloria Steinem, "Outrageous Acts, Everyday Rebellions," *Words and Change* section, p. 149.

⁵Susan Faludi, *Backlash* (N. Y.: Crown Publishers).

⁶Mrs. J. B. Livingston, *Today's Victorious Woman*, Volume One, (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1983), pp. 16-17.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

⁸Betty Frieden, *The Undeclared War Against American Women* (N.Y.: Crown Publishers, n.d.).

⁹Andy Kizer, "A Book Review of 'Feminism and the Bible,'" by Dr. Jack Cottrell, *Spiritual Sword Lectures* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, n.d.), pp. 407-408.

WHY THE CHURCH IS NOT A DENOMINATION

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The church Jesus established (as revealed in the New Testament) was not a building of wood or stone; nor was it a series of denominations splintering from each other throughout history calling itself by different man-made names and practicing different and conflicting man-made doctrines. The church Jesus built existed long before the Catholic church or any of the Protestant denominations. Christ's church consists of all those saved from sin (Acts 2:47; Eph. 3:15,21), born into the family of God (John 3:3-5; 1 Tim. 3:15). No denomination can save nor can it be the saved!

The word "church" comes from a compound Greek word, *ekklesia* meaning: *ek*, out of, and *klesis*, a calling; thus, "the called out ones." Those who are called (by the gospel) (2 The. 2:14) have been delivered "from the power of darkness" and have been translated "into the kingdom" of Christ (Col. 1:13). When the called obey the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 6:16-18; 2 The. 1:8), they are added to the church of Christ (Acts 2:47). Therefore, the church is the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), composed of all the called. Every saved person is in the "one body" (Eph. 4:4). There are no saved people outside the body of Christ, the church.

The word “church” is used in a “local” and “universal” sense in the New Testament, determined by context. Often it refers to a congregation in a certain place (city). Acts 5:11 says, “And great fear came upon all the church.” This refers to the church in the city (location) of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the only local congregation that existed at that time. Many other references identify the church by location, Antioch (Acts 11:26), Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), Philippi (Phi. 1:1), etc. This simply means that the church existed and assembled for local worship and service unto the Lord. These believers were members of the church of Christ in their respective cities. The church is also used in a universal sense meaning the church everywhere. When Jesus said, “I will build my church,” He meant His church wherever (universally) it is established. Paul wrote, “and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). This refers not only to one location but to the church universally in all locations.

The word “church” is not used in a denominational sense in Scripture. When used in the universal sense, it refers to the entire saved and unified body of Christ; when used in a local sense, it refers to all the saved worshipping and serving God in a specific place. The church is not only non-denominational but is anti-denominational (Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:10). Notice the charts illustrating the scriptural definition versus the denominational concept.

THE SCRIPTURAL CHURCH IN CHART



WHAT IS WRONG WITH DENOMINATIONALISM?

The word “denominate” means “to name, to give a name to: designate.” (Webster). Denominations are commonly recognized as religious bodies known by specific names (or doctrines, organizations, etc.) As the word is used in most Protestant literature, “a denomination is any ‘Christian’ church which believes itself to be a part of the universal church (of Christ), but only one part among many (which differ in name, organization, doctrine and practice). It exists in part to preserve specific values which might otherwise be lost in periods of transition” (*Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, p. 164). In common terms the denominational definition for the church is: a denomination (church) is a religious body larger than a local congregation, yet smaller than the whole body of Christ. Thus, by definition, a specific denomination is neither all the saved universally (claiming to be only one part among many differing religious groups), nor all the saved in the local sense. The denominational definition of the church is unscriptural. This is the error of counterfeit religions which attempt to justify religious division by ignoring their unscriptural nature. Those who support denominationalism support religious division. This is contrary to Christ’s prayer for unity (John 17:20-21), and contrary to Paul’s command “that there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1:10). Those who bid God speed to religious error become partakers in the sin of division (2 John 9).

THE UNSCRIPTURAL THEORY CHART



ORIGIN OF THE UNSCRIPTURAL DENOMINATIONAL DEFINITION OF CHURCH

Denominational historians and theologians have been investigating the denominational contribution to religion. It is significant to note that they all recognize that denominationalism is not simply NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY. Russell E. Richey in his book on *Denominationalism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, pp.14-15) quotes Gibson Winter in *Religious Identity*,

This book brings into view what is called the denominational theory and pattern of the church. It is this theory and pattern represented fully by the several denominations together and only partially within the experience of a single denomination that constitutes a Protestant, American, and Evangelical contribution to the history of Christianity. Martin E. Marty observed that this development is the most basic administrative change in the church in fourteen hundred years (*Righteous Empire*, pp.67-68).

Russell E. Richey also summarizes Winthrop Hudson's classic *American Protestantism and Religion in America*,

Hudson insists that the denominations and denominationalism are not to be explained as accidents of religious liberty and disestablishment, or as functions of social factors like class or cast. Rather underlying denominationalism IS A NEW THEORY OR THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH (emp. SR). There is theological legitimacy for denominationally divided Christianity. Implicit in the theology of the Reformers this theory of the church was most fully worked out within the Puritan movement by the Independents (Congregationalist). In defense of their congregational practice the Independents articulated the THEORY OF THE CHURCH WHICH PREDICATED A UNITY AND REALITY TO THE CHURCH TRANSCENDING THE EMERGING PARTY DIFFERENCES IN PURITANISM (emp. SR). The neutral term "denomination" later employed to convey this understanding, though applied to distinct movements and institutions, signified that these were but "differing attempts to give visible expression to the life of the church in the life of the world." Adopted and popularized by Pietists and Evangelicals, this theory of the church provided the theological rationale for American denominationalism (pp. 19-20).

Richey says,

It was a theory which had been hammered out by a group of Puritan divines in the preceding century and which had won sufficiently widespread acceptance so that its theological justification could largely be TAKEN FOR GRANTED. As a consequence, the Evangelical leaders WERE NOT COMPELLED TO CONSTRUCT A SYSTEM-

ATIC DEFENCE OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE CHURCH WHICH WAS COMMON TO THEM ALL. To discover their fundamental PRESUPPOSITION, which they betray only in incidental remarks and observations, one must go back to the seventeenth century divines who first formulated the denominational theory of the church (p.22).

Please notice other statements,

The use of the word “denomination” to describe a religious group came into vogue during the early years of the Evangelical Revival. (*Denominationalism*, p. 21). The word “denomination” was adopted by the leaders of the Evangelical Revival, both in England and America, because it was a neutral term which carried with it no implication of a negative value judgement....Denominationalism is the opposite of sectarianism. The word “denomination” implies that the group referred to is but one member of a larger group, called or denominated by a particular name. The basic contention of the denominational theory of the church is that THE TRUE CHURCH IS NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED IN ANY EXCLUSIVE SENSE WITH ANY PARTICULAR ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTION....NO DENOMINATION CLAIMS TO REPRESENT THE WHOLE CHURCH OF CHRIST....The denominational theory of the church was implicit in the thinking of Protestant Reformers. The TRUE CHURCH, THEY AFFIRM, IS NOT AN INSTITUTION, ALTHOUGH IN THE LIFE OF THE WORLD IT MUST ASSUME INSTITUTIONAL FORM (p. 22; Emp. SR).

THESE HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGIANS REVEAL:

1. The denominational theory of the church gained widespread acceptance because it gave legitimacy to religious division.
2. Theological justification was assumed without proof.
3. No systematic defense was made, it was assumed to be scriptural.

CONSEQUENCES OF THIS
DENOMINATIONAL THEORY:

1. In their view the True church does not exist.
2. Religious toleration vetoes the need for Bible unity.
3. False doctrine is winked at and ignored.
4. Merchandising of religion is rampant.
5. Religion is social entertainment not spiritual sacrifice.
6. Freedom of religion is seen as a license for apostasy.
7. Fellowship is based on subjective compromise rather than truth.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A DENOMINATION

A denomination is recognized by its unscriptural name, founder and place of establishment:

Methodist	John Wesley	England (1729)
Baptist	John Smith	London (1607)
Lutheran	Martin Luther	Germany (1517)
Catholic	Boniface	Rome (606-608)
Assembly of God	Convention Chairman: E. N. Bell	Arkansas (1914)
Jehovah's Witness	Charles Russell	Pittsburgh (1872)
Mormons	Joseph Smith	New York (1830)

A Denomination is recognized by its unscriptural organization:

1. Popes, cardinals, diocesan bishop.
2. Presidents.
3. General conference.
4. One man/woman pastor system, board of deacons.
5. Rejection of local elders rule (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5) with serving deacons and evangelist/preachers.
6. Clergy/laity.

A denomination is recognized by its unscriptural worship:

1. Adding instrumental music, solos, and a choir.
2. Omitting the Lord's supper from the first day of the week to quarterly or annually.
3. Tithing instead of a freewill offering as prospered.
4. Preaching denominational doctrine instead of the Word of God.
5. Prayers offered to the Holy Spirit, altar calls, or not in the name of Christ.

A denomination is recognized by its corruption of the plan of salvation:

1. Just receive Jesus in your heart.
2. Pray through.
3. Infant baptism, sprinkling, name of Jesus only.
4. Faith only, wholly of grace.
5. Repentance before faith.
6. Baptism of a penitent believer said to be non-essential.

A denomination is recognized by its unscriptural doctrine (see chart).

Doctrinal Likenesses & Differences?

These differences have caused denominational divisions. From 18:17

Doctrine	Methodist	Lutheran	Baptist	Catholic	Assembly of God	Jehovah's Witnesses	Mormon
1 Pope in authority	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
2 Once saved always saved	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
3 Infant Baptism	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No?
4 Eternal Hell	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes?
5 Speak in tongues	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
6 Immersion only	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
7 1.44.000 only in Heaven	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
8 Joe Smith was a prophet	No	No	No	No	No	No	No?
9 Women Preachers	Yes	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	No?
10 Purgatory	No	?	No	?	No	No	?
11 Closed Communion	No	?	Yes?	Yes	No	Yes	?
12 Instrumental Music	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13 Jesus body resurrected	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
14 Autonomy of local church	No	No	Yes	No	No?	No	No
16 Faith Only	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes?	?
17 Transubstantiation	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
18 Baptism and Marriage for the dead	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
19 Holy Ghost baptism and fire	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
20 Healing in atonement	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
21 Vows on members	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
22 Godhead trinity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No?
23 Virgin birth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
24 Earth to be destroyed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes?
25 Eternal soul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

The answers given are from the common conservative position generally held - research from documents in hand
 - liberal elements may vary.
 By Stan Ryan & Clifford Dixon

DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION IS UNSCRIPTURAL
BECAUSE:

1. The Lord prayed for oneness, unity of believers (John 17:20-22).
2. Religious division was condemned in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10).
3. Religious division is “heresies” (Gal. 5:20; 2 Cor. 11:19).
4. Those who caused and promoted division were marked (Rom. 16:17).
5. We are to strive for unity, “one body” (Eph. 4:1-6).
6. We are to have no fellowship with error (Eph. 5:11).
7. We are to abide in “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).
8. False doctrine is the cause of religious division (Rom. 16:17).
9. Religious division is a cause of infidelity (John 17:20-21).

DENOMINATIONALISM SAYS:	THE BIBLE SAYS:
One church is as good as another	There is one body (Eph. 4:4)
One way is as good as another	Jesus is the way (John 14:6)
One faith is as good as another	There is one faith (Eph. 4:5)
Doctrine does not matter	Abide in the doctrine (2 John 9)
All going to the same place	Not everyone (to heaven) (Mat. 7:21)
Just believe, nothing to do	Doeth the will of Father (Mat. 7:21)
Cannot understand alike	Understand the will (Eph. 5:17)
Fellowship everyone	No fellowship...darkness (Eph. 5:17)
Wrong to judge	Judge righteous judgment (John 7:24)
Church not important	Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25)

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IS ANTI-DENOMINATIONAL

Jesus purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). He built the church (Mat. 16:18) from the foundation up (1 Cor. 3:11). The church is founded upon solid rock, faith in the deity of Christ (Mat. 16:18). The foundation (Christ) was tried (Isa. 28:16), and laid according to the Father's will (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the "chief cornerstone" from which apostolic (inspired revealed truth) measurements were squared (Eph. 2:20-21). Jesus is the head of the church (Col. 1:18), the Saviour of the church (Eph. 5:23) and is Lord over the church (Acts 2:36). All denominations were founded by uninspired men (Wesley, Luther, Calvin, etc.).

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED IN JERUSALEM WAS ANTI-DENOMINATIONAL

On the day of Pentecost 33 A.D. (Acts 2) the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4) came as Jesus promised (Acts 1:8; 2:33). Joel's prophesy (Acts 2:16) began fulfillment in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:5). Only the apostles (Acts 1:26; 2:1-4; they, them) spoke in languages (tongues, vs. 4-6) and did miracles (Acts 2:14,37,42,43). They preached to sinners that Jesus is "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Sinners repented and were baptized (Acts 2:38-41). Believers then worshipped (Acts 2:42), cooperated in benevolence (Acts 2:44-45), and evangelism. They were continually praising God (Acts 2:47). Those who were saved day by day were added to the church by "the Lord" (Acts 2:47). All denominations were established far from Jerusalem (Rome, England, Scotland, Germany, America, etc.).

THE SAME CHURCH REPRODUCED IN OTHER PLACES

The church in Jerusalem was the first local congregation and the only one for some time (Acts 2-7). Then the great persecution caused evangelism into other areas (Acts 8:1-4). Philip reproduced the church in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25). He also baptized the eunuch who continued to Ethiopia (Acts 8:27-39). The church met in Damascus, where Saul was baptized (Acts 9). Saul (Paul) later returned to enjoy the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-

28). The church existed in Galilee (Acts 9:31), saints were in Lydda (Acts 9:32) and in Joppa (Acts 9:36-43). The church was reproduced in Caesarea (Acts 10), Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19). These were all churches of Christ reproduced and carried on by those who had come from Jerusalem with the gospel of Christ.

Paul's missionary tours reproduced the church of Christ throughout Asia minor (Acts 13:1-14:28). Later, missionary tours through Phrygia, Galatia, and Macedonia reproduced the church in many cities including Philippi (Acts 16:30-34), Thessalonica (Acts 17:12), Athens (Acts 18:24), Corinth (Acts 18:8), Ephesus (Acts 19:4-5) and others. The seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2-3) and the church of Christ at Rome (Rom. 16:16) were all the same kind. Each congregation was autonomous, locally organized (Acts 14:23; Phi. 1:1) under the headship of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). None of these were differing denominations, but were united under Christ (Rom. 16:16) by the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:41-42; Heb. 2:3; Gal. 1:8-9; Jude 3) locally and universally (Mat. 16:18). All departures from apostolic teaching were condemned (Rom. 16:17; Acts 20:28-30; 2 Tim. 4:1-6). The same church can exist today when people obey God's Word (1 Pet. 1:18-25). Departures from sound doctrine result in denominational error.

BIBLE UNITY IS OPPOSED TO DENOMINATIONAL DIVISION

Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21). The apostles commanded unity (1 Cor. 1:10). Unity was based upon the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:4-6). All were to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Jesus condemned the doctrines of men as "vain" (Mat. 15:9; Mark 7:7-9) and the apostles warned about the sin of division (Rom. 16:17; Acts 20:28-30). Unity is "oneness" in Christ (Eph. 4:1-6). The modern attitude of "unity in diversity" is contrary to the revealed truth. Error is to be exposed and rejected (Eph. 5:11). **BIBLE UNITY IS ONENESS: ALL MAY BE ONE** (John 17:20-21). **ONE WAY** (Jer. 32:29; Isa. 35:8; John 14:6; Mat. 7:13-14). **ONE PATH** (Job 28:7; Psa. 16:11; Pro. 4:18; John 14:6). **ONE DOOR** (John 10:9). **ONE SHEPHERD** (John 10:16). **ONE FOLD** (John 10:16). **ONE VINE** (John 15:1-8). **ONE GOSPEL** (Rom. 1:16;

Mark 16:15-16). ONE BODY (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:20; Col. 3:15; 1 Cor. 12:13). ONE CHURCH (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4). ONE FAITH (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). ONE BAPTISM (Eph. 4:5; Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11-12).

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THE CHURCH

In the first century some falsely called the church a “sect” (Acts 28:22) and Paul a false teacher. The church was not a splinter or faction of Judaism. Jews were converted to become believers in Christ, members of the church. Those who made these false charges were unbelievers who rejected Christ, His church and the Truth. Christ would not build a denomination “sect” while praying for oneness (John 17:20-22). Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:10) nor are His faithful servants. Paul denied that the church is a “sect” (Greek *haireisis*) (Acts 24:5,14; 26:7-8).

Some mistakenly refer to the vine and the branches claiming that the branches are differing churches. But a branch in context is a “man” or individual believer (John 15:1-8), not the different denominations. The seed of the kingdom is the “Word of God” (Luke 8:11; Mark 4:14). The same seed will not produce different kinds of branches or different kinds of crops. Corn seed will not produce grapes, apples, oranges, etc. God’s Word will produce a Christian, a member of the church of Christ (Acts 11:26; Rom. 16:16). God’s Word did not produce denominations in the first century and it does not produce them now!

Members of the church in the first century were called “Christians” and the church was called the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). The church is the “body of Christ” singular, not bodies plural (Eph. 4:4). We are many individual members but one body (1 Cor. 12:20). The original church is reproduced today wherever the pure seed is planted (Luke 8:11). Denominations are the result of different seed, the doctrines of men (Mark 7:7-9). Different denominations come from different teachings (human seed) and is the source of religious division. Our plea today is for religious unity based upon the Bible as the only source of religious authority (Eph. 4:1-6). Thus, we practice and call on everyone to renounce all human traditions, man made creeds, and doctrines of men as Jesus

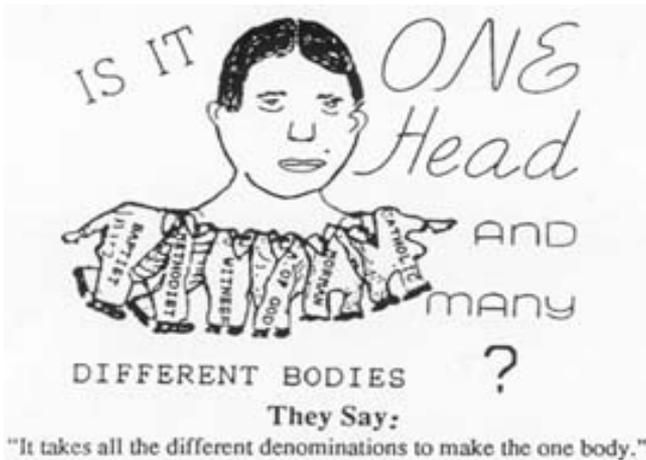
did (Mat. 15:9; Mark 7:7-9). Let us unite upon the Word of God and continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). We pray that men today might stop opposing religious unity (by defending denominationalism) and see the need to restore NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY.

THE ONE BODY IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Eph. 4:4	THERE IS ONE BODY	THE CHURCH
1 Cor. 12:20	YET BUT ONE BODY	THE CHURCH
1 Cor. 12:25	NO SCHISM IN THE BODY	THE CHURCH
Col. 3:15	CALLED IN ONE BODY	THE CHURCH
Eph. 2:16	RECONCILED...IN ONE BODY	THE CHURCH
Eph. 5:23	SAVIOUR OF THE BODY	THE CHURCH
1 Cor. 12:13	BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY	THE CHURCH
Acts 2:47	LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH	THE BODY

In the Bible the “one body” is the “one church.” Furthermore, “the body of Christ” is the church of Christ. Most preachers will agree that all the saved are in the body of Christ, but began to argue that all saved people are not in the church of Christ. Why?

THE DENOMINATIONAL FREAK DISHONORS CHRIST



DESCRIPTIVE SCRIPTURAL NAMES ARE OPPOSED TO
DENOMINATIONAL NAMES:

1. "The church" (Acts 2:47; 8:1; 12:1; 15:4).
2. "The body" (Col. 1:18).
3. "The body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12).
4. "The churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).
5. "One body" (Eph. 4:4).
6. "My church" (Christ, Mat. 16:18).
7. "His body" (Eph. 1:23; 5:30).
8. "The church of God" (1 Tim. 3:5; 1 Cor. 1:2).
9. "Church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23; Col. 1:18).
10. "The church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15).
11. "The kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 16:19).
12. "The kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5).
13. "The kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16; John 3:5).
14. "My kingdom" (Christ, Luke 22:30; John 18:36).
15. "The kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13).
16. "A kingdom which can not be moved" (Heb. 12:28).
17. "The house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).
18. "The household of God" (Eph. 2:19).
19. "His own house" (Christ, Heb. 3:6).
20. "The household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
21. "The whole family" (Eph. 3:15).
22. "The bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9).

BIBLE NAMES FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

OPPOSE DENOMINATIONAL NAMES:

1. "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).
2. "Disciples" (Acts 11:26; 16:1; 20:7; John 8:31; 15:8).
3. "Brethren" (Acts 9:30; 1 Cor. 15:6; Col. 1:2).
4. "Saints" (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:2; Rom. 1:7; Acts 9:13).
5. "Believers" (Acts 5:14).
6. "Members" (1 Cor. 6:15; 12:27).
7. "Children of God" (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:26).
8. "Sons of God" (Rom. 8:14; 1 John 3:1-2; Phi. 2:15).
9. "Beloved of God" (Rom. 1:7).
10. "Heirs of God" (Rom. 8:17).

LOGICAL REASONS WHY BIBLICAL TERMS SHOULD BE USED:

1. The church is His (Christ's) body and therefore should wear His name.
2. The church is the bride of Christ and should wear the Bridegroom's names.
3. The church is a New Testament institution and as such should use the descriptive names that identify it.
4. The names given by divine sanction give glory to the Lord and to His submissive servants.
5. Denominational names are divisive, confusing and are unscriptural.

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN OPPOSE DENOMINATIONALISM?

Yes! Jesus was the greatest religious controversialist the world has ever known. He never lost a religious discussion (read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). Every Christian is a soldier in the Lord's army (2 Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Tim. 6:12) and must "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). The truth is in conflict with religious error which must be rebuked and reprovved (2 Tim. 4:2-8; Mat. 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13). Many did not want to hear what Jesus had to say and were offended and "walked no more with him" (John 6:59-68). Truth offends those who refuse to believe.

The message of repentance involves religious controversy, yet it was the theme of Old Testament prophets as they rebuked sin and error calling for righteousness and unity among God's people. John was a prophet in the wilderness calling for Israel to repent (Mat. 3:1-10) and rebuked some as "a generation of vipers" in danger of the wrath to come. Strong, clear, plain language is not always mean, ugly or unchristian (read Mat. 23:13-39). Those who stand for truth are often falsely criticized by those who want to remain in error. A Christian can follow the Bible examples of "contending for the faith" and please the Lord:

1. He can "contend" (dispute, contest) Jude 1:3.
2. He can "dispute" (debate) Acts 9:29, 17:17, 19:9.
3. He can "reason" (confer, argue) Acts 18:4.

4. He can “persuade” (convince) Acts 18:4, 26:28; 2 Corinthians 5:11.
5. He can “judge” (righteously) John 7:24, 5:30; Luke 7:43.
6. He can “speak” (speak out) Acts 18:9.
7. He can “expound” (interpret thoroughly) Luke 24:27; Acts 18:26,28:23.

If a Christian refuses to “contend for the faith” and fellowships religious error he becomes a “partaker of the evil deeds” (2 John 7-11).

A UNIVERSAL APPEAL TO RESTORE

The idea of restoring New Testament Christianity should have a universal appeal to all men. It is not an effort to create a new denomination or to start a denomination better than existing ones. To restore means “to bring back or put back into the former or original state.” Our desire is to simply be non-denominational New Testament Christians united with all others of like precious faith within the Church that Jesus built (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47).

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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Darrell Conley



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INTRODUCTION

The New Testament has much to say about sound doctrine. “For fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). “If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now” (1 Tim. 4:6). “If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). “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 gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). The word translated as “sound” means “wholesome, healthy.”¹ It indicates doctrine that is conducive to spiritual health, to spiritual wholesomeness. This would necessarily mean doctrine that is true and in accordance with the will of God. Doctrine that is false could never be considered sound doctrine.

We sometimes have a misconception of what doctrine is. We often divide the teachings of the Bible into moral statements and commands, and into doctrinal statements and commands. By “moral,” we usually mean what the Bible says about stealing, lying, murder, adultery, etc. By “doctrinal,” we usually mean what the Bible says about such things as faith, repentance, confession, baptism, the organization, worship, and name of the church.

The Bible makes no such distinctions. The words translated “doctrine” simply mean “the act of teaching” or “what is taught.”² When we talk about the doctrine contained in the Bible, we are talking about its teaching on every subject. Its doctrine is what it teaches about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the plan of salvation, the establishment, nature and organization of the church, heaven, hell, etc. It also includes what the Bible teaches about loving one another, living a pure and holy life, sin, stealing, lying, adultery, drinking, etc.

WHAT IS “THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST” IN 2 JOHN 9-11?

The King James Version translates 2 John 9-11 as follows: “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.” Upon examination of this language, we discover a grammatical ambiguity. Is John speaking of the doctrine that Christ taught, or of the doctrine about Christ Himself? It is this ambiguity that has given some false teachers the occasion to assert that we are free to believe and teach almost anything in religion and to fellowship almost any religious group. The American Standard Version translates the verses as follows: “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.” Using the word “teaching” instead

of “doctrine,” makes it more difficult for the English reader to conclude that John was speaking of the teaching **about** Christ, instead of the teaching done **by** Christ.

There is little doubt that John in his first epistle as well as his second, attacks the Gnostic doctrine that Jesus had not come in the flesh. Guy N. Woods, in his introduction to First John, discusses the heresy of the Gnostics:

Pernicious teaching regarding the person of Christ was afloat, and there were those in the church who had imbibed its poison and apostatized from the faith. (1 John 2:19). Some denied the *deity* of the Lord; others, his *humanity*. The former said that Jesus was not Christ; the latter, that Christ was not Jesus. Unbelieving Jews were in the vanguard of those who denied his deity; the Gnostics questioned his humanity. There were two groups of these Gnostics—the Docetic Gnostics, who denied the actual humanity of Christ, and the Cerinthian Gnostics, who attempted to distinguish between the man Jesus and the Christ which they alleged descended upon Jesus at his baptism and left him on the cross. The word “Gnostic” is derived from the Greek *gnosis*, knowledge, and they were so designated because of their claims to superior knowledge.

Gnosticism, whether of the Docetic or Cerinthian brand, was an admixture of paganism and corrupt Christianity. Basically, the theory regarded evil as an ever-present characteristic of matter, and its advocates were, therefore, unable to accept the doctrine of the incarnation—the assumption of flesh on the part of the Lord—on the ground that they believed it impossible for sinless deity to occupy a material body. They hence argued that the body of Jesus was not real, but an illusion and that the sufferings on the cross were apparent and not actual. The theory, in its practical aspects, was especially pernicious because its devotees were led into a course of conduct essentially wicked and vile in nature. Inasmuch as they regarded their bodies as evil, they concluded that their spirits were independent of them, and thus undefiled by them. They contended that once regenerated, they were pure in spirit, and it mattered not what the body did, since it was inherently evil anyway. They lived lives of unrestrained indulgence, on the ground that a jewel might lie in a dunghill and be just as much of a gem as in the most costly case! They believed that it was inevitable that their bodies should sin, and they argued that a thorough understanding of these matters left them free to indulge in any course of action which they preferred. It was this alleged superior knowledge which prompted them to style themselves the *Gnostics*.

In his first epistle, John attacks the Gnostic heresy by stating that he and the other apostles had heard, seen, and touched the Word (1

John 1:1-2). He also declares that “every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God” (1 John 4:2-3). In 2 John 7, he says, “For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the anti-Christ.” The question under consideration in this lecture is not whether John was concerned about the Gnostic heresy, but whether that was the only teaching he was concerned with. Is the doctrine or teaching of Christ confined only to the doctrine that He had come in the flesh? Is this the only teaching over which fellowship may be broken?

First, let us take up the question of the grammar of the phrase “the teaching [doctrine] of Christ.” Is this genitive phrase subjective, that is, the teaching that Christ did? Or is it objective, that is, the teaching about Christ? Alan Highers, in his very fine discussion of this question at the Sixth Annual Denton Lectures,³ lists the opinions of the following commentators and grammarians:

A. T. Robertson: Not the teaching about Christ, but that of Christ which is the standard of Christian teaching as the walk of Christ is the standard for the Christian’s walk (1 John 2:6).⁴

F. F. Bruce: Either interpretation would be appropriate: whether we accept the former or the latter depends on our understanding the genitive “of Christ” as subjective or objective genitive respectively. There is a strong balance of probability in favour of the former construction (so Westcott).⁵

J. R. W. Stott: But the “usage of the N. T.” (Westcott, Brooke) requires that the genitive be interpreted not as objective, “the teaching about Christ,” but as subjective, “Christ’s teaching.” This no doubt includes what Christ continued to teach through the apostles.⁶

Simon J. Kistemaker: This phrase means either “the teaching that originates with and belongs to Christ” (subjective genitive) or “the teaching about Christ” (objective genitive). Scholars have advanced arguments for either position, but from the writings of John the evidence favors the subjective genitive.⁷

B. F. Westcott: The doctrine which Christ brought, and which He brought first in His own person, and then through His followers (Heb. ii. 3). This sense seems better than *the doctrine of* (concerning) *the Christ*, and the usage of the N. T. is uniformly in favor of it.⁸

Henry Alford: Not abiding in the doctrine of Christ (i.e., in Christ’s doctrine,—that truth which Christ Himself taught).⁹

A. E. Brooke: There is nothing in the context or the usage of the N.T. to suggest that *tou Christou* should be regarded as an objective genitive, the writer meaning by the phrase “the apostolic teaching about Christ.” Such an interpretation would seem to be the outcome of preconceived notions of what the author *ought* to have meant rather than of what his words indicate.¹⁰

Joseph Henry Thayer: The doctrine which has God, Christ, the Lord, for its author and supporter.¹¹

The immediate and remote context of this passage is determinative. As we have seen, the Gnostic heresy is certainly one of John’s concerns, but there is no reason to conclude that “the teaching [doctrine] of Christ” is limited to whether or not He had come in the flesh. If we understand the phrase to mean “what Christ (and the apostles) taught,” it certainly would include what Christ (and the apostles) taught about His incarnation. There is no argument to be made from the context that would narrow the “teaching [doctrine]” to that topic alone. The context, both immediate and remote, makes it clear that the “teaching [doctrine] of Christ” is the entire body of what He taught.

Notice the words in bold print in the following quotation from 2 John:

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in **truth**; and not I only, but also all they that know the **truth**; for the **truth’s** sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in **truth** and love. I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in **truth**, even as we received **commandment** from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new **commandment**, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk after his **commandments**. This is the **commandment**, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it (2 John 1-6).

How absurd to think that John means in verses nine through eleven, that only the doctrine regarding His incarnation is important and we are to disregard the rest of the truth and the rest of His commandments! In other words, “Forget what I just said about walking in truth and keeping His commandments!”

John obviously thought it was very important to know and follow the truth and to obey the commandments of Christ. John had written

the words of Christ in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.” Rather than restricting the commandment(s) to the command to love one another, as such false teachers as Carl Ketcherside attempt to do,¹² in 2 John 6, he defines love as walking after his commandments. John does the same in his first epistle. “Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:2-3).

John consistently emphasizes obedience to the commands of God. “And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked” (1 John 2:3-6). “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21). “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:23-24). “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15:10). “Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you” (John 15:14).

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the sound doctrine is the teaching that Jesus Christ did. “If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing” (1 Tim. 6:3-4). Christ said regarding the seventy, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). If that was true of the seventy under the limited commission, what would be the fate of one who rejects the teaching of the apostles under the Great Commission?

THE LIMITS OF FELLOWSHIP

The teaching of Christ is what saves us. “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:23-24). We are to be judged in the last day by the teaching of Christ. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). The anathema of God rests upon any who would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). John makes it plain that one who does not remain within the doctrine of Christ does not have God (2 John 9). It is all important, therefore, that the doctrine of Christ be kept from perversion. False teachers rob people of that which saves them. It is the truth that makes men free (John 8:32). False teaching causes even our worship of God to be in vain (Mat. 15:9). We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but are to reprove them (Eph. 5:11). John warns in 2 John that if an itinerant false teacher of that day were to ask lodging and hospitality of faithful Christians, they were not to be received, welcomed, or encouraged. “If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works” (2 John 10-11). The word “partaketh” is from the Greek word for fellowship. When we have fellowship with false teachers, we share in the guilt of their sin. We are guilty of the sin of having a part in and encouraging that which will rob people of their salvation.

The gradual apostasy of the past thirty years has now reached warp speed. The proverbial frog has waited too long to jump out of the pot. The cowardly heretics of the past three decades, who denied their false teaching by pleading that they had been misunderstood, misquoted, or lied about (pick one), are now out of the closet. Having subverted whole congregations, colleges, and papers, having captured many naive young people, and having deceived many silly, untaught adults who should know better, they now have a power base that gives them the courage to reveal their true identities. They

are spiritual termites who have done eternal damage to the souls of our generation. Max Lucado can stand before a mostly Catholic audience at St. John Newman Catholic Church in San Antonio and address the priest, Tony Cummins, as “Father,” holding hands with him to signify “unity.”¹³ He can address a charismatic denomination and in prayer thank God for “this great church.”¹⁴ He can announce to the Oak Hills Church of Christ, where he preaches, that he has no difficulty in worshiping with instruments of music,¹⁵ and still remains their preacher. Abilene Christian University can protect and defend teachers of evolution,¹⁶ and Bible professors who attack the virgin birth of Christ,¹⁷ and foolish brethren just sit in the pot while it boils. They can hire an ordained Methodist preacher to be the editor of the school paper,¹⁸ and they can announce that they will no longer forbid students to frequent beer joints and dance halls,¹⁹ while alumni continue to send their children and their money to this unchristian university. We are reaping the fruit of having neglected such admonitions as are found in 2 John 9-11.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST?

It Includes All that the Bible Teaches about Christ:

It includes what it teaches about His pre-existence with God and as God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

It includes what the Bible teaches about His virgin birth. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). One of the most shocking things I have ever heard was the ACU professor in 1966, who, in an attempt to justify the Revised Standard Version’s mistranslation of this passage, denied that Isaiah 7:14 was a messianic prophecy.²⁰ Thank God that we have a divine translation and commentary on this verse in Matthew 1:22-23.

It includes what the Bible teaches about His sinless life. “For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

It includes what the Bible teaches about His miracles. “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples,

which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

It includes what the Bible teaches about His death and resurrection. “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” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

It includes what the Bible teaches about His ascension and coronation. In the first gospel sermon, Peter declared that God had promised David He would set his Descendant upon David’s throne, that this was said regarding the resurrection of Christ, and that David had prophesied that the Christ would be seated on the right hand of God. He then declared that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:29-36). Christ is now ruling over His kingdom. “And he made us to be a kingdom...I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus” (Rev. 1:6, 9). Premillennialists go beyond the teaching of Christ.

It includes what the Bible teaches about His coming again (1 The. 4:13-5:3). He is coming not to establish His kingdom, but to deliver it up to God (1 Cor. 15:24-25).

It Includes What Christ Taught about the Old Testament:

He taught that from the beginning of creation, man and woman were made male and female (Mark 10:6). This eliminates the possibility of long geological ages between the creation of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1), and the creation of Adam and Eve. It also eliminates the theory of evolution, since it teaches that they were not created male and female, but rather began from non-living matter as a one celled organism which was neither male nor female, plant or animal, and gradually developed into man and woman.

He taught the historicity of the flood. He compares the suddenness of His second coming with the coming of the flood. “And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man” (Mat. 24:37-39). One cannot deny the historical account of the flood in the Old Testament and claim to be a disciple of Christ.

He also placed His stamp of authenticity on the Old Testament accounts of the destruction of Sodom (Mat. 11:23-24), and Jonah being swallowed by the great fish (Mat. 12:39-41). Anyone who denies that these things occurred has gone beyond the teaching of Christ.

In fact He authenticates all of the Old Testament by teaching that all three of the divisions in the Hebrew Scriptures speak of Him. “That all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

It Includes What He Taught about Salvation:

We must both hear and do the will of God. “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” (Mat. 7:21).

We must believe in His deity. “Except ye believe that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Notice that “*he*” is in italics, which means that it was inserted by the translators. Literally, He was saying that we must believe that He is “I am.” That is, of course, the Old Testament name of God that was revealed to Moses from the burning bush (Exo. 3:14). Jesus made it clear when He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). To believe that Jesus is the Son of God is to believe in His deity.

Jesus and His apostles taught repentance. “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). “The times of

ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30).

It includes the confession of faith in Him. “Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

It includes the necessity of baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). (See also Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; and 1 Peter 3:21.) One who denies the necessity of baptism has gone beyond the doctrine of Christ. One who accepts those who have not been baptized for the remission of sins has gone beyond the doctrine of Christ.

It includes what Jesus and the apostles taught about remaining faithful. “If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

It Includes What Christ and His Apostles Taught about the Church:

Christ is its founder. “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Mat. 16:18). Christ is its head. “And he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). Christ is its foundation. “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Notice that this is said in the context of teaching that one should not elevate men above that of ministers. One of those of whom he was speaking was Cephas (Peter). He is saying clearly that the church is not founded upon Peter or any other man.

It includes what Christ and His apostles taught about the establishment of the church, the kingdom of God. “Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). “But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). The kingdom was to come with power; the power was to come when the Holy Spirit came. We learn in Acts 2:1-4, that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of

Pentecost. Therefore, the kingdom must have come on the day of Pentecost. We should not be surprised then, to learn that from that day forward the church, the kingdom, is spoken of as being in existence (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13). The church did not begin during the ministry of John the Baptist, nor during the personal ministry of Christ. The kingdom is not future. It is present as the church of Jesus Christ.

It includes what Christ and His apostles taught about the worship of the church. It was to be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). That is, it was to worship with the spirit or heart, and according to the truth or the revealed Word of God. It includes preaching, prayer, and the observance of the Lords's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7). It includes giving of our means on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). It includes singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Those who add the mechanical instrument to the worship of the New Testament church go beyond the teaching of Christ (2 John 9), and do so without the authority of Christ. To do something in the name of someone is to claim to do it by their authority. Notice the proximity of Colossians 3:16 and 17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Instrumental music in the worship of God is not authorized by Christ or His apostles. It is beyond the doctrine of Christ.

Christ's teaching regarding the church includes its oneness. He built only one church (Mat. 16:18). That church is His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24). There is one body (Eph. 4:4). Therefore, there is one church.

The Doctrine of Christ Includes What Christ and His Apostles Taught about:

Putting God's kingdom first (Mat. 6:33). It should be first in our affections, in our work, in our giving, and in our attendance at its assemblies.

Preaching and teaching the word (Mat. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Sin and worldliness (Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21).

Growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Withdrawing from the disorderly and the heretic (Rom. 17:17-18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 The. 3:6,14-15; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of Christ includes all of this and more. It includes all that the New Testament embraces. One cannot accept the doctrine of Christ piecemeal. We cannot accept His deity and reject baptism. We cannot acknowledge His virgin birth and omit the new birth of water and Spirit. We cannot believe in His death and resurrection and minimize or reject His church. We cannot accept what He says about baptism and ignore what He says about faithfulness and purity of life. We cannot accept what He says about the church and reject what He says about how to keep that church pure.

Christ still says, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Mat. 12:30).

ENDNOTES

¹W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), 4:55.

²*Ibid.*, 1:331-332.

³Alan E. Highers, "'The Teaching of Christ', Fellowship and Unity," *Studies in 1, 2, 3 John*, Dub McClish, ed. (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1987), pp. 454-455.

⁴A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 6:254.

⁵F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970).

⁶J. R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

⁷Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986).

⁸B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976).

⁹Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian, 1976), 4:16.

¹⁰A. E. Brooke, *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. and T. Clark, 1964).

¹¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. and T. Clark, 4th ed., 1901), p. 144.

¹²Carl Ketcherside, *The Twisted Scriptures* (St. Louis, MO: Mission Messenger, 1965), p. 86.

¹³Unpublished letter from Tony Cummins to Northern Oaks Church of Christ, November 24, 1989, inviting us to celebrate with them the beginning of "advent" by hearing Max Lucado and enjoying fellowship with them.

¹⁴This occurred April 6, 1990, at the Trinity Church here in San Antonio. I have a tape of his sermon and his prayer.

¹⁵Roy Deaver, ed., *Biblical Notes*, November/December 1994.

¹⁶Bert Thompson, *Is Genesis Myth?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 1985).

¹⁷Andre Resner, "Christmas at Matthew's House," *Wineskins*, November 1992.

¹⁸Ira Rice, Jr., ed., *Contending for the Faith*, August 1992.

¹⁹Buster Dobbs, ed., *Firm Foundation*, February 1995.

²⁰J. W. Roberts in answer to a question at a forum in Sewell Auditorium. I was present.