The Blight Of Liberalism

Michael Hatcher, Editor

2005 Bellview Lectures

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Thirtieth Annual
Bellview Lectures

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DEDICATION

Paul and Phyllis Brantley

Paul William Brantley was the third son born to Hairston and Inez Brantley on May 1, 1940. Brother Brantley grew up in a home which loved the Truth of God's Word and instilled in him that same love. Paul's father served as the first preacher for the Bellview congregation and also served as one of its elders for many years. Paul was appointed as a deacon in 1970 and then, like his father, appointed as an elder in 1991; he continues to faithfully serve in that capacity.

Brother Brantley has been dedicated to the Lord's service in many ways through the years. He has taught in the Bible school program of the Bellview church for many years. He also developed his abilities at leading singing and has led the singing for the congregation here and taken charge of the song leading during the lectures. He has been deeply interested in oversea mission work. His first mission trip was when he, along with brother Ira Rice and others, went to Riga, Latvia, in 1993. In 1994, Paul made his first trip to Murmansk, Russia, and this year returned for his twelfth trip to Russia (always paying his own way). While in Russia, he has taught Bible in the public schools, led singing in meetings and worship assemblies, and taught in the Murmansk School of Biblical Studies. On one of the trips, he and brother Rice wet to Kamchatka (on the Pacific side of Russia) and began a work there. In 2004, brother Brantley was made an honorary alumni of the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee.

Brother Brantley is a family man. On November 2, 1962, he and Phyllis Rose Elzen were married. They have three daughters (Tia, Tanya, and Talisha), five grandchildren, and three step-grandchildren (Tanya being married to a faithful Gospel preacher, Preston Silcox).

Brother Brantley is one who will stand for the truth of the Gospel. He is not one to be moved by false teachers or the doctrines of men. He loves the Lord and His Word with all his heart. Neither family nor friends will move him away from the Scriptures.

Paul Brantley is a great friend of Gospel preachers. He will support them as long as they remain faithful to the Truth. He will often make comments in support of what has been preached after sermons (especially those *hard* or *negative* sermons). He encourages preachers both publicly and privately.

He has lived his life in an exemplary way. Those who are a part of the flock he helps oversee can point to him as an example of the way a Christian is to live his life. He is also one who studies the Scriptures, and when he teaches, his study shows in the material he sets forth.

Because of our great love and respect for brother Paul Brantley, it is our great pleasure to dedicate this book of the Thirtieth Annual Bellview Lectureship, *The Blight Of Liberalism*, to Paul Brantley for his years of faithful service to the Lord and the Bellview congregation.

PREFACE

Liberalism seems to be taking over the world and the church. *Liberalism* in its truest form is a loosing of the standard. Spiritually, it is a loosing of what God has bound. We observe this taking place in just about every aspect of life today. Thus, a lectureship and book on this subject is needed. If those faithful in the Lord's church do not contend for the faith (Jude 3), we are likely to be overwhelmed by the liberalism of our society—but especially in the church. In the church liberalism is so pervasive that many have predicted another split taking place with the majority of the congregations in the brotherhood being lost to the liberals. It is our prayer that this book will help stem the tide and help others to be able to stand.

There are many individuals who play a major role in the production of this book and conducting the lectureship, such as the overseers of this congregation. They have a love not only for this congregation but for the church as a whole; thus they continue these series of lectureships. The Bellview congregation is, albeit not a large congregation numerically, a hard working congregation which loves the Lord and the Truth. Without the dedicated help of so many of its members, this lectureship could not continue.

We greatly appreciate all of those who write for and speak on the lectureship. These men freely give of their time, effort, and energy for the good of the brotherhood and this lectureship. These men are sound in the Faith and love the Lord and His church. They willingly spend their time writing these chapters for the good of the church. We appreciate these men for their willingness to serve the Lord and His church.

Special appreciation is extended to Denise Mowery and Gary Summers in their work on this book. Sister Mowery, the secretary at Bellview, does a great deal of work both on the lectureship and this book. Along with doing the format of the book, she reads each chapter and checks references for accuracy sake. Brother Summers willingly gives his time in giving the book a final proofreading to ensure proper grammar and to make sure that the book is accurate in every way. We greatly appreciate all these in their work for the kingdom.

Finally, it is our prayer that this book will be of invaluable service to you to years to come. Prayerfully, it will help brethren stand for the Truth of God's Word, but in standing for Truth they will also stand against error in whatever form it might take.

Michael Hatcher, Director and Editor; February 25, 2005

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THE ORIGIN OF LIBERALISM

David P. Brown

David Brown was born in 1946 in Camden, Arkansas. He is married to the former Joann Anglin of Jackson, Tennessee. They have four children: Timothy, Carrie, Rebekah, and Joanna, and twelve grandchildren.

He holds the B.A. and M.Ed. degrees from Northeastern Oklahoma State University and has completed course work toward the Ed.D. at Oklahoma State University.

David has been preaching for thirty-three years and is active in Gospel meeting work and lectureships in and out of the United States. He has written for several religious journals, and for seven years served as Associate Editor for the *Christian Worker* and is the editor for *Contending For The Faith*.

He has served as Assistant Director of Turley Children's Home in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Director of the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. He presently preaches for the Spring Church of Christ in Houston, Texas.

INTRODUCTION

Liberalism is used in various fields of study—political, religious, social, and intellectual. People often employ the term without defining it; we will define the term. However, before we define liberalism, we want to point out the following facts. In the case of religious liberalism there are fundamental principles on which it is based. From these foundational principles a new religion emerged which retained the traditional terminology but drastically redefined the terms. Liberalism, as we have come to know it, came into existence as a theological system in the sectarian denominational world as a direct result of certain men's efforts to deal with the Enlightenment (Warfield 591). Later we will investigate the historical development of liberalism among the denominations as well as how it came to influence the Lord's church.

Our definition of liberalism will cover the term as it exists in Protestant sectarian denominational theology, but it will also include liberalism as it pertains to the church of Christ. The reason is: among other things denominationalism itself is a form of liberalism. Thus, what liberalism means and does to and in the denominations is one thing, but what it means and does to the Lord's church is another

matter. Some members of the church see liberalism only from the standpoint of what it has done and is doing to the denominational world. For the faithful member of the Lord's church that view of liberalism is insufficient—it is too limited. We must see liberalism, not only from the perspective of its attack on the cardinal biblical doctrines that we have in common with some of the denominations, but specifically how it has challenged and made inroads into primitive, pure, New Testament Christianity—the church of Christ.

LIBERALISM DEFINED

With the previous information in mind, we will now define our subject. *Liberalism* is created by any doctrine that looses men from what the complete, final, authoritative, infallible, rightly-divided Word of God binds upon them (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:17). In other words, a liberal doctrine is any doctrine that allows human beings greater liberty than God permits them in, by, and through His Word (Col. 3:17; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 John 9-11). It confuses an **obligation** (the thing that must be done) with an **option** (a way or method for an obligation to be discharged that circumstances and situations may change). Thus, *liberalism* covers a broad spectrum of doctrines.

Liberalism and Anti-ism—In our study on the origins of *liberalism* we must understand what *anti-ism* is because the two are direct opposites in what they do to the church. *Anti-ism* is a conservatism that is sinful because it conserves more than the obligations God has bound on us in, by, and through His Word. *Anti-ism* makes optional matters obligatory.

Obligations and Options—With every obligation God has placed on us through His Word, there are various options from which we may choose to discharge these obligations. The obligation is always the same for all people, at all times, in every society and culture. However, options whereby the obligation is discharged may change because of advancements in technology, different economic conditions, people's several abilities, circumstances, culture, civil laws, and so on.

Human judgment is exercised when it comes to choosing which option one may use to discharge a biblical obligation. The fundamental principle behind, and the motivating factor for, determining the option one selects to discharge a biblical obligation is this: **it is the option that offers the greater advantage in discharging the obligation**.

Therefore, an option that **expedites** the discharging of a God-given obligation is an option that offers a greater advantage in discharging the obligation than do other options. Thus, expediency involves advantage. In other words, it discharges in the quickest and best way possible the obligation God has placed upon the Christian. As stated earlier, whatever the antidoctrine, it restricts one's conduct more than what God does in His Word by making an optional matter an obligatory one.

TWO THINGS LIBERALS AND ANTIS HAVE IN COMMON

Two things that the liberal and the anti have in common are: (1) neither one is content with **only** what God through His Word has obligated man to do or not do, as the case may be, and (2) because of their actions noted in number one, the liberal along with the anti are in rebellion to God.

It must be understood by everyone that no form of anti-ism is God's answer to liberalism, and no form of liberalism is God's answer to anti-ism. One might as well believe that Methodist doctrine is God's answer to Roman Catholicism or that Baptist doctrine is God's answer to Universal-Unitarianism as to believe that anti-ism or liberalism can scripturally substitute one for the other. Anti-ism and liberalism, regardless of the topic, repudiate the inspired directions of the apostle Paul regarding having Bible authority for all we believe and practice (Col. 3:17). Only the truth on any doctrine can correctly take the place of either liberalism or anti-ism.

Sometimes people erroneously affirm that the truth on any subject is found between two extremes. The fact of the matter is this: **the truth regarding anything or any idea is just what it is.** Thus, the truth pertaining to anything or any idea will always be the truth regardless of what men think, say, or do about it. Anything to the left or right of the Truth is false, and we sin if we go either direction from the Truth.

To some people the truth itself on any subject is extreme—it binds more than they like it to bind, or it looses more than they like it to loose. We must, therefore, realize the truth about truth. "A true proposition is one that corresponds to the facts or correctly describes the facts" and "must be true for all men at all times and all places" (Ruby 329, 331). Thus, in regard to truth, extremists are those who loose where God in His Word has not loosed, or those who bind where God in Word has not bound. Jesus put it this way: "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; cf. John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 12:48).

The only possible quality in an anti that places him/her in a little better light than the liberal is this: an anti continues to (1) respect the Bible as the Holy Spirit-inspired Word of God, and (2) an anti knows he must have the Bible's approval for whatever he believes and practices. The liberal cares for none of the things. We must understand that all false doctrines are either liberal or anti. Anti-ism will hinder the work of the church by not allowing her to do all God authorizes her to do. Liberalism destroys every vestige of Bible authority, the Gospel, and the church for the reasons previously given in our definition of liberalism. Anti-ism stifles and strangles the work of the church. Liberalism erases the church and all that pertains to it.

LIBERALISM'S BEGINNING

The first record of Liberalism in human history is found in Satan's false message offered by him to entice Eve to sin. When Satan began to entice Eve, he was headed for Adam—the head of the human race (Rom. 5:12). God had instructed Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warned them of the consequences of violating His prohibitive law (Gen. 2:16-17). In other words, the first man and woman were authorized by God's Word to eat the fruit of certain trees, and by His Word they were forbidden to eat the fruit from a certain tree. Thus, by God's authoritative Word Adam and Eve knew of what trees they were at liberty to eat and of what tree they were forbidden to eat.

Satan's message to Eve was a liberal doctrine—it loosed her from what God in His infallible Word had bound upon her (Gen. 3:4-5). Thereby Satan lied to Eve. She was seduced, she believed, and she obeyed Satan's lie for the reasons given in verse six. Thereby, Eve sinned (1 John 3:4). Then Adam, without being deceived, partook of the forbidden fruit given to him by his wife and he, too, sinned (1 Tim. 2:14).

The second record of liberalism's evil work in the human race is found in Cain's attitude and action toward the obligation God placed on him and his brother Abel regarding their worship of Him (Gen. 4:1-15). Of this event, the writer of the Hebrews epistle declared: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts:

and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). Since it is the case that (1) faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), (2) Abel offered his sacrifice to God by faith (Heb. 11:4), then it is the case that we must conclude that Abel and Cain had received God's Word instructing them regarding the worship He desired of them. It is also the case that Cain did not comply with God's Will regarding his worship to Him. The divine record says of God's attitude toward Cain's unauthorized (and thus sinful) offering: "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Gen. 4:5). Among the things we may conclude from this Old Testament record is that, if we want God to respect our beliefs and actions, they must be authorized by God's Word—they must be by faith (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 15:4).

While liberalism has invaded the Lord's church in the same way it has denominationalism, it has reared its ugly head in the church in a way that it could not do in sectarian theology. The reason is this: **the Lord's church stands alone in her respect for, correct approach to, the ascertaining of, and submission to proper Bible authority**, apostate brethren not with standing (2 Tim. 2:15: Col. 3:17; Heb. 5:8-9). Indeed, as stated earlier, denominationalism itself is a form of liberalism. If the denominations truly respected Bible authority and honestly knew how to ascertain it and were fully willing to submit to it, they would not be denominations. Indeed, they would repudiate the whole false system along with its attendant erroneous doctrines that gave birth to, sustain, and have characterized them from its inception in the Reformation to the present. Additionally, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Armenianism, Wesleyanism, Mormonism, Creedalism, and such like false doctrines that have hindered the proper division of the Word of God for many years would disappear. Therefore, in the Lord's church liberalism has not only sought (1) to repudiate and destroy those elements of biblical Truth that exist in denominational theology, which Truths we hold in common with them, but (2) it has attacked the Bible as a divine infallible pattern along with the communicative element of language that serves as the means whereby the Bible authorizes anyone to do anything.

Furthermore, it has attacked the biblical principle of restoration. Those who imbibe it are blinded to Christianity as it appears on the pages of the New Testament. Thus, there is a liberalism that seeks to make the Lord's church only another denomination among the denominations. This is the singular difference in liberalism's attack and

evil influence on the Lord's church from that of liberalism's attack and impact on the denominations.

Thus, in our earlier comments about liberalism and its contrary evil brother anti-ism, we defined *liberalism* as we did. If we are not willing to see the difference in how liberalism deals with Bible authority, the Gospel, and the church, and so on from the way it has attacked denominationalism, we simply do not have a correct understanding of what liberalism is, how it works, and what it has done, is doing, and will do to the church that it never could accomplish in the sectarian denominational churches. **Satan knows there is no need to convert denominational churches to denominationalism**.

A BRIEF GENERAL HISTORY OF THE FOUNDERS AND FOUNDATION OF MODERN LIBERALISM

During the eighteenth century an intellectual movement began that was to have far-reaching consequences for the western world and the United States in particular. The central core of the movement was that it almost promoted human reason to the level of the divine. It denied supernatural divine revelation and ascribed to the rational powers of human beings the ability to discern truth of all types. This was the period known in history as the Enlightenment, which has been labeled, *The Modern Paganism* (Gay). This was also the time of the formation of German Rationalism and Deism.

The Enlightenment produced much that is to this present time described and touted as the *modern mind*. Some of these principles of the Enlightenment are:

1. The beginning of scientific history
2. Any *truth* must justify itself before the bar of reason
3. Nature is the primary source of answers to the fundamental questions of human existence
4. Freedom is necessary to advance progress and human welfare
5. Literary and historical criticism are necessary to determine the legitimacy of our historical legacy
6. The need for critical philosophy
7. Ethics as separate and independent from the authority of religion and theology
8. A suspicion of and hostility to all truth claiming to be grounded in some kind of authority other than reason, e.g., tradition or divine revelation
9. Raising to the value of science as the avenue by which man can find truth

10. Toleration as the highest value in matters of religion
11. A self-conscious continuation and expansion of the humanism first developed during the Renaissance (Ramm 4-5).

During this time certain *scholars* began a direct attack on the inspiration of the Bible as it had been defined during the late Reformation—verbal plenary inspiration. These men initiated the development of what became known as Higher Criticism—better defined as "Destructive Criticism." In particular they attacked traditional Protestant reformatory doctrines in general and specifically doctrines of the Lutheran Church. They targeted the supernaturalism of historic Christianity in general and sighted in on the trinity, the Deity of Christ, the atonement, the virgin birth, the resurrection, miracles in the Bible, and so on.

As noted previously, concurrent with this movement was the development of Deism. This is the view that affirms the existence of God as the Creator of all things. However, once God set all the natural laws in place and working, He took and takes no personal interest in his creation. According to Deism, as one does a clock, so did God with his creation—He wound it up and left it to function through natural law without any direct or indirect personal involvement in it by Him. This view of the natural world rules out miracles, because they violate the function of natural law. The Deist declared that Christianity only re-declared God's revelation of Himself in nature—that God Himself is separated from and uninvolved in His creation. With these points in mind we now turn to other contributing factors to the formation of liberalism.

THREE IMPORTANT PHILOSOPHIES

In understanding what liberalism is we must have a familiarity with certain philosophers and their philosophies. Their ideas are seen in three philosophies—Existentialism, Pragmatism, and Irrationalism. These philosophies unite to give us the liberalism of our time.

Existentialism gives emphasis to individual existence, freedom, and choice. Thus, while it is somewhat difficult to define, it stresses absolute individual existence and, consequently, on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. Thus, absolute objective truth is rejected by the existentialist.

Pragmatism looks at the consequence of an action. According to the consequence, it determines whether the action is right or wrong. Thus, if an action accomplishes one's desired end, it is right. If the

action does not accomplish the end desired, it is wrong. Hence, there is no absolute objective standard of right and wrong. If a thing works, it its right; if it does not, it is wrong. The pragmatic approach was also applied in determining what is true and what is not.

Irrationalism is the result of a number of philosophies, including existentialism and pragmatism. All of these philosophies reject and repudiate the "Law of Rationality." The *Law of Rationality* is: "We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence" (Ruby 131).

All three of the previously noted philosophies come to basically the same end—Subjectivism. Although the philosophers we shall next notice in our study differ in certain aspects of their views, the commonality shared by each philosopher and his philosophy is the subjective nature of truth. Thus, we ask, what is Subjectivism?

> Subjectivism is an epistemological theory. It is a theory of knowledge, and how it is achieved. Subjectivism holds that knowledge is generated from the mind, without reference to reality. It holds that gaining knowledge about the world is done through introspection. It holds that metaphysically, the world is a figment of our imaginations. It holds that because reality is an aspect of our minds, it is affected by them.
>
> Like most misbegotten notions, this theory is never held consistently. The effect of trying to hold it consistently would be a complete inability to interact with the world. One would just sit and wish for things to be "better," confused at why the world isn't doing its part.
>
> No, the practitioners apply it only in certain respects, and to certain degrees. It is an act of evasion. An attempt to ignore the facts of reality. It is the claim that the mind controls particular aspects of reality, or that certain facts of reality don't exist, and can be whatever you mind wants. A common use of subjectivism is in the field of ethics. A subjectivist evades the objective nature of ethics, and pretends that he may act in any way he chooses, without consequence.
>
> Subjectivism is a denial of reality. It is the acceptance of the Primacy of Consciousness. It is a denial of reality, and a denial of the Law of Identity. It states that "anything goes," and lets desires, whims, and emotions run rampant ("Subjectivism").

The late Thomas B. Warren commented concerning certain factors that brought about the rise of liberalism. He wrote:

> There have been at least four other factors which have been highly significant in the rise of modern liberalism: (1) The growing influence of science and its influence over the minds of men, (2) the evolutionary hypothesis of Charles Darwin, (3) the attacks of the higher critics on the Bible itself, and (4) the scientific study of the various so-called "world" religions. These factors, along with factors previously noted,

were vital to the rise of the two basic branches of modern liberalism: (1) Moderate liberalism (Modernism) and, (2) Radical liberalism (Humanism) (*Sound* 12).

SOME PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANS OF LIBERALISM

David Hume was very influential in bringing new viewpoints into religion and science.

> "Hume is our Politics, Hume is our Trade, Hume is our Philosophy, Hume is our Religion." This statement by 19th century British idealist philosopher James Hutchison Stirling reflects a unique position that David Hume holds in intellectual thought. Hume profoundly impacted all of the disciplines noted by Stirling, not only during Hume's own life, but for generations after and on to our own day. Part of his fame and importance owes to his boldly skeptical approach to a range of philosophical subjects. He questioned common notions of personal identity, and argued that there is no permanent "self" that continues over time. He dismissed standard accounts of causality and argued that our conceptions of cause/effect relations are grounded in habits of thinking, rather than in the perception of causal forces in the external world itself. He argued that it is unreasonable to believe testimonies of alleged miraculous events, and, accordingly, hints that we should reject religions that are founded on miracle testimonies. Against the common belief of the time that God's existence could be proven through a design or causal argument, Hume offered compelling criticisms of standard theistic proofs. Also, against the common view that God plays an important role in the creation and reinforcement of moral values, Hume offered one of the first purely secular moral theories, which grounded morality in the pleasing and useful consequences that result from our actions (Fieser).

Another highly influential philospher of the Enlightenment was Immanuel Kant (April 22, 1724–February 12, 1804). He

> was a German philosopher from Prussia, generally regarded as one of Europe's most influential thinkers and the last major philosopher of the Enlightenment. He had a major impact on the Romantic and Idealist philosophies of the 19th century, and his work was the starting point for Hegel.
>
> Kant is best known for his view—called transcendental idealism—that we bring innate forms and concepts to the raw experience of the world, which would otherwise be unknowable. We perceive the world by means of our senses and innate intuitions, he argued, and therefore the thing-in-itself cannot be known. Our objects of knowledge, filtered by our senses, are simply appearances.
>
> His epistemology, or theory of knowledge, was an attempt to solve the conflict between the rationalists, who said that knowledge without

> experience is possible, and the empiricists, who argued that experience is all there is. Kant bridged the gap between these two positions with the opening statement of his *Critique of Pure Reason*: "But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience" (*Wikepedia*).

Kant, therefore, opposed the traditional arguments for the existence of God. He contended that we cannot know reality by pure reason and, thereby we cannot know that God exists. Only by conclusions drawn from moral law can man know anything about God. Thus, through man's five senses man cannot prove the existence of God. Thus, Kant helped to further magnify science.

Another influential philosopher was August Comte (1798-1857). He

> developed a secular religion known as positivism, which emphasized reason and logic. He later systematized it as the Religion of Humanity, complete with priests and a calendar of saints.
>
> Comte divided the progress of mankind into three historical stages:
>
> 1. Theological: relies on supernatural agencies to explain what man can't explain otherwise.
> 2. Metaphysical: man attributes effects to abstract but poorly understood causes.
> 3. "Positive": because man now understands the scientific laws which control the world.
>
> Comte also founded the social sciences, and it is important to remember in our more cynical times the ideals to which they aspired. Comte and other early social scientists assumed that human behavior must obey laws just as strict as Newton's laws of motion, and that if we could discover them, we could eliminate moral evils—in exactly the same way that medical scientists were then discovering how diseases worked and were eliminating much of the physical suffering which had always been an inevitable part of the human condition. In his earlier, less systematic works he influenced such figures as J. S. Mill, T. H. Huxley, George Henry Lewes, and George Eliot; all gradually fell away as his philosophy became more rigidly systematic (Everett).

One of the most influential philosophers in all facets of society and culture over the last two hundred years is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)—better known as G. W. F. Hegel. Hegel was greatly influenced by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

> Along with J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. von Schelling, Hegel (1770-1831) belongs to the period of "German idealism" in the decades following Kant. The most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted, throughout his published writings as well as in his lectures,

> to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic ontology from a "logical" starting point. He is perhaps most well-known for his teleological account of history, an account which was later taken over by Marx and "inverted" into a materialist theory of an historical development culminating in communism. For most of the twentieth century, the "logical" side of Hegel's thought had been largely forgotten, but his political and social philosophy continued to find interest and support. However, since the 1970s, a degree of more general philosophical interest in Hegel's systematic thought has also been revived....
>
> Until around 1800, Hegel devoted himself to developing his ideas on religious and social themes, and seemed to have envisaged a future for himself as a type of modernising and reforming educator, in the image of figures of the German Enlightenment such as Lessing and Schiller. Around the turn of the century, however, possibly under the influence of Hölderlin, his interests turned more to the issues in the "critical" philosophy of Immanuel Kant. (Redding).

He learned from Kant to classify things in threes; he borrowed from him through the influence of another philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Hegel believed in a dialectical process for all things. While he rarely used the following terms in his logical system, this is the foundation of his own reasoning. He began with the thesis (one fact) which produced the antithesis (and opposing fact). The conflict of these two facts produced another fact—a syntheses of the thesis and antithesis. This process never ceases, but goes on and on ad infinitum. Thus, there is no final truth. Therefore, men can never arrive at final truth on anything.

The Hegelian dialectic has impacted the world in a terrible, thorough and long-lasting way. Hitler and the Nazis were strongly influenced by Nietzsche who was greatly influenced by Hegel (*Politics*). The founders of Communism—Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Stalin—were influenced by Hegel (*Economics and Politics*). Thomas J. J. Altizer's "God is Dead" view was a direct result of Altizer applying Hegel's dialectic philosophy to his thinking about God, Christ, and man (*Christian Atheism—Religion*). And, when Hegel's dialectic process is applied to Biology, the result is *evolution*.

> Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher [1768-1834] was a German theologian and philologist who held pastorates and professorships at Landsberg, University of Halle, and Trinity Church in Berlin. He was influenced by Plato and Kant and believed God to be immanent—one with all creation. The New England Transcendentalists were particularly struck by Schleiermacher's conception of religious experi-

> ence as an immediate, eternal, mystical moment when a person becomes aware of the all-surrounding, invasive, incredible presence of God in and through the universe. Believing that man can find the answers to moral laws within himself, he emphasized the contemplation of nature and its ever-present miracles.
>
> As the great champion, and a modern prophet, of personal active religious feeling—as opposed to mere passive assent to formal and inherited doctrines—Schleiermacher redefined the basic elements of Christianity in his famous and groundbreaking book *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799). For him, "every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle as soon as the religious view of it can be the dominant" and "every original and new communication of the universe to man is a revelation." On the issue of belief, Schleiermacher was adamant on the distinction between firsthand belief and secondhand acceptance of the belief of another, arguing that "to accept what another has said or done, or to wish to think and feel as another has thought and felt, is a hard and base service.... It must be rejected by all who would force their way into the sanctuary of religion. To wish to have and hold a faith that is an echo, proves that a man is incapable of religion." Religion for Schleiermacher, then, always meant individual religious experience, and thus he insisted that "the existing forms should not in themselves hinder any man from developing a religion suitable to his own nature and his own religious sense." He separated not only church and state, but also church and science as well as church and morality (Alcott).

Schleiermacher sought to avoid the view that the principles of religion must be verified by empirical investigation of the natural world. He contended that propositions (into which truth may be placed) were not in actuality the root and foundation of religion. Thus, he postulated the view that it is wise in religion to be guided by one's emotions. Of course, in his efforts to oppose and repudiate a religion based upon the standard of the intellectual empirical knowledge of natural law (rationalism), he succeeded in establishing another standard—man's feelings. He thereby move people further away from the authority of God revealed in the meaning of the words of the Bible.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is considered to be the person who originally brought existentialism into theology.

> Moral Individualism
>
> Most philosophers since Plato have held that the highest ethical good is the same for everyone; insofar as one approaches moral perfection, one resembles other morally perfect individuals. The 19th-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who was the first writer to call himself existential, reacted against this tradition by insisting that the

highest good for the individual is to find his or her own unique vocation. As he wrote in his journal, "I must find a truth that is true for me...the idea for which I can live or die." Other existentialist writers have echoed Kierkegaard's belief that one must choose one's own way without the aid of universal, objective standards. Against the traditional view that moral choice involves an objective judgment of right and wrong, existentialists have argued that no objective, rational basis can be found for moral decisions. The 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche further contended that the individual must decide which situations are to count as moral situations.

Subjectivity

All existentialists have followed Kierkegaard in stressing the importance of passionate individual action in deciding questions of both morality and truth. They have insisted, accordingly, that personal experience and acting on one's own convictions are essential in arriving at the truth. Thus, the understanding of a situation by someone involved in that situation is superior to that of a detached, objective observer. This emphasis on the perspective of the individual agent has also made existentialists suspicious of systematic reasoning. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and other existentialist writers have been deliberately unsystematic in the exposition of their philosophies, preferring to express themselves in aphorisms, dialogues, parables, and other literary forms. Despite their antirationalist position, however, most existentialists cannot be said to be irrationalists in the sense of denying all validity to rational thought. They have held that rational clarity is desirable wherever possible, but that the most important questions in life are not accessible to reason or science. Furthermore, they have argued that even science is not as rational as is commonly supposed. Nietzsche, for instance, asserted that the scientific assumption of an orderly universe is for the most part a useful fiction ("Existentialism").

Basically Friedrich Nietzche (1844-1900) applied Kierkegaard's view to atheism.

Born the son of a Lutheran pastor in Röcken, Saxony, Friedrich Nietzsche was raised by female relatives after his father's death in 1849. He quickly abandoned his initial pursuit of theology in order to specialize in philology at Bonn and Leipzig, where he studied with Friedrich Ritschl....

Nietzsche sharply criticized the Greek tradition's over-emphasis on reason in his Die Götzendämmerung (Twilight of the Idols) (1889). Reliance on abstract concepts in a quest for absolute truth, he supposed, is merely a symptom of the degenerate personalities of philosophers like Socrates. From this Nietzsche concluded that traditional philosophy and religion are both erroneous and harmful for

> human life; they enervate and degrade our native capacity for achievement.
>
> Progress beyond the stultifying influence of philosophy, then, requires a thorough "revaluation of values." In Zur Geneologie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals) (1887) Nietzsche bitterly decried the slave morality enforced by social sanctions and religious guilt. Only rare, superior individuals—the noble ones, or *Übermenschen*—can rise above all moral distinctions to achieve a heroic life of truly human worth (*A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names*).

Two other men of importance to the spread of theological existentialism and contemporary with each other are Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich. Most of their work was done in the first half of the 20th Century.

> Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884-1976) was born on August 20th in Wiefelstede, in (what was then known as) the grand duchy of Oldenburg. His father, Arthur Bultmann, was an Evangelical-Lutheran pastor, his paternal grandfather a missionary to Africa, and his maternal grandfather a pastor of the pietistic tradition....
>
> Perhaps Bultmann's most important use of his existentialist methodology is in his interpretation of scripture. Indeed, Bultmann was at least as important a New Testament scholar as a theologian (Amongst other accomplishments, he invented Form Criticism, a method that notices that certain classes of pericopes in the synoptic gospels such as healing stories and exorcism stories often have a formulaic structure. These structures would indicate liturgical use in the church and thus imply a composition date much later than the death of Jesus). To understand what Bultmann meant by an existentialist interpretation of scripture, it is helpful first to see why he thought it was necessary. After all, why not just use the objectifying modes of thinking so successful in the natural sciences? Bultmann's answer is that the approach of the natural sciences is inappropriate to hermeneutics because a person's relation to history, and thus to texts of our history like scripture, is wholly different from her relationship to nature. For Bultmann, humans are right to differentiate themselves from nature and perceive it as truly other. But the case with history is different—humans cannot separate themselves from their historical existence. Unlike the natural scientist, the person engaged in historical studies is considering a living complex of events in which she is essentially involved. Therefore, the history complex cannot be observed "objectively" in the sense used in the natural sciences, for every word spoken about history is at the same time said about the person speaking. (McLaughlin and Smid).
>
> Paul Tillich [1886-1965] is highly regarded as a mediate theologian who stands at the boundary between liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, idealism and realism, Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. His

> indebtedness to the Romantic movement in the 19th century makes his theology adequately identified as a philosophical theology. For Tillich, theology is designated to satisfy the church's demand; namely, to make "the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation" (*Systematic Theology* 1, 1951, p.3; hereafter *ST*). To this end, Tillich makes use of the Christian message, obtained from the Word of God, to answer philosophical questions that raised out of the cultural realm. Simply, this is the so-called "correlation" methodology rendered for constructing Tillich's Christian systematic theology. Tillich's "correlation" method has been labeled as one of his major contributions to modern theologians (Wu).

The men previously studied do not cover all the important voices in their specific disciplines, but they are highly representative of those who greatly influenced much of Western thought in philosophy and theology.

These philosophies and theologies were fed in a practical way into our American educational system—public and private. In the secular educational systems of the world, the philosophers operated to alter the thinking in all of the sciences. Through the far-reaching influence of great divinity schools and seminaries, the liberal theologians restructured religion.

While over the last 150 years there have been many persons involved in spreading such thinking, as previously noted, it was John Dewey (1859-1952) more than any other person who accomplished getting these pernicious doctrines into higher education and thereby into main the stream American life.

> John Dewey, a major figure in American intellectual history, is considered to be one of the few Americans of the twentieth century who "...can be acknowledged on a world scale as a spokesman for mankind" (Dykhuizen, 1973, p. xv).
>
> Dewey's areas of work included philosophy, psychology, education, politics, and social thought. At an event in celebration of his 90th birthday, in 1949, Dewey described his life goal as the quest to obtain "a moderately clear and distinct idea of what the problems are that underlie the difficulties and evils which we experience in fact; that is to say, in practical life." This concern with the practical, socially responsible life is a key element of the philosophical concept of pragmatism, which Dewey explicated in many of his writings. Dewey is also considered to be a preeminent voice in American educational philosophy, with emphasis on what is generally called "progressive education."

> Dewey was just beginning his work in the 1890s, but his lifetime of intellectual accomplishments (40 books and over 700 articles, in addition to countless letters, lectures, and other published works) continue to play an influential role in many fields of knowledge (Ecker).

Dewey was initially Hegelian in thought and approach, but was also greatly influenced by William James, who himself was influenced by Hegel, and is credited with popularizing *pragmatism*.

For around 70 years, primarily through the auspices of Columbia University, John Dewey and his fellow workers (whom he taught and trained) indoctrinated their students. These students in turn became the teachers and administrators in the departments of education in the state universities. Then, they influenced the local school teachers of the public schools in every state in the Union. In time Dewey's pragmatism and socialism came to dominate the American educational system. Today, Dewey's views in their various and extended forms along with many others of like persuasion continue to govern and permeate the educational philosophy and methodology of the educational system in the United States (Reese 163-164, 282-283, 211-215, 453, 128-129).

THE LIBERALS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CHURCH

The attitude and goals of the liberals in the church at present are no different from the liberals of a century ago, which finally evolved into the Christian Church denomination.

Earl West gives the causes for division in the church during the late nineteenth century. They are: (1) "The growing use of instrumental music." Of the differences on this topic West wrote:

> There were two attitudes toward the organ. One insisted that its use was a matter of expediency; the other insisted that it was a human innovation into a divine worship and, therefore, sinful. Between these two positions it was evident that there was no compromising or midway point, a fact that has always permanently stood in the way of reunion between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church. Here, then, was the point of departure; the parting of the ways, the instrument giving the impetus to a division which neither the war, slavery, the Ferguson Fiasco, nor even the missionary society had done (*Search* 234).

(2) "The trend toward denominationalism." Regarding this view West pointed out:

> After the Civil War, a trend set in among many brethren to reduce the church to the status of another denomination. Some openly defended using the word denomination with reference to the churches of Christ. That there were Christians in all denominations now began to be openly advocated. The term, Disciples of Christ, was now elevated to the dignity of a denominational appellation, and the Disciples of Christ denomination, with its "reverends" and "pastors," a royal sect among sects, was now a reality. Some openly declared that a return to the New Testament Church was not desirable if it were practical, as did W. T. Moore, when he spoke before an Indiana Convention in Rushville. W. B. F. Treat openly laid the charge at the door of Isaac Erret of having as his supreme desire the making of the churches of Christ another denomination among denominations.
>
> Symptomatic of this trend was the attitude toward the "pious unimmersed," and the growing practice of union meetings with the denominations (*Search* 240).

(3) "The silence of the Scriptures." West quoted David Lipscomb's comments on this topic:

> We do not think anyone has ever claimed authority from the Scriptures to use the organ in worship. They only claim it is not condemned. It is used as an assister of the worship. Its service is part of the worship and very frequently a substitute for a portion of the worship. Our worship to God is regulated by the laws of God. We have no knowledge of what is well-pleasing to God, in worship, save as God has revealed it to us. The New Testament is at once the rule and limit of our faith and worship to God.
>
> This is the distinctive difference between us and other religious bodies. Others accept the New Testament as their rule of faith, but do not make it the limit of their faith. They add other things as articles of faith and acts of worship than those contained in the Bible. We seek for things authorized, they for things not prohibited. Our rule is safe—theirs is loose and latitudinarian. Ours confines us to God's appointments. Theirs opens the worship and service of God to whatever will please men. Our rule limits man's worship to the exercises approved of in the Bible (*Search* 241).

As far as the colleges operated by the brethren at the time were concerned, Earl West recorded the following:

> As L. F. Bittle pointed out as early as 1873 in his letters to Jacob Creath, it had rather been the tendency of colleges to fall in line behind the popular sides of issues in the brotherhood. Colleges, as a general rule, will as a matter of policy pursue for a time a midway "safe" course until it is known which side will be the most popular, and then will jump with full force on that side.... The reason is clear: colleges

> must have money to operate and if they get too unpopular, they will not have enough funds to run (*Search* 461).

The Gospel preacher Benjamin Franklin commented on the state of affairs in the colleges of his day. In 1875 he wrote:

> We did not and could not foresee that colleges could be made a power for evil as well as for good; that all depends upon whose hands they are in; that infidels could be made professors; that worldly-minded men could become professors; that men who are not sound in the faith, have not the love of the truth, cold get control of colleges, and that they could be turned upon the Bible, and made engines to batter down the very thing they were intended to build up; that they could be turned against the very truth they were built up to maintain;.... We did not foresee, and could not, that men could get control of the colleges and vast sums of money, and conceive the idea that it is sectarian to be under the control of Christians and teach the Bible in those colleges; that a College of the Bible could be perverted from its purpose and turned away from it genuine friends... we must open our eyes and see what has been done and what is being done (qtd. in West, *Franklin* 296).

The details are many and the list long that covers the forty or so years wherein liberalism penetrated and wrought its havoc in the church of the nineteenth century. For the most part the previously mentioned material provided the catalysts for the digression that came forth into its own as the Christian Church denomination.

The attitude of those who stayed with the pure unadulterated Gospel of Christ toward their digressive brethren is well represented in the following comments from Texan T. R. Burnett. He wrote in his paper, *Burnett's Budget*:

> This budget becomes more and more convinced every day that it will become necessary to establish churches of the apostolic order in every town in the state where the so-called "Christian Church" now holds sway. The lawless determination of the society and organ people to rule or ruin every church with which they have connection, and either put in the unscriptural things or put out the brethren who oppose them, makes this plainly evident. The loyal brethren need not waste any valuable time waiting for a reformation, for there is none in prospect. Ephraim is joined to his idols, and he would rather have his society and music idol than any kind of Christian union known to the Bible. Brethren, proceed to re-establish the ancient order of things, just as if there was never a church of Christ in your town. Gather all the brethren together who love Bible order better than modern fads and foolishness, and start the work and worship of the church in the old apostolic way...It is better to have one dozen true disciples in a cheap

> house, than a thousand apostate pretenders in a palace who love modern innovations better than Bible truth (qtd. in West, *Search* 437).

LIBERALISM AND THE LORD'S CHURCH TODAY

We now want to turn our attention to the general history of liberalism as it has come down to the present-day church of Christ. Please notice that liberalism always presents itself as fresh, new, relevant, up-to-date, and modern. It purports to breathe fresh and invigorating oxygen into those who have been hindered and stifled by old, tired, and out-dated traditions. However, the truth about liberalism we have already seen—it came and comes from Satan, and it contradicts or in some way or another alters God's Word in that it allows liberties to people that God does not allow them. Thus, liberalism, regardless of how it presents itself, is nothing more or less than a reversion to rebellion against God—a rebellion that is as old as Satan's own rebellion against Him.

WARNINGS ABOUT LIBERALISM FROM FORTY YEARS AGO

In commending Ira Y. Rice, Jr.'s, first volume of *Axe on the Root*, the late Guy N. Woods wrote to Rice on November 3, 1966. In his letter he revealed how disturbed he was at the inroads liberalism was making in the church of Christ. In part Woods wrote:

> I have been warning of the things of which you write for quite some time, in pulpit and press, and on open forums, and only lately have the brethren generally become alerted to the threat of the pseudo-intellectuals among us. If our brethren do not speedily get back to the principles of the Restoration era, we are destined, IN OUR DAY, to experience the most massive split the churches of Christ have known (Rice 79-80).

Later in commending Rice's book at the Freed-Hardeman College Lectures (probably the 1967 lectures—DPB) during the Open Forum that Woods conducted, he said concerning Rice:

> He is saying things there [in *Axe on the Root*—DPB] that ought to be said; and that everybody *ought* to know about. And if we don't recognize it and do something about it, the cause we love and the Lord's work, as we know it, will not exist in the next generation... (80).

Some four years later the late Thomas B. Warren in his Introduction to the 1970 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book, *The Church*

Faces Liberalism, made clear his great and grave concern for the Lord's church regarding liberalism. Warren wrote:

> During most of the fifties and the early sixties, God's people were involved in controversy: (1) as to whether the Scriptures authorized one church to assist another church in the preaching of the gospel, and (2) as to whether a church has the right to render benevolent assistance to non-Christians. The negative position relative to such issues has been referred to as "anti-ism"...
>
> However, since it seems that an erroneous extreme will usually beget another erroneous extreme, it is not surprising that, as a reaction to "anti-ism" (extreme, erroneous "conservatism"), there should arise those who espouse erroneous views at the opposite end of the pole from "anti-ism." Such an opposite error has arisen, and we rightly refer to such error as "liberalism." Under the influence of various materialistic, naturalistic, and hedonistic philosophies, men in many parts of the world are rejecting the view that God exists, that the Bible is his inspired and authoritative revelation to man, and that Jesus Christ is his Son.
>
> Along with the rejection of these views goes the rejection of such basic Christian propositions as: truth is objective and absolute, man can attain to at least some religious knowledge.
>
> The existence of such liberalistic views is disturbing even when such views are held only by those out of the church. It is much more disturbing when some of these views are espoused and propagated by some who at least profess to be followers of Christ. While I personally do not know of any members of the church who reject belief in the existence of God, there are some in the church who are holding views which definitely are in conflict with plain Bible teaching. For example, some hold the view that denominationalists should be recognized as Christians and preachers of the gospel of Christ. Some hold to the view that truth is relative and subjective, *not* absolute and objective. Others hold that even though truth is absolute, man cannot learn it. These and other anti-Biblical views are currently being espoused and propagated.
>
> Contrary to such contention as just noted, the Bible *is* the criterion of loyalty to Christ. It is *not* the criterion of loyalty to a mere *party*. The fact that men hold differing views as to what the Bible teaches does not detract at all from the fact that testing one's attitudes, beliefs and practices by the light of Bible teaching is the *only* way one can *know* he is loyal to Christ.
>
> The fact that men do differ as to what the Bible teaches does not alter the fact that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, complete, and final revelation of God to man, that the Bible does not contradict itself, and

> that one *must* obey Bible teaching in order to be saved (Warren "Introduction").

From the liberal camp, and very happy to make the following report of the influence of liberalism in the church of Christ, W. Carl Ketcherside, without realizing it, helped corroborate the warnings of Woods and Warren regarding the inroads of liberalism in the church. In 1969 Ketcherside wrote:

> A front-rank man in the Bible department at Abilene Christian College recently said that if the instrument was being introduced now, the brethren who oppose it would look at it a long time before they would divide over it. This is a clear-cut admission that the division has cultural overtones and it is now time for the Bible department at Abilene to take a second look at its role in condoning and continuing a division which was sinful in the first place.
>
> A ranking professor at another college told one of his good friends, who is also a good friend of mine (but secretly for fear of the Jews), "Carl is right about fellowship and has been all along, and if he had come up in the right group, he would be headlining every lectureship program in the brotherhood." In the face of such an admission I'm not sure it is much of an honor to speak at a lectureship, and I am very grateful to God that I did not "come up in the right group" (166).

During the 1970 Pepperdine University Lectures (of all places) the late Glenn L. Wallace (the brother of the late G. K. Wallace) delivered a sermon titled: "The New Face Of The Church." Later Wallace published his sermon in tract form. In that sermon he warned of the growth of liberalism in the Lord's church. As proof of liberalism's inroads into the church via the schools of higher education operated by some of the brethren, Wallace quoted from two speakers in the 1966 Abilene Christian College Lectures. The first was a quote is from Don H. McGaughey and the second was from Ray F. Chester. Wallace wrote: "'We must not lapse again into the error of putting the Bible ahead of Christ.' (A.C. Lectures, 1966, page 16) Another shouted: 'Our religion is not a religion of the book.' (A.C. Lectures, 1966, page 14)" (qtd. in Wallace 3). This sounds as if Ketcherside was on target as to the sentiments of some at that time that were connected with the old Abilene Christian College.

Wallace also quoted from a January 1967 article by Leroy Garrett (the long time protégé of Ketcherside) in his paper, *Restoration Review*. Garrett was reporting on a meeting of the now long defunct Campus Evangelism organization (that later resurfaced in a new form known as

"Crossroadism" that eventually evolved into "The Boston Church," and finally into "The International Church of Christ"). Garrett wrote:

> More than 300 church of Christ young people were there and my immediate impression was that I was beholding the *New Face Of The Church of Christ*. The old church of Christ orthodoxy is dying—a new brotherhood is emerging. The daring young princes among us have crossed their Rubicon—they have set their face toward Antioch rather than Jerusalem (qtd in Wallace 2).

Ketcherside, Garrett, and the speakers at the Abilene Christian College lectures quoted by Glenn Wallace helped corroborate the warnings of Rice, Woods, and Warren.

Remember, Wood's comments preceded Wallace's and Warren's by about 4 years, and the first volume of *Axe on the Root* appeared in 1966. Thus, it has been about forty years at this writing since the first major efforts were begun in an attempt to warn brethren of the inroads liberals were making in the church, and, yes, those liberal efforts were primarily coming from certain ones in the colleges operated by the brethren. The rank liberals of forty years ago knew exactly what they were doing and recognized their accomplishments among the college students of that day—they knew where they were heading and how to get there. However, many members of the Lord's church were blind to what was happening and attacked any criticism of the colleges operated by certain brethren. However, as we have seen, there were men who did see what was happening. As voices in the wilderness of willful ignorance most of their warnings fell on deaf ears—so it is to this very hour. For those who lived through this part of the history of the Lord's church, Woods, Wallace, and Warren's words are almost prophetic concerning the terrible destruction liberalism has wrought in the Lord's church from the time these men gave their warning to the present.

The generation of forty years ago does not control the church today. Those *young princes* of whom Leroy Garrett wrote in the late 1960s are the elders, deacons, Bible school teachers, and preachers in the church. They also comprise the faculty members, administration, and boards of the universities operated by members of the church. They have no qualms in fellowshipping the denominations and propagating the error that the church of Christ is a denomination, or worse.

Church after church continues to succumb to the siren call of loose living that liberalism offers, and the universities operated by the brethren are either under the complete control of the liberals or they are

headed that way. If the situation regarding liberalism in the church was bad when Rice, Woods, Wallace, and Warren wrote, warning the brethren of liberalism forty years ago—and it was, then it is ten times worse today. Therefore, we have the need for our present study.

Because error is so rampant and diverse in today's church, one would necessarily be forced to develop this study into a rather large book rather than the chapter it comprises. However we shall briefly note some of the significant changes subjectivism and the "better felt than told" mentality has done to the church of Christ.

We will attempt to explain the New Hermeneutic in common ordinary words and not the theological jargon belched out by the scholastic dead-heads produced by the seminaries and divinity schools. The New Hermeneutic does not approach the study of the Scriptures through rules of interpretation. It exists as a result of men believing that truth is relative and subjective. It is more of a *catch-term* to be used in opposition to the true principles of hermeneutics that include: direct statements, example, and implication as well as the other principles of Bible interpretation as found in such books as Dungan's *Hermeneutics*. Actually, the only rule in the New Hermeneutic is that each person should be free to interpret the Bible according to his/her own insights. This view sounds good on the surface, because we all should be free to study the Bible for ourselves. However, what is meant by being free to **interpret** the Bible for one's self is basically the application of the old erroneous denominational view that teaches it does not make any difference what one believes as long as one is sincere in the belief of it. That view has been taken and applied to the study of the Bible. It comes out something like this: "It does not make any difference what you think the Bible teaches, just so you sincerely believe the Bible teaches it." This subjectivism is the direct consequence of denying the absolute objective nature of truth in general and Gospel Truth in particular.

According to this false doctrine, the Bible is some sort of "love letter." As Leroy Garrett wrote of the Bible's authority:

> We cannot equate the authority of the Bible with the authority of God as we can the authority of Christ and God, for the Bible is an earthen vessel. God is perfect, infallible, and infinite. The Bible as a human product is no.... If the Bible was brought to us by an angel directly from heaven, having been dictated word-for-word by God himself, so that its contents would be nothing less and nothing more than the actual words of God, then we could equate the authority of the Bible

> and the authority of God. But the Bible is clearly not that kind of book (43).

To these people, all the Bible does is make known to mankind that God loves the human race—that one is a sinner in some way or another and, therefore, separated from God. But, Christ loved you as a sinner and died for you. Therefore, if you will mentally affirm that you understand the previously mentioned matters and acknowledge to God your need of salvation, Christ will save you. That is the "Core Gospel." Once a person does as previously described, his *ticket to heaven is punched* and the grace of God will take you to glory. Furthermore, this "Core Gospel" is the basis for fellowship. Thus, since about any denominationalist believes what was just described as the "Core Gospel," we may fellowship anyone who calls Christ his Savior and God his Father.

To such people, speaking of the Bible as an absolute objective standard of Truth is absurd. To declare that it must be approached and interpreted accordingly is to be legalistic and judgmental; it is nothing more or less than one seeking to merit heaven. Thus, one is a *legalist*, "a commandment keeper," who does not trust in God's grace to save him/her; it is sectarian in spirit—that is, unloving, unkind, and mean spirited—to label others and be harsh in his labeling of them. **Does anyone not see the inconsistencies and hypocrisy in the mindset that would think and say the things about their brethren as noted in the previous sentence**?

The New Testament is not a divine pattern or blue-print. With this attitude towards the Bible in gear and at full throttle, anything goes. From this *highly enlightened perspective*, mechanical instrumental music in worship, humming, sounding like a mechanical instrument of music with one's voice, whistling, clapping, about any kind of racket, and so on, is not a problem. Praise teams (mini choirs) are brought in, and the worship becomes a three ring circus. The Lord's Supper may be taken at any time—weddings, funerals—whenever the urge to do it strikes someone. Baby dedication in the worship period appears. "Contemporary worship" assemblies are in vogue. All of life is worship, and the worship assembly is divided. Entertainment takes the place of worship, and dramatics have replaced the preaching of the Truth of the Gospel. The authority of the elders is challenged. The five steps in God's plan of salvation is mocked and repudiated. The mode, the need, and the reason for baptism, or whether one is baptized or not,

are unimportant. The teaching of the Bible regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage is compromised, and some churches are thereby happy to fellowship fornicators (Mat. 5:32; 19:6, 9). Women are made deaconesses and put into positions in the church where only men are to exercise dominion. Repentance is simply saying you are sorry. Denominationalism is neither here nor there as far as right and wrong is concerned, and we could go on and on citing the different cases of sin being accepted in the church. Additionally, the church of Christ is considered just another denomination—and a poor one at that.

Anything goes as long as one believes in the *core gospel*. Every thing is subjective and emotional. Holiness and spirituality are turned into *nickels, numbers, and noise* to the glory of God. The people sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play—all the time loving to have it so. Thus, we see the new face of the Postmodern church. God looks down from heaven as the faithful wonder at the longsuffering of God. The afore-noted activities are the result of the postmodern doctrine on the church—but what is Postmodernism?

POSTMODERNISM

What has invaded the minds of some members of the church of Christ that they would think as just described? We will attempt to answer the preceding question. In doing so, we must first realize the difference in postmodernism and modernism, and we must know the connection between modern and postmodern theology. Then we must see how the Lord's church has been and is being impacted by these false ideas.

In informing us about such matters, J. E. Choate wrote:

> The best way to attach a handle to *postmodern theology* is to use the common classifications of history over the past 2,000 years. We have in mind the passage of time from the *Ancient* period to the *Middle Ages* and to the *Renaissance*. We move next from the *Modern* to the *Postmodern* period which is our own time. These two time references include and transcend all particular human events which show the flow and inter-connections of the ages in transition. Neither age was necessarily a denial or despair of one age giving way to another.
>
> *Ancient theology:* The development of historical theology dates from the last century to 590 A.D. This general period embraces the apostolic period recorded in the writings of the apostolic fathers through Augustine (4th century).
>
> *Medieval theology:* The medieval period lasted from 590 to 1517 to the beginning of the Reformation. The Renaissance and the Reforma-

tion periods were propelled from the vortex of 1000 years of what is sometimes called the "Dark Ages."

Renaissance and the *Protestant Reformation:* This period set up a transition epoch from the end of the Middle Ages to the beginning of the modern period. The *Renaissance* witnessed the emergence of Protestant theology, the emergence of national states and capitalism, the age of discovery, the scientific revolution, and numerous other monumental events.

Modern theology: The roots of modern theology are traced back to the 18th century Age of Reason, and to Immanuel Kant, who maintained that man could only know God through reason. It is a long way from Thomas Aquinas to Immanuel Kant, and eventually to Rudolf Bultmann who embodied the spirit of neo-orthodoxy. The roots of Modernism are discovered in man's reason which rejects the supernatural and the inspiration of Scripture, and relies solely on the scientific apparatus.

Many varied forms of modern theology have evolved from the "Old Modernism" which dominated the theological scene in 1900. The old modernism was a syncretism of the late 19th century documentary hypothesis of the Mosaic law, form and source criticism of the New Testament, and which embraced the evolutionary hypothesis. This syncretism took the shape of the Social Gospel which dominated the modern theological scene until the horrors of World War I.

This brings us to 1919 to the birth of *neo-orthodoxy* (also called dialectical theology) where "God talk" and man's theological "human talk" sought common ground for the "divine-I-thou encounter" with God. Bultmann said Scripture is encrusted with millenniums of myth and folk stories. Tillich reduced God to a philosophical "ultimate ground of being."

Terminology of Postmodernism as Distinguished from Modernism

Postmodern theology: This movement has not discarded the baggage of modern theology identified in the minds of most students with the theological systems of Barth et al. Their influence as leading spokesman of neoorthodoxy was buried under the avalanche of the charismatics and "death of God" theologians in the 1960s and 1970s.

Our liberal brethren are now introducing theological expressions into churches of Christ as if they were their own brain children. Nowhere is this more evident than in college lectureships and the Christian Scholars Conference. These new terms, their meaning, and uses are hidden deeply in the dark recesses of postmodern theology. It is imperative that we understand their sources and meanings in order to learn what liberal brethren are not inclined to tell us.

Paradigms and parameters: Two of the words most often bandied back and forth are *paradigm* and *parameter*. Thomas Kuhn (1970)

introduced the word *paradigm* into the scientific community. A paradigm is a working model of something. A parameter is an unstable circumference around something which keeps shifting.

Kuhn used the working models (paradigms) of Ptolemaic astronomy and Copernican astronomy to show the shifts which take place with the discovery of new knowledge. Each of these paradigms worked as well as the other because each showed the fixed positions of the heavenly bodies to the earth. The first was just a model. The second model showed how the universe actually works. The Copernican model, in turn, gave way to Newtonian astronomy.

Kuhn meant to show that paradigms shift with the discovery of new knowledge. Kuhn's paradigm (model) concept also found a common acceptance and use in politics, philosophy, theology, and literary criticism. Our liberal brethren should not think us to be so ill informed that we are groping in the darkness of ignorance on these matters.

They tell us of the urgent need for the old hermeneutic (paradigm) to be replaced by a new hermeneutic (model). They tell us the churches of Christ are now in a paradigm shift moving from an outmoded, obsolete old hermeneutic to a fresh and viable form of a new hermeneutic, but never explained.

Deconstructionism is another new term about which little is known outside the colleges. The old modernism is dying though its strength is not completely spent. Postmodernism poses even greater dangers because the theology repudiates and undermines all notions of coherent and unitary truth in the Bible.

The philosophy of Jacques Derrida is little known outside academic circles, and not favorably there. His philosophy of ideas is known as poststructuralism or deconstructionism. He maintains that the meaning of language is hidden and elusive. Radical postmodernism says nothing can be known for certain and best to steer clear of all ultimate truth claims. Derrida's suspicion of all literary texts, including the Bible, is an affront to man's intelligence.

The two prime examples of the content of postmodern theology are Elizabeth Fiorenzo-Schussler's theology of the women's liberation movement which calls for a complete radical "deconstruction" of what she terms to be the *androcentric*, or male dominance of the biblical message. And the second example of "deconstructionism" is to be found in the work of the Jesus Seminar best represented by the writings of John Dominic Crossan, and especially in his treatment of the life and crucifixion of Jesus.

Summary

The theme of deconstruction as advanced by our brethren is more or less hidden from the uninitiated. Some of their "destructive" tactics come out in their most publicized writings, e. g., *The Second Incarnation*, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, and *Will the Cycle Be Unbroken*,

> authored by Rubel Shelly, Carroll Osburn, and Douglas Foster. We think that our liberal brethren will be given cause to regret that they have opened up on these matters (10-12).

To the Postmodernist there is no objective reality and, therefore, no absolute objective truth. Thus, there is no infallible standard of authority. Truth becomes whatever one desires it to be, and each person's own conception of God is what God is to him or her. Language is incapable of expressing anything so that anyone can truly know the mind of the author—that is, except the Postmodernist author. There is no objective right or wrong. Subjectivism reigns supreme, and absurdity dominates the masses. Thinking is no less or more than one's lusts, appetites, or emotions. Truly, their God is their belly (Rom. 16:18; Phi. 3:19).

AT ALL COSTS WE MUST HOLD TO THE TRUTH

No matter the *ism* troubling the church—our job is to hold to the Truth of God's Word. No matter how many succumb to the enticements or whatever the sin, our task is to hold to the Truth. No matter what names we are called or jobs we must lose because we will not compromise the Truth, or whether family and friends leave us or governments persecute us—our work is to keep on doing good as the Bible defines *good*. The inspired apostle Paul calls on all of us to: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10; Jude 3). "This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong."

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THE ATTITUDE OF LIBERALISM

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PREFACE

During the gathering of material for this essay on the attitude of religious liberalism, **two** facts were discovered which kept imposing themselves on the process. In the first place, trying to identify the mental essence of liberalism (as it affects churches of Christ) is much like trying to describe a million shooting stars hitting the earth all at once. Liberals have no real, objective structure to their thinking patterns and are much like water which can exist as a gas, liquid, or solid depending on the external temperature. Liberals can **appear** as conservative, objective, subjective, intellectual (or non), compassionate and loving (unless questioned), depending on their audiences. In the second place, trying to scale down the huge amount of material on liberalism available in books and websites is much like trying to stop a tsunami! There were 20,384 sites on the internet just covering liberalism and churches of Christ without including the thousands of other sites that indicate the very real relationship between the thought patterns of political **and** religious liberals. Therefore, readers of this chapter will please be forgiving of the author as he struggles to *capture the wind* by exposing the never static attitudes of liberals.

Whether to thank Michael Hatcher for this challenge or not is hard to decide, but certainly he and brethren Brantley, Gallaher, and Stancliff are to be praised for their constancy in standing for the faith and their willingness to host the annual Bellview lectures—especially this year's expose of liberalism and its many, ever-changing faces.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the ambiguity in the elastic attitudes of liberals is illustrated in the following quote:

> We see the church floundering between two equally disastrous paths. On the one hand are those who advocate a rationalistic orthodoxy [i.e. faithful Christians—KM] which arrogantly imposes its own limited scheme upon the Bible and places human restrictions on God. On the other hand are those who are increasingly attracted by a generic Protestant pietism—sprinkled generously with therapeutic terminology—which eagerly caters to the shifting whims of the surrounding society. We have little sympathy with either of these **secularizing** [emphasis mine—KM] options. We plead for a return to our own historic roots in the central message of the Bible (Allen, Hughes, Weed).

The above quote may seem biblical, especially to the untaught, but there is much *liberalese* to be interpreted. Those who are described as "rationalistic" are actually faithful brethren who use the time-honored and polemically-tested approach to biblical interpretation of explication, implication, and example which approach the liberal labels as arrogant. Too, even though the authors, above, were unwilling to opt for pietism (charismatic, noise-oriented worship and emotionalism instead of Christ), they refused to allow the Bible to be a pattern. In fact, they explicitly write just a few sentences after the above quote that unless the churches of Christ "return to God" the Bible must be abandoned. This latter attitude, though somewhat hidden in the *liberalese* of modern times, means that to the liberal **only** the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (the "core" gospel) is of any importance and that any applied hermeneutic by human minds necessarily ignores the power of God. Note the following by these men:

> We have used the term "transcendence" often in this book. By this term we point to the fact that God is infinitely greater than ourselves, that he is the majestic sovereign of the universe upon whom we must depend for life itself, that he works in mysterious ways which defy our shallow understanding, that he is the very standard of holiness in

> whose light our nobelist efforts are meager indeed, and that we finally must acknowledge his will and not our own (3).

All theists (Christians) would exalt God's majesty, but what the authors above mean (in *liberalese*) is that the Bible does say certain things, but God is above the Bible and man cannot restrict God to His Word because man cannot properly interpret that Word since God, in His "mysterious way" transcends that Word. That God "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform" is from a poem and not from the Bible; and that the majesty of God somehow negates the power of the Word of God is a completely false idea. In fact, the psalmist insisted: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: **for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name**" (Psa. 138:2). The liberal's attitude that the Bible is "not enough" and that one must "return" to a transcendent idea about God (or abandon the Bible) is just another way of saying that a liberal wants to do whatever a liberal wants to do.

To facilitate a deeper understanding of this attitude of liberalism, **eleven** basic concepts are set forth in this essay: (The source outline for these concepts comes from Wayne Coats' wonderful book, *Perspectives on the Development of Liberalism*, pages seven through nineteen.) (1) Liberalism borrows from its forefathers and is **not** a new phenomenon. (2) Liberalism believes that it is intellectually superior to conservatives. (3) Liberal theology is ambiguous, subjective, and unstructured. (4) Liberalism's attitude toward pattern theology is that such *legalism* restricts God's power. (5) Liberalism demands unity in diversity. (6) Liberalism, when confronted, hollers that it is misunderstood and immediately attacks the questioner rather than replying to the inquiry. (7) Liberalism has an adaptation mindset. (8) Liberalism has a ritualistic attitude. (9) Liberalism believes that its *theories* are the only truly contemporary and relevant facts. (10) Liberalism is a close kin of modernism. (11) Liberalism defines its own religious terms rather than using biblical ones.

LIBERALISM IS NOT NEW

James Sawyer pointed out that the *father* of modern liberal theology is usually thought to be Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (6). Schleiermacher lived between the time of John Calvin (1500s) and Karl Barth (early 1900s) and was educated in the pietism of the Moravians (i.e., Lutherans). Schleiermacher left Lutheran theology for neology

and then embraced romanticism, which doctrine stresses the **subjective** analysis of the whole of a doctrine rather than logical analysis of all of the parts (6). Thus, Schleiermacher developed a theology that interpreted Christianity in terms of "romantic idealism" (subjectivism) which, he argued, allowed mankind to be **both** Christian and modern (6). Schleiermacher's "god consciousness" or ***gefuhl*** (feeling) is at the very center of the thinking of modern liberalism.

Thus, liberalism as a theological system, has not arisen in a vacuum, nor was "its goal to destroy historic Christianity" (Sawyer 1). Actually Schleiermacher was trying to salvage some kind of Christianity from the leftovers of the Enlightenment (seventeenth century) and its rationalistic views, which views elevated human reason nearly to divine states (2). (Anyone who has studied Immanuel Kant, the enlightenment philosopher, and his *Critique of Pure Reason* knows that Kant decided that **all** knowledge arrived through the external senses and encountered certain innate categories already built into the human mind and that there were **no** categories which could receive data from the spiritual (noumenal) world. Kant was an atheist in that he believed that God could **not** break into history or the **phenomenal** realm.) Schleiermacher's philosophy was thus an attempt to *allow* God into history. There was a radical contemporary with Schleiermacher whose name was G. F. W. Hegel (4). Hegel insisted that what is known is the result of the *outworking* of spirit and mind (5). To Hegel, a *dialectic* was pushing all of cultural and rational (not biological) evolution and always upward as the Absolute Spirit (Hegel's god) acted and imagined through human minds (5). Until World War I shattered Hegel's **upward** theological stance, his philosophy affected **all** of nineteenth century religious thought until Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann came on the historical stage, insisting that the Bible is mythological and that no work, not even faith, can be done to have salvation.[1]

In liberalism's "hall of fame" there also abides Adolf von Harnack and his *History of Dogma* wherein he insists that the New Testament text was corrupted in the very first century and that one can only defend the **Kerygma** of that text—that is, one can probably be sure about the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ but not about much else in Holy Writ (10). Because of Schleiermacher, Hegel, Harnack, and others, Bible believers today are hearing about feelings, evolution, core-gospel, and a myriad of things foreign to God's Word, but not one

of these so-called new ideas is new at all, but are the *grandchildren* of all of those ancient religious philosophers.

LIBERALISM IS ARROGANT

Liberals today are proven to be in a very awkward intellectual bind, for:

> Their ideology clearly has the coloring of a religion but part of that ideology is the renunciation of religion in favor of rationality. For them it is a real Catch-22! Without reflection, liberals of today have adopted the labels of secularism that have been attached to the liberal fallout from classical dialecticism. [See above, on liberal history and compare evolutionists, Marxists, etcetera to the mindset of today's liberal—KM] Liberals really believe that their ideology is scientific ("Liberalism" 5).

Applying the above arrogant secularism's ideology to liberal members of churches of Christ is **not** difficult—if one examines the messages spewing forth from some of *our* contemporary universities and colleges and if one realizes that **every** college started by brethren in the nineteenth century did apostatize (West and Coats 41-238). In fact Christendom since the second century of the modern era has been plagued by the external influences from secular, liberal, non-biblical scholasticism:

> Our modern ideologues still retain the ancient antagonism of leftists against religion. [In churches of Christ such liberals detest Bible mandates—KM]. This is especially true of liberal intellectuals most of whom firmly believe that religion is an albatross carried around only by the unenlightened ("Liberalism" 4).

Worldly liberals are thus secularly oriented and often seek cults and esoteric religions, and liberals in churches of Christ just seek any change. To appear religious, then, a liberal must suppress his personal sense that he is far superior to the conservative, and the liberal must pretend to enjoy religion. Jesus said of such: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mat. 22:29).

It is often surprising to faithful Christians when liberals leave the sign in the front yard that reads "Church of Christ," but liberals, as noted above, must **appear** to be sincere, hide their arrogant intellectualism, and change everything they can from the inside of the church (Miller 47-110). Such change efforts have arisen from the romantic mentality liberal **schools** have produced. Anti-Bible scholasticism desires the position of defining all other's belief systems, **and** such

desire makes its reputation by bad-mouthing what it labels the radical, religious right and by proposing a **truce** with the Bible (Momen 2). Those who seek to define for themselves and others what is good and evil can trace this liberal mindset to the dawn of humanity:

> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).
>
> And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (3:6).

As did Eve, the liberal wants the privilege of deciding for himself what is right and what is wrong and he truly believes that all others are less than capable of making religious and moral decisions. *Our* universities are training such arrogant intellectuals and are voiding those students' abilities to practice comprehensive and logical thought.

LIBERALISM IS UNSTRUCTURED AND AMBIGUOUS

Theological agnosticism is used by scholars to describe the theories of Albrect Ritschl, who saw religion in terms of personal efforts to establish the "Kingdom of God" on earth by **subjective** determination of moral-ethical values (Sawyer 7-8). Rational knowledge of God was out and religion was strictly a phenomenological experience (8). That is, only what one sees for oneself in **this** world (cf. existentialism) or in **verifiable** history should be considered religious. "Knowledge of God as He was in Himself, His essence and attributes fall outside the possibility of human experience so *no positive assertions concerning His nature could be made*" (8). Such assertions as Ritschl's try to divorce faith from reason, but God has said:

> Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa. 1:18).
>
> Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 The. 5:21).

The liberal, then, if he combines from Ritschl, Barth, Harnack, and others, decides that the existence of God cannot be rationally demonstrated, but since man appears to need Him, such is *proof* of His existence (Stuckenberg 276). A liberal can say that the God of the Christian might be Christ, or the Christian might believe in some other kind of God (Jewish, Hindu, Stoic, Deistic, etc.), but no **objective**

biblical truth can be communicated (Sawyer 8). The most that can be said about God by the agnostic liberal is that, since Jesus did exist in history, there is the **impression** that God was present and active before the Christ came to earth (Brown 257).

LIBERALS VIEW THE BIBLE AS RESTRICTIVE

One liberal has written:

> Accepting our status as finite, time-bound mortals, we must also accept the finite and therefore revisable status of our theological pronouncements. Theology, in fact, might be defined as human interpretation of divine revelation. God has revealed himself in history and in Scripture, but our interpretation of that revelation takes place within time, under the conditions of creaturely finitude. For all his protests against theology and theologians, Alexander Campbell himself wrote theology—a great deal of it in fact. He even wrote a book entitled *The Christian System* (1835), where he tried to lay out in a somewhat systematic way his interpretation of the Christian faith. But it was partly (maybe even mostly) the Christian system and partly the Campbell system. (How much of one or the other depends to a considerable degree upon how one views the tradition which Mr. Campbell did so much to inaugurate.) Such an awareness teaches us that, while we acknowledge God's great claims upon us, we make modest claims for our theology. It teaches us that we must continue our efforts with humility, prayer, and the encouragement of others who also attempt to live out the Christian commitment. We can continue our quest with vigor and excitement, welcoming new and deeper insights and revising older, settled ones in the process, because we know that it is not finally our theology that saves us but the gracious work of God proclaimed in the gospel (Allen 12-13).

A careful reading of the above quote will lead to the conclusion that the author thought that truth was unattainable by humans (cf. existentialism) and that all pronouncements by finite humans must ever be revisable. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The liberal says that humans can never know truth and that claims to know are legalistic and restrictive and indicative of something other than intellectual honesty (Osburn 10-12). Thus, those who hold that the Bible is the only pattern for the church and life are legalistic, radical, untaught, and unloving (Shelly).

LIBERALISM DEMANDS UNITY IN DIVERSITY

One has written, "All doctrinal differences that fall short of destroying biblical faith are covered by faith" (Pierard 33). The foregoing author did not define what the "doctrinal differences" might be,

but his articles were intended to *prove* that unity exists even when beliefs differ (32). This *unity in diversity* idea is offered to the world as a way to accept all denominational persons who have been immersed no matter what those folks understood at the time of their baptism. Note the following:

> Similarly, when one is taught to fulfill righteousness (obey the Lord) in immersion as a response of penitent faith in Christ, the erroneous concept that remission has already been received does not nullify the baptism. It is obedience to truth that saves (1 Pet. 1:22), not obedience to error (Allen 169).

The above author has evidently forgotten that one must obey truth "from the heart," that is one must understand the biblical reason for baptism (remission of sins), or the baptism is of no effect (Rom. 6:16-18; cf. Acts 2:38-41).

Some brethren are teaching that God's grace is granted "in my imperfections"; so all with such faults are still in fellowship: "If God grants me grace in my imperfections, he must also grant others grace in theirs" (Woodruff 19). Note carefully that Woodruff is pushing what he considers the foundational argument for unity in diversity. However, such a base as *grace only* is extremely weak for one is to be saved **from** one's sins not **in** them (Mat. 1:21; 1 John 3:4). One's *imperfections* (not defined by Woodruff) hardly qualify as sins if said imperfections are not transgressions of God's law (1 John 3:4; 5:16ff; Jam. 4:17). For example, one not a good singer, or one who is lame, or one who is a slow thinker has *imperfections*, but such cannot be said of sinners for they must obey from the heart (Rom. 6:16-18). If one's imperfections are that that one has not correctly obeyed God, then that one is not covered by God's grace and has no unity with true Christians (2 John 9-11).[2]

From a purely human standpoint, then, liberals try to *love* everybody and to tolerate all error except what is taught about Jesus' Deity. The one thing that does irritate a liberal is the truth that he is espousing error and loosing biblical commands from God.

LIBERALS WILL ATTACK

Anyone who has dealt with one having a liberal mindset is well aware of the vitriolic nature of such individuals whenever their doctrine is questioned. Seemingly, the psychological impetus for ad hominem argumentation by liberals is that they, having ensconced themselves on the throne of religious authority, are quite incensed when any other

person questions their reasoning. One brother, when questioned in a letter, about his teaching that faith has its source in "philosophy and higher education" wrote back that the sender of the letter was "narrow-minded, bigoted, and unproductive in the salvation of the lost" (Shelly). The questions that were asked in the letter were never answered; only an attack on the one asking was ever done. These attacks seem out of the ordinary when one considers that, since the 1960s, liberals have "held love as the sufficient norm of ethical behavior" (Pierard 5).

LIBERALISM AND ADAPTATION

Liberalism (and its near cousin modernism), which shift in theological thinking occurred in the late nineteenth century, is increasingly chameleon-like in its approach. The major approach of a liberal is to "adapt religious ideas to modern culture and modes of thinking" (Pierard 1). This adaptation process results in the rejection of religious faith, based solely on Bible authority. (Yet, John 12:48 is still in their Bibles.) The modern liberal views the Bible as the "work of writers who were limited by their times; it is neither supernatural nor an infallible record of divine revelation and thus does not possess absolute authority" (1).

The central theme of liberalism today is **divine immanence**. This latter phrase is the new age way of teaching the ancient belief of **pantheism**. God is not above the world according to the new philosophy, but is the world's soul and its life, and thus "God is found in the whole of life not just in the Bible or any revelatory events" (1). The liberal further adds, "Because he [God] is present and works in all that happens, there can be no distinction between the natural and supernatural" (1). Those who have seen the movie, *Star Wars*, will be reminded that the natural-supernatural "Force" was with the hero. However, the Bible teaches:

> 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).

Modern liberals also view sin as merely imperfection, ignorance, or immaturity which imperfections can be overcome, not by One on the cross, but by education and persuasion (Pierard 2). As man progresses, he will one day reach redemption. That is, through a process of evolution man will gradually transform from a primitive state to becoming

obedient sons of God on earth. Jesus set the example to follow in this natural realm, and so religious psychology and the social gospel will achieve the kingdom of God here on earth (cf. John 18:36). To the liberal, God can only be encountered by experience.

LIBERALISM IS RITUALISTIC

Modern liberalism has attempted to *kill God* and replace Christianity with ego-centered humanism (Wilber 2). Ancient biblical truths are considered to be pre-rational myth, and any conversations with liberals about Holy Writ become huge waste of time because to the liberal the Bible is unscientific. Those who would "transform the world" by having all embrace the God of the Bible are, by liberal definition, on a *witch hunt* (2).

The liberals trained in modernism and now living among churches of Christ find it appalling that one would try to convert a denominational person, for example, for only a few core Scriptures apply, and any others are to be dispensed and never taken literally. A Christian should go to worship and then leave the rest of the world alone or, better, adapt to the present world view. The liberal's attitude at this point is ritualistic, for one is to experience God through ritual not through revelation. However, God takes a dim view of those who do what is right in their own eyes and reject what God wants (Jud. 21:25).

LIBERALS BELIEVE THEIR THEORIES ARE FACTS

Psychologists label the thought processes of the conservative as convergent, but the tag put on the liberal's intellectual efforts is divergent (Momen 11). Convergent thinking is deductive (objective analysis) and focuses on all the facts to draw a conclusion warranted by the evidence. Divergent thinking, however, prizes intuition and aims to include all probabilities rather than arriving at sure conclusions. The apostle Paul described such as "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

The amazing thing about liberals is that they believe that their intuitions are facts! It is the case that artists and social scientists predominate among divergent thinkers. In the church such thinking is unbiblical, for it presupposes that absolute truth is unattainable. The liberal stereotype that conservatives are legalistic and opposed to science has its source in the radical thinking (especially Niebuhr) that only liberals are true thinkers (Momen 1). Coats has written that:

> It is heart breaking to see many of our young brethren deceived by liberal philosophy. They call it "Contemporary." The false teaching has an appeal to young minds when men use smooth words and fair speeches. What a tragic waste when brothers become imbued with the heretical ideas propounded when brethren sit at the feet of modernist professors long enough to learn how to copy them, then infiltrate "our" schools with such borrowed infidelity. I do not know why the liberal professors try to impress people with their ability, when it is nothing more than the ability to repeat what infidels have offered (16).

The answer as to why *our* liberals borrow from infidels seems to be that divergent thinkers actually believe that their **theories** are **facts** (cf. evolutionary thinkers). Conservatives view the Bible as absolute and unchanging truth, whereas liberals view Holy Writ as a mere guide to their own experiences and view the lives of other professed *Christians* as all right—even though those others are actually described in the Bible as infidels. To the liberal the meaning of *truth* changes as the circumstances of individuals and society changes (Momen 2).

LIBERALISM'S *COUSIN* IS MODERNISM

A liberal *Christian* is not, by definition, a **secular** humanist ("Choice" 1). "The outright humanist has a contempt for the liberal" because to the liberal "there are two groups of people in the world, the 'tolerant' and 'enlightened' versus the intolerant and unenlightened to the 'true' meaning of life and tolerance" (1). On the other hand, a liberal is a kind of humanist who has not rejected the spiritual realities in life, and, at the same time, a liberal **is** a kind of gnostic modernist.

The liberal's drift from biblical Christianity can be traced to the faulty thinking of the nineteenth century enlightenment and higher criticism or destructive approaches to biblical interpretation. The result is that the modern liberal is a kind of gnostic who seeks higher spiritual experiences and who rejects the Bible's parameters.[3] This latter day gnostic has no literal Bible, and denominational liberals even deny the literalness of God's Son's dying for literal sins ("Choice" 2). One has written:

> Clearly as a "Christian" you get liberalized by rejecting the historical Biblical Christian faith, but if you are in a denomination which has done this already, that is, rejected the historical Christian faith, you probably do not know it even if you are a Pastor. You just accept the denominational tradition and your spiritual experiences and assume yours are the same as everyone else's and that everyone's experiences in the denomination are Biblically valid even if you or your denomina-

> tion do not even believe that the Bible with its literal New Covenant by simple faith in atoning death of Christ and his resurrection is literally true. You may have a warm "spiritual experience" of "tolerance," as a liberal, but it is not of the God of the Bible in His moral truth and purity and holiness nor of the Christ of the Bible. And as a liberal you are not a fallen sinner who needs repentance and redemption nor do you seek the Jesus of the Bible but usually a "higher" Jesus who preaches a "higher consciousness" of "absolute tolerance" as you yourself have. This is all baloney. It is all New Age, and modern Gnosticism, but one cannot see it for two reasons. One, you cannot be wrong if you truly are like a liberal, or of the liberal enlightened few, and two, you cannot be wrong if you have all the denominational trappings, Right? In fact let us recall, this was what the entire debate was about, namely, "who shall win" control of the Protestant Christian official denominational authority. A liberal's overt point was that the baton of history is being passed *in the church* from traditional Bible believing Christians to liberal Christians of the new (non-fundamental) "Christianity" based on higher spiritual experiences and tolerance, and of course once you have these new "higher experiences" of pure "tolerance," you are *now a real* Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian, and the Bible of Abraham, Moses, Peter, and Paul is seen as mostly mythology for primitive people who do not have modern learning and higher spiritual experiences like you have, etc. Liberalism sounds so good initially as a substitute for Biblical Christianity, but it is almost total nonsense (quite literally) but it masquerades as "higher" spiritual knowledge and as "better" rational or scientific knowledge and as supposedly true Christianity, and following that time in the early 20th century, Liberalism pretty much came to dominate or control every major Christian Protestant denomination (as well as university), but in truth it is really a form of humanism, but not a *secular* humanism but what is called a new age (Eastern) Humanism or Cosmic Humanism or Cosmic Humanism of the nondescript spiritual forces of good and evil, light and dark, and "enlightenment" and so forth and so on ("Choice" 3).

There are a number of unbiblical statements in the above quote, but the sentiment is correct. The above author was attacking Henry Emerson Fosdick's enlightened, gnostic humanistic *Christianity*, but at the same time showed what modern liberalism has accomplished in Protestantism—it has destroyed it!

LIBERALISM HAS ITS OWN VOCABULARY

In working through the terminal degree at the Harding Graduate School of Religion, located in Memphis, Tennessee, this author was able to discern an entirely new vocabulary employed by liberals. For example, *inspiration* does **not** mean to the liberal that the writers of the

Bible received their messages in verbal form from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-16), but that the writers were impelled to write as a musician might be in being *inspired* to pen a symphony. One professor said that the biblical writers just had a better **intuition** about spiritual things than most others. When that professor was pressed as to why the Bible writers said that God spoke to them (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2), the answer came that those ancient penman had **accommodated** their writings to the ideas of their day because to say that "God spoke" gave the messages more authority! (In other words, that professor was saying that the writers **lied**. When pressed as to how lies could be considered "God's Word," that teacher said that God always used fallible things to get His points over and that even an error-filled Bible was useful!)

Another term used by liberals is *unchurched*. However, the term does not mean to the liberal that the *unchurched* person is not a member of the Lord's church, but that that one is just not attending anywhere. To the liberal, converting someone from denominationalism is to be considered as sheep stealing since there are "Christians in all those groups" (Miller 331).

Liberals couch their messages in such ways that their *fair speeches* deceive (Rom. 16:18). One of their favorite terms is **kerygma** (core) which means that only the death, burial, and resurrection are essential matters in terms of fellowship and that all other doctrinal matters are non-essential even though the Bible record is full of such doctrines.

Absolute is never, according to liberal thinking, to be attached to truth, and the liberal is absolutely sure that one cannot know absolute truth.

CONCLUSION

Eleven attitudes of liberalism have been discussed, albeit briefly, in this chapter. Liberalism is an adopted view, intellectually arrogant, and unstructured in doctrine and approach. Liberalism views the Bible as restrictive, and demands unity in diversity. Too, the liberal will personally attack those who disagree rather than discuss doctrine, for he has no doctrine. Liberals believe they should adapt as culture changes, practice ritualism, and hold to the view that their theories are actually facts. Liberalism is not secular humanism, but is rather a kind of gnostic humanism more akin to modernism and existentialism—and as such has had to develop its own religious vocabulary.

Liberals do not like conclusions. They like all things to be open to review and do not hesitate to be intolerant to those who are intolerant of the liberal's non-biblical, sub-biblical, and un-biblical doctrine. That is, liberals are enemies of the truth.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Space restraints forbade a detailed explanation of Albert Ritchl and his theological agnosticism, which philosophy insisted that each person determine his **own** morality and forbade an in-depth look at the impact comparative religious studies have had on the minds of countless numbers of theologians.

[2]The reader may realize what an oxymoron the phrase unity in diversity really is. Unity and diversity are on the opposite sides of a huge definition gap.

[3]The fact is, modern liberalism is ultimately existentialism which is a subject for another essay, but said discussion is outside the delimitations of this article.

THE COVERT NATURE OF LIBERALISM

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Covert has been defined as "concealed; hidden; secret." The primary point of this study will be to examine the slow, secret, usually hidden nature of liberalism. We will expand the topic to include *sin*, since liberalism is a sin. By liberalism we mean, going beyond that which is authorized. Liberalism is usually, by nature, covert.

Brethren, the liberals among us (especially in the early days of the movement) had to be very discreet. The church as a whole was strong and knew the Truth. The Liberals began a covert and subversive effort (mainly among younger members) to change the way members of the Lord's church think. As always, actions follow the course of thought, and we have witnessed widespread alterations in the virtually every aspect of worship and doctrine in the "churches of Christ."

A CULTURAL EXAMPLE

A good cultural example of the subtle (methodical) effects of sin (liberalism in this case) would be the fundamental change in our society over the past fifty years. From 1950 to 2005 virtually every aspect of American life has been assaulted and altered by the effects of liberal-

ism. The baby-steps taken in the 1960s have turned into a stampede. Our current nation can scarcely be recognized by those of previous generations. The sexual revolution has led to the cheapening of marriage and the acceptance (by many) of the homosexual lifestyle. The assault on all things *Christian* is seen virtually every day. Each of these (and dozens of others) are examples of how little changes here and there (liberalism), over time, rewrote an entire culture.

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

The first example of the covert nature of liberalism is found in Genesis 3. Remember our definition of *liberalism*: "going beyond that which is authorized." God had authorized Adam and Eve to eat of every tree in the Garden of Eden except one—the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Tempter approached Eve and altered the Word of God by adding just one word to it. He told her, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

When Satan added to the Word of God and convinced Eve to accept his addition, he succeeded in bringing sin, death, and evil into the world. Many today bemoan "book chapter and verse" preaching, yet such is the only authorized way to get from earth to heaven (Rom. 1:16).

God's response to their sin (violation of His Word—1 John 3:4), was immediate, decisive, and without fluctuation. The notion that God really does not care all that much about the details of His law is as wrong as it can be. God did care and the course of human history was altered forever because the first couple decided to add a little to the Word of God. Liberalism "snuck up on them," and the consequences have echoed through the corridors of time.

The second example of liberalism in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 4. In this text we read of the worship of Cain and Abel (sons of Adam and Eve). Abel was a shepherd and offered the firstlings of his flock. His worship was accepted by God. However, Cain, his brother the farmer, did not do as God instructed concerning worship. Much speculation has arisen as the nature of the problem concerning Cain's worship. Hebrews 11:4 sheds some light on the topic: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

The passage affirms that Abel offered according to faith. In light of this statement notice: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). So when examined together, we can deduce that Abel worshiped God as He (God) had instructed. If this action made Abel's sacrifice acceptable, this author would suggest the opposite was true of Cain's; he did not offer according to faith. That is, he did not give the proper regard to the word God had given concerning sacrificing as an act of worship.

Today there are a host of people who seem to think that God will accept whatever they offer as worship. This is simply wrong. This image of God as being made of *play dough* (a *god* that can be molded into anything people desire) must be opposed. God is not well pleased with just any old thing being offered as worship. The account of the worship of Cain and Abel should help us in this regard.

Moses, perhaps the greatest of all Old Testament characters, also stands out as an example of where the covert beast, liberalism, can lead a man. Moses led the people of God faithfully for decades, yet on one occasion he went beyond what God authorized. In Numbers 20 God commanded Moses to "speak ye unto the rock" to receive water. Moses altered God's Word and "smote the rock" instead.

To most people's way of thinking, this action would be no big deal, but it was a big deal to God. The consequences of his actions were great. After 40 years of faithful service in leading the children of Israel, God refused to let Moses enter the Promised Land. God means what He says and says what He means. Adding to it or going beyond it is deadly.

These examples could be multiplied a dozen-fold and the result would be the same. God frowns on those who do not respect His authoritative Word. Let us turn our attention to the New Testament to note the consistency of this position.

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

While the Old Law was terminated at the cross of Christ (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14), the principle of obeying God's Word did not. In fact Jesus taught, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He also warned those who did not wish to listen to Him: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

A large portion of the material found in the New Testament deals specifically with the problems associated with not staying true to God's Word.

> My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. 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. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:1-6).

In fact, the first section of the wonderful book of Revelation stands as a testimony to the possibility of congregations falling away from God's way. Five of the seven congregations addressed were on their way to apostasy. The basic problem is always the same: going beyond (liberalism) or stopping short of what God permits (anti-ism).

In Mark 12 we find the Lord dealing with some liberals of His day. The Sadducees, (they denied the resurrection, the existence of angels, and generally had fashioned themselves in the likeness of the Greek culture), opposed Jesus on various occasions. Mark records:

> Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave *his* wife *behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err (18-27).

The setting of this passage is one of controversy. Jesus is in the process of being asked a series of four questions by a crowd of detractors. Among these were some Sadducees who posed the above

question concerning the Levirate Law of Marriage. Jesus makes it clear to them that the question is based on their false assumption that all things are the same in heaven as on earth, which they are not (there is no marriage in heaven). He then points out that the Scripture concerning Moses and the burning bush should have been more than enough to show them the fact of the resurrection. Most liberals are just as limited in their knowledge of the Scriptures and the proper application of such. Let us notice some modern day assaults on worship.

ASSAULTS MADE UPON WORSHIP IN OUR DAY

The Lord's church has always endured attacks from the enemies of heaven. In the first century various congregations were infected by false teachers and ungodly men. In fact much of the New Testament was written to help congregations deal with unfaithful members. There are multiple warnings about the reality of faithless men and their influence.

Paul warned the Ephesians elders with these words:

> For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 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. 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. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:27-32).

Things have not changed much from the time these words were penned. Today, there are a host of people, sadly many in the church, who have corrupted worship in our day. These changes seemed to begin *innocently* enough with calls to "restudy" certain elements of worship. This author finds it interesting that every time the liberals in the church (*liberal* is being used of one who loosens where God has bound—they go beyond that which is authorized) restudy a position, they **always** ended up changing to what the denominations were doing. According to these change agents, in all the years of the church's existence we had never gotten even one point correct. When they say things like: "We are in the process of restudying a position," you can mark it down, they are moving in the direction of apostasy.

We have seen several changes in worship within churches of Christ. Some of these changes include: praise teams (choirs by another name), lifting up hands, hand-clapping, putting on pageantry and special services to commemorate holidays, dramatic presentations (plays, etc.), baby dedications (shades of Catholic christenings), the Lord's Supper being offered on a day other than Sunday, breaking up Sunday evening services into small cluster groups (this hails back to the house church practice of the Crossroads Movement), children's church (segmented worship), changes in the worship environment, and changes in preaching style.

These same folk have bemoaned book, chapter, and verse preaching for years. It is hard to believe that a Christian could, with a straight face, complain about too much Bible in our preaching. The truth is, for these anti-Bible-way-of-doing-things people, could not get the changes they desired enacted unless they *dumbed down* the congregation. Unfortunately, there were plenty of hireling preachers to accommodate the desires of these unholy miscreants. Today, many members (those who attend liberal mega-churches) do not know if Jesus was crucified at Calvary or shot at Bunker Hill. We will look at some of the corruptions that have been brought about by these efforts.

Brethren, instrumental music has always loomed like a shadow over the church on this continent. Many younger members in particular in the church today do not view instrumental music in worship as a matter of sin. Many prominent men and colleges have been declaring for years that they see no wrong in its use. This of course is the same thing as an approval of such. The good news is that the older generation has done a pretty good job of holding firm on the sinfulness of instrumental music in worship. This is one reason the change agents did not begin with trying to bring in the instrument. Instead the effort to alter singing was made in the area of praise teams, special music, solos, etc.

The truth is that these agents of change are nothing more than denominationalists in Christians' clothing. They are doing everything in their power to make the church acceptable to the world. They have lost sight of the fact that we are supposed to be pleasing God, not men (Acts 5:29). All of their blathering about how we must meet the needs of the culture is nothing but a smokescreen.

RECENT EXAMPLES

Just this Spring this scribe received two separate mailings that illustrate exactly what is being discussed. The first was an advertisement for the *30th Anniversary Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop* (March 24-26, 2005). It is just a large card-type invitation to the Memorial Drive Church of Christ in Tulsa. The workshop is directed by Terry Rush. Notice two of the speakers' descriptions given on the invitation:

> **Paul Whitmire** has a God-story. God called this businessman to begin a ministry in the inner city in the Oklahoma City area. You'll be moved by his testimony as he shares how God works!
>
> **Robert Cox**—God called Robert to build one of the most dynamic churches in America...in the inner city. And his church recently sent forty of its members down the road to plant another congregation. You will not want to miss this powerful message!

Notice the unscriptural terminology. The ad sounds more like the language of the Pentecostals than New Testament Christians. The truth is the Tulsa Workshop group is closer akin to denominationalism (especially the Pentecostal types) than the Lord's church. One thing this writer knows for certain, any man who advertises that he has a "God-story," does not have a clue concerning the Gospel. Unfortunately, these types of ads and this type of language usage is not rare at all. In fact, scarcely a day goes by without articles in various bulletins making the same mistake.

A couple of months ago Abilene Christian University sent out their catalogue advertising their *87th Annual Bible Lectures*, February 20-23, 2005. Any brethren who have kept up with the trends in the Lord's church have known for some time of the departures of Abilene Christian University. To further illustrate the nature of modern-day liberalism, consider a few summaries from their catalog.

In the opening comments under the heading of Unity, we read: "Regular forums will bring groups together in dialogue to promote better understanding, illumine points of agreement, and delineate points of disagreement subject to further dialogue" (3). The Bible does not instruct us to conduct dialogue sessions with false teachers. We are to mark and avoid them (Rom. 16:17-18), not hold hands, hug, and act as if everything is all right. The problems between the Lord's church and the Disciples of Christ denomination is not one of understanding each other. **We respect biblical authority, and they do not**. Trying to

imply anything else, which this ad does, is a covert move on the part of liberals among us.

On the same page under the heading, "Disciple Formation," we read: "A variety of worship opportunities will be provided to draw participants into the practices of worship: praise, contemplation, prayer, attention to scripture, lament, etc." The next quote likewise states: "Because faith and imagination are partners in the work of spiritual formation, the Lectureship will encourage artists to assist our spiritual pursuits through, drama, music, visual arts and literature."

These comments show the progressive nature of liberalism. The covert is giving way to the overt, and this author suspects this trend will simply get worse and worse. The referral to artists and using imagination is exactly where they are going. Note the section on *Art and Faith* (8). The subtitle reads: "Through song, painting, sculpture and theatre, we will allow our senses to take in the glory of God."

Brethren, these agents of change will not stop until they have turned the congregations where they attend into a full-blown denomination (no, that is not too strong or an overstatement). On the same page we find this description of one of the artistic presentations, titled: "Iron Apron Strings Art Exhibit." Notice the write-up:

> Iron Apron Strings employs visual metaphor to depict the remarkable women cited in Matthew's account of Christ's lineage. Through the creative combination of gothic shapes, inspiring music, found objects, family heirlooms, plaster, oil paint and gold leaf, Jill Maxwell has created paintings, drawings, and multimedia works that are reminiscent of medieval religious icons and reliquaries. The dimly lit gallery space is transformed into a sanctuary for quiet reflection and prayer.

Amazing! In reading the description for the first time, this author was thinking it sounded like an exhibit filled with Dark Age Catholic icons and tomfoolery. However, when this bunch sees that fact, they heap praise upon it as if it is a good thing. Brethren, this one write-up goes a long way to proving that these people have very little in common with us any more. If the religion they practice is Christian, this writer has never read the Bible.

Gothic shape, icons, paintings, indeed. Such things should never be supported by any member of the Lord's church. A quiet *sanctuary* of prayer? Hardly. They need to be reflecting more on the Scriptures of God (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17) than the paintings and imaginations of men. How far will they go? This scribe affirms that they have gone all the way already. It may take a few more years for them

to adopt all of the trappings of the denominational world, but the step which leads to the pit of hell has already been taken. They have rejected the authority of God and His Word. Now they are limited only by their personal likes and dislikes.

There are several other points which could be looked at from this same mailing. There is a sermon by Rick Atchley titled: "The Doctor Will See You Now," with a subtitle: "Is there still a place in the church for a ministry of healing?" The title is bad enough, but notice the caption that follows:

> Is the healing ministry of Jesus still available to the church today? What should believers be taught to believe regarding God's purposes for their bodies? This class will raise some eyebrows and some expectations (14).

Now that is rich, is it not? The caption certainly indicates that the speaker is planning on affirming something that will "raise eyebrows and expectations." If the English language has any meaning at all, the indication is that he is going to affirm some type of miraculous healing today. (These tapes should be available by the time this material comes out in print. Please contact Abilene Christian University for a set of tapes to see what is taught).

There are more lessons encouraging *Christian art*. They also laud their "Continuing Conversations with the International Churches of Christ." Dialogues with the devil and his associates is never beneficial to the church. We are to resist the devil, not sit down to dinner and discussion with him in an attempt to better understand why he is as he is. More could be said about this part of the lectureship, but it is beyond the scope of our topic.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Brethren, it is a damnable mistake to attempt to change the Lord's church to please men. We are to help men find the Lord so He can change them and they can be pleasing to God. We must realize that the Gospel and it alone is the power of God to save the souls of men (Rom. 1:16). We must trust God's plan and simply do our duty in spreading the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:4-15). It is our job to "plant" and "water" and "God gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).

We need to help our elders and preachers stay strong on these subjects. Oftentimes when a preacher presents a straightforward lesson on the sin of liberalism, there are complainers who get in a huff and try to cause trouble. The faithful need to hold up the hands of those willing

to teach the truth on controversial topics. We need to be vocal in letting the elders know that we appreciate a clear and distinct style of preaching.

This penman will conclude with a quote from the apostle Paul: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi. 4:13). My friends, with God on are side, we cannot be defeated. We must stay the course, knowing that we will be blessed, if we faint not.

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LIBERALISM'S ELITISM

Wayne Coats

W. Wayne Coats was born and reared in Mississippi. After finishing high school, he enrolled in Freed-Hardeman College. He has graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, David Lipscomb College, Middle Tennessee State University, and the Divinity School of Vanderbilt.

He met Elaine Wright while both were students at Freed-Hardeman. After a few years of courtship, they married. Their home has been blessed with four children. Wayne and Elaine now reside in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, where they own and operate Mt. Juliet Funeral Home, Mt. Juliet Memorial Gardens, and Mt. Juliet Pet Cemetery.

Wayne is the author of numerous books and is active in writing and preaching and teaching at the local level and in meetings and lectures across the brotherhood.

Am I dealing with a baseless assumption when writing about liberalism and elitism? Is there no such curse as liberalism which pervades the people of God? Is the assertion of elitism only the figment of an infertile imagination? We shall see!

It is a fact that liberalism has many definitions. There are any number of devotees who are experts at denying the existence and prevalence of liberalism. It seems ironic that any number of modernistic scholars among the denominational professors can write freely about liberalism; albeit, some among our brethren have not been convinced that liberalism actually exists. For many years the church has been cursed due to the liberal concepts that have existed.

There are sundry definitions that have been given relative to liberalism. The overt demonstrations and exhibitions of the liberal attitude far surpasses the written definitions that can be found in books and writings.

We will attempt to apprise the reader of such statements and enable one to be familiar with liberalism. A good definition of liberalism can be found in any number of acceptable dictionaries.

The liberal is one who thinks he is "broad-minded, tolerant, not bound by authority or traditional forms." Liberalism is a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing "intellectual liberty." The liberal is one who thinks he believes and who believes he thinks. The preceding

definition will assist one in ascertaining whether there are liberals causing havoc in the church of Christ.

When we consider the fact of elitism, we immediately think of the attitude of superiority that describes the liberal element. A person approaching the state of imbecility would deny this, but sensible people know it to be true. Liberalism is elitism.

One would not be amiss in equating the elitism of liberalism with the various forms and meanings of *super*. As a *super person*, the elite will be quick to assert his superiority over and above the common herd. He is higher in quality, if not quantity. He far surpasses the norm. A super person is like a super-highway. He is exceedingly broad-gauged. The pathetic liberal parades himself as superior in status. Insofar as intelligence, he thinks that he possesses a super-abundant, or at least more than an ample supply.

If the liberals think of themselves as being a supreme, super segment of society, so be it. Their supreme excellence is best known to themselves. If there are any superlative entities of unsurpassed levels in which all others are surpassed, such would be found among the liberals. Let none aver that Superman was displayed only on the movie screen and in comic books. We can read about the super-normal and the super-order so frequently when we peruse the literature of the liberals.

This author does not consider it to be a mark of real intelligence for any man to possess a feeling of superiority in an overbearing manner. It is absurd for one to exaggerate one's own worth or sense of importance in an overbearing manner. Arrogance is not a quality to be admired (except among the liberals).

When this writer was a small boy attending Pine Grove School, there were quaint expressions that were used to describe anyone who thought too highly of himself. One descriptive statement that was used (and which fits perfectly the stance of the liberal) was and is: "a boy got too big for his britches." Those were fighting words!

We recall that the Bible informs us that "Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). No person can imagine the difficulty which Moses experienced in leading the people from Egypt to Canaan. Those were among the most obstinate ingrates mentioned in the Old Testament.

When the Israelites abode in Kadesh, they murmured because they had no water. Moses said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). Whatever else was wrong about

the episode, God declared, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (v. 12). The people angered Moses and they "provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Psa. 106:33). Moses took liberties which displeased God. From that ancient experience respectable people learn to respect God.

We read of old Herod who arrayed himself in royal apparel and sat upon his throne. When the old reprobate made an oration to the people, they shouted and said, "*It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 12:21-23). It is fortunate for the liberals that an angel is not dispatched to slay all of those who refuse to give glory to God. Payday does not always come immediately.

John mentions the lowly scum-ball named Diotrephes. This proud, arrogant superman certainly acted the part of a haughty liberal. No man was more contrite and lowly in spirit than John; yet the mighty Diotrephes would have no time nor place for John. Diotrephes wanted to be above and beyond other brethren. He desired first place among the brethren. Was he really superior to others, or was his stance one of self-elevation? Diotrephes was afflicted with a severe case of dwarfism, but he was not aware of such. No person is more deceived than the liberal who has his good eye on self, his bad eye on others, and no eye on God.

John did not fit into the mold which Diotrephes had made for others. If we will kowtow before such hell-bound characters, we will be praised. If not, the modern Diotrephes will "prate against us with malicious words." Such low-bred rebels will be successful in getting some brethren to listen to their ravings and rantings. We can expect the person afflicted with fermented ignorance to reject a good man like John. Likewise, he will influence others to follow his dastardly deeds (3 John 9-10). Some people seem to be unable to think without the help of some liberal nut or dummy.

We are aware of the many problems that existed in the church at Corinth, but a very careful study of Paul's letters to the church will inform us that the basic problem was manifest among the members who were haughty and carnally minded. The apostle wrote:

> For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:3).
>
> 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 (4:6).
>
> Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us (4:8).
>
> We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised (4:10).
>
> Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you (4:18).
>
> And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned (5:2).
>
> Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (5:6).
>
> For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise (2 Cor. 11:19).

From the preceding verses, we can see the terrible malady which persisted among the puffed-up Corinthians. Pride, arrogance, haughtiness, boasting, and a sorry attitude prevailed among those liberal-minded people. Make a notation of all the sins that were prevalent among the church members, and it is no wonder that they were so carnally minded and puffed up.

The apostle John wrote to seven congregations in Asia Minor. So many things were amiss in those churches, but none was worse than the blatant error that existed in the church at Sardis. John declared: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1). The sorry condition that prevailed in Laodicea was enough to make the Lord sick. John wrote, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (3:17). No Bible verse aptly describes the American church scene better than the sordid picture that John presented relative to the church in Laodicea. How tragic! This was elitism personified. We can preach sermons, publish papers, and write books—all of which can do good—but until we can affect a humble Christ-like attitude in ourselves and others, we will be like sounding brass and clanging cymbals.

We recall the statement of the peerless apostle who wrote:

> And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12:7).

How different Paul's attitude is from that seen in the man of sin: "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" (2 The. 2:4). What difference is there in the character who exalts himself above God and the brother who exalts himself just a mite under God? It is a matter of degree! It is a shame for one to sit in the temple (figuratively) and show himself as being above angels—or on an equality with them.

The church had come from the pristine hand of Almighty God, and in a very brief time elitism began to show itself. A person must have a high opinion of himself when he presumes to change the Word of God. All persons who are knowledgeable about biblical matters will agree that proud pompous people have all but buried the beautiful bride of Christ.

A very puffed-up person known as Astruc (who lived from 1684 to 1766) determined that the Pentateuch was a hodge-podge of scraps and pieces that had been pasted together by various people. Old Astruc denied inspiration and was exceedingly arrogant, as was seen when he wrote, "Free through the pathless haunts I roam, where mortal feet have never strayed." Astruc did not tell us that he copied the sentence from another writer by the name of Lucretius. The old reprobate declared that his efforts helped Moses out of some very careless writing. We do not know how Astruc became so brilliant, but he stated that some "negligent or ignorant copyist arranged Moses' material in consecutive form." He does not inform us how he learned so much.

Astruc was very proud of himself and his efforts. He said that his work was

> far from being injurious to the cause of religion; it could only be helpful to it, because it would remake or clear up several difficulties which arise from reading the book and with the weight of which commentators have always been burdened.

The mighty Astruc claimed he had removed and cleared up all of that which had been "difficulties and burdens for the commentators." No modesty was left for others since Astruc possessed all of it! The plagiarist could be placed in the same category with Robert Ingersol who traipsed over the country making speeches about the mistakes of Moses. Astruc also wrote about the blunders of Moses.

The liberals will brazenly declare: "Liberty is the right claimed by the modern religious thinker to be free from the control of authority—

whether the Bible, the church, etc." A very familiar refrain, which floats about like flotsam on a stagnant pond, is the sluice of one modernist who stated: "It is impossible that a book written two or three thousand years ago should be used in the twentieth century without having some of its forms of thought and speech translated into modern categories." The liberal thinks the Grand Old Book is too old for modern minds.

With the passing of time many American Universities were reeking with the stench of German Rationalism, Modernism, Liberalism, and downright Atheism. W. K. Pendleton, the son-in-law of Alexander Campbell, attended the University of Virginia. Without question he became saturated with liberalism and pomposity. Pendleton became vice-president of Bethany College and co-editor of the *Millenial Harbinger*. The liberalism of Pendleton was expressed when he said: "To plead for union and at the same time exclude the really pious from the communion of the body and blood of the Saviour, is in the very nature of things to destroy the practical power of our plea." Pendleton served on a committee to raise money for the Missionary Society. Every honest student of Restoration History is aware of the wretched destruction wrought by the Missionary Society as operated by the liberals.

In the state of Florida, the Florida Christian Convention was organized. W. K. Pendleton was the president of the affair. Before he left Bethany College the seeds of modernism and liberalism had been sown profusely. Very shortly the school went kaput. Look at the miserable affair today! The caterwauling cry was made continually by the liberals that "religion needs to be modernized." The new word is *contemporary*.

W. K. Pendleton expressed his liberal view when he wrote:

> There are many things established and right in the practical affairs of the church in the nineteenth century, that were not introduced in the days nor by the authority of the apostles...questions of mere expedience that involve neither moral nor spiritual principle or teaching. We have no evidence that in apostolic days the disciples owned houses such as we would not call churches at all.

The spirit of liberalism is stated by one writer who declared that liberalism "is an alliance between faith and philosophy, arising from pride, which arouses the spirit of disobedience and demands a compromise between authority and liberty." Of course, the spirit of liberty will

prove to be the most important thing for those who hold authority in contempt.

The liberal has very little, if any, respect for the Bible. One liberal declared:

> The Bible has lost all hold on the leaders of thought and certainly is destined before many years to become one of the curiosities of the past. The inspiration of those who spoke a "Thus saith the Lord" is only a little higher type than that of the whirling dervishes and heathen medical men.

Such a haughty attitude stinks to high heaven, but it seems par for the course for liberals.

The liberal stance is: "The fundamentalist theory of the finality of the Biblical revelation can be satisfying to no person who thinks." The liberal would like to convince all people that the only real thinkers are to be found among the liberals.

Brother Moses E. Lard was the recipient of many liberal barbs. He wrote of the liberals:

> They claim to have made greater progress in spirituality in the inner life and in the secret walks with God. These men who know so much more ought to show a little more patience until we learn better or die off.

Without doubt the liberal attempted to leave the impression that he excelled others in knowledge, but such was only a conceited and bigoted claim. In an effort to impress people, the liberals have tried to appear profound, deep, and scholarly, and they use a lot of big words. As we used to say when I was a school boy—anybody with "one eye and half sense" could certainly see through the facade that was presented.

Brother F. G. Allen wrote a piece that would be as appropriate today as when it was written years ago. The old brother declared:

> Some of our preachers are so vague, sometimes they are months trying to get people to understand what they meant and what they didn't mean. There is no necessity for this. What the Bible clearly teaches on any subject may be so presented that the people will understand it—cannot help but understand.

One very astute brother wrote of the liberals, "Their very pompous action would seem to say, 'We are the only advanced thinkers.'" Do you think the pompous attitudes of liberals ever change?

A person affiliated with the Missionary Society wrote an article some years ago attempting to enlist preachers to work for the Society.

Please note the kind of preachers desired: "The people are seeking a ministry that will lead the church out of a stagnant formalism into a vigorous spiritual activity." Such was prevalent among all the liberals —and their regal attitudes have not abated, but have grown worse.

J. A. Clark quoted the liberals' position thus: "This is an age of liberalism. We must keep abreast with the times. We are exercising liberalism toward the pious un-immersed."

Several years ago O. E. Payne wrote a book dealing with mechanical instruments of music in worship. Payne boasted and claimed to "go deeper than anyone else." He had the temerity to say, "If we forbid instrumental music we cannot *psallo* and therefore to employ it is mandatory." Brother M. C. Kurfees shredded the "deep thinking" of Payne and left nothing but trash. Not one of the liberal digressives in subsequent years would dare to use the Payne arguments.

Some of us older folks will remember when Roy Key and Carl Etter became so liberal in their views. Key joined the Congregationalist Church. He said he "had learned so much more."

Brother G. C. Brewer wrote a tract regarding the Key-Etter apostasy which he titled *As Touching Those Who Were Once Enlightened*. The woods are full of pompous liberals who claim that they have learned so much more. Key had not learned one thing that faithful brethren had not learned from infidel modernists.

To get a view of the liberal stance please note that a liberal wrote: "The most effective Christian churches that I know today are manned by liberals." "Liberalism takes up the cudgel for intelligence in religion." "The liberal wishes to stand for intelligence in the Community."

This writer was flabbergasted to read an article in the *Gospel Advocate* some years ago, wherein the writer said, "The big churches are the ones with the big brains." Hogwash! The egotistic, haughty, and arrogant disposition of liberalism was written by Norvel Young (who was president of Pepperdine University) and handed to the judge before whom Norvel stood after having been indicted and charged with vehicular manslaughter. The blood alcohol content or level of Norvel was .23. That was more than twice the .10 at which one was legally drunk in the state of California. Norvel Young wrote:

> For years I have lived with a developing pressure because of my intellectual conflict with the fundamentalist dogmas and doctrines of the Church of Christ. For years, it had been increasingly difficult for

> me to accept the simplistic assumptions of the hell-fire and brimstone fundamentalists which most preachers in this church teach.

(He had no compunction about receiving money from the fundamentalist congregations of the church.) It seems like Norvel was still drunk when he wrote of his great intelligence for the judge.

Did Norvel actually think the judge would be overcome with the sluice of slime presented to him? In the preceding piece we see the elitism of the intellectual liberal at its best. Will a jug of moonshine help a person to feel so unduly brilliant that he can recover from fundamentalism?

After this author had delivered a lesson some years ago at one of the brotherhood lectureships, a young preacher approached me. During our conversation he related that he had listened to Rubel Shelly speak at some place. After the speech he approached Shelly and asked a simple question. Shelly very arrogantly replied: "Where did you get your Ph.D.?" Such a stupid, asinine remark occurred some years after Shelly repented of his "harsh and steely attitude." That sort of humility was such as allowed Shelly the Great to prattle: "It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation."

With all the bragging, boasting, and grandstanding of the great Rubel Shelly, when he was challenged to defend his liberalism in a public debate, he ran like a frightened rabbit. Brother Wayne Smith wrote Rubel a letter and asked him why he refused to debate Wayne Coats. Shelly responded that he did not know Wayne Coats and he did not "have time to honor every request for a fist fight that comes my way." The plain truth is that Shelly knew better than to enter into a discussion where his modernism would be exposed. Such has been the program of the liberals for many years. They appear to surpass the angels in sweetness and humility. The Scriptures speak of Michael, the archangel, debating with the devil (Jude 9).

We recall the babbling of James Woodroof, who bragged about being so much better than the conservative brethren. In his book, *The Church in Transition*, Woodroof wrote: "Perhaps we ourselves, before we became more enlightened, were where our conservative brother is today." This scribe suspects it is due to the superior enlightenment of Woodroof that he stated he would not enter into a "puking contest with buzzards."

The liberals have a **mania for change**! Modern Protestantism has been built and continues to exist upon the flimsy pillars of change. There cannot be a major Protestant church without following the silly creed books. Periodically the creeds are re-written, changed, and modernized. Our liberal brethren refuse to be in arrears of the Protestant groups; so their sugar-stick is "We gotta change." J. M. P. Smith wrote:

> The twentieth century world needs a twentieth century religion, and it is part of its task to make that religion for itself. It is the task of the leaders of the religious life of today to see to it that the religion they teach and embody shall be suited to the needs of the modern world.

Such an attitude as presented in the preceding paragraph is but a rehash of the efforts of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (1 Kin. 22:52). Such foolishness dethrones God and enthrones man. A person gets puffed up indeed when he thinks man can draw his own blueprint for time and eternity.

We are told, "Orthodox religion was all very well for our grandfathers and grandmothers but it cannot satisfy the modern mind with all its advanced scientific and philosophical knowledge."

With respect to the nature of the church as revealed in the Bible, one liberal has written, "Our organization and discipline are greatly defective and essentially inadequate to the present condition and wants of society."

The liberal must never be satisfied with conditions which prevail among the conservative brethren. One wrote:

> I know my brethren. I know they have certain forms or words current among them that are hindrances to their own progress. "Baptism for the remission of sins" is one of these forms; "law of pardon" is another. The form of words, "baptism for remission of sins," is unexplainable and should be thrown out of use. No one believes it and yet it is constantly used. You teach baptism for the remission of sin. Which of us is more likely to reach the Baptists?

The **mania for change** was presented by a liberal who wrote, "It follows that Truth adapted to one place and to one condition of the church and the world, does not meet the demands of a different time and a different state of the church."

The liberals decry the sane, sober, sensible, and scriptural plea to restore New Testament Christianity. They would have us to repudiate the Restoration plea and forego calling the masses to return to the ancient order of things.

Please notice a liberal statement: "Christians are asked to unite on the basis of the primitive church in Jerusalem, but in reality no one wants to return to the condition of that church." **This writer's answer is**: That primitive church in Jerusalem worshipped God in spirit and in truth. Those early Christians went about serving God under the tutelage of the inspired apostles. Why in the name of common sense do we have the written messages of those inspired writers if we are at liberty to cast them aside? Which smart liberal will give us a valid substitute for the inspired Word? Talk about arrogance and a high-minded spirit!

In describing the high-minded spirit of the liberals, please remember whet an old brother described: "Their very pompous actions would seem to say 'We are the only advanced thinkers.'" Liberals never change!

The broad-gauged liberal spirit was voiced by Marvin Phillips when he wrote, "We ought to have fellowship with any and all who name the name of Jesus." If you think about the statement a moment, that would encompasses every sort of sect and cult that can squeak, "Jesus." This scribe repeats—liberals never make any sense.

David Slater was working with the West End Church of Christ. He wrote to the late brother Ira Rice and said, "I pray for you and your cronies...very few sensible people take you and your handful of noisy busybodies very seriously at all." No doubt, Slater felt so very superior while deprecating those associated with the *Contending For The Faith* paper. Sometime after Slater's derogatory remarks to brother Rice, the Nashville news media had a lot of grist to grind when David Slater was arrested for stealing from parked cars and again for passing a hot check. This author wonders how superior he felt while in a jail cell.

The notorious Nashville Jubilee was begotten and delivered by Steve Flatt and some of his Madison brethren. The unscriptural, wicked, evil, ridiculous corporation was presented to a bevy of men whose colossal ignorance defies description. The Jubilee was a clone to the old American Christian Missionary Society. Of course, so many liberals who hopped, skipped, and jumped to the Jubilee clog, had no earthly idea what the old Missionary Society was, nor did they know the corporate structure of Flatt's Jubilee. The majority of the frolicking crew could care less. The thing was big, huge, and excessively large—that impressed a lot of people.

The depths of duplicity were reached when the preacher of the Monterey Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, wrote to the Saint Luke's Methodist Church in Lubbock and said:

> Thank you for allowing us to use your building on November 18th. We, of the Monterey Church of Christ are grateful to have you as our partners in spreading the Good News of Jesus in our community and the world.

Then the Methodist preacher reported: "A pastor from Monterey Church of Christ baptized an infant in our building." Such an attitude is growing among the young *Divines* who are being hatched out of the liberal schools.

This writer would sound a warning which needs to be shouted from the housetops in every nook and cranny of the world. The major culprit is the so-called Christian universities. Does anyone care to dispute this assertion? The seat of the trouble has been found in the liberal and modernistic schools.

The professors in the religious institutions of yesterday became saturated and soaked with the spirit of rationalism, modernism, and infidelity. The liberal and questionable views of the professors are to be passed along to the students who want to sound smart like their professors.

It is challenging to read a statement made by Mosheim in his monumental work relative to the *History of Religion*. In commenting on the statement by Mosheim, Alexander Campbell wrote:

> Mosheim, from the mass of evidence upon this subject to which he had access, satisfactorily shows that the first "theological seminary" established at Alexandria in Egypt in the second century was the grave of primitive Christianity. Yes, it appears that the first school instituted for preparing Christian doctors was the foundation, the streams whereof polluted the mass of Christian professors, and completed the establishment of a paganized Christianity in the room of the religion of the New Testament.

It is odd, strange, and curious that Campbell disparaged the Alexandrian School for its departures from the faith. Anyone who knows the facts can discern that the old Bethany College (of which Campbell was president) also strayed from the right way and stumbled into the worst form of modernism.

For a more modern parallel, one might look at the universities that flaunt their liberalism and that present a "paganized Christianity in the

room of the religion of the New Testament." Do not say it is not happening.

Faithful brethren must arise to the call of duty and never cower before the foe. As long as there is a devil, we will need to arise in defense of the truth.

WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

LIBERALISM'S VIEW OF GOD

Wayne Jones

Wayne Jones was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1996 at the age of 19 as the Valedictorian of his class. He is married to the former Shana Kaye Spacek, and they have three children: Hannah, Ashlyn, and Bailey. Wayne has done local work in Luxora, Arkansas, and Newbern, Tennessee. He is currently serving as the associate preacher at the Southaven Church of Christ in Southaven, Mississippi. He has held Gospel meetings and spoken on youth rallies in several states. He speaks on various lectureship programs and has served as a counselor/teacher at the second session of Sardis Lake Christian Camp for the past eight years. He has also served as director of Reelfoot Youth Camp.

INTRODUCTION

David gathered all the princes, captains, stewards, officers, and the mighty, valiant men of Israel in Jerusalem. There David informed them that despite his own desires, God would not allow him to build the house wherein the ark of God would rest (i.e., the temple). Instead, God had chosen David's son, Solomon, to build His house (1 Chr. 28:1-6). Knowing the task which lay ahead for his chosen son, David gave Solomon a sincere charge before all the mighty men of Israel and it is recorded for our consideration in 1 Chronicles 28:9. Within the framework of this charge David instructs Solomon to serve God faithfully and willingly. However, David began his fatherly advice with these words: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father." It is this writer's opinion that the latter could not be done without the former. It would be impossible to serve God willingly and faithfully unless we knew Him and were familiar with His Will. How would we know what He wants? How would we know what brings Him glory and what pleases Him? Truly, it should be the mission of every man and woman to know the God of heaven!

The truth is, God wants us to know Him. We see from the account of Adam and Eve in the garden that God desires communication with man on a regular basis. When those lines of communication were severed by sin, God immediately gave a promise that would remove

that sin, reopen those lines, and allow man to continue to approach God. Meanwhile, God spent nearly four thousand years perfecting His message to man. That message was a revelation about Him! Consider how the Sacred Record opens: "In the beginning **God**" (Gen. 1:1). The Bible is a book about God. It is a sixty-six book library about God's power, knowledge, wrath, peace, holiness, goodness, law, judgment, mercy, love, longsuffering, severity, jealousy, expectations, plan, and church. What a great and humbling privilege to know that God left His Book in the hands of sinful men so we might get a glimpse of Him and who He really is!

God so greatly desired for men to know Him that He came to earth and walked among them. John 1:1 states: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Some thirteen verses later we are told that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (1:14). John goes on to identify Christ as the One who is full of grace and truth in verse 17. To have seen the Christ would have been to have seen God in the flesh. However, even the disciples of Christ misunderstood this principle:

> If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? (14:7-9).

God's intense desire for us to know Him is easily seen in those opportunities we have to see things as God sees them. For example, God gave us the privilege of marriage wherein we find companionship, as well as social, emotional, and physical fulfillment. In the marriage relationship we should experience love so deep and so complete that we would give our lives for our spouse. In that way, we can see things through the eyes of God. Did He not love us enough to give His only begotten Son to die in our stead? Within the boundaries of marriage, God commanded Adam and Eve to bear children who can be one of the greatest earthly sources of joy and happiness. Truly, "children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward" (Psa. 127:3). However, some of the darkest moments of a parent's life are spent grieving over the rebellion and sinful actions of his children no matter if they are young or old. If understood correctly, we could use

these times to see the world as God sees it. As He looks down, He sees His perfect creation and even those who claim to be under His parental care. Still many of those same individuals are immoral, wicked, and rebellious. How do you suppose that makes God feel? According to the Psalmist, sin provokes God's wrath and grieves His heart (Psa. 78:40). Does that accurately describe our feelings when our children do something that we have forbidden or fail to do something that we have commanded? If our children chose a path of rebellion, during that difficulty we can slightly feel that pain that the rebellious cause God each day. Some say that experience is the best teacher. If so, we can learn a lot about our heavenly Father through the similar experiences we share with Him.

It is an understatement to say that problems arise when we lose sight of Who God really is or when we forget Him altogether. It is for this reason that Solomon, who turned away from God later in his life, would charge the young to remember (i.e., know and obey) God in their youth (Ecc. 12:1). The adverse affects of forgetting God or of not remembering Him are clearly seen in Paul's inspired description of the Gentile world.

> And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:28-32).

We do not have to completely forget God to get ourselves into spiritual peril. All we have to do is alter our view of who God is and what He expects of man. A vivid example of this principle can be seen in the parable of the talents as recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. Near the conclusion of this text, the master brings his three servants before him to give an account of how they had used the money he had entrusted to them. The first two had used the master's talents to earn him even more. Consequently, he rewarded them amply (25:20-23). However, the *one talent* man had no fruit of his labours. There was no fruit because, as you recall, he had hidden his talent in the earth and dug it up when the day of reckoning was approaching (25:18). Why would

this entrusted man act in such a fashion? The answer was given from his own lips: "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed" (25:24). In short, this man failed in his responsibility because of a misunderstanding he had about his master. He pictured his lord as a man who expected more out of man than was possible. He pictured his master as a man who demanded far more than his servants were capable of handling. The man with only one talent paid a heavy price for these misconceptions.

A similar Old Testament example is found in the uncompleted tower in Babel. Recorded for us in Genesis 11:1-9, the builders of this city and tower were working under a false assumption of God and His power. Their mission in building this great city and tower was to fortify themselves against any attackers and at the same time make a name for themselves. It is the former of these two reasons that showed their misunderstanding of God. Of what were these men and women afraid? No world empire had yet been established. We have no record of any family or group of families that had attacked and taken captive any other families. It is possible (and highly probable) that this tower was meant to be a defense against a Divine attack. It was apparent that they felt threatened by someone or something. "Why did they think they might be scattered? Were they conscience of the effects their attempt to get a name for themselves would have upon God? Did they realize their plans would offend God?" (Dobbs 139). Is it possible that this massive tower was their attempt to escape another God-induced flood or even some other act of Divine punishment? These ancient builders sought a city wherein they would be independent and self supportive. The problem with that is this—no man will ever be *self-supportive*. Do not all of our good gifts, including the daily provisions of food and water, come from the Father above (Jam. 1:17)? Spiritually speaking, "the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). The humorous ending to their story was that they built the tower so they would not be scattered, but God confused their languages and caused them to scatter "abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9). What was their initial problem? Pride and arrogance that allowed them to demote God and elevate themselves: in short, a misunderstanding of who God is and what He demands of His creation.

Like the prideful builders of Genesis 11 or the fearful servant of Matthew 25, we will fail in our responsibilities toward God if we misunderstand Him, His will, or His nature. In every issue that as ever faced the church, a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of God and/or His Word was at the core of the problem. Whether it be the first century issue of circumcision or the anti movement of a few years ago, those on the side of error misrepresented God and His Word to spew their false doctrine. Such is the case with the current liberal movement in the Lord's church. Rubel Shelly once wrote, "The basic assumption of the liberal with regard to God and our relationship to him is false" (40). He went on to say in this same lecture: "By his approach the liberal is making a 'god' of self or human intellect rather than approaching the true God of the Bible" (40). May we ask who has changed? Has God's nature, mercy, or judgment been altered since those words were written and spoken in 1970? Or could it be that Rubel's view of God has changed since then? Of course, it is the latter. Furthermore, anyone who walks in the way of the liberal and sits in the seat of the false teacher suffers from either an insufficient knowledge of God or concern for what God has said. Needless to say, the view of God those enamored with the liberal movement hold is a false one. Let us investigate their view of God together. Liberalism views God as One who:

DESIGNED A FLAWED PLAN

As he reads the Bible, the diligent student should be amazed and overly impressed by the true wisdom of God. God's plan that took form before the worlds were even established unfolds beautifully for us in the biblical record. God began to carry out His plan with the promise that He made in the garden that the seed of a woman would conquer the evil one. God identified the bloodline through which Christ would come in the call of Abraham. God guided the furtherance of His plan with the protection of Joseph, the exodus from Egypt, and the conquering of the promised land. God's people did not make His plan easy to carry out. They often rejected His authority and disobeyed His commands during the days of the judges. God even allowed them a king and used their own decision to continue His purpose with 70 years of captivity to purge His sin-tainted people. During these years inspired prophets foretold of that promise made long ago in the garden. They saw in the distance the approaching blessings that would surround this

new house (Isa. 2:2-3), this new kingdom (Dan. 2:44), and this new covenant (Jer. 31:30-31). Although revelation about the coming Messiah was silent for a period of 400 years, the New Testament Record opens with John heralding the good news of God. His purpose was to prepare the hearts of the Jewish world for the coming of Christ. Then, with an angelic announcement, Christ was born of a virgin, and God's plan to redeem man was nearing its completion. Christ's work was to seek those who were lost, give instruction regarding the doctrine of His kingdom, and to establish His church upon absolute fact that He was the Son of God. To complete His portion of this plan, Christ lived among men, and taught with Divine authority, but His teaching was not popular. He went to the cross to die for our sins and to purchase His church. On the first Pentecost after His resurrection, Christ established His church through the preaching of the apostles, and it was dedicated with the blood that stained that old rugged cross! How magnificent was God's divine plan? Paul states that when the angels saw the church, they were able to see God's manifold wisdom (Eph. 3:10). When the angelic hosts (who were dwelling in God's presence in a timeless expanse and were privileged to witness many undescribable events), looked down and saw God's completed plan to redeem man, they were seemingly impressed. Even so we, when we consider the patience, love, mercy, and longsuffering it took for God to carry out this plan, should be forever reminded of His infinite and matchless wisdom.

Yet to the liberal, God's plan was not really all that brilliant. In fact, according to his teaching, the liberal must view certain parts of God's plan as flawed. For example, the church that Jesus purchased with His blood is of far less significance to the liberal than it was to Christ Himself. In the liberal movement there is a great urgency to adopt the practices and join the hands of our denominational neighbors. In the past it was front page news when a congregation of the Lord's church would join hands in *worship* with a denominational institution. Now, it seems to be so common that less and less is being publicly said about the matter. Brethren, it is still wrong and sinful. However, if we were to view God as the liberal movement views God, we would not believe this practice to be true. According to men such as Rubel Shelly, Lynn Anderson, and Jeff Walling, one *church* must be as good as another. Thus, indicating that all the love and longsuffering that God exerted to bring the church into existence was pointless. Personally, this writer is not ready to make such a blasphemous statement!

Even those among the liberal movement could see at one point that they would have to reject the true nature of the church. Consider words from over 30 years ago penned by Rubel Shelly.

> Why do you preach at all? If you do not tell people of the distinctive nature of New Testament Christianity as opposed to denominationalism, you imply that their present status is acceptable before God and that you fellowship them in their error. **Why not share your pulpit with the Baptist or Presbyterian preacher in town**? (38 emph. added).

These statements were made by a man who would later speak at the Word and Spirit Celebration in Nashville, Tennessee, along with preachers from various area denominations. Two years before that Shelly spoke at the Pentecostal Holiness Conference where he stated:

> We come from our different backgrounds and traditions...and traditions become so important to us that we forget really that the kingdom of God is wide, deeper, larger, greater than any of those particular streams or traditions (qtd. in Miller 316).

As we previously asked, what changed? Did God become more accepting between 1970 and 1994? No, but men like Rubel have changed their view of God. That alteration, although having begun slightly, has led to a revolt in many churches of Christ against the very plan of God to save man from his sins through the Christ who died on Calvary.

DELIVERED AN INEPT MESSAGE

It is clear when reading his works or listening to his message, the liberal has a disdain for the very Word of God and the authority it contains. At a Campus Minsters Conference in Memphis, Tennessee, Jeff Walling made these comments about the Bible:

> And all we're doin is sayin, "I just want to do what the Lord calls me to." Course, we don't like followin; we like havin a map. Don't tell me follow you just give me a map. Some of us think he did, that this is a diagnostic tool. I don't need the leading of the Lord, I've got the Scriptures. It is my substitute for the leading of the Lord. The problem is Scriptures doesn't tell me whether to live in Los Angeles or Atlanta. The Scripture doesn't tell me whether to be in campus ministry, or pulpit ministry, or senior ministry, or just plain ole ministering ministry. You know, it doesn't tell me. So what have I got to do?...I've got to learn to walk behind Jesus, and say "Father, you lead me...." And God doesn't give maps because, if we ever took a look at a map at where he was headin us, we'd get out of the car right now (qtd. in Blackwell).

In response to Walling's hideous remarks, we should realize that (among other things) the Bible is truly a road map which covers every possible road that men could travel. From each point along the way, this inspired diagnostic tool can guide men back to the right course. Shame and fear should come upon the man who will verbally and publicly discredit and discount the precious Word of God simply because his personal agenda and preferences are not supported therein! The man who speaks in such a way is no different than the slithering serpent of Eden's garden.

Their attack on the Bible involves what they call a "new hermeneutic" which is nothing more than first century text-twisting (2 Pet. 3:16). *Hermeneutic* has "to do with how we approach Biblical interpretation, and how we apply its meaning and message in life and service to God" (Colley 52). While they (the liberals, that is) are sure that the *old* way is wrong, they have still yet to define and describe this *new* way of interpreting the Scriptures. It would appear that the primary purpose of this new viewpoint of Bible study as been introduced to discredit and destroy confidence in the old way.

> The primary concern of those clamoring for a "new hermeneutic" appears to be the dismantling of the "old hermeneutic." Much of their effort has been spent criticizing what is deemed to be the shortcomings of the hermeneutical practices of the past, specifically the "command, example, necessary inference" triad. Little energy has been expended on their part in proposing a legitimate alternative (because there isn't one) (Miller 114).

While the liberal element has yet to supply us with a clear and understandable explanation of how we **should** interpret Scripture, they are very clear and understandable on how we **should not** do so. Proof-texting, pattern theology, and the three-fold approach to ascertaining Bible authority (direct statements, implication, and example) are all rejected under the *old* way of thinking. James S. Woodroof suggests that those who hold to the old way of Bible authorization should be lumped in the same category as the Pharisees of Jesus' day and that they are no smarter than monkeys. Woodroof states:

> We have searched the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have eternal life; and, not realizing, it is He who is life, we have failed to come to Him that we may have life. We, like they, have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word (qtd. in Bales 15).

> The Bible only can also make legalists. Some have failed through the Scriptures to see God and as a result have become Bible worshippers. "Bibliolators." A brother observed, "A monkey looks at a telescope but human beings have the intellect to look through it to the objects beyond. Surely, we have more sense than a monkey" (qtd. in Bales 75).

Much of this change regarding how we read and study God's Word is born out of pure selfishness. Their desire is to be accepted by all and, thus, bring in the big numbers. To accomplish such a selfish goal, the liberal will "appear humble, pious and genuinely concerned for the welfare of the church" (Shelly 35). With such intents, the liberal element is seeking to reform the church for which Jesus died into nothing more that a denomination among other denominations. Much like the denominational world around us, the liberal element cannot find their erroneous teaching in the Bible, so they simply change it. Much like the denominational world, the liberal element seeks to redefine words in hopes of finding *support* for their man-made doctrines. The liberal element greatly depends on modern perversions of the Bible, such as the New International Version, to give credibility to their divisive dogmas. Again, much like the denominational world around us, the liberal movement is appealing because it allows that which God has not allowed. This type of toleration appeals to the crowds and appeases the sinful. Such an approach to God's Word will not confront a man with his sins nor will it effectively motivate him to seek the Christ of Calvary. Sadly, it does not appear as if the liberal element is concerned with the salvation of souls, but rather they are concerned larger numbers in the pews and in the collection plate.

Despite the claims of the liberal, we can be assured the Bible is alive and active (Heb. 4:12). We can rest with assurance that it reveals all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and that it is sufficient to make man complete before God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It was the psalmist who penned: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: **for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name**" (Psa. 138:2). Personally, this writer would rather fall in behind David, Paul, and Peter with great confidence in and respect for the written Word of God than to give even the slightest hint of support to a movement that downgrades the Word of God.

DEMANDS MORE THAT HE REALLY EXPECTS

The heading given above seems like a contradiction of terms. How could someone require something of a person, but then not expect them to fulfill that requirement? Despite how ridiculous this might sound, the liberal (through his own teaching) serves a *god* who demands more than he really expects. Teaching such a doctrine will endear a man to the masses, but it will alienate him from the Lord. Although those of the liberal movement would not give this title to their false doctrine, it is specifically what they teach regarding God's expectations of man. They do so by elevating limited portions of Scripture as more important and necessary than other portions. One of the first to popularize this teaching was Carl Ketcherside. Brother G. K. Wallace identified "Ketchersidism" with great clarity.

> Today, brother Ketcherside maintains that the only basis for unity and fellowship is simply belief in the person of Christ. The "Fraternal hand" is extended to all who accept the deity of Christ. He says that if a man believes that Jesus Christ is the son [sic] of God, has been baptized for the remission of sins, then all else is nought (Jones 307).

There were many who followed Ketcherside as he swung on the doctrinal pendulum from anti-ism to liberalism. Men such as "Rubel Shelly, Marvin Phillips, Don Finto, Jim Bevis, Lynn Anderson, Max Lucado, Mike Cope, Jeff Walling, Joe Beam and Leroy Garrett" (Rice 150) have advanced the teaching of Ketcherside into this century.

One of the modern-day designations of this doctrine is the "Core" or "Bull's eye" doctrine. Although not original with him, Rubel Shelly seems to have championed this cause in this current generation. Such a philosophy asserts that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are the most important parts of the Gospel. To believe them, in the words of the liberal movement, is to "hit the bull's eye" and thus, to be in fellowship with God and justified in His sight. According to Shelly, there are many "discipleship issues" that fill the outer circles of the "bull's eye." According to modern-day Ketchersidism, it does not matter where you attend "worship services" or even if you have been baptized. Consider the stomach-churning statements of our apostate brother Lucado from just a few years ago:

> All you have to do is to say "yes" to the Father... And all you have to do is to call Him Father. Just call Him Father. Just turn your heart to him right now as I am speaking... "Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins, I give you my tears, I give you my fears, I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins,

> and I ask you Father, to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen." I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church. I want to encourage you to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read you Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved (qtd. in Liddell 572-73).

Those words are dangerously comparable to the traditional Baptist or Methodist sermons which have been preached for years. Did you realize that according to this way of thinking, baptism, Bible study, and church membership are non-essentials. Apparently these issues (and others, such as, modesty, mechanical music in worship, and marriage, divorce, and remarriage) are on the *outer fringes*. While speaking at a Pentecostal service in April 1994, Rubel suggested to preach forcefully on the outer fringes of this "core" is to "bully and intimidate people whose faith in the Lord is as real and genuine as mine" (Jones 309). Talk about intimidation. How dare the liberal element, without so much as a verse for proof, claim that preaching the "whole counsel of God" qualifies one as a bully! While it is possible for a preacher to become issue-oriented and hobby happy in his preaching, it is also possible for a preacher to neglect the issues of the current generation and how they adversely effect the Lord's church. To ignore these issues in pursuit of this new theology is to openly disregard the dangers that lurk in the shadows.

With this view of doctrine, God becomes a Deity that has authorized, demanded, and required many things in Scripture that He does really expect us to follow. After all, God demanded baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:21) and according to Max Lucado such is not necessary. Likewise, God has demanded a marriage remain intact unless one party has committed fornication (Mat. 19:9). In such cases only the innocent party is free to remarry, and the command of the guilty is to remain unmarried. Yet, those in the liberal movement have stated that such a doctrine is not really necessary to obey. Did God not mean what He said? Does God expect less from us that He demanded in Scripture? To logically follow this doctrine is be make blasphemous accusations against the God of heaven and earth.

Living within the framework of the "core Gospel," the sinner's mind is allowed to rest at ease, even if sin remains in his life. What does it matter if he, either in action or in words, takes away or adds to the Word of God? So along as he leaves the *core* alone and verbally agrees

with it, all else is insignificant. Yet taking the Bible for what it says, we are aware that Christ promised curses upon the one who would add to the words of God (Deu. 4:2; Pro. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). Never in those verses was there a warning against adding to or taking from the weightier, significant parts of the law. On the contrary, it would appear: "Every word of God *is* pure" (Pro. 30:5), and that man should live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mat. 4:4). Furthermore, Christ revealed the standard of judgment would be His own Words (John 12:48). Through the delegation of authority and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all the written Words of the New Testament would be included in that standard of judgment. Yet, Christ spoke as much about the *outer fringes* as He did about the *core*. Christ addressed the subjects of false teachers, marriage, baptism, worship, and prayer. Never did He put a clarification on those matters as being less important than the *core* of His message. Paul's message in Corinth was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4), yet he still addressed unity (1 Cor. 1), the withdrawal of fellowship (1 Cor. 5), marriage and divorce (1 Cor. 7), and miracles (1 Cor. 11-13). Peter wrote concerning Christ's death (1 Pet. 3:18) and resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3), yet he also addressed the subjects of false teachers, elders, the need to study and baptism. The question is this: "Are we going to believe fallible men or the infallible God?" Sadly, some have chosen the former, and their souls will be lost because of it.

In conjunction with this view of God is the idea that God seeks for unity at any price. That is why the most controversial issues are in the *outer fringes*. It is true that God desires unity—we have all heard countless sermons expressing such desires. We have preached the garden prayer of Christ as recorded in John 17 and the pleading of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:10. No sermon on unity is complete without a reference to the words of David: "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa.133:1). Yet, some have twisted these verses to teach that unity is to be had even if God's direct commands have to be compromised or placed in the *unimportant* file. This transformation of teaching has been at work for many years within the Lord's church. For some brethren, all they had to give up for unity's sake was the conviction that mechanical instruments of music in worship were sinful (they did not even have to accept it, they were just asked not to preach about it). Others were told that they would have to leave morality out of the equation for unity to be

found (so they gave up preaching on dancing, drinking, and immodest dress). A few years later the issue of marriage and divorce was the payment for unity; for unity's sake some stopped preaching about it. Now we are asked to sacrifice the distinctiveness of the Lord's church and the essentiality of baptism for the remission of sins upon the altar of unity. It is high time that we point out that God's desire for unity is based upon the knowledge of and obedience to a pattern of revealed doctrine (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:4-6). It is past time that we preached with thunder that God has never desired an ounce of truth to traded for so-called unity!

Sadly, under the banners of "unity in diversity" and the "core Gospel" liberalism has spread like wildfire. Despite its claim of love, these fallen brethren are enemies of the Truth and have altered their view of who God really is and what He really expects of His people.

> In spite of its intense denial, liberalism has no respect for the absolute, unmitigated authority of the Word of God. Liberalism is self on the throne.... Liberalism is man's feigning reverence for God and His Word while paying homage at the shrine of self-will (Chesser 13).

Without trembling, those of liberal intent walk in the sins of Cain, Nadab, Abihu, Balaam, King Saul, and Jeroboam. These were all men who received commandment of the Lord but assumed that He expected less of them than He first demanded. Personally, this scribe would rather follow in the steps of Noah. According to the biblical record, instead of perverting the commands of God to find the *core* or what God really wanted, Noah did "all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22).

CONCLUSION

Over thirty years ago, Rubel Shelly adequately wrote, "The first basic error of liberalism is one of attitude" (37). Liberalism's attitude toward and viewpoint of God is at the root of their error. The liberal movement have a blatant lack of respect and regard for Who God really is and what He really expects of man. What will stem the tide and reverse the error of liberalism? Dear friends, it will be nothing short of relearning about God as He is revealed in Scripture. May we pray for ourselves the prayer of Moses: "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, **that I may know thee**" (Exo. 33:13). For those teaching liberal doctrines or even those who have been influenced by their teaching, may we pray as Christ

prayed for the disciples: "**that they might know thee the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

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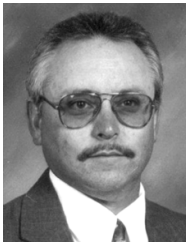
LIBERALISM AND CHRIST

David B. Jones



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INTRODUCTION

The theme this year is another timely and needed topic: *The Blight Of Liberalism*. We have seen the Lord's church divided and, even in some locations, destroyed because of the liberal doctrines of men which have replaced the Gospel of Jesus Christ at those places. We have had men rise up in the church and espouse new doctrines and lead away many. Today we have their disciples continuing this apostasy. We must stand in the gap, speaking the truth in love, to save those who will repent, and to educate others so they will not be taken captive by these devilish doctrines.

Our assigned subject is "Liberalism and Christ." We will explore this subject, making applications for us today. Christ had to deal with those who mishandled and misused His Father's Word. For example, the Sadducees approached Him on one occasion, asking Him a question exposing their liberal nature and their impure motives. Matthew records:

> The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first,

> when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am 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 (22:23-32).

The Sadducees were Grecian or Hellenistic in background, and because they were, they had a liberal attitude toward the Scriptures. They did not believe in spirits or the resurrection. They misused the Word of God, hoping to trap Jesus. However, notice Jesus told them they erred, not knowing the Scriptures. The Master Teacher did not allow them to be liberal with His Father's Word without being rebuked. He spoke out when His Father's Word was handled in such a manner, and we should follow His example (1 Pet. 2:21). We will notice this subject in three parts: The Divine Standard; The Divine Standard Exposed Liberalism; and The Divine Standard Commands us to Expose Liberalism Today.

THE DIVINE STANDARD

While walking among men on the earth, Jesus revealed the Father to us through Himself. John wrote: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). John had previously written:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (1:1-3).

The Word became flesh and walked among men to pay the price for our sins (Heb. 2:9). He also walked among men to reveal the Father to us. The Hebrews writer also made this point:

> 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; Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word

> of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

Jesus was the *express image* of God; that is, He was the "figure stamped or the exact copy or representation" of God. Therefore, He revealed God to us, and part of the proof came in the form of words. This made Jesus the Divine Standard or authority because He was revealing the Father through His actions and His words.

On one occasion Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father and he would be satisfied (John 14:8). John records Jesus' answer to this:

> Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (14:9-12).

Jesus' answer explained to Philip that if he had seen the Son, then he had also seen the Father, because the Father was in the Son through His Words. Thus, Jesus revealed the Father and was the Divine standard Himself. Jesus actually had the Words in Him and He was the Word also.

THE DIVINE STANDARD EXPOSED LIBERALISM IN HIS DAY

Jesus being the Divine standard was capable and able to expose the errors of His day. There were many who were inconsistent, with whom Jesus dealt as lived on the earth. The Sadducees were one such group. They approached Jesus on one occasion and asked of Him a sign:

> The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O *ye* hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed (Mat. 16:1-4).

No doubt they had seen and heard of the signs which Jesus had worked in and out of their presence. They knew He had the ability to heal and recover the sight of the blind, yet they rejected the evidence and

continued to seek something else as proof. The evidence was ever before them, but they refused to see it because of their attitude toward the Master. In their prejudiced and biased opinions, they did not allow room for the clear teaching which Jesus did to show them what they should do.

One of the signs of liberalism is the fact that they are very inconsistent in their application of the Word of God. On one such occasion, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a cornfield. As they journeyed, the disciples plucked ears of corn and began to eat. It happened to be the Sabbath Day. The Pharisees saw their actions and condemned them for breaking the law of the Sabbath, which was that they were to do no servile work. Jesus immediately referred to David from the Old Testament who ate the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to do, yet the Pharisees held him up as righteous. Jesus and His disciples did not break the Sabbath because someone traveling on the Sabbath was allowed by the Law of Moses to rub the husks together and pop out the grain and eat as they walked. They could not gather, but they could take in what they needed to live that day by the method mentioned above (Deu. 23:25). Jesus asked them (Mat. 12:1-12ff) how David could be excused when he broke the Sabbath, and His disciples be accused when they did not break it. Jesus went on to tell them that He was greater than the temple and that He was the Lord even of the Sabbath. They had a very liberal way at looking at an application of the Scriptures.

Another example of Jesus dealing with the liberalism of His day is found in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. Jesus was asked why His disciples did not wash their hands before they ate. He answered by asking them why they violated God's law to keep their traditions. They would give their money to the priest of the temple, but it was money to be used by them to take care of the parents. When it came time to help their parents, they did not have any left and when their parents would die, they would collect it back from the priest who had taken a cut for himself. Jesus said this practice was a violation by their traditions and went on to show that it is vain to teach for commandments the doctrines of men.

Jesus continued to see liberal principles all along the way even with His disciples. He took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain and was transfigured before them. The text reads:

> And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Mat. 17:1-8).

Moses was there as a representative of the Old Law since it came through him. Elijah was also there as the representative of the prophets. These men spoke of Jesus' upcoming death (Luke 9:31). When Peter saw the three men, he rashly said they ought to build three tabernacles—one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. God made sure they understood when He overshadowed them with a cloud and spoke from that cloud, claiming Jesus was His only begotten Son. The Father said, "Hear ye Him." This endorsement forever settled the matter of who has authority today. However, we want to notice the attitude of Peter. According to the thinking of many people, Peter had a good idea. However, God only wanted **one** tabernacle. This one tabernacle would show the authority of His Son over everyone, including Moses and Elijah. Many today need to learn this lesson as they go about trying to build *new churches* for the Lord. They need to reread this text and see that Jesus alone has authority, and it is His Word which we should read and study for salvation. We need to follow the lead of our Savior and not allow liberalism to flourish.

Perhaps the most blatant picture of liberalism was the buying and selling in the temple. Although the Jews had to have animals to offer to the Lord in the temple, the Jews also made money by selling them in the temple area to those who had to travel a long way to get to the temple. Obviously, some of them were not making money using the circumstances but many of them did. As Jesus stood over and watched how the religious leaders handled the worship in the temple, His anger rose. John records this for us:

> After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

> And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body (2:12-21).

Jesus could not stand by and see His Father's house of prayer become a den for dishonest and money-hungry Jews. He exposed them for what they were in graphics terms. He made a whip and literally drove them out of the temple. He cleansed the house of worship and of prayer. Today, when we see men or women abusing and misusing the Lord's church, we ought to rise up and cleanse it spiritually. We may need to mark and avoid (Rom. 16:16-17); there are times names need to be mentioned and fellowship withdrawn, so in the spirit of Christ, there will be an opportunity to save the soul of the one in error.

THE DIVINE STANDARD EXPECTS US TO EXPOSE LIBERALISM TODAY

Since the Divine Standard is not walking around physically with us today, we cannot turn to Him personally and see what to do and how to do it. However, He left us His inspired Word through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and we can know how and what to do with liberalism. Jesus said:

> Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.... 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 16:7, 13-15).

The Father's words came down to Christ who gave them to the Holy Spirit who, in turn, inspired the men to write. The Bible is the Word of God the Father, the Word Who is the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We have

the Divine Standard's Words to guide us as we deal with the same spirited people He dealt with while on earth.

All of the New Testament is the Word of Christ, and so we need to obey it all—not just the Gospel accounts or the parts we like. Verses such as these we now consider show us that we need to fight the good fight of faith and expose the errors of liberalism. Paul wrote:

> All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God provided all things we need to be complete or mature as we work for Him. This leaves no room for anything else.

Peter tells us that God has given unto us **all** that we need:

> Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:2-4).

Notice that God has given—past tense—all things that we need for life and godliness. We can know how to live and how to be godly through the knowledge of God's Word. Since God has given unto us all things, then we have what we need to expose those who would not teach what the Bible teaches.

According to the Lord's half-brother Jude, the faith has been delivered once for all:

> 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).

God has placed within our hands all that we need to make us full-grown and capable of defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Paul sat in a Roman prison, he knew the brethren were upset back in Philippi. They knew he was there for preaching the Gospel, as Jesus commanded. Paul wrote these words to them:

> But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without

> fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel (1:12-17).

Paul wanted them to understand that his being in prison was providential and that through his imprisonment, the Gospel would have opportunity to go forth. He also wanted them to understand that he was still set for the defense even though preaching is what landed him in prison. They may have reasoned that since preaching put him into prison, he might be bitter against the Truth. Paul wanted them to know that he was still set to defend the truth. In fact, he later wrote to them:

> Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (3:1-3).

He warned them against the false teachers known as Judiazers: those who were persecuting the church.

So it is today with those of a liberal mindset. The clear evidence is set forth in the New Testament, but this is not enough for them. They still search for some other means by which they can *know* Jesus. They reject walking the straight path set forth in the New Testament. Their goal is to broaden the paths of the fellowship lines and expand the borders of what is accepted in worship. Jesus' teaching is not enough, and so they have heaped to themselves teachers, because of their itching ears, and then they have them tickled by these charlatans. Their attitude toward Scripture expresses doubt as to whether or not we can actually *know* we have absolute truth. They reject the idea of drawing lines, and they widen what God has made narrow in an attempt to be accepted by many in the denominational world. Carroll D. Osburn wrote a book, titled *The Peaceable Kingdom* and therein has promoted the "core" Gospel/doctrine heresy. Notice this example of his comments regarding fellowship:

> There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who are only beginners and have yet to arrive at Christian maturity (1 John 2:12-14; Acts 18:24-26; Romans 14:1-23). There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether more than one cup in communion is acceptable, whether the communion bread is to be pinched or snapped, whether once can eat in the church building, whether funds can be used from the church treasury to support orphan homes, 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 (90-91).

According to Osburn, the doors and gates of the way called narrow (Mat. 7:13-14) would be widened to include many, no matter what they believed or practiced. Jesus spoke of those who would substitute their ways for God's:

> *Ye* hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men (Mat. 15:7-9).

When man substitutes for God's way, he violates God's law and is rejected by Jesus. These individuals and their doctrines are to be exposed for the good of the body. Rubel Shelly is another of the stripe which espouses the doctrine of compromise. Here is what he said several years ago regarding fellowship:

> We come from our different backgrounds and traditions. And sometimes those backgrounds and traditions become so important to us that we forget really that the kingdom of God is wider, deeper, larger, greater than any of those particular streams or traditions (amen from the audience). The streams and tributaries flowing into the larger kingdom of God we would do well not to build dams in each other's little rivulets.

He compared the various religions which confess that Jesus was the virgin-born, crucified, and bodily-resurrected Son of God to streams and tributaries which flow into a larger river. He would have us believe that as each smaller stream of water flows into a larger one to form only one river, so the various religious backgrounds and traditions from which denominations come join together to make only one body—though diametrically opposite in teaching. Jesus also addressed this idea as He spoke on earth. In John 15:1-11 Jesus taught about the vine and the branches. The various branches grow from the one true vine and thus make one large vine. However, Jesus explained what the vine and the branches were in His analogy: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (15:1). "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (15:5). Jesus is the vine and members are the branches. All the branches of a vine produce the exact

same fruit with the exact same leaves, etc. Thus, all the various denominations with their vastly different traditions, teachings, requirements for membership, worship, and organization, cannot be branches of the **same** vine! They all produce different fruit! As further evidence of this point, we once again notice a quote from Rubel's speech in 1995:

> We're here to affirm a central truth around which we can unite. We're so different in our church polity and organization. We are so different in our traditions, we don't know each other's liturgies. We didn't know quite at some points in the service, some of us, which side to sit on, when to get up, when to sit down and when to do what. We are so different in these matters, but those are not the matters that make people Christians. The core of historic, orthodox Christianity comes to its crescendo around the event that we call resurrection, around this season of the year that we call Easter.

According to Rubel, all *believers* (as he would say) can *unite* around the cross but can have different organizations and beliefs in how to be saved and how to worship with God's approval. However, this compromising idea goes against sound biblical principles and precepts!

The Bible is filled with passages which exhort us to take actions against those who would try and make the church of Christ into a haven for liberalism or denominationalism. For example, Paul wrote:

> Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them (Rom. 16:16-17).

We must put our eyes on these kind of teachers and avoid them. We should not invite them in to speak, nor should we go and speak with them on various programs unless we are there to expose their error. Paul again wrote:

> But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Tit. 3:9-11).

Paul acknowledged that a heretic is one who condemns himself. It is sad when brethren become angry when heretics are called out from the pulpits! Since these men condemn themselves because of their false doctrines, we are not wrong for pointing out their errors. We are not doing the condemning, the Bible says the teachers themselves do the condemning.

Peter also wrote:

> 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. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Peter warned them and us that false teachers dwelt everywhere and were not to be tolerated. These false teachers were not overlooked by God. They were not to be simply loved for who they were, but they were condemned by the Lord for their pernicious ways. Their erroneous ways would cause others to follow them to destruction. Peter then begins to use a series of threes to show how God would not suffer some things to go unpunished; applies this principle to the false teachers. God will not allow them to miss judgment as well.

We read in Galatians about a situation which had arisen due to the Jews who had tried to pervert the Gospel by mixing physical circumcision into the plan of salvation of the Gentiles. Paul went up to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles and the elders there to see how to handle this situation. Notice what Paul writes:

> Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 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 (2:1-5).

Titus was a Gentile and was not circumcised because to do so would have been given place to the false teachers, since it would have involved doing what they bid for them to do. Paul explained why they did not—**that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you**. Paul's attitude was that he would not give credence in any way to what the false teachers were upholding, which is our example today. We need to avoid at all costs giving any credence to false teachers. We love them because they are brethren: erring though they be. But, we do not

love the actions of perverting the Gospel, as so many of them do in our day and age. As we noted in Shelly's and Osburn's writings and speeches, these men needed to be marked for the safety of the flock. A shepherd would not invite a wolf into a sheepfold if he had the safety of the sheep at heart, and neither does a false teacher need to be invited in to have an opportunity to draw away the sheep to their erroneous ways.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is the Divine Standard of religion. He came from heaven and lived a perfect life on earth. He handled the liberalism of His day with His words and His actions. When He ascended back to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide them into all truth. We now have that written Word and we can know how to handle these matters. Jesus expects us to handle them just like He did. He spoke against them, drove them out, and marked them when necessary. We cannot do less and be His disciples in the church today.

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LIBERALISM AND THE SPIRIT

Kent Bailey

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INTRODUCTION

The blight of liberalism is one of the greatest dangers facing the New Testament church. Liberalism works like termites on a structure. Often there is no realization that a problem exists until the building is ready to fall. About thirty to thirty-five years ago, faithful brethren began to sound out warnings regarding the reality of such.

During the past twenty-five years the problem of liberalism has grown at a very rapid pace primarily due to the fact that the majority of our people do not have an adequate understanding of the Scriptures. When one does not understand Bible truth, one will not understand false doctrine nor how to properly respond to and defeat such. Resultant from generic preaching and teaching, a failure to educate brethren regarding crucial issues facing us, and an aversion to controversy, we have produced a generation within the Lord's church that totally rejects the concept of following that of a divine pattern and has nothing less than contempt for the aspect of biblical authority.

LIBERALISM DEFINED

When we discuss liberalism, we speak of a broader concept of truth than what the Word of God allows. Liberalism is a philosophical problem that relates to basic attitudes, positions, thoughts, and principles out of which comes action. *Liberalism* has two particular extensions and applications:

Classical Liberalism

Classical Liberalism attacks the very concept of God and denies the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible. It repudiates the Deity of Jesus Christ, rejects the concepts of sin, salvation, the final judgment, heaven, and hell. Such a view advocates the position that the historical Jesus was only a human being and that his ultimate purpose in life was the elevation of humanity's social good. This particular view has spawned the various forms of humanism, contributed to the spread of various forms of agnosticism, and literally destroyed the moral fabric of our society asserting that there are no absolutes**.** Classical Liberalism finds advocates in the philosophies of both *Modernism* and *Post-Modernism*.

Practical Liberalism

Practical Liberalism denies both *Modernism* and *Post-Modernism*. This particular view affirms the existence of God, the Deity of Christ, and the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible. The Practical Liberal believes in the reality of the concepts of sin, salvation, judgment, heaven, and hell; however, he rejects essential components of God's divine Truth.

The Practical Liberal purports to accept the concept of plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, yet denies that it is totally sufficient for our understanding as per 2 Timothy 3:15-17. This problem leads individuals to reject the essential component of following the New Testament as a divine pattern and seeking Bible authority for all that one does in life. The Practical Liberal accepts the truth regarding the suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ; however, he denies the Gospel plan of salvation in rejecting baptism for the remission of sins and/or denying that one must properly understand the design of baptism (if he accepts the proper design of baptism at all).

The Practical Liberal rejects the New Testament pattern regarding the nature, organization, worship, and work of the Lord's church and seeks at most to change the practice of following New Testament teaching along these lines (or at the least to change one's thinking to

the point to bring about compromise of the Truth). They have no problem at all with the inclusion of mechanical instruments of music, special singing groups, or other unauthorized activity in the worship of God. When pressed on the authority, or pattern principles, the Practical Liberal usually denies the authoritative nature of the principle of implication as well as New Testament examples. If one rejects the pattern principle, obviously he will also reject the premise of models or examples to follow.

Whether it be Classical and/or Practical Liberalism, such has an extremely negative effect upon one's reaction to God. He downplays the Holy Spirit's role in performing miracles and in the inspiration of the Word, thus developing false views about God.

The Holy Spirit and Biblical Inspiration

There was a time (in the not too distant past) when someone affirmed the concept of biblical inspiration that everyone knew exactly what he was both explicitly stating and implying. The apostle Paul sets forth the case for biblical inspiration in the Scriptures themselves:

> 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).

Inspiration derives from the Latin *inspirare,* which means "to breathe upon or into" something. The five English words, "given by inspiration of God," in the King James Version actually are translated from the single Greek adjective, *theopneustos*, which is derived from two Greek root words (*theos*—God, *pneo*—to blow or breathe). *Pneuma*, defined as "spirit," comes from the verb *pneo*. *Pneustos* may be properly translated "spirited," and *theopneustos* would mean "God-spirited, God-breathed, filled with the breath of God, the product of God, or given by God through the Holy Spirit." The term translated *inspiration* implies an influence from without that has the ability to produce effects beyond natural powers. The book that is in this sense inspired is one into which something of another spirit or mind has been breathed; in other words, its author has been overshadowed by a power outside himself.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we note that the writers of the Scriptures spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit. In this context, we find usage of the Greek term *pheromenoi*, which literally means "borne along." His point was that the Bible writers did not communicate for

themselves but were "borne along" by the Holy Spirit to write (or speak) as they did. Biblical passages such as 2 Samuel 23:2, Acts 1:16, and 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 all affirm this to be the case.

Only plenary verbal inspiration meets the qualification for that of biblical inspiration. When we speak of *Plenary Verbal Inspiration*, we refer to individuals writing exactly what God wanted them to write, without errors or mistakes, yet with their own personalities and styles evidenced in their writings. *Plenary Verbal Inspiration* speaks with reference to "total word inspiration" with nothing having been omitted.

LIBERALISM VERSUS INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The influence of liberalism has brought about several fatally false views regarding the concept of biblical inspiration:

1. **Universal (Naturalistic) Inspiration.** This false view asserts that the Bible is inspired only in the sense that the writers are great in their natural genius and exceptional talents when they accomplished their works. The Bible is thus placed on the level of the particular works of Milton, Browning, Beethoven, Frost, and VanGogh. The fatal problem with this particular position is that it does not meet with the definition of Biblical inspiration and relegates the concept of inspiration to nothing more than *Naturalism*.

2. **Thought (Dynamic or Concept) Inspiration.** This false view affirms that the *thoughts* of biblical writers are inspired, but not the actual words. This position affirms that the crucial aspect of inspiration is that various thoughts rather than specific words are inspired. This concept has some very serious problems. How can thoughts be conveyed without specific words? Furthermore, how would the writers of the Bible understand totally God's divine message and write down specific words when they had received only thoughts? What if they chose the wrong word (or words) to express a particular thought or thoughts? Why do liberal and modernistic or post-modernistic commentators engage in word studies of the text of the Bible while rejecting **total word** (plenary verbal) inspiration? This position is sinfully worthless!

3. **Neo-Orthodox Inspiration**. The false view alleges to accept the supernatural elements in the transmission of Scriptures, however it also affirms the existence of errors within the Bible, and thus the Bible cannot be taken as absolutely being true. Those of this particular per-

suasion assert that God uses the Bible as a means of communication thus becoming a channel of communication such as the various aspects of creation demonstrate God's being. Emil Brunner charged that those who believed in propositional revelation (plenary verbal inspiration) were guilty of *Bibliolatry*. This particular view totally repudiates the very essence of biblical inspiration!

4. **Encounter Inspiration.** This position affirms that the Bible is a *vehicle* of revelation but within itself is not a divine revelation. The proponents of this view further affirm that the Bible *becomes inspired* only when it *inspires* the reader—that it is exclusively a human document that may bring to reader into a *personal encounter* with God. Thus, this view of inspiration is purely subjective and is contingent upon a personal encounter with God. Such is an abandonment of the very element of objective propositional truth.

The Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead, played an active role in the transmission of God's truth to humanity. To deny the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures demonstrates an effect and influence of liberalism upon one's particular view of the Holy Spirit (Thompson 195-96).

THE INFLUENCE OF EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is chiefly a twentieth century philosophical movement that embraces diverse doctrines and centers on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate accountability for his acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong.

There are many existential methodologies, but most have a common denominator that is typified in the methodology of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Kierkegaard drew his conclusions based upon a reaction to what he considered to be a dead form of Hegelian rationalism. The existentialist does not deny the concept of objective truth, however he does not consider such as within itself important as that which is subjective. Unless someone believes something subjectively and passionately, the existentialist does not believe that he has truth. Kierkegaard thus falsely concluded that truth is personal not propositional. He also thought the Lawgiver of religious truth often superseded the moral law as religious truth transcended ethical or rational thought (Geisler and Feinberg 46-52). When a person separates his conclusions from the divine standard of the Word of God, confusion reigns en masse (2 Tim.

3:15-17). Paul the apostle, prior to his converting to the truth, had strong subjective feelings in opposition to both the Deity of Christ and the New Testament church. Those subjective feelings led him directly into sin in opposing God's scheme of Redemption (Acts 23:1; 26:9).

We find that, especially during the twentieth century, religious teachers having been influenced by noted liberals as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Rudolph Bultman, who began to advocate the existential "leap of faith" in matters of religion—pushing religion by feeling rather than by propositional revealed truth. Coupled along side the philosophy of Romanticism, i.e., the movement originating in the eighteenth century characterized chiefly by a reaction to neoclassicism and an emphasis upon the imagination and emotions, such has a terrible influence upon the way individuals react to Bible teaching. Those coming under such influences desire this existential *leap of faith* over biblical trust based upon proper evidence (Heb. 11:1). They also seek to sustain their religious views by means of emotional feeling rather than objective truth.

In reaction to religious formalism and intellectualism, a movement originated in Germany during the seventeenth century known as *Pietism. Pietism* is not to be confused with *piety*. It is a designation in the area of religion for those who advocate Bible study based upon an immediate experience and sentimentalism that substitutes feeling for intellect, a substitution of a religion of feeling over a religion of will (Wallace 597).

THE INFLUENCE OF PIETISM ON RELIGION

In noting the modern day concepts of Calvinism, Wesleyanism, and Pentecostalism, one can clearly see that the basis of such false teaching has a "better felt than told" experience rather truth. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., correctly observed:

> The personal attitudes of the modern devotees of Pietism conform to the manner of its founders in the peculiar complex of the parent group— the original Pietist cultus. In early denominational circles, and among some current cults, it appears in the notions of "heartfelt religion," which in the old phraseology is "better felt than told." From the earliest recollections of gospel preaching in the history of the church of the past and present century, gospel preachers have unanimously opposed this so-called "religious experience" and consistently rejected all such psychic emotionalism as an evidence of pardon and sanctification or of the indwelling Spirit. It was the preaching of these pioneers of the gospel that drove the "mourner's

> bench" out of vogue. It is a curious enigma, indeed, that people and preachers within the church now, who should know the truth on the age-old doctrinal controversy over "a religion of the head or of the heart," have now turned Pietists. Their entire argument for direct spiritual influence by an immediate Holy Spirit indwelling is Pietistic —it is governed by sentimental emotions rather than by the consistent evidence of the truth as revealed in the gospel.
>
> It is for the sake of the "truth of the gospel" in the divine plan of salvation made known unto us by the revelation of the Holy Spirit through the written word that this study of the mission and operation of the Holy Spirit is submitted (597-598).

Calvinism in all of its forms labors under the false premise of "heart-felt religion" in advocating the doctrine of *Irresistible Grace*—the false doctrine that the Holy Spirit works **immediately** and **directly** upon the alien sinner to bring him to salvation. There are varying degrees of this particular heresy. The full-blown five-point Calvinist teaches that this work of the Holy Spirit is *irresistible* in that it cannot be rejected. Such is advocated because of the affirmation of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, and Limited Atonement. Those who reject the concepts of "Unconditional Election" and "Limited Atonement" (but advocate a direct influence of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of alien sinners) deny that this influence is irresistible, i.e., that such cannot be resisted; however, they nonetheless advocate a direct working of the Holy Spirit that can be resisted. This would be a modified form of Calvinism. When one studies the conversion accounts as recorded in Acts, one will readily take note of the Holy Spirit's role in the conviction and conversion of alien sinners being brought about by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ, not some "better felt than told, heartfelt experience."

Arminianism advocates the false doctrine of Total Depravity; however it denies unconditional election and limited atonement, grants a direct working of the Holy Spirit, and denies perseverance of the saints. The two driving forces of Arminianism are that of Wesleyanism and Pentecostalism. While both of these false religious systems are based on a Pietistic Arminian view of the Holy Spirit and His work, nonetheless there are some distinct differences (Turner 129-50).

The most closely linked religious movement on the American continent that actually became the springboard for Pentecostalism is that of the Holiness and/or Wesleyan Movement founded by John Wesley.

Wesley developed a particular slant on the concept of Sanctification that came to be known within this Wesleyan/Methodist/Holiness Movement known as *The Second Blessing*. Wesley advocated that this second blessing was a higher level of salvation that completely purged the human soul from the desires of evil and only permitted perfect love to be present. This doctrine is referred to today as *Total Sanctification* and falsely affirms that, when such is received, the recipient of such loses all desire to commit sin and develops the inability to sin. 1 John 3:1-9 is a passage misapplied by the adherents of that false doctrine to support that particular viewpoint. The doctrine of *The Second Blessing* or *Total Sanctification* is a doctrine advocating the direct work of the Holy Spirit on the human soul separate and apart from the Word of God. This doctrine denies the all-sufficiency of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and advocates ecstatic experience as a sign of its being parted.

The Wesleyan Movement was built upon emotionalism and subjectivism rather than the Word of God; therefore, serious problems eventually developed within the movement. Disagreement arose among leaders as to what constituted true holiness. For the most part, the denominational officials among the Methodists came to distinguish between holy living and emotionalism. As the result of these divergent views, the 1890s brought an official split among the Methodists—with the majority of the leadership taking a stand against the Holiness Movement. This action resulted in the establishment of some twenty-three different Holiness denominations that for the most part continue today.

It was during this time-frame of division among the Wesleyan/Methodist/Holiness Movement of the 1890s that Charles F. Parham began to place a new twist upon John Wesley's doctrine of *The Second Blessing* and/or *Total Sanctification*.

In 1900, Parham established an educational enterprise located at Topeka, Kansas, known as Bethel College. He and his students soon came to advocate that *The Second Blessing* was a fulfillment of the "latter rains" as mentioned in Joel 2:23 and evidenced by alleged Holy Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues (ecstatic utterances), followed by the performance of supposed modern-day miracles.

In 1905, Parham established another educational enterprise in Houston, Texas. One of his students, W. J. Seymour, went on to Los Angeles, California to conduct a revival meeting. He became so extreme in his Holiness doctrine that the Nazarene Church, where he was

preaching, locked him out of their meeting house and closed the doors to his revival meeting. This resulted in the origin of Pentecostal Holy-Roller practices on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. The Azusa Street Mission spread Pentecostalism throughout the land.

LIBERALISM AND NEO-PENTECOSTALISM

From 1900 to 1960, the distinctive doctrines of Pentecostalism were limited to the various Pentecostal denominations. However, in the early 1960s, there came about an evolution of a new type of Pentecostalism—**Neo-Pentecostalism**. Whereas classical Pentecostalism was based upon the Wesleyan/Holiness doctrine, Neo-Pentecostalism went beyond that particular religious thought to even include varying denominational groups all the way from Calvinists to Modernists, based upon Existentialism. It was during this same time frame that false teachers arose within the churches of Christ such as Pat Boone, Don Finto, and others, to lead many into apostasy.

The basic message of the Neo-Pentecostals is that of the alleged modern-day Holy Spirit baptism, miracles, and tongue speaking—minus the emphasis upon *The Second Blessing* and/or *Total Sanctification* doctrine. As a matter of fact, Neo-Pentecostals have very little teaching against worldliness and immorality and have come under quite a bit of criticism from those of the classical Pentecostal denominations because of their lack of opposition to such.

The event that many believe to have been the catalyst for this movement took place at Van Nuys, California on April 3, 1960, when Dennis Bennett, Rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, announced at a worship assembly that he had spoken in tongues. This announcement received a great deal of national publicity and has been acclaimed as the beginning of the Neo-Pentecostal movement.

The Vineyard Fellowship and the Third Wave

During 1988, a Neo-Pentecostal book authored by C. Peter Wagner, Professor of Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary of Pasadena, California, titled *The Third Wave of The Holy Spirit*, was published, advocating a more radical form of Neo-Pentecostalism.

The thesis of this book maintains that there have been two previous and distinct *waves* of the Holy Spirit during the twentieth century. The emphasis of the third *wave* is on alleged miraculous healing power, the exorcizing of demons, raising the dead, and God directly speaking to individuals. The basis of this movement finds its origin in California

with a Neo-Pentecostal group known as the *Vineyard Fellowship Church*. The so-called *third wave* of the Holy Spirit is alleged to be a divine cause of the same miracles of the first century being performed today with that of an entertainment flavor.

There has occurred an open division in the *Vineyard Fellowship Movement*, however. A movement known as *Toronto Airport Blessing* was brought about in 1994 at the *Toronto Vineyard Fellowship Church* in Toronto, Canada. In January of that year, during a four-day revival meeting, *holy laughter* took control at the beginning of the first evening and continued for the remainder of their assemblies. The mother church of the *Vineyard Fellowship Movement* has since dis-fellowshipped this particular church due to its getting so out of control that, in addition to their *holy laughter*, some are also roaring like lions and barking like dogs.

Pentecostalism does pose a very real threat to the Lord's church. The noted liberal preacher and university professor Randy Harris nearly ten years ago commended in the *Wineskins* publication a book titled *Surprised By The Power of The Holy Spirit*, authored by Jack Deere of the Vineyard Fellowship Church.

In 1996, Rubel Shelly spoke on the *Mid-South Conference of Spiritual Renewal* conducted at Florence, Alabama. Also on this same program was Mike Bickle, founder of an organization known as the *Kansas City Prophets*. This group became part of the *Vineyard Fellowship Movement* in 1990 and alleges to have the gift of prophecy for our time.

It is certainly obvious that those of the New Hermeneutic persuasion are in fellowship with Pentecostalism. Such will have an effect upon many with regards to additional false doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit, as well as giving greater encouragement and endorsement to unauthorized and unscriptural holy-roller type activity such as shouting and hand clapping in worship assemblies. Such serves as a case in point to demonstrate how far some are willing to digress from God's truth, as well as demonstrating that there is no stopping place when the doors of personal subjectivism are opened.

THE AX LAID TO THE ROOT OF PENTECOSTALISM

Since Pentecostalism, in all of its forms, stands in opposition to the truth of God, such must be proven to be false. In noting the teaching of the Scriptures that the Word of God is all-sufficient to meet the needs

of humanity (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2:15), Pentecostalism is thus demonstrated to be false, based upon its claim for latter-day revelation and the continuation of miraculous activity (1 Cor. 13:8-13). God's verbally inspired and inerrant Word had once and for all time been delivered unto His saints and once and for all time confirmed to be true (Heb. 2:1-4).

Pentecostals have no more respect for the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures than do the Mormons. Their claims are as phony as a three-dollar bill and their promises are as empty as a hollow log. The only evidence that they attempt to give for their practices are the subjective personal testimonies and loud cries comparable to that of the heathen witch doctors totally void of intelligence and biblical truth (Bailey 435).

LIBERALISM AND THE DIRECT INFLUENCE DOCTRINE

The question of how the Holy Spirit works in both conversion and sanctification is of primary importance. If one is in error on this vital subject, it will lead one into error on various components regarding God's scheme of redemption. While faithful brethren have differed for years regarding the means of exactly **how** the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, there has always been and continues to be a common agreement that the **influence** of the Holy Spirit on the **mind** of the Christian in the process of sanctification is limited to that of the Word of God. The last several years there has been a growing number who have actually gone beyond the personal indwelling doctrine to affirm that, in addition to His sanctifying influence through the His Word, the Holy Spirit operates **directly** to sanctify the heart of the faithful Christian (Deaver and Moffitt 101). This affirmation is loaded with fatal error and actually is teaching Calvinism in reverse. Classical Calvinism calls for a direct work of the Holy Spirit in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, whereas this particular form of Neo-Calvinism, as advocated by some preachers in the church, calls for a direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind (or heart) of the Christian in the process of sanctification. This direct influence doctrine is alleged to be "in conjunction with the Word of God, but not separate and apart from the Word of God." Such a contention is fatally false because of numerous reasons.

First, if the Holy Spirit works directly on the mind of the Christian in conjunction with the Word of God, then it must follow that the Word

of God is not all-sufficient in the sanctification process, which is a denial of 1 Timothy 3:15-17.

Second, if the Holy Spirit works directly on the mind of a Christian in conjunction with the Word of God in a non-miraculous way, then how does one distinguish when the Holy Spirit is working from when He is not working? During the first century there was tangible evidence to establish that the Holy Spirit was directly working (Acts 2:33). The alleged non-miraculous direct influence of the Holy Spirit would have no tangible evidence. How then does one rationally conclude that such an influence is taking place? If these Neo-Calvinists within the church are not very careful, their error is going to take them beyond Calvinism directly into Existentialism and Pentecostalism. Both Mac Deaver and Glenn Jobe are already affirming an alleged non-miraculous Holy Spirit baptism.

Third, a direct influence of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word of God upon the mind (or heart) of the Christian necessitates a miraculous influence. To speak of a non-miraculous direct influence is a contradiction of terms. If the Holy Spirit were to have a direct influence today that would constitute His working **without** means. The Holy Spirit working without means would constitute miraculous activity, therefore the direct influence doctrine of the Holy Spirit implies the false doctrine of modern-day miracles.

Fourth, If the Holy Spirit has a direct influence on the mind of the Christian in conjunction with the Word of God those who affirm this doctrine find themselves in a hopeless dilemma in attempting to explain just exactly what the Holy Spirit accomplishes:

- The Holy Spirit could not lead contrary to the Scriptures (2 Cor. 13:8).
- The Holy Spirit could not add any new revelation (Jude 3).
- The Holy Spirit could not interpret the Word of God due to the fact that, if the alien sinner can understand the Scriptures without direct help, then so can the Christian. There would be no point in giving humanity a revelation that one could not understand without direct help (Eph. 3:1-6).
- The Holy Spirit could not give direct strength to the Christian due to the fact that such would violate one's free moral agency—in addition to placing God in a situation where He would be blamed for a Christian's weakness (since this direct help does not really occur) (Camp 31-34).

The church of Christ both collectively and distributively is involved in a crucial battle for the cause of truth. May we determine both here and now that we shall join this fight and "earnestly contend for the faith" as we are "set for the defense of the gospel."

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LIBERALISM AND THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

The standard for at least a general belief in God is His creation. Paul informed the Gentiles that their suppression of the truth and rejection of the Creator was inexcusable: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). There is not a person on the planet who can deny that somewhere in their ancestry there was knowledge of the true and living God—and that He created all. To deny such is to deny that the Bible is the plenary, inerrant, and inspired Word of God—which is exactly what religious impostors do regarding the origin of the world. Those who claim fierce adherence to *science* decry the Bible as a religious book, not a science book. When a man reveals his scientific position, he also reveals his religious position. Science and religion are not mutually exclusive. *Science* by its most basic definition simply means "to know." If the definition for science is expanded to include the various laws and facts of the material world, it still does nothing to deny the Scriptures, which are fraught with references to what man's scientific investigations have proven to be true (i.e. the roundness of the earth—Isa. 40:22; the recesses on the ocean floor—Job 38:16; the fact that the earth hangs on nothing—Job 26:7; et al).

IN THE BEGINNING—OR AFTER THE BIG BANG?

The Bible begins with no apologies, no justifications, no hidden agendas, and no disclaimers. It simply states: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Whether or not one fully believes that inspired statement is a serious commentary on his world view; it is either an endorsement of his faith in God and the veracity of His Word, or it is an indictment of his defiance of the Omniscient God and his rejection of the inspired Scriptures. With all of the overwhelming evidence for supernatural creation emanating from an Omnipotent God, it is disturbing that those masquerading as *religious* would seek to impugn the biblical record and build their faith on the improbable and, in many cases, the impossible. People can become jaded like the first-century Gentiles to whom Paul wrote rebuking them for their proclivity to worship the creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25), or they can be people of faith who adhere devotedly to biblical faith that declares: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). The choice is up to the individual. The biblical record cannot be dismissed without serious consequences. Liberal thought has sought to destroy the minds of gullible followers for many centuries. The most dominant perspective from liberal thought is the Big Bang Theory. Even a cursory review of trying to rectify two polar opposite causes for the same effect would show the impossibility of blending the Big Bang with the inspired Genesis account of creation.

Perhaps you also have seen bumper stickers: "The Big Bang Theory: God spoke, and BANG, it happened." The proponents of the Big Bang Theory would be quick to tell us that it is not so much of an explosion as it is an expansion, but in either case, there has to be cause and effect. Scientists in the field of Astronomy and Physics admit that the universe had a beginning. Of course, Christians make the same claim. The most logic you can expect to receive from those who believe in the Big Bang Theory is their acceptance that there had to be a beginning. The following is a quote from a website dedicated to the Big Bang Theory:

> According to the standard theory, our universe sprang into existence as "singularity" around 13.7 billion years ago. What is a "singularity" and where does it come from? Well, to be honest, we don't know for sure. Singularities are zones which defy our current understanding of physics. They are thought to exist at the core of "black holes." Black

> holes are areas of intense gravitational pressure. The pressure is thought to be so intense that finite matter is actually squished into infinite density (a mathematical concept which truly boggles the mind). These zones of infinite density are called "singularities." Our universe is thought to have begun as an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, infinitely dense, something—a singularity. Where did it come from? We don't know. Why did it appear? We don't know.
>
> After its initial appearance, it apparently inflated (the "Big Bang"), expanded and cooled, going from very, very small and very, very hot, to the size and temperature of our current universe. It continues to expand and cool to this day and we are inside of it: incredible creatures living on a unique planet, circling a beautiful star clustered together with several hundred billion other stars in a galaxy soaring through the cosmos, all of which is inside of an expanding universe that began as an infinitesimal singularity which appeared out of nowhere for reasons unknown. This is the Big Bang theory (Big Bang).

The above convoluted quote shows the tortured logic of a believer in the Big Bang Theory. These atheistic theorists build a doctrine of beliefs that defy the very science they claim disproves supernatural creation—where is the cause and effect?

CAUSE AND EFFECT

As do many students of the Word of God, this author has copious notes in the margins of his Bible. There is no claim to originality in many of the instances of these notes as they have often been prompted by reading or researching certain topics. In thinking of the content for this manuscript, the writer found notes he had written at the beginning of text of Hebrews. Hebrews 1 is strong in apologetics and affirms both Creation and the Deity of Jesus Christ. Some of those notes are in the form of this syllogism:

Premise One: Everything which has a beginning has a cause.

Premise Two: The universe has a beginning.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause.

God has no beginning, so He does not need a cause. Einstein's Theory of Relativity (this year—2005—marks the one-hundredth anniversary of this theory) asserted that time is linked to matter and space. God, because He is eternal (therefore living outside of time) is also the Creator of time. In the early nineteenth century, biologist, Herbert Spencer told of basic scientific principles by which man studies the unknown: (1) time, (2) force, (3) energy, (4) space, and (5) matter. All five of these principles appear in the very first verse of the Bible, and in the order Spencer gave. Consider Genesis 1:1 with these terms

interpolated: "In the beginning [time] God [force] created [energy] the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]." As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, God is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15). Though we cannot intellectually fathom the eternal nature of God, one's belief in God as Creator is based simply and faithfully upon the accuracy of Genesis 1:1.

Additional notes this scribe had penned in the margin of his Bible indicated that "the notion of an effect without a cause is witchcraft not science." A further exercise in this course of study could go in this direction: (1) The universe is eternal; (2) The universe is not eternal; rather it created itself from nothing; (3) The universe is not eternal and was created by something (someone) that was prior to it and superior to it. The Big Bang believers would deny number one, leaving them with the two remaining options. Since they deny the existence of an eternal and omnipotent God based on their philosophical and religious beliefs, they cannot accept option three. Therefore, they find themselves having to accept the impossible that the universe had a beginning, and yet nothing caused it. That is why such language, as mentioned earlier from the "Big Bang" website—"an expanding universe that began as an infinitesimal singularity which appeared out of nowhere for reasons unknown," is ridiculous.

The original *Humanist Manifesto* published in 1933 claimed: "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created" (8). This is preposterous. Every effect must have a cause. A house implies a builder. The Scriptures say, "For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God" (Heb. 3:4). Also, evolutionists base their conclusions on the premise that thing tend from disorder to order (The Big Bang Theory). For example, if you see an abandoned house with dilapidated walls, rotting wooden framework, peeling paint, and bricks in disarray, you might say, "I imagine that used to be a nice house." You would not say, "That pile of rubble will be a house when it grows up!" The only way that house will be restored is if there is the re-introduction of a designer to make repairs and rebuild. The adage that the Big Bang had as much of a chance of creating the universe, as a tornado ripping through a junkyard has of creating a 747 jet, rings true.

Disorder does not drive order. In fact, the reverse is true. Things tend towards disorder and breakdown. The Scriptures testify on this matter as well in Hebrews 1:10-12:

> And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In preparing for this manuscript this penman discovered a brief question and answer scenario that facetiously shows the faulty logic behind the "Big Bang Theory." (The original author is unknown and no source was indicated on my copy.) The article is included here in its entirety. Perhaps the reader is familiar with this humorous exercise.

> What Came First?
>
> With evolutionists, it is unusual for anything to be first. The explanation for almost anything is that it developed from a previous step: Where did people come from? The monkeys. And the monkeys? From the fish. And the fish? From the invertebrates. And the invertebrates? From the first cell. And the first cell? From non-living chemicals. And these chemicals? From the earth. And the earth? From the Big Bang. And The Big Bang?

We will never get a straight answer from the proponents of this theory to that final question: "And the Big Bang?"

As the other topics in this lectureship make evident, liberalism is insidious. Skeptics, agnostics, atheists, and all other *ists* or *ics* are all welcome under any umbrella that refuses to acknowledge the *ex nihilo* (Latin for "out of nothing") creation of the world. The sad legacy of these fools who have professed themselves to be wise has continued to poison generations and countless souls (Rom. 1:22). The doctrine that defies the God of heaven while deifying man will not escape His righteous review. One does not have to be a scientist to debunk the *science* behind any suggestion that the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God of heaven is not the wisdom and energy behind everything that exists. Indeed as the apostle John's inspired and eloquent defense of the Deity of Jesus includes, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). As mentioned in the introduction, *science* means "to know." Those who deny Creation do not know that God does not exist and, therefore, did not create. They do not know that the Big Bang or any other implausible explanation is the reason for the universe. They simply have gone the way of the Gentiles of old who "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25).

Though the evolutionists cling to billions of years as enough time to justify their macro view of evolution (from a single cell came everything that is visible), not even hundreds of billions of years or infinite epochs of time are enough to discount and dismiss the God of heaven who as indicated in a "Creation Psalm" simply "spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9). Liberalism is simply Satan's way of saying, "God did not" when the Bible says, "God did." Unfortunately, there are many willing participants and promoters of Satan's agenda when it comes to Creation. If one can remove an all-knowing, all-powerful God from Creation, then he has no problem loosening the restraints on every area of his life, thereby freeing himself in this life to maximum self-indulgence with no eternal consequences —at least in his mind.

In light of the incredible level of faith it takes to sustain a belief in the Big Bang Theory and the accompanying "molecules to man" evolution, why is the conviction of Bible-believers regarding Creation so difficult to comprehend? This is liberalism's blight on the world regarding the very basic tenet of legitimate faith: "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). Faith is not at issue when discussing the origin of the world. The Big Bang theorists have faith, but their faith is misplaced. Those who believe the Bible have their faith in the proper source: the God of heaven.

Recently, world-renowned British philosophy professor and atheist, Dr. Antony Flew, somewhat recanted on his decades of unbelief by asserting that there was at least a possibility of supernatural creation being the impetus behind the existence of the universe. This writer has read the 1976 debate between Dr. Flew and a member of the body of Christ, the highly qualified and eminent Dr. Thomas B. Warren. Early in the debate, Dr. Flew made the following statement:

> Some people, both those inclining to Dr. Warren's side in this debate and those inclining to my opposite side, have been surprised and even a little shocked to find me proposing a straight atheist resolution—"I know there is no God"—rather than something more cautiously agnostic—"I do not think the thing is proved, or even can be proved, either way: and anyway do not expect me to stand up to be counted" (Warren and Flew 1).

In addition, Dr. Flew said, "I have started by trying to show why I am going to take a boldly atheist rather than a modestly agnostic line" (5). Well, nearly 30 years later, has Dr. Flew *progressed* from a bold atheist to a modest agnostic? On December 9, 2004, it was worldwide

news when Dr. Antony Flew, who was called "a leading champion of atheism for more than a half-century" by the Associated Press, seemed to be a *modest agnostic* after all. The Associated Press story reported:

> He now believes in God more or less based on scientific evidence, and says so on a video released Thursday.
>
> At age 81, after decades of insisting belief is a mistake, Antony Flew has concluded that some sort of intelligence or first cause must have created the universe. A super-intelligence is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature, Flew said in a telephone interview from England.
>
> Flew said he's best labeled a deist like Thomas Jefferson, whose God was not actively involved in people's lives.
>
> "I'm thinking of a God very different from the God of the Christian and far and away from the God of Islam, because both are depicted as omnipotent Oriental despots, cosmic Saddam Husseins," he said. "It could be a person in the sense of a being that has intelligence and a purpose, I suppose" ("Famous").

CLAYTON: CREATION CONFUSION

A few years ago in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where this author lives, John Clayton held a seminar at a local congregation of the Lord's church which is very liberal (unscriptural). Mr. Clayton, a retired Indiana high school physics teacher, erstwhile atheist and traveling lecturer to churches of Christ, has expressed views in his publication *Does God Exist?* concerning the big bang theory: "We have tried over and over again to point out to readers that the big bang theory is not at odds with the Bible nor with the concept of God as Creator." While Clayton's scholarship seems impressive, Bible believers need not be intimidated. His capitulation to a mixing of Creation and Darwinism is egregiously inconsistent. Mr. Clayton wants to have it both ways, seeming to assuage to some degree his former camp of Atheism, while also attempting to appeal to Christians. This attempt to balance two diametrically opposing viewpoints is deceitful, as well as illogical. Clayton sponsored an essay contest in his publication *Does God Exist?* In the last two issues of 2000, he published the two winning essays. The second *award-winning* essay was fraught with the same inconsistences as have been identified with the editor, John Clayton. Both are compromisers of Bible truth.

Though the impetus expressed behind the scholarship money for the essays was for the writers to show "how science supports belief in God and how they plan to use this to help others," the very title of the article

"Synthesis of Faith and Fact Possible or Impossible" implies that Creation (*religion*) is a leap of faith and that evolution (*science*) is rooted in fact. In the article, the author at one point claims that one of the "sad myths used to explain the fossils" is "that the flood wiped out the dinosaurs" (Hall). Though we have no biblical record that specifically identifies that this is what happened to the dinosaurs, the prima facie evidence for such is overwhelming. There are large "dinosaur graveyards" in the Western parts of New Mexico and Wyoming. These *graveyards* suggest a sudden and catastrophic event overcame these animals simultaneously. Even using the evolutionists' identification of rock strata, there is a boundary called the K-T Boundary. The *K* stands for the Cretaceous Period which was 135 million to 65 million years ago by the evolutionists' calendar. The *T* stands for the Tertiary Period which (again according to the evolutionists' arbitrary calendar) began 65 million years ago and has continued until the present. The evolutionists recognize this boundary as one that identifies extinction, but always fail to accept the most logical account of why this boundary exists geologically: that being the Great Flood. Dinosaur fossils (skeletons) are always found **below** the K-T Boundary, never **above**. This means they were buried under tons and tons of sediment and fossilized (some of them with intact or nearly intact skeletons). The more fleet-of-foot mammals survived longer and were able to reach higher ground, and thus in many cases were fossilized above where the dinosaurs are found. The point is elementary, but it is scoffed at by those whose *scientific scholarship* has overruled the consistency and veracity of the Word of God.

If the reader is wondering what the Flood has to do with a study of the origin of the world, let us look briefly at the connection. The catastrophic geological upheaval caused by the Great Flood as chronicled in Genesis 7-8 greatly changed the appearance of the earth and is responsible for the fossil record. Instead of accepting the genuineness of the biblical account of this universal flood, the evolutionist has used the results of it (the reconfiguring of the surface of the earth and drastic change in the environmental conditions of the earth, etc.) as a defense for the billions-of-years doctrine that they espouse. The author does not have space to examine this idea more closely. However, he urges the readers to further research this matter in their own studies (Apologetics Press has excellent material on this matter, as does Curtis Cates and others).

This is just one area of skepticism rewarded with a scholarship by John Clayton. There are many other points that could be addressed from this single *award-winning* article by Sharon Hall, but this scribe will reference only this additional one. Hall writes: "Genesis apparently was compiled by Moses" and "Moses says that God created the earth in six days and that God rested on the seventh day." These statements are cheap shots at the inspiration of the Bible and the ability for the readers of Genesis to understand what *day* means. The scholarship-awarded writer continued: "Whether the 'day' can be taken literally or is a figurative expression is the subject of heavy controversy by scholars." This writer finds it to be uncontroversial as to what *day* means. Moses (who is the inspired author of Genesis along with the first five books of the Bible, and those books were not simply *compiled* by Moses or anyone else) told the children of Israel regarding the observance of the Sabbath Day in Exodus 20:11: "For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Think of it this way—if the Bible began by expressing terms that we cannot possibly understand (i.e., *day* meaning an un-quantifiable period of time), then we would be unable to understand or have confidence in anything the Bible expresses. Sadly, in the case of the article in *Does God Exist?*, the student seems to have learned well from her teacher, John N. Clayton. This is a sad, but apt example of the fruits of liberalism. There is always a willing mind ready to absorb and disseminate the inconsistent, faith-shaking agnosticism that emanates from the instructor. The pompousness of so-called *science*, as it looks down its nose at the simple-minded *religious* folks, is an affront the cause of Christ and the veracity of the Scriptures.

DEATH AND CREATION

Another reason there is incompatibility between Creation and macro-evolution is death itself. The evolutionist teaches that animals (dinosaurs for example) preceded man by millions of years, that they fought and killed each other arbitrarily, and that there was widespread death among animals prior to man. This defies the Genesis record of Creation and what introduced death in the first place to this earth. God made animals, man, and woman on the same day (the sixth day of Creation). They peacefully co-existed, and no creatures were carnivores but were herbivores (Gen. 1:30). It was a perfect scenario, and God said

that it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Death was not a reality until after mankind had sinned. Following Adam's and Eve's sin and their subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden at the end of Genesis 3, the next chapter chronicles the birth of Cain and Abel, followed by the inspired account of the murder of Abel by Cain. There was no death prior to sin! Man still has those two major problems—sin and death, and a compromise with evolution can do nothing to alleviate that problem. According to the billions of years in the evolutionary account, death, bloodshed, violence, and suffering all happened millions of years before man arrived on the scene. In Glen Rose, Texas, there are human footprints intermingled with dinosaur footprints on the same level of stratum. These fossils show dinosaurs co-existed with man. This is what the inspired Job noted in Job 40:15-17. If one wonders why *dinosaur* does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible—the obvious reason is that the original King James Version was produced in 1611. *Dinosaur* was not coined until 1841. One claiming to be a Christian cannot reconcile the Bible's account of a perfect world that had no bloodshed and death with a view that teaches death and bloodshed prior to sin. Death resulted from sin, and sin was not present on the earth until Adam and Eve.

THEORIES OF COMPROMISE

Liberals who refuse to accept the six literal 24-hour days of creation as chronicled in the book of Genesis know to opt for a more *laissez-faire* mode of creation, such as the concept that God created and then He waited, and waited, and really waited, even to the extent of hundreds of millions of years between *days* of creation (The Day-Age Theory). This quasi-agnosticism is far from a reasonable compromise. "Theistic Evolution," that would encompass both the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory as they are called, is oxymoronic. If the *theologians* behind these theories really conceded the omnipotence of God, why would they be so dogmatic about purporting that God did not speak all that was made into existence in six literal 24-hour days? Trying to meld the concept of God and evolution into a plausible explanation offends most of those who are unrelenting evolutionists as well as offending believers in the six literal days of Creation. Creation and evolution involve polar opposite world views that are irreconcilable. Though we vehemently disagree with the strict evolutionists, perhaps their position is more respectable than one who would try to

coalesce two diametrically opposing views into one. The Law of Excluded Middle soundly refutes any attempt to do such (inasmuch as two precisely stated, yet opposite propositions on the same subject means that one statement must be true and the other must be false—no middle ground answer will suffice). The consistent evolutionist will acknowledge that much. Scholastic evolutionist, Dr. Douglas J. Futuyama, the author of a widely used college textbook on evolution, said it this way:

> Creation and evolution, between them exhaust the possible explanation for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did not appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence (qtd. in Baugh).

In a review of Futuyama's work, Korthof writes:

> According to Futuyma, "Evolution has the status of fact" and "the attack on evolution is an attack on science in general."
>
> The case for evolution has two sides: positive evidence—that evolution has occurred; and negative evidence—that the natural world does not conform to our expectation of what an omnipotent Creator would have created.

Even the hardcore evolutionist takes umbrage at the suggestion of some sort of compromise between evolution and Creation.

The Gap Theory (Ruin—Reconstruction Theory) attempts to force five billion years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. God is Omnipotent! He could have chosen to allow lengthy epochs between the days of Creation, but then *day* would have no meaning to us. The children of Israel would have been greatly confused if Moses had instructed them that they must wait a billion years or some other unrealistic, unidentifiable time to get from the sixth day of the week until the Sabbath. The Theistic Evolutionist who tries to have it both ways cannot logically do so.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

It is the wise soul who asks: "Who am I? Where did I come from? What is my purpose here? Where am I going?" Everything that we see either came through a natural process called evolution or from a premeditated design called Creation. The Psalmist marveled, as he wrote, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art

mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psa. 8:3-4). When man seriously considers the aforementioned questions, he must come to terms with the answers to the questions. If he concludes: "I am just another animal with no eternal soul. I descended from an ape. I have no purpose on this planet except to fulfill my every whim and desire and when I die that is the end of my existence," then he will have missed it all, and it will cost him his eternal soul. However, if he says: "I am created in the image of God and have been known by Him prior to my conception (Jer. 1:5), thus my purpose here is to glorify God by worshipping and serving Him (Isa. 43:21; Mat. 4:10). When I die, I will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Mat. 25:31-43; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27) therefore I need to live a life faithful to the Savior and according to His New Testament (Luke 9:23)." A life committed to the truth of the Word of God will one day allow us to be with our Lord, His angels, and all the saved of God forever and ever. Amen.

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LIBERALISM'S EFFECT ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Jerry Murrell

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INTRODUCTION

As the Lord's church has undergone the present apostasy, which began in the 1960s, many churches have tried to stem the tide. No church has done more to oppose error and uphold truth than the Bellview Church of Christ; for this you are to be commended. This year's lectures are an attempt to attack liberalism *head-on*, and it is this author's prayer that much good will come from it.

This particular topic, liberalism and Bible translation, is an important topic. Many people do not understand the negative impact that some of the newer Bible *translations* have had on churches of Christ. It will be the purpose of this chapter to tell the facts about the new versions that have negatively impacted[1] the church of Christ and to *let the chips fall where they may*.

Years ago Brother Foy Wallace said that these "new Bibles will make a new people out of us." *We*[2] are now a new people, and before this study is over, the author intends to prove that modern perversions of God's Word must receive much of the blame. Years ago men began to promote the idea of "attend the church of your choice." This meant that you should attend a church that made you comfortable with the views and doctrines that you already hold. Now men might just as well say: "Choose the Bible translation of your choice." If you hold to some doctrinal error that is widely believed in these United States, you will

likely be able to find a translation that attempts to uphold your doctrine. If such is not the case today, just wait until some marketing experts learn of your *niche market*, and they will soon provide a translation of the Bible to fill the void.

Almost from the dawning of the restoration movement, Bible translations have been an issue among churches of Christ.[3] This is what we would expect, given our historical roots. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Bible was chained to the pulpit, and the main source of authority was not God's Word but Popes and church councils. In Protestant churches, there was a great emphasis that also pushed men away from the Bible. In the *mainline* denominations, classical liberalism and skepticism, as was embodied in men like Henry Emerson Fosdick, caused the Bible to be questioned as a source of authority, since it was merely a human book. In the more conservative denominations, the Bible was historically not seen as the source of authority because it had been superseded by creed books. In the Lord's church, a great emphasis was placed on the Bible as God's complete, final, inspired, authoritative, all-sufficient revelation to man. Since this is the case, we are more concerned with carrying Bibles that get every detail right than any other religious group. Since most members in the Lord's church can only read an English translation of God's Word, we should all want to have the very best translation possible. This has led to a battle over translations that has raged from the beginning until now.

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS THROUGH THE KING JAMES VERSION: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

The old Roman Catholic church did not want *the laity* to be able to study the Bible for themselves. This caused them to use Jerome's Latin translation, *The Vulgate*, as their official version. Catholics saw any attempt to translate the Bible into any language other than Latin as heresy. John Wycliffe (about 1330-1384), called the morning star of the Reformation, made the first known translation of the whole Bible[4] into English. He had come to believe that every man was responsible for learning and obeying God's law as contained in the Bible, which he viewed as a higher authority than the Pope.[5] If every man must "obey the Bible as the codification of the law of God, it followed that every man must know what to obey" (Bruce, *History* 13). This made it almost inevitable that Wycliffe would desire to make an English translation of the Bible. His final version[6] was published four years after his death, in

1388, and had the problem of having to be copied by hand because the printing press had not yet been invented. The Roman Catholic Church saw his desire to translate God's Word as dangerous. After his death, he was condemned by the council of Constance. As a result of this excommunication, his bones were exhumed and burned, and then the ashes were cast into the river Swift (Gonzalez 349).

Soon after the time of Wycliffe, the Renaissance began to get underway. With the emphasis on reading and studying of the *classics*, which were written in Greek and Latin, the number of people capable of translating the Bible into English increased greatly. Men like Thomas More (1480-1535) and Erasmus (1466-1536) were leading scholars of the day who were concerned with learning God's Will as it was originally revealed by His apostles. With Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450, the relative ease with which Bibles could be printed set the stage for a great demand for English translations. This demand would cause many to begin to supply the people with a translation of the Bible in the English tongue.

In 1516, Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) printed his first edition of the Greek New Testament. It was his desire that his Greek text would be translated into English so people could read the Bible for themselves. In the preface to this groundbreaking work he wrote:

> I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the common tongue, should be read by the unlearned. Christ desires His mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I could wish that even all women should read the Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, and I would that they were translated into all the languages of all Christian people, that they might be read and known not merely by the Scots and the Irish but even by the Turks and the Saracens [Muslims—J M]. I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough, that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveller [Old English spelling—JM] might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them (Bruce, *History* 29).

The wish of Erasmus would soon come to fruition. In 1526, the first New Testament to be printed in the English tongue was translated by William Tyndale (1494 or 1495-1536). It was also the first major attempt to translate from the Greek text, rather than the Latin translation, into English. Tyndale's most famous statement came when he was having a dispute with a man who was defending the authority of the Pope. The man argued that the English people would be better off "without God's Law than without the Pope's." This strengthened

Tyndale's resolve to translate the Bible into English. To this man he replied: "I defy the Pope and all his laws; if God spares my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost" (Geisler and Nix 550).

Tyndale would later revise his New Testament translation in 1534. The second edition was unwittingly financed by the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall's order that all of Tyndale's original Bible be bought and burned by the English churches. This is the translation that contributed the English word *elder* for πρεσβύτρος, previous translations had used *priest* because of their Roman Catholic understanding of the church *offices* (van Bruggen 48). Tyndale was strangled and then burned at the stake on October 6, 1536, for his Protestant *heresy* and translation of the Bible into English. His final words were reported to be a prayer, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes" (Comfort 265).

The next important English Bible was the Geneva Bible. During the reign of the Catholic[7] Queen Mary (1553-1558), affectionately known to Protestants as "bloody Mary," many of the leading Protestants had to flee England. Among those who fled to find refuge in Geneva was William Whittingham (1524-1579), the Dean of Durham. He met John Knox, preacher at the English-speaking church in Geneva, who was working on a new translation. What is more important, he also met John Calvin and married into Calvin's family (Bruce, *History* 86). Whittingham completed his New Testament by 1557, and it became known as the Geneva Bible (published in 1560). This version made three important contributions to the history of the English Bible: (1) the print was Roman type rather than Gothic, which made it easier to read than previous versions; (2) for the first time a version of the Bible was divided into verses and not just chapters (MacGregor 133); and (3) for the first time italics were used to show places where the English idiom required additional words to faithfully convey the meaning of the original language (Geisler and Nix 554).

This Bible became so widely used that the Bishops of the Church of England decided to revise the Great Bible which was losing popularity. It was published in 1568, in part, to provide an English translation that was not so throughly identified with Calvinism and Puritanism (Comfort 267). This was more a revision of the Great Bible than a new translation (Bruce, *History* 93). The Bishop's Bible was widely used in Churches, but the Geneva Bible was still the most popular version used

in private homes. No copies of the Bishop's Bible were even printed after 1602 (Geisler and Nix 555).

Tyndale's prayer for the Lord to open the eyes of the king of England would be *answered* when King James I of England (1603-1625) decided to commission a new version of the Bible in English. This Bible has come to be known as the King James Version and is said to have retained about 90% of the work of William Tyndale. The proliferation of Bible versions[8] seemed to be bringing religious division in Great Britain. The Anglican Church clergy were using the Bishop's Bible as their official version. The Puritans were calling for political reform as well as religious reform. As strong Calvinists, they were using the Geneva Bible to teach and preach.

In 1604, King James called on the leaders of the Anglican and Puritan factions to meet and work out their differences at what has been called the Hampton Court Conference. The Puritan leader, John Reynolds, called on King James to authorize a new version. This was appealing to King James, who not only saw a single accepted version in his kingdom as an answer to the religious division in England, but also it would be a way to supplant the Geneva Bible which contained notes that King James saw as dangerous to his authority.[9]

King James responded:

> I could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think that, of all, that of Geneva is the worst. I wish some special pains were taken for an uniform translation, which should be done by the best learned men in both Universities, then reviewed by the Bishops, presented to the Privy Council, lastly ratified by the Royal authority, to be read in the whole Church, and none other (Bruce, *History* 96).

The final resolution that set the parameters for the work to be done said:

> That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service (Bruce, *History* 96).

The translators of the King James Version were men of the highest academic qualifications of their day. They intended to improve on the existing Bible versions that were already having a great impact on the English-speaking world. In the preface, Miles Smith wrote:

> Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one...but to make a good one better, or out of many

> good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our indeavour [old English spelling—J M], that our mark (Paine 174).

The best English speaking scholars in the world were contacted and asked to participate in the making of this new translation.[10] Fifty-four men were nominated by the bishops to take part in the translation. Forty-seven of the top scholars, were divided into six groups to actually work together to make the King James Version (hereafter referred to as KJV). The process seems to have taken six years, from 1604 through 1610 (Paine 174). In addition to being an accurate translation of God's Word, the KJV was a great literary work. Almost everyone will admit that the KJV

> gathered to itself the virtues of the long and brilliant line of English Bible translations; it united high scholarship with Christian devotion and piety. It came into being at a time of vigorous literary activity, and its scholars had a remarkable mastery of the instrument which Providence had prepared for them. Their version has justifiably been called "the noblest monument of English prose" (Skilton 329).

The translators of the KJV also had a very high view of Scripture. Smith, who typified their views, wrote in the preface:

> The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer [Old English spelling—J M], the holy spirit [sic], not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the Penmen such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's spirit.

WHAT A BIBLE TRANSLATION SHOULD BE

What kind of things should a reader look for in a Bible translation? In his book, *Challenging Dangers of Modern Versions*, Brother Robert Taylor, Jr., laid down three criteria for evaluating any Bible translation. Brother Taylor said: (1) a translation must be accurate, (2) a translation must be clear and understandable, and (3) a translation should be dignified (17). These are the three best criteria that the author has found for evaluating Bible translations.

A translation must be accurate. What does it mean for a Bible translation to be accurate? This writer believes that there are three hurdles that a translation has to overcome to be considered accurate. First, a Bible translation must be based on the proper text. This simply means that the Greek and Hebrew texts that underlie the English translation must be as accurate as possible. The first step that a person with little training in the original languages should take in evaluating

a new version is to read the preface and see what is said about the text that was used to make this translation. What you are looking to see will be explained later. God inspired the very words that were actually written by men like Moses, Jeremiah, Peter, and Paul (1 Cor. 2:13). This being true, we want to be as sure as possible that we have the very words that these men penned before we translate them into English. No translation of the Bible can ever rise higher than the text that underlies it. The reader may ask, "Why is this a subject of debate?" There are probably few Gospel preachers that do not own a copy of the Greek New Testament (hereafter abbreviated as GNT), and almost anyone who asks to see one has access to it.[11] It would seem simple enough to take that book and translate those words into English.

The problem is that the current Greek text was not simply a compilation of the original documents, called autographs by scholars, that were written by God's inspired penmen. The latest known reference to a surviving autograph was in the writings of Peter the so-called Bishop of Alexandria who died about 311. He referred to a textual problem and said that his view was correct because he was arguing

> as the correct books render it, and the copy itself that was written by the hand of the evangelist [contextually meaning the apostle John—JM], which, by the divine grace, has been preserved in the most holy church of Ephesus, and is there adored by the faithful (Roberts *Fathers* 282).

No Christian in the first century ever held a copy of the same Greek text available today, because it did not exist until many centuries later. Modern copies of the GNT were based on a compilation of many manuscripts (handwritten copies) of the original documents as penned by the inspired writers. There are more than 5000 ancient manuscripts containing all or parts of the GNT in existence today.[12]

This means that we have more evidence to establish the original text of the New Testament than we have for any other ancient document. Other literary works are accepted as reliable while relying on far less evidence.

> For Caesar's *Gallic War* (composed between 58 and 50 BC) there are several extant MSS [manuscripts—JM], but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar's day. Of the 142 books of the Roman History of Livy (59 BC-AD 17) only thirty-five survive; these are known to us from not more than twenty MSS of any consequence, only one of which, and that containing fragments of

> Books iii-vi, is as old as the fourth century. Of the fourteen books of the Histories of Tacitus (c. AD 100) only four and a half survive; of the sixteen books of his Annals, ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh. The extant MSS of his minor works (*Diallogue de Oratobbius, Agricola, Germanica*) all descend from a codex of the tenth century. The History of Thucydides (c. 460-400 BC) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to c. AD 900, and a few papyrus scraps, belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (c. 488-428 BC). Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals (Bruce, *Documents* 16-20).

You might wonder how all of these manuscripts came into existence. It happened by a combination of God's inspired commands and His providence. For example, when Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, he instructed them to see that "this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren" (1 The. 5:27). He commanded the Colossians that, after they read the epistle he had written to them, they "cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16). These passages indicate that the New Testament writers expected that their letters would be copied and given to other congregations of the Lord's people soon after the church that was originally addressed in the letter received it. Since there were no copy machines or printing presses in the first century world, the copies were made by hand.

Over a short period of time, these letters began to be collected and became the basis for the canon that governs the church today. However, none of the autographs are extant today. What we have instead are copies of these autographs or copies of the copies of these autographs. The manuscripts are divided, by those who study them, into four groups. The first group is called the papyrus. They are manuscripts that contain only fragments of New Testament books. They are designated with a *p* followed by a superscript number, such as p^{52} (containing John 18:31-34, 37-38) which has been dated about A.D. 125. Some have dated p^{46}, Chester Beatty Papyrus II, which contains all of Paul's epistles except 1 Timothy-Titus and Hebrews, as early as the late first century (Comfort 179). These papyrus documents date from the early second century to the early eighth century with most of them being

made in the third or fourth centuries. Part of every New Testament book is represented by one or more papyrus manuscript (Black 18-19). We now have identified at least ninety-eight papyrus manuscripts (Greenlee 25).

Then parchment began to replace papyrus as the material to be written upon. Parchment (in the form of a codex[13]) was easier to preserve than papyrus (in the form of a scroll) so the manuscripts that we have on parchment are more complete than the papyrus documents. The earliest manuscripts of the GNT were written in all capital letters, each letter being distinct from the one before it. These manuscripts are called uncials.[14] Uncials were prevalent until the tenth century. These manuscripts are designated by a capital letter from the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin alphabet and an Arabic numeral preceded by a zero. The more *important* manuscripts also have names (such as the fourth century manuscripts Codex Sinaiticus ℵ 01[15], Codex Alexandrinus A 02, and Codex Vaticanus B 03).[16] There are at least 300 known uncial manuscripts (Greenlee 26).

Then, beginning in the ninth century, the GNT began to be copied in a different form. The new script used smaller letters which were more or less connected to one another. Using this smaller print was more economical because it was faster to write and less parchment was needed to produce a book (Metzger 9-11). The minuscule manuscripts are designated by Arabic numerals without the zero in front of them (such as Codex 1 from the twelfth century).

The fourth group of manuscripts that are used to discover the original text of the GNT are called Lectionaries (abbreviated either by *l* or lect.)[17] The text is very similar to the text found in the majority of minuscules. As Metzger said, "Basically the Greek lectionary text presents a Byzantine type of text" (Aland 165). A few of these date from the fifth century (such as *l* 1043), but most date from the tenth century or later (Black 21).

These four witnesses to the original text of the GNT are the main evidence with which all textual critics work. Some weight is also placed on two other kinds of evidence. One of these is called patristic writings. Patristic writings are the writings of the early Christian writers. These quotations are so extensive that the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from these writings alone (Greenlee 46). Most textual critics place little weight on this line of evidence.[18] There is also some weight placed on early versions of the New

Testament, such as the Latin and Syriac translations. While these two lines of evidence are much less weighty than the first four listed, they are used on occasion.[19]

These six witnesses to the original GNT are the same for all textual critics. They constitute the evidence that points to the identity of the New Testament text. However, as with any court case, we know that there are various ways to look at the evidence. The prosecution as well as the defense are given the same facts, but they will use them to reach diametrically opposing conclusions; one says the defendant is innocent, the other says that the defendant is guilty. Fortunately for us, the evidence for the identity of the Greek text of the Bible is so overwhelming that the conclusions that all involved reach are not polar opposites. As Sheehan has written, no matter which of the generally accepted methods of textual criticism one uses, from the eclectic (Metzger), to the Majority Text (Pickering), to blind acceptance of the Textus Receptus (hereafter referred to as the TR) (Hills), there is 97% agreement on the actual text of the GNT (4-5). Given the sheer number of manuscripts and all of the discussion produced thereby, this is simply amazing. Even a critic who holds all other methods of textual criticism other than his, the eclectic method, in utter contempt, has admitted that while textual differences may make a difference in the interpretation of individual passages, "never is a doctrine affected" (Carson 56).

There are three basic ways that textual critics now use to recover the original text of the GNT. The method used by Westcott and Hort (hereafter referred to as W-H)[20] is to follow the reading of the two earliest manuscripts, א and B, and adopt that reading. As they said:

> It is our belief (1) that the readings of א and B should be accepted as the true readings until strong internal evidence is found to the contrary, and (2) that no reading of א and B can safely be rejected absolutely (Westcott 225).

If these two manuscripts disagree, the reading of B should be followed. They wrote, "even when B stands quite alone, its readings must never be rejected" (Westcott 560). The presupposition of the W-H method is that the older reading is necessarily the better reading. Others would counter and say it is not the age of the manuscripts but the quality and antiquity of the text, represented in the manuscripts, that is most important. All other considerations being equal, and assuming that older is better, if a ninth-century manuscript were copied from a

second-century manuscript, would not the resulting manuscript be more accurate than a fourth-century manuscript copied from a third-century manuscript? All of these *older* manuscripts and papyri[21] come from Egypt where the climate made the preservation of these early texts possible. The Bible is a universal Book and the proper text should have a wider geographical distribution. Besides, if Peter of Alexandria was correct, the autograph of the book of John was still present in Ephesus and people that lived close enough were still using it to check their copies.

The Eclectic[22] (from the Greek word *eklegomai* meaning to pick or choose out of something) method is the most popular method to be followed today. In the eclectic method the external evidence (manuscript dates and families) becomes less important and "internal or contextual considerations" become more important (Metzger 175). The eclectic approach is presumably where one chooses the best reading regardless of its origin. However, in practice, sometimes this method not only refers to the "selection of readings," but also to the "choice of criteria" (Epp, *Eclectic* 141). In other words, in one attempt to arrive at the original text, the textual critic may use the earliest manuscript as his standard while discounting a reading from the *church fathers*, and later he may face the same evidence for another reading and make the opposite choice. As Hodges wrote, "The knowledge possessed by modern textual critics about scribes and manuscripts is so ambiguous that it can, without difficulty, be used to reach almost any conclusion" (*King James* 343-44). The eclectic method seems to be based on the philosophy prominent in Judges, every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Jud. 21:25).

The majority text method[23] takes all of the readings and argues that the reading found in the majority of the manuscripts is most likely the original reading. Among the most vocal proponents of following a "Majority Text" is Zane Hodges.[24] In the preface to his GNT he wrote:

> the Majority Text deserves the attention of the Christian world. When all the issues are properly weighed, it has a higher claim to represent the original text than does the Egyptian type. The latter is probably a local text which never had any significant currency except in that part of the ancient world. By contrast, the majority of manuscripts were widely diffused and their ancestral roots must reach back to the autographs themselves (*Majority* X).

Most Christians who have read notes in the modern version that say something like "the two oldest manuscripts omit this phrase"[25] do not

know that most likely the phrase omitted by these two is found in 90% of the manuscripts that we have. The text underlying the KJV is virtually the same text as in what has been estimated to be 90% of our manuscripts (Hodges, *King James* 335).

The main objection to the position that identifies the Majority Text as being identical to the original GNT is that the readings are later than those most heavily relied on by the W-H and eclectic methods. Again this assumes that older is better, but even if this criterion is the basis, how do we know that the Majority Text is not the earliest reading? It has now been admitted by eclectic method critics as prominent as Gordon Fee that "readings that eventually became the majority can often be shown to have existed as early as the second century" (Fee, *Majority* 201). That is earlier than any of the manuscripts that so dominate the thinking of other textual critics.

Another argument against the Majority text being identical to the original GNT was first presented to this author by Dowell Flatt. Brother Flatt used to stress to his students that the textual critic must "weigh rather than count."[26] The idea that Brother Flatt was promoting was that the 90% agreement among manuscripts must be discounted when weighed on the scale against the earliest manuscripts, א and B. This contention assumes that weighing and counting are mutually exclusive. It is this writer's contention that based on the evidence at hand, א and B are inferior manuscripts which should be given very little weight.

Between these two manuscripts there are about 3000 documented errors in the four accounts of the life of Christ alone. There are 3000 differences between them, and this number does not even consider spelling errors (Hoskier 1). If, for the sake of argument, we assume that these manuscripts are equal in quality, then both manuscripts have 1500 errors in them. This means that they are not our *best* manuscripts; they are bad. If you were hired to copy by hand Matthew through John, in the KJV, you would most likely not make a perfect copy. However, if you were to make 3000 errors, you would be fired and your *copy* would be thrown into the trash can. How much *weight* should be given to poor manuscripts?

It seems to this author that of the three main solutions to the problem of the identity of the GNT the best solution to the textual problem is the Majority Text. However, this penman believes that a greater weight should be placed on geographical distribution of the manuscripts than simply sheer numbers. This would be especially true

when it appears that most of the texts that support a particular reading seem to descend from one manuscript. If, at the end of the first century, every congregation had access to an inerrant copy of the Word of God, then it would seem that the geographical distribution of a reading should carry more weight than any other criteria. The copies that were produced all over the empire were produced from a pure text. This means that it would be most likely that the reading with the greatest geographical support is most likely the original reading. In practice, this principle differs little from the Majority Text conclusions.

When one looks at the sheer number of textual variants in our GNT, the number might appear to be frightening. Many of the textual problems make no real difference in doctrine; so it is not as imperative that all the various readings be fought over with equal vigor. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 the original text either says that Jesus is delivering us ἀπὸ τῆς ορψῆς which is translated "from (in the sense of away from) the coming wrath" or ἐκ τῆς ορψῆς which is translated "from (in the sense of out of) the coming wrath." The majority of texts, with witnesses going back as early as C (fifth century) favors ἀπὸ, while the earliest known witnesses including ℵ, A, and B favors ἐκ (D. Wallace 471). Since there is no difference in translation that the English reader would notice and no difference in teaching that the Greek reader would notice based on the reading adopted, the author already knows more about the evidence than he needs to know. If this scribe printed his own Greek text, the favored reading would be ἀπὸ, but a footnote would read citing evidence for the other reading. There is no need to fight or divide the Lord's body over this variant.[27]

Second, the translation method is of the utmost importance. The second step that a person with little training in the original languages should take is to read the preface and see what kind of translation method the text they are evaluating represents. When it comes to God's Word as it was delivered to men, even the smallest detail, such as every jot and tittle, is inspired, and therefore it is important that it be conveyed into English (Mat. 5:18). When we give up on attempting to have as literal a translation of Greek to English, we are treading on dangerous ground. The scholarly terms for the two positions are formal equivalence (as literal a translation of the words as is possible) and dynamic equivalence (as free a translation as is needed to convey the thoughts of God as is possible). The basic flaw with the dynamic equivalence method is as one has said: "We want to know what God

said—not what Dr. So-and-so thinks God meant by what he said" (Steele 72).

The formal equivalence method is an attempt to convey to the English reader as literal a translation of the Greek as the English language can bear. Some *scholars* try to ridicule the idea that a literal translation is preferable or even possible. For example, Lightfoot wrote: "The best translation is not necessarily the one that is most literal. To the contrary, it seems to me that a really good translation will always be something more than mere word-for-word equivalence (40). Or as Gordon Fee plainly said: "The best transnational theory is a dynamic equivalence" (*Read* 36).

> If it is possible to translate more accurately by abandoning the words of the original for its ideas, why do the dynamic equivalent translations end up in such disagreement with each other? Instead of enhancing accuracy, dynamic equivalence subverts our confidence in the accuracy of the translations (Ryken 82).

Even some in the Lord's church have abandoned the idea that a literal translation of God's Word is helpful. After ridiculing the idea of a literal translation, J. W. Roberts said: "It ought to be evident from such material as this that accuracy in translating the Greek New Testament, then, is not a matter of literal rendering" (*Literalness* 167). However, almost everyone will admit that the KJV was an attempt to translate God's Word as literally as possible into English. Miller wrote:

> It will probably be a long time before any English translation excels the King James Version with respect to the much desired quality of literalness (in the sense of faithful reproduction—no more, no less-within the bounds of good expression) (307).

Vernon Ray struggles to prove to his readers that the KJV is not a literal translation by making the following argument: "In 1 John 3:17, the words 'of compassion' were added to the term 'bowels' in order to communicate the right meaning" (54). He then correctly cites the passage from the KJV which includes *of compassion* in italics. In the KJV italics is used to tell the reader that these words are not in the original but are necessary to complete the sense for the English reader. This seems to be great evidence for the KJV's ability to communicate the literal words while at the same time giving a meaningful translation to the English readers. This appears to be the perfect way to handle the problem when it arises. Besides, if the KJV is not a literal translation, why is it that when the *scholars* begin to ridicule the idea of a literal

translation, they are doing so to tear down the KJV. Why should they do so if it is not a literal translation?

The dynamic equivalence method is but another step on the road of offering a paraphrase of God's Word to people. Some might say: "Surely no one in the Lord's church would defend the use of a paraphrased version of God's Word," but they would be incorrect. Hear the words of Neil Lightfoot, who felt like he had to defend a paraphrase to defend the Revised Standard Version which is more of a free translation than it was a literal one. He wrote:

> But even if it [RSV—JM] were [a paraphrase—JM], on those grounds alone we should not refuse to use it. A paraphrase is to be rejected and condemned only when it departs from the sense of the Greek tense (41).

The dynamic equivalence method shares with the paraphrase method of translation a greater emphasis on communicating a message in English than on taking the words of God from Greek and placing them into English. The author of The Living Bible was at least honest enough in his preface to warn us that he was tampering with God's Word before he did so. He wrote:

> There are dangers in paraphrases, as well as values. For whenever the author's exact words are not translated from the original languages, there is a possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say. This is because a paraphrase is guided not only by the translator's skill in simplifying but also by the clarity of his understanding of what the author meant and by his theology.

In other words, as the translation becomes less literal, the theology of the translator becomes more important. This danger is also present, to a lesser degree, in a dynamic equivalence translation.

The champion of the dynamic equivalence method is Eugene Nida. Nida places the priority not on the words of the Bible but on the meaning. Nida defines translation as "producing in the receptor language [English—JM] the closet natural equivalent to the message of the source language [Greek—JM], first in meaning and secondarily in style" (Nida, *Principles* 19). He argues that "this means that certain rather radical departures from the formal structure are not only legitimate but may even be highly desirable" (Nida, *Theory* 13). When Nida talks about the formal structure, he actually means the words that God chose to place into the Scripture. He is saying that it may be

legitimate, and even highly desirable, to depart from the words as God gave them to His apostles to make an English translation.

The inevitable result of a thought for thought rather than word for word translation is: the translator's theology will dictate the text of the translator. Once we assume that the words of the Bible must give way to what the translator understands to be the meaning of the Bible, we have no choice but to give up on saying that we can have the mind of God on any matter. As one from Oklahoma Christian University who has assumed that a literal approach is not desirable and therefore defended a preference for *meaning* over *words* has said: "Every translation is a commentary" (Niccum 31).

While the KJV and other literal translations attempt to use italics to indicate to the reader that a word (that is not found in the original text) has been supplied to make sense to the English reader, the dynamic equivalence translations do not do so. They can add words not in the original text whenever they decide that they need additional words to get their theology across to the reader. They see no need to inform the reader that they added the word on their own. As Jack Lewis has said in his defense of the New International Version: "The Dynamic Equivalence translation feels no need to indicate every word not represented in the original" (*English Bible* 296). The only difference between a translation like this and a commentary is that a commentary does not try to convince you that it is anything more than a commentary. It makes no claim that it is the infallible Word of God the way a modern translation does.

A translation of God's Word should never be more clear than the original language was to the first readers, unless there are clear Bible verses that make it permissible. For example, there is a classic problem with understanding the meaning of one of Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians. The KJV has "But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin" (1 Cor. 7:36). This leaves the problem as ambiguous, the way an accurate literal translation should. However, different versions will choose to solve the *problem* for the reader, taking on the role of an interpreter rather than a translator. "If a man has a woman friend to whom he is loyal but never intended to marry" (The Message). "If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to" (New Internal Version hereafter referred to as the NIV). "But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*" (NASB 1995). Each rendering is a possible

interpretation of the meaning of Paul's word, but not one of them should be in the text of the English translation.

When the translator offers a dynamic equivalence rendering of the New Testament to the English reader, he has stepped beyond his job description. He has ceased to be a translator and has become an interpreter of God's Word. This is the job of the reader—not the translator. Let me illustrate this problem by one effort to communicate Acts 2 into English. In the Amplified Bible Acts 2:39 reads: "For the promise (of the Holy Spirit) is to *and* for you and your children." This author admits that this is one interpretation of the identity of the promise that Peter is giving to the people on Pentecost. This writer has good friends who he is in full fellowship with that believe the promise under consideration in Acts 2:39 is the Holy Spirit. They use this interpretation to support a literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and others use this interpretation to support a nonliteral indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This penman happens to believe the promise of Acts 2:39 was the Abrahamic promise. If one is reading the Amplified Bible and treating it as God's Word, how does he even realize that this view is a possibility? If the translator would not make this decision for people but simply translate, they can interpret the Bible for themselves.

Later, in the same chapter, the Amplified Bible reads: "And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to the instruction...to the breaking of bread [including the Lord's Supper] and prayers" (Acts 2:42). This writer happens to believe that this interpretation is correct, but it should not be placed into the translation. The danger is seen a few verses below when the Amplified Bible reads: "And day after day they regularly assembled...they broke bread [including the Lord's Supper]" (Acts 2:46). If one only had this version to read, he would think that the early church took the Lord's Supper on a daily basis. This is fatal error, and he would believe it for one reason: the translator decided to become an interpreter of God's Word and misled the reader. Translators need to stick to translating; they cannot do so if they are using the dynamic equivalence method of translation. With its emphasis on the meaning of the text over the words of the text, the dynamic equivalence method of translation is more compatible with thought inspiration than with verbal plenary inspiration.

Ryken has written an entire book taking the dynamic equivalence method to task. Anyone interested in this issue, who has the time, the whole book is worth reading. He summarized his case that a dynamic

equivalence version is not accurate concerning four principles. Since the author cannot say it better, he will quote him. He said:

> (1) such translations make interpretive decisions for the reader, and run the risk of deciding wrongly; (2) such a philosophy requires the translator to resolve ambiguities for the reader; (3) this philosophy urges the translator to interpret images and figures for the reader; and (4) this philosophy generally leads to a loss of important repetitions (300-301).

Then Ryken spends the rest of his appendix conclusively demonstrating that his charges are true. All dynamic equivalence translations are dangerous and possibly deadly to a person's soul. Like the sign says about swimming with sharks: You have been warned; you will use them "at your own risk."

Third, the result of the above two criteria, the teaching of the translation must be accurate. Translators are not Stoics without any feelings about what God's Word teaches on a host of issues. This is the third step that a person with little training in the original languages can take. Brethren need to open up the Bible they are reading and notice how it renders certain passages that are important to teaching other people the Gospel. For example, they should read passages that authorize singing in the worship of the church today. If they read the Amplified Bible in Ephesians 5:19, they would see the following words: "Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments], and making melody with all your heart to the Lord." No one can use this verse to teach others about pure New Testament worship.[28]

Brother Taylor's second two criteria were that a version must not only be accurate, but it also must be understandable and dignified. It might seem that these two criteria are at odds with one another. The more readable versions are, invariably the more vulgar they are.[29] Suffice it to say on this point, any person who cannot understand the KJV can consult the New King James Version for help. These versions are both clear and free from the kinds of doctrinal error that make liberalism possible. As regards dignity, this author would not even ask Brother Hatcher to print some of the less dignified parts of translations like the New Living Bible. If the reader has one, he might consult passages like Genesis 3:4, 1 Samuel 20:30, and 2 Samuel 11:2-5. Suffice it to say, it is this writer's conclusion that the KJV is accurate, readable, and dignified.

THE REASONS FOR THE CLAMOR FOR THE MODERN VERSIONS

The argument for modern versions has been made based on four objections to the KJV. The first of these three arguments can be found in many religious groups. So far as the author can tell, only members of the church of Christ have been found making the fourth of these arguments. (1) Our knowledge of Greek and Hebrew has improved greatly since 1611. (2) There have been improvements made in the Greek and Hebrew texts underlying the modern translations. (3) The English language has changed greatly since 1611. (4) There are numerous *doctrinal errors* in the KJV that need to be corrected.[30]

Some would argue that we need new translations because our knowledge of Greek and Hebrew has greatly increased. As Kubo wrote:

> New understandings of the original language through archaeological discoveries have helped to shed light on obscure passages and have aided us in understanding some passages better than they were understood before (20).

While it is true that there have been many discoveries that have helped us to understand some things that were unknown in 1611, this does not automatically make the case for modern versions being superior to the KJV. First, the men who translated the KJV were more learned than the men who make translations today. For example, even one of the harshest critics on the internet of the so-called KJV only position, Ed Rickard, admits:

> The men who produced it were the best scholars of their day. Their practical knowledge of Greek or Hebrew exceeded that of most scholars engaged to produce modern translations. They not only could read the original language fluently; some could speak it.

To answer this objection plainly, what we may gain in the knowledge of a single word that was discovered on a grocery list in Athens, we often lose in the ability of men to place that word into the overall context of the Bible. Second, if this were the real motive of those who make modern translations, why do they not simply update only places in the KJV where we have actually learned some information about Hebrew and Greek that have enlightened us? Instead they place their sectarian doctrines into the text—as the author shall demonstrate.

Even one of the scholars who worked on the translation of the RSV argued that this objection has been over-emphasized. Cadbury wrote:

> It would be a mistake to exaggerate the extent to which such revised judgements of the language can actually be recorded in translation. Improved knowledge of the original language is often a matter of slight nuances, of the suggestions that the original phrases hold for one familiar with them, rather than such as to necessitate one English rendering instead of another (105).

Many who argue for a new translation argue that the text of the original languages underlying the KJV is inferior to the text that has been used for modern translations. This objection has already been answered above in the section titled, "What a Bible Translation Should Be." However, let the author repeat his conclusion that, though there are real differences between the text of the KJV and the texts based on the eclectic method, except for a few places where entire sections are included by the new versions with footnotes that indicate they do not belong in the text,[31] the differences are not significant to doctrine.[32]

Many will argue that the English language has changed greatly since 1611; so we need a translation written in modern English. As Goodspeed put it:

> If the purpose of New Testament translation is to bring what the New Testament writers meant to convey directly and vividly before the modern American reader, then it should not be necessary for him to detour through a course in sixteenth century English, such as is necessary for the understanding of even the simpler parts of the New Testament (113).

If this were all that the authors of new versions wanted to do, this author does not believe that many people would oppose them, but this is not all that the modern versions do.

If a new verison came out that changed the KJV's "we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" to the NIV's "we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 The. 4:15), no one would complain. However, the modern translators also change the teaching of the text based on their own theology. For example, they change the KJV's "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" to the NIV's "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires" (Rom. 8:5). The Calvinist tint in this text does more than an update of the wording of the KJV, it serves to pervert the teaching of Paul. The issue should not be which version has wording

that is newer; the issue is: Which version contains wording that is truer?

However, some of the KJV's *archaic language* has a purpose and serves to make it more accurate than its contemporary counterparts. Lewis voices the concerns of many who call for an update to the language of the KJV when he writes: "The reader of the KJV has to deal with 'thees' and 'thous' and their corresponding old English verbal endings *th* and *est*" (*English Bible* 59). The reason that the KJV used "thees" and "thous" has nothing to do with seventeenth-century English. It was used because it is "Biblical English."

> The Greek of the New Testament like the Hebrew of the Old Testament distinguishes between the singular and the plural forms of the second person. The AV [KJV—JM] makes this distinction simply because the NT Greek does so (Allis 69).

Many first year Greek students are still taught to use *thee* and *thou* for the second person singular and *ye* for the second person plural. This is done so that the instructor will recognize that his student knows the difference. Modern versions that eliminate *thee* and *thou* use *you* to cover both forms, which causes confusion to the modern Bible reader.[33] It is much easier to deal with updating the language of the KJV as we teach than to deal with correcting the error in other versions like the NIV.

The fourth objection that the KJV contains numerous *doctrinal errors* has been made by Jack Lewis and his students. If one reads this chapter in Lewis's book without discovering what Lewis means by "doctrinal errors," it is easy to be misled. He informs his astute readers that *doctrine* means "teaching." He then avers that "any failure to present the Word of God accurately, completely, and clearly in a translation is a doctrinal problem" (Lewis, *English Bible* 61).[34] Given this definition, it is easy to see why Lewis can claim that the KJV contains "doctrinal errors."[35] What preacher has not ever preached a sermon and afterwards been met at the door by someone who says something like, "Did I understand you to say..."? Does this failure to be complete and clear enough for this person mean that you have taught "doctrinal error"? One wonders, if Lewis had been fired from his classroom the first time he was not complete and clear in his teaching, how would he have liked it? Maybe after being fired for failing to be clear, the papers could have *written up* Lewis accusing him of doctrinal

error. Surely, given the golden rule, he would not expect others to treat him differently than he has treated the KJV.

Lest the reader thinks that this author is being unfair with Lewis, let us note some of the *doctrinal errors* he charges, in his chapter, against the KJV. He wrote, "The reader of the KJV comes across some Semitisms that should have been converted into English phrases; for example, 'she called his name Joseph' should be 'she named him Joseph'" (Lewis, *English Bible* 60). Normally, Lewis will give this reader the verse that contains these *doctrinal errors*, but he failed to do so here. This author will inform his readers that this *doctrinal error* appears in Genesis 30:24 so he can mark through this evil translation and write the correct reading into the margin of his Bible. This is just one of many pathetic attempts to charge the KJV with doctrinal error.

Other *doctrinal errors* cited by Lewis concern words that have changed their spelling. The reader will want to rush out and buy a good Bible marking pen when he discovers that the KJV includes words like musick instead of music in Amos 6:5. Lewis ruins many sermons that have been preached on the "adventures of Paul in the theatre," based on Acts 19:31 when he informs his readers that this word would be much better translated as "venture." However, he let the evil KJV get away with a *doctrinal error* when he did not inform his readers that *theatre* in the same text should instead be "theater" (*English Bible* 60). Hopefully, Lewis will include this correction in his next edition to save another soul from Hell.

The only place where Lewis actually tries to make a case that there are what would normally be called *doctrinal problems* in the KJV concerns what he sees as the Calvinism of the KJV. As Lewis said, "Attention has been focused on certain renderings as leaning toward Calvinism" (*English Bible* 62). Note that even in his charge, Lewis does not indict the KJV for teaching Calvinism; instead he simply accuses it of leaning toward Calvinism. This is a distinction that his students have failed to grasp. The contention that the KJV leans toward Calvinism ignores two indisputable facts. First, the reason for the KJV translation to begin with was, in part, to provide an alterative to the Geneva Bible that had been translated by John Calvin's son-in-law (Comfort 267). Second, the KJV has been used on the polemic platform all over this land to defeat the doctrine of Calvinism.

However, this assertion is the closet thing to a credible argument against the KJV; so it will be pleasurable to deal with it. Lewis seems

to be very careful not to claim that any of the verses he calls forth for consideration in this section actually teach Calvinism. For example, he wrote, "Attention has been focused on [instead of making a bolder and more personal claim]...'such as should be saved' (Acts 2:47)" (*English Bible* 62). This is clearly an example where the translation could have been made more accurate. The present passive participle of the Greek *saved* was used here, so a more accurate translation would have been "those who were being saved." However, a Calvinist who wanted to tamper with the text would have instead used words like "those who were foreordained in eternity to be saved." When discussing the fate of those who have never heard the Gospel, this author has often said: "(1) God is just; (2) Therefore God will save those that should be saved and allow those to be lost who should be lost." This writer has never finished a presentation on this topic and been greeted by anyone who accuses him of teaching or leaning toward Calvinism. Clearly the KJV does not teach Calvinism in Acts 2:47.

The second most prominent passage that this scribe has heard the charge that the KJV is biased toward Calvinism is in Acts 3. In Acts 3:19 the KJV reads: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted." Lewis cites this and says, "Others have felt that 'be converted...' Acts 3:19...can be interpreted to say that man is passive in conversion" (*English Bible* 62). Again, this is not a completely accurate translation of the aorist active imperative form of the word translated "be converted" in this passage, but it is not Calvinism. This author once had a discussion online with a brother who made the statement even bolder than Lewis. Upon questioning, he affirmed that to translate "be converted" in the passive sense, as the KJV does here, is to teach Calvinism. This penman asked him if Jesus was a Calvinist. To this he replied an emphatic "no." This author then asked him to consult Matthew 18:3 and note that Jesus said, "Except you be converted." In so doing, He chose to use the second aorist passive[36] subjunctive of "be converted." If the brother was right in his contention against the KJV, Jesus was a Calvinist. Besides, if a Calvinist were to read Acts 3:19, he would become perplexed that repentance was a condition for being converted. This is not his doctrine. The KJV is not the translation that one would try to force on people if he were a Calvinist. We will soon see what a real Calvinist's Bible looks like when we evaluate the NIV.

The other problem passage in the KJV that this author heard repeatedly is found in Acts 12:4.[37] There the KJV reads: "And when he

had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people" (Acts 12:4). First, in 1611 *Easter* was not only used for the day but for the time of year. Second, the marginal note in the KJV correctly indicates that the Greek text reads "Passover." Third, some have wrongly assumed that the KJV here teaches Christians to observe Easter. They argue that, if the KJV is correct, this passage teaches that the early church observed Easter. The early church did not observe Easter. Therefore, the passage is inaccurate. If one substitutes the more accurate word into the text, *Passover*, would anyone argue that the verse indicates that the early church observed Passover? If not, neither does the passage indicate that they observed Easter in the KJV. Fourth, if the observance of Easter is based on the KJV's mistranslation, why is it the case that those in the Lord's body who observe Easter with denominations invariably are seen carrying a modern translation rather than the reliable KJV? While this is not the translation of this passage that the author would defend today, the verse does not teach Christians to observe Easter and therefore does not contain *doctrinal error*.

AN EVALUATION OF THE MODERN TRANSLATIONS THAT HAVE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Revised Standard Version

Given our emphasis on Bible study, memorization, and authority, it might be difficult to see how the modern versions became used in the Lord's church at all. One of the first methods of a modern version being placed into churches of Christ concerned the Revised Standard Version (hereafter called the RSV). The ultra-liberal National Council of Churches of Christ[38] worked hard to market the RSV as the successor to the ASV.[39] It was said to be an up-to-date translation of God's Word. They were very successful at getting many in the liberal seminaries and schools of religion to begin to use this new version. Many of the professors in *our schools* came out of these programs, bringing their RSVs with them. They recommended them to the students in their classes, and the students took them to pulpits all over this land.[40] The people in the pew did not understand how dangerous this new version was; so they switched so they could follow along with the preacher's sermons. The move away from God's Word was then fully underway.

The RSV was produced under the direction of the National Council of Churches of Christ. The RSV came out in three stages. The New Testament was published in 1946, followed by the Old Testament in 1952, and finally the Apocrypha in 1977.[41] The Greek Text that was behind the New Testament was the Nestle seventeenth edition (produced in 1941).[42]

There are at least two commendable things about the RSV. First, there was an attempt to use *thee* and *thou* when addressing Deity. For an example see Solomon's prayer (1 Kin. 8:46). Many of us who still use that kind of language when addressing Deity in prayer can appreciate this distinction. However, the RSV botches the way that men address the second member of the Godhead so badly that this plus actually becomes a minus. For example, in the RSV, God speaks from heaven and says: "Thou art my beloved Son" (Mark 1:11—RSV). However, when Peter makes the same confession of the Deity of Jesus he said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:16—RSV). Using the RSV rationale for translation of these kinds of passages, Peter begins by denying the Deity of Jesus when he said "You" instead of "Thou," but he finished strongly by affirming the Deity of Jesus when he said "Son" instead of "son."

Since its beginning, the RSV has come under fire and has not been accepted by many people for various reasons. As Brother Taylor has observed, "It was produced by modernists, for modernists, and to advance modernism" (265). H. Leo Boles attended one session of the translating committee and resigned because it was "shot through and through with the updated modernism of Destructive Criticism" (Foy Wallace 654). First, it is not an attempt to literally translate the Greek into English. In the preface to the RSV the translators criticize the ASV and others for being "mechanically exact, literal word-for-word translations, which follow the order of the Greek words, so far as is possible." So the RSV would be a freer, looser, and less literal translation. As a result of this kind of thinking, the RSV "blurred some of the finer distinctions in New Testament wording which...have some significance for those who are concerned with the more accurate interpretation of the text" (Bruce, *History* 93).

Second, the Old Testament came under fire for tampering with Messianic prophecies. The classic example was the debate over Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth. The translators changed the KJV's translation of *almah* from "virgin" to "young woman" (Isa. 7:14).

Much of the blame for this change was laid at the feet of the Reform Jewish professor, Harry Orlinsky. Whether he was the lone culprit or not,[43] he was the one who traveled the country defending this translation. Fortunately, for our purposes, the inspired Matthew settled this issue long ago when he chose the word παρθένος which clearly means virgin (Mat. 1:23). As Guy N. Woods said: "If we give up the doctrine in Isaiah, we must logically reject it in Matthew, because Matthew is supported by Isaiah" (259).

Third, the RSV took out many terms that have had a great influence on our traditional understanding on the role of the Messiah. For instance the RSV obliterates the seed promise of the Old Testament in passages like Genesis 12 by changing seed to descendants (Woodson 54).[44] This was an obvious attempt to make the nation of Israel the fulfillment of these promises (this view agrees with the Jewish understanding of Orlinsky). Also in the Old Testament, we see Christ as the scapegoat who was sent away, carrying the sins of the people (Lev. 16:8, 10, 16). However, in the RSV, the scapegoat becomes Azazel who was, instead of being a scapegoat, an old mythological wilderness demon. The KJV, based on Peter's use of this passage (Acts 2:27), indicates that Jesus is the person who is David's "Holy One" (Psa. 16:10), but the RSV changes this to "godly one." This takes away the Messianic character of the Psalm and Peter's inspired interpretation of it. They change the words of the Psalmist from "thou art my Son" to "You are my son" (Psa. 2:7—RSV). However, in Hebrews 1:5 the text reads: "Thou art my Son." In both of theses instances, the English reader will get the distinct impression that the New Testament writers were reading prophecies as Messianic when they were not intended to be Messianic. This creates a lack of faith in the readers. As Evans has said: "The RSV is a translation which can never receive the approval of conservative scholars" (65).

New American Standard Bible

The New American Standard Bible (hereafter referred to as the NASB) New Testament was published by the Lockman Foundation in 1963. The whole Bible was then published in 1971 (Kubo 222). The Foundation recognized that the ASV was "fast disappearing from the scene" and felt that they should rescue it and preserve it and "to do so in such a form as the demands of passing time dictate" (Preface to NASB vi-vii). It is almost impossible to discover the identity of the

men who made up this secret committee that made this translation.[45] However, it has been revealed that Ruben Olson was chairman of the editorial board (Lewis, *English Bible* 166). The basic Greek Text used for this version was the eclectic Nestle's twenty-third edition, with some minor changes (Kubo 223). The NASB followed the Masorectic Text with a great amount of input from other versions and especially the Dead Sea Scrolls. Denny Petrillo noted that they were so meticulous with their textual and translation marginal notes to the point that there are 478 marginal notes in the book of Job alone (643).

The NASB was an attempt to be literal but less so than the original ASV. The committee who produced the NASB had a two-fold purpose: "to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to English usage" (Forward to the NASB iii). The committee wrote, "When it was felt that the word-for-word literalness of the ASV was unacceptable to the modern reader, a change was made in the direction of a more current English idiom" (Preface to the NASB vii).

There are some places where the NASB made improvements over the KJV. In general, attempts were made to make more distinction between verb tenses, especially the aorist ("he did")[46] and imperfect tense ("he was doing") as well as participles (Preface to the NASB, viii). For example, they translate the aorist participle and aorist indicative in the following way: "And having said [aorist active participle—JM] these things to them, He stayed [aorist active indicative—JM] in Galilee" (John 7:9). They make the KJV's "Then the Jews sought him at the feast" more literal by translating "The Jews therefore were seeking [imperfect active indicative—JM] Him at the feast" (John 7:11). This writer also likes the attempt to use capital letters when using a pronoun referring to Deity as in "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9).

The NASB also did a good job making some passages clearer than the KJV by using different English words to translate the same Greek word in differing contexts. For example, in Hebrews they do a good job of dealing with αἰών. They translate: "But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). Instead of *age* the KJV has Christ appearing at the end of the world. This is a permissible translation of αἰών, but it does not fit the context. In the place where the Holy Spirit is incorrectly referred to by the neuter *it*, the NASB uses the more correct *Himself* as

in Romans 8:16, 26. This means the Holy Spirit is a masculine person, as well as Deity, since the NASB uses the capital letters to refer to Deity.

One of the first problems with the NASB is that it leaves contradictions in the Bible, which were easily solved by other versions. For example, in John 7:8 the NASB has Jesus say: "I do not go up to the feast." However, two verses later the text reads: "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up" (John 7:10—NASB). If this had been said of anyone but Jesus, the reader might conclude that He lied. However, since this is Jesus under consideration, the reader can be assured that the NASB lied in at least one of these places. Luckily for the person who still has his trusty KJV, he can turn and read Jesus saying, "I go not up **yet** unto this feast" in the first instance above (John 7:8). The problem created by the NASB was solved by the KJV.[47]

They seem to cast doubt on the Deity of Jesus in places. For example, what possible reason can be offered for changing the KJV's "Joseph and his mother" to "father and mother" in Luke 2:33, if not to cast doubt on the virgin birth? The use of capitalized pronouns when referring to Deity is present even in Messianic prophecy like Psalm 45:6 which reads: "A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." The application of this principle makes many more of the Old Testament prophecies about Christ into missed translations. For example, the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 reads: "He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel" instead of "you shall bruise Him on the heel," as it should read, given their principles. This failure to capitalize pronouns in passages referring to Christ recurs in Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17, and Deuteronomy 18:15. This appears to be an attempt to weaken the Old Testament picture of the Messiah.

The NASB seems to tamper with important doctrines. When it comes to Calvinism, they have changed "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10—KJV) to "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you."[48] However, the NASB's premillennial bias is the worst of their doctrinal problems. For example, the rendering of "so [adverb of manner—JM] all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26), has been changed to "thus all Israel will be saved."[49] Brother Wallace pointed out that the NASB changed Acts 3:19 to give it a premillennial flavor. Wallace wrote:

> "the times of restitution"...in this passage refers to the gospel dispensation and "times" is plural, designating and parallel with "the last days"...But the change in the New American Standard Bible to "until the period", indicates a future time and thus gives a premillennial slant to this passage (Foy Wallace 587).

The NASB also changes the tense of the verb in Revelation 20:4 to help the case of the premillennial preacher. Instead of saying that "they lived and reigned with Christ," the NASB says "they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." *Came to life* sounds more like an imperfect tense, but the verb tense is aorist active indicative.[50]

Earlier mention had been made of the importance of the text underlying a translation. This is easily demonstrated using the NASB. The NASB changes the doctrine of salvation by making "repentance for the remission of sins" in Luke 24:47. The KJV says that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached" (Luke 24:47). This is based on a textual difference between the two versions. The NASB went with a reading of *eis* ("for") instead of the KJV's *kai* ("and"). Almost all extant manuscripts contain the reading of the KJV, with *eis* found basically only in three manuscripts p^{75}, א, and B.

In brief, the NASB has some good things about it. Especially in Matthew-John it does a pretty good job translating the verb tenses to help the reader understand the text more clearly. However, its premillennial bias makes it too dangerous to be used as a standard text for reading and studying the Bible. It should be used on for the purpose of comparison with a more accurate Bible and that by a person who is mature in the faith.[51]

New International Version

The New International Version is the greatest threat to the Lord's church of any of the versions that have thus far been made. It has replaced the KJV as the best-selling translation with more than 100 million in circulation worldwide. Gary Summers has given the estimate that 90% of *our* young people use the NIV (760). The idea for this version began at a meeting at Trinity Christian College, near Chicago, in 1965, and sponsorship for the project was begun in 1967 by the New York International Bible Society. By September 1973, the NIV New Testament was published and sold very well (Kubo 243). The complete Bible came out in 1978 after the Old Testament translation was completed.

The Preface to the NIV is again the best place to begin evaluating this version. The committee had two goals that were contradictory. They wanted to "preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English" (Preface iii). While at the same time they used a different method of translating than the long tradition (at least the tradition before 1940) so they would be faithful to "the thought of the biblical writers" (Preface iii). To do this, the translators confess that they have "striven for more than a word-for-word translation" (Preface iii). Unfortunately, for the translators of the NIV, not only does this method depart from the vast majority of the long tradition of translating the Bible into English, it also departs from the possibility of making an accurate translation of God's Word into English. The biblical writers used words to impart not their thoughts but the mind of God into the documents that they wrote (1 Cor. 2:11-16). When David spoke by inspiration, God's Word was on his tongue not God's thought (2 Sam. 23:2). If God had intended for His Word to be translated according to thoughts, He would have inspired the biblical authors by thoughts.

The original text that was used to translate the NIV in the Old Testament was basically the Masorectic Text. This text was compared with the Dead Sea Scrolls and other witnesses, such as early versions, of the Old Testament. One unfortunate thing about the Hebrew text used for the NIV was that sometimes the translators decided to read the words with a different set of vowels[52] than the Masorectic scribes provided, and "These instances are usually not indicated by footnotes" (Preface iv).

The original text used for the New Testament was "an eclectic one." However, they add that the "best current printed texts of the Greek New Testament were used" (Preface iv). It seems that they followed the second edition United Bible Society text, which was an eclectic text, most of the time, but they made some changes to it (Kubo 245). Recently, a Greek text that purports to be the text relied on by the NIV translators has been published by Zondervan. It is called *A Reader's Greek New Testament*.

Instead of using italics for words of clarification supplied by the translator that do not appear in the original text, the NIV uses brackets, but this is not uniform; so it seems to do more harm than good. The committee wrote, "To achieve clarity the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the context. If there

was uncertainty about such material, it was enclosed in brackets" (Preface v).

There are some good features of the NIV.[53] It places as strong an emphasis on the Deity of Jesus as their underlying Greek text will allow them to communicate. For example, Victor Perry wrote an article where he compared the way the Deity of Jesus was presented in nine different texts. The NIV affirms the Deity of Jesus in all nine texts while the ASV affirms it in five of the nine and the KJV did the same in six (214-215).[54] The problem is the text underlying the NIV takes away certain fine proof texts for the Deity of Jesus. For example, in Romans 14:10 the KJV has "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Then after quoting proof from Isaiah 45:23, Paul writes: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Taken together, these two verses plainly state the Christ is God, Deity. However, because the NIV is based on an eclectic text rather than the TR or Majority Text, it has: "For we will all stand before God's judgment seat" for Romans 14:10. This is perfectly good translation of a Greek text that fails to make the case for the Deity of Christ in this instance. The same textual difference is the cause of the difference between the KJV's affirmation of the Deity of Christ in 1 Timothy 3:16, which reads: "God was manifest in the flesh" while the NIV has "He appeared in a body." Though at least in this instance the NIV has a footnote that says, "Some manuscripts God."[55]

There are three specific facts about the NIV that this author would like to single out for commendation. First, the translation of the Greek φονεύω (Mat. 5:21; et. al.) and the Hebrew *ratsach* (Exo. 20:13; et .al.) by *murder* rather than *kill* as in the KJV was a helpful improvement. Second, the translation of the Greek ἐπισκέπτομαι by words like "to look after" (Jam. 1:27—NIV), "did help you" (Mat. 25:44—NIV), or "showed his concern" (Acts 15:14—NIV) instead of "visit" in the KJV. Third, they did not follow the course of most other modern versions by tampering with the virgin birth. The translation reads: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14—NIV). They did not even include a footnote giving "young woman" as an alterative translation, to the disgust of Jack Lewis, et al.

Just as the main problem with the RSV was modernism, the main problem with the NIV is denominationalism. It was produced by a "transdenominational" group of scholars which was supposed to help

"safeguard the translation from sectarian bias" (Preface to the NIV iii). However, it seems that it has actually resulted in *getting a little bit of everyone's doctrine* in there. It has something to make you happy whether you are a Calvinist, a Premillennialist, an advocate of faith only, or Pentecostal. Unfortunately, since Jesus is none of these, His views get scant attention.

If you are a Calvinist, the NIV is for you. For example, if you are having a hard time convincing others that they were born in sin, try reading them Psalm 51:5 in the NIV. It reads: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." One wonders why David praised the Lord because he was "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14—NIV) if he was sinful at birth? We do know that, according to the NIV, this hereditary total depravity is a result of mankind possessing a sinful nature. Twenty-two times the NIV has Paul telling you that you have a sinful nature. Peter gets to say this about you only once in 2 Peter 2:10. Each one of these is based on a mistranslation of σάρξ which the KJV almost uniformly uses *flesh* to translate. The three exceptions in the KJV are Romans 8:7 and Hebrews 9:10 where they chose *carnal* and Romans 8:6 where they choose *carnally*. This translation first appears in Romans where Paul says: "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death" (7:5). The strangest rendering of σάρξ in the NIV occurs in Romans 8:3: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature [σάρξ], God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful [ἁμαρτία] man [σάρξ] to be a sin offering." Now in the original language, σάρξ occurs twice in this passage. Paul also showed the translators that he knows how to use *sinful* (ἁμαρτία) in front of σάρξ if he wanted to do so. The dilemma faced by the translators is that the high Christology of the NIV met the Calvinistic bias of the NIV and something had to give.[56] In this case, they chose to give up their biased translation of σάρξ, in one place.[57]

If you are a Calvinist and were translating the Bible, you might take the NIV translation of 1 Peter 2:8 as a model. The KJV has "being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." The NIV changes one single word that seems to make the verse fit more with the unconditional election/predestination portion of Calvin's tulip. The same phrase in the NIV reads, "they disobey the message—which is

also what they were destined for." The same word, τίθημι, appears only two verses earlier (2:6) in both translations, where the NIV and KJV used *lay* to translate it, which would be a very helpful change of wording to the Calvinist.

The Calvinist would be appreciative of the help the NIV has given him in making his doctrine of irresistible grace more believable. This is the doctrine that, before a person can be saved, the Holy Spirit must operate directly upon him to change his depraved heart. If the Holy Spirit chooses to operate on one, he cannot stop Him, he will be saved. For example, the story of the conversion of Lydia has always been a place where those who teach this doctrine like to misuse the Bible. The KJV says "a certain woman named Lydia...which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). The NIV instead says: "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia...who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." For some reason, the NIV moved "one of those listening," their translation of ἤκουεν ἧς (literally was hearing of whom), to the beginning of the verse instead of putting it right before "the Lord opened her heart" as it does both in the GNT and the KJV. The NIV seems to move the hearing of the preaching far away from the opening of Lydia's heart to obscure the plain meaning of the passage. The Calvinist would appreciate this rendering in the NIV.

The Calvinist would use the NIV to teach the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul very plainly says that he himself might fall from grace if he did not keep himself in check. He wrote, "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." *Castaway* (ἀδόκιμος) is very strong and is rendered *reprobate* in most other occurrences by the KJV. It was used of something that had been tested and found lacking in the requisite quality to be kept. However the NIV weakens its force in this passage and adds words to the text that make it appear that Paul is only speaking of a literal race. The NIV reads: "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." *For the prize* are not in any way representing any underlying Greek words and the NIV does not bracket them. They seem to be out there, along with the weakened *disqualified*, to take away the force from this passage that teaches the possibility of

apostasy. A Calvinist being defeated by the KJV in a discussion concerning the possibility of apostasy would certainly find a better home in the NIV.

The NIV also has a bias that shows itself in proof-texts for premillennialism. Note the change in Ephesians 1 to accommodate the premillennial doctrine. The KJV has: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ." For this rendering it is clear that the *gather together* will take place in the Christian age, since the Christian age is the "fullness of time" (cf. Gal. 4:4). Instead of this rendering, the NIV has: "to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." This clearly puts the bringing together of all things into the future, though the words translated might *gather together* by the KJV are not based on a future tense verb but instead are based on an aorist middle infinitive. This bias is also seen in other passages like John 5:28-29 where, instead of the KJV's translation of ὥρα[58] by *hour*, *time* is used in the NIV to accommodate the premillennial rapture and two resurrection theory. The NIV had no problem shorting the duration of time from *hour* in passages like Galatians 2:5 which they render: "We did not give in to them for a moment" (NIV). These and other passages clearly show that the NIV was translated to conform closely with the premillennial doctrine.

The NIV also supports the doctrine of faith only. For example, in Romans 10:10 the KJV correctly translates: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." This KJV uses *unto* to translate the Greek εἰς. This indicates that at the point of faith man is moving toward righteousness—he is not righteous yet. However, the NIV instead has: "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified," which indicates that man is already justified when he believes. Either the NIV uses *and are* to translate εἰς or they just ignore it and make up part of their text. This scribe cannot tell which was the case. In either event, this is an unjustified attempt to teach salvation by faith only. Support for "faith only" also comes from the NIV translation of Romans 1:17 which reads: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." They at least provide an accurate rendering in the margin: "is from faith to faith."

The NIV also has a bias that shows itself in texts that deal with the Pentecostal doctrine that miracles continue today. If one were to wonder how long the miracles that occurred in New Testament times would last, there are two classic texts that answer this question: Ephesians 4:7-15 and 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. In the Ephesians 4 passages the most crucial detail for the discussion is given in verse 13 which tells us how long the gifts will last. The NIV's answer "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature" is woefully lacking. The words translated by "unity of faith," ἑνότητα τῆς πίστεως, in the NIV is literally translated by the KJV as "unity of the faith." The reason is that τῆς πίστεως is a genitive feminine singular noun. The genitive is the basic case of possession. However, the NIV translates this genitive as if it were in the dative case. This makes it appear that the gifts will last until everyone believes the same way instead of placing the emphasis on the unity that finds its basis in the body of doctrine known as *the faith*. As the KJV teaches, when the faith is complete, the need for the spiritual gifts will cease. The NIV, however, leans toward Pentecostalism.

The NIV also handles 1 Corinthians 13 in a way that would make Oral Roberts proud. The KJV translates the key verse, for the purposes under consideration here, in this section: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (13:10). They did so because the words translated "that which is perfect," τὸ τέλειον, are in nominative, neuter, singular, adjective form. However, the NIV translated this key verse, "But when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." This switch from the adjective *perfect* to the noun *perfection* seems to have been done to make the case that spiritual gifts will last until Jesus returns, instead of when the canon was complete. If this was not the motive, why did the translators use a noun to translate a Greek adjective? The Pentecostal should lift up his holy hands and shout for joy in finding his doctrine placed into a Bible. Finally, the NIV has come to rescue Pentecostalism from its fate of being defeated by the KJV.

The NIV is a dangerous perversion of God's Word. The trans-denominational group that translated it seems to have placed their false doctrines in at every turn. As long as the NIV is seen to be an acceptable update of the Bible, change agents will have a field day. Faithful brethren everywhere need to get the material provided in this review, and other good material reviewing the NIV, into the hands of people

who are making decisions concerning the purchase of a new translation. If the NIV is allowed to continue to run through the brotherhood, almost unabated, faithful brethren will have a bleak future.

Now the NIV has been updated to an even kinder, gentler, and less accurate, version. This new Bible is called *Today's New International Version* (hereafter referred to as the TNIV). This writer cannot prove that this translation has negatively impacted the Lord's church yet, but given the high praise it has been given by some in *our colleges* and the dangerous content of this translation, it will not be long before this dangerous combination leads to problems. For example, Curt Niccum, of Oklahoma Christian College, has already said of the TNIV, "One would be hard pressed to find a better general English Bible," though he does feel that it will have the most appeal to the 18-34 year-old age bracket (31).

There have been relatively few changes from the NIV to the TNIV, but this author has yet to find a positive change that has any impact on man's responsibility before God. About seven percent of the text and footnotes have changed from what was found in the original NIV (Morgan). The main changes that have been made from the old NIV to the TNIV concern gender.[59] Those who advocate this new version say that it is attempting to use "gender accurate language" while opponents kindly use the neutral "gender inclusive language." For example, instead of the peacemakers being called the "sons of God," they are called the "children of God" (Mat. 5:9).

Once again this author believes that a simple reading of the preface to the translation will help the Christian to evaluate the TNIV. The preface says that their purpose was to "mute the patriarchalism of the culture of the biblical writers through gender-inclusive language when this could be done without compromising the message of the Spirit." Notice that the claim is not made that the patriarchal bias came from the seventeenth century translators of the Bible, but instead it came from the authors of the Bible. To say it another way, the words that were inspired by the Holy Spirit smacked of that great evil, which is usually only associated with American culture—patriarchalism. Now these so-called translators have come along to rescue the Bible from this gender bias.

One might say, this is not an important debate. We have always understood that the message of Romans 8:14 applied to females as well as to males. While the second statement is true, it really demonstrates

that there was no need for a TNIV style translation. The main problem with this method of translation is that it is just another step down the road of the "dynamic equivalence" method of translation. When the Holy Spirit chose to use υἱος (male as opposed to female), what gives a translator the right to change God's Word? God does not treat lightly attempts to change His Word (Rev. 22:18-19). If God has used τέκνον and a translator wants to update the "patriarchal language" of the KJV translators and use the phrase "children of God," that is permissible. However, this writer will oppose any attempts to tamper with God's Word, no matter how well-intentioned the attempt.

If you study carefully the TNIV, you will notice that it is another step toward the blurring of gender roles in the Lord's body, but they were smart enough not to attempt to go all the way at once. As Lynn Anderson teaches in *Navigating the Winds of Change*, the change agents must go slowly. While their translation of 1 Timothy 3:2 does not make a bold move toward female elders, reading: "Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife"[60] the deacons do not fare as well. The NIV text is literal when it reads, "In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect" (1 Tim. 3:11). However the footnote attached to *women* says, "Probably women who are deacons, or possibly deacons' wives." An even more subtle change, impacting the eldership can be found in Acts. "Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (20:30). Since the people who will follow this path will come from among the eldership, why use *some* instead of *men*? Could it be that the translators want to push women into leadership roles in the church? What will be the next change to the words of the text as presented to us by the Holy Spirit?[61] Where will it all end?[62]

THE LINK BETWEEN FAULTY MODERN TRANSLATIONS AND DOCTRINAL DEPARTURES IN THE LORD'S CHURCH

A new day has dawned in the church of Christ. To paraphrase Brother Tant, we are no longer drifting away from the truth. We are moving full speed ahead. The change agents have taken over many of the larger congregations and most, if not all, of our educational institutions of higher learning. One can have a fine debate between two propositions that appear, at first glance, to be opposites but are not

mutually exclusive. (1) Resolved: the modern speech translations have led to doctrinal departures in the Lord's church. (2) Resolved: the doctrinal departures in the Lord's church have led to modern speech translations being used in more abundant numbers. This author believes that both are true and that both facts feed off of one another. If the ship of Zion were sailing in space, it would be time to call back and say: "Houston, we have a problem."

Without the modern speech translations which contain so much error, there would have been no way for the change agents to push us away from truths that were once "most assuredly believed among us." With people studying from and hearing sermons from these perversions of God's Word, these truths that we have held for so long are not so obvious to us as they once were.

For example, in 1950, when the Billy Graham Crusade came to town, brethren asked the question what shall we do about it? Differing answers to the question were given. Some said, "We should bring in someone like Brother Wallace to openly challenge him for a debate." Others said, "We should spend the week before, during, and after the crusade in a united radio effort challenging his false teaching on salvation." Someone else said, "Surely the newspapers should be used in an effort to overthrow his false doctrine of faith only. We should get Brother Woods to write an article exposing this doctrine and run it in the paper." This is no longer the reaction in many congregations.

Now when Billy Graham brings his crusade to town, brethren begin to ask, "To what extent can we be involved in this effort." Another brother asks, "Shall we put up signs to advertise the crusade?" Another brother asks, "Can we all go to the crusade together and sit together?" Finally, elders and preachers in some congregations decide to send people to receive training from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in "how to witness." This author submits to you that today, in any town large enough to host a Billy Graham crusade, there will be one or more congregations that call themselves "Church of Christ," which will have fellowship, i.e., joint participation, with the crusade.

What has changed in the last fifty years? In part, it is the new Bibles read by this new generation. The doctrine of salvation by faith alone is in Bibles like the NIV, which says: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last" (Rom. 1:17). The doctrine of faith only finds a home in translations like the RSV which teaches: "You stand fast only through faith" (Rom.

11:20). *Only* was placed here without evidence just as surely as Martin Luther placed it in his translation. If a man used this as his Bible, it would be easy to see why he might be willing to have fellowship with Billy Graham and participate in his crusades. They read these Bibles and then cannot understand why others will not join with them in the crusade.

To these people who read the modern versions, we are the ones who are false teachers—not Billy Graham. We are legalists because we believe and teach that a man has to obey the law of Christ to go to heaven (Heb. 5:8-9; Gal. 6:2). Because they have studied and read their NIV, they do not believe that we are under any law at all today, but we are under grace. They will point out to you that your problem is you do not understand grace; so you boast about getting everything right: this is not the way a man saved by grace should act. You counter that you are not boasting, you are simply obeying Romans 3:27 where law is what excludes boasting. You think that this verse says: "Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (KJV). However, your friend turns to read it aloud to you from his Bible and instead it says: "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith" (NIV). He counters and says, see there is no law in that passage. As long as he believes his NIV, you are in for a difficult time convincing him otherwise.

There is no doctrinal issue on which a higher percentage of members of the Lord's church hold false doctrine than that of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. As long as two brethren in conflict accept the KJV, you have a chance to convince the other person of the error of his ways. This writer is going to share with you the contents of a conversation he had with a brother who had a false view on this very issue. He was using a modern speech translation that was either causing the problem or becoming a crutch to help him believe what he already wanted to believe. The brother wanted to know if his physical brother had ground for a scriptural divorce.

He had read in his Bible the verses that he should have read: Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. The problem was he had read them from a modern translation that had weak rendering of the text. The KJV gets these verses exactly right. For example, in Matthew 19:9 the KJV reads: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her

which is put away doth commit adultery." Instead of reading "except for fornication," his version read: "except for marital unfaithfulness." He began to tell me how he had been present at his brother's wedding and he heard with his own ears her promise to "love, honor, and obey" his brother. Now his brother had decided to take a job in another city, but his sister-in-law refused to move with him. This amounted to disobedience according to the person on the other end of the phone and was unfaithfulness to her marriage vows. In his view, his brother had a right to put away his wife and remarry when the opportunity arose, but his father, who this penman had a close relationship with, had told him that he could not get a scriptural divorce on these grounds. He was not looking for an answer; he had found his answer in his modern version. He wanted this scribe to explain to his father what *marital unfaithfulness* was for him.

Before this conversation, this author had never done much thinking about the difference between marital unfaithfulness and fornication. That has now changed. This phrase, at the very least, is misleading. We should stick to the tried and true instead of the untested and new. Modern perversions of God's Word, such as the one's reviewed in this chapter should be marked with a skull and crossbones. They are dangerous to the Lord's church.

CONCLUSION

The Bible has lost respect in the recent past. It is no longer studied and believed by the people in the pews the way that it once was. In part, this is the fault of the modern version. The committee that met in 1967 to lay the groundwork for what would eventually become the NIV, set forth the following position paper as a result of the discussion considering the feasability of a new translation. They wrote in part:

> Only with one version in common use in our churches will Bible memorization flourish, will those in the pew follow in their own Bibles the reading of Scripture and comments on individual Scriptures from the pulpit, will unison readings be possible, will Bible Teachers be able to interpret with maximum success the Biblical text word by word and phrase by phrase to their students, and will the Word be implanted indelibly upon the minds of Christians as they hear and read again and again the words of the Bible in the same phraseology. We acknowledge freely that there are benefits to be derived by the individual as he refers to other translations in his study of the Bible, but this could still be done in situations in which a common Bible was in general use (qtd. in Paine *Twentieth*).

They could not have done more to put an end to the use of a common version than to send the NIV into the pews of churches of Christ. As the number of versions have proliferated, all of the negative consequences they anticipated have resulted.

However, in addition to these problems, doctrinal departures in the Lord's body have come about. Instead of studying the Bible in Bible classes, teachers all over this land are spending time answering questions like: "Why does my Bible say _____?" and "Why is this verse in a footnote in my Bible?" Unless we are willing to fight the version battle, this chaos will not only continue, but it will get worse. If you do not have the stomach to fight for God's Word, there is no fight in you. We have come to a time when "there is no universally accepted version of the Bible in spiritual Israel, so every man does that which is right in his own mind." As long as men are having to stand as critics of the Word of God, God's Word cannot change their lives.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Because the focus of this lecture will be on versions that have negatively impacted the church of Christ, the author will not do a full scale review of some of the terrible translations that have failed to be used by large numbers of Christians such as the misnamed *The Living Bible*, *Today's English Version*, and others. There will also be no review of the *New King James Version* which is clearly the safest of the modern versions produced thus far.

[2] By *we*, this writer means the postmodern Church of Christ denomination that has emerged among what are usually described as "change agents."

[3]Alexander Campbell even published The Living Oracles, which was translated by George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Phillip Doddridge, because he placed a premium on having a Bible that was translated as correctly as possible.

[4]However, he used the Latin version of the Bible as his textual basis instead of the Greek and Hebrew text.

[5]Wycliffe's life came on the heels of what has been called the Babylonian captivity of the Pope, when the Pope was a virtual subject of the French crown (1309-1378); the first part of the period of the great Western schism and resulted in two rival popes (1378-1417). This made his views more popular than they would have been just one hundred years before.

[6]The author accommodatively calls it *his* final version in spite of the belief by most scholars who have studied this era and seem convinced that the revision was actually done by one of his disciples, John Purvey (1353-1428), after Wycliffe died. The opponents of Wycliffe referred to it as the "Lollard Bible," after the beliefs of many of those who would use it to teach others. The truth of who actually did the revision is not important to this study. The main difference between the two translations was in the way the word order and sentence structure was handled. The first translation followed Latin syntax and word order while the last version followed the English word order and sentence structure. This first translation reflects Wycliffe's belief that "the quality of the text could be preserved in translation only by the most painstaking word-for-word procedure" (Bruce, *History* 15).

[7]She was Catholic almost in self-defense, as the Protestants had declared the marriage between her father, Henry VIII, and her mother, Catherine of Aragon, null and void. If they were correct, she was illegitimate, a concept which carried more of a stigma in Tudor England than in 21st century America.

[8]Following Tyndale's Bible, translations were put out by Miles Coverdale, Thomas Matthew, Richard Taverner, and three Bibles that have come to be known as the Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and the Bishop's Bible.

[9]Remember the Geneva Bible had been produced by Calvinists who had fled England because they were being persecuted by Queen Mary. This must have had a great effect on their final product.

[10]For a discussion of their superb qualifications see Gustavus Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version*.

[11]The emphasis in this section will be on the Greek New Testament rather than on the Hebrew Old Testament because that is where the debate is currently raging. The Hebrew text that underlies translations is the Masorectic text. It is very uniform in its contents. The only serious debate concerns the weight that ought to be given to the

manuscripts found among what has been called the Dead Sea Scrolls and the manuscripts of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. For the most part, (estimates range above 90% agreement) the Dead Sea Scrolls agree with the Masorectic text, even though the Dead Sea Scrolls predate our Masorectic text by about 1000 years. For this reason some call the Dead Sea Scrolls, Proto-Masorectic. To see the differences in these texts one can consult the margin modern translations such as the New American Standard Bible and New Revised Standard Version. For a thorough but readable discussion of the issues involved in Old Testament textual criticism see Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*.

[12]The vast majority of these are made of papyrus or parchment (vellum).

[13]A codex is simply a book rather than a scroll.

[14]*Uncial* is from the Latin *uncia* meaning a twelfth part because each of these letters took up approximately one-twelfth of a line. Almost all of the papyrus manuscripts are also written in uncials but *uncial*, is used to designate parchment manuscripts.

[15]This text was discovered by the textual critic Tischendorf at the monastery called St Catherine's at Mount Sinai. Since Tischendorf was the one who assigned the numbers to the manuscripts this one was assigned the number 01 and has been seen as the "most important witness" to the original GNT ever since. As some would say of this, "How convenient."

[16]The numerical system was devised by Casper Gregory in 1890 when they ran out of letters from the three alphabets to designate the uncials.

[17]Lectionaries contained the *lections* (Latin for "appointed readings") from a church service on a particular day. They were made because most people did not have a Bible. Though these are the least cited line of evidence, they are used by some, usually to support the reading that the textual critic has already decided to adopt.

[18]They cite problems with this evidence such as the fact that many writers alluded to biblical statements rather than citing them. There is also the question of whether or not the writer was relying on his memory or if was he actually looking at the biblical text. Some modern textual critics will even argue that the Textus Receptus has actually been placed back into the writing of the patristics by the men who copied their manuscripts (they have to invent some way to explain the agreement between these early witnesses to the GNT and the Textus Receptus). This still needs to be proven rather than simply asserted.

[19]Most textual critics would only use these lines of evidence to (1) break what they perceive to be a tie among the other witnesses or (2) to support the reading that they believe is in the text in spite of evidence to the contrary.

[20]The author does not find any affinity with those who would make the debate concerning the textual basis of the GNT as pitting Satan and Wescott and Hort against God and the Textus Receptus. While it is true that the motives of these men are not above question, not every person who carries a Bible based on their attempt to recover the GNT is a liberal intent on destroying the church.

[21]Many of the early papyri contain distinctive readings that agree with the majority text and disagree with ℵ and B (Sturz 55-69).

[22]Metzger prefers to call this "rational criticism" (175).

[23]Since this paper is not an in-depth study of textual criticism, the author has chosen to not make the case for the Textus Receptus separate from the case for the Majority Text. While the arguments for the two methods of arriving at the identity of the original GNT are different, the results of both methods are virtually identical.

[24]While those who accept the Textus Receptus place most of their case on the "providential preservation of scripture," Hodges and Pickering make a complex mathematical argument for their case. The basic thrust of the argument is that the original GNT would have more descendants than later texts. This would mean that the reading with the most textual support must have come from the original text.

[25]For example, at Mark 16:9-20, the NASB notes reads, "Some of the oldest mss. omit from verse 9 through 20." The NIV note says, "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." For a conclusive case that Mark 16:9-20 belongs in the Bible, see B. J. Clarke. "Does Mark 16:9-20 Belong in the Bible?." *Studies in Mark*. Ed. Dub McClish. Denton, TX: Valid, 2002. 615-660.

[26]However, many of these *scholars* who make this kind of argument want people to count the number of *scholars* who hold to the eclectic text rather than weigh the power of their arguments.

[27]In fact, some would not even call this a textual variant because they reserve *textual variant* only for difference among the manuscripts that are "significant or meaningful" (Epp, "Variant" 48).

[28]The reader will find much more on this point in the final section of this study which will show the link between the false teaching found in the modern versions and the doctrinal departures that have taken place in the Lord's church.

[29]For example, Today's English Version has Peter say to Simon, "May you and your money go to hell?" (Acts 8:20).

[30]To fairly deal with each of these objections alone would take four studies of considerable length. Entire books have been written on the second and third objections. The author will be forced to be brief in his discussion of these issues, but they simply must be dealt with to do justice to the topic under consideration.

[31]Examples include Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11, Acts 8:37, et. al.

[32]For example, in Acts 12:24 there is a textual question. Luke either wrote that as a result of the death of Herod, "the word of **God** grew and multiplied" [KJV, emp—JM] or "the word of the **Lord** continued to grow and to be multiplied" (NASB, emp—JM]. If Luke wrote κυρίου, Vaticanus, also known as B, has preserved the reading. If Luke wrote θεοῦ, then every other important Greek manuscript and family has preserved the correct reading (this is the view of the NIV, ASV, KJV, and NKJV). This is one case where the ASV translation disagrees with the Greek Text of Westcott and Hort, as their GNT has κυρίου. This serves to show their over-reliance on B that was mentioned above in this study. While every word of the Bible is important and the author is convinced that the reading of the KJV is correct, this serves as a great example of a textual variant that makes no difference in doctrine. The vast majority of textual problems in the GNT are like this one.

[33]The author makes no claim that the KJV makes a clear distinction between the second person plural and singular in every case. However, it is better to make the distinction in many cases while not doing so in some than to completely ignore the distinction. Once again, if someone wants to truly revise the KJV and make this more clear, he has my full support. These unclear modern versions are guilty of what Lewis

will call "doctrinal errors," though he would not admit it.

[34]Note that he switches the words from "doctrinal problem" in his definition to "doctrinal error" in the title of his chapter.

[35]Given his definition, if the autograph of Galatians written by Paul were discovered today and handed to an English reader, it would immediately become one big doctrinal error since the autograph is not a clear English translation.

[36]In case a rusty Greek student, who has not studied Greek since school, is reading this and wondering if this form might as easily be called middle as passive, remember that in the present, imperfect, and perfect the form for the middle and passive are the same; so what one calls a passive verb another may call a middle verb. This is not the case with the aorist form. The careful student will note that the form in Matthew 18:3 is second aorist passive by the presence of the η after the stem in στραφῆτε.

[37]Interestingly enough, Lewis does not call this a doctrinal error or even mention it in his chapter concerning the KJV. However, he does later mention it when discussing the ASV and there he calls it a case where the KJV "missed the proper translation" (*English Bible* 84).

[38]As Lincoln has correctly said, this group has "proved to be unbiblical in its objectives, socialistic in its aims and destructively modernistic in its doctrine" (50).

[39]The reason that the ASV is not being discussed in this article is three-fold: (1) So far as this author knows, the ASV has not been used to bring liberalism into the church; (2) The only two criticisms of it that have been offered concern the Greek text upon which it was based, Wescott and Hort, and it is called strong in Greek, weak in English; (3) This version is slowly dying out, there are very few, if any, new users of the ASV in the Lord's body.

[40]When they were questioned, they cried out for "academic freedom" but as Brother Woods observed, they "must not forget that there is also academic honesty" (262).

[41]There was also a Catholic version of the RSV produced in 1966.

[42]They did not simply rely blindly on the Nestle text; they instead used eclectic principles (Grant 41).

[43]It does not seem that he was alone in this rendering since the New English Bible made the same change.

[44]Yes, this is William Woodson fighting against the RSV in the pages of the *Gospel Advocate*. One wonders if this article made him part of the "New-Antism."

[45]They probably learned this from watching the problems that the RSV had with their liberal committee coming under attack and hurting the sales of their translation.

[46]Though this does add the problem of which aorists are epistolatory aorists. They seem to have ignored this on occasions such as rendering Paul's statement to Philemon concerning Onesimus as: "And I have sent him back to you" (Phm. 12), though he surely did not send him back without the book of Philemon to help make his transition more smooth.

[47]Like most modern versions it also contains the contradiction between Matthew 5:17 where Jesus said that He "did not come to abolish the law" but he did abolish it in Ephesians 2:15.

[48]This is actually a possible translation of the Greek text here, the problem is they were influenced by their Calvinism to place the words into the wrong syntax.

[49]Again, this is a legitimate translation of the Greek οὕτως in isolation, but it seems to have been changed here to agree with the premillennial doctrine of the salvation of Israel rather then the KJV's rendering which indicates that Israel will be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles were saved.

[50]See also the NASB's handling of Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:1, Revelation 5:10.

[51]In 1995, the NASB came out with an update of their translation sometimes abbreviated as the NASBU. This revision shares in all the criticisms leveled against the original version in this brief review except one; they changed *thus* back to *so* in Romans 11:26.

[52]The Hebrew language was originally written without vowels. Later scribes added the vowels to the words of the Old Testament so they could be pronounced. The NIV translators believe that some of these vowels added by the scribes were added incorrectly. If the wrong vowels are added, this makes the Hebrew word incorrect. For example, imagine an English phrase without vowels: "stp hr." If a policeman is shouting this phrase it probably means "stop her." If a bus drivers is making the statement it probably means "step here." Context and knowledge of the text was helpful to the Masorectic scribes. If they are ever incorrect, it would clearly be the exception and not the rule, though the vowel pointing was not part of the inspired text as written by Moses. It would be much more helpful if the NIV would have at least put a note into the margin every time they saw fit to emend the vowels of the Masorectic Text.

[53]In the evaluation of the NIV the author has made a careful attempt to follow the advice of Jack Lewis by using the Greek New Testament as the "zero mile post" (Lewis, *Questions* 133) instead of the KJV. The KJV will be cited with each criticism leveled at the NIV not as the standard to which the NIV should measure up to, but as an illustration of why the KJV measures up more faithfully to the GNT.

[54]The passages that he looked at were John 1:1, 18, Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, 2 Peter 1:1, 1 John 5:20.

[55]The strangest thing about the lack of footnotes in Romans 14:10-12 while the footnote is present in 1 Timothy 3:16 is that the United Bible Society claims that it is more sure about the one that gets a footnote, casting doubt on the text and less sure about the text that does not receive a footnote. *God* in Romans 14:10 gets a "B" rating in the second edition of the United Bible Society *Textual Commentary*, while *He* gets an "A" rating.

[56]They confront the same problem in 1 Timothy 3:16 where they have Christ "appeared in a body" instead of "appeared in the sinful flesh they would have used in place of *body* if they had been consistent in their use of σάρξ.

[57]They also give up their translation of σάρξ as sinful nature in Matthew 16:17 lest they have Peter's sinful nature as a potential source of his knowledge of the Deity of Jesus. It also causes them a problem in Romans 4:1 where the KJV tells us that Abraham is "our father according to the flesh." The NIV is in such a dilemma when it comes to the question of what to do with σάρξ here that they completely leave it untranslated. This is not based on any textual problem but is purely the result of their Calvinism conflicting with the truth.

[58]This is actually the background for our English word *hour*, after it passes from Greek to the Latin *hora*.

[59]The first attempt at a gender neutral version was made by the ultra-liberal national council of Churches of Christ with their New Revised Standard Version. This translation has many more problems than simply the changes in gender but will not be discussed in this study because of its small impact among liberals in the Lord's church.

[60]This rendering does, however, not accurately convey the same sense as the KJV's "husband of one wife." The Greek text would literally read in English: "a man of one woman."

[61]As the NRSV started down this road, they had a problem since English does not have a gender neutral third person singular pronoun. How would they solve this insurmountable problem, given their view that gender must be eliminated as a far as possible. The translators simply changed the third person singular pronouns to third person plural pronouns. For example the NRSV changes the words of Jesus in John 15:5 from "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: **He** that abideth in me, and I in **him**, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" to "I am the vine, you are the branches. **Those** who abide in me and I in **them** bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." This completely loses the personal application flavor of the passage and obscures the fact that Jesus dwells in each Christian and not just in Christians collectively.

[62]Some have even suggested that Jesus be called the "child of God" rather than the "Son of God." Others, have suggested that God be called "parent" instead of "Father." Some, even more radical, have suggested that God be called "Father/Mother."

LIBERALISM'S VIEW OF THE CHURCH

Jerry C. Brewer

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INTRODUCTION

To properly understand liberalism's view of the church, one must understand what liberalism is. As a philosophy, liberalism abhors restraint. In religion, liberalism rejects **biblical** restraint. Eve was the first liberal when she ignored God's restraining injunction in Genesis 2:16-17 and ate of the forbidden fruit. Her desires, rather than God's Word, became the standard upon which her decision was made, because, for the liberal, there is no higher authority than his own consciousness. Liberalism is a system of **subjectivism**. Rejecting a "thus saith the Lord," the liberal becomes a "law unto himself," subject to no higher law than his own feelings, prejudices, desires, and experiences.

Liberalism also motivated Cain to substitute things of his own choice in worship to God instead of what God had commanded.

> And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect (Gen. 4:3-5).

Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted and Cain's rejected? Did God make an arbitrary choice in the matter? Certainly not, for God "is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). God commanded both brothers to offer a blood sacrifice. That fact is obvious when one considers the

statement in the New Testament: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). To do a thing *by faith* is to do a thing as God directs in His Word. "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Abel made his sacrifice "by faith," and Cain did not. Cain's sacrifice was rejected because he was a liberal. He believed he could substitute something of his own choice for what God commanded, and that is precisely the way liberalism today views the church of Christ. Like Cain's, the liberal's view of the church is faithless and is rooted in rebellion against divine restraint.

Liberalism also manifested itself in the nineteenth-century through the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in the work of the church and the introduction of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church. That same practice of loosing where God has bound demonstrated by Eve, Cain, and the *progressives* in the nineteenth-century characterizes liberalism in our century.

> Liberal theology today is all that it was a hundred years ago and carries all its baggage. Our contemporary, liberal brethren are mesmerized by the concepts of postmodern theology. They are engaged in a conscious mutilation of the real meaning of Scripture. Most of them seem to be ignorant of the fact that liberal theology as understood today has its roots in the old modernism which dominated the theological scene at the turn of the century (Choate).

Liberalism disregards the apostolic injunction that says, "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). *In the name of the Lord Jesus* means by the authority of Christ as expressed in the New Testament. *In word or deed* means whatever is preached or practiced must be expressly authorized by His authority. Like Cain, modern liberals recognize no divine restraint in the church's origin and nature. Because it regards man, rather than God, as the source of authority in religion, liberalism views the church as a humanly devised denomination. With that view of the church, liberalism then opens a Pandora's box of human innovation in the work and worship of the church that is limited only by man's imagination.

With liberalism's basis established in our minds, we shall now demonstrate the contrast and vast chasm that exist between the liberal's view of the church and that of God's Truth revealed in Holy Writ.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

As a divine creation, the church has existed in various forms from eternity. It is our purpose now to examine the various stages in which the church has existed through the ages until its establishment in Jerusalem following the resurrection of Christ.

The Church in God's Purpose

The salvation of mankind was God's purpose before the world began, and the church of Christ—the kingdom of God—is the divine institution in which that purpose is accomplished (Eph. 1:1-11). In it the fulness of Christ dwells (Eph. 1:22-23). One cannot be in Christ without being in His church, and one who is in the church is in Christ. It is the instrument of salvation for which Christ was the Lamb foreordained to be slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-19), and within it are all the spiritual blessings of heaven (Eph. 1:3).

The *mystery* that Paul reveals in the Ephesian epistle is that the church, purposed from eternity, was not to be limited to the Jews. "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6; cf. Eph. 2:11-22).

The Church in God's Promises

Contained in the germinal promise of Genesis 3:15, God's eternal purpose comprehended Christ's virgin birth, His struggle with the powers of hell, His death, burial, resurrection, triumphant exaltation to the throne of David, and the salvation of Jew and Gentile in one body. Genesis 3:15 is the first intimation of a Redeemer and His work in all of the Bible, and included in this promise is the church which He would build despite His own death (Mat. 16:16-18). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only person in all of history to found a religion and build His church *after* He died, and that promise is contained in Genesis 3:15. The church further existed in the promises to Abraham and his descendants.

> Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

God's promise to bless all families of the earth through Abraham's seed was renewed to his son, Isaac, at Gerar and to his grandson, Jacob,

at Bethel (Gen. 26:4; 28:14), and in that promise was the church, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. Gal. 3:16) where those blessings reside (Gal. 3:26-27).

The Church in Prophecy

The church existed in Old Testament prophecy when ancient men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, foretold the coming kingdom. One of those was Daniel—a Judean captive taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. In a dream which he could not recall, the king saw a great image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs and belly of brass, legs of iron and the feet a mixture of iron and clay. In the dream, the image was broken into pieces by a small stone cut out of a mountain "without hands." *Without hands* indicated that this was not a thing of human, but divine, origin. The small stone represented the kingdom of heaven—the church—which "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34-35). God revealed the dream to the king through Daniel who said the various parts of the image were four kingdoms of men. The head of gold represented the Babylonian kingdom over which Nebuchadnezzar reigned. The breast and arms of silver represented the rise and fall of the Medo-Persian empire. The thighs and belly of brass were the empire of Alexander The Great, and the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay were the Roman Empire. The dream, Daniel said, foretold the establishment of the church (or the everlasting kingdom of heaven) in the days of the kings represented by the feet of iron and clay.

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

In the days of these kings—the Roman Empire—specified **when** the kingdom of God would be established. That time, during *the days of these kings*, was further narrowed in a later vision given to Daniel.

> I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

Daniel predicted that the Son of man—Jesus Christ—would come to the Ancient of Days—God—with the clouds of heaven. When this occurred, He would be given dominion and glory and a kingdom. Those events surrounding the establishment of the church, and predicted by Daniel some five centuries before, were precisely fulfilled in the New Testament in approximately A.D. 33.

> And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Christ was given dominion after He ascended to the Father, and the church was established when the events described in the above passage took place. The kingdom was established on the day of Pentecost following Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. On that day, Peter recounted those events, crowning his sermon with the proclamation that Christ is now the ascended and crowned King.

> This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-33, 36).

The church was established when Rome ruled the world. That was the last great kingdom represented by feet of clay mixed with iron of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The establishment of the everlasting kingdom of God took place "in the days of those kings." What Daniel called "the days of these kings" in his prophecy, Isaiah called "the last days" and foretold the **place** where the kingdom, or the church, would be established.

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into

> pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isa. 2:2-4).

"The mountain of the LORD'S house" in Isaiah's prophecy is the church. That is made clear by Paul's statement to Timothy, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Isaiah also prophesied of the universal nature of the church in saying that "all nations shall flow unto it" and that "out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." When Jesus gave His final charge to the apostles, He said:

> Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

When Jesus said, "Thus it is written," He referred to Old Testament Scriptures. There are only two places in the Old Testament where "it is written" that the Gospel would first go forth from Jerusalem and would be for all nations. One of those is Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 2, and the other is the identical prophecy in Micah 4:1-3. Thus, Jerusalem is identified as the **place** where the church was established upon the earth.

The Church in Preparation

The church also existed in the preparatory work of John the Baptizer and in Jesus' earthly ministry as they both announced the imminent approach of the kingdom (Mat. 3:1-2; Mark 1:14-15). In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judea, and Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee, more than four centuries of heaven's prophetic silence was broken by a lone voice crying in the Judean wilderness: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:2). In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, John had come to prepare the way of the Lord and proclaim the approaching kingdom.

> The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it* (Isa. 40:3-5).

The son of a Levite priest and his wife Elisabeth, John's birth was miraculous. The angel who announced it told Zechariah (John's father)

that the child would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb and that his mission would be a special one. "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to **make ready a people** prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). It was John's special task to gather the spiritual material of which the church would consist and prepare it for that spiritual building to be erected by Jesus Christ. His message was the baptism of repentance and belief on Christ (Who would come after him) to the remission of sins (Acts 19:4; cf. Mat. 3:1-2, 6).

> John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.... And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;... And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; 7:29-30).

Those who were convicted by Peter's sermon on Pentecost were baptized into Christ, obeying the command in Acts 2:38. John's message was for Israel to repent, be baptized, and believe on Him who was to come. After John's order ended, the command was to believe on Him who has already come, repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins. As a result of Peter's preaching on Pentecost and their obedient response to his message, the record says, "And the same day there were **added *unto them*** about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). To what were those who obeyed on Pentecost **added**? Acts 2:47 says they were added to the church. A building has to exist before one can add to it. The church existed in its preparatory state before the three thousand were baptized. The apostles were set in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). They had been the disciples of Jesus and, as such, had been baptized with John's baptism. They and others who had received John's baptism prior to the cross were set in the church on Pentecost, and forever afterward those who obey the Gospel are added to them and constitute the kingdom of God.

Jesus established His church on Pentecost—seven Sabbaths and one day after His resurrection. It was built of the material which John had prepared as his messenger. The principle is the same as the construction of a pre-fabricated building. The parts are prepared to fit together at one point and shipped to another to be assembled into an existing structure.

Before the material was assembled, it constituted the building in a preparatory state. When the material was assembled, it constituted the building in existence. The house of God, which is His kingdom or church, is built of living stones.

> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Solomon's temple in the Old Testament was a *type* of the church or the *true temple* of God revealed in the New Testament. In the building of both, there is a parallel.

> And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building (1 Kin. 6:7).

The stones of which Solomon's temple was built were hewn out and prepared to fit together before they were set in place for its construction. John performed the same work in preparing the *living* stones to be set in the church. When the time came for the establishment, or construction, of God's spiritual temple on the day of Pentecost, the *living* stones that had been previously hewn from the wilderness of Israel were set in place.

The Church in Perfection

As the completion of His earthly task drew near, Jesus went to Jerusalem with His disciples and prepared to eat His final Passover supper with them.

> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Mat. 26:26-29).

After He was crucified, buried, and resurrected, Jesus appeared to His disciples for 40 days: "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). In His last appearance to them, He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised power (Luke

24:49), which would signal the coming of the kingdom of heaven—the church upon earth (Mark 9:1).

> And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight (Acts 1:7-9).

Returning to Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded, the apostles waited for the power which He had promised. For ten days they continued in prayer and supplication until the day of Pentecost when they assembled together with one accord and 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 2:2-4).

Standing before the assembled multitude, Peter used the keys of the kingdom, proclaiming the Gospel and announcing for the first time that Christ had been exalted to the throne of David at the right hand of God (Acts 2:29-36).

> Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? 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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls (Acts 2:37-41).

Those who obeyed the terms of the Gospel he announced were added to the church (Acts 2:47). What God had purposed from eternity had come to pass. Existing in God's eternal purpose, in promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, illustrated in the types and shadows of the Mosaic covenant, foretold by the Old Testament prophets, and prepared by John the Baptizer, the church was established by Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost following His resurrection (Acts 2:22-28).

LIBERALISM'S VIEW OF THE CHURCH'S ORIGIN

Now consider liberalism's view of the church and its origin. Juxtaposed against the divine origin of the church and its grand design for the salvation of all men as revealed in God's Word, liberalism views the beautiful, spiritual bride of Christ as a product of a nineteenth-century religious movement. In liberal terms, the blood-bought church of Christ is nothing more than the "Stone-Campbell Movement" of the 1800s. For that reason, apostates speak of churches of Christ as "our heritage," "our tradition," or "our fellowship" in a denominational sense and use the same terms regarding what they call the "other streams" of the "Stone-Campbell Movement."

Their Ashdodic language betrays more devotion to the historicity of the Stone-Campbell movement than to the church for which Jesus died. It was that very thing against which Earl Irvin West warned. Noting that Alexander Campbell was held in high esteem by "all adherents to restoration principles," West offered the following caveat:

> While such veneration is commendable, yet it has its dangers, for too frequently there is a temptation to ascribe to Campbell a greatness of which he was not worthy. Indeed, it is the danger of the study of the whole restoration movement, for with many there seems to be a fundamental interest in restoring the restoration rather than the New Testament church. In the restoration movement no authority of any kind is to be found. No man is qualified to intelligently approach the study unless he recognizes that those who played the important roles were just men and liable to errors. We lose nothing in admitting that at times they were wrong, for there is only one authority—the New Testament Scriptures. This study of the restoration movement is approached, not with the idea of attempting to fit any pioneer leader into a mold, but to study as objectively as possible what they did teach. Where they were wrong, we shall frankly state it; where they were right, we shall gladly uphold it (1:181).

West also referred to Campbell's support of the American Christian Missionary Society, one of the factors that gave rise to the apostate Independent Christian Church and then the Disciples of Christ. That those who now propose to change the church into a denomination venerate Stone and Campbell should surprise no one. Devoted to their *new hermeneutic*, born of postmodern theology and devoid of absolute authority, liberals would have us loose from the ancient verities circumscribing the work and worship of the church and embrace the restoration movement rather than the church which has been restored. Liberals—apostates—well understand the truth of West's observation:

"In the restoration movement no authority of any kind is to be found." That explains their devotion to the "Stone-Campbell heritage" and a denominational concept of the church. In restoring that movement, its devotees have rejected the divine pattern for the church and seek a consensus of historians and restorers to legitimize their effort. The liberal abhors what he calls *pattern theology*. In 1966 one of them wrote: "The Bible was never intended as a detailed blueprint of faith and practice. When everything is forbidden that is not commanded, and everything commanded that is not forbidden, believers are no longer free sons but slaves of tyranny" (Graham 132). It is obvious that Graham considered Cain a "slave of tyranny" since his grain offering was forbidden by the blood offering which God commanded (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17). His *remedy* for the *tyranny* of divine authority is to replace it with human authority.

> They should surrender and renounce the "blueprint" concept of the Bible.... They should eliminate all sectarian barriers to fellowship, such as their opposition to instrumental music in worship, contention for one pattern of church government, communion only on Sunday, and salvation by baptism. The scholarship of the world does not support these views.... They should be willing to let consensus of rational opinion of all Christian scholars of whatever church and age be the decisive factor in matters of interpreting the Bible (141).

His last two sentences above clearly articulate the liberal's view of the church. It is to be guided by "the scholarship of the world" and a "consensus of rational opinion of all Christian scholars" rather than by a "thus saith the Lord." That was precisely Cain's position regarding sacrifice to God. What God commanded as a sacrifice was rejected for Cain's own wisdom—the *scholarship of the world*—and that concept lives on in the liberal mind of this present day. Such a gathering of "Christian scholars of whatever church" had that very thing in mind, as noted in the following:

> Nine ministers and church historians met June 25 [1999] in Cincinnati in the interest of restoring dialogue among all three segments of the Stone-Campbell heritage. The meeting was an ad hoc gathering, with no official sponsorship. Its purpose was to discuss ways to lessen the impact of division between the Disciples of Christ, non-instrumental Churches of Christ, and Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (*Christian Chronicle*).

The stated purpose of this meeting—to "lessen the impact of division" between these three "segments of the Stone-Campbell

heritage"—ignores the **cause** of division. It also places the apostate Independent Christian Church and Disciples of Christ denominations on the same level with the church which Jesus built. It is this "Restoring the Restoration" mindset which drives liberals to view the church of Christ as simply another denomination among many. The *impact* of the division can not only be *lessened*, but it can be easily and completely negated by submission to God's authority expressed in the Scriptures. That was the sum and substance of H. Leo Boles' address to another "unity conference" held sixty-six years ago.

> Hopes were entertained in the late 1930s and early 1940s that the Disciples of Christ and churches of Christ could close the breach separating the two groups... The leaders of the unity movement in the Disciples of Christ Church were Edwin R. Errett and James De Forest Murch who were associated with the *Christian Standard*, the leading paper among the Disciples. Claude E. Witty, minister of the Westside-Central church of Christ in Detroit took the lead among the members of the church. A warm friendship developed between Witty and Murch following an arranged meeting. Together they launched the movement for unity among the Disciples members and the churches of Christ... The Unity Movement generated considerable interest among the members of the churches of Christ. Murch and Witty published the Christian Unity *Quarterly* as a medium to freely discuss the proposal. The Unity Movement climaxed in Indianapolis, May 3, 1939, in a highly publicized meeting. B. C. Goodpasture had been invited to speak on that occasion; instead he recommended H. Leo Boles for the task (Boles/Choate 183-84).

Brother Boles spoke for an hour-and-a-half and clearly articulated the only basis upon which unity could be achieved by believers in Christ—the Sacred Scriptures. Here is a summary of his speech at that meeting:

> There is but one pathway to unity among God's people; there is but one rule that can make us one in Christ Jesus; only one way that can bring salvation to the world. All must exalt the supremacy of the word of God and keep opinions private; no one should propagate his opinions in "the areas of silence," but acknowledge the leadership of Christ and love each other as brethren in order to enjoy Christian unity. So let each one lay aside all opinions, ways, inventions, devices, practices, organizations, creeds, confessions, names, manner of work, except those plainly presented and clearly required in the New Testament. Let all determine to do nothing in religion, save that plainly taught in the scripture and ask his brother to accept nothing that God has not required. Let all do faithfully just what God has required, and let all do this in the way approved by God, and unity is

> the inevitable result and no "conference" or "unity meeting" is needed. This will reduce all religious worship and service to its original divine simplicity and purity, and will restore to it its original efficacy and power to save. In this simplicity and purity of worship, and in perfect harmony with the will of God, the richest blessings of God will be ours (32).
>
> W. L. Totty described what happened when it came Boles' time to speak. "He told them in no uncertain terms what had caused the division and what it would take to bring about unity—that if they expected a compromise they were mistaken" (Boles/Choate 184).

Had the Disciples of Christ respected the authority of God a century ago, no division would have occurred. Restoring the restoration among these so-called "segments of the Stone-Campbell heritage" is merely recycling those old denominational "unity conferences" of the last century and it is past time for brethren today to imbibe the spirit of H. Leo Boles and let apostates among us know that we will not compromise one iota of Truth for their ecumenical pipe dreams.

What liberals would do in our time is restore a movement that was slowly finding its way out of the Babel of sectarianism and whose leaders often had erroneous concepts concerning the church and who composed it. In the early days of the movement to restore New Testament Christianity on the North American continent, Campbell and others viewed sectarians as Christians and the sects as simply splinters of the one church of the New Testament. That is the old denominational view voiced for generations that "we're all headed for the same place, even though we are taking different roads." It is the old denominational refrain of: "You go your way and we'll go ours and we'll all meet in heaven." But Jesus said there is only **one** way to the Father (John 14:6), promised to build only **one** church (Mat. 16:18-19), and will save **only His** church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). That old sectarian mantra is now chanted by modern day Cains. The church is God's family (1 Tim. 3:15). To teach that God has children in denominations is to accuse God of adultery, for He has no children outside of His family, and denominations do not constitute any part of God's family. Yet, that is exactly what Mark Henderson of the "Quail Springs Family of God" in Oklahoma City did in 1996 at Abilene Christian University's annual lectures.

> Brothers and sisters, we don't have to live in estrangement and isolation from those who honestly differ with us inside or outside our fellowship. We don't have to agree with them at every point, nor do

> we have to convince them to agree with us on every issue. All we have to do is look to our left, to those who have felt the sting of our rejection, and everywhere we see one who has surrendered his or her life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we may rejoice that we have discovered a brother or sister, and we may extend to that child of God the same inviting hand of grace and acceptance that we ourselves have received from the Lord Jesus (*People Need The Unity-Committed Church*).

Henderson and his fellow-travelers may think they have discovered something novel in believing we can find "a brother or sister" "outside our fellowship" who is a "child of God." Solomon said that "*there is* no new *thing* under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9-10). Henderson is only parroting the same blasphemous ecumenism that was extant among liberals of the nineteenth century. In 1888, B. B. Tyler wrote:

> The denominations of our time represent the efforts of godly men to return in faith and life to the religion of Jesus as he gave it to the world in the beginning. The various Protestant denominations represent stages in the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (West 2:282).

Tyler's view that the church was just another denomination brought a swift reply from John F. Rowe—one which equally applies to Henderson's view that there are brethren "outside our fellowship." Rowe wrote:

> So much sophistry in so small a space we have not, in a long time, seen in a sectarian sheet of the deepest dye. Alas, alas, the "Grand Restoration" is only a "movement," and another denomination has been added to a troop of phantasmagoria (2:283).

Thus does liberalism—past and present—view the church of Christ as simply another denomination among many. Based upon that view, the liberal rejects the biblical basis for unity in Christ (1 Cor. 1:10) and seeks a superficial union founded upon human wisdom. That is the thrust of the various "unity conferences" conducted by those still claiming to be members of churches of Christ, such as the following reported in the *Christian Chronicle*:

> Ministry Impact '04, brought together 350 members of the conservative Christian Churches and of the churches of Christ for dialogue and fellowship. Speakers from both bodies noted the irony of the situation that prompted the meeting—the American Restoration Movement of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone began as a unity movement, but instead produced a three-way division—the third being The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Conference participant Jim White, minister of the Southwest Church of Christ, Omaha, Neb., said, "This is not all about our giving up our position on a capella music. It

> is about finding common ground regardless of 'what side of the keyboard' we are on."
>
> Prentice Meador, senior minister for the Prestoncrest Church of Christ, Dallas, said, "There is nothing to fear in all this. Any time God's people are working toward reconciliation they are close to God's heart. We should regard each other as brothers in Christ, but we don't have to give up all our convictions—we should strive to get our beliefs and practices right," he said (Adams).

In the liberal's view, Cain and Abel were simply the heirs of *different streams* of the same *heritage*, needing only a few summit meetings and "Restoration Forums" to get together and solve their problems through compromise. That remains liberalism's view of the oneness of the church of Christ. To the liberal it is only a *stream* of Campbell and Stone's "unity movement"—a phenomenon which had its genesis on the American frontier of the nineteenth-century. Almost four decades ago, Logan J. Fox offered the same skewed view of the church's origin that is regularly regurgitated by today's liberals.

> The Church of Christ is a historical movement. It is one branch of the Restoration Movement, a nineteenth century reform movement in America associated largely with the names of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. The original movement was conceived as being a part of Protestantism and must be classed with other "free church" movements. One branch of this movement likes to think of itself as being the main Campbellian stream while the others are "digressive" (28-29).

The church of Christ, revealed on the pages of Holy Writ, did not spring from a *movement* on the nineteenth-century American frontier, nor does it remain a *movement*.

> The very idea of a "movement" involves that one has *not yet arrived* at his desired destination... A movement is designed to get us someplace... Now, when one tacks the word "restoration" onto the beginning of the word "movement," obtaining the phrase "restoration movement," we get this concept: *not yet having arrived at restoration... Once we have restored the church, the movement* to the church is *finished*. Thus, we are no longer *in a movement* to restore the church, but we are *in the church* which has *been restored*. God is *not* going to save a movement toward restoration. God is going to save those who have been restored; God is going to save the church... I want to be a member of that which has been restored, the Lord's body, his church. I will teach what the Bible teaches; I will be a part of the church for which the Lord died and shed his blood, and I will reject what these so-called scholars are calling the "restoration movement." Really, it takes only one generation to fully restore the church. Once

that restoration process is *complete*, the *movement* has ended (Cauley 5).

CONCLUSION

The church of Christ was purposed from eternity, promised to the patriarchs, foretold by the prophets, prepared by John, and established by Christ in Jerusalem on the Pentecost immediately following His resurrection. It is plainly revealed on the page of Holy Writ as the locus of salvation for all who will enter therein, and it stands in the same relation to the world today that the ark of Noah stood to the antediluvian world. The church of Christ is the only church built by Jesus, purchased with His own blood, for which He will return, and which He will save eternally. It is **not**, as liberalism views it, a *movement* begun by men on the North American Continent in the nineteenth-century, which diverged into three denominational streams.

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LIBERALISM AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH

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UNIQUE DEFINED

Unique is an adjective and is defined as "being the only one, being without a like or equal, distinctively characteristic" (*Merriam-Webster*). It describes something that is singular or original. It is not like anything else of its kind. The etymology of *unique* is "French, from Latin *unicus*, from *unus* one—more at one."

While *unique* is based on *uni* meaning single or one; this author wants to use the first two letters to illustrate some spiritual principles. The prefix *un* is used to show the opposite of, or the reverse of the root word. There are a number of words which show the force of the prefix *un*.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE AND ILLUSTRATION USING THE PREFIX *UN*

The church of Christ is unique because it is un-paragoned: it is a model of excellence, a pattern by way of distinction, implying superior perfection, surpassing refinement.

The church of Christ is divine in origin. Being divine in origin, it is decreed from eternity and destined for eternity. The church came into being by a divine act of creation—the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:8-11) even before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9). The church is the model, and it is perfect because it is the body of Christ and comes from God. Thus the

church of Christ is un-precedented, having no previous example. The church of Christ follows no other religious persuasion because no other church was ever in the mind of God. The church of Christ is un-copied—modeled from no other form. There are so many various religions that have gotten their ideas from each other. God originated His idea from no other.

The church of Christ sets the form and pattern for men to follow. Therefore, the church of Christ is un-derived—not borrowed nor received from a foreign source. There is not another church to get, obtain, or derive from. The church of Christ is un-limited: having no bounds. The church of Christ is un-confined in that it is universal in nature (Mat. 28:18-20). The church of Christ is un-copied: Jesus Christ (Himself) built the church; not one spiritual fiber was subcontracted out to anyone, nor were any additional architects consulted.

The church of Christ is un-rivaled, having no competitor because there is only one church. The church of Christ is un-surpassed; there is no other church to exceed the only church in the New Testament.

The church of Christ is un-excelled. There has to be more than one for this to be possible, and there is only one church. Thus, no church can out-do the church of Christ because Christ's church is the only one.

The church of Christ is un-matched; again, there is no other church to compare. The church of Christ is un-peered; she has no comparisons or associates.

The church of Christ is un-exampled, since Jesus Christ is the example (1 Pet. 2:22). There is one Christ, therefore, there is no one else to follow.

The church of Christ is un-approached; nothing can come close or near the church whether in worship, organization, work, or any other aspect. The church of Christ is un-paralleled: Jesus said that He is going to save the church of Christ (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 15:24-26). One church will be saved; therefore, no *other* is moving in the same direction.

The church of Christ is un-reproducible: Jesus Christ has already laid the foundation (1 Cor. 3:9-11). Therefore, no one can produce a new one. The church of Christ is un-duplicatable (another corresponding to the first, or a second thing to the same kind). The New Testament church cannot be copied because, again, there is only one.

The church of Christ is un-equaled: the church that Jesus built is not the same in value as other organizations because it took the blood of

Jesus to purchase it (Acts 20:28). The church of Christ is un-beatable: she cannot be defeated by denominational rivals; she will stand unmoved (Heb. 12:28).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AS SEEN BY THE PROPHETS IS UNIQUE IN ITS ONENESS

Each of the following prophets spoke and wrote in a very unique way concerning the distinctive, distinguishing characteristics of the coming of the church of Christ:

The Church as Seen by Isaiah

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

Isaiah (Micah gives the same prophecy—4:1-2) points out several things regarding the establishment of God's house which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). The time of its establishment will be in the last days (2:2), which refers to the final dispensation of time, which is the Christian age. That age began on Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.

Isaiah shows the church's beginning place—Jerusalem or Zion (2:3). Jesus instructed His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father and were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). The apostles obeyed His command (Acts 1:12; 2:1-4). It was in Jerusalem that the seed of the kingdom was first sown and first bore fruit. Those who obeyed the Gospel were added by God to the church (Luke 8:11; Acts 2:36-47). The place of beginning was Jerusalem, and the apostle was Peter who declared that Jesus Christ began His reign over His kingdom, "the church of Christ," on that day (Acts 2:30-36).

Isaiah prophesies as to who can enter. He states that all nations would flow into the church—that is, people from all races would be to come into the church of Christ. That includes Jews and Gentiles (John 10:16; Rom. 1:17). People from every nation under heaven are invited (Mat. 28:19; Acts 10:34-35) to obey the Gospel.

Isaiah says that the Lord would teach us of His ways (2:3). Jesus said:

> 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).

That which is to be taught and will draw men to Christ is the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), which one must obey (Rom. 6:17-18) to be a member of the church of Christ.

Isaiah adds that the law would go out from Zion (2:3). Zion is where the church was planted—Jerusalem. The law of the Lord would initially be proclaimed from Jerusalem. Summing up what Isaiah prophesies concerning the church:

Time:	Last days
Place:	To begin at Jerusalem or Zion
Who can enter:	All nations
Entrance requirements:	Obeying the law

The Church as Seen by Daniel

Daniel gives an interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in which he revealed that there would be four world empires. This prophecy of the coming kingdom was given to a pagan king in the land of Babylon. The prophet, Daniel, was led of God to describe and interpret this dream for Nebuchadnezzar. He began by saying:

> But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days (2:28).

The dream revealed five kingdoms. Four of them were earthly, and one was spiritual.

Babylon was clearly identified as being the first kingdom (2:37-38) and was represented as the head of gold (2:38). The Babylonian empire was 606-536 B.C. The kingdom of Babylon was the first of the four world kingdoms.

The Babylonian kingdom was conquered by Medo-Persia, which is the second great world kingdom. It was a combination of two nations: Media and Persia (cf. 5:28; 9:1; 2:39). In the dream it is represented by the breast and arms of silver (538-332 B.C.). On the night of Belshazzar's drunken feast, the Medes and Persians overtook Babylon.

The Greecian empire would in turn conquer Medo-Persia (330 B.C.) becomes the third great world kingdom. It was the kingdom of Alexander the Great and often called the Macedonian empire (8:20-21;

2:39). This kingdom was represented in the dream by the belly and thighs of brass (332-323 B.C.).

The fourth kingdom was to be the Roman empire. Legs of iron, feet part iron and part clay represents the Roman kingdom (63 B.C.-A.D. 476) in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:40).

During the days of these kings (the kings of the Roman empire) God would set up His kingdom (Dan. 2:44). Daniel's mention that there was a stone cut out without hands which smote the image (Dan. 2:34) shows that God is the one who was setting up this kingdom. This stone represented the kingdom of God (the church). Jesus was crucified in A.D. 30 during the reign of the Roman kings (John 11:48; 19:1-42), and then He established the church. God Himself would rule His kingdom (Dan. 2:44). The Lord's kingdom, unlike these four kingdoms, would never be destroyed; it would also break into pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it (the church of Christ) would stand forever.

The Church as Seen by Jeremiah

Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant and that God would make with the house of Israel—the church of Christ (31:31-34). Jeremiah (just as Isaiah, Micah, and Daniel) announces that it will be in the latter days by using the words "behold, the days come" (31:31). This new covenant which Jehovah would make with the church (spiritual Israel) would not be like the old covenant, the law of Moses (31:32).

The Church as Seen by Joel

Joel saw the church as having its beginning in the last days (Joel 2:28): "And it shall come to pass afterward"! This is the same as Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, and Jeremiah.

Joel states: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (2:28). The Holy Spirit would be poured out without distinction of race. He would be poured out on both Jew (Acts 2) and Gentile (Acts 10). Joel was the prophet of Pentecost, foreseeing a spiritual Zion that would include all the people of God—all flesh.

There was a terrible division among people then, even as it is today. Gentiles look upon the Jews with hatred, as the Jews did the Gentiles. Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9). There were divisions among the differing sects of Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, and Essenes. When Joel spoke of *all* flesh, he is saying that there would be no racial or nationalistic discrimination. When Joel spoke of their sons and daughters, he made no distinction

regarding sex. Joel adds that the Spirit would be poured out on both the old and young; there would be no distinctions regarding age. Likewise, the servants and handmaids would receive the Spirit—thus removing any social position.

We read about the fulfillment of this prophecy on Pentecost when Peter states: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Peter then goes on to quote Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:17-21). This fulfillment is in harmony with what Joel prophesied concerning the deliverance and the pouring out of the Spirit which would begin at Jerusalem (Joel. 2:32).

The Church as Seen Zechariah

> And speak unto him, saying, 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 (Zec. 6:12-13).

We know from this prophecy that the **Branch** would build the temple of the Lord. Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy when He built the church (Mat. 16:18), which is the temple of the Lord (Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17). Zechariah also teaches where Jesus would build the church when he said:

> And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited *as* towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her (Zec. 2:4-5).

This is clearly a reference that only can be fulfilled in the Lord's church and in Jerusalem. Zechariah again shows that it would be in Jerusalem when he writes: "Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain" (Zec. 8:3). He connects Jerusalem with truth, and he connected a mountain with holiness. Both Isaiah and Micah referred to the church of Christ being the mountain of the Lord's house (spiritual Jerusalem; 1 Tim. 3:15), and Zechariah says it is the temple of the Lord.

When will all this take place? "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin

and for uncleanness" (Zec. 13:1). Zechariah 10 had introduced the Christ who was pierced (crucified), and from the crucified Christ at Calvary there would be a fountain of spiritual cleansing opened for David's house and Jerusalem's inhabitants. "In that day" is a clear-cut allusion to Messianic times. This prophecy is referring to the day the **Branch** would make available forgiveness of sins through His blood. Judaism, with its animal sacrifices, could not offer a fountain opened to take away sin. "For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Forgiveness of sin could only take place by the blood of Jesus.

The church of Christ is amazingly unique in that Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and now Zechariah all prophesied that the church would be established at the same time, the same place, and by the same Person.

The Church as Seen by Amos

Amos saw God's church as the rebuilt tabernacle:

> In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old (Amos 9:11).

The prophets spoke in symbols and figures which the people of their day could understand, but they were explaining the nature and characteristics of the Messianic age.

The tabernacle built by Moses was an elaborate tent for the purpose of meeting with God and obtaining mercy, thus it was the center of worship. However, Israel had failed in worshiping God as He commanded (Amos 5:21-24) and kept not his testimonies. "For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images" (Psa. 78:58). Their actions caused God to be wroth with them, and He greatly abhorred Israel. This caused Him to forsake the tabernacle at Shiloh which was the tent which He placed among men (Jer. 7:12; 1 Sam. 4). Now, Amos prophesied of a time when God would again give such a place for worship and the obtaining of His mercy as in David's day. The broken down tabernacle of David will again be set up. When David was king, the kingdom was united under him (2 Sam. 7:12-17). After David's son Solomon died, the kingdom divided; the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos saw this breached, broken down tabernacle restored to its former state; the tabernacle of David raised up as in the

days of old: "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this" (Amos 9:12).

When Amos saw the tabernacle of David being rebuilt, he was seeing the Gentiles being received into the Lord's house. This made the one tabernacle for one nation consisting of both Jew and Gentile. This one people possessing the remnant of Edom and all the nations that were called by the name of God, subsequently becoming the possession of the new David.

This Messianic prophecy was fulfilled under Jesus Christ and in His church. James, our Lord's brother, quotes this prophecy as having been fulfilled in the church. He said:

> Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:13-18).

James is stating that the prophecy Amos made had already been fulfilled; the tabernacle of David—the church of Christ—had already been set up and both Jew and Gentile were flowing into it. The church is the rebuilt tabernacle (temple) of God (Eph. 2:16-22). The church is the true tabernacle with Christ as high priest (Heb. 8:1-2).

Thus we see in Amos the same thing we see in Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Joel, and Zechariah—the establishment of the church of Christ. They all saw the church being established at the same time, same place, and by the same Person.

The Church as Seen by Ezekiel

There are several passages which Ezekiel writes that point us to Jerusalem, the Messiah, and the church.

> For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out (34:11).
>
> And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods (34:24-25).

God promises to become the shepherd and to gather the scattered sheep. The sheepfold will become one with one shepherd over the one fold. There will be a period of restoration with a new temple (the church of Christ) resulting in a new worship under a new law and with a new king David Who is Jesus Christ. He will rule until the consummation of this Christian dispensation. These prophetic words are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His church. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). He then adds, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd" (10:16). The current *fold* was the Jews and the *other sheep* would be the Gentiles. Comprising this one fold would be those from Judah and Israel (Eze. 37:22), and Jesus would also bring in the Gentiles (Isa. 11:10; Eph. 2:11-16).

Ezekiel also prophesied that David would rule even though David, at the time of Ezekiel, had been dead for four-hundred years.

> And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (37:24-28).

This is obviously a reference to Jesus Christ. Notice what God said to David:

> And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

These prophecies have reference to none other than Jesus Christ. The Hebrews writer quotes 2 Samuel 7:14 and applies it to Him (Heb. 1:5). Thus we know that the one shepherd in which Ezekiel speaks of is our Lord.

Here again, we see the uniqueness—Christ, His church, and His messengers. Ezekiel in his prophecies points to Pentecost and the one church with the one king. That one church is the church of Christ with Christ being the head and which was established during the first century for all people.

The Church as Seen by Hosea

Hosea saw God's church as a called-out people.

> Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God (1:10).
>
> And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God (2:23).

Hosea's wife, Gomer, was guilty of whoredom. The relationship between Hosea and Gomer illustrated the spiritual relationship of God and Israel—who had become guilty of spiritual whoredom. Israel's spiritual whoredom caused God to have a controversy with them (Hos. 4). Here Hosea's prophecy gives a way of hope for the *called out* of God. Hosea declares God's mercy on and His exaltation of the called out, which mercy reaches out to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Hosea speaks of a certain place and a certain time that the children of Israel would no longer be His people because He had cast them off. Likewise, he speaks of a time which would come that there would be those who were called "sons of the living God." When will this be fulfilled?

Both Paul and Peter show that this time would be during the Messianic age—the Christian dispensation. Paul quotes both passages in Romans 9:25-26, showing how God shows mercy upon the Gentiles that they are called the children of God. Peter speaks of that chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and a people belonging to God and says that are the "people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:10). He applies this to the those who are Christians. Thus, Hosea's prophecy of a "called-out people" is fulfilled in the church of Christ.

Here is another prophet of God (Hosea) speaking about: the same thing, at the same time, in the same place, and the same Person, as did

the other prophets we have noticed. The church of Christ is unique, having been established in the first century at Jerusalem by the reigning Christ for both Jew and Gentile.

The Church as Seen by Haggai

God through the prophet Haggai records these words:

> For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it *is* a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts (2:6-9).

These verses point to the future temple in which the longing of all nations is to be the Messiah. Haggai calls upon those who had seen the original temple to call to mind the glory of that structure. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, yet the literal temple that was being built was not greater than the former. There was a temple coming that would be desired not by Jews only but also by all nations. That temple would be the church of Christ with Jesus reigning as king.

Haggai said that the Lord would shake the heavens, earth, sea, dry land, and all nations. A few verses later (2:21-23) Haggai again speaks of the shaking of heaven and earth, overthrowing the kingdoms of the earth, and establishing another kingdom which would be superior to those kingdoms. This kingdom was the church of Christ with the Christ as king of the kingdom.

As one reads the Scriptures, he finds that Mount Sinai quaked (Exo. 19:16-19), the Egyptian world shook as Israel was freed by the power of God, and Babylon was also shaken. Yet, the church of Christ is built on the solid rock of Jesus of Nazareth (Mat. 16:18), and it cannot be shaken, moved, or destroyed (Heb. 12:22-29). Haggai is another prophet showing uniqueness of the church that Jesus built.

The Church as Seen by Obadiah

The final paragraph of Obadiah's prophecy offers hope to the remnant of Jacob.

> But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions (17).

Obadiah is seeing the Lord's church. One of the major factors in all prophecy was that the church of Christ would be established on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and Obadiah, as so many others, sees this taking place. There are several other things that are contained within this prophecy:

1. There is safety in Mount Zion
2. Possessions (blessings) are abundant
3. Esau stands as a symbol for the enemies of God's people
4. Esau is to be consumed
5. The tribes of Israel and Judah will possess the cities of the south
6. Messengers will issue invitations to Mount Zion
7. Esau will be judged
8. The kingdom will be God's.

The ultimate realization of what Obadiah saw is the establishment of the church of Christ. Here is another prophet saying the same thing. Oh, how unique is the church of Christ!

The Church as Seen by Zephaniah

The last section of this book (3:9-20) refers to the return from Babylonian captivity to the land of Canaan, but it also has reference to the Christian age. Zephaniah prophesies that in that day:

1. The people would speak a pure language
2. They would call upon the name of the Lord
3. The people would serve God.

This passage clearly deals with God's interest in saving the Gentiles under a new covenant—and in the church which will be established in Jerusalem. Zephaniah looks to this age that began on Pentecost as he writes: "The LORD *will be* terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen" (Zep. 2:11). In the New Testament age men will worship God and do so in spirit and in truth (Acts 2:42; John 4:24).

Zephaniah 3:9-20 gives us a preview of the Messianic age in which the church of Christ would be established for all mankind.

The Church as Seen by Habakkuk

In Habakkuk 2, we find the prophecy concerning the woes of future humiliation that God would bring on the sinful Babylonians and the deliverance that God would give. The prophet says:

> For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith (Hab. 2:3-4).

These two verses show us that there was a time fixed in the mind of God. It was not to be fulfilled immediately, but this oracle of hope was to come at an appointed time—the Messianic age. While Habakkuk did not specifically point to the church of Christ, he pointed to the age in which the church would be established.

The Church as Seen by Malachi

The Old Testament closed with a divine promise concerning Malachi's prophetic view of the coming of John the Baptist:

> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Mal. 4:5).

This is the promised messenger who is going to prepare the way:

> Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 3:1).

The work of John the Baptist was to prepare men for the coming of Christ and for the coming of the kingdom (the church of Christ). The *Elijah* that Malachi is referring to is, of course, John the Immerser. Jesus Himself identified him as that Elijah who was to come (Mat. 11:14), to prepare the way before Him (Mat. 11:10; Mark 1:1-7). Malachi, in this prophecy and its fulfillment in the life of and the work of John the Baptist and the coming of Christ, shows us the development of the scheme of God's redemption through Jesus Christ and His church. Yet, the main message is applied to men in the Christian age:

> In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight (Mat. 3:1-3).

Here is another prophet of God, John the Baptist (Mat. 11:7-10; Mark 11:32), referring to **the** kingdom—the church of Christ (singular).

Jesus Christ's message was also the same as John's. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). Jesus, being a prophet Himself (Mat. 21:11;

John 7:40-41), is saying that His kingdom (singular) will be established shortly.

The uniqueness of the church of Christ is truly seen in this composition of all the prophets at which we have looked: Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Joel, Zechariah, Amos, Ezekiel, Hosea, Haggai, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Malachi, John the Baptist, and above all Jesus Christ. They all preached and prophesied of the same church (the church of Christ) that would be established at the same time (the first century), at the same place or location (Jerusalem), by the same person or builder (Jesus Christ).

LIBERALISM SAYS:

One Church Is Just as Good as Another

We have just examined the writings of prophets of God including our king, Jesus the Christ, and they all agreed with the same scriptural fact that the church of Christ is the only church that God has given to man to be a member of in this dispensation. Jesus believed the church of Christ was important enough to die for (Acts 20:28). If one church is just as good as another, then Jesus Christ died in vain. He did **not** shed any of His precious blood for any other religious organization, for any denomination, or those *pseudo* churches. He did not shed even a drop of His blood for them. Instead every drop of the blood of Christ which He shed on Calvary (John 19:34) went to acquire, gain, and procure the church of Christ. Surely, all men should be able to see the unique value of the church.

The church of Christ is the purchased thing, and the blood is the purchase price. The church then is equal in value with the blood of Jesus Christ—it cost His life. Consider the question again: Is one church just as good as another? Let us continue to answer that with more explicit, scriptural details.

No religious group is as good or even comes close to Christ's church, because the church of Christ is one of a kind. The church of Christ has its own identity, along with many other points of distinction. For example, Marshall Applewhite of the Heavens Gate Church in San Diego, California (and his forty-plus followers), died because of the religious ritual practice of suicide. Now, let us ask this question again: Is one church just as good as another? David Karesh in Waco, Texas; Jim Jones in South Africa; or Matt Hale and his Church of the World Order all show that one church is not just as good as another. These

churches, along with other worldwide religious groups, practice such things as murder, in-house sex, gun running, drug dealing, satanic worship, blood drinking, and the list could be expanded greatly. Now, is one church really as good as another?

There are *churches* which practice racism: The Black Muslims, African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.), and white supremacist groups. There are those which practice polygamy, such as Islam and Mormonism. There are those which practice witchcraft and idolatry. Many other practices could be mentioned, but we begin seeing that one church is not as good as another.

Consider the chart below, showing the different men starting the different *churches* in different places and times, which again shows that they are not the same and that one is not as good as another.

Church	**Founder**	**Place**	**Time (A.D.)**
church of Christ	Jesus Christ	Jerusalem	30
Catholic	Boniface III	Rome, Italy	606
Islam	Muhammad	Arabia	622
Lutheran	Martin Luther	Germany	1511
Church of England	King Henry VIII	England	1534
Presbyterian	John Calvin	Switzerland	1536
Baptist	John Smythe	Amsterdam, Holland	1607
Quakers	George Fox	England	1650
Methodist	John Wesley	England	1729
Mormon	Joseph Smith	America	1830
Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles T. Russell	Pennsylvania	1872
Christian Science	Mary B.G.P. Eddy	Boston, MA	1879
Church of the Nazarene	P. F. Bresee	California	1895
Church of God in Christ	C. H. Mason	Memphis, TN	1897
Assembly of God	A-Group	Hot Springs, AR	1914
Church of the Lord Jesus Christ	S. C. Johnson	Philadelphia, PA	1930
Black Muslims	W. D. Ferrod	Detroit, MI	1930
Church of God	D. S. Warner	America	1880
Salvation Army	William Booth	London, England	1865

(William Booth started the East London Christian Mission in 1865. The name was changed to the Salvation Army in 1878).

There are also those who believe in latter-day revelation:

The Potter's House	T. D. Jakes	Dallas, TX
The Gold Dome Benny Hinn	Creflow Dollar	Atlanta, GA
New Dimension Christian Center	Greg Burns	Pensacola, FL

This list could be expanded to include all religious groups. They were started by the wrong men, at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and with the wrong beliefs. These men cannot save those who are following them. However, the church of Christ was started: by the right Man—Jesus Christ, at the right time—A.D. 30, and in the right place—Jerusalem. This is the church Jesus said He would save (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 15:24-26) and the only one that He will save.

How can any of these denominations be as good as the Lord's church? They were started by different men, at different times, and in different places. These denominations wear different names and teach different doctrines resulting in differing practices. These groups have different days of worship and teach different ways to be saved. They all disagree with each other and more importantly, they disagree with God and His Word. Listen, friend, the idea that "one church is just as good as another" is just as false as it can be!

In Ephesians 4, Paul writes these words:

> I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *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 (1-6).

In this listing of the seven ones, Paul says that there is "one body." When there is only one of a thing, then there are no other choices in the matter. Paul also lists that there is "one Spirit." It is by this one Spirit that we are all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

Paul also says that there is only "one faith." Yet, previously we listed twenty-three different *faiths* (Eph. 4:5). According to the Bible, twenty-two of them are wrong because the Bible, the Word of God says, there is only *one* faith. You can only choose one, and the choice is yours (Jos. 24:14-16), but God wants us to choose life, that both you and your seed may live (Deu. 30:19).

Any Church Will Do

If any church will do, then anything else will do: any car will do, any house will do, any wife will do.

Paul stated, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). Just as a man is married to his own wife, Jesus Christ is married to His *one* wife, the church. Paul

wrote about the wife of Christ: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Paul also wrote that we are now married to Christ:

> Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).

As there is just one wife for this writer (Mat. 19:4-6), there is just one bride for Christ. The apostle John saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven and described it as a "bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

The idea of uniqueness could not find a better description than that of a husband and wife, a concept that is easily understood. The husband and wife relationship is sustained between Christ and the church. The bride of Jesus, the church, should wear the only name that can give reverence and honor to Jesus the husband. As a group, we are the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). As individuals, we are Christians (Acts 11:26). We must wear Christ's name just as the wife wears the husband's name.

> This *is* the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Gen. 5:1-2).

This is the perfect, unique case in which the wife wore the husband's name—**their** name was called Adam.

Israel was God's bride under the Old Testament. *El* is the Hebrew word for "God." Therefore, Israel wore God's name. God was married to Israel (Jer. 3:6-14; 31:31-34). There is no difference in the New Testament. The lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9) made herself ready (19:7) when the bride was established on Pentecost day (Acts 2:47). Christ is not a polygamist: He does not have more than one wife. As the bride of Christ, the church is submissive to Him and are to remain chaste and pure (2 Cor. 11:1-3; Eph. 5:25-27).

"The Church Is Just like the Airport"

People can go to any airport, going to the same place by choosing different airlines. If we all are going to New York, Delta Airlines is not the only company that has flights going there. You can make your own choice; any airline will do. Also, one airline is just as good as another; so choose the airline of your choice. After all, one airline is as good as

another, and they will all end up in that *one* airport—New York. So the Baptist may choose Delta, the Methodist might choose Continental, the Catholic might choose Northwest, the Pentecostal may choose US Air, the Lutheran may choose Air Tran, and the Presbyterian may choose American Eagle, and we will all end up in New York.

That might be good if you are going to New York, but we are not trying to go to New York! Instead we are trying to go to **glory**! Delta, Continental, Northwest, US Air, or any other airlines cannot take anyone to glory.

There is only one thing that can take me to heaven, and that is the church of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Eph. 5:23). Peter said:

> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

There will be no airport to go to, therefore there will be no planes to catch. Those things will all be burned up. There will be only one transportation that is fire proof, and it is the church of Christ.

The Seven Day Adventist cannot take the bus, the Mormon cannot go by boat, the Assembly of God cannot hop on the train, and the Salvation Army cannot take a plane. Only the church of Christ will wind up in heaven. No, you will not have the transportation of your choice. Jesus says, "I am the way" (John 14:6). He is not one of many ways! He is the one way, and that way is found in the church of Christ.

"Join the Church of Your Choice"

"Join the church of your choice" or "go to the church of your choice" is suggesting that there are many churches to choose. While it is true that there are many in the world to choose from, there is only one in the New Testament to choose, and it is the church of Christ.

There are thousands of religious bodies existing in the world (but without God's approval). Some people think that *church* is similar to a car lot. They think that they can pick out what they like, what they want, and what suits them. God and His Word does not enter into the matter at all. What about the Lord's choice? Does He get a choice? It is not the church of man's choice, because the Bible does not teach about the church of one's choice. The church Jesus built and purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28) is His choice.

The church of Christ's choice started in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Zec. 1:16), wears His name (Rom. 16:16; Acts 4:12), and of which He is the

head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23). The church of Christ's choice advocates and preaches only the doctrine of Christ (2 John 2:9). Since the church of Christ's choice is divine in all of its origin, to get into the church of Christ's choice, you need to obey His Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 2:16). Upon obedience to His Gospel, God adds one to that one church of which is the church of Christ's choice. Joining a *church* is a human act while the Lord adding the saved to the church is a Divine act.

> Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.... Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.... And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women...and much people was added unto the Lord (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24).

There is only one way that the Lord adds anyone to the church of Christ's choice, and that is upon our obedience to Christ in being baptized for the remission of our sins (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38). Likewise, this is the only way to get into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27) where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10).

There is only one way to be born again. Jesus said it was by being born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). The Spirit creates in man a new spiritual life by the Word of God (1 Cor. 4:15; Jam. 1:18;1 Pet. 1:22-23). That new life begins when we are baptized in water for our salvation (Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 10:47-48; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). Through that new birth we are made new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) and are now in Christ, having been added to that one church of Christ's choice.

God has specified **how** one gets into that one church. When God specifies there are no alternatives to what He has said—there are no choices in the matter.

Noah Did Not Have the Wood of His Choice

God told Noah to make an ark to the saving of his family (Gen. 6). In giving Noah instructions about this ark, He commanded him to make it out of gopher wood (6:14). Noah had many kinds of wood to choose from (oak, pine, redwood, etc.), but God said to use gopher wood. Any other type of wood was eliminated because God had not authorized any other wood. Noah, if he was to be saved, had no other choice.

Cain Did Not Have the Sacrifice of His Choice

We are told, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4).

The Scriptures inform us as to why Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's rejected: Abel's offering was by **faith**. Paul informs us: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Thus, we know that Abel followed the instructions of God and offered his sacrifice correctly and was found righteous.

On the other hand, Cain made a sacrifice to God, but it was rejected. Why? Cain's offering was not by faith.

> And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell (Gen. 4:4-5).

Since Cain's sacrifice was not offered by faith—by God's instructions—then his trouble was a lack of faith. He made other choices when there was no choice in the matter.

The faith of Abel is still speaking to man today. When God gives instructions, then there is no choice in the matter, we must follow those instructions to be acceptable with God.

David Did Not Have the Transportation of His Choice

In the transportation of the ark of the covenant, God had mandated how this was to be done. There was a due order in which it was to be done (1 Chr. 15:13). God had given explicit detailed instructions about the matter (15:15). The moving of the ark was specifically given to the sons of Kohath of the Levitical tribe (Num. 3:29-31). David, instead, built a new cart (2 Sam. 6, 1 Chr. 13) to transport the ark to Jerusalem. While traveling, the oxen stumbled, and the ark shook. Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the ark and the Lord struck him dead. The death of Uzzah, however, could have been avoided. God had repeatedly told the Israelites the way the ark was to be transported.

> This *shall be* the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, *about* the most holy things: And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over *it* a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof (Num. 4:4-6).

God had one way of carrying the ark, not one of many ways.

> And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear *it*: but they shall not touch *any* holy thing, lest they die. These *things are* the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation (Num. 4:15).

The priests were even forbidden to touch the ark while it was being moved. Uzzah had no right to touch the ark, nor did David (or Uzzah) have the transportation of his choice. The other clans of the Levitical tribe were supplied wagons and carts for hauling tabernacle items (7:2-8). However, no carts were given to the family of Kohath, because they were explicitly required to bear the ark upon their shoulders (7:9). When the ark was placed on a new cart in moving it from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem, rather than on the shoulders of Kohathites, Uzzah paid for this error with his life (1 Chr. 13:7-10).

After Uzzah's death, David was displeased and called his death "a breach upon Uzzah" (2 Sam. 6:8). Soon, David read the Scriptures and said, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God" (1 Chr. 15:2). God had not given man the choice of the ark's transportation. It is the transportation of God's choice, and when God chooses, there is no other choice to select from.

Nadab and Abihu Did Not Have the Fire of Their Choice

In the five different sacrifices ordained of God and revealed in Leviticus, fire was used with: the meat or meal offering (2:2), the peace offering (3:5), the sin offering (4:10-12), the burnt offering (6:13), and the trespass offering (7:5). When it came to the fire which was to be used by the priest in offering sacrifices, Nadab and Abihu learned the hard way that they did not have a choice regarding that fire—they could not use the fire they wanted.

> And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (10:1-2).

We know, beyond any doubt, that the fire used by Nadab and Abihu was not authorized by God. Therefore, the fire of their choice cost them their lives. What was the fire of God's choice?

> And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which *is* for himself: And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the vail (Lev. 16:11-12).

The fire of God's choice in this particular matter was the fire that had been taken from the brazen altar of sacrifice in the court outside the tabernacle. Priests were authorized to get the fire from that location but none other.

Nadab and Abihu, in choosing to use "strange fire," were actually refusing God's choice of fire. The service of the altar of incense was restricted to the burning of incense. "Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon" (Exo. 30:9). Strange fire was a fire of man's choosing—not what God had commanded.

> And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun (Num. 16:46).

Nadab and Abihu changed God's divine pattern and chose to do what they wanted to do. However, they learned that they did not have the fire of their choice.

Naaman Did Not Have the River of His Choice

> Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was* a leper (2 Kin. 5:1).

Naaman is sent to Israel to rid himself of his leprosy. We learn that for Naaman to get rid of his leprosy, he is going to have to comply with God's choice. However, he shows how man will trust in himself, in his own reasoning, instead of trusting and obeying God.

The instructions of God through the prophet Elisha reads: "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kin. 5:10). This was the choice of God for Naaman to comply with—if he wanted his flesh clean: go to Jordan and wash seven times. That is all that Naaman had to do.

> But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the

> LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper" (2 Kin. 5:11).

"Behold, I thought" Naaman said. He had the matter all settled in his mind. He had devised his own choices, his own options, his own selections, and his own ways, but God says: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 55:8).

We must allow God to speak and choose for Himself. God, through the message of Elisha, chose Jordan. Naaman thought: "If it is only the water of a river that is needed, then the rivers at home will do." Naaman said to himself: "What is the sense of going down into the Jordan? The Damascus river is better than the river of Jordan. Why not the river of my choice: Why not Abana, Why not Pharpar, Why not rivers—*plural*, Why not just any river in Damascus (2 Kin. 5:12)? Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?"

When God authorizes, man does not have a choice. But Naaman said, "behold **I** thought":

1. Naaman thought money could cleanse him from leprosy (5:5).
2. Naaman took instructions from the wrong person to get rid of his leprosy (5:5-6).
3. Naaman went to the wrong place to get rid of his leprosy. Instead of going to Elisha, the prophet of God, he listened to the king of Syria who sent him to Jehoram, the king of Israel, who was not even on speaking terms with God (5:3-7).
4. Naaman's attitude was prejudiced. He invented choices in his own mind, by saying any river will do (5:12).
5. Naaman wanted to substitute. Instead of washing in Jordan, he wanted to choose the river of his choice (5:12).

Elisha was the messenger of God and delivered God's message to Naaman. God's command as delivered by Elisha was to go wash. He stated where he was to wash—the Jordan River. That was the only river authorized; none other would do. The number of times he was to dip into the river was stated—seven. This was God's choice for the cleansing of his leprosy. When Naaman went "and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kin. 5:14). Jesus stated: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving

Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27), and he was cleansed because of his obedience to the man of God.

Summary

The Old Testament was written for us to learn (Rom. 15:4). One of the things we learn concerns God's dealings with man. From these examples God teaches us: (1) Noah did not have the wood of his choice, (2) Cain did not have the sacrifice of his choice, (3) David did not have the transportation of his choice, (4) Nadab and Abihu did not have the fire of their choice, and (5) Naaman did not have the river of his choice. One application of these examples is that man does not have the church of his choice!

CONCLUSION

Notice these seventeen reasons why the church of Christ is unique:

1. She was planned and purposed by God from times eternal (Eph. 3:8-11).
2. She was built by and upon Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18).
3. She has Jesus as her head and Savior (Eph. 5:23).
4. She was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
5. Her members are in Christ (Rom. 6:3-4).
6. Her members have the right to prayer (1 The. 5:17; 1 Pet. 3:12; John 9:31).
7. She brings glory to God (Eph. 3:21).
8. She has no creed but Christ (Acts 2:36).
9. She has no rule of faith but Christ's Word (John 14:20-24; Acts 2:42; 1 Pet. 4:11; Jude 3).
10. She has no earthly headquarters (Eph. 1:21-23; Mat. 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 3:22).
11. She is sanctified and cleansed by Christ (Eph. 5:26).
12. She works and worships in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17; John 4:23-24).
13. She will be gloriously presented unto Christ (Eph. 5:27).
14. She is essential to salvation (Eph. 5:23; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 15:24-26).
15. The apostles were members (Acts 2:41).
16. She will last forever (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28-29).
17. She wears the right name (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2).

The plea of the church of Christ is to go back to Jerusalem and restore the apostolic church. To accomplish this goal there must be a

complete return to the original ground of the New Testament church, and take up things just as the apostles left them.

This plea does not mean establish some new thing, nor does it mean to reform some church. What the world needs is the original church of Christ in all of its primitive faith, worship, and practice. It is our most earnest desire that all should be content with no name but Christian, no creed but Christ, and no book but the Bible.

God's arrangement is very unique. If men today will proclaim the simple message, the same results attained by the church on the day of Pentecost will be attained by righteous men today. Do exactly what God wants, and be what God wants all men to be. In doing so, men will make their calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10). Then the world will appreciate the uniqueness of the church of Christ and the stand that it takes.

WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.
"Unique." *Merriam-Webster Online*.

LIBERALISM AND THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Each congregation of the Lord's people is autonomous, that is, self-governing under Christ. Jesus has all authority in matters pertaining to salvation, Christianity, and religion (Mat. 28:18). He is the only head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18). He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Elders under Christ have authority for expedient matters (Heb. 13:17).

THE CHURCH HAS ONE WORK

The work of the church is saving souls. This work is accomplished in three ways: (1) edification, (2) benevolence, and (3) evangelism. Note the following verses which reveal the first of these three: **edification** of the saints:

> He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 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: 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. 4:10-14).

Acts reveals the work of **benevolence** as a work of the first century church and thus a function of the body of Christ today:

> And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.... And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.... Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.... And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-37; 6:1-4).

With regard to **evangelism**, just before He ascended up to the right hand of the throne of God, Jesus gave His great and wonderful commission to His disciples:

> Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:14-16).

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:18-20).

These three avenues of the work of the church have the salvation of souls and the glory of God at heart (Mat. 5:13-16; Phi. 2:14-16). The

purpose of Christ when He was on earth in the first century is the purpose of His spiritual body, the church, today—that is, to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Though the church of Christ today does not possess the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, as did the first century church, she still has been given the divine command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

THE BIBLE AUTHORIZES IN THREE WAYS

In carrying out this work, elders can know that the New Testament (which law to which men are accountable in the Christian Age—Gal. 6:2; 2 John 9-11) authorizes by: (1) Direct Command, (2) Approved Account of Action (example), and (3) Implication. Any one of these three sources may be used to prove a religious doctrine and/or practice as authorized by Christ.

ELDERS AND FINAL DECISIONS

Elders have authority in the decision-making process with regard to optional matters in the work of the church, that is, they have the authority to make the final decisions in matters of **expediency**. The teaching of the New Testament states that members of the church are to be obey those who have the rule over them. This shows that members are to be subject to the eldership.

> Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

An example of an expediency would be the building of a meeting house for worship. The Lord's church has New Testament authority to take money from the church treasury to build a meeting house to assemble. Hebrews 10:25 teaches Christians to assemble together for worship to God and therefore authorizes (by implication) the elders to use the Lord's money to build a building.

GIVE IT THE AUTHORITY TEST

It is this author's conviction that, while a respect for the authority of the New Testament is absolutely necessary in regard to studying the issue of the work of the church and liberalism, it is also necessary to know how to rightly divide the Word of truth. Yes, we must have a healthy respect for Bible authority (Col. 3:17).

How to Determine Authority from God's Word

Three Ways the Bible Authorizes - Colossians 3:17
2 Timothy 2:15
Rightly Divide

Direct Statement
Example
Implication

New Testament Proof of The Necessity of Water Baptism for the Sinner:

Direct Statement - The sinner in becoming a Christian is commanded to be **baptized** to be saved (receive remission of sins)—Acts 2:38.

Approved Example - Acts 2:41 - About 3,000 individuals were approved of God when baptized on Pentecost in that the Lord added them to His church.

Implication - Acts 2:41 - Sinners were approved of God when baptized and this implies the approval of God for sinners today who are baptized. He disapproved if they did not—in that one today must gladly receive the Word about baptism to be added to His church.

Noah Knew How to Determine Authority to Build the Ark Genesis 6-8

Specific Commands Were Obligatory

1. Must build the ark
2. Must make a plurality of rooms
3. Must use pitch (tar-like substance)
4. Gopher wood must be used
5. God's blueprint was to be followed
6. Must have ark for home for awhile
7. Must have ark with three levels
8. One door placed in side of ark

General Commands Were Optional*

1. Choice of Tools
2. Number beyond two rooms
3. Where to get the pitch
4. Where to obtain gopher wood
5. Measuring method
6. Living quarters, which level
7. What kind of level connectors
8. Which side to place the door

*The **general command** was and is to be **obeyed**—but was and is optional in regard to method in the realm of expediency, provided no principle of God's Word is violated in the choice of "expedients."

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We must rightly divide the Word of Truth, the New Testament (2 Tim. 2:15). Elders and all members must take the biblical evidence and properly interpret it. In carrying out the work of the church, elders can know what the New Testament authorizes by one of the three ways enumerated. Any one of these three may be used to prove a religious doctrine and/or practice as authorized by Christ.

SOME MODERN PRACTICES

Recreation and Entertainment as a Work of the Church

Does God authorize recreation and entertainment as a work of the church? **No!** Notice what is being advocated in this statement!

1. There is absolutely **no Bible authority** for the church (out of the church treasury) to build and maintain gymnasiums for the enjoyment of members of the church.

2. When **any** congregation of the Lord's people misuses the Lord's treasury in that which is unscriptural, it serves as evidence of and a reflection of that leadership's misunderstanding of Deity's purpose for the church in a lost and dying world (cf. Mark 16:15-16; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 5:17).

3. When members of the church enjoy one another's company by engaging in recreational activities (such as camp, outings, retreats, etc.), it is not to be financed out of the Lord's treasury.

4. There is absolutely **no Bible authority** for the church (out of the church treasury) to build and maintain swimming pools and such like for the enjoyment of members of the church. Faithful brethren for years have understood this and have built camp swimming pools out of individual's pockets as opposed to doing it out of the church treasury, which treasury is designed for the saving of souls through the three ways mentioned previously.

5. It is not only unwise, but it is **unscriptural** to erect (out of the church treasury) a sports' complex. Some brethren have been heard to take the position that this is an **optional** matter but that the *best choice* for an eldership is to chose to spend the Lord's money on preaching the Gospel (as though God gives them a choice—which He does not). Those who advocate such a position end up being against spending the Lord's money on constructing a gym based on subjectivism rather than a respect for the authority of God's Word (cf. Col. 3:17) and rightly divided the Word of Truth, i.e. correctly determined authority (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

Having considered what is being advocated, let us now turn our attention to what is not being advocated:

1. That churches may not eat fellowship meals.
2. That churches may not eat fellowship meals **in the church building** (Grizzell, *Unscriptural*).
3. That members of the church may not engage in recreational activities with one another, e.g. picnics, outings, retreats, camps, etc. It would be ludicrous to hold such a position.
4. That a Christian is in error by seeking to build a friendship with a lost individual through appropriate means.
5. That which we know as *anti-ism* is good. *Anti-ism* is seeking to bind where God has not bound which is just as sinful as is *liberalism* (seeking to loose where God has bound). This author is just as opposed to anti-ism as he is liberalism.
6. That there may not be **secondary** uses of authorized expedients, provided the Lord's treasury does not pay the expense of secular pursuits and provided it does not violate any New Testament principle of truth, (e.g. the command to "Abstain from all appearance of evil"; 1 The. 5:22) (Grizzell *Church*).

If there is New Testament authority for **purposefully** constructing a gymnasium from the Lord's treasury for basketball games (recreation) in a *multipurpose building*, then there is also New Testament authority to purposefully construct a gymnasium from the Lord's treasury for basketball games (recreation) separate and apart from that *multipurpose building*. If not, why not?

The liberal's argument for the Lord's money to pay for their gym is unscriptural, whether they place it in or out of the worship place. What view of Christ did individuals originally possess when the first contact they had was with a church financed gym? What were they converted to? Were they converted to Christ and a correct view of Christ's church, or were they converted to a denominational view of Christ and His church?

Implications of False Doctrine

Any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is false itself. If it is the case that the elders of the church have New Testament authority to take funds from the church treasury and build **solely** a gymnasium, then the elders are justified to build any other type of sports' complex as well.

Liberal's Definition of a "Multi-purpose" Building

"Liberal brethren's concept of a "multi-purpose building" is a church financed gymnasium with added classrooms" (Grizzell, *Church* 51).

Divine Math Versus Human Math

> Though a church leadership may build a gymnasium for one purpose (recreation and entertainment of the members and guests) and then use it for three other purposes, the first aforementioned purpose is not somehow magically justified by the Scriptures, i.e. 1 wrong + 3 rights do not = a scriptural position.... The inspired writer James stated that, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). So, in the context of James 2:10 the divine math teaches that 1 + 3 = 0. All the good and wonderful works accomplished by those in error are worthless with regard to salvation from their own sins (Mt. 7:21-23) (51).

> There are some brethren who are standing up and speaking out against such innovations as...gymnasiums and such like.... "Where is the authority for such practices?" Instead of proving that their position is scriptural, they simply exclaim the scriptures do not condemn it! This is exactly the argument that the Christian Church has made for years in trying to defend the use of instrumental music in worship. Instead of *proving* their claims, there is simply an *assertion*. Brethren who are trying to *defend* the positions that we stated above instead of *proving* their claims, simply charge, "There is arising a new anti-ism among us." Brethren, it is not a new anti-ism arising among us. It is still just the "old liberalism" reaching its tentacles farther and farther out (Grubb 10).

Women Preaching in the Pulpit of the Church

God's Word does **not** authorize women preaching in the presence of men. Though the New Testament gives restrictions to women in certain areas, all Christians, including women, must be involved in the work of the church through evangelism, edification, and benevolence.

Women in the first-century church were involved in each of these areas. Women were involved in teaching the Gospel of Christ both in evangelism and in edification. In Acts 18:26 Priscilla, with her Christian husband Aquila, privately taught Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly. She, no doubt, did this in a way so as not to usurp authority over men. Apollos did great works after being taught by this Christian couple. Women can teach children at home and in Bible classes. Older women are to teach the younger women (Tit. 2:4-5). They are to teach the younger women such things as their need (1) to

be sober so there will be less silliness and more correct priorities (Mat. 6:33), (2) to love their husbands which will result in less fusses in the home and fewer divorces, (3) to love their children so there will be less neglect and abortions. In their teaching they must not usurp authority over men (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

Women can do good works. Dorcas was a great example of one who did what she could (Mark 14:8) who made garments for others (Acts 9:36-39). Lydia showed her generosity by demonstrating hospitality to Paul and others (Acts 16:11-15). The church at Rome was to receive and assist Phoebe because of the aid she had given many (Rom. 16:1-2). Furthermore, the widow whom Paul classifies as a widow indeed (1 Tim. 5:9-10) was "well reported of for good works" in that she: (1) showed hospitality to strangers, (2) washed saints' feet (was a humble servant), (3) relieved the afflicted (note the empathy), (4) diligently followed every good work (was a doer of the word, not a hearer only; Jam. 1:22-25).

One author (unknown to me) summarized that women can

> prepare the communion, and take care of it; teach women's classes; teach children's classes; help clean the building; serve as church secretary, teach the lost the Gospel, take care of baptismal clothes; help their husband in teaching others (note: Aquilla and Priscilla—Acts 18); care for elderly people; visit the sick; visit women in jail, do and grade Bible correspondence courses; help the needy; help the orphans and homeless; write articles for women for brotherhood publications; host Bible studies in their home; hand out or mail out tracts and other things.

Restrictions on Women

God has placed certain restrictions on the female Christian. Consider what Paul writes to his son in the faith Timothy.

> I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).

Faithful godly men are to lead prayers when brethren worship God together. This principle is binding in whatever mixed situation (where there are both males and females) exists (including small groups or classes).

> In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array (9).

Women are to concern themselves about dressing in a modest, non-sinful manner when in the presence of others. This is certainly true

when coming together in worship. What is immodest? Anything which is too low at the neckline, too short, too tight, too see-through, and which brings undue attention to oneself and causes lust in another is immodest. (A tract the author recommends is *The Christian and Modest Clothing* by Thomas Eaves, Sr.).

Godly women will not dress in dresses which are thigh-revealing so to distract a man who is serving the Lord's Supper from thinking on his Lord's death. Godly Christian women do not engage in mixed swimming to the gaze of men's eyes. When in Florida years ago, this writer preached in a congregation situated not far from the beach, and preached a three-part series on immodest dress. For the most part it was ill-received (like a lead balloon sermon). One woman called others on the phone, crying and picturing the preacher (me) as a persecutor. I do not know what it is about Florida, but when travelers cross the Florida line, they start taking their clothes off. As brother Bill Coss once described it, the old people on the beach looked like a bunch of cows walking around.

Some (even members of the Lord's church) have argued that culture determines what is modest. When asked if a Christian stumbled into a nudist colony (for the sake of illustration), since the culture there is nudity, could a Christian be nude there and that not be a sin? One prominent member of that congregation (a lady) affirmed that it would **not** be sinful. (There's a Greek word for such a position as that, it is *baloney*). She added that modesty in Tennessee (my home) is different than modesty in Florida! A rose is still the beautiful color of red no matter where you take it. Take it to the beach of South Florida, and it is red; take it to worship and it remains red; to a nudist colony, it is still red. Likewise the Gospel does not change its beautiful color of Truth wherever it is taken and preached.

> But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (10).

Can you imagine the inconsistency of a Christian woman being engaged in "good works" which Paul commanded while dressing in a provocative manner, and with the hair prepared to attract undue attention, and dripping in jewelry (bringing undue and unwarranted attention to herself)? Can you imagine a woman professing godliness visiting a sick male in the hospital wearing a low-top blouse and with a skin-tight, painted-on dress? Men have a responsibility too in not dressing immodestly and in not lusting. The first time *woman* is found

in the New Testament is Matthew 5:28 where Jesus warned men to avoid lusting and committing mental adultery. Jesus stated: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Can you imagine a man or woman dressing so as to advertise the flesh and in a way as to cause a weak person to lust and in that condition, handing out a tract to a lost person of the opposite sex and the tract titled: *The Sinfulness of Immodest Dress According to The Bible*?!

> Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection (11).

Silence means "quietness. A description of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others. Silence" (*Strong* G2271). Obviously this word does not mean she cannot utter a sound, else this would contradict those New Testament passages, which teach she is to confess Christ in becoming a Christian (Rom. 10:9-10), and sing (Eph. 5:19).

> But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (12).

Paul explains what it means to be in silence. She is to be in silence regarding teaching over a man and usurping the authority of men. *Usurp authority* (not up-surp, as one *she-elder* mispronounced it) means "to govern, exercise dominion over one" (*Strong* G831). Certainly in the teaching and preaching situation the woman is not to exercise authority over the male leadership of the church. A woman cannot be a preacher— she cannot preach in a mixed assembly of males and females. This is true in the assembly on Sunday or whenever there is a combination of both men and women. Contrary to those who loose where God has not loosed, it applies in small groups as well (it rules out "chain prayers" where women join in the leading of prayer). Paul reveals the general line of authority: God, Christ, man, woman (1 Cor. 11:3).

> For Adam was first formed, then Eve (13).

The Holy Spirit gives us the reason for these distinctive roles of males and females and the limitation of the woman. Adam was created first, before the woman. Priority gives precedence is the principle. We learn this principle in the Old Testament and the firstborn of the tribes. Paul also argues that Jesus is deserving of worship as opposed to the angels, because He was before them (Col. 1-2).

> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (14).

To God, it matters that Eve was the first sinner and that she allowed herself to be deceived by Satan and sin. This is the second reason God gives for this role distinction.

> Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (15).

The general role for women in life is set forth here. Her meek and quiet spirit will spill over into her behavior in worship and in regard to church matters. This disposition would never think about being a *she-elder*, presiding at the Lord's table, leading in prayer, preaching, leading singing in the assembly, etc. A Christian woman will not resent the male leadership role which has been assigned to him by God.

Woman alone can give birth. A man never will! Paul sets forth four things for the woman to do to please God: They will live a life of (1) faith in Christ—a faithful Christian life, (2) of charity—a serving type of love which does the best for others (*agape*), (3) holiness—a life of consecration or being set apart of service to God, and (4) sobriety—meaning temperate, self-controlled.

Another important text concerning woman's role is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

> Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

This passage does not contradict but compliments Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2. Here Paul addresses a specific problem in the church assembly. Certain wives of certain prophets were speaking up in the assembly asking their husbands questions (as their husbands were up preaching). Paul's instruction was for them to quit causing this disturbance. He pointed out the universal principle that it is a shame for women to *speak* (make a speech) in the assembly of God, thus, usurping the authority over the male leadership.

Silence here is from a different word than in 1 Timothy 2. It carries with it the idea of being mute, or totally silent, and is found nine times in the New Testament. However, context ultimately determines the meaning of a word. While it does mean to be totally silent, it could not apply to singing (Eph. 5:19), or to her confessing her faith in Christ

prior to baptism (Rom. 10:10). Here it would be applied in the sense that she is not to preach, i.e. to publicly teach in a mixed assembly of males and females, nor to disturb worship with questions.

Shame means base or dishonorable. *In the church* refers to the church assembly; this principle would also apply to small mixed groups of males and females. This was a worship assembly in the first century, not a special meeting (separate from a worship situation) for those with miraculous gifts to exercise their gifts. Rex Turner wrote:

> Paul gave the reason—more specifically the reasons—for the limitations placed on women with respect to the public assembly. The chief reason for the limitation of the woman was that "Adam was first formed, then Eve." This statement was equivalent to Paul's saying that the woman was made for the man and that, therefore, her childbearing character and qualities do not comport with the public ministry of the word. A second reason for the limitation of the woman was that "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression." The point here is that the woman's inclination to react far more emotionally than men to unusual situations—a quality which makes her a good mother and nurse—leaves her less prepared to meet the hard issues and decisions of life with the deliberateness, forethought and balance that problems often demand (140).

He continues by saying:

> While both roles or realms are of vast importance, the role of the woman in giving rise to humanity is by far the greater and more important role.
>
> The case is that though woman was first in the fall of humanity, she is now first in the rise of humanity (141).

He concludes by saying:

> Men will not give birth to children so long as the earth may stand; whereas, women will continue to give birth to children just as long as the earth does stand (144).

Satan has made wicked assaults against the New Testament teaching about the woman's role in the church.

The Assault of Feminism

Someone wisely observed:

> Men and women in the world, having rejected Bible truth, are confused about the most basic things. Many men are trying to be like women in dress and manner, while many women are demanding the right to be like men, to dress like men, to do the same work as men, to play the same sports as men, to fight in armies like men. They want more than equal pay for equal work; they are demanding a man's place

> in the home, church, and state. Sadly, the church is always affected by society. Thus the rebellion of women in the world is causing similar problems in the churches, and we find women demanding leadership roles in many (Author Unknown).

Feminism is reflected even in leadership roles in ungodly cults. Allen Dickerson wrote:

> The cult of Spiritualism was founded by the Fox Sisters. The subtle and destructive cult of Seventh-Day Adventism was founded by so-called prophetess Ellen White. Theosophy was founded by Madam Elena Blavatsky. The blasphemous cult of Christian Science, which is neither Christian nor scientific was founded by Mary Baker Eddy. And the Four Square Gospel Movement was founded by Aimee Semple McPherson who lived a questionable moral life and died a tragic death (qtd. in Cloud *Women Leaders*).

Even though a Fundament Baptist, David Cloud shows the assault on the role of women. Cloud quotes several things from his files (his documentation has been retained in the quote) showing the negative effect of unauthorized practices of denominations.

> There are almost 4,000 licensed and ordained women in the Assemblies of God.
>
> In 1984, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution saying the Bible "excludes women from pastoral leadership." Like many things adopted by this Convention, the resolution was almost meaningless. In a September 1993 meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, a measure to expel congregations for ordaining women was rejected unanimously. The Fall 1997 edition of Folio, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, reported that there are 1,225 ordained Southern Baptist women. Roughly 200 of the ordained women serve as pastors and associate pastors. In 1979 there were only 58 ordained Southern Baptist women, but the number has increased rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, during the same period in which the "conservatives" have dominated the national convention.
>
> The United Methodist Church has ordained women since 1956 and today has 4,743 women "clergy."
>
> The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has 2,419 female leaders. In 1979 the United Presbyterian Church, forerunner of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., adopted a resolution REQUIRING the congregations to elect women elders. This politically correct denomination also voted to ban the ordination of any man who opposed women clergy and gave such men 10 years to change their minds or get out (EP News Service, June 21, 1980). So much for the supposed broadminded attitude of Modernists.
>
> The United Church of Christ has 1,803 female leaders.

> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has 1,358 ordained women.
>
> As of 1994, 16 of the 30 independent Anglican communions around the world have approved ordination of women priests. The Episcopal Church in the United States, which approved women's ordination in 1976, has more than 1,000. The Episcopalians ordained the first Anglican female bishop in 1989. The General Synod of the "mother church" in England endorsed the concept of female priests in 1993. In 1991 Queen Elizabeth showed her approval of all this by appointing a woman as one of her royal chaplains in Scotland.
>
> The Church of Scotland approved the ordination of women in 1968 and now has 100 female ministers.
>
> The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, though more conservative than other Lutheran bodies, is beginning to allow women to preach in regular worship services. A survey showed that about 1,000 LCMS clergymen maintain that the Bible is not opposed to the ordination of women (*Christian News*, Feb. 13, 1989).
>
> "Leaders of Youth With a Mission (YWAM) appointed their first female national director in March to oversee a 200-member staff in Switzerland. At a conference last year, YWAM founder Loren Cunningham spoke out strongly against what he called 'cultural bias' against women. He also warned that God's blessing might be removed if YWAM did not commission female leaders" (*Charisma*, July 1993).
>
> "Women now comprise at least a third of the student population at the leading interdenominational divinity schools; at Yale and Harvard, they're more than half" (Ibid.).
>
> "U.S. women ordained to full-time ministry in 1986 increased to 20,730 from 10,470 in 1977, and represented 7.9% of all U.S. clergy, according to a recent study by the National Council of Churches. ... The survey showed that 84 of 166 denominations ordain women to full ministry... (National & International Religion Report, March 13, 1989) (Cloud *Women Preachers*).

These facts are evidence of the attack of denominationalism upon the New Testament plan for the woman's role in the church. Additionally, whatever denominationalism does, sad to say, some in the church imitate to the detriment of the cause of Christ.

False Arguments to Allow for Women Preachers and/or Church Leaders

Darrell J. Pursiful has made several arguments for women in the "ministry." Let us review his material. (All quotes will be from Pursiful unless otherwise stated.)

1. Junia was a woman and identified by Paul as an apostle.

First, this was a man identified by Paul as a relative, respected by the apostles, but **not** one of the apostles. The ASV has Junias in Romans 16:7, and in the Greek it is masculine gender not feminine. Also, simply being considered *of note* by the apostles did not make one an apostle. However some argue that "the frequent references to 'false apostles' would be meaningless if the apostles were a small, well-defined group." Yet, there is no evidence offered to prove such an assertion (1 The. 5:21). Others argue along this line: "It is not impossible that 'fellow worker' was Paul's affectionate term for an apostolic associate." Again, this is simply pure assertion without any proof being offered. We must have Bible authority for such statements.

2. Phoebe is believed to have held the office of a deacon in the church at Cenchrea, since she was highly commended to the church at Rome by Paul (Rom. 16:1-2). Some of these falsely argue that the translators have some times obscured Phebe's position of leadership, calling her a *servant* or *helper*.

However, all Christians are servants. One of the qualifications for holding the office of a deacon is to be the husband of one wife: "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:12). Could Phebe be the husband of one wife? No.

To get Phoebe into the office of a deacon, one modern liberal writer stated: "We must remember that terminology was rather fluid in the first century. There is no inherent problem with Phebe being described as both a 'deacon' and a 'leader.'" To refer to God's Word as *fluid* is to wrest the Scriptures: "As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). Some will try almost any argument to promote women into the office of a deacon and create an office for female deacons in the first century. Note some of the misguided comments made: "1 Timothy 3:11 is most likely a reference to 'women deacons." This is not the office of a woman deacon anymore than the office of a woman elder. Instead this is qualities the deacon's wives are to possess. Some would say, "In Greek, the same word (*gyne*) is used for 'woman' or 'wife.'" The original word in 1 Timothy 3:11 is γυνή (*gune*). This is also translated *wife* in 1 Timothy 3:12. This is also the word translated *woman* in 1 Timothy 2:12 where she is commanded not to teach nor usurp authority over the man. The context defines the way the word is to be interpreted and

properly applied. The context is clearly a reference to the qualifications of a deacon's wife, not a separate class of deacons.

Some will say that "it is unlikely that Paul would establish qualifications for the wives of deacons but not the wives of overseers." Yet, there are certain qualification for elder's wives implied in 1 Timothy 3. She is to be scripturally eligible for marriage, willing to submit to her husband's rule, and helping to keep their children in submission (1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5). All leaders' wives were to have certain moral qualities. Since God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35), then "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11) applies to both deacons' and elders' wives.

Others will state that "the repetition of 'likewise' also suggests that we are dealing with three orders of ministry." The KJV has *likewise* in verse 8 and *even so* in verse 11 but it is the same Greek word. However, in this context the KJV uses *office* in reference to elders (3:1) and twice referring to deacons (3:10, 13). It does not use *office* with reference to any women in discussing the work of elders or deacons. Thus, women were not officers in the church.

Some have asserted that "given the fluidity of church structures in New Testament times, it is not inconceivable that some churches would have a mixed body of male and female deacons (such as in Cenchrea?)"

Fluidity is a noun meaning "subject to change" (*Merriam-Webster*). However, the governmental structure of the church is not subject to change. God's word does not change, and those who add to or subtract from the Word of God are under the condemnation of God (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:16).

3. Some argue for having women elders/preachers from the use of Deborah in the Old Testament; why did God make Deborah a judge in Israel (Jud. 4:4-5)? The false argument goes some thing like this: When men will not assume their responsibilities, God uses women. The men in Deborah's day were very weak and cowardly. This is seen in the fact that Barak, the captain of the armies of Israel, refused to go into battle unless Deborah went with him. The woman had to remind him that God had said it is time to fight; the woman had to encourage and challenge him to go; the woman had to go with him! "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go" (Jud. 4:8).

James Meadows notes:

> In his book, *All the Women of the Bible*, Dr. Herbert Lockyer discusses more than 160 women who are named in the Old and New Testaments, and more than 100 references to women who are not named...In all this there is not one reference to any woman's ever having a leading role in any public worship to Jehovah.
>
> But can one find evidence for women preachers today from Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, and Anna? Miriam prophesied "to all the women" (Exo. 15:20). Some men went to Huldah where they communed with her privately (2 Kin. 22:14f; 2 Chr. 34:22f). Anna prophesied in the temple, but Josephus stated that a partition separated the men from the women in worship. There is no evidence that she prophesied to mixed audiences. The "children of Israel came to her [Deborah] for judgment" (Jud. 4:5). Wayne Jackson writes:
>
> She gave prophetic judgment as a "mother in Israel" (Jdg. 5:7). The fact that she judged at all is a dramatic commentary on the spiritual anemia of the Israelites during this period, and Deborah's song laments this woeful condition (Jud. 5). This was but one of the occasions where Jehovah accommodated his working to Israel's weaknesses (cf. 1 Sam. 8:9; Matt. 19:8), and it certainly affords no precedent for the Christian age (497).

Additionally, in the Old Testament God suffered or allowed certain things (Mat. 19:8; Acts 17:30). Could it be that God was showing His great power by destroying a mighty enemy by the use of that which seemed small and weak? Notice what Deborah stated: "I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Jud. 4:9).

4. The daughters of Philip would show that God allows female preachers today because they were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9). It is argued that when God gives a gift He always allows the opportunity to use it in public. However, this is simply false. God allowed a gift to be used in harmony with His will, which included the restrictions God placed upon its use. This prophesying was done in a private setting not a public setting. One must also consider that Philip's daughters had the miraculous gift of prophecy, and there are no miraculous gifts today (see 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Jam. 1:22-25).

5. Some will argue that both men and women were to prophecy (Acts 2:17-18). Again, this must be in harmony with God's restrictions. Therefore we conclude that it was done in private settings, thus fulfilling Joel's prophecy.

6. In seeking to establish the false position that women were in leadership roles in the church in the first century, comes this misguided statement: "In almost every instance, the Greek text lists Priscilla first, which is highly unusual in the culture of the ancient world, and which most likely suggests that of the two, Priscilla was the more prominent." There is simply no evidence for such an argument and is really nothing more than mere conjecture. There is no indication that Priscilla violated the instruction given in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and the line of authority of 1 Corinthians 11:3.

7. There were women elders in the first century. Note this misguided statement: "The most natural way to read the address of 2 John 1, 'unto the elect lady and her children' is to see the 'elect lady' as the leader of a house church, her 'children' being the members of that community." Those who are leaders in the church are told to be the husband of one wife in 1 Timothy 3:2. Can a woman be a husband? No! Regarding this misguided statement, if the "elect lady" of John's second epistle was "the leader of a house church" (as a denominational preacher is today), John would not have commended her; instead he would have condemned her (3 John 9-10) because the church is to have a plurality of leaders or elders (Acts 14:23).

8. Then there is the attempt to explain away passages which teach that women are not to preach or do the work of an evangelist (Acts 20:20; 2 Tim. 4:5). After liberals think they have established that women can be leaders in the church, they must then explain away two difficult passages (1 Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 14) which teach against women preachers/leadership over men. At one time liberals, instead of explaining away the text, simply attacked Paul by calling him a woman hater. Now they try to create an attitude in the reader to have them believe that Paul everywhere else in his writings established that there were women in the leadership. The reader is thus lead to the conclusion that Paul must not be teaching against women preachers in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14. Note this misguided statement:

> It is principally from the writings of Paul that we discover that there were women apostles, prophets, teachers, elders, and deacons in the New Testament period. And not only do we know they existed, we know that Paul commended them. Would Paul endorse women ministers on the one hand through both teaching and example, and on the other hand deny women a place in the ministry of the church?

We studied 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 previously, so there is no need to study this again. However, let us note some statements which seek to circumvent the restrictions which God placed on women.

Note the following misinterpretation of Paul's command for women to keep silence in 1 Timothy 2:12:

> If so, Paul's meaning could be rendered, "I forbid a woman to teach or practice sexual immorality with a man."...Among the Greeks female teachers, virtually without exception, were high-class prostitutes who would offer "after school" love lessons to their male pupils.

Such an interpretation ignores the context which is worship and who leads in that worship to God. Paul has shown that men (males) are to lead in worship (2:8).

Then how does the liberal mind explain away Paul's reference to Eve showing that submission is a matter that goes back to creation?

> Paul concludes his point with the illustration of Eve (1 Tim. 2:13-15). The unanimous interpretation of Genesis 3 in ancient times was that Eve's sin was not as great as Adam's. She was genuinely deceived and thus didn't act out of willfulness as Adam did. This is a fitting warning to the women of Asia Minor who, brought up in the gross immorality of these religious patterns, might not follow them out of rebelliousness but simply because they didn't know any better.

They fail to realize that all sin is the transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4). One sin, if not covered by the blood of Christ, will separate one from God eternally. Both Adam and Eve were guilty of sin (Rom. 3:23), but Eve was the first sinner. The fact that Eve was deceived in the transgression is one of the two biblical reasons the woman is not allowed to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man.

Some have argued that women did not receive formal education in the ancient world. It is argued that they must, therefore, learn. Since they have never received formal training of any kind before, they must be specifically instructed as to how to take a leadership role. Paul specifies that they must learn this in *silence*. However, this *explanation* ignores the context and the reasons given by the Holy Spirit as to why the females were to be silent. Adam was first formed and their ancestor, Eve, was deceived in the transgression in Eden.

Another false interpretation is that Paul is warning against women asserting a right to teach. They say that it is not difficult to imagine women who have been deceived by heresies and are now insisting on the right to spread them within the church. No, Paul stated the two reasons that women were not to teach, nor usurp authority of men in the

assembly of the church: (1) Adam was first formed, and (2) Eve was deceived in the transgression. Paul said nothing about women who had been deceived by heresies in the chapter. To insert such is *eisegeses* which is "the interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one's own ideas" (*Merriam-Webster*).

We see the viciousness and determination of the doctrinal liberal to explain away the text of God's Word. Notice the liberal's goal:

> The point is not to argue for any particular interpretation, but to raise "reasonable doubt" as to the "male-only-ministry" interpretation these passages have been given.

Jesus taught that we should not doubt God's words (Mark 14:31). The work of Satan is to cause doubt concerning the certainties of God's Word. Jesus said that "the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

Some have argued concerning Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 14:

> Three egalitarian interpretations of these verses are possible: 1. These verses are a scribal addition and do not belong in the biblical text at all. 2. These verses reflect the views of some of Paul's opponents. 3. These verses reflect Paul's regulations for disruptive behavior in church and do not address the "women in ministry" issue at all.

The first is but an assertion. A study of canonicity reveals there is abundant evidence in the form of manuscripts, translations, and in other forms to prove the text of 1 Corinthians as being inspired and therefore genuine and authentic. The second is another assertion without evidence and ignores the context of Paul's statements. While the first part of the third explanation is true, the second part is false. The instruction to women sets forth a general application and principle reiterated by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

The Assault of Misguided Ones in the Church

"*As for* my people, children *are* their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause *thee* to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (Isa. 3:12). Isaiah was condemning Israel's behavior when he said women ruled over them. May this never be said today in the church of the Lord.

> One reason why women are taking leadership positions is that the man has too often failed to take his place. When men are weak, women must be strong. This is often seen in the church. Men should willingly step forward to lead the church in every area, but often the men are weak and lazy. They don't give; they don't go soul winning; they don't volunteer to fill vacant positions; they don't come out on work

> days. Someone has to lead, so the women step in and take control. Christian men should respond to the call of world evangelism, but few do. A great number of Christian men are too weak, or lazy, or fearful, or busy with selfish plans to be concerned about world missions. So the women do what they can (Author Unknown).

Men must not tempt women to *take control*, particularly those who have a weakness in this area. However, we have some misguided male leaders who place women in positions where they violate the principles given in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. There are some in the churches of Christ who have advocated the same arguments seen previously in this chapter. Rubel Shelly advocated such things as female song leaders, female teachers of classes with adult males present, women making the announcements in the assembly (*Women*). Brother Shelly attempted to justify women in leadership positions over men in the church today by arguing much the same as we have previously seen. He stated:

> In the Old Testament tradition of Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), the New Testament acknowledges Anna as a "prophetess" (Luke 2:36).... The evangelist Philip had "four unmarried daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9).

He argued for Phoebe serving in the office of a deacon by writing, "Many biblical scholars believe there was a female order of deacons in the first century. Among those in our own heritage who have subscribed to this view are Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, Moses Lard, and Robert Milligan." Even if these men held to such a view, they were not inspired of God nor are they our authority today. Such name dropping only constitutes the fallacy of debate called appeal to false authority (John 12:48).

He argues for women taking leadership roles by arguing that the Samaritan woman "became an evangelist to her city.... Jesus did not rebuke her for speaking publicly about him." Yet, when the woman told others of Christ, He was in a different geographical location (John 4:28, 30). She was in the city, He was out of the city. Thus, the writer's statement, "Jesus did not rebuke her for speaking publicly about him," is seen to be an irrational argument. He was not in her presence to rebuke her. The inspired writer, John, simply recorded the incident. The text simply states that she "went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (4:28-29). From this statement we are to believe that she became an *evangelist*. Truth is, one may be evangelistic without

being what the Bible calls an *evangelist* (as defined by 2 Tim. 4:5). The work of an evangelist involves preaching publicly in the pulpit of the church on the first day of the week (2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:7, 20). Even brother Shelly teaches that a female disciple today cannot preach in the pulpit during worship. His use of this incident serves only as supposed proof that a Christian woman today may teach an adult Bible class where men are present. In which case Rubel Shelly denies the pulpit to one he called an evangelist.

In trying to explain Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 14, Shelly informs us that, if women had miraculous gifts, they would use them and that "it was Spirit-origin that was at stake and not the gender of the recipient." Brother Shelly is simply asserting this but has no biblical evidence. He also asserts that "the women at Corinth were permitted to exercise their supernatural gifts but were required to defer to the church's male leadership." However, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 sheds some light on this passage regarding the woman's role. Women were to keep silence with regard to teaching wherein males were present. To deny this is to imply that Paul contradicted Paul. We should let the Bible interpret the Bible as brother Franklin Camp used to say.

In concluding his article, Shelly argues:

> The Bible is not against women ministering, using their God-given talents, standing up and speaking, administering church programs, singing (congregationally, small groups, or solo), reading Scripture, sharing information about church projects, testifying, teaching sub-groups of the church's membership (whether female, male, or mixed).

Shelly has mixed some truth with some error. Yes, she may speak as in confessing Christ prior to baptism or in singing. However, teaching mixed groups is an outright denial of the Holy Spirit's explicit statements in 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

He summarizes his article by saying that women cannot become elders and in the assembly where all the church has gathered, females can do all but two things: (1) lead in prayer, and (2) teach the Word. He wrote: "These two leadership roles appear to be specifically assigned to males. Aside from a single office and two activities in public worship, only culture, tradition, and (perhaps) prejudice deny females the chance to use their gifts in the life of the church."

God's Word is not to be approached like one who enters a supermarket. Notice the *supermarket mentality* of brother Shelly in choosing

what he likes and disregarding what he dislikes. True, females are not to become elders, preach in the pulpit, or lead public prayers in the assembly of the church. However, the same principle which disallows these also disallows her presiding at the Lord's table, teaching a mixed class of males and females, serving in the office of the deacon, and other things (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-12).

The Bible upholds women and their role, even though forbidding a leadership role taken by them. Likewise, men should always uphold godly women and have a Christ-like attitude toward them, unlike the Koran which states:

> Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and **beat them**; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great (*Koran* [Sura 4.34]; emph—GLG).

The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc. of Nashville, TN

The organization "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Incorporated" (hereafter referred to as CCDR) centered out of Nashville, Tennessee is unscriptural. Let us notice some reasons it is unscriptural.

1. The expression, "Churches of Christ" is unscripturally used (Rom. 16:16).

2. The true church of Christ does not own or operate any humanly originated organization (Eph. 3:21; Col. 3:17).

3. The true church of Christ trusts in God's plan for helping the benevolent (a trust issue). God's plan for helping in benevolence is: 1) through financial support through the church treasury (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 11:27-30; Acts 6:1-6; Jam. 1:1, 27; 2 Cor. 9:13) and through individual efforts (Jam. 1:27; Gal. 6:4-5; Phi. 2:12).

4. The church of Christ **is** God's disaster relief organization (Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27; Acts 11:27-30; 2 Cor. 9:13; Eph. 3:21).

5. No humanly originated society (organization) has the scriptural right to solicit money (in the name of doing the Lord's work or otherwise) from the divinely originated treasuries of churches of Christ (Col. 3:17).

6. No humanly devised religious society or organization which claims as the CCDR, Inc. that, "We work through local congregations using a biblical cooperative pattern in all things" and "This is His work!" has Bible authority to solicit the non-Christian world for the money to do that work (3 John 7). It is well known that

the CCDR solicits support from corporations and non-profit agencies nationwide. Shall our TV evangelists (in the church of Christ) now solicit money from non-Christians who are in their TV audiences?! By the principle of support-raising practiced by the CCDR this would be now Scriptural.

7. The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc., has an unscriptural Organizational Structure. If it is "church of Christ" it must have or be seeking to develop the organizational structure as defined in the New Testament (Col. 1:18; Phi. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Col. 2:10). The CCDR does not have, nor does it seek to have, this scriptural organizational structure. If the Electricity Company started calling themselves, *The Churches of Christ Electricity Relief, Inc*., and then started soliciting churches of the Lord and secular businesses for money to pay the monthly light bills of the poor, then we would have something similar to what we know as *The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc*. (Grizzell *Seven*).

Document Resulting in a Divided Eldership

The executive director of the CCDR was sent a copy of a seven-page document (which document defended its existence) by a faithful preacher and asked if he agreed with this letter. His written response was that it was a well-written letter and one with which he could agree. Some of the things in the seven-page letter were: "I know of no congregation in our brotherhood that has the financial ability to do the massive works done by the CCDR, INC." This statement reveals the disdain and lack of respect for God's plan and pattern (cf. Col. 1:18; Phi. 1:1; Eph. 3:21). The document continued that "the term unscriptural is not a bad term in itself. The term means not mentioned in Scripture." Actually *unscriptural* refers to that for which there is no authority in the New Testament. There are things which are authorized today but which are "not mentioned" in the Bible (e.g. airplanes in traveling to preach the Gospel). Even though these are not mentioned explicitly in the Bible, they are not unscriptural.

The document additionally said, "The forming of a legal entity to carry out disaster relief is not forming a religious organization." While this would be true, it is forming a religious organization when the CCDR people attach the New Testament expression, "Churches of Christ" to it! Here is an admission that they do not consider CCDR a religious organization (those who support it need to understand this). Remember that when you see the expression, "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief" engraved upon the sides of those big white trucks when they roll upon the scene: "not...a religious organization"! (The

executive director stated his agreement with this material.) Yet, they continue to use "Churches of Christ" to describe themselves. To argue that the CCDR is not a religious institution and can remain a nonreligious institution when taking on the expression, "Churches of Christ," is irrational, contradictory, and unscriptural thinking (Ferrell).

Excuses Offered By CCDR Supporters

Let us consider some of the justifications offered by the CCDR and its supporters. First there is simply the accusation that you are anti-church cooperation if you oppose the CCDR. However, this accusation is false! It is easy to falsely accuse faithful brethren, but proving the accusation is another matter. Churches **are authorized** to cooperate in benevolent matters. We see a divinely approved example of a plurality of churches cooperating in a benevolent work in Acts 11:27-30.

Churches **are authorized** to cooperate in spiritual matters also. The same passage also authorizes churches to cooperate in spiritual matters, which includes both edification and the preaching of the Gospel to the lost (involving the Lord's treasury) by implication. In Acts 15:22-35 a plurality of churches did cooperate in spiritual matters. Note here that this was a non-benevolent matter wherein one church (the Jerusalem church) cooperated with another church (the Antioch church). An inspired letter was sent from the Jerusalem church to the Antioch church. There was also a sending of preachers up to Antioch (the receiving church) to edify by their preaching to the Antioch church.

To illustrate this principle of church cooperation: Suppose an eldership decides to have a television program for the evangelizing of that area. It is a work of that congregation and under their oversight. They have the right to ask other congregations to participate that a wider audience might be reached. Those other congregations have the right to send money to the church overseeing the television program (they also have the right not to). In this situation the congregations are having fellowship with each other in this important work. All congregations involved are fulfilling their obligation in preaching the Gospel to the lost (Mark 16:15). This arrangement is well and good as there is Bible authority for such arrangement. (This same principle would also be applicable for a benevolent work.)

However, if this organization (which is not the church) decided to name itself "Church(es) of Christ" this or that, we then see an **abuse** of this scriptural arrangement. That organization is not the church of our

Lord and has no biblical right to designate itself as such. If it is the church as revealed in the Bible, then it must organize itself according to the scriptural arrangement (having elders overseeing the work and deacons serving under the oversight of the elders; Phi. 1:1). Yet, this is exactly the situation of CCDR, and one of the reasons why faithful brethren oppose that organization.

Brother Joe Dudney (executive director of CCDR) stated, "We have done an in-depth study on the part as to whether we are scriptural or unscriptural. We have met with many 'well-read' Bible scholars. If you please, I will call them 'heavy weights' in the brotherhood" (Dudney 6 Nov. 2003). These *heavy weights* determined that CCDR is scriptural. Among these *well-read heavy weights* of the brotherhood is Walt Leaver (Dudney 1 Dec. 2003). Notice what brother Virgil Hale wrote of brother Leaver, and then determine if this is someone whom we can trust to determine the scripturalness of CCDR.

> Most of you who read these lines know of the effect that the **Nashville Jubilee** has had on the body of Christ in the past ten years. It was started for the purpose of either destroying the church of our Lord or else making it what some of the "Change Agents" want it to be. One of the promoters of Jubilee has been the Antioch **congregation** (in Nashville) where **Walt Leaver** was the preacher until he moved to another congregation in the Nashville area. Walt was not only a promoter of Jubilee, but one of its speakers. In recent months, **Walt Leaver** was with the **Glendale Road** congregation for a meeting. It is not as though the brethren there did not know who he was, because they had the information concerning him ahead of time.
>
> In 1990, **Walt Leaver** spoke one night in a revival at the **Donelson Presbyterian Church**. Rest assured that he was not there to teach them the truth. He preached on the crucifixion of Christ and described it in minute detail—never one time telling them what one must do to be saved. I have talked with some who were present and they said that some women elders were present in the pulpit with him and when the instrument started playing and the people started singing, Walt sung right along with them. I am convinced that **Glendale Road** had him because of **who** he is and **what** he stands for.
>
> Just to give you an indication of where **Walt Leaver** stands, let me give you the following information. In an interview in 1994 with Tyler Young, he stated he was not clear enough on what the Bible teaches to say that one who taught that women could preach in the public assembly with men present would be a false teacher; that one who divorced for some reason other than fornication and remarried would not have to get out of that marriage to become a Christian; that he could not say that people in denominationalism are lost; that he could

> not back up with scripture to say that it would be a sin for someone to worship with instrumental music, and could not say that they would be lost for doing so; and when asked if someone had been sprinkled rather than being immersed for baptism, would they be lost, he said, "I'm not going to say I know he would be lost." This is just a sampling of what he believes. Yet, knowing these things, the **Glendale Road** eldership had him come and preach in a meeting for them (1+).

This is one whom Joe Dudney believes is a *well-read heavy weight* Bible scholar in the brotherhood. Sound brethren should not simply accept that CCDR is sound based on their self-serving statements. It should also make us wonder about the executive director and the board of directors of CCDR. Yet, many church leaders simply accept what they say and continue to send millions of dollars to them ever year.

Jesus said that poor you will always have with you (Mark 14:7; Col. 1:6), but he never said such a thing about people being evangelized. Jesus expected the church to evangelize the whole world—which they did. However, He did not expect the church (first century or any other time) to feel and clothe the whole world (contrary to the thinking of the CCDR and Healing Hands International).

As we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10). The woman who heard Jesus say that the poor you will always have among you had just ministered to Him by doing what she could with a material thing (Mark 14:6-8). The church today should have the same disposition of doing what we can as opportunity presents itself to serve Christ, yet realizing that we will always have the poor with us.

> And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying (Mark 14:6-8).

Serving Christ is submitting to the will of Christ about the mission of His church, which is the saving of souls (Luke 19:10). Feeding spiritual bread to every creature is the primary obligation (Mark 16:15-16). When the church today seeks to distribute spiritual bread first (recognizing that the poor we will always have with us), it is no more right to despise the church for this disposition and behavior any more than it was right for some to despise this woman. Jesus defended this woman for doing what she could while she had the means and the opportunity. Does not Jesus also defend His bride (the local congrega-

tion) when she does what she can to the best of her ability as the opportunity presents itself?

When CCDR distributes its goods (solicited from both Christians and non-Christians), it does not glorify God because it violates spiritual principles, yet God is the one whom we should be seeking to please (2 John; Col. 1:18). If a work does not please God due to it being unauthorized, we can be sadly assured that it will in some way work to sabotage the recipients in a spiritual way: whether we have the insight to see that damaging effect or not. This is illustrated with David bringing the ark to Jerusalem by building a new cart to carry it, instead of following God's instructions.

> And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that *was* in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.... And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:3-8).

Ask Uzzah if King David's accomplishing the divine instruction to move the ark, but David utilizing his own unauthorized method and means (his new cart), was either pleasing to God or beneficial in the long run. While the ark was being moved along ever so carefully and without a problem, all **seemed** beneficial and pleasing to God and all seemed to be receiving the great benefit, **but** when the ark unsteadied due to moving it in this unauthorized manner, Uzzah was struck dead by God as Uzzah sought to solve the problem which had been caused by David having used this unauthorized means of transporting the ark (the correct method would have been to carry the ark on poles on priests' shoulders). After God's wrath was seen, all could see the wisdom of God in His specified choice of transportation for the ark.

Sometimes we are like David and Uzzah who were involved in transporting the ark—since all is going well (that is it seems to be going well by outward appearance), we have not yet come face to face with God's wisdom for His chosen method (Eph. 3:21 is God's means, not a humanly-originated society calling itself the "Churches of Christ"). Also, at the moment while the CCDR is prospering by unauthorized contributions and *distributing* goods, we are not yet brought face to face with God's final judgment (Mat. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:17). If we continue to judge by appearance (with the attitude of: "Oh, how

successful this unauthorized means is helping people and attributing credit and influence to the churches of Christ"), rather than by the righteous judgment taught by the written will of the Savior, we all shall one day come face to face with God's judgment, but then it will be too late, as Uzzah discovered (Rom. 15:4; John 7:24).

Uzzah and Ahio drove the new cart. Today, Joe Dudney is like king David and Dudney's Board of Directors (and misguided brethren) of the CCDR of Nashville, Tennessee, are like the drivers of the new cart. If we become impressed with how well the *new cart* is transporting the ark to its destination and impressed with what a brilliant supposed authorized expedient the *new cart* of the CCDR is, we have committed the same mistake David, Uzzah, and Ahio.

A friend of mine wrote to me recently pointing out that Joe Dudney, executive director of the CCDR, Inc., was asked the following question by Lindy Adams of the *Christian Chronicle* and then Dudney's response:

> "How do you respond to the criticism that you are only offering humanitarian aid and not evangelizing?" He responded saying, "We have proof that we're doing both—offering humanitarian aid in the Lord's name, as well as providing the local congregation tools to spread the gospel. By the way, every family food box has a New Testament tucked inside" (Adams).

After reading this, this author posted in part the following to an internet list:

> Since when does the Lord's church need an unauthorized religious organization (which, by the way, professes it is not a religious organization when they feel they need to—I have the written evidence of this) to provide the local congregation with tools to spread the gospel. Dudney needs to learn how to respect the authoritative word of God himself and then learn how to determine authority from the same. Pitiful! Still, I expect many of our brethren to bow down and worship is [*sic*] unauthorized organization which is equivalent to a denomination who does many good works but of whom the Lord will say, *I never knew you*. Elders who do not know how to determine authority will continue to support unauthorized organizations and arrogantly oppose those of us who know the difference between the Lord's church and man-originated, unauthorized organizations. So be it. Bring it on! (Grizzell LURlist).

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED ON THE LORD'S SIDE

Let us stand up for the pattern of church government, worship, and work of the church set forth in the New Testament. Let us understand

the true nature and mission of the church. Let us never endorse, support, or encourage those who have gone beyond the New Testament pattern of the organization of the church. If we do we bid Godspeed, then we are partakers of their evil deeds (2 John 9-11). It will cost us the high price of our souls. We are commanded to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).

The mission of the Lord's church is the most important business in the world. (Luke 19:10). When each member of the church, both male and female, becomes consumed with seeing that the great commission of our Lord is fulfilled in our day, then we will be pleasing to God (Mat. 28:19-20). When each member of the church has the servant attitude of Christ in the cause of Christ, then he/she will be happy in the role God has specified (cf. Phi. 2:5). Then will we be the "whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). There is no place for liberalism in the work of the Lord's church.

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LIBERALISM'S EFFECT ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The devil has always been successful at employing willing agents in attempting to accomplish his mission. Adam and Eve contended with the serpent (Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3). Satan used the Pharisees, Sadducees, Chief Priest, torture, and every means available to try and thwart the mission of Jesus (Heb. 5:8-9), but failed (Gen. 3:15; John 17:4; 19:30; Rev. 3:21). From Genesis to Revelation inspired history reveals how this master of deceit has challenged God's servants. Today the "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He has unleashed an army that is skilled, brutal, and merciless. This militia is known as Liberalism. No doubt this enemy of all righteousness has had an effect upon the mission of the church of Christ throughout the world. It has caused division within the church among family and friends. It is doubtful if one can find a family that liberalism has not affected in some way. The devil knows well: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Mat. 12:25). For the church in any given area to survive, it must be able to identify and realize the potential of "Liberalism's Effect on the Mission of the Church."

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

To be able to better understand liberalism's effect on the mission of the church, it will be helpful to clarify what is intended when referring to the church's mission. For the Lord's church to be able to accomplish its mission it is essential that elderships, deacons (men in business meetings where elderships and deacons do not exist), preachers, and faithful members appreciate the church's mission. By *mission* it is meant the purpose or function of the church. Webster defines *mission* as "a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special duty" (480). That definition corresponds with what Jesus said when He told His apostles:

> All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Mat. 28:18-20).

The "teaching...baptizing...teaching them to observe all things" consisted of (1) evangelism, (2) edification, and (3) benevolence. These three areas comprise the basic mission of the church of Christ.

When reading Acts, one is reading of the execution of the mission of the church. The apostles evangelized throughout "Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Many became obedient to the Gospel, and when they were scattered by persecution, they "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:3-4). As churches of Christ began to be established in various places, there was the need for edification. According to Thayer, *edification* means "to build a house, erect a building...to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness" (439-40). Edification was a crucial part of the church's mission in the first century (Acts 14:21-22; 20:32; 1 The. 5:11; 1 Tim. 1:4). Then there was the need for benevolence. No greater example will one find in the area of benevolence than the church of the first century (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 11:28-30).

Liberalism is having a devastating effect upon every area of the mission of the church. In many congregations today, leadership has lost sight of the mission of the church. When the church of Christ recognizes its mission, its purpose for existing, and executes it responsibilities, then the church will reflect "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10).

EVANGELISM

One will not find a better manual on how to evangelize than Acts. Notice the success of the early church in carrying out the great commission, as briefly summarized in an article written by David B. Smith:

> An honest man who reads the book of Acts is surely impressed with that book's record of the rapid growth of the Lord's church. On the very day the church was established, some three thousand men and women were added to the distinguished body of the Lord when they obeyed the gospel preached by the apostles (Acts 2:37-41). The chapter ends on that same positive note, "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Not many days following that first day of Pentecost, some five thousand more souls were added to the number (Acts 4:4). This is the same emphasis in nearly every chapter of the record. The church was so effective in that day that Paul could later write of the efforts of the Gospel, "the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23) (1).

One may be asking what all of this has to do with liberalism's effect on the mission of the church in relation to evangelism. The effect can be seen in the difference between the faith the apostles and evangelists of the first century had in the Word of God and the faithlessness of liberalism as observed today. How could an "unlearned and ignorant" man like Peter (Acts 4:13) persuade three thousand to "gladly receive his word" and be baptized, qualifying them to be added to the church (Acts 2:41)? The answer is obvious. A casual examination of his sermon will reveal it to be filled with Scripture. Peter's attitude toward the Word of God was like Paul's, who said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). When Peter and the eleven began speaking on the day of Pentecost, some mocked (Acts 2:13). Peter refuted the scoffers with Scripture (Acts 2:15-16). As Peter and John were preaching in the temple, they were arrested (Acts 4:3), interrogated (4:5-7), commanded not to preach in the name of Jesus (4:18), and threatened (4:21). They prayed for boldness to speak God's Word and continued to preach (Acts 4:29-31). When commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus, the apostles replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28-29). When beaten for preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40), Peter and the apostles responded by "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name"

(Acts 5:41). Such faith and reverence in God and His Word has always characterized God's faithful servants (Heb. 11:4-40).

The church of the first century did not lose sight of Jesus' commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20). They knew their mission and where the power resided to be able to accomplish that mission. Is the same attitude of the apostles and first century Christians typical of the liberal mindset today? How do you suppose the average liberal today would have responded under the same circumstances the apostles and first century Christians faced? Only a brief comment comparing the attitude of liberalism and liberalism's idea of church growth to that of the New Testament pattern will be offered here. For a fuller understanding of these two areas the reader is encouraged to examine the chapters written in this book by Keith Mosher and Loy Hardesty.

The most honest and accurate way to achieve an answer to the way a liberal would have reacted under the same circumstances as the apostles and others in the first century is to examine the words of one of their own champions. What came to mind when writing this section was something this writer read several years ago. It was a reminder that the attitude of some of the liberals who lived during Jeremiah's lifetime was virtually identical to the position of one who initiated a landslide of digression in the precious bride of Christ from the eighties to the present.

When the Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, summoned Judah, saying, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls," the reply was, "We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16). Compare that statement to one made some fifteen years ago in a speech by one of the Goliath's of liberalism, and notice the remarkable similarity in attitude. Rubel Shelly referred to brethren who used the words *the old paths* to be a statement that is often used to describe "stubborn traditionalism...and maybe some times even pigheadedness" (Music 289). This same individual said, concerning the church of the Christ, "The church has got to change. If it doesn't change my kids are not going to stay with it" (Music 291). What a cry of desperation. Maybe now one can identify with the discouragement Joshua and Caleb faced while contending with the ten faithless spies who instigated terror in the hearts of the congregation of God's people so that "all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried" (Num. 14:1).

Although the words quoted by the granddaddy of liberalism were spoken over a decade ago, the digression of the liberal state of mind in relationship to the Word of God and the church has not improved with time. The words spoken by this promoter of change is typical of the liberals' lack of respect for the Word of God and His church. Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church?

If the church needs to change today, it needs to return to walking in the "old paths, where *is* the good way" (Jer. 6:16). When the apostles were beaten for preaching the Christ, they never voiced the idea that the church must change (Acts 5:40). When Paul was stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19), he did not reach the conclusion that the church must change. Many of the things Paul suffered are listed in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Other than what he said about them when writing to the church in Corinth, and what is revealed in Acts, little is known about how much he endured. At the end of Paul's life, facing possible execution, he did not conclude that the church must change, but rather penned: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). How grand it will be for all who can leave this life with the same confidence!

What are faithful elders, preachers, and members of the Lord's church to do when liberals join with the denominations in slandering the bride of the Christ? Elders must remember their mission (Acts 20:28-30; Tit. 1:9-11; 1 Pet. 5:1-4); preachers must remember their mission (2 Tim. 4:1-5); and members must remember their mission (Acts 2:42; 8:4). Thank God for the autonomy of the local church. Wendell Winkler well described the wisdom of God in the local capacity when he said that

> the autonomy (self governing) of each church must be maintained. The New Testament is silent as to any other arrangement for local church government. Had God desired any other arrangement, surely He would have revealed such to us. Local church autonomy is the best safeguard for preserving the truth of God's desired order. This is true since only one congregation can apostatize at a time.... Thus, with the mission of the church carried out in local congregational capacities, when we speak of the mission of the church let us conceive of it in a more personal way by thinking of the matter in the light of the mission of **this church...the congregation of which I am a member** [emph—TY]! (4-5).

Elders, carefully read, analyze, and apply Ezekiel 34. Carefully read, analyze, and apply Paul's tearful admonition to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38).

There is a stopping place when liberals threaten the mission of the church, and that place is the local eldership. An eldership cannot control what godless liberals do throughout the brotherhood, but they had better keep the ravening, bloodthirsty wolves out of the fold (local congregation) where they shepherd. Elders have a God-given charge to watch for the souls of the flock as they that must give account (Heb. 13:17), and one sure way they can do this is by keeping liberals out of the pulpits of local congregations (2 John 9-11). Elders need to know who is who and who is a sneaky closet liberal in the brotherhood to preserve the mission of the local congregation. How careless of an eldership to allow someone to come and speak to a congregation when they neither know the speaker nor where he stands on basic issues that threaten the purity of the church. Elders do not be like one of those Wayne Coats describes who said:

> It seems that many do not want to know what is happening. Send them a subscription to a paper which attempts to make known the Godless schemes of liberals, and they are quick to write, "Cancel—I don't want this paper." Who said "Ignorance is bliss"? (287).

Brother Coats' book should be read and be a part of every elder's library. If you care to know what liberals think of the authority of elders who "lock the henhouse" when the wolves begin to circle, read Wesley Simons' chapter in this book on "Liberalism and the Eldership."

Even autonomy is not a guarantee that a congregation will not slip into apostasy if elders are indifferent and asleep to the progression of liberalism. Notice what an eldership allowed to happen to a potential stronghold for the Lord's cause, which had its beginning with a small, yet very fruitful local radio program.

The Northside Church of Christ at Calhoun, Georgia (where this writer has the privilege of serving) is in existence today partly as a result of the conversion of Mildred Hall. Sister Hall, who at the time was a Baptist, heard the truth on the radio. She called the preacher, whom she heard on the local station. He came and reasoned with her from the Scriptures, and she gladly received the Gospel and was baptized. In May, 1953, the church of Christ in Calhoun, Georgia, met for the first time. Radio played a part in the beginning of a good work

in Calhoun, but that work did not remain untouched by the hand of liberalism.

Because of an eldership that was weak in knowledge and courage, the liberals were able to suppress the truth and eventually steal the building. The elders were a great aid to Frank Mills, the liberal preacher who cunningly pulled the strings of the puppet elders, and was able to "deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18). If there was any hope of resolving the situation, it was ended in February of 1999. Jerry Dyer, the *conflict resolutionist* (a then recent graduate of Pepperdine and newly appointed director of Church Growth at Ohio Valley Collage), landed the final blow that split the Calhoun Church of Christ. Paul accurately described the situation with the elders, preacher, and Jerry Dyer in leading this liberal Jihad, when he through carefully selected words of the Holy Spirit penned:

> 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. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith (2 Tim. 3:1-8).

Faithful brethren who had devoted their lives to the work of the Calhoun Church of Christ (including the now aged and precious Mildred Hall) were forced by the *loving liberals* to leave.

Others could have possibly been saved, "pulling *them* out of the fire" (Jude 23), had it not been for a well-known *sound preacher* who closed the door forever when he went to the Calhoun Church of Christ in October 1999 and praised the liberals to the high heavens (by the way, it was mentioned that he left there with a considerable amount of money; see 2 Peter 2:3). When this *sound preacher* was questioned as to why he did so, having had the documented evidence of the liberal digression beforehand, his response was that he did not have the time to read it. Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church?

How many of you know of similar circumstances, where elderships actually formed a wall to protect the wolves from faithful members who

begged elders to do the work they were selected and trusted by a congregation to do? Again Paul's words of inspired warning come to life:

> Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

If liberalism can take control of a local work, just think what they can do with cooperative efforts that exist and are currently forming. Be it clear that this writer is not opposed to congregations cooperating in doing a good work. The Bible authorizes faithful congregations of the Lord's church to do so (Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:1-5). As a result of satellite and cable television the truth can be used to attack false doctrines of denominationalism, atheism, liberalism, and any other deadly *ism*.

Today there are various efforts to have the unadulterated Gospel presented worldwide—that is wonderful. Let God's Word be known from the palace to the cow pasture, but some of our preachers who are getting all giddy over the efforts need to ask some questions. If someone learns the truth, where are they going to go? Many rank, liberal apostates are going to be allowed to cooperate with sound brethren in these evangelistic efforts. If someone learns the truth, is that someone going to be told not to attend one of the liberal congregations of the church of Christ that is supporting those *good works*? Could that fall into the category of inconsistency? Good, sound brethren who would never think of endorsing "children's church," "unity in diversity," et al., are going to be slipping under the covers with those who do. They are going to be clasping hands in a joint effort with those who have zero tolerance for God's Will when it conflicts with their own self interest. Is this fellowship (Phi. 1:5-7; 4:14-18)? Does God really mean what He says (Eph. 5:11)? Yes!

You may be surprised to learn that liberal congregations are receiving recognition through advertisements by the program, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Just watch the program some time and look at some of the churches receiving recognition as supporters. You may be appalled should you choose to go to the web sites of some of their supporters. Is it possible that liberals could one day own these *good works*? It appears they already have their finger in the pudding. Take a lesson from history and remember what happened to "Herald of

Truth" (Coats 290). Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church?

Liberalism is divisive, but it also unites those whom God says to avoid (2 John 9-11). Do you remember the article that spread throughout the brotherhood like wildfire: "Some Are Going—Some Are Coming" (1). That event took place about ten miles from the congregation where this writer serves. What actually took place was, the Christian Church denomination split over the instrument. They had no problem with a stringed instrument; it was the flute or wind instrument that caused the Christian Church to split. They will surely find plenty of sympathy for their denominational error from the preacher who will "help them through the difficult but great days" (1), as the article affirmed. Yes, the preacher mentioned in the article is without doubt the man to help the Christian Church denomination to merge with the church of Christ in this particular town. Apparently this preacher has never read of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 4:1-3), and no wonder the well-known brother who wrote the article was called a "'Pace Setter' among churches of Christ by the CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE" ("Biographical"). Being recognized by the *Christian Chronicle* is about as flattering as it would be if one were honored by Larry Flint in *Hustler Magazine*. Watch for this particular church of Christ to be eventually swallowed up and stolen by the Christian Church denomination. Should the sound brethren there remain silent? Shame, shame!

When one of the ladies from the afore mentioned Christian Church denomination visited "The Third Annual Northside Lectures" and heard Kent Bailey preach a sermon on "Why I Left The Christian Church," she realized she had never obeyed the Gospel. Fearing her condition she wanted to be baptized and added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:38-41). Despite all the efforts from those of the former merger to get her out of the building and to convince her she was all right, she persisted until they eventually baptized her. Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church?

EDIFICATION

It is disappointing today to see so many people leaving the one faith. Young and old alike are turning their backs on the Lord. The faith of the most valiant soldiers of the cross is being put to the test. Faithful elders, preachers, and all Christians need to remember some of the most beautiful words of the Bible which were spoken to Joshua: "Be strong

and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Jos. 1:9). In times like these, one can appreciate how Noah, that great "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5), must have felt when the world rejected God's grace (Gen. 6-7). More probable than not, for the church in the twenty-first century, the worst is still ahead. Maybe one can see a parallel with what the Lord spoke to the prophet Jeremiah saying:

> If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? (12:5).

It appears the majority have not survived the challenge. Many have cast aside Paul's words: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, **which is able to build you up**, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). If the all-powerful (Rom. 1:16), all-sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:1-3) Word of God will not keep the saved faithful, then no substitute man can devise will be an improvement. Faithless liberals today have programmed the church to death to try and appeal to every age and situation. Go to some of the web sites of congregations in your area or any area and see what they are doing.

When churches were established in the first century, what saved them kept them saved. After the church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-47), how did the church remain strong? Could it have been that they "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42)? Liberal Jeroboams today have *monkeyed* with all three of these areas. The have exchanged the apostles doctrine for the "Beverly Hillbillies" and "Andy Griffith."

They have ignored God's limits on fellowship to embrace every false teacher who claims to "know Jesus as their personal savior" contrary to plain teaching (1 Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). They have exchanged worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) for a more relaxed atmosphere for those who want to be more *laid back* and "contemporary worship" for those who want to get more *revved up* in worship. All throughout Acts, one will find it was the Word of God, the apostles' doctrine that saved, strengthened, and sustained the first-century Christians. Neither archeology nor sacred or secular history has uncovered any evidence of the New Testament church having a

gymnasium, no record of the church assembling to play "Old Maid" or "Rook"; yet when their faith was challenged, many would die before they would deny their Lord.

What is being done by elders or churches of Christ today in the area of edification? One may check out the Edmond Church of Christ, Edmond, Oklahoma, home of "In Search Of The Lords Way." As this chapter is being written, an interesting picture is before this writer of seven happy campers. If you would like a hint of what that picture may entail, just look at the name given to the picture on their web page "http://www.edmondyoungfamilies.org/images/camping/sexycampers.jpg." Can you draw a mental picture from that? Here are young campers one-half to two-thirds naked for all to see. There is much more than their light shining (Mat. 5:16) in this picture. How edifying! Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church in relationship to edification?

One area where liberals are having a heyday is with the youth. Cowardly liberals pick off the youth, knowing they do not have the wisdom to readily identify the "big bad wolves." In this regard, they are spiritually pedophiliac. They provide an atmosphere that would naturally appeal to a youthful disposition which would want to be spiritually uplifted, and what better place to do this than at a liberal "Youth Rally"? There are several youth days/lectures attended by young people that are conducted in an orderly, reverent atmosphere, but:

> Many of these gatherings are nothing more than Pentecostal pep rallies. The speakers are professionals at creating an emotional climate. They are full of jokes and stories. They are comedians, not preachers; entertainers, not spokesmen for God; actors, not teachers of truth. Attentive minds and calm reflection on faith building, biblical truths are supplanted by clapping, swaying, and displays of emotion.... One of the most popular and well-attended youth rallies is Winterfest. Headquartered in Edmond Oklahoma, the Winterfest organization is a money-making enterprise that is void of deep reverence for the majesty of God and the authority of His Word. (Chesser 112-13).

Many congregations today employ youth ministers (who most often have received extensive training in our liberal schools) to ensure spiritual development of teenagers.

> In most cases, elders hire a youth minister who himself is a youth... being only a few years at best out of his teens.... Regarding spiritual activities and biblical instruction, youth ministers are frequently spiritual catastrophes (Chesser 112).

Talk about spiritual development, a congregation consisting of four elders, at the particular time, discovered that their youth minister was really on the ball. Some of the youth began to confess to parents that this young man had been providing alcoholic beverages, arranging dates contrary to parent's wishes, allowing his office to be used for teenage petting, and on it could go. It was even discovered some of the older teens had been taken to places of live entertainment (no it was not to see Barney). This is not to say all *youth ministers* are immoral. This is to ask a question: Where were those who were supposed to be watching the flock? "It is the responsibility of pastors to oversee the flock. Their duty demands intimate knowledge of every sheep. They shall account to God for every one" (Chesser 113). When the elders were confronted with this particular situation, their response was that they would have fired him a long time ago, but they were afraid that would split the church. Why were the parents oblivious?

> God has his youth ministers, and they are called parents. There are exceptions to the rule, but generally, youth ministers are symbols of parental neglect. If parents were functioning according to God's design for the home, there would be no need for an employee of the church to minister to the youth. Elders have hired youth ministers to do the work that God has ordained for the home (Chesser 110-111).

Nothing can replace God's pattern for the home (Deu. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21).

When will elderships learn the mission of the church is not to provide entertainment and recreation? Recreation is to be provided by the home. Notice what Wayne Coats revealed:

> Did you see the bulletin of the Broadway church in Paducah, Kentucky, about "Our Recreation Ministry"? The cost of the Family Life Center and program of activities is estimated at THREE MILLION, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. Volunteers were requested to help run it. The order of events offered by the church of Christ were
>
> 1. Table games — (Rook, Monopoly, etc.)
> 2. Aerobics
> 3. Weight Training and/or Fitness programs
> 4. Craft programs
> 5. Walking groups
> 6. Jogging
> 7. Ping pong
> 8. Table soccer
> 9. First Aid and CPR Instructional clinics
> 10. Weight Training clinics

11. Scouting Activities
12. Family Movies
13. Summer Day Camp for Children
14. Free Exercise Groups
15. Seminars
16. Basketball
17. Volleyball
18. Others (List any you may be interested in)

> Such as the above is a clear-cut defiance of the word of God. People with respect realize that the Seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). There can be no kingdom without kingdom seed. With the whole world lying in wickedness (1 John 5:19) and headed for hell and destruction, we wonder how such children of God can spend millions of dollars to help people frolic around. Is it true that Jesus died on the horrible, painful, agonizing cross to purchase the church in order for youth ministers to turn it into a frolic event? (Coats 351-352).

It is not uncommon to hear people ask: "What does the church provide for our children?" The answer should be, "It provides excellent Bible classes with teachers who believe in the all-sufficiency of God's Word" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It provides a preacher who will "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2) on any Bible subject. It provides an eldership who realizes the seriousness of the charge given to them (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

It appears there is no end to the tomfoolery injected by liberalism to improve upon God's mission of the church: Singles Ministries, Youth Ministries, Involvement Ministries, Praise Ministries, and you name it. This elder, along with the other two elders of the Northside Church of Christ, recently spent the afternoon with a lady and her son trying to encourage their faithfulness, upon which this eldership was told that, if a program was not put in place to *minister* (cater) to divorced women the Northside congregation would eventually lose a lot of members. This lady was divorced. She did everything she could to save her marriage. She went to the bars and restaurants with her husband to be able to drive him home when he would be too intoxicated to drive himself. It was stated to her that the Bible has the ability to meet her every need. She repented of sin, but informed the eldership that she would be looking elsewhere to attend. Should the church create a ministry for every situation: divorced women ministry, innocent divorced women ministry, guilty divorced women ministry, divorced men's ministry? Should the church provide for people who have

infirmities, such as an arthritis ministry, people who are losing their hair ministry? Are not all important? Where will it stop?

The Lord has one place for people to find comfort and edification, regardless of their situation, and that place is in the church of His dear Son (Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:1-22; Col. 3:1-15). It is here that Christians come together to worship every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). No one who loves God will ever come away from a worship service designed by God and say: "I didn't get any thing out of it."

If there is hope, edification, peace for the heartbroken, disheartened, discouraged, or lonely, it is when hearts are focused upon God in true worship and in sweet fellowship with those of like precious faith. This is as near to heaven that one will get in this life. No liberal substitute can improve upon that!

BENEVOLENCE

This area will only be mentioned briefly. For a fuller explanation, see the section in this book, "Liberalism and the Work of the Church," by Gary Grizzell.

God's people are a benevolent people. Abraham showed a spirit of benevolence when he offered Lot first choice of the grazing land (Gen. 13:8-10). When the tabernacle was being constructed, the freewill offerings were so abundant that the people were restrained from giving (Exo. 36:5-7). In the new Testament the benevolent spirit of the saints was apparent, for many of them "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45). Later, as the church began to grow, that same spirit existed when

> as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 4:34-35).

Even "Barnabas...a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36-37). When there was a need, the church was generous in supplying the necessities (Acts 6:1-4; 11:28-30; Phi. 2:25; 4:10-18).

The giving and distribution was done through a described process. First, the distribution was done through the apostles (Acts 4:34-37). This would ensure no misappropriation or deceit (Acts 5:1-11). When the Grecian widows had a need, seven qualified, godly men were selected to appoint over the business (Acts 6:1-3). When the church had

men who qualified to be elders, it was the eldership who was overseer of the benevolent work (Acts 11:30). In every case, the ones selected to be responsible for the benevolent distribution were men of impeccable character. One can truly appreciate the wisdom of God in using qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9), elders, in overseeing the needs of benevolent work. Only men who meet the qualifications of elders should be entrusted to oversee and appropriate such a task.

As it is in about everything God has instructed His people to do, liberalism has found a way that they think is better than God's way. They are as prideful as the prince of Tyrus, of whom God said, "Behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee" (Eze. 28:3). Today there is: "The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc." If there is one word in the title that accurately describes this man-made organization, it is "Disaster," for that is what the organization did to the work of local elderships. Here is an organization that is so benevolent that they have volunteered to do every elderships' benevolent work for them.

This organization has created a hierarchal arrangement that places them above the pattern given in the New Testament. According to their web site, it is made up of a Board of Directors consisting of twelve men, an Advisory Board of thirteen men, and Joe L. Dudney who serves as Vice President/Executive Director. Where does one find a hint of such an organization in the Scriptures? Someone will argue, but just look at all the people that they are helping and all the *good* done through the Churches of Christ Disaster Relief. There is not a denominational pragmatist anywhere that cannot make the same argument. Inspiration precluded that notion: "And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8). This writer can still remember the words Bro. Keith Mosher, Sr., told his students: "The ends never justifies the means." Is liberalism having an effect on the mission of the church? Only an ostrich could deny the facts!

CONCLUSION

The effects of liberalism upon the mission of the church are real; the consequences are devastating. No doubt many good, faithful Gospel preachers, elderships, and members are questioning themselves as to whether they are overreacting to the "blight of liberalism." Some have become so confused or despondent that they have joined the ranks of

the liberals or turned their backs to religion completely. Some of the material read in preparation for this assignment was written by men who at one time were faithful but have since swerved from the strait and narrow.

While listening to brother Harrell Davidson speak sometime back, he said something to the effect that it is possible to stay too long in a situation where liberalism is present. Today some are participating in lectureships and workshops, hoping to have a positive impact on some who are about to be devoured by liberalism. If one will make a simple observation he can see that, when put in strenuous situations, good men often compromise. Many are being overtaken by liberalism, but few if any are being snatched from the hell fire of liberalism. It is certain that one cannot have a saving influence if they go and do or say nothing to address the problem. No, one must not go and just blast a congregation or elders and close doors of hope, but this writer remembers what John Renshaw would say to his students: "Silence is golden, but sometimes it is just plain yellow." It is easy to kick liberals in the seat of the pants in such an assembly as are gathered at the Bellview Lectures, but can it be done while warming by the fires in the liberal camp? It would be wise to remember what happened to Peter on one occasion (Mark 14:54, 66-72) and Peter and Barnabas on another occasion (Gal. 2:11-13). God said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11). May all trust Him who knows what is best for His creation.

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LIBERALISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

Loy Hardesty

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INTRODUCTION

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). This great passage is the key to the advancement and growth of the Lord's work anywhere and everywhere, 2000 years ago, now, and for all time in the future. We, in the church of the Lord, are members of a **teaching institution** (John 6:45). Yet the institution itself does not teach, but the members do the teaching. In Acts 8, because of the persecution underway, led by Saul, the disciples of the Lord were scattered. However, it was not a band of disheartened and pessimistic followers who were scattered from Jerusalem to drop out of sight and never be heard from again. No, when the disciples of the Lord were scattered, they took the message with them!

For the message to be taken it takes people truly converted, completely loyal, and fervently evangelistic. One of the sorrows of our time is that too many of us are silent disciples—we do not speak! When we move from place to place, the Word, as far as our teaching others, does not go with us! To desire growth is biblical and scriptural. It is obvious that we need to grow as individual Christians. Peter wrote, "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18). For a congregation to desire to grow is certainly a healthy attitude, and without

desire on our part growth will not happen. We watch our children and grandchildren as they begin to walk, talk, and also develop into a healthy adult. The lack of growth in a child strikes fear in the heart of the parent. That same fear should affect us in the church when we fail to see growth in a newborn babe in Christ. Paul stated: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). It is interesting that in the history of the church from the 1800s up to the 1960s the church grew. At one time the churches of Christ were listed as the fastest growing religion in America. Most preachers of this era did not have a college degree, yet their preaching converted thousands of people. New congregations were established across this great land. Brethren, this happened because of book, chapter, and verse preaching. Preachers believed that it was the preaching of the Gospel that was God's power to save (Rom. 1:16); so they faithfully proclaimed it to all, and the church grew.

Now it is different! We went from the powerful preaching of men like E. R. Harper on the Herald of Truth to dialogue of two or three men politely tripping all over themselves so as not to offend the denominations. At one time we had men like V. E. Howard who preached the pure Gospel of Christ, and now we have White's Ferry Road using denominational preachers on their program.

Brethren, we did not stop growing because we needed a new hermeneutic or a new temple that will seat 10,000 people, neither do we need a new Apollos (Max Lucado) who is eloquent in speech (or writing). We stopped growing because we stopped preaching the Gospel. We compromised and became like the nations around us. Our sermons became such that they could be preached in any pulpit in town, and no one would be offended. Our preachers began trading pulpits with Baptists, Methodists, or whoever. As a result, we have mega-churches across the land filled with unconverted people.

"Bigger is Better" became the battle cry of brethren; so we began to merge. Neighborhood congregations were swallowed up, and the mega-church was born. If you are small, you are nothing in the eyes of the liberal brethren. Our preachers began to journey up to South Barrington, Illinois, and the Willow Creek Community Church to learn from denominational preachers how to grow (plant) a church. Brethren, how sad, how sad!

J. Wayne Kilpatrick has an

affinity for denominational religion [as] is clearly set forth in a letter mailed out to preachers in the area, dated Feb. 20, 1992. The letter, addressed to: "Dear Fellow Preacher," said in part the following:

> Gary Bradley, Sr. and I recently attended a Leadership Seminar in a northern state that excited and challenged us as ministers of the Gospel. We came back more committed than ever to reaching lost people for Jesus. The seminar was attended by ministers from 47 states and four foreign countries. It was so valuable and I thank God that we were able to attend....
>
> We want to share with you some of the things we learned in this seminar.... That is why I'm urging you, pleading with you, to attend the Seventh Annual Leadership and Church Growth Seminar to be conducted at the Homewood church on March 6 and 7....
>
> Dedicated leaders and members of the Mayfair church in Huntsville, the Vaughn Park church in Montgomery, and the Homewood church in Birmingham, are making final preparations for you in order that you and the entire congregation where you worship can be benefitted.... Come and let us tell you about a church where the members arrive one hour early in order to find parking places and a seat in the auditorium. Let us tell you about a church that has grown from no members to over 17,000 in just 17 years. Let us tell you about a church that has 80% growth rate by conversion not transfer....(quoted from Seibles Rd. bulletin, Sept. 10, 1995).

What the above letter from Wayne Kilpatrick did not reveal was that his fabulous church which has eighty percent growth rate by **conversion**, and for which Wayne has such great praise, is the Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago. This is simply a denomination among denominations, yet Wayne speaks of their **conversions**. If this is not outright affirmation that these denominational people are Christians, what would such take? Think brethren, Wayne is **urging** and **pleading** for not only preachers but for the members of **entire congregations** to come and be indoctrinated with the error he has seen first hand at Willow Creek!

Brother J. E. Choate says of people at the Willow Creek Community Church: "They hear original contemporary music performed with all the pizzazz of a professional show with 16 vocalist, a ten piece band and three interpretive dancers." Bro. Choate also says of Willow Creek:

> A growing number of churches of Christ in the Nashville area are "aping" the practices of such community churches as the Willow Creek and the Phoenix, Arizona Community Church

> of Joy. The area churches which come first to mind are the Woodmont Hills Family of God, and the Antioch and Donelson churches. The Fourth Avenue church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee, and old and influential church of another time, is drifting into these shallow waters due to the influence of the Willow Creek religious atmosphere promoted by their *avant grade* [sic] ministers.

If the above is not proof aplenty that some of our brethren want to take the church into denominationalism, what would serve as proof? (Pigg 7-8).

In the early 1970s Lynn Anderson got the attention of many brethren by making a statement that the church of Christ is: "A big, sick denomination." He added, "And I meant exactly every one of those three words. Big and Sick and Denomination." A few years later Lynn verified his denominational thinking when the following was announced in an Abilene newspaper:

> Lynn Anderson, minister of Highland Church of Christ, will *lead* a Church Growth Seminar from 8 to 10 p.m. Wednesday at Elmwood West United Methodist Church in Abilene. Pastors, church leaders and Council of Ministries members from Brookhollow Christian church, Grace Lutheran church, St. James Methodist Church, Westminister Presbyterian Church and Elmwood West Methodist Church will participate in the seminar.

In the years since the Church Growth Seminar for denominations in 1979, Lynn Anderson has gone farther and farther into denominationalism, as is often the case when men start in that direction. Though Anderson is not receiving the attention he once was, he has been a contributor to error and is a classic example of how the "devices" of the devil are working in taking the church into the mainstream of denominations (Pigg 8-9).

THINGS THAT HINDER TRUE CHURCH GROWTH

Ignorance of God's Word

This author would have to say that the first thing on the list which hinders true church growth is ignorance of God's Word.

> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hos. 4:6).

Paul encouraged Timothy to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). It is the rejection of (ignorance of) the will of

God that leads men to bring the instrument into the worship of God, to put women in a place of leadership, and to partake of the Lord's Supper on days not authorized. History has shown that when that door is opened, the floodgates of apostasy prevail.

In the 1970s an elder informed this penman that they had heard those sermons (first principles) a thousand times and they did not need to hear them anymore. Teenagers, including two that belonged to this elder, believed that there were Christians in every denomination in town.

Sleeping with the Enemy

Another hindrance with church growth is bidding God speed to error:

> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Brethren use men in gospel meetings, youth meetings, who are known false teachers. They try to defend such by saying they did not teach any false doctrine here. John said not to bid them God speed, and that is exactly what we do when we invite the fox into the hen house. Paul wrote:

> Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

Instead of inviting false teachers in, we need to stop their mouths.

Silence Is Golden

Brethren, omission is as much a sin as commission. God will hold us accountable for our silence. The attitude of many is that we do not have any problems here and we do not want to know about any problems there. Brethren, today we live in a mobile society. We are constantly traveling: our children go off to college, we travel, go on vacations, go on a weekend outing, travel out of town, etc. Additionally, people are often moving from one location to another. With so much travel and movement, we need to know what is going on in the

Lord's church, not only where we regularly attend, but other places also. If we try to bury our heads in the sand and never know what is taking place in the church, then we will fall into error. What is taking place in one congregation will just about always finds its way into other congregations, including the one you attend. We simply cannot bury our heads in the sand.

> 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! Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Isa. 5:20-21).

Peter devoted nearly all of 2 Peter to exposing false teachers. Paul, in instructing the young preacher, continually deals with false teachers in 2 Timothy, even specifying specific names of individuals. They saw the need for exposing error; we should also.

Desire to Be Entertained

Brethren have come to expect being courted, wooed, and entertained. Many congregations are spending millions of dollars on *Family Life Centers* so they may entertain their members. From the monthly publication *Bulletin Brief* comes an article titled, "Fallacies and Fruits of Liberalism," which states:

> The cathedrals and religious malls being constructed by some churches today are deliberately calculated to impress and awe the human mind. They are purposely designed to seduce and lure people. The construction of gymnasiums and family life centers is the result of misguided efforts to address family problems and needs through entertainment and pleasure (the social gospel). They are mere human substitutes for what people really need to sustain them amid life's trials and tribulations, straight-forward confrontation with the mind of God revealed on the pages of the Bible. If we will sit down, examine our hearts and be honest with ourselves, we will see the desire for numbers and big buildings which cost millions of dollars are nothing more than appeals to the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

Concerning the desire for new things, he writes:

> It is decidedly a non-spiritual attitude that desires newness to the extent that there is developed a change from God's will in order that men might be pleased. The very idea of those proposing to belong to God, and then developing a desire of newness at any price, is completely contradictory. It is a sad time in spiritual Israel when so many of our people can be satisfied with so little Bible in the congregations and preaching work, and can be pleased with entertainment and social activities because such, in its departure from the Word, is new. Indeed,

> Jeremiah's words are so appropriate in this day, and this very hour: Ask for the OLD PATHS...and walk therein! We shall lose our souls if we turn from those paths in the quest for constant newness.

Bad Attitudes Hinder Church Growth

Let us look at the Tate family and realize how many belong to your congregation. There is brother Dic Tate who wants to run everything, while Uncle Ro Tate tries to change everything. Their sister Agi Tate stirs up plenty of trouble with help from her husband, Irri Tate. Whenever new projects are suggested, Hesi Tate and his wife, Vege Tate, want to wait until next year. Then there is Aunt Imi Tate, who wants the church to be like all the others. Devas Tate provides the voice of doom, while Poten Tate wants to be a big shot. Of course there is the black sheep of the family, Ampu Tate, who has completely cut himself off from the church. However, not all members of the Tate family are bad. Brother Facili Tate is quite helpful in church matters, and a delightful, happy member of the family is Mrs. Felici Tate. There is cousin Medi Tate who always thinks things over, and lends a helpful, steady hand. Let us facilitate the cause of Christ rather than agitate it.

Preacheritis

> Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Have you ever heard, "They have fired my preacher and I haven't been back since"?

Brethren who are we serving, who are we worshiping, and who died for us? "Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). When brethren begin elevating preachers, then we become nothing more than the Apostate Church. This is what happened with Crossroads at Gainesville and also at Boston with the International Church of Christ. We are to worship God rather than man.

THINGS THAT PROMOTE TRUE CHURCH GROWTH

Brethren we need to get back to the Bible. Paul wrote:

> I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Paul also states,"So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Growth (numbers) without conversion means nothing. We may be filling buildings and even earning bragging rights to being the biggest in the brotherhood, but if we have not converted them by teaching God's plan of salvation, we have not accomplished anything.

If you had a herd of cattle or horses out in the corral, and you decided to stop feeding them the good (and more expensive) alfalfa and start feeding them the cheaper and less satisfying straw, you will soon begin to see the bones of your animals. Why? Because straw does not have the protein and nutrients that they need to grow and be healthy. Many preachers and Bible class teachers are feeding the flock straw. It comes in many forms: false Bibles such as the *New International Version*, *Revised Standard Version*, or whatever pleases the ears; nice after dinner speeches instead of Bible preaching; denominational material in Bible classes; etc. We need to get back to the book—the **Bible**. When we get back to preaching the Bible the way God wants us to, rather than trying to please men, the church will grow.

Some are too preoccupied with numbers. Consider when Gideon was going to lead the children of Israel against the Midianites.

> And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog

> lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place (Jud. 7:2-7).

God shows that numbers do not make greatness. God would do great things through small numbers, just as He could through large numbers.

In the New Testaments consider these verses:

> Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Mat. 7:14).
>
> Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (Mat. 9:37-38).
>
> So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen (Mat. 20:16).
>
> Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able (Luke 13:23-24).

We know that it is God's will that all should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 2:9) by coming to repentance so none perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

We also need to realize that God is not as concerned about numbers as we seemed to be. There are conditions that lead to salvation, and God demands that we keep them to be saved. When we for the sake of numbers do away with God's plan, we damn our souls and those that follow us. God instructed Moses to inform the children of Israel that "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people" (Deu. 7:7). The number of people did not matter with God. Moses goes on to say, "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them" (7:11). Obedience to God is what He is concerned with.

The change agents of our day want us to believe that **bigger** is better. They do not believe that it matters that they have changed the sign on their buildings to remove "of Christ" from them, or that they encourage sinners to pray the sinner's prayer and tell them that they are saved before they are baptized into Christ. All that matters is that they are **big**! They inform us that we do not count because our preacher does not have a Ph.D. degree and that we are just a bunch of country hicks!

If you think this sounds ugly or derogatory, just read *Love Lines* or *Wineskins* and listen to the speakers of the Tulsa Soul-Damning Workshop (they call it Soul-Winning, but there is no way to tell how many souls will be lost because of this workshop) or liberal lectureships around the country. Then you would see for yourselves what is going on in the church today.

Leadership Is Vital

For true growth to take place we need strong leaders. We need elders who will stop the mouths of the gainsayer, who will shepherd the flock, lead them, show them the way, and love God and the brethren:

> Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

Leaders need to look toward the future to plan. They should not wait until six months or three months before a gospel meeting and say, "Well, we had better find a man to preach our meeting for us." Planning promotes growth. We need to have a vision for the future.[1]

We need preachers who will stand in the pulpit and boldly preach the Truth (Eze. 13:5; 22:30). Remember the words of Paul, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We all need to be men of faith: "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). Paul emphasized need for faith and that faith is based upon God's Word (Rom. 10:17). When we read all of Hebrews 11, it reveals a long list of those who believed in God, trusted in God, put God first, and did as God commanded them to do.

Commitment

Faithful Christians promote church growth by their good example.

> Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).
>
> And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead (Rev. 3:1).

If all of God's people would wake up (Rom. 13:11), worship regularly (Acts 20:7), and serve Him faithfully (1 Cor. 15:58), we would set the world on fire ("turn the world upside down"; Acts 17:6).

John hears sirens close by during the night; he jumps up and gets into his clothes, and rushes outside to see the fire trucks on the corner because the church building is on fire. A neighbor sees him and says: "John, what are you doing out here? You've never shown any interest in the church before." John replies, "I've never seen the church on fire before."

Unfaithful dead Christians equal dead churches. Dead churches are not going to grow. When a lost world sees in us a hit and miss attendance or failing to attend on Sunday night and Wednesday night, how can we convince them the importance of the church? How can we convince a lost and dying world that they need Jesus when they do not see Jesus in us? We are the only Bible that many people ever read. We are never going to convert our neighbors when he sees us out mowing the lawn on Sunday morning, pulling our golf carts or boats into the driveway Sunday night, or on Wednesday going to the bowling alley or movie theater. How can we say to this man, "You need Jesus," when he can plainly see that Jesus does not mean anything to us? "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam. 4:7).

Prayer Will Promote Church Growth

"Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. 5:16). Brother Otis Gatewood, in a chapel service at York College in the fall of 1964, addressed the problem of stereotype prayers in the following way, He said:

> Many prayers by brethren are a collection of traditional phrases we use over and over again. A man could be praying in the worship service and drop dead of a heart attack and the man next to him could pick up and finish the prayer and no one would know the difference.

Our prayers need to be personal: pray for the sick by name, for real needs of the brethren, for the elders, deacons, preacher, and the missionaries. We must make our prayers close-up and personal.

We need to make sure we pray for the lost and the spread of the Gospel (Mat. 9:36-39; Acts 4:29; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-3). In praying for the lost we do not pray that they will be saved outside of Christ—but that they will obey the Gospel to be saved. We should also make

these prayers personal—praying for specific individuals that they would submit to the Will of God.

Get Priorities Right

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat. 6:33). Not just the elders, the preacher, the Bible class teacher, but everyone putting the church first in their life. Today we observe many finding loopholes to avoid meeting with the saints in worship to God: congregations are changing the time of services or canceling completely the evening services for the Super Bowl; members are forsaking the assembly because Uncle George and Aunt Suzie come for the weekend—on and on we go finding a loophole to forsake the assembly and put God on the back burner.

John said of Jesus, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire" (Mat. 3:11). Many want to make a case for Holy Spirit baptism and include the baptism of fire as one experience. The Church of the Fire Baptized is headquartered in Independence, Kansas. Many Pentecostal churches use the expression *Fire Baptized* (or the Church of the Burning Fire) in identifying themselves. Even some of our brethren have been carried away with false doctrine in regard to the Holy Spirit. The baptism of Fire is not something we should desire or pray for but something we should avoid at all cost. If we are not faithful, we will experience this baptismal fire: we can count on it. Paul gives us information about this baptism of fire when he wrote:

> And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:7-9).

Instead of tripping all over ourselves and bending over backwards to avoid offending people, we need to be preaching Hell, Fire, and Brimstone sermons—ones that reveal the wrath of God to pull people out of the fire. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). But some say, "What about grace?"

> For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Tit. 2:11-12).

Grace is not without conditions. That grace of God teaches us to live in a certain way. If we want the church to grow, we are going to have to make drastic changes in our lives.

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).
>
> Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

THE GROWING CHURCH IS:

A worshiping church — Acts 2:42
A united church — Acts 2:44
A compassionate church — Acts 4:32-35
An evangelistic church — Acts 8:4
A faithful church — Acts 13:10

CONCLUSION

Are you helping or hindering the growth of the Lord's church? We need to examine ourselves and see whether we be of the faith. Brethren, we need numbers, we need to fill that empty pew, but we are going to have to do it the Lord's way, not ours. May God help us to do that!

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ENDNOTE

[1]For more study on this read: Cates, Curtis. "Decision Making in Leadership." *Leadership*. Ed. Michael Hatcher. Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1997. 255-271. Summers, Gary. "Goal Setting in Leadership." *Leadership*. Ed. Michael Hatcher. Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1997. 273-83.

LIBERALISM'S EFFECT ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Larry Powers

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Larry began preaching in 1975 while a member of the Air Force while stationed in Klamath, California. He continued to preach part time until he retired from the Air Force and entered Memphis School of Preaching.

He has done local work with the Elm Grove Church of Christ in Burlison, Tennessee, Gardner Church of Christ in Martin, Tennessee, and is presently working with the Sharon Church of Christ in Sharon, Tennessee. He has done campaign work in Australia; New Zealand; Zambia, Africa; and the Marshall Islands. He has been teaching with the Online Academy of Biblical Studies since 2002.

Larry is married to the former Teresa Ann Hatchett, and they have two children and two grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

Organization is an essential part of any institution: the home, civil government, and secular business. Any business lacking the proper organization is destined to decline and to deteriorate. Any government deficient in organization is a government on the road to ruin. God in His infinite wisdom has structured the church in such a way that the benefits of sound organization may be realized. Liberalism has affected the organization of the home and of the church. To understand how liberalism has affected the the church requires knowing what liberalism is, as well as knowing what the scriptural organization of the church is.

WHAT IS LIBERALISM?

Webster defines *liberalism* as "the quality of state of being liberal...a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity." "The word 'liberal' derives from the Latin '*liber*' ('free') and liberals of all stripes tend to see themselves as friends of freedom, particularly freedom from the shackles of tradition" (Wikipedia).

> Liberalism is not one simple, undifferentiated doctrine. As with other doctrines or ideologies, there are varieties of liberalism. [Most] liberals agree on the primacy of individual freedom and individual choice,... [Although] some liberals argue in favor of these core values by means of highly abstract reasoning (Sally).

Liberalism in the biblical sense is an attitude toward God which denies what He has stated in His Word. Rubel Shelly, before he went headlong into liberalism, stated: "To put it bluntly, liberalism is something altogether different from Biblical Christianity and would destroy it" (6). Liberalism denies the authority of the Scriptures or that God has provided a pattern for the organization of the church.

Liberalism is not found in the Bible, but *liberal* is found six times: the first of these are in the Old Testament (Pro. 11:25; Isa. 32:5, 8, in which it is used three times) and one time in the New Testament (2 Cor. 9:13). The words translated "liberal" in the Old Testament do not have the same meaning as usually attached to the word today. The two words mean "generosity, blessings, etc." The New Testament word translated "liberal" does not have the same meaning as usually attached to it today. *Liberal* (Greek *haplotes*) in the New Testament (2 Cor. 9:13) means "singleness, sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking) or generosity (copious bestowal), bountifulness, simplicity" (Zodhiates 1667). The context of the word is very important. When used in connection with giving it is a good thing. When this same word is used in context of being loose with the Scriptures, it is a bad thing.

There are many examples of liberalism in the Old and New Testament—even if the word itself is not used. There were some who were not happy with the way God had organized the children of Israel into a great nation. Miriam and Aaron were not pleased with God's organization and spoke against Moses (Num. 12:1ff). Korah rebelled against God's plan of organization (Num. 16:1ff). Liberalism once again lifted up its ugly head when the children of Israel rebelled against God's pattern of organization, when they wanted a king so they could be like everyone else (1 Sam. 8:5). Paul warned that liberalism would take place among the elders (Acts 20:29-30). Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence and was attempting to change the organization of the church to one-man rule (3 John 9-10).

WHAT IS GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH?

Jesus promised to build one church (Mat. 16:13-19). He purchased this one church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and loved the church enough that He gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). The church was purposed from before the foundation of the world (2 Tim. 1:9), and is the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:10-11). Every person throughout the whole world who obeys the Gospel of Christ is added by the Lord to this one church (Acts 2:47). The church is the body of Christ, and Christ is the only head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). The church is composed of all the saved throughout the whole world. Therefore the church is used in the universal sense, and relative to the church universal there is no functioning government on the earth. The church for which Jesus died, the church of Christ, is governed completely by divine authority (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is the only head, the only authority of His church, and He exercises that divine authority through the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is no person on earth who is head of the Lord's church. There is no such thing as a group of men today who dictate or make laws for the Lord's church.

The church of the Lord is also used in the local sense. This is a congregation of Christians meeting in one village, town, or city. There was a congregation located at Jerusalem (Acts 2). Paul writes to the church at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse. Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). The New Testament speaks of the church in a local setting such as the church at Antioch, the church at Ephesus, or the church at Corinth. Each of these congregations was independent of all others. There is no work or service of the church that is too large for the church to do, and any organization larger than the local church of our Lord is unscriptural and unnecessary. Therefore, only the local church is organized on earth.

Today only the local congregation has officers and organization. All the Bible teaching on church government concerns only the local church. God's plan for the local church was that every church be organized with a plurality of elders to direct and oversee the members and the work of the church (Acts 14:21-24). Paul said, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Tit. 1:5). Is it possible for a congregation to function without elders? **Yes**! God planned for this situation. There are examples of congregations

operating without elders for a period of time. According to Jim Massey, there are only four ways in which a congregation can function: (1) Scripturally unorganized, (2) Scripturally organized, (3) Unscripturally unorganized, and (4) Unscripturally organized (Massey 90-92). A scripturally organized congregation is one where there are elders and deacons serving who are qualified to serve. An unscripturally organized congregation is where there are men attempting to function as leaders, elders, who are not qualified to serve. A scripturally unorganized congregation is a congregation where there are no men qualified to serve as elders. An unscripturally unorganized congregation is one that has men qualified to serve, but for some reason they will not serve, or the congregation will not allow them to serve.

The local church must have an organization. The Bible likens the organization of the church to a human body (1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4-5). The body has many parts, and all these parts are necessary if the body is to function properly. The same is true of the local church: all members must work together if it is to function properly. The local church is independent of all others concerning its management of local affairs. Every organization must have leaders and followers. Leaders are needed to make decisions. Any organization without them may be compared to a flock of sheep without a shepherd. They simply wander in circles until they select a leader. Jesus had compassion upon the multitudes which followed Him because they were as sheep without a shepherd (Mat. 9:36). The local church is no exception to this general rule of needing some form of government.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS LIBERALISM HAS AFFECTED THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH?

Today some liberals are advocating one-man rule. This one-man according to them is the preacher. This is not a new twist concerning the organization of the church. Ignatius taught that a congregation needed a single bishop to maintain the unity of the congregation (Schaff 145-146). He lived in the early part of the second century. Those who favor one-man rule by the preacher sometimes claim that, whenever God had any great work to do, He never formed a committee—He always raised up one man to do the work. This has led some to advocate a leadership structure attempting to combine elders with leaders. Lynn Anderson, a staunch liberal himself, stated in an article in the *Christian Chronicle*:

> Some time back, several ministers from churches of Christ spent a day with Lyle Schaller, (respected resource person and prolific author on church development). We specifically asked him what churches of Christ look like "from the curb." For the most part Schaller was complimentary of us. But not so of our leadership model. "You expect your elderships to lead in a visionary way," Schaller observed, "But history shows that groups have never been able to lead! Nor is this biblical. Rather, every major move of God was led by a person, not a group."

Later in the same article Anderson stated:

> However, Schaller's analysis is becoming dated.... What is more, in church after church, elders are empowering a person—with leadership gifts and training to—to lead. This frees up elders to shepherd, and also frees up the leader to lead. Result: happy elders, happy leaders and flourishing churches.

What those who are advocating one-man leadership seem to forget is that God designed the pattern for the church to follow. That pattern includes elders. A movement toward one-man rule or one-man leadership is denominational. God has given elders responsibilities, and God has given preachers responsibilities. The responsibilities of elders are to lead/rule the congregation (Heb. 13:17). Elders/presbyters are also called bishops and/or overseers, and pastors and/or shepherds. Elders or presbyters indicate spiritual age. A "bishop" or "overseer" is translated from a word (*episkopos*) which means "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, a curator, guardian or superintendent" (Thayer 243). Elders, bishops, overseers, pastors, and shepherds possess no legislative powers within the doctrinal realm; they must operate only in the framework authorized by the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of all souls—Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1). Elders then have no authority to change the organization of the church to one-man rule or to add a group of leaders. When elders attempt to appoint men as leaders, they are attempting to change the organization of the church. When some are appointed as leaders, men are attempting to create an office in the church which was not created by God.

Preachers have responsibilities which have been given by God, and these responsibilities do not include taking the oversight of the local congregation. The preacher is not the one who makes the decisions for the congregation. Paul gave the young preacher Timothy a very serious charge to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5). The church at Philippi had

elders and deacons (Phi. 1:1), but Timothy was sent to them to do the work that an evangelist needed to do (Phi. 2:19). A preacher has a duty to preach and teach the Word of God. Paul said, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Tit. 2:15).

Some liberals are attempting to create a new office in the church called "church leaders." This usually takes place when there are no men qualified to serve as elders. In an article from the *Gospel Advocate* J. Roy Vaughan stated:

> It has been suggested that when a congregation does not have qualified men for elders, some brethren should be selected by the church as "leaders of the church." Occasionally we hear brethren referred to as "the leaders of the church." But this does not solve the problem. To appoint men in the church to do the work of elders, give them the responsibility and require them to assume it, and call the "leaders," instead of elders is simply beating around the bush; for such men are elders in every sense of the word, so far as their work and responsibility are concerned, with the exception of the name. This arrangement is no more scriptural than to appoint men elders who do not possess the scriptural qualifications and who would be elders in name only. We should be careful lest we create an office in the church by human authority (742).

This is not a new departure from the scriptural organization of the church. This article was written August 8, 1946. This practice seems to have been widely accepted since that time. The only group of men which God has approved to have the oversight of a congregation are called elders. Therefore, just because the church appoints a group of men they call *leaders*, that does not make it right with God.

Today some liberals are advocating putting women into leadership positions. Some are even advocating placing women into the eldership. The Honolulu Church of Christ several years ago was holding men's business meetings and women's business meetings. While visiting the congregation one Sunday night (November 1997), the women were coming out of their business meeting, and one lady said, "The women meet to discuss what they want done, and then we tell the men what they need to do." One of the most powerful influences in all humanity is the influence of a woman and mother. It is the woman who wields the greatest influence in the lives of the children. They are to teach (Tit. 2:3-5; Acts 18:24-26), but they are to be in subjection to their own husbands (Eph. 5:22-23; Tit. 2:3-5). They are not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Therefore, the woman

is not to teach or have authority over a man. Paul gives reasons for this restriction (1 Tim. 2:13-15). The woman's role in the church is not a role of general leadership, but it is one of subordination and subjection. Subordination and subjection do not mean inferiority, as many state.

The Bible does not give women the authority to be elders. The Bible says, "This *is* a true saying, **If a man** desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1). The words (*ei tis*), translated "if a man" in 1 Timothy 3:1 is translated "if any man" 35 times, "if any" 19 times, "if a man" eight times, "if any thing" six times, "if ought" three times, and "whosoever" two times (Smith 111). Paul continues to give the qualifications for **a man** that desires to serve as one of the elders, and one of those qualifications is "**the husband** of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2). *Husband* (*aner*) means

> with a reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman; either as a male...or as a husband (Matt. 1:16; Mark 10:2; John 4:16; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:2; Gal. 4:27; 1 Tim. 3:2,12; Titus 1:6)...as reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy (Thayer 45).

It is translated "man/men" 156 times, "husband" 50 times, "sir" six times, "fellow" one time, and is not translated two times (Luke 24:19; Acts 3:14).

Today some liberals are advocating that elders should be re-evaluated each year or so. While visiting the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ in Honolulu (December 1996) one of the elders said, "I will only be serving as one of the elders until December 31st; the congregation will be re-evaluating us, and I probably will not be serving after that." This elder did not attend the Sunday evening service that evening because he had family visiting. There are other congregations throughout the brotherhood who have adopted this practice of reevaluating or reaffirming elders. Dub McClish listed some congregations who are using this unscriptural method of dealing with elders.

1. The Richland Hills Congregation, North Richland Hills (Forth Worth), Texas
2. The Houston Park Congregation, Selma, Alabama
3. The Pleasant Ridge Congregation, Arlington, Texas
4. The Airport Freeway Congregation, Euless, Texas
5. The 11th and Willis Streets Congregation, Abilene, Texas
6. The Crestview Congregation, Waco, Texas
7. The Brown Trail Congregation, Bedford, Texas (The only congregation in the list without a reputation for liberalism to a greater or lesser degree) (84).

The congregations using this unscriptural reevaluating or reaffirming of elders have several different methods for the process. They have different timetables and different criterion to determine if a man may continue to serve. Some have attempted to give this process a different name to make it sound more pleasing, but no matter what it is called, a skunk by any other name still stinks. Some have set the minimum level of confidence for elders at 70%. Brother Marvin L. Weir stated:

> **One** valid objection disqualifies a man from serving as an elder. However, where is the scripture or wisdom that necessitates that an elder who has been selected by the congregation and who meets the Holy Spirit's qualifications can/must be periodically "reaffirmed"? (26).

Where is the Bible authority for such a practice? The Bible puts forth the authority for the selection and appointment of elders (Acts 14:23; 15:4ff; 16:4; 20:17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). The Bible does not give the specifics of how this selection is to take place. Therefore, the manner of selection is left to human wisdom. However, this must be done in accordance and harmony with scriptural principles. Nowhere in the Scriptures do they give authority for a reevaluation or reaffirmation of elders.

Today some liberals are advocating that elders are not appointed but merely develop into elders, and the people will recognize that fact. Charles A. Holt wrote an article in the *Examiner* (January 1993) in support of this false idea.

Today some liberals are advocating that elders simply are ruling by example and have no power whatsoever. While it is true that elders should be examples, it is not the only way they are to lead or rule. The Bible declares how that elders are to rule. The authority of the eldership is limited; there are some things they cannot change. Elders do not have the authority to add to the law of the Lord nor set aside any of the commandments of Christ. They do not have the authority to dispense with any of the acts which are necessary for a person to become a Christian: to change immersion into sprinkling or pouring, to change the fact that baptism is necessary for salvation, etc. Elders possess no power to dispense with or change one or more of the acts of worship: to bring mechanical instruments of music into the worship; to allow people to hum, whistle, or make the sound of instruments and call it singing, or vocal music; to set aside the command to partake of the Lord's Supper the first day of every week. They do not have the right

to change the role of women: to put a woman into the pulpit to preach, to teach an adult class of both men and women, to allow them to officiate at the Lord's table, to lead a prayer before the congregation, or to direct the singing of the congregation. They do not have the authority to change a single, solitary syllable of the great commission which forms the heartbeat of the mission of the Lord's church. Relative to the specifics of the Gospel, their authority is in the word, and they must see to it that God's Word and work are preached and practiced just as the Bible demands.

The authority of the eldership is set forth by the Word of God. Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter wrote, "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 Pet. 5:2). Elders are to feed the flock. *Feed* (*poimaino*) means "to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep...to rule, govern" (Thayer 527). It is translated "feed" six times (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 9:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 12; Rev. 7:17), "rule" four times (Mat. 2:6; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15), and "feeding cattle" one time (Luke 17:7).

Paul wrote to Timothy and the qualification, "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?)" (1 Tim. 3:4-5). *Ruleth* means "to stand before, to be over, to rule, to superintend, to preside over" (Thayer 539). "Take care of" means precisely that. Its significance for elders means that they are to take care of the church, taking forethought, and making provision. Its implied significance for the members means that they are to submit to this rule (in matters of expediency). Paul said, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (1 The. 5:12). Admonish is its precise definition and means "to put into the mind, instruct, warn, admonish" (Zodhiates 1713). Elders have the responsibility of admonishing the church and seeing that it is done.

Paul charged, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). *Obey* (*peitho*) means "to be per-

suaded, trust." It is translated in the New Testament: "persuade" 22 times, "trust" eight times, "obey" seven times, "have confidence" six times, "believe" three times, "be confident" two times, "agreed," "make (one's) friend," "yield unto," "wax confident," "have whereof (one) might trust," "put (one's) trust," and "assure" (1 John 3:19) (Smith 284). "Rule" (*hegeomai*) means "primarily to lead on or forward...to preside, govern, rule, whether in a temporal sense or in a spiritual one" (Zodhiates 1695). This word is translated "count" ten times, "think" four times, "esteem" three times, "have the rule over" three times, "governor" two times, "chief" two times, "chief speaker," "suppose," "judge," and "account"(Smith 165). *Submit yourselves* (*hupeiko*) means "submit to." This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. *Watch* (*agrupneo*) means, "to be sleepless, keep awake, watch...to be intent upon a thing...to exercise constant, vigilance over something (Thayer 9). It is translated "watch" four times (Smith 4). The elders are to watch over the church, being on guard against wolves who seek to destroy the church. They must watch for false teachers that call for the church to change to keep up with the times.

Paul continues to write concerning elders: "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre" (Tit. 1:7). *Steward of God* means "administrator of God's house." The significance of this for elders is that they must be active, energetic, administrators of God's house, the church. In view of all this overwhelming evidence, how can one fail to see that authority inheres in the work of the elders?

The authority is with the eldership, not with one elder. Elders are not to be dictators (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Instead they are to feed or tend the flock (1 Pet. 5:2), to teach the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:2; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 5:12). Elders are to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). They have the obligation of taking the oversight of the congregation (1 Pet. 5:2). Elders are to watch for grievous wolves (Acts 20:29-31). They are to support the weak (Acts 20:35), and admonish the church (1 The. 5:12-13). Elders are to consider and decide on church problems (Acts 15:6). They are to take the lead in exercising discipline (Mat. 18:15-18; Luke 17:1-4; Mark 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 10:32).

Liberalism is causing a great amount of damage to the organization of the Lord's church. The only way to combat this attack by the liberals is to take a stand (1 Cor. 15:58). Christians must put on the whole armor of God and fight against these liberals (Eph. 6:10-18).

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LIBERALISM AND THE ELDERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest needs in the Lord's church today is good leadership. It can truly be said, as goes the leadership, so goes the congregation. A local congregation will never be stronger than its leadership. We need to put men into the eldership who have a great Bible knowledge and a love for God.

It is the job of the eldership to stop the mouths of the gainsayers: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). However, some elderships have become the source of false doctrine. Some try to stop the preaching of truth rather than stopping the preaching of error. They tell the preacher that he cannot preach on social drinking, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, dancing, immodest apparel, etc. The devil is wise. He uses those who ought to be safeguarding truth to pervert truth and lead the flock astray. The devil works through some elderships. If the devil can get the eldership, then he has the congregation. This is the very thing that Paul told the elders at Ephesus:

> 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. 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 20:28-30).

Some elders are more concerned about safeguarding the number present and the contribution than they are in safeguarding souls and Truth. They are more concerned about paying for the building than they are for saving souls. Some do not want the big givers to be offended by the preaching of Truth. Elders must understand that they are going to give an account for the way they have or have not safeguarded Truth and souls (Heb. 13:17). We need men who are going to be God's men. Men who will stand for that which is right regardless of the cost. There will be some who will leave because of sound preaching. We hate this, but so be it! We either please God or men.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LIBERAL POINTS PROMOTED BY SOME ELDERSHIPS?

There are many points to the liberal agenda. It is hard to list all of the liberal thoughts promoted by those who do not have a respect for God's Word. Roy Deaver came up with the following list in showing some of the things endorsed by the liberal camp:

> When we use the word "Liberalism" with regard to the church we have in mind certain brethren who: (1) Reject the doctrine of miraculous word-by-word inspiration of the Bible; (2) deny and/or disregard the distinctiveness and exclusiveness of New Testament Christianity; (3) insist that not all things are black or white—that some things are "mushy gray"—that truth is relative; (4) think of the New Testament church as being just another denomination among denominations; (5) are vehement in their defense of "social drinking"; (6) insist that we have no specific instruction as to when to observe the Lord's Supper, and that—therefore it may be observed on Thursday night; (7) hold that it makes no difference as to whether or not one believes the Bible record of the virgin birth of Christ; (8) are tolerant toward those who hold to the doctrine of "theistic evolution"; (9) think and teach that we cannot disfellowship—but that we must fellowship—the people in the "Christian Church"; (10) are concerned about "Christian Unity"—but without proper regard for Bible teaching on the subject of unity; (11) are inclined to **minimize** matters of **doctrine**—stressing all the while that "It is the spirit that counts"; (12) stress emotionalism and flights into fantasy; (13) insist that there is no such thing as an "act" of worship, but that worship is entirely a matter of "attitude," a "condition of the heart"; (14) ridicule the time-honored practice of giving "book, chapter, and verse" for what is being preached and practiced; (15)

> minimize the works and influence of the great gospel preachers of a former day; (16) weave everything into their sermons excepting the word of God; (17) attempt to emphasize "Jesus" but "not the church"—the "man" but not the "plan"; (18) want to fellowship everybody excepting those who don't want to fellowship everybody; tolerate everything and everybody excepting those who won't tolerate that kind of toleration; include everything and everybody excepting those who don't want to include everything and everybody; (19) insist that it is impossible for one to really "know," and that "you can't really **prove**" that God is, or that the Bible is the word of God (5-6).

Elders have a God-given obligation to watch for the aforementioned points and see to it that these do not invade the local congregation for which they are responsible. However, some elders are the very ones who want such promoted!

LIBERAL VIEWS AND PRACTICES IN THE ELDERSHIP

In this part of the lesson, we will point out ways in which the devil and men have striven to pervert God's leadership. God has authorized that good sound elders should oversee the local congregation (Acts 20:28). He has given the qualifications that these men must meet in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11. Therefore, no man or group of men have a right to change God's pattern for leadership. When one studies church history, he will discover that the church was originally led astray by the perverting of the eldership. The following are some of the ways in which liberalism has influenced the eldership.

Disdain for the Office

There are those who do not want elders. One reason such is true is that some of these men cannot meet the qualifications set forth in the Bible to become an elder, and they do not want to lose their say in decision making. They cripple the development of elders by stating time and time again, "We do not have anyone qualified." These men usually make the qualifications so rigid that no one could possibly become an elder.

It is sad that these men cannot step back and allow God to have His way when it comes to leadership. Some men are not qualified to be an elder and never will be. Jesus, as great as He was/is, does not meet the qualifications of being an elder. This is also true of the apostle Paul. However, they would not and did not stand in the way of appointing good godly men to function in that office.

There are others who disdain God's pattern of leadership by promoting evangelistic oversight. This means that the preacher is the one who makes all of the decisions. What we need is Bible authority for this arraignment, and there is none. These men have left the pattern of God's Word for leadership. They will rule or ruin!

Elders Going Beyond Their God-given Authority

There are some elders who believe if they approve a thing, then that makes it all right. This author was at the Harding Lectureship in Memphis, Tennessee in about 1971 when the question was asked in open forum, "Is it true that young women are leading prayers in the presence of men." A professor from Harding stood up and said, "I will answer that! Yes, it is true. However, these young ladies are not usurping authority, because we gave them that authority." A man from Texas stood up and asked, "If you give them authority to preach, will that be all right?" The professor from Harding sat down and did not say another word. He knew he could not give a woman the authority to preach. In like manner, he could not give them authority to pray in the presence of men (1 Tim. 2:8). There are some elders who believe, if they declare it scriptural, then that makes it scriptural. Some members believe this is the case.

Consider what the elders at Fifth and Highland did:

> Throughout its 75-year history, the Highland Church of Christ has been blessed in countless ways. One of the most apparent of those blessings is the spiritual giftedness of our members and the way that their gifts have been poured out to benefit others.
>
> Another of those blessings is the willingness of this Highland family to seriously study God's Word and to take direction from what is revealed. Over a decade ago, the Highland elders began to study, pray about, and discuss among themselves the roles of women in various worship and ministry activities. The result of that interaction was a congregation-wide study a few years ago on the role of women in public worship.
>
> After that period of study, the Highland elders decided that it was time to encourage the participation of women in various ways in public worship. From the earliest conversations with members, the elders communicated that it was not the intention of Highland leadership to place women in the role of elder or preaching minister. However, the eldership concluded that it is scriptural for women to participate in all other ways.
>
> It has been our intention to implement these changes in roles carefully—seeking natural ways to allow our women to join our men in

> using their gifts. Over the past few years, you have seen the fruits of this intent. Ministry reports, congregational announcements, the sharing of testimony, and participation in praise teams and dramatic presentations by women have become fairly common. More recently, you have witnessed women reading scripture, serving communion, and leading prayer.
>
> Brothers and sisters, your elders want you to know that we firmly believe that such activities are fully scriptural and that we are grateful that we have been able to have this experience at Highland. We are also aware that these actions represent a great amount of change and that change can—and does—produce anxiety. Please know that we are not callous to those feelings. Yet, we believe that scripture provides all women and men the opportunity to share their God-given gifts. Thus, you will see women continue to be used in worship as natural and appropriate occasions arise.
>
> We want you to know that when you see a woman taking a public role in worship, it is being done with the knowledge and approval of the eldership. For those of you for whom this is a difficult transition, we encourage you to patiently seek God's peace as our church family prayerfully moves through this transition.
>
> For those of you who were not at Highland during our intensive study or if you were here but would like to refresh your study, we will be offering a class this spring that will lead you through the scriptures that led us to our decision. Or, if you would like to talk with an elder about this, please let that be known. We are always willing to spend time with you.
>
> God has blessed the Highland church with people who are willing to serve in thousands of ways. We trust you will join the Highland shepherds in praising the Lord when you witness that service in your fellow sisters and brothers (Cope).

These elders did not have the authority to allow women to participate in public worship with men present (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). However, they have assured the congregation, when you see women leading prayer, reading Scripture, or waiting on the table, it is with the elders' approval. Who gave the elders this authority?

They claim that they are not going to allow women to preach or be elders. Why not? They have stated that brethren should use their God-given abilities and talents. Do not any of the women have any ability when it comes to speaking and leadership? What if the elders see women whom they believe to have these gifts? Will the congregation accept such if the elders say that they have authorized it? The congregation has bought into what the elders have already done. This is the devil using the eldership to lead a congregation further into error. Fifth

and Highland has been lost to liberalism for years. The actions of her eldership surprise no one.

Remember, the elders of a local congregation are not to make laws for God (Rev. 22:18-19). They are to be spiritual leaders, insisting that they and the congregation honor and obey the laws which God Almighty has made (Acts 20:28).

Elders Have No Authority

There are those who believe that the only authority that elders have is that of example. This would destroy the authority and rule that God has given to these men. Charles Holt championed this cause for years. This means that a member of the church can do to a large degree that which he wishes and is subject to no one. The average congregation does not function as well as they would if they had scriptural elders.

Here are some questions to ponder. If a wife refuses to be subject to her husband, has she sinned (Eph. 5:22-23)? Almost all who know the Bible would say, yes—if the husband was acting in harmony with God's Word. Does a Christian sin who will not obey the laws of the land that are in harmony with God's Will (Rom. 13:1-5)? Again, all who know the Bible would say, yes. If one must obey the laws of the land made in most cases by those who are not members of the church, how then can one reason that he does not have to submit to godly elders (Heb. 13:17)? Dub McClish tells of this growing problem:

> It seems that every time it becomes necessary for elders in a local church to assert some authority there are some members ready to challenge them. On a larger scale, when a general crisis develops, threatening to harm the whole brotherhood, and when elderships begin using their God-given authority to preserve the churches, said authority will most certainly be challenged by those who are affected. When elders began refusing to allow the anti-cooperation hobbyists to disturb the churches of ten to fifteen years ago, the hobbyist attacked such scriptural exercise of authority by calling these elders "Pontifical Bishops." Others, since that time, have begun teaching that elders have no more authority than any other member and that they can "rule" only by the leadership of "good example."
>
> More recently some of the pitiful malcontents among us have mounted a campaign of open rebellion against the authority of elders. A graphic example is seen in an article written by Dean Thoroman, entitled *Removing Unwanted Elders,* published in *Integrity,* October, 1970. Among the unseemly statements in which he attacks elders are the following: "When they feed, they need not stuff unwanted food down unwilling throats."..."What authority do elders have over their flock

> which that flock does not willingly give them? None! There is *no* Biblically authorized hierarchy in the church." (It is my guess that Dean has run into some elders somewhere that refused to put up with what he wanted to teach. He surely should have if he was trying to teach such things as quoted above!)

Brother McClish does a beautiful job answering this false view:

> *Episkopos* (along with kindred forms, *episkopew* and *episkope*) is commonly translated "bishop," "overseer," and "oversight" in the following passages: Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2. The word is defined as follows: "An overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent;...specifically the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church" (Thayer, page 243).
>
> *Oikonomos,* translated "steward" in Titus 1:7, is used to describe the relationship of the bishop, under God's authority, to the church. This word means: "the manager of a household or of household affairs; especially a steward, manager, superintendent...to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not of age:...the manager of a farm or landed estate, and overseer,...the superintendent of the city's finances, the treasurer of the city:...a bishop (or overseer) is called *oikonomos theou,* of God as the head and master of the Christian theocracy" (pages 440-441).
>
> While Thayer's concept of the bishop apparently involves the idea of "one-man rule" which we can not accept, his definition of these two terms clearly indicates that they include delegated authority. If there is no delegation of authority indicated in the words themselves and if there is no requirement of authority in the responsibilities these words suggest, then in what sense are elders overseers, superintendents, managers or stewards? If no authority inheres in these terms, then elders are no more than mere helpless figure-heads without any real function. It is not unlikely that this is precisely the position to which modern false teachers would like for all elders to be reduced (*Elders*).

Is a child of God obligated to follow the elders when they lead the congregation in a scriptural withdrawal? Must one submit to the eldership when they decide the time of services, etc.? If one does not have any obligation in these areas, then there would be total chaos. God has a pattern and that pattern must be followed.

Women Elders

There is a movement among some to appoint women elders. There is no Bible authority for this action. Some try to argue that Paul was

prejudice toward women. This of course is an attack on inspiration. Others try to say is was a cultural thing. However, when one reads 1 Timothy 2:11-15, he finds three reasons why the woman cannot be in a leadership role. First, the man was first formed, then the woman; second, the woman was in the transgression and third, the woman has a different role. However, there are those who are not going to live within the boundaries of the Word of God.

The following exchange took place during the Gender and Ministry discussion at Freed-Hardeman University:

> Question: I would like to ask brother Randolph: Can women serve as elders today? If not, why not? Our culture today would allow it even though the culture of the Bible in general might not permit it.
>
> Randolph: I have no problem with women serving as elders today. I think that effectively that is what the older women were doing referencing Titus. And the important thing that I think we need to grapple with here is what we have done with the notion of the eldership. The eldership has become in our congregations, in most of our tradition, basically the board of overseers that deal with the business of the church, or effectively the corporation's board, taking the model of the American business community and not necessarily the biblical model. In the biblical model, elders are serving spiritual functions, pastoring congregations. I think the reality is that those older women teaching the younger women were serving in that particular role. That was part of that. I would understand it in that fashion.
>
> I think the tasks of elders are not gender specific. I think that women can do those things and, in fact, in most of our congregations, if we are so blessed, they are doing them. We simply don't acknowledge them in any formal fashion. The reality would be that it would be better for us to acknowledge the business function that our elders perform and call it a board of overseers or something of that sort and call out from our congregations the pastors that are actually functioning in that role. Then you would find, I suspect, that your congregations know who those people are, and that those people are not gender limited. Then in time of need, in time of teaching, a range of other things, people in our churches turn to the elders in those churches and those elders don't necessarily conform to the same individuals that are on the board of elders.
>
> We have taken function, we have taken a ministry, we have taken a role and turned it into an office on the business model. I think that is to our loss. It would be better to recognize what is really going on in our churches and acknowledge the reality that we already have women who are serving in that role.

Mitchell: I would not take any exception to what brother Randolph said. I think we do need to look at the biblical material on the elderesses that are mentioned in Titus and Timothy and try to find out what the functions were of the males who were called elders and females who were called elders. I have no doubt that there are going to be some very significant differences. And then we have to find out how much those differences are cultural, and so forth. I agree with brother Furman Kearley in an article he did in 1988 in the Advocate that women should not be pursuing offices of power and prestige in church. And the reason why I agree with him is because there should not be any such thing as offices of power and prestige in the church.

Gilmore: Brethren, I live in a house with four women and women are very versatile, but it is very difficult for them to be the "husband of one wife." First Timothy 3:2; I take this to be binding and canonical. It is from God, it is written to us, it was written to Timothy, and it is for us until there is some reason to overturn its relevance today. I think that we should take God very seriously in this matter. I know that the two of you have already indicated that you have a serious approach to the Bible. It is true throughout history that when people have not taken God very seriously, the results have not been good. I am thinking here in 1 Timothy 3 that if the elder is supposed to be the husband of one wife, then God means what he says, and that it is not possible for a woman to do that. Likewise, a "board of overseers," is not a concept that I endorse because they are just men who serve in the eldership. It is not an honorary office. I think when elders cease to be able to serve as elders due to age or health reasons, it is time for them to resign. The Greek words *presbuteros* denotes "an older person," *episkopos* means "overseer," *poimen* means "shepherd" or "pastor." These are not just spiritual business persons. They are spiritual leaders. Male leadership in the church is what is advocated in 1 Corinthians 14 and in 1 Timothy 2.

And in closing, I would like to remind you about Chart #9.

McWhorter: It is obvious from the scriptures that the situation concerning the elders is a posture of positional work. These men had to possess certain qualifications. Nothing is ever said about women in this regard. We are told what the qualifications are. Ralph has just spoken of them—married men with children. In addition to that these were men who could be recognized in the congregation because we pay them certain respect and we obey them. If it is simply people who are doing a work, then all that is said about these qualifications, all that is said about the position they hold, qualifications they possess, our respect and obedience to them would be completely beside the point. Nothing is said in the scriptures about a woman doing this work or holding this positional authority (Gender and Ministry).

Why do some think that women can be elders? To explore this point further, this writer emailed Christopher R. Hutson for his justification of this point and he made the following arguments:

> In brief, I would pursue four lines of argument. First is a theological question. I would want to think about God and how our relationships with one another as human beings reflect or correspond to our understanding of God. And I would want to think about what Jesus is trying to show us about God and about what it means to be human. I would want to be clear on those questions and to pursue questions about church polity only as a secondary matter. Let's keep the main thing the main thing. Whatever answer you come up with in your study, I hope you will be able to show that it is consistent with your Christology.
>
> Second is a question of social history. I would want to consider what is the nature of eldership in a traditional, elder-led society. We don't live in that kind of society. We have people we call "elders" in our congregations, but our model for thinking about them is more like a corporate board of directors. Well, ancient societies didn't have corporations with boards of directors, so what did "elder" mean for them? I'd like to pursue that way of thinking about the question.
>
> Third is a question of exegesis of key passages. I would want to consider, for example, what Paul means when he says that in Christ there is no "male and female" (Gal 3:28). Here and other places the Scriptures call us to treat one another as equals and to break down our artificial social barriers of discrimination. In Gal 3:28, Paul puts sex discrimination on a par with ethnic discrimination and social class discrimination. If we think those other things are wrong, then how can we hold onto sex discrimination? Paul thinks the gospel should change the ways we relate to one another here and now. So that is another way of thinking about the question.
>
> Fourth, as for "gender specific roles in the body of Christ," that is a question of pneumatology-ecclesiology. I think we should let the Spirit blow wherever it wills, don't you? Who am I to say that God can't or won't call a woman to any specific task? After all, there are plenty of Bible women who are called to serve and to lead in all sorts of ways. So I would want to take into account God's call of women in Israel, God's call of women in early Christianity, and what the NT says about how the Holy Spirit functions in the life of God's people. That last bit is difficult, because we in the Church of Christ don't have much experience talking about the Holy Spirit, but we need to think more deeply about the question.
>
> These are brief sketches of lines of reasoning. All could be argued at length. But these are the sorts of issues I would want to take into account in order to answer your question. I hope this gives you some idea how I think about your question and perhaps gives you some

> direction for your own studies. I encourage you to read the works listed on our "reading list" and to visit www.gal328.org again. We'll add items from time to time that may address your question more fully.
>
> May God bless you in your research. Brotherly,
>
> Chris

Chris' argumentation is false. He misunderstands Galatians 3:28. If there is neither male nor female, then we ask the question: "Is the husband the head of his home?" He wants to make the Bible gender neutral. This cannot be done! Paul shows God's order of authority:

> Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God (1 Cor. 11:2-3).

The Bible shows that there is an order of authority whether man wants to observe it or not. Chris basically states that we should let the Spirit move where He wills, and if He chooses to guide a woman into the office of being an elder, who am I to stand in the way? We agree that the Holy Spirit should be the one who sets the boundaries for men and women. With that in mind, consider what He has said:

> But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:12-15).

The role of the woman is not tied to culture but to creation, her being deceived, and a different role for the woman as designed by God. So, Chris is wrong on all his points.

When the Christian church appointed a woman elder in our area, this scribe went to her home and talked to her. This penman asked for Bible authority for her appointment. She tried to make many arguments, but none of them were scriptural. She tried her best to make the Bible gender neutral when it came to leadership. This writer asked her, "When your husband was living, was he the head of the home?" She had to say, "Yes." This argument proves that the Bible is not gender neutral.

We must realize that we are in a tremendous battle over the woman's role in the church. When all the dust clears, we will be the only ones standing for that which is right relative to the proper role of

the woman. One denomination after another is giving ground on this subject.

Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders

In doing research for this chapter, this author came across a denominational website where the preacher was wanting to know how to go about reevaluating elders. He stated that he knew it was not taught in the Scriptures, but his congregation needed to do this.

Brother McClish points out that even those who promote this unscriptural practice realize that they are plowing new ground.

> A brother who champions the "reaffirmation" of elders based upon periodic "reevaluation" of them began a manuscript on the subject as follows: "The reaffirmation of elders is new ground for most congregations. It is an uncharted course—a path not traveled. Few congregations have had any experience with reaffirmation."[1]
>
> While (as noted above) this practice is generally of recent vintage among us, it has been observable in the denominational world for many years[2] (83-84).

The way this usually works is: the names of the current elders are placed before the congregation. Those who receive a 75% plus approval rate can continue to be an elder. Those who receive a smaller percentage should gracefully withdraw themselves from the eldership. There are those who want this procedure to take place every two years.

This practice is a case of the congregation leading the eldership rather than the elders leading the congregation. If there is a problem within the eldership, God has give us a process by which the congregation can address that problem. The sound and faithful elders should follow Paul's inspired instructions: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:19-20). Therefore, if an elder becomes involved in sin, that sin can be addressed. So, in that sense, elders are under evaluation every day. This is the way God wants it to be. Every Christian is under evaluation every day. Some fail in a big way. We are to love them enough to withdraw fellowship if they will not repent.

The church sees that some elders are not doing the work of an elder, and they do not know how to deal with that problem. How does a congregation get rid of an unqualified elder? The answer is go at it the Bible way. Do not invent an unscriptural practice. We often fear that we are going to rock the boat. It is better to rock the boat than to allow

unscriptural elders to sink the boat. Think about how many congregations have been destroyed because faithful members of the church feared getting involved. Shall we turn God's blood-bought church over to the liberals because we fear rocking the boat?

There are sound elders who see a fellow elder promoting that which is sinful and will not take a stand. He too fears that he will be viewed as a troublemaker. Peer pressure is not limited to young people.

One Eldership Being over Many Churches

We will not devote much time to this point in view of the fact it is not a major problem. This came to light when Alvin Jennings wrote his book, *How Christianity Grows In The City*. Wayne Coats critiqued brother Alvin's approach to evangelism. He exposed all of its shortcomings.

Elders are to have oversight of one congregation. There is no Bible authority for elders to oversee more than one congregation. They would not have the time or knowledge of what is going on or Bible authority.

BEING AN ELDER IS AN HONORARY POSITION

The door to liberalism is opened wide when unqualified men are appointed as elders. One is not to be appointed an elder because he is: a good old boy, old, liked by all, well-off financially, a natural born leader, a good business man, or a good family man. One should never be appointed to the eldership unless he desires the office (1 Tim. 3:1). Once he desires the office and understands that the position is a work and not an honorary position, then and only then will he do the kind of job that God wants done.

Too many elders hold a position, rather than doing the appointed work. Many elders believe that their primary job is to hire and fire the preacher and decide how the money will be spent! When was the last time an elder was in your home? When a problem arises, do you feel like the elders can help you with that problem?

BEING A GOOD ELDER INVOLVES

The principles of being a good shepherd, as set forth in John 10, teach one how to become a good elder. A good shepherd knows the flock and the flock knows him (10:14). He also leads the flock (10:3-4) and does not allow the flock to lead him. He realizes that he must feed the flock (Acts 20:28). He is not a hireling; he loves the flock so much that he would lay down his life for them (John 10:11-13). He realizes

his responsibility to the owner of the sheep, or the chief shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

We need good qualified elders. The sad thing about being an elder is that one cannot leave his job and go to a school of preaching to be grounded in the Truth. Therefore, he must be a diligent Bible student. It seems that very few want to pay this kind of price. This is why some elders do not recognize error as readily as they should.

To fix the aforementioned problem, we must encourage young men to desire the office so they will prepare themselves. How long has it been since you have heard anyone encourage a young man to aspire to be an elder? We need more teaching on the work and qualifications of an elder. We need to support good godly elders.

THE WAY LIBERALISM ARISES IN ELDERSHIPS

Liberalism arises in elderships when there is a lack of Bible knowledge (Hos. 4:6; Jer. 23:9-40). Some elderships love their own agenda more than they love God and His Word (Acts 20:28-30). There are leaders who will not stop the mouth of the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). Therefore, the congregation is at the mercy of the false teacher. The shepherds have allowed the fox in the chicken's pen. Babes in Christ have their faith overthrown. Those who once were grounded in Truth start to doubt their own faith. It is not long until the congregation is in a full-blown apostasy.

Some elders will not practice church disciple. Therefore, sin runs rampant in the local congregation. This writer has heard of elders who have made the statement: "Church discipline will not work here." They seem to know more about discipline than God. God teaches that congregations are to be involved in withdrawing from those who will not walk in harmony with His Will (1 Cor. 5:1-12; 2 The. 3:6).

Some elders fail to keep themselves informed on what is going on in the brotherhood. Therefore, they are caught unaware of what a preacher or teacher might be trying to promote. Many times these false teachers have done irreparable harm before the eldership is alerted. All elders need to take good publications which are "in the know" on what is going on in the brotherhood.

A survey by Dan Owen shows that some elders do not know the truth or else will not stand for the same! The survey was sent to 889 congregations and 64 elderships responded. Here are some of the amazing results:

> On the topic of divorce and remarriage, 23 percent said that they would encourage their eldership to extend fellowship to individuals who were unscripturally divorced and remarried. Sixty-six percent said that they would discourage fellowship in the same case, but only 50 percent said they would counsel the unscripturally married couple to separate. Seventeen percent said they would answer this question differently if neither party had been Christians prior to the second marriage. Concerning 1 Corinthians 7:15, 41 percent said that the believer who is deserted by the unbeliever has the right to remarry. Fifty-five percent said that the deserted believer has no such right. All who responded from the state of Tennessee said the deserted believer has no right to remarry, which may say something about the doctrinal complexion of the church in that geographical region.
>
> When asked what kinds of activities would be tests of fellowship in their congregations, some of the respondents gave some sobering answers. Eleven percent said the illegal use of drugs would not be a test of fellowship. Eight percent said one might teach that it is right to use instrumental music in worship, yet remain in fellowship. The same eight percent felt that one could teach the existence of miraculous gifts in the church today, or that women could lead in any part of public mixed worship, or that the Lord's Supper could be taken on other days besides Sunday, and that such people should be retained in the fellowship of the church (357).

Notice, some of these elders do not believe that the use of illegal drugs, that the teaching of instrumental music as being scriptural, miraculous gifts for today, women having a public part in mixed worship, or the Lord's Supper being partaken of on various days are a test of fellowship. How would you like for these elders to be watching for your souls and safeguarding your children from error?

STOPPING LIBERALISM AMONG THE ELDERSHIP

The eldership has the God-given obligation to stop the mouths of the gainsayers. Paul put it this way: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). Some elders do not want to rock the boat. Others do not what to fall from grace in the eyes of some of the members. As one president has well stated, "If one cannot take the heat, then he needs to stay out of the kitchen." It takes courage and faith to be a good leader. Whose mouths are they to stop?

Elders, are you part of the solution, or are you part of the problem? Each elder must be honest enough to ask himself this question.

CONCLUSION

We must encourage and train men to be good elders. If we fail to do this, then the Lord's church will continue to have major leadership problems. We need schools to help in this area. These classes will need to be conducted at night since most elders have full-time jobs. Men who live close to schools of preaching need to attend when they can. We need more "full-time" elders. If a preacher is worthy of his hire, then an elder would be worthy of his.

We can neglect the problem if we wish, but we will pay a great price. May God help us to see the problem and work hard to solve the problem His way!

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ENDNOTES

[1]Cannon, Jr., John H. "A New Direction for Church Leadership: The Reaffirmation and Selection of Elders Among Churches of Christ," manuscript of sermon delivered at Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ, Arlington, TX (n.d., but 1991 or later), 1. Cannon excerpted and edited this manuscript from his unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation by the same title, for the College of Biblical Studies, Abilene Christian University. (The quotation endnoted is one of the very few things in the entire manuscript with which I can agree, incidentally!) My thanks to Jesse Whitlock for this document.

[2]Garland Elkins tells of first seeing such procedures in the Christian Church perhaps thirty years ago (from a personal letter to Goebel Music, May 14, 1990—used by permission and with appreciation). As with most of the other innovations the change agents are continually introducing into the worship, organization, and work of the New Testament church, this one apparently originated in sectarian/denominational circles where the issue of scriptural authority is rarely considered. My thanks to Goebel Music for several letters and documents relating to this subject.

LIBERALISM AND FELLOWSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Ambiguous language may foster misunderstanding and dispute. It is always good to define our terms when we enter a study or discussion. With that said, let us define and illustrate *liberalism* and *fellowship* so all understand precisely what we have in mind.

Liberalism, for purposes of our study, is a view that seeks to loose where God has bound. Liberalism has a lax attitude toward God's commands, and it is nonchalant when it comes to rules, law, and statutes. Liberalism practically views God's commands as suggestions. Liberalism seems to pick and choose which commands it will follow. Not all commands are of equal importance to the liberal mindset. It might be further argued that the liberal mind, although not admitting to it, does not really believe that truth is objective or can be ascertained in many doctrinal matters. Instead, liberalism sees more of a *smoky gray*, whereas the truth is black and white.

Liberalism seeks to *lower the bar* on requirements for salvation. We have seen a persistent move by liberal elements over decades now to reduce the number of impediments to religious fellowship. While this seems to be a noble platform, it has become a tragedy in that the liberal element has ignored God's distinct lines of Christian fellowship and rushed to hold hands with any that claim to believe in Jesus (without regard to whether or not this fellowship is authorized by heaven).

Fellowship appears some fifteen times in the King James version of the New Testament. "Fellowship" is from the Greek *koinonia*. Vine tells us that it means:

> a having in common (*koinos*), partnership, fellowship (see COMMUNICATE), denotes (*a*) the share which one has in anything, a participation, fellowship recognized and enjoyed; thus it is used of the common experiences and interests of Christian men, Acts 2:42; Gal 2:9; of participation in the knowledge of the Son of God, 1 Cor 1:9; of sharing in the realization of the effects of the blood (i.e., the death) of Christ and the body of Christ, as set forth by the emblems in the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor 10:16; of participation in what is derived from the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor 13:14 (RV, "communion"); Phil 2:1; of participation in the sufferings of Christ, Phil 3:10; of sharing in the resurrection life possessed in Christ, and so of fellowship with the Father and the Son, 1 John 1:3, 6-7; negatively, of the impossibility of "communion" between light and darkness, 2 Cor 6:14; (*b*) fellowship manifested in acts, the practical effects of fellowship with God, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers as the outcome of faith, Philem 6, and finding expression in joint ministration to the needy, Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Heb 13:16, and in the furtherance of the Gospel by gifts, Phil 1:5. See COMMUNICATION, CONTRIBUTION, DISTRIBUTION, FELLOWSHLP (115).

In 1 John 1, John sets forth both the basis and the conditions of fellowship. Four times in five verses we have *fellowship*. He wrote:

> 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. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have **fellowship** with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (vv. 3-7).

It is clear that John had a purpose in mind when writing to the brethren of fellowship.

1. John was in fellowship with the Father and the Son (v. 3).
2. John wrote so that the recipients of the epistle might enjoy fellowship with God's other faithful children (v. 3).
3. One cannot have fellowship with God and walk (live in; persist in; make sin the habit of one's life) in sin, which is metaphorically represented by *darkness* (v. 6).

4. To enjoy fellowship with other faithful children of God, one must walk (present tense; "walk and keep on walking") in the light (v. 7). *Light* here is a figure for the life of righteousness.

We conclude then that one cannot be in fellowship with God's children without being in fellowship with God. One cannot be in fellowship with God unless one walks "in the light."

The Bible presents Christ's church as a family made up of God's children. When a sinner obeys "from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered" (Rom. 6:17-18), he died to the old life of sin and rose from the watery grave of baptism to walk and live as a new creature (Rom. 6:3-6). He became a child of God; he was adopted; he became an heir. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). He gained a spiritual family.

> For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

One of the great spiritual blessings a Christian has in this family of God is that of fellowship, but remember, it is conditional fellowship (1 John 1:7). It can be severed by returning to a life of sin. Once again, how does one know that he is in fellowship with the Father in heaven? John states it another way:

> 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. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6).

Try as one may to the contrary, there is no way that fellowship with God's faithful children can be maintained when one operates outside of the Father's Will.

FELLOWSHIP AND LIBERALISM ILLUSTRATED

While *liberal* and *liberalism* are not found in the Bible, the attitude is indeed present. Jeroboam is an example that cannot be forgotten (1 Kin. 12). He changed the place, the time, and the particulars of worship. He corrupted worship. He was perverse. Jeroboam was an

ancient liberal. Though dead and gone, Jeroboam's spirit and actions live on in modern day anti-types.

How should we illustrate liberalism? How can we come to a fair understanding of the liberal view of fellowship? Perhaps by analyzing modern-day liberals, we can see how they view fellowship and thereby observe the dangers of the liberal view.

Read this appraisal of Max Lucado and his teachings.

> Lucado holds an unscriptural view of Christian unity which is helping to break down the walls of separation between truth and error and which is preparing the way for the building of a one-world apostate "church." Lucado helped organize an ecumenical alliance of pastors in his home town, which has grown to more than 100. The pastors are learning to "put away differences" in order to deepen personal relationships. It includes women pastors, Charismatics, and others. Cindy Daniel, for example, is co-pastor with her husband of Expect a Miracle Church. Newman Dollar, pastor of City View Christian Fellowship, who, with Lucado, was one of the founders of this ecumenical fellowship, told the San Antonio *Express-News* (Feb. 19, 2000) that he wants to see more pastors from Catholic churches participating....
>
> We wonder if Lucado considers the gospel itself "essential." If so, how can he yoke together with Roman Catholics who add sacraments to Christ's salvation? The phrase "in essentials unity—in non-essentials charity" is a smokescreen for disobedience to biblical separation....the Bible does not divide doctrine into essential and non-essential. Timothy's job in Ephesus was to make certain that NO OTHER DOCTRINE be allowed (1 Timothy 1:3). There is no hint here that some portions of apostolic truth are "non-essential." Paul labored to preach THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD (Acts 20:27). The man who strives to be faithful to every detail of New Testament truth will find it impossible to be comfortable in an ecumenical Promise Keepers-type environment. As one wise man observed, "You will have a limited fellowship, or you will have a limited message" (Cloud).

These words were written—not by a member of the Lord's church—but rather by David Cloud of the "Fundamental Baptist Information Service." Even those outside the church can see that Lucado and those of his persuasion are seeking to open fellowship's gates. While the author of these words is no more saved than Lucado, it is noteworthy to see that even he recognizes the danger in Lucado's liberal view of fellowship. You cannot become one of the best-selling religious authors in the United States without appealing to folks across a wide denominational spectrum. Max Lucado does not care for the lines of fellowship that God has drawn. He does not flinch when encouraging disregard

and disrespect for God's commands. Lucado and Jeroboam have that in common.

In his book, *In The Grip Of Grace*, Max Lucado is a loud voice on behalf of open fellowship with those outside of Christ. One chapter, "Life Aboard The Fellow Ship," is especially helpful in understanding the liberal view of Christian fellowship. Here are some excerpts:

Rocking the Boat

> God has enlisted us in his navy and placed us on his ship. The boat has one purpose—to carry us safely to the other shore.
>
> This is no cruise ship; it's a battleship. We aren't called to a life of leisure; we are called to a life of service. Each of us has a different task. Some, concerned with those who are drowning, are snatching people from the water. Others are occupied with the enemy, so they man the cannons of prayer and worship. Still others devote themselves to the crew, feeding and training the crew members.
>
> Though different, we are the same. Each can tell of a personal encounter with the captain, for each has received a personal call. He found us among the shanties of the seaport and invited us to follow him. Our faith was born at the sight of his fondness, and so we went. We each followed him across the gangplank of his grace onto the same boat. There is one captain and one destination. Though the battle is fierce, the boat is safe, for our captain is God. The ship will not sink. For that, there is no concern. There is concern, however, regarding the disharmony of the crew. When we first boarded we assumed the crew was made up of others like us. But as we've wandered these decks, we've encountered curious converts with curious appearances. Some wear uniforms we've never seen, sporting styles we've never witnessed. "Why do you look the way you do?" we ask them. "Funny," they reply. "We were about to ask the same of you."
>
> The variety of dress is not nearly as disturbing as the plethora of opinions. There is a group, for example, who clusters every morning for serious study. They promote rigid discipline and somber expressions. "Serving the captain is serious business," they explain. It's no coincidence that they tend to congregate around the stern.
>
> There is another regiment deeply devoted to prayer. Not only do they believe in prayer, they believe in prayer by kneeling. For that reason you always know where to locate them; they are at the bow of the ship.
>
> And then there are a few who staunchly believe real wine should be used in the Lord's Supper. You'll find them on the port side.
>
> Still another group has positioned themselves near the engine. They spend hours examining the nuts and bolts of the boat. They've been known to go below deck and not come up for days. They are occasion-

ally criticized by those who linger on the top deck, feeling the wind in their hair and the sun on their face. "It's not what you learn," those topside argue. "It's what you feel that matters."

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

Some think once you're on the boat, you can't get off. Others say you'd be foolish to go overboard, but the choice is yours.

Some believe you volunteer for service; others believe you were destined for the service before the ship was even built.

Some predict a storm of great tribulation will strike before we dock; others say it won't hit until we are safely ashore.

There are those who speak to the captain in a personal language. There are those who think such languages are extinct.

There are those who think the officers should wear robes, there are those who think there should be no officers at all, and there are those who think we are all officers and should all wear robes.

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

And then there is the issue of the weekly meeting at which the captain is thanked and his words are read. All agree on its importance, but few agree on its nature. Some want it loud, others quiet.

Some want ritual, others spontaneity. Some want to celebrate so they can meditate; others meditate so they can celebrate. Some want a meeting for those who've gone overboard. Others want to reach those overboard but without going overboard and neglecting those on board.

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

The consequence is a rocky boat. There is trouble on deck. Fights have broken out. Sailors have refused to speak to each other. There have even been times when one group refused to acknowledge the presence of others on the ship. Most tragically, some adrift at sea have chosen not to board the boat because of the quarreling of the sailors.

"What do we do?" we'd like to ask the captain. "How can there be harmony on the ship?" We don't have to go far to find the answer.

On the last night of his life Jesus prayed a prayer that stands as a citadel for all Christians:

> I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who will believe in me because of their teaching. Father, I pray that they can be one. As you are in me and I am in you, I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world will believe that you sent me. (John 17:20)

How precious are these words. Jesus, knowing the end is near, prays one final time for his followers. Striking, isn't it, that he prayed not for their success, their safety, or their happiness.

He prayed for their unity. He prayed that they would love each other.

As he prayed for them, he also prayed for "those who will believe because of their teaching."

That means us! In his last prayer Jesus prayed that you and I be one.

The Command of Acceptance

Of all the lessons we can draw from this verse, don't miss the most important: Unity matters to God. The Father does not want his kids to squabble. Disunity disturbs him. Why? Because "all people will know that you are my followers if you love each other" (John 13:35). Unity creates belief. How will the world believe that Jesus was sent by God? Not if we agree with each other. Not if we solve every controversy. Not if we are unanimous on each vote. Not if we never make a doctrinal error. But if we love one another....

I've asked that question. I am deeply appreciative of my heritage. It was through a small, West Texas Church of Christ that I came to know the Nazarene, the cross, and the Word. The congregation wasn't large, maybe two hundred on a good Sunday. Most of the families were like mine, blue-collar oil-field workers. But it was a loving church. When our family was sick, the members visited us. When we were absent, they called. And when this prodigal returned, they embraced me.

I deeply appreciate my heritage. But through the years, my faith has been supplemented by people of other groups. I wasn't long on God's ship before I found encouragement in other staterooms.

A Brazilian Pentecostal taught me about prayer. A British Anglican by the name of C. S. Lewis put muscle in my faith. A Southern Baptist helped me understand grace. One Presbyterian, Steve Brown, taught me about God's sovereignty while another, Frederick Buechner, taught me about God's passion. A Catholic, Brennan Manning, convinced me that Jesus is relentlessly tender. I'm a better husband because I read James Dobson and a better preacher because I listened to Chuck Swindoll and Bill Hybels.

And only when I get home will I learn the name of a radio preacher whose message steered me back to Christ. I was a graduate student who'd lost his bearings. Needing some money over Christmas break, I took a job driving an oil-field delivery truck. The radio only picked up one station. A preacher was preaching. On a cold December day in 1978 I heard him describe the cross. I don't know his name. I don't know his heritage. He could have been a Quaker or an angel or both for all I know. But something about what he said caused me to pull the pickup onto the side of the road and rededicate my life to Christ....

Just because a group is distributing toys at Christmas doesn't mean they are Christians. Just because they are feeding the hungry does not mean they are the honored ones of God. Jesus doesn't issue a call for blind tolerance.

> Nor does he endorse blanket rejection. If unanimity of opinion were necessary for fellowship, this would have been a perfect time for Jesus to say so. But he didn't. Jesus didn't hand John a book of regulations by which to measure every candidate. Were such a checklist necessary, this would have been the ideal time to give it. But he didn't....
>
> But there are believers in many different heritages who cast their hope in God's firstborn Son and put their faith in the cross of Christ. If they, like you, are trusting him to carry them to the father's castle, don't you share a common Savior? If their trust, like yours, is in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, aren't you covered with the same grace?
>
> You mean they don't have to be in my group? No.
>
> They don't have to share my background? They don't.
>
> They don't have to see everything the way I do? Does anyone?
>
> What is important is their fruit and their faith. Later, a much more tempered Son of Thunder would reduce it to this. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God has God living inside, and that person lives in God" (I John 4:15).
>
> Ironic. The one who challenged the simple answer of the Master eventually rendered the simplest answer himself. It should be simple. Where there is faith, repentance, and a new birth, there is a Christian. When I meet a man whose faith is in the cross and whose eyes are on the Savior, I meet a brother....
>
> Is God asking us to do anything more than what he has already done? Hasn't he gone a long way in accepting us? If God can tolerate my mistakes, can't I tolerate the mistakes of others? If God allows me, with my foibles and failures, to call him Father, shouldn't I extend the same grace to others? In fact, who can offer grace except those secure in the grip of grace? If God doesn't demand perfection, should I?

From these quotes and others, we see that the liberal view of fellowship promoted by Lucado (and others) and accepted by many in the brotherhood can be sifted down to a few points.

1. Liberalism believes division is to be avoided at all costs, even at the expense of Christ's doctrine.
2. Liberalism holds *fellowship* and *unity* to be more important than doctrine. In his book, *When God Whispers Your Name*, Lucado plainly speaks for liberals everywhere when he writes, "The right heart with the wrong creed is better than the right creed with the wrong heart" (43). There is a third alternative that is biblical but omitted by liberals: the right heart and the right doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-5).

3. Liberalism is quick to point out that religious disunity is widespread, which is true. However, liberalism goes further to argue that since there is so much disagreement over doctrine, uniformity of doctrine is a hopeless goal and efforts to such an end are futile. Did Jesus pray for, and Paul command, that which is impossible (1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:20f)?
4. Liberalism holds that religious harmony can only exist where there is acceptance, or at least tolerance, of contradictory doctrines. It does not allow that there is yet another way to achieve unity: through submission to the authority of God. Note carefully Acts 2:42.
5. By implication, Lucado and liberalism believe that truth cannot be ascertained, and that doctrines are largely matters of opinion. Jesus forever took doctrine out of the realm of opinion when he prayed: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).
6. Liberalism erroneously holds that one who merely claims to follow Jesus is a Christian. In other words, liberalism claims for itself the right to decree who will be God's child without regard to whom the Father claims as His child. Liberalism argues, "If a fellow with a pure heart calls God *Father*, can't I call that same man *Brother*" (Lucado, *God* 54)? Of course, the answer to that is "no." It is only when the **Father** calls that fellow **son** that you are authorized to call him **brother**!
7. Liberalism creates a straw man with which to do battle by asking, "If God doesn't demand perfection, should I?" (Lucado, *Grip*). The truth is that, while none of us is perfect, God does indeed demand that we be faithful and adhere to His doctrine (1 Cor. 4:2; 2 John 9-11). When one refuses to abide in the doctrine set forth by God, he is to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17; 2 The. 3:6).
8. Liberalism *picks and chooses* favorite verses and observes the *passover* on others. For example, Lucado writes, "What is important is their fruit and their faith. Later, a much more tempered Son of Thunder would reduce it to this. 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God has God living inside, and that person lives in God' (I John 4:15)" (*Grip*). Liberalism forgets that it was the same writer (John) in the same epistle who told us how one knows God:

> 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. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6).

Can we meet with liberals to study? Liberalism, while boasting of humility, is not really interested in fair examination for the same reason that denominations refuse fair exchange and debate—it is not helpful to their cause. After all, liberalism and denominationalism suffer when there is a fair presentation of God's truths.

Frank Chesser, in his fine book, *The Spirit Of Liberalism*, has a chapter titled, "Liberalism and Exclusiveness." Chesser accurately presents beautiful, pristine, pure Christianity as a religion of exclusiveness (read the entire book—it will do you good). He was right on target when he wrote:

> The spirit of liberalism detests the spirit of exclusiveness. Liberalism and exclusiveness are as incompatible as light and darkness. Exclusiveness is very restrictive, and liberalism views restrictions with great disdain. Divine exclusiveness confines music in worship to singing. Liberalism abhors that limitation, points to unauthorized playing and shouts, "It's no big deal."
>
> ...Billy Graham is a million miles from "abiding in the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9). And yet, once-faithful brethren have drawn him to their bosoms and are shouting his praises to a lost world. Such is the pernicious spirit of liberalism (202, 204).

COMPROMISING ON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

It is not enough that some brethren have opened wide arms of fellowship to those outside of Christ's body, there are others who cowardly have feet on both sides of the fence. These fickle brethren say they do not believe the doctrines taught by false teachers, but then they fellowship the very same false teachers. Can we spell *compromise*?

Several years ago a brother got very upset with *Contending For The Faith,* more specifically, the journal's editor for rebuking his association with false teacher and apostate Steve Flatt (*Contending For The Faith*, May 1998 and July 1999). This upset brother went on to cry, "Every charge made against me or Mack Lyon...is built off the false notion of guilt by association" (Sanders). This author asked him if he was in fellowship with Flatt and received no answer at first. Thus, this

writer asked again, "Are you in fellowship with Steve Flatt? Yes or No?" His reply was, "Steve Flatt is my brother in the Lord. There are issues between us." I wrote him back:

> Steve Flatt is my brother in the Lord also, and I too would say that there are issues between brother Flatt and myself. Now we've agreed on that, but that doesn't answer the simple question: Brother Sanders, Are you in fellowship with Steve Flatt? Yes or No?

This upset brother replied, "Yes, I am in fellowship with Steve Flatt, but that does not mean I approve of every decision he makes or that I fellowship every person he may fellowship." Frankly, as this scribe studies his Bible and reads the answers by this compromising brother, the two just do not harmonize. Just how is this possible? How do you fellowship one brother but withhold fellowship from those that he fellowships? Such reasoning and defense was not born out of knowledge and respect for heaven's will. The Scriptures are still plain:

> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Do not fellowship false teachers! Do not do it! Yet this brother was mad as the proverbial *ol' wet hen* at being judged guilty by association. He calls such a "false notion." Careful now! John teaches that one is indeed guilty by fellowship (2 John 9ff). You cannot side with truth and error at the same time. You cannot cleanse your hands by saying, "I don't agree with him, but I'm in fellowship with him." It is not as if Steve Flatt's errors were *done in a corner*. Flatt is a public figure with public error, but the point we emphasize just here is that liberalism and its attendant errors should not be given the comfort and consolation of fellowship from brethren who say they do not agree with the apostate's error. The Bible still says the same thing—do not fellowship these messengers of error (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10; Eph. 5:11)!

CAN WE CONTINUE TO FELLOWSHIP APOSTATE CONGREGATIONS?

What about those in liberal, apostate congregations? Can we—should we—continue to fellowship these brethren? It is hard to give up warm, rich friendships with years of memories and history behind them. Still, when it is time to leave a congregation because it has es-

poused error, there simply must be a break in fellowship. It is falling short of the Bible's requirements for members to just talk about the problem. When you say, "I've tried to correct the error. I'm getting nowhere. They've turned deaf ears to truth. I now must leave," there must be accompanying action. You must resolve to break fellowship and then do it!

Not all division is wrong—some is commanded. "For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19—ASV). Brethren that want to do right do not remain forever in an apostate congregation and simply lament the *good old days*. They must boldly break those ties. It does not take an eternity to see the handwriting on the wall. When it is time to leave, it is about time to break fellowship with those who will not. You might try to pull some out of the fire, but if they refuse, fellowship ought to be severed. Do not fellowship the false teacher. Do not fellowship the brethren that uphold the hands of false teachers. If someone does not like this principle of "guilt by fellowship," then that person is at odds with the apostle John and, most importantly, the Lord Himself.

CONCLUSION

In all, then, we have studied the meaning and beauty of Christian fellowship. We have defined and illustrated the extremist mindset called liberalism. Then we have taken a liberal and shown how he teaches error on the New Testament doctrine of fellowship. We have looked at fellowship with an apostate congregation and seen how some, through compromise, hurt the Lord's cause by fellowshipping false teachers (even though the first party might not agree with the false teacher's error). After all is said and done, we will stand before the Great I AM and be judged by His words (John 12:48). In view of Judgment, this scribe does not want to be guilty of withholding fellowship from a single faithful child of God. Neither does he want to be in fellowship with a single person who is not in fellowship with God. The Bible clearly defines who is, and who is not, in fellowship with God. Those that are holding hands with the liberals had better repent.

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LIBERALISM AND WORSHIP

Bobby Liddell

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INTRODUCTION

Why study "Liberalism and Worship"? Gradually, liberalism, working through its *change agenda*, has crept into faithful congregations, many of which were known in the past for their stalwart stand for Truth. It has gained momentum to the extent that hardly any congregation has escaped some influence (or, quite often, interference) from its devilish doctrines. One of the areas which liberalism and its champions specifically and systemically target is corporate worship. Thus, this is a study of an ungodly attack against scriptural worship. The intent of liberalism is to dismantle Christian worship and replace it with worship which God has not authorized and will not accept—but which is pleasing to the ones who are behind this wicked, devious onslaught.

What is *Liberalism*? Merriam-Webster defines it as "a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity." Wikipedia has: "The word 'liberal' derives from the Latin '*liber*' ('free'), and liberals of all stripes tend to view themselves as friends of freedom, particularly freedom from the shackles of tradition." Simply put, liberalism (generally described as a turning to the left), is a departure from Truth in rebellion to orthodoxy and authority, and in favor of personal liberty and choice. Liberalism looses where God has bound, and masks the evil of its soul-stealing with a self-proclaimed "loving, broad-minded tolerance." Liberalism decries "law keeping" as if such were the unpardonable sin, preferring

relationships over requirements, and love over law. Faithful brethren have shown repeatedly that love and law (and law keeping) are **not** mutually exclusive (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; Psa. 119:97). The truth is, one cannot have a right relationship with God and the saved without meeting God's requirements (1 John 1:3-10).

What is worship? *Worship* is obeisance, homage, and respect paid to God. *Worship* means to bow the knee to one who is worthy; to kiss toward. Properly understood, worship involves intent, attitude, action, and offering/sacrifice, all motivated by loving respect for the One worshiped, and guided by obedience to Him. True worshipers give reverence in praise to the true Object of Christian worship—God (Luke 4:8), offering obeisance in spirit (that is, from the heart) and in truth, (that is, according to God's Word) (John 4:24; 17:17). God has determined what He will accept in worship (and surely, as Creator, has the right to do so); He has revealed what He has authorized true worshipers to do, "for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). Thus, worship of God, as shown by the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), the New Testament under which we live (Mat. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:15), involves praise, adoration, bowing before, and honoring the sovereign God of the universe—in accordance with His divinely-given directions.

How does liberalism affect worship? Liberalism condemns true worship; liberalism changes true worship; and, liberalism corrupts true worship.

LIBERALISM CONDEMNS TRUE WORSHIP

One of the most despicable aspects of modern liberalism is the smug arrogance of its adherents who sneer at true worship and mock true worshipers. Liberalism preaches tolerance, acceptance, accommodation, and love, but absolutely cannot tolerate what they, according to their perverted point of view, call *conservatism*, cannot accept what they call *traditionalism*, and, most of all, cannot accommodate what they term *legalism*. (It seems hardly any sin can begin to compare with the grievous, heinous malevolence of *legalism* as liberalism views it.) Loving liberals can love everyone **but** us (which this writer knows from his own numerous encounters with such *love*).

Liberalism will rationalize modern innovations and departures in worship with a glib comment about culture, shifting paradigms, and scholarship; it will wink at those who introduce them, acclaiming such

change agents for their wisdom and courage, while hatefully blasting the faithful who raise opposition, speaking of them as if they were worse than the devil himself. Liberalism seeks to minimize, with a wave of the hand, the plain Bible passages which condemn their changes, touting instead the rights of the worshiper and the appeal of such changes to the non-churched. Liberalism's adherents mock the simple, orderly worship which has characterized faithful brethren since Pentecost (Acts 2). God's Word declares their position before Him: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD" (Pro. 17:15).

Some years ago, Rubel Shelly (one of the leaders of the modern blight of liberalism), along with Randall Harris, wrote *The Second Incarnation*. Note how, in their book, they show their boredom with and spite toward worship in churches of Christ—and how their misguided characterizations and misrepresentations appeal to the carnal, unfaithful, disgruntled, disobedient, and unconverted. "The tired, uninspiring event called worship in our churches must give way to an exhilarating experience of God that simultaneously exhibits and nurtures life in the worshippers" (13). Shelly and Harris quoted A. W. Tozer, who wrote the following:

> For whatever we can say of modern Bible-believing Christians, it can hardly be denied that we are not remarkable for our spirit of worship. The gospel as preached by good men in our times may save souls, but it does not create worshipers (113).

Shelly and Harris wrote:

> Much of what is said is negative and focuses on the disinterest of non-Christians in the corporate event churches call "worship assemblies." Even those who participate in (or, perhaps, merely *attend* these convocations do so with a sense of hesitancy because of what they label the "boring" or "irrelevant" character of what happens in them. Young people sometimes complain about the archaic language and dull music of the church's hymns (114).

Echoing those who err in proclaiming "everything we do is worship," and quoting from the *New International Version* in support of their error, they state:

> Our worship is not confined to a particular time or place.... Thus, Paul can urge his readers to "offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1) (116).

Employing modern denominational slang, they misuse *encounter* (which means, according to Merriam Webster, "a violent clash," or a "meeting...between hostile factions or persons"). "Worship...always has personal encounter with God as its essence" (119).

> Only when an encounter with the Living God is fostered—with whatever "feelings" may accompany that encounter (e.g., celebration, melancholy, tears, laughter, judgment, etc.)—has worship transpired (121).

They introduce the *new tradition* of "creativity arising from the Spirit of God" to replace the *old tradition* which they loathe (not the traditions of men which would be wrong—Mark 7:8, but worship offered according to the apostles' doctrine—Acts 2:42—which they call *tradition*). The *new tradition* is better, by their estimation, because it is *their* tradition (cf. 2 The. 2:15; 3:6; Col. 2:8; Mat. 15:3), and they are sure that, by implementing the *new tradition* (through their superior scholarship and spirituality), they are going to be the very saviors of the church.

> Third, we impoverish our worship by *restricting it with tradition.* The development of traditions is inevitable and even helpful, but they must not be elevated to the status of law. Otherwise they become stifling, close off creativity arising from the Spirit of God, and reduce the worshipping body of Christ to a rigid formality (131).

Rejecting the tested and tried scholarship of faithful men, the obvious intent of the Lord, and the plain, clear passages of Scripture which teach otherwise, Shelly and Harris state, again with an openness "to the invigorating presence of the Spirit's fresh breezes":

> Contemporary as well as traditional music has its place in worship. Individuals, groups, and the entire congregation may offer the music under different circumstances (1 Cor. 14:26). Written prayers as well as extemporaneous ones are appropriate. Silence and hubbub, planned and spontaneous services, children and adults–all have their place. Yet a repressive tradition will likely dictate a narrow range of possibilities and confine worship to a predictable routine. The church must be open to the invigorating presence of the Spirit's fresh breezes through our sometimes stuffy worship experiences (132).

> 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 (135).

Luckily, for us, Shelly and Harris have some *suggestions* about worship.

> While the practical details of implementing a theology of worship must be left to individual fellowships and congregations, we dare to offer a few suggestions about areas crying out for creative and Spirit-guided attention (135).

Paul commands our teaching one another in song: "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). He also commands that each person sings in corporate worship to God, thus, elimination solos and choirs: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).

In spite of these Scriptures, Shelly and Harris say:

> That is, let there be more hymns of praise and prayer addressed directly to God...and fewer designed to encourage believers to do one thing or another.... Whether sung by the entire group or presented by one person or a small group to the larger group, our songs should lift our view above ourselves to God.... Music has the marvelous power to focus a group's confession of faith in a way that a mere recitation never could (136).

On public prayer, Shelly and Harris wrote: "We suggest the writing and reading of more public prayers.... While spontaneous prayer is often appropriate, it is a companion to written prayer rather than a substitute for it" (137). On preaching, they penned: "We encourage the development of more theological preaching" (137). Not surprisingly, they recommend testifying. "With some reservation, we also suggest the use of testimony in the assembly. By the term, we mean the public proclamation of the presence of God in an individual's own life" (138). On structure of worship, Shelly and Harris suggest:

> First, variety.... Many of our worship assemblies are so predictable.... our more accustomed problem has been stagnation (138-139).

> Second, we need to strive for an atmosphere that respects the sensibilities of a wide spectrum of worshipers. There is a place for raucous celebration; there is a place for awestruck contemplation. There is a place for spontaneity; there is a place for carefully planned liturgy.... None of us has a right to dictate how things always must be. We have no right to quench the infinite variety of loving responses to the presence of God. Mutual respect and concern will lead us into unselfish acceptance and praise to God for our brothers' and sisters' offering of praise, even when it is in ways to which we are not personally disposed.

> Third, we plead for the Lord's Supper to be the focal point of the church's corporate worship. The justification for this plea stems from its unique call to the body and blood of Jesus (139).

So, Shelly and Harris offer their prescription for dull, boring worship.

> That we could so spoil worship as to make it dull and boring to ourselves and unattractive to non-Christians is scandalous. We must recapture the spirit of worship and refuse to let it be mere routine (139).
>
> There will be jubilation on occasion—perhaps with applause and cheering.... May God help us to arise above the familiar, comfortable, and routine to worship him in spirit and in truth (140).

Thus, liberalism, represented accurately by Shelly and Harris, condemns Christian worship as most unappealing. According to them, it is tired, uninspiring, dull, boring, predictable, stagnated, repressed, and impoverished by tradition to a narrow range of possibilities, and irrelevant to Christians—and, it is unattractive to non-Christians. Liberalism **condemns** true worship; thus, liberalism **changes** true worship.

LIBERALISM CHANGES TRUE WORSHIP

There is no doubt that liberalism changes worship (see "suggestions" of Shelly and Harris as noted above). History amply demonstrates the changes liberalism has made. This fact engenders two questions. (1) Does worship need changing? (2) What man has the power, or right, to dictate what changes in worship should be made?

To answer the first question: "No, worship does not need changing" if it is worship which is offered as God directs through His Word. If we would be pleasing to God, we must respect what God, in the Bible, teaches, knowing that by His Word (specifically, in this age, the New Testament of Christ), we shall be judged (John 12:48). If the New Testament, under which we live (Mat. 5:17-18; Col. 2:14; John 6:63), is not the Word of God, then it does not matter what we do in worship. We could do anything, or nothing, with impunity—if the Bible is not the inspired Word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:9-13), and if we are not amenable to it.

To answer the second question: "No man has the right or power to change the worship God has decreed." Since the Bible is God's inspired Word, and we are amenable to it, we must study it to know what God said, then believe what God said, do what God said, and refrain from doing either what God has said not to do, or what God has not said

(authorized) to do. To make the above statement concise in regard to our study—we must do, in worship, only what God has authorized.

We must worship God acceptably—and we can (Mat. 4:10; John 4:24). Surely, all agree that God will not accept worship from one who refuses to hear His Word, believe, and obey (Heb. 5:9; Luke 6:46; 2 The. 1:7-9). Nor will God accept worship from one who does not love Him (1 John 5:3; cf. John 14:15), and know Him (1 John 2:3-4). Every accountable person must, if he would offer acceptable worship, act upon faith in Christ (John 8:24; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6), repent of sin (Acts 3:19), confess faith in Christ (Mat. 10:32-33), and be baptized into Christ to obtain remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and be added by God to Christ's church (Acts 2:47), and begin to worship acceptably as God has authorized (Acts 2:42).

The Bible records cases of those who attempted to change God's Word and to change acceptable worship. The first *change agent* was Satan, and modern *change agents* are his offspring (John 8:44). He tried to change what God said by adding *not*, saying to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). He could not, however, change the Truth, or the consequences of disobedience (Gen. 3:14-24). Like him, liberalism changes worship by changing the Word of God. Respect for God's Word will dictate adherence to it; thus, liberalism actually lives through disrespect of God and His Word.

The first to change worship was Cain (Gen. 4). His worship, unlike Abel's, was not offered by faith (Heb. 11:4) and was not accepted.

> And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell (Gen. 4:4-5).

The Hebrews, coming out of Egypt, changed worship—and were punished for doing so with three thousand losing their lives (Exo. 32:20-28). Read what God said about their *new tradition*:

> They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (Exo. 32:8).

Nadab and Abihu changed worship, offering "strange fire" which the Lord "commanded them not," and were consumed by fire from the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2). Note that they did not do what God had said "thou

shalt not" do, but the problem was they did not do what God said "thou shalt" do (cf. Lev. 16:12; Heb. 1:5, 13; 7:14).

Jereboam, son of Nebat, changed worship (1 Kin. 12:16-33), putting golden calves in Dan and Bethel; thus, changing the object and place of worship. He also changed the day of the feast; and, changed the priesthood—according to that "which he had devised of his own heart" (1 Kin. 12:33; cf. 13:34; 15:29-30; Jud. 17).

Like the sinners of old, modern liberals want to change worship to make it like they want/like; to make it more appealing to others; to make it according to their wills instead of God's will. So, they add solos, choirs, instrumental music, performances, testifying, swaying, clapping, cheering, and *such like*. They sing during the Lord's Supper and/or change the day of partaking of the communion. They put women in roles of leadership in worship and take God's Word out of the pulpit, replacing it with story-telling, humor, and doctrines of men.

Liberalism misses the point of worship. Worship is not focused upon man—but God. "Raucous celebration," "spontaneity," and "applause and cheering" are **not** improvements. God has commanded worship that is simple and sincere, reverent, and orderly—and that does not appeal to carnal men-pleasers.

Liberalism condemns true worship and changes it, but, in doing so, liberalism corrupts true worship.

LIBERALISM CORRUPTS TRUE WORSHIP

Since no man has the right to change worship, but liberalism changes worship, these changes result in corruption of worship. Any change man makes from what God has prescribed will **always** be for the worse, and never for the better (cf. Rev. 22:18-19). Liberalism changes the focus of worship from God to man—from participation to performance. Worship, as God commanded, is something one does—not something one watches. Liberalism changes the attitude of worship from spirit to flesh—from an offering directed by the heart to entertainment directed toward the flesh. Liberalism changes the pattern of worship from truth to error—from God's way to man's way. In all this, liberalism seeks to make worship *contemporary*; that is, new and appealing to those who do not want to do what God has commanded, anyway (cf. Luke 6:46).

Man cannot walk in God's way and, at the same time, in his own way (cf. Mat. 6:24). So, the decision comes as to which way man will

go (Mat. 7:13-14). According to the modern-day proponents of liberalism, who are bent on walking the broad way of religious error, the church of Christ is just another denomination. This author denies this charge with every fiber of his being, for he left denominationalism to be added, by the Lord, to the one true church (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18; Acts 2:47): that is, this writer left **a** church of **man** for **the** church of **Christ** (Rom. 16:16). Growing up under the influence of Protestant denominationalism, this penman often heard the arguments for worship based upon what one likes, interprets God's Word to allow, what makes one feel good, what appeals to the masses (more numbers on the board), or what God has not specifically declared "thou shalt not" do.

Liberalism (as espoused by members of the church of Christ) is nothing more than a copycat of twentieth century American Protestant denominationalism (read that Southern Baptist doctrine). Lucado, Shelly, and others have simply embraced Southern Baptist teaching, echo Southern Baptist error, and change worship to the Southern Baptist pattern. Who can deny it?

It is no wonder that liberalism views worship from the perspective of Southern Baptist doctrine and practice (especially as seen in the Community Church movement of our day—for the most part). It parrots their mocking the Lord's body in the same old, tired way. Why? Because, the leading proponents of liberalism have fallen in love with the Southern Baptists, and are bent on rebuilding the church accordingly (cf. Mat. 16:18; 15:13). To prove this point, read carefully the articles which follow.

Craig Bird, in *The Baptist Standard*, wrote under the headline "Even in Churches of Christ, there's no sign of ceasefire in worship wars":

> The raging debate over worship music has surfaced in a most unlikely place—within the Churches of Christ, which bear the historical distinction of shunning all musical instruments in worship.
>
> Over the past two years, at least five major congregations associated with the Churches of Christ have added instruments to some worship services, according to the Christian Chronicle, a 60-year-old Church of Christ newspaper.
>
> The highest-profile case involves Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, a 3,800-member congregation led by pastor and best-selling author Max Lucado.
>
> No one is willing to predict whether these breaks from tradition signal the start of a sweeping change or are "isolated tragedies"—the description favored by Harding University professor Flavil Yeakley.

But they do illustrate the ages-old tension between making the gospel message "user friendly" and defending the purity of "the truth once delivered to the saints."

More than a century ago, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians fought the issue of instrumental worship to a resolution, remodeling their sanctuaries to accommodate organs and pianos.

Since the Jesus Movement of the 1960s, guitars, drums and amplifiers likewise have gained acceptance in many Protestant churches, as Christians adapted musical styles to the marketplace.

The Churches of Christ, claiming about 2 million adherents, is by far the largest fellowship prohibiting man-made instruments. But other smaller groups, such as Primitive Baptists, have resisted as well.

The doctrine is based on the conviction that all congregational practices and structures should meticulously emulate the patterns of the New Testament, which reports nothing of musical instruments in worship.

For the same reason, Churches of Christ shun denominational labels. There is no formal structure or authority to the Churches of Christ beyond the local congregation, and even the capitalized "C" is avoided in the name—Churches of Christ—assigned by religious demographers.

Because of the decentralized nature of the Churches of Christ, there is no way to measure the extent of the pro-instrumental trend.

But the discussion is widespread enough that the issue is being re-examined with an intensity not seen in more than 100 years.

Breaking with tradition

The website for Lucado's Oak Hills Church deals openly with the topic. A cappella singing is still "our primary source" of music at worship assemblies, the website notes, but there are "ample opportunities for instrumental worship as well, such as at our Peak of the Week prayer services."

"The use of instrumental accompaniment is not a doctrinal issue at Oak Hills, but it is part of our religious heritage that we have chosen to preserve," the site notes.

Oak Hills and the Body of Christ at Amarillo South in Amarillo no longer identify themselves as Churches of Christ, according to the Christian Chronicle.

Other Churches of Christ that have added instruments, according to the newspaper, are the Northwest Church of Christ in Seattle, which added a Saturday evening instrumental service; Southlake Church of Christ, in the Dallas-Forth Worth area, which added a Sunday morning instrumental service; and Farmers Branch Church of Christ, also near Dallas, which added a Saturday night instrumental service.

All five report substantial growth in attendance and say the change was driven by the need for evangelism.

Reaching the culture

Indeed, the desire to reach out to a music-saturated culture is at the heart of the debate.

One new Church of Christ, still in its formative stages, recently asked a Baptist music professor to lead the congregation in a Bible study on instrumental worship.

Paul Richardson, professor of music at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., declined to name the church. But the professor said "at least part" of the congregation "was open to examining its traditions in light of biblical and historical scholarship."

Prescribed or permitted

Since the New Testament gives little instruction in worship, Richardson said, the basic theological issue is: "How do we handle what we don't know?"

One extreme position is to do only what is explicitly allowed by Scripture. At the other end is the view that whatever isn't specifically forbidden in the New Testament is permitted—although always with the limitation imposed by other doctrines.

Richardson said most Christians "find our lives, our ethics and our worship in the category of 'adiaphora,'" the Greek term for things neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture, and "about which we must make decisions according to the best light given us."

The absence of instruments in the early church may have been influenced, ironically, by Greek philosophy. The Greeks argued that emotions stirred by music could be dangerous.

In later centuries, Richardson said, instruments became part of the Roman Catholic Church "about the same time as instruments became widely accepted by society at large."

During the Reformation, clear divisions began to emerge. Some groups influenced by Martin Luther retained the instruments.

Those influenced by John Calvin placed strict limits on music in worship. Still others, influenced by Ulrich Zwingli, disallowed music of any sort.

Baptist traditions

Calvin's influence was greatest among Baptists and later the Churches of Christ. He placed three restrictions on music in worship: scriptural songs only (mostly the psalms), human voices only, and unison singing only.

"Most Churches of Christ and Primitive Baptists long ago gave up the restrictions on text and part-singing but cling to the one against instruments," Richardson pointed out.

Baptist groups traveled differing routes. For example, Seventh-day Baptists, strict sabbatarians who know a thing or two about defending a minority position against steep odds, were early promoters of hymn singing, despite criticism from other Baptists.

At various times in Baptist history, instrumental worship was rejected because it was practiced by the Church of England, which persecuted the free-church followers like the Baptists.

Organs often were rejected—and later violins—because they were used to provide worldly entertainment.

All those historical precedents support one of Richardson's theories: "We are all Amish."

"We all have some idealized culture that we find more faithful to the living of the gospel as we understand it," he elaborated.

"That culture is typically one in which we never lived, though we have sought to preserve it in some way to 'protect' the faith."

Yet, he argued, Christian discipleship includes the need "to present the gospel faithfully in the culture in which we live without binding it to the culture."

Keeping theology first

In every area of Christian living, Richardson suggested, there is a need to look at any issue from three approaches—theology, aesthetics and pragmatics. But they should be addressed in that order, he advised, giving theology first priority.

"Much of the debate in the 'worship wars' is the result of starting the discussion with aesthetics or pragmatics instead of theology," he asserted.

"If the New Testament shows us anything, it is that the church organizes itself and carries out its mission in a variety of ways, more or less appropriate to its culture.

"About the only unity that can be found in the churches of the New Testament is the confession 'Jesus is Lord.' And that was plenty to bring them into conflict with their surrounding cultures.

"The New Testament tells us very little about worship," Richardson added, "and what is there is descriptive rather than prescriptive.

"However, it tells us a great deal about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the destination of all things, the Christian life and how we should treat others, both in and out of the faith.

"This should be the way in which the New Testament shapes our practice of worship."

Again, from *The Baptist Standard*, Toby Druin reported an interview with Max Lucado. A portion of that interview follows.

> Max Lucado is minister of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio and is one of the nation's most prolific and popular Christian writers. He is quoted in many Baptist pulpits, and his books, which have won six Gold Medallion Awards, are on the shelves of countless Baptists. Last spring, Dallas Baptist University presented him an honorary doctorate degree....
>
> *Q. Why are you a Church of Christ minister? Tell us about your call to ministry.*
>
> My father was an elder in the Church of Christ when I was growing up in West Texas. That's where I came to faith, to trust Christ. I was about 10. It was a Wednesday night Bible class. There were about four in the class. It was a small church, a sweet group of folks. I was baptized there. I went through prodigal years as a teenager and then to Abilene Christian University, where professors had a profound influence on me.
>
> My faith was not anywhere mature enough then to consider changing churches or looking at different churches. I didn't understand the differences, because as a teenager I didn't pay a lot of attention and didn't grow spiritually. When I went to college and recommitted my life to Christ, some friends asked me if I would like to go to Brazil and spend a summer working there. Then we decided we wanted to be missionaries for five years.
>
> At the time, I wasn't thinking I wanted to preach. But to get into Brazil in those days, the late l970s, you had to have a degree in Bible and experience in a local church. So I stayed at ACU and got a master's degree in Bible and then two years' experience in a church in Florida. That's when I began to be aware of some of the legalisms in the Churches of Christ. I began studying more and reading Scripture and thinking back about what I had been taught.
>
> But on the other hand, I had been part of a church in Abilene that was a progressive, grace-oriented church and wasn't feeling I needed to change churches. It made sense for me to stay as a missionary associated with Churches of Christ. When I came back in 1988, I had an opportunity to join forces with Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago and others. It was a tough decision. Bottom line for me was the church here in San Antonio has blessed and encouraged me to preach whatever is on my heart as long as I can go to the Scriptures and say, "Here is why I believe this." A man gave me counsel and told me, "Stay where you are until you can't go any further." Never has there been a wall here. I have never felt a call to leave the Churches of Christ.

> I don't consider myself a revolutionary; I'm not trying to wake everyone up. But a lot of them have written me off; I don't get a lot of speaking invitations. But I really don't consider myself a Church of Christ minister. I consider myself a minister at Oak Hills, which happens to still call themselves a Church of Christ. But if I should leave Oak Hills, I couldn't see myself going to another Church of Christ. I would go anywhere the Lord sends me. I think I would make a good Baptist.
>
> *Q. What do you say to those who say you sound more like a Baptist than a member of the Church of Christ?*
>
> I say, "Thank you." I really do, because I have benefitted so much from the teachings of Baptists, especially in the area of understanding God's grace. When I was working in the oil fields in West Texas, the truck I was driving had a radio that could only pick up one radio station, and I heard a Baptist preacher present the gospel. He made it sound so sweet and so simple that I pulled over to the side of the road and rededicated my life.
>
> *Q. Your description of baptism has given me a greater appreciation of what baptism means.*
>
> There are those in Churches of Christ who teach baptism is a work necessary for a person to be saved. I certainly do not hold to that, but I think it is something sacred to God and is to be exalted. We teach immediate baptism. Somebody who has accepted Christ can be baptized immediately here, just as the Philippian jailer was in Acts 16. I know many Baptists practice that as well, but I know there are many who disagree with me.

Max Lucado would, by his own admission, "make a good Baptist," and, to those who say he sounds more like a Baptist than a member of the church of Christ, he would say, "Thank you." Should we be surprised he believes and teaches like a Baptist?

Shall we all just become "good Baptists," and worship in vain (Mat. 15:9), to enjoy the approval of men? The church designed by Shelly, Lucado, and those like them will do just that. Liberalism corrupts true worship.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO STOP THE BLIGHT OF LIBERALISM ON WORSHIP?

Christians must **know the Book**. Knowing what is acceptable worship will help us to know what is not. Christians must worship God. Worship is not a time to be pacified or entertained. Let us put aside all that distracts us, and put ourselves into worshiping our God. Christians must worship in spirit, from a heart filled with praise and gratitude, and

ready to offer loving respect to God. Christians must worship in truth, doing what God has prescribed in the way He has decreed.

If we will worship as God intended, we will **put to silence the critics of Christian worship**. However, if our *worship* is a time to sleep, groom ourselves (clip nails, fix hair, etc.), plan meals or ball games, talk, joke, laugh, pass notes, play with children (or let them run wild), daydream, watch others, read other material, or pout because we *have* to assemble, we are aiding liberalism's attack on true worship.

If our singing is half-hearted and pathetically offered; if our prayers are vain repetitions, or unscriptural in content; if our giving is more keeping than giving; if our observance of the Lord's Supper is without proper respect; and, if our Bible study (preaching) is a time we can hardly wait to end—then, we need not be surprised to hear someone criticize our worship. We have opened the door to the devil, and he is ready to enter. In too many congregations, he already has control—and, we are to blame.

CONCLUSION

The blight of liberalism robs men of their souls, turns churches from Truth to error, changes peace to confusion, and corrupts true worship. Thus, the threat of liberalism demands the study given it in this lectureship, and liberalism deserves a speedy death and burial. We must expose liberalism for what it is, mark and avoid its advocates and proponents, and congregations which have embraced it, and not give them space or place to put forth a single word in its defense. Liberalism does not deserve a dime of support, nor does a preacher of this ungodly error.

Let God's faithful determine today to rid the church of every liberal preacher we can. If we cannot save them, let us put them out of the pulpits, cut off their support, and warn other brethren lest they go elsewhere to sow their deadly seed. Let us not invite them to speak, to write in our papers, or to teach in our schools. Let us not send our young people to be warped and twisted by their deceitful ways and words. Let us not allow bad leaven lest it permeate the whole loaf (Gal. 5:9).

When churches select and appoint only scripturally qualified men to the eldership, the result will be the promotion of righteousness and the exposure of wickedness, the uplifting of Truth and the condemnation of error, to the cleansing of the church of every liberal false teacher

from every classroom, pulpit, and eldership. When each local congregation stops liberalism within it, and when the support for liberal preachers, professors, papers, and schools ceases, it will be only a matter of time until the blind enthusiasm for liberalism wanes, flickers, and dies.

"God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

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LIBERALISM AND SINGING

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INTRODUCTION

There is no controversy among God's people, since the beginning of the Restoration Movement, that has been as divisive as the controversy over singing as a part of New Testament worship. From the time, in 1859, when L. L. Pinkerton introduced the melodian in Midway, Kentucky (Choate 21), until Phillip Morrison stood at Freed-Hardeman University on February 11, 2005, affirming that the use of instrumental music in worship is not a "fellowship issue," a great debate has raged over the introduction of mechanical instruments of music into the worship of God. The debate will only become more intense as Leroy Garrett and others intend to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the official division between the Independent Christian Church and churches of Christ with yet another *apology*.

While the most public battles have been waged over the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, the battle over singing has not been fought only on this front. Local churches have recently battled over the use of choirs, praise teams, singing during the Lord's Supper, praise and/or *camp* songs in worship and probably a host of other issues. It will be the purpose of this chapter to notice these controversies as well as to provide a Biblical answer to the arguments that liberals have advanced.

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT HAS TO SAY ABOUT WORSHIP GENERALLY AND SINGING IN PARTICULAR

From the time of the first family on earth, man has known that God has desired worship. Both Cain and Abel made offerings in their worship to God (Gen. 4:3-4). God accepted the offering of Abel (Gen. 4:4), but He rejected Cain and his worship (Gen. 4:5). So immediately the Bible reader is confronted with the fact that there is a right way and a wrong way to worship God. In the New Testament we learn that it was obedience to the command of God that made the difference. Abel made his offering by faith (Heb. 11:4). We know that faith comes "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Taking all of these passages together makes it clear that for our worship to be acceptable to God, it must be based on a "thus saith the Lord."

In the New Testament, the classic discussion on worship took place between Jesus and an unnamed Samaritan woman whom He met at Jacob's well (John 4:4-30). The woman had a question concerning the place where worship was to be offered to God. The Samaritans had a temple on Mount Gerizim, and the Jewish temple was located in Jerusalem (John 4:20). The controversy concerning the right place for the temple had raged for centuries. Jesus decided to tell her of the coming Christian dispensation when worship would not be centered in one place or the other (John 4:21). Jesus revealed the truth concerning New Testament worship when He said: "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

There are three important truths concerning worship in the above text. First, God is to be the object of our worship. We are to serve our fellow man, but only Deity is worthy of our worship. Second, worship is to be offered with the proper spirit or attitude. Third, worship is to be offered according to Truth. When coupled with John 17:17, which teaches that the Word of God is truth, it is easy to see that worship must be offered according to that which is commanded in the Word of God.

If God was an idol and not a living being, He could not speak (Jer. 10:5). If God could not talk, we would have to guess how He was to be worshiped. If such were the case, then we would offer to God the kind of worship that we want to offer Him. However, since such is not the case, we have to go to the Bible (which is His message to mankind) to see what kind of worship God wants His children to offer to Him.

God has not left man to guess what kind of worship He wants man to offer to Him. Everything we do in religion, whether in word

(preaching) or deed (practice), must be done in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17). When one does something in the name of the Lord, it means that he is acting by His authority. When the Sadducees asked Peter and John: "By what name, have ye done this?" (Acts 4:7), they wanted to know whose authority they had to preach in the temple area. The chief priests and elders had asked Jesus the same question after He had cleansed the temple of the moneychangers (Mat. 21:12-13). They wanted to know "By what authority doest thou these things?" (Mat. 21:23).

If Jesus had been a modern-day liberal, He would have disputed their premise that man needs authority for what he does in religion. He might have replied, "Well, just what do you mean by that kind of question, you legalists? God did not tell me not to cleanse the temple." Instead, His reply does not deny that He must have authority to cleanse the temple. He implicitly affirms that John's baptism had to be authorized by God, or John (as well as all who submitted) were acting sinfully (Mat. 21:24-25a). They decided that since they were not able to answer His question without getting themselves into trouble, they would not do so (Mat. 21:25b-27a). Likewise, though Jesus had authority from God to act as He had, He refused to answer their hypocritical question (Mat. 21:27b).

So our worship must be authorized by heaven to be pleasing to God. This brings us to the question: "What kind of music is authorized by God to be offered to Him in worship?" First, let us eliminate the Old Testament as the source for learning what to do in the worship of God in the Christian age. We do so because it is the "New Testament" that "giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). By way of contrast, the Old Testament was intended from its beginning "to be done away" (3:7) and now "is done away" (3:11). This means that the Old Testament law "is abolished" (3:13). Just as one today would go to the Old Testament to answer the question: "What kind of sacrifice does God want today?" we should not go tho the Old Testament to ask the question: "What kind of music does God want today?" These two parts of worship are now regulated by New Testament teaching rather than by Old Testament teaching. The Old Testament is still for our learning (Rom. 15:4), but it is no longer in effect. If we seek to be justified today by obeying the Old Testament, we are "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

Let us begin by listing all of the New Testament passages that have some bearing on what kind of music God desires to be a part of the

worship of the church, and then draw some conclusions from these verses. On the night of Jesus' arrest, He taught His apostles the significance of the Lord's Supper and that its importance in the kingdom. We then read:

> And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Mat. 26:30).

After Paul and Silas were thrown into jail for preaching in Philippi, the Bible says:

> And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

As Paul is making the point that the Gentiles were always intended to be part of the new covenant, he quotes an Old Testament prophecy (found in Psalm 18:49) which would find its fulfillment in the church. Paul wrote:

> For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:9).

As Paul is critiquing the out-of-control worship that was taking place in Corinth, he told them how he worshiped God when he wrote:

> I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also (1 Cor. 14:15).

Paul was in the process of telling the church at Ephesus the consequences of being "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). In the midst of this discussion he issued a command that they would be

> Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

In the twin epistle to Ephesians, Colossians, Paul told the church:

> 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).

To prove his assertion that all Christians are brethren with Jesus (Heb. 2:11), Paul cites an Old Testament Messianic prophecy, Psalm 22:22. In this passage David wrote:

> I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee (Heb. 2:12).

The final passage concerning music in the New Testament is found in the writings of James, the Lord's brother. James wrote:

> Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms (Jam. 5:13).

From these passages, we can learn much about the kind of music that God desires in worship. First, singing is to be a part of the worship of the church (Heb. 2:12). This would include not just Jews but also Gentiles (Rom. 15:9). Second, worship involves people speaking to themselves (Eph. 5:19). The verb used here, *heautois*, is a reciprocal reflexive pronoun. Thayer defines it: "reciprocally, mutually, to one another" (163). These passages taken together authorize congregational singing. This singing is primarily to God (Acts 16:25) and secondarily to each other (Eph. 5:19). In so doing we are to teach and admonish "one another" (Col. 3:16). This singing is to be done "with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15) as is all worship (John 4:24). Singing is also to be done "with the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15). This eliminates the use of unintelligible sounds such as humming, oohhhing, or ahhhhhing as part of our worship. The content of our singing is to be made up of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). These terms are not easily defined, but they clearly do not include some songs that are sung in school assemblies such as patriotic songs. These songs have their place, but not in worship. When we sing psalms, they should come from a heart overflowing with joy (Jam. 5:13).

As one examines the passages that discuss singing as part of New Testament worship, some things are clearly absent. There are no passages that explicitly or implicitly authorize the use of a mechanical instrument of music in the worship to God. First, there is a specific kind of music named—singing. Just as surely as Moses being told to make the ark of gopher wood eliminated any other kind of wood (Gen. 6:14), so the authority of God behind singing, coupled with any authority for any other kind of music, eliminates any other kind of music. As the Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said while commenting on 1 Corinthians 14:15: "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery" (qtd. in Wallace 496). Second, there are passages that authorize congregational singing, yet there are no passages that authorize choruses, choirs, and quartets in the worship of the New Testament church. God's plan for worship is easy to follow, unless men try to tamper with it.

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CONTROVERSY

That the early church did not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship is so well established, it is almost axiomatic. There are

three basic lines of evidence that establish this contention. First, the New Testament did not mention the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. This has already been demonstrated in the previous discussion. Second, the early Christian writers very plainly stated that the early church did not use mechanical instruments of music in worship.

Third, those who have studied what is called the patristic period, have concluded that the early church did not use mechanical instruments of music in worship. There is no evidence pointing to their use. *A capella* comes into English from Italian based on a Latin origin and means literally "in the style of the church." As the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* summarizes, "The rejection of all musical instruments from Christian worship is consistent among the fathers" (Weakland 106).[1]

As far as can be documented, the Roman Catholic church introduced mechanical instruments of music into their worship, after the predicted apostasy from the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3) was in full bloom. The use of instrumental music in worship to God was introduced around the time of Pope Vitalian I in about A.D. 670.

This is readily admitted by the most respected professors of music around the world. These men are not trying to argue for one kind of worship in the church or another. They are simply giving us the results of their many years of study of the history of music. For example, of the world's foremost authorities on the use of instrumental music was a Columbia profession named Curt Sachs (1881-1959). So well respected was he that the American Musical Instrument Society still gives away the Curt Sachs award to the person who contributed most to the field that he pioneered, organology.[2] He has plainly written, "All ancient Christian music was vocal" (qtd. in Baxter 11). Frederic Ritter was a professor of music at Vassar. He was one of the foremost nineteenth century professors of the history of music. After his study, he concluded: "We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregations. It was, however, purely vocal" (Ritter 28). Emil Naumann (1827-1888), who was a professor of music at Oxford University, wrote, "There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of a vocal nature (177). Finally, in a more recent work, the music historian Hannick wrote: "The religion of Classical Greece and the Jewish temple liturgy both

used musical instruments extensively, as literary descriptions and artistic representations show. By contrast, early Christian music excluded them completely. There is much evidence for this prohibition" (368).

The first mention by Alexander Campbell of the already brewing controversy over instrumental music was in 1851. John Rogers had read an article in a paper called the *Ecclesiastical Reformer*, edited by Carroll Kendrick, advocating the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship and he wrote to Campbell wanting to know his views on the question. Campbell's famous response was:

> That all persons who have no spiritual discernment, taste or relish for spiritual meditations, consolations and sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aid is but natural. Pure water from the flinty rock has no attraction for the mere toper or wine-bibber. A little alcohol, or genuine Cognac brandy, or good old Madeira is essential to the beverage to make it truly refreshing. So to those who have no real devotion or spirituality in them, and whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I think that instrumental music would be not only a desideratum, but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But I presume to all spiritually minded Christians, such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert (581).

It would not be long before the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship was becoming a bone of contention. By 1860, L. L. Pinkerton had introduced the melodian into the worship of the church at Midway Kentucky. According to West, he wrote of this action:

> So far as is known to me, I presume to you, I am the only preacher in Kentucky of our brotherhood who has publicly advocated the propriety of employing instrumental music...and that the Church of God in Midway, Kentucky is the only church that has made a decided effort to introduce it (61).

West goes on to point out:

> However, Pinkerton was not entirely correct as it had been introduced at the Sixth Street church in Cincinnati where D. S. Burnett preached, as early as 1855 (61).

This introduction of mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church caused great division in the Lord's body. By 1906 the Census Bureau had recognized that the churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Church were no longer one, but two distinct bodies. The story of this division has been told so well by J. E. Choate and William Woodson in *Sounding Brass and Clanging Cymbals*, that

the author sees no need to retell that story except to point the reader to this excellent book.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC ANSWERED

The arguments that have been advanced in favor of the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church are numerous and varied. It will not be the intent of this study to answer all of them. This has been done very ably in debates held both in the present and the past. For a book that is exhaustive in its refutation of all of the arguments that have been advanced, the reader is pointed to James D. Bales, *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship*, which has recently been republished by Eddie Cloer.

The liberals have, for the most part, given up on all of the arguments that have been advanced in favor of instrumental music but three, the *psallo* argument, the "we do not need authority for what we do in worship argument," and the "you must fellowship those who use instrumental music or you have divided the church argument." These arguments are neither new nor true, as shall be demonstrated.

One argument that refuses to go away is the *psallo* argument. The argument is that the Greek word *psallo*, translated "making melody" in Ephesians 5:19, demands the use of instrumental music. So far as this author has been able to discover, this argument was first advanced by J. Caroll Stark. He wrote in March of 1875:

> Melody comes from *psallontes*, and this from *psallo*, a word which means to cause the heart strings to vibrate with music to God.... The word psalm has an instrument in it as certain as the *baptizo* immersion in it and therefore, the command to sing psalms in the church is a command positive to have instrumental music in the church (66).

In answer to this contention, if *psallo* includes the instrument as well as *baptizo* includes immersion, the playing of the instrument in worship is not a matter of option, but of obligation. Second, if *psallo* implies an instrument, the instrument would be named. If we did not see the early church baptizing in water, we might think that it would be just as permissible to immerse in buttermilk. Likewise, if there is an instrument inherent in *psallo*, it is named in the text. Stark himself noted this when he wrote that *psallo* is "a word which means to cause the heart strings to vibrate with music to God." Note it is the heart that is the instrument to praise God—not the organ, melodian, or piano.

By 1911 the time had come for someone to step up to the plate and plainly refute the *psallo* argument, as it seemed to be gaining popularity. M. C. Kurfees did so in his monumental work, *Instrumental Music in the Worship*. In this book, Kurfees successfully answers the idea that "the use of a musical instrument *inheres* in the word" *psallo*. He did so "with a simple statement of incontestable facts" (64). This critique was so telling that the Christian church people had to make a response. They did so nine years later through O. E. Payne's book, *Instrumental Music in Worship*.

After Payne's book, those who favored the instrument thought that they had won the argument. They were so confident in their position that they began to call for another debate on the subject, if anyone on the other side of the issue dared to stand up and be counted. They were so confident that one cannot read their challenges without thinking of Goliath, the giant who by use of taunts called God's people to have a man to represent them. By 1923, the debate was agreed to and it was supposed to be the utter defeat of those who opposed instrumental music in worship. Ira Boswell and N. B. Hardeman met on the polemic platform in Nashville, Tennessee, from May 31 to June 5, 1923. Boswell was prepared to stake his case on *psallo*; as he said in his first speech, *psallo* "is the word about which this discussion, if it comes to a discussion concerning a word, about which this discussion must be" (Boswell 30). He went on to say that they had proof of his proposition and the "proof that I desire to present to you tonight is the primary meaning of the word 'psallo'" (Boswell 30). However, Boswell had already made his fatal mistake. He had already said: "the position which I occupy, the position which I am endeavoring to sustain, 'To sing with or without the instrument is scriptural'" (Boswell 29).

The debate was lost for Boswell as soon as Hardeman asked his first question of Boswell. Hardeman asked: "Can Eph, 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15; Rom. 15:9, and James 5:13 be obeyed and complied with without the use of the instrument?" (Hardeman 38). In his second speech, Boswell did not even attempt to answer this question. This caused Hardeman to arise for his second speech and observe that "if the word [*psallo*—JM] means that [to play an instrument—JM] and you cannot obey God without doing that, how can a man say that I can worship either with or without the instrument?" (Hardeman 57). The point was so telling that Boswell tried to call a point of order on Hardeman's argument. Later, in his third speech Boswell tried to answer the question by saying that

psallo means "to play with or without the instrument" (Boswell 71). Finally, Hardeman delivered the death blow when he admitted that the instrument was required by *psallo* but that the instrument was named—"the human heart" (Hardeman 77-80). From this point forward, it was clear that Boswell's argument had been devastated.

The Christian church really has never recovered from the force of Hardeman's argument in the Hardeman-Boswell debate. They quickly abandoned the *psallo* argument. They began to search for new quibbles to use in arguments over the issue. However, the liberals in churches of Christ have yet to realize what the Christian church figured out in 1923—the *psallo* argument is a dead end. As recently as 1991, two liberal brethren, Bill Swetmon and Larry James, arose and argued that the idea that the use of a mechanical instrument of music does not inhere in *psallo* "is not even a reasonable hypothesis" (Swetmon 27). First, Lipe pointed out in a chart that Swetmon, like Boswell, cannot decide whether or not he wanted to make playing an instrument in worship a matter of faith or opinion. When he argues that *psallo* means to play, he is forced onto the horns of this dilemma (Lipe 53). The most amazing thing about this argument is that Swetmon is no more prepared to answer it than Boswell was in 1923. You would think that in 68 years, they would have been able to formulate an answer to this question, but such is not the case. Second, Lipe answers Swetmon's argument with a series of charts in which he shows that Swetmon is selectively quoting his Greek Lexical authorities. If Swetmon would only keep quoting, he would find statements in the very authorities that he cites that say things like, the following from Abbot and Smith, that *psallo* "in NT, **to sing a hymn, sing praise**" (Lipe 55—emphasis his).

There are two additional arguments, against the liberal's understanding of *psallo*, which this author wants to advance for your consideration. First, *psallo* is not only used in the New Testament in Ephesians 5:19, it is also used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:15, where he wrote: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Twice the KJV translates *psallo* as "I will sing." What if we took the definition that Swetmon wants to place on this word. This would have Paul say: "I will play a mechanical instrument of music with the spirit, and I will play a mechanical instrument of music with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15—Payneful version). How does one play a musical instrument with or without understanding? This seems to make this passage nonsensical. Second, in Romans 15:9, Paul quotes an Old

Testament prophecy that reads: "For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." This understanding would have the proper translation of Paul's words as: "For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and play mechanical instruments of music unto thy name" (Rom. 15:9—Payneful version). Since the first-century, New Testament church did not use instrumental music in its worship, Paul is quoting an Old Testament prophecy that had not yet been fulfilled, while contextually claiming that it had been fulfilled. There is no way that liberals can sustain their assertion that *psallo* authorizes the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship.

The second argument that liberals use today to argue that the use of mechanical instruments of music is authorized is the old argument that says we do not need authority for what we do in religion. This argument was answered by Alan Highers in his debate with Given Blakely in 1988. Highers used passages like Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 2 John 9, et. al., to establish his case that worship is regulated (Highers 69). He even took some rosary beads to the pulpit to make his case that, if everything not specifically prohibited by the Bible is allowed, there is no stopping place (Highers 145).

Even though Highers ably destroyed the position that whatever is not expressly forbidden in Scripture is allowed and its related idea that we do not need authority for what we practice in religion, it continues to be used by liberals. In the recent discussion at Freed-Hardeman Uuniverisy over instrumental music, Phillip Morrison said:

> It's disingenuous [hypocritical—Kenyon] to stand in a church building not authorized by Scripture, behind a podium not authorized by Scripture, to use a microphone not authorized by Scripture, to use a hymn book not authorized by Scripture, to use a tuning fork not authorized by Scripture, and argue that you can't use a piano because it's not authorized by Scripture (qtd. in Kenyon).

All of these items are matter of expediency and are therefore authorized. We are commanded to assemble (Heb. 10:25), and you cannot assemble without having a place to assemble. Brethren have usually chosen to use church buildings to expedite the command to assemble. The podium is used to hold a Bible and other notes. When the preacher is told to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), he often uses a podium, or some other means of holding the Word so he can preach it.

Microphones, hymn books, and tuning forks are used to expedite the command to sing (Eph. 5:19).

The parallel can be seen in the building of the ark. Noah was told to make an ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). He might have used a hammer and saw to expedite the carrying out of that command. When he finished with his hammer and saw, he still would have only built an ark of gopher wood. If he had chosen to use another type of wood—other than gopher wood—he would have violated God's command. Likewise, when God instructed us to sing, we may use a microphone, hymn book, or tuning fork to carry out the command to sing. However, if we add playing a mechanical instrument of music to the worship, we have violated God's command just as surely as if Noah had changed the type of wood that he was to use in building the ark.

The final argument that has been used in favor of the use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship is the argument that those who oppose such are being divisive. As Morrison said, "We cannot afford further fractioning of Christianity" (qtd. in Kenyon). It is obvious by this statement that he cannot see the difference between pure New Testament Christianity and denominationalism. Then he went on to say:

> I'm afraid that the unity plea championed by people like Stone and Campbell has little credibility these days, seeing that their followers have fractured into at least twenty-four different, definable groups (qtd. in Kenyon).

This begs the question: Who caused the division over the instrument? All the way back to the beginnings of this division, men pleaded with those who loved their organs to love the church for which the Lord died more. Those who cause division contrary to the doctrine are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17). Since the use of the mechanical instruments of music in worship is not authorized in the doctrine of Christ, those who introduced it are guilty of dividing the Lord's body. We stand with H. Leo Boles who said at the unity meeting: the Christian church knows how fellowship can be restored again: return to worship the way it was practiced before the division took place.

OTHER LIBERAL INNOVATIONS REGARDING SINGING

It seems that the simple first century worship pattern will never do for liberals. They have decided that the church will not grow unless we are willing to change. One of the main areas where they believe there is a need for change is in the singing of the church. For example, they

desire to have choirs take part in our worship. As Rubel Shelly has written: "Individuals, groups, and the entire congregation may offer music under different circumstances" (Shelly 132). Of course this is very different from what God has spoken on this matter. Paul wrote that all members ("every one of you") are to sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It may be true that singling out a few people who are talented singers and allowing them to sing might sound better ascetically, but God is concerned with the melody made in the heart—not how the congregation sounds to the ears of man.

Another modern innovation has been the so-called praise team leading the church in worship. What this amounts to is that there are four people, two men and two women who are handed microphones so they may lead the singing. They argue that since you have four part harmony, it makes sense to have a leader for each of the four parts. Since there are normally some men sing the soprano and a few others sing the alto parts, this amounts to women leading over men in the worship of the church. These four people then usually drown out the rest of the congregation and become not simply four song leaders but a defacto quartet. The praise team seems to be a poor substitute for small groups singing where too much opposition has caused the change agent to take one step backwards before he can take two steps forward.

An older innovation that is still practiced in some churches of Christ is singing during the Lord's Supper. The first argument that comes to mind in opposition to this practice is a simple reading of 1 Corinthians 11. If one strives to keep his mind focused on all the aspects of the Lord's Supper which Paul mentions here, there is no way that one can add singing to this item of worship. Besides, this writer's mother taught him not to talk with food in his mouth. How can one partake of the bread—which represents the body of the Lord—while at the same time singing? How can one drink of the cup that represents the blood of the Lord while at the same time singing? Additionally, there is no new Testament authority for singing during the Lord's Supper. After the Lord instituted the Supper, the apostles "sung an hymn" (Mat. 26:30), not while they were partaking of it.

CONCLUSION

Man's worship of God is of the upmost importance. We "must worship God in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). This is a matter of obligation not a matter of option. Seeing the importance of singing as

part of New Testament worship, Satan has seen fit to attack the Lord's body through corrupting its singing. For many years he has used liberals to attempt to do so. There is no question that this assault on pure New Testament worship will continue. The only question is: "What will liberals think of next?" When a man refuses to be directed by the Bible in his worship, there is no stopping place for innovations. If we stick to the Bible, looking for a "thus saith the Lord" for what we practice in worship, God will be pleased. If we are ready to try every new kind of strange fire that liberals offer us, we are liable to get burned (cf. Lev. 10:1-2).

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ENDNOTE

[1]For proof of this contention see the vast array of citations compiled by Everett Ferguson in *Early Christians Speak*, Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1971, 149-165.

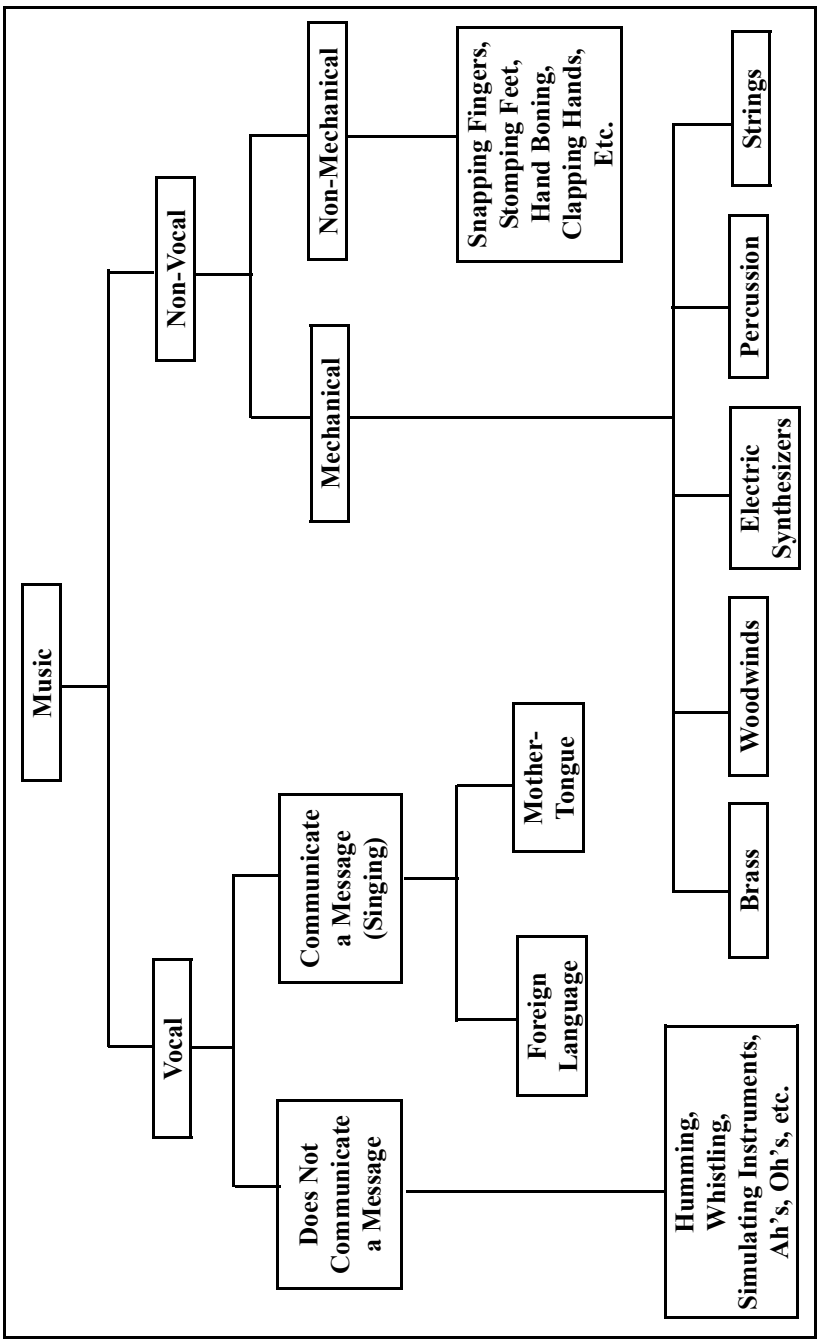
[2] See Sachs, Curt. "The American Musical Instrument Society." 19 Apr. 2005 <http://www.amis.org/awards/sachs.htm>.

ADDENDUM

Editor

The chart on the following page aptly shows exactly what God has authorized and what God has not authorized (thus an innovation of man) regarding the type of music He desires. When one studies the passages in the New Testament dealing with the subject of singing (see them listed in this chapter), he finds that God has authorized a specific type of music—singing. The kind of music that communicates a message (singing) is the only thing which meets the conditions of "speaking" (Eph. 5:19) and "teaching and admonishing" (Col. 3:16). This clearly shows that mechanical instrumental music, clapping of hands or snapping fingers, humming or whistling, or the simulating of mechanical instruments of music with the voice are all man-made innovations.

The only thing the editor might add to this chart is would be under both "mother tongue" or "foreign language" is that it could be done either by a choir, congregationally, or individually. One has authority to sing when he is by himself (Jam. 5:13). In the worship of the church there is authority for congregational singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), but there is no authority for a choir (chorus) in the worship of the church.


Music
Vocal
Non-Vocal
Does Not Communicate a Message
Communicate a Message (Singing)
Mechanical
Non-Mechanical
Humming, Whistling, Simulating Instruments, Ah's, Oh's, etc.
Foreign Language
Mother-Tongue
Brass
Woodwinds
Electric Synthesizers
Percussion
Strings
Snapping Fingers, Stomping Feet, Hand Boning, Clapping Hands, Etc.

LIBERALISM AND PREACHING

Eddy Craft

Eddy Craft was born in Signal Mountain, Tennessee and graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1972. He has a weekly television program, *Biblical Viewpoints*, which is seen in Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and Jackson, Mississippi. He also is involved with a weekly radio program, *Arise To Truth*. He speaks on several lectureships and gospel meetings each year. Eddy has done local work in Saltville, Virginia; Rogersville, Tennessee; Abingdon and Luray, Virginia; he has been working with the church of Christ in Elizabethton, Tennessee, for the past twenty-three years.

Eddy is married to Betty (Cook), and they have three children, four grandchildren.

Liberalism is one of the of the most dangerous attacks on the Lord's church today. Liberalism has made its ugly inroads into the church, and we are suffering because of it!

Liberalism in the church is not something new. The first century church was not immune to the problem of liberalism.

> For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (2 Pet. 2:18-19).

Peter tells us that these brethren were being granted liberty by those that did not have the right to grant them that liberty. The liberal's agenda is to free themselves from all bondage and to grant that liberty to others. Liberalism is nothing more than a flat denial of Bible authority.

Brother Curtis Cates made a very accurate statement as to what liberalism is:

> Liberalism is an **enemy** of the light of God's Word, the absolute and knowable Truth (2 Tim. 3:14-17). One must speak the Truth (1 Pet. 4:11), obey the Truth (John 8:32), and persist in Truth (John 8:31). Liberalism belittles the authority of Christ (Mat. 28:18), elevates the groundless opinions of men above the precepts of God (Mat. 15:9), and preaches that Christians are scattered throughout the denomina-

> tions (Mat. 15:13), deprecating to meaninglessness the exclusive church for which Christ died and in which is every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3), including our salvation and our hope (19).

Liberals in the church contradict and deny Bible authority. The Word of God is clear when it comes to the way we are to handle the precious Book Divine. Let us notice together a few of the verses along this line.

> Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you (Deu. 4:2).
>
> Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Pro 30:6).
>
> 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).

While we know that the liberal hates this approach, it is nonetheless biblical and may God help us never to run away from it. It is the purpose of liberalism, anti-ism, and radicalism of any sort to lead away from the authority of God's Word.

We see the awful effects of liberalism in many areas. We see both scholastic and social liberalism. When you think about how it has affected our schools and society, it is no wonder the church of Christ has a problem with this hideous sin.

We must recognize that we are under the complete authority of Christ. Brent Smith makes an excellent point here.

> Authority from *exousia* is defined as the right to control or command, absolute power, warrant. Who has the supreme right to command the world? Jesus has the right and does command today through his word, the Bible. Jesus himself said, "All power [authority—ASV] is given unto me" (Mat. 28:18). God the Father has placed all things in subjection to Christ (Eph. 1:21). Even now, Jesus is at the right hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3:22). In the judgment man will be judged by the words of Jesus (Jno. 12:48). Jesus revealed his will to the apostles and prophets, authors of the New Testament, via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (332).

Brother Thomas B. Warren gives us a very workable definition of *liberalism*:

> Liberalism, in the sense in which we are using the term here, can take either one of two forms: (1) it can hold that no one is under obligation to have Biblical authority for what he does in religion or (2) it can take the form of holding that while one must, to be pleasing to God, have Biblical authority for what he does in religion, one may hold that some belief/practice is authorized by the Bible when such is not actually the case (66-67).

For our use in this lesson, liberalism is one upholding and/or practicing that which the Bible does not authorize.

For the remainder of our lesson consider Jeremiah 23. What a great book Jeremiah is when it comes to the kind of preaching in which we should engage. It also gives us great insight as to what liberal thinking can do to a people.

Liberal preaching affects the attitude of pastors. When the pastors become liberal in their thinking, the people of God are headed for trouble.

> Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD (Jer. 23:1-2).

When liberal preaching takes place among the children of God, unity is destroyed and the people of God suffer because of it. Unity is such an important part of the plan of God that it is no wonder that Satan wants to take it away. When shepherds ensure that sound preaching takes place, they will combat liberal thinking, save the flock, and promote the unity that is taught in the Word of God.

The pastors who would not listen to the kind of preaching that Jeremiah was doing are going to give an account for their actions. Jeremiah makes it very clear throughout his entire letter that those who violate the teachings of the Word of God will not get away with it.

> And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth (Jer. 23:4-5).

Liberal preaching will lead to the executing of God's judgment and justice in the earth, and when that happens, people will wish they had listened to the Word of the Lord!

A second thing that liberal preaching did was that it not only **corrupted** the pastors but also **the prophets**.

> Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force *is* not right (Jer. 23:9-10).

Here we see the evil affects of liberal preaching. It dulled the senses toward a proper standard. When the Word of God is forsaken, anything goes. The Word of God was replaced with adultery and immorality.

What was going on was not hidden from God. He was well aware of the events of the day and He would deal with it in His own way.

> Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery *ways* in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, *even* the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. **And I have seen** folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err (Jer. 23:12-13).

Liberal preaching seems to bring comfort, but as Jeremiah shows, the way they were traveling was like walking on ice in the darkness of night. God saw the folly in preaching liberalism.

In the third place, the **priests were also affected** by the preaching of liberalism. We are seeing the corruption of God's people from the top down. "For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD" (Jer. 23:11). This is not the first time that Jeremiah has connected the **prophet** and **priest** together with liberalism.

> A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? (Jer. 5:30-31).

We are able to see from the preceding what happens to God's house when liberal preaching takes place. Liberalism will remove God from His own house. This was done in the first century by the church of the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:20). God was knocking at the door of the church where the people had put Him out. Have we removed God from His house today? What the prophets and priests were doing is seen clearly from the writings of Jeremiah.

> The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the

> prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit (Jer. 2:8).

There is no doubt about it. The attitude of liberalism was running rampant in Jeremiah's day.

In the fourth place, we see the **people of God were affected** by the blight of liberalism. The effect that liberalism has on the people of God may be the saddest part of all. "And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err" (Jer. 23:13). When the Word of the Lord is exchanged for liberalism, there is no doubt that the people of God will err. Liberalism will cause people to walk in lies. It will also cause the hands of evildoers to be strengthened. This makes it difficult to be brought back to repentance. The people of God become as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

> I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah (Jer. 23:14).

As a result of this liberalism, profaneness went forth into the land. It is also of interest that the hands of evildoers are strengthened by the attitude of liberalism. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). Notice how they had pleasure in them that do them. They strengthened the hands of the wicked. The people's posterity would also be affected by liberalism. All throughout we can see the importance of teaching our children truth. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deu. 6:7). The liberalism that Israel's children was being taught would affect them for a long time and cost some their souls.

Their worship and service was vain, because they followed the false teacher's message rather than following God's commands.

> Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: **they make you vain**: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD (Jer. 23:16).

Our Lord and Savior made it very clear that, if one practiced for doctrine the commandments of men, their worship would be vain. "How-

beit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). Jeremiah said that they speak a vision of their own hearts. This sounds much like some of the so-called *preaching* that we are hearing today. They talk about the Lord laying a message on their heart on the way to church or to the radio station. Usually they all say the same thing: "Send me your money." Visions and dreams were sometimes allowed by our God to test the people to see if they really loved Him.

> If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him (Deu. 13:1-4).

These visions and prophecies came true, but their message would turn man from God to serve idols.

> Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 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. 23:27-28).

If an angel from heaven appears to you and tells you to do something the Word of God does not authorize, you must obey God.

> 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. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

The truth is, the Word of God laid down beside these dreams would expose them for what they are. When one has the truth, he does not have to fear error; truth will always prevail.

> *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour (Jer. 23:29-30).

The truth will stand when the world is on fire.

In the fifth place, we see **false peace being offered**. This is what liberalism does!

> They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you (Jer. 23:17).

This is not the first time, and neither will it be the last, that liberalism will offer a false sense of safety. Micah talks about the same false safety that was being offered.

> The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is* not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us (Mic. 3:11).

Jeremiah had warned earlier: "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace" (Jer. 8:11). Liberalism offers so-called peace, but the truth is—it will destroy you. "Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him" (Mic. 3:5). False teaching is making war against our God, and we must stand against it with every ounce of our being. This passage shows the deceptive nature of the Devil and his ministers. Jesus warned of his deceptive nature: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat. 7:15). The devil is the master deceiver. His ministers are following the same path of deception.

> For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Satan and his ministers look innocent, yet their message is deadly! We hear ministers today talking about "once saved always saved" or "there is nothing you can do to be saved." All this sounds good, and yet it is just a false sense of security. The liberalism of Jeremiah's day was no different than today. We must have a love for the truth to look behind all the hoopla and follow the Word of God. Those who do not have this kind of love will fall prey to the devil and his devices.

> And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be

> saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 The. 2:10-12).

These false prophets were telling the people that as long as they listened to them, no evil would come upon them.

In the sixth place, we see the **performance** of the liberal prophet. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (Jer. 23:21). Look at the **zeal** of these prophets. They could not wait to get their message to the people. Are the people of God as eager to get the truth to the ears of dying men? Brethren, it is sad and shameful for anyone to out-work, out-pray, or be more involved in what they do than the people of God. It is truly a sad day when the Mormons, Baptists, etc., out-live and out-work members of the church of Christ. The Lord has commissioned us to go into all the world with the truth, and we must do it. Look at what these liberals could have done with the truth. "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:22). Just think of the people they could have turned to God if they would have taught the truth. Liberalism turns people from God that might have obeyed Him had they not come under its influence. The Bible warns about a zeal that is not according to knowledge:

> Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

This kind of zeal can lead many down the road to destruction. Jeremiah makes the point that liberalism profits nothing:

> Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not **profit** this people at all, saith the LORD (Jer. 23:32).

My friends, liberalism has nothing to offer!

Notice the conclusion that Jeremiah reaches in this chapter as the result of accepting liberalism. **Their pastures were taken from them** (Jer. 23:1). The pastors would see to it that the sheep were led to green pastures. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psa. 23:2). Because the pastors scattered the

sheep, they would lose their pastures. The value of the pastures are seen in a number of verses:

> For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice (95:7).
>
> Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture (100:3).
>
> How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate (Joel 1:18).

Just like pastors of old would search for good pastures for their sheep, Christians today need to be nourished with good pastures: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). From the preceding verses we see the value of good pastures. The pastures are lost when we exchange the Word of God for liberalism.

Their pleasant places became desolate. "For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force *is* not right" (Jer. 23:10). The pleasant places or the habitations of the wilderness are dried up for want of rain. This would leave the people of God no place to go for food.

They would be taken from the presence of God. "Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, *and cast you* out of my presence" (23:39). We will be robbed of our joy in this life when we remove ourselves from the presence of the Lord. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore" (Psa. 16:11). Sin always separates man from God.

> Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

Nothing could be sadder than being separated from the presence of God **perpetually**. This is the end result of liberalism. "And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten" (Jer. 23:40).

> Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when

> the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord**, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:6-9).

The judgment day will be a day of separation.

> And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats (Mat. 25:30-33).

The punishment for the wicked will be everlasting destruction. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mat. 25:46). What a sad day it will be for those who thought they were right in the sight of God when, in fact, they were workers of iniquity. There will be some judgment day surprises.

> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (7:21-23).

Let us notice some practical suggestions that will guard us from liberalism.

1. We must first take heed to ourselves. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). The apostle Paul understood the value of this point. "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27).

2. Study the Bible and rightly divide it. "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). We need to be known as the Bereans of old: "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).

3. We need to teach others so we can protect the church for the future:

> And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).
>
> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:19-20).

4. We need to realize that, when we open the door and bring into the church that which is not authorized, we will never be able to shut that door.

5. We need a good sound Bible school program. It is no wonder that many churches become liberal when there is no curriculum to be followed. When someone enters our Bible school program in kindergarten, they should have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures by the time they reach the adult class.

6. Be careful in the selection of elders. Make sure they meet the qualifications. If these were not important, then God never would have given them (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).

7. Make sure that sound doctrine is being preached from the pulpit. The church cannot be stronger than the food she is being fed!

8. Warn the church of the false doctrines that are being advocated by false teachers. Paul constantly warns the churches: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you*" (1 Cor. 4:14).

9. Do not bind where God has not bound. God is the only one that can bind and loose:

> 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 tense of the verbs points out that whatever was bound on earth had already been bound in heaven. In our fear not to become liberal, we must not run into anti-ism or radicalism.

10. Bible teaching must first begin in the home. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6). "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). A constant study of God's Word in the home will help greatly in keeping the church pure.

11. We are to prove all things. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21).

12. We are to try the spirits. "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). The church at Ephesus tried the false apostles of their day, and it is a good thing that they did. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2).

13. The mouth of false teachers must be stopped.

> Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

14. When hiring a preacher or getting one to hold a gospel meeting, the elders must make sure he is sound in the faith. They may want to make up a list of questions to ask him. You cannot just assume that, because he is sound this year, he will also be next year.

15. We must recognize that truth is absolute and attainable. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). When studying 1 John it is important to make note of the fact of how many times he uses *know*. John was not only the apostle of love but also the apostle of the absolute. When the liberal tells you that you cannot be absolute about anything, just ask him if he is absolutely sure about that. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3).

16. We must at all costs contend for the faith.

> 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).

17. It is not in man that walks to direct his own steps. "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). "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Pro. 28:26).

18. Keep in mind that the Doctrine of Christ is the teaching of the New Testament as a whole. It certainly included the Deity of Christ, but it is not limited to the fact that Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

There may be many other things that will safeguard the church from liberalism in the future. Brother Brent Smith makes a point that this author thinks that we need to consider when it comes to who a liberal is.

> An individual is not a liberal just because he does not step to the beat of my drum in areas of judgment. An individual is not a liberal just because he is, in my estimation, on a slippery slope. An individual is not a liberal just because he quotes from an author who is a liberal or because he quotes from a version or translation that is not as accurate as it should be. What does he teach? Did he teach the truth regarding the particular passage in question? That is what should be of concern, is it wise for him to use this version or translation? That is another issue altogether. An individual is not necessarily a liberal because he cites from a Bible paraphrase, did he use a paraphrase as just that, or did he try to pass it off as a true translation? Did he teach the truth and then use the paraphrase for emphasis? One could go on and on with questions about what books are in a preacher's library, from which school did a man graduate, and so forth. The point is this: red flags should go up, bells and whistles should sound loudly, and the hair should stand up on the back of our necks when a preacher or Bible class teacher gets up and begins to teach something that is error. Faithful Christians need to stand up and oppose such error and, if the shoe fits, label it as liberalism. But in the process, we must not get caught up in a witch hunt and begin labeling and thus condemning individuals on the basis of mere suspicion (338-39).

Liberalism is the practice or belief of anything that is not authorized by the Word of God. There are only two sources of authority. It is either from God or man:

> And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of

> men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things (Mat. 21:23-27).

The things that we believe and practice are either from heaven or men. If our doctrine is from men, then we are worshiping God in vain (15:9), and that is liberalism. We must have Divine authority for what we believe and practice. We need to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. We should do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names, or as Peter put it: "If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). All of our problems in the church, liberal or otherwise, will somehow be connected to Bible authority.

One other thing that this scribe would like to notice in this transcript is the liberal's attitude about following a pattern. Having looked in some depth at Jeremiah 23, it is clear that the people of God understood that they had a pattern to follow. It is so sad there are some of our own brethren who fail to recognize how important it is to follow the pattern. Some are making the argument that God does not have a pattern for the church. However, the Bible teaches us that we are to walk by the same rule: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phi. 3:16).

The Word of God teaches that the Old Testament tabernacle was a type of the New Testament church (Heb. 8:4-6). "Pattern" is the Greek *tupos* which Thayer defines as "the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made: Acts vii. 44; Heb. viii. 5 (Ex. xxv. 40)" (342). The pattern was given for all time. "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). Without a pattern how could we obey the Word of God? "In all things shewing thyself a **pattern** of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Tit. 2:7). It is very strange that the liberal teaches that we do not have a pattern, but the Bible teaches that the Romans obeyed one. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). *Form* in this verse is our Greek word *tupos*.

We are surely, as other generations, seeing the blight of liberalism. Thank God for lectureships like this one that will closely examine the false teaching of liberalism in such depth.

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LIBERALISM'S VIEW OF SALVATION

Harrell Davidson

Harrell Davidson was born and reared near Bradford, Tennessee. He began full-time preaching in 1958 and has been preaching for 47 years full-time working with congregations in Virginia, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Tennessee. He has been working with the church of Christ in Obion, Tennessee, for the past 24 years.

Harrell attended Freed-Hardeman University, Harding University, and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He has done continuous radio work for 18 years and 4 years of television work. He is a regular speaker on lectureships and in gospel meetings. Harrell teaches full-time for the Online Academy of Biblical Studies and is also an instructor for The Rocky Mountain Audio and Video Bible Institute.

Harrell has also written several books including the authorized biography of Guy N. Woods, *Over the Vast Horizon*, and has published many of his notes on the Old and New Testament which are available on a CD Rom.

Harrell is married to the former Carrie Spurlock, and they have four children and six grandchildren living with 1 deceased.

INTRODUCTION

This author appreciates the efforts of brother Michael Hatcher and the great Bellview elders in their choice of study in this lectureship. Looking over all the topics proposed for this lectureship, and specifically the topic assigned me, this writer realized that every topic was/is a salvation issue. However, this scribe has been preaching and lecturing on this topic since the early '60s and it appears to no avail. Brethren, we are losing the battle!

In 1973 this penman was driving the late brother Guy N. Woods and the late brother E. R. Harper to Oklahoma Christian College, as it was called then—today they need to drop *Christian*. These brethren began a discussion in my presence regarding the immediate past and the immediate future of the church, as they perceived it. Brother Woods said that we have already lost to the liberals. He said, "We are in a 75 percent—25 percent majority-minority situation, and we are in the minority." He averred that this was his assessment based upon his travels each year preaching in meetings from "Maine to California and

from Canada to Florida." Brother Harper stunned me when he said, "Guy, I believe that you are wrong. We are in an 80 percent—20 percent majority-minority, and we are the minority." It is this writer's humble judgment that brother Harper was right! It is sad that such conversation would be taking place, but it was necessary, and it is a reality lo these many years later.

Some of us saw the things taking place that are now full-grown, and they have destroyed congregations of the Lord's people all across the world—yes the world! America is not the only place that liberalism has reared its ugly head. A faithful brother, Oscar Ali, missionary in Lahore, Pakistan, found out first hand about this deadly spiritual disease. All of a sudden there appeared, in the small congregation in this predominately Muslim nation, a group from Sunset School of Preaching teaching error regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It appeared that their purpose was to cause division in this congregation that numbered 13 at that time. Is this a salvation matter? In view of Revelation 21:8 it is indeed a salvation matter. These students went throughout the Far East teaching their damnable doctrine dividing congregations right and left.

In 1976 the late brother Franklin Camp was introducing in the church bulletin where he was worshiping the Davidson family who was moving there to work with this congregation. He placed our picture on the front cover of the bulletin. He said, "Brother Davidson is well known for his many lectures regarding liberalism." A few years later the elders of said congregation fired me because I believed then, as well as now, that Matthew 19:9 is to be understood literally—that it means exactly what it says. The elders did not believe that. They held to a modified view of the Bale's doctrine on this subject having been led there by a former preacher in whom they trusted. It is interesting to observe that in the year 2005 this eldership still holds this doctrine. If they do not, there has not been a public statement and a deserved apology to me, and especially my family, for the ordeal that this put all of us through. It is also interesting that this congregation is a major participant in the para-church organization known as Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes. This writer is well aware that one false doctrine does not have to necessarily follow another, but oftentimes it does.

Is this a salvation issue? You be the judge. For instance, this author talked with a young lady who was majoring in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and asked her why she was majoring in Bible—not that

such a major was wrong, but wondered how she planned to use such? She told me that she intended to minister to youth when she graduated. There is a very limited way that she could do this scripturally, this penman pointed out. She, of course, disagreed with my assessment, arguing that she could minister to both male and female. According to plain passages of Scripture (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12), she cannot and is in error for doing so. Not only is her soul at stake, but her hearers' souls are at stake. The students are being influenced for eternity, and that scares this writer. The next logical move for her is to do what many "youth ministers" have done, and that is move into the pulpit. Now, is the foregoing a salvation issue?

So many congregations are hanging their spiritual *hats* on Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes nonsense. This scribe has noticed through the media that the dues to this organization are now due for the year 2005. Most congregations involved with this work indicate that this is the main focus of the youth work that they are doing. Some claim that the congregation is not really involved and that the families are paying the dues to the para-organization. Okay, take the name of the church off the list and what do you have? Do you have listed the families as the sponsors? This organization is causing problems within the kingdom of our Lord. Why do we put up with it? Those congregations, by their actions in this matter, are open to do the same with the various disaster relief organizations that exist all over the United States. We might as well cave in, join the American Missionary Society, and let them do our missionary work. By the way, this is comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges—they are equal.

GRACE

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). The apostle Paul also wrote the letter to the church in Rome in which he said, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24). These passages, as well as a host of others, instruct us somewhat in the matter of grace. We need to look at this subject and give it some attention because the liberals have abused grace overtime. The liberals will deny this supposition, but they deny anything and everything that has to do with salvation or any other subject. In an attempt to understand liberalism, one must do some ciphering because of the problems it presents. When this author was

discussing a particular point with a liberal, he thought that the point had been firmly established only to then find out that the first point had already changed before we got to the second point. This sounds like double talk but those who have tried to talk to a liberal, know what the author means. With the liberal nothing is ever established—set in concrete. A student of liberalism can become confused, bewildered, and outright discouraged. A person will wind up saying, "Huh?" The liberal shifts gears faster than a Ferrari automobile.

Rubel Shelly would make an argument that man is saved by grace alone plus nothing minus nothing. He said, "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation" (3). If that were the case, then salvation would be totally a matter of grace. However, notice that Paul said that we are saved by grace through faith.

Grace is favor. Noah found grace (favor) in the sight of the Lord. The Lord told Noah to build an ark, giving him specific instructions as to the dimensions and the kind of wood to use. All of those instructions must have been added so we could increase our reading ability, because Noah could not add one whit to his salvation! Salvation that is by grace illustrates God's part in the process. It is favor that we do not deserve. Faith is the part that man does indeed add to achieve his soul's salvation. Paul must have been wrong when he wrote, "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If Rubel is right, then faith is not essential to one's salvation, because man does not add one whit. One cannot argue that this is faith on God's part. That would have the cart pulling the horse. Hebrews 11:6 still says, "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." This scribe will be most happy to continue to stand by this passage and believe that faith is essential to my salvation and yours. If we do not add faith unto our souls, we will by all *whits* be lost eternally. Shelly is not my judge and certainly not my Bible.

Peter told the audience in Jerusalem: "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). Brother Peter must have been wrong! He must have been hallucinating! Since man does not add one whit to his salvation, then repentance and baptism is not essential to one's salvation. Who would ever believe that anyone associated with the churches of Christ would ever embrace such a position? Once upon a time Rubel and this author spoke every year on

the Annual Gus Nichols Lectureship in Jasper, Alabama. I would have never dreamt that he would go off into error, but this would not even be the tip of the iceberg. Rubel would later take the position in the Highers-Shelly Preacher's Forum Discussion at Freed-Hardeman that he would not object if the elders at Woodmont Hills were to "roll the instrument in." He was a supporter of the Billy Graham Crusade in Nashville a couple of years ago. You see, my brethren, that there is no end to where some will go. The road of liberalism is a downward spiral that will finally lead the soul to hell.

The church at Rome must have been confused on the subject of grace. They evidently thought that, if a person sinned, that more grace from God was applied. Paul wrote to them, among other things, to correct this error. He wrote:

> What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection (6:1-5).

This writer is convinced that verses 3-5 above was written to correct the error that existed regarding grace. We sometimes lift passages out of their immediate and broader context. Look at all that Paul wrote about grace in Romans (1:5; 1:27; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20-21; 6:1, 14-15; 11:5-6; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 16:20, 24), and you will learn the truths that he articulated to the church at Rome by Inspiration. The obvious answer to all false doctrine is found only in the Scriptures.

GRACE AND THE UMBRELLA

Somewhere along the way our brotherhood began to hear a new doctrine among our brethren. Some were teaching that as long as one was under the grace of God they could not so sin as to be lost eternally. Some of us realized that this was nothing more than bonified Baptist doctrine. Upon thorough investigation it was learned that this was coming from the White's Ferry Road School of Preaching in West Monroe, Louisiana. Next we learned that it was also coming from what used to be International Bible College in Florence, Alabama. However, none of the professors would admit teaching it in the classroom, but students were going out in the field and teaching the false doctrine. As

closely as possible under close scrutiny, it was learned that the students had not heard the false doctrine before entering school. The obvious conclusion must be that someone in those schools, and there may have been others, was indeed teaching this doctrine.

The Obion Church of Christ was supporting a missionary in what the elders thought was a good work. The missionary and his supporting congregation's eldership came for a visit during the week near mid-day. My elders called me and asked me to come to the building and meet with them. When I arrived, my elders asked me what I knew about International Bible College. I told them the doctrine that some of the students were teaching. The missionary and his supporting elders got in a *huff* in a hurry, but they could not successfully deny the charges that I had investigated. My elders abruptly stopped supporting this work. By the way, neither my elders nor I mentioned International Bible College first. The missionary mentioned it himself, and it was at that juncture that my elders called me into the meeting; so do not think that we were on some kind of witch-hunt.

The doctrine is best explained (the way the students themselves explained it) by using an umbrella. They averred that, as long as one was under an umbrella, one would not get wet. The same, they said, is true with the grace of God. As long then as one stayed under the umbrella of God's grace, one could not so sin as to get out from under the umbrella. However, this very day we have had strong rain. This penman was under an umbrella but got wet from my knees down just the same. It is absolutely mainline Baptist doctrine pure and simple. In many debates with Baptist preachers, brother Woods would press his opponents to answer his question. He asked something like this: "If you were to die while in a drunken stupor committing adultery with a 16 year old girl would you be eternally lost?" The answer every time was always "No." What? Yes, that is right! They admitted that, dying in a drunken adulterous situation, they would not be lost! Where do you suppose our young brethren got that old doctrine of "once saved always saved"? Liberalism's view of grace will definitely send souls to torment.

ANEMIC PULPITS

Anemic pulpits will cause one to be lost. All across our land there has been an exercise practiced that is nauseous to this writer. When some preachers are ending their *talks*, they are saying in general the

words that follow: "If you have a commitment to make, I will be in the office tomorrow from 8 until 11 a.m." The precious invitation of our Lord is not even being extended by so many today. This practice suggests that we no longer care about the salvation of souls. The idea that in some way we are equal to the pope is a misnomer. Every faithful Gospel preacher is far above the pope! The practice of telling the preacher of your commitment is pope-ish to say the least.

One such preacher said that he had found a way to make his sermons exactly 18 minutes long. This preacher is sure that this would find great interest among many because not only of anemic pulpits but also anemic pews. He thought that he could shorten his sermons if he would leave the Scriptures out. He said that he would use a text for his lesson. He would then tell several intriguing stories and end his lesson with an emotional impassioned plea; thus, his sermons would be exactly 18 minutes long. Did you notice that he said that he would leave Scriptures out of his lesson? What is the use and purpose of preaching if the Scriptures are going to be left out? This preacher must have been reared in the dark ages, for he was taught that the Gospel is God's power to save (cf. Rom. 1:16). Now it is being illustrated that such must not be the case.

When hamburgers and milk shakes began to be offered for every visitor that attended a particular service, we began to cheapen the Gospel. Some offered helicopter rides and gave away 10-speed bicycles to those who could get the most people to attend a Vacation Bible School. Where is all of this leading? Those pulpits became anemic. They put noise, nickels, and numbers before the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why would anyone have the desire to do this? This scribe admits that he does not have the answer why. It stinks to the high heavens, and this preacher is about ready for people to call him something other than a preacher—because everyone who puts a Bible under his arm and gets up and says something is called a preacher. If that is going to be the case, then call this preacher something else.

We do not need a new Gospel for every age, as some aver. The answer to all the problems of life is the true unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, liberals do not preach sermons involving truth. They had rather preach about concepts—not book, chapter, and verse preaching. We have had a new breed of anemic preachers among us now for many years. It has always bothered this writer to hear a liberal or weak member of the church say something like: "I know what the

Bible teaches, but..." There are any numbers of things wrong with such thinking. Friends, there is no *but*. God's Word says what it means and means what it says, and no one has the right to change it. Regarding the Gospel, the liberal believes that everyone is okay. The mindset is "You are okay and I am okay; so let us not be upset about our differences." Denominationalism is not all that bad to the liberal. A liberal is all loving until a *mossback* or *legalist* calls them in question, and then they turn the *hounds* out to attack the teller of truth. Their love really shows for what it is, and it is not brotherly love.

THE SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE

The writer of these lines has never seen a doctrinal matter over which he could compromise. In matters that pertain to the Scriptures there is no place to compromise. In matters of option, there can be liberty shown (compromises made regarding optional matters). The apostle Paul demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 8-10 that there are matters of liberty where a person might make one of two choices—and neither of them be wrong. These may be referred to as matters of liberty, where one may do either of two suggested things. Though with Paul personally, the choice he made might be different from mine, and there is no problem with that.

This discussion refers to matters of faith; those doctrines having to do with the salvation of the soul. Before me is the transcription of a tape recorded speech which Rubel Shelly made in 1983 at Centerville, TN. Among many other things he said in the beginning of his speech:

> I am trying to think my way out of a sectarian attitude. I grew up in the context of one. I learned a sectarian spirit. I breathed a sectarian spirit. I exhibited a sectarian spirit and I taught a sectarian spirit. I am embarrassed. I am ashamed. I have repented. I am trying to outgrow it.

One can see the spirit of compromise in these statements. Shelly caved in long ago and became one with every other denomination in the country.

Later in the same speech he said:

> There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations. Yet, they are separated from one another by creedal formulations, human names, cumbersome organizational structures that have found their way into the stream of human history since the time of Christ and the apostles.

What could have possibly led to his compromise on these matters? This writer believes that he knows. While he was preaching on the radio, a

Baptist preacher followed his 30-minute program. Rubel said that he thought he ought to really bear down on baptism, and he quoted all the baptism passages possible before his time was up, since the Baptist preacher was sitting in the studio ready to preach in his own 30-minute time slot. As Rubel walked out of the studio, the Baptist preacher told him that he really enjoyed his program on baptism. He told Rubel that he has always believed that about baptism, and he preached the same, though most of his Baptist brethren did not accept it. Rubel said that these Baptists were becoming his brethren. While he probably did believe that, it was foolishness. A person cannot be baptized correctly and worship incorrectly and be acceptable in the sight of God. It was the spirit of compromise that prompted him to say that.

Coming back from the Joplin unity meeting in 1984, he said that he found out that we (the Lord's church) had one-and-a-half million brethren that he did not know of, speaking of the Christian Church. With that, he has already gone down the long road of no return.

THE FIVE STEPPERS

After having moved to the Birmingham area, this author was delighted to be invited to go to the monthly preachers' luncheon which he accepted. Wayne Kilpatrick was also present at this preacher's luncheon. Wayne had already been known for several departures from the faith; so this author mentioned to some of the brethren (brother Arnold Sexton being one, and also the one this writer was sitting beside and who had invited me to that luncheon) that he would not be back so as not to extend fellowship to Wayne. The subject of preaching came up in that meeting and Kilpatrick said most precisely: "I wish that I never had to preach on the five steps ever again." While many grimaced at that statement, this author publicly stated that he could not fellowship Kilpatrick. Wayne grinned and passed it off with laughter to a couple of his cronies. Anyone who cannot preach the five steps into Christ should have quit their feeble and worthless efforts years ago. Wayne there compromised the truth and denied his Lord. The "5-stepper" phraseology was there born in my own presence. This scribe appealed to the other preachers in the area to mark this brother and avoid him. They instead appointed two brethren to go talk with him, at which time they wound up playing golf, having a good time, and nothing ever came of that meeting.

We learn that salvation means nothing to a dyed-in-the-wool liberal. His idea is to restructure the church and change all the things that have set us apart from other religious bodies until in many places the church of my Lord is thought of as being a denomination among other denominations. All faithful brethren will continue the good fight of faith. We will not give in. We will not bend. We will not be moved. Now, what was that about the 80 percent to 20 percent majority-minority?

THE HOORAH LORD'S SUPPER

Someone might be saying: "Davidson, you have lost your mind!" Hold on until you hear the rest of the story. A member of the congregation here in Obion, Tennessee, recently visited her daughter in a big Tennessee city. Her daughter attends a liberal congregation in that area. This good sister told my Carrie that worship was most certainly different. She was saying that with some disgust. She said, "It took us 45 minutes to partake of the Lord's Supper. Someone was always bounding up and down; they had various chants—the preacher was left with about 15 minutes for his sermon." Sorry to say, but this is the concept that many have of the "sacred feast divine." One person in Arkansas said, "We have come to this part of our worship that, if it were not for the supper, none of us would be here." How misguided can people be? We have not seen the tip of the iceberg as yet.

CONCLUSION

The author of these lines believes that the church has completely restored in a pure form. However, we face an imminent restoration process all over again if these kinds of things continue. What will our children and grandchildren think regarding the nature and characteristics of the Lord's church a decade or two from now? Passing by the church building in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, coming back from a home that we have Sharp County, Arkansas, we saw the sign, which said, "Basketball leagues are now forming." The gymnasium is as big, if not bigger, than the church building. It does not take a rocket scientist to know that the present generation and another or so to follow are going to look at the church as a place to have fun and games. All the while, the bruised, bleeding Christ is still suffering over the abuse that His body, the church, is inflicting. May God help us to wake up.

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LIBERALISM AND BAPTISM

Guss Eoff

Guss Eoff, Jr., was born March 7, 1923, in Fort Worth, Texas. In February of 1942, he married Lla Laline Norris. They have one son, Larry, also a Gospel preacher. Guss began preaching in 1942.

Guss attended Pepperdine College and Southwest State Teachers College. He received his Doctor of Ministry in 2000. Guss has preached for local congregations in California, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Missouri. He also has preached in twenty-five countries and twenty-seven states. He served as a missionary in Hong Kong for two years. In 1974, he went on a preaching Safari in Tanzania, East Africa, that covered 20,000 miles before he returned home. He has conducted eighteen campaigns in Malaysia and Singapore.

In 1952, he conducted the first television program for churches of Christ in Northern California and in 1959 he conducted the first gospel meeting in Thailand. He 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. World Video Bible School has put out a DVD with 140 of Guss' hand painted charts.

INTRODUCTION

What liberalism is doing to the church is beyond anything this author could imagine. Things are being said and done that would never have entered my thoughts.

When this writer became a member of the New Testament church sixty-three years ago, it was like stepping out of hell into heaven. My parents never took me to church services a single time in my life. The only time that I went to church was to a denomination with some friends. After I was old enough to join the Baptist Church, I decided I wanted to be a Baptist preacher. When I met J. F. Tipton and started to study the Bible, I could see the great difference between the doctrines of men and plain teaching of the Bible.

One of the subjects that caused me the greatest problem was baptism. This scribe had been taught that baptism was not essential to salvation. *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, D.D., plainly says:

> Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of "baptismal regeneration"; but it is essential to obedience,

> since Christ has commanded it. It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world, and to membership in the Church which is his body. And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedience and tokens of affection (20).

Needless to say, this writer, as are others, was very confused by this doctrine. The idea that "Baptism is not essential to salvation—but it is essential to obedience, since Christ commanded it" seemed to me to be contradictory. How could something not be essential to salvation but be essential to obedience? Could one be saved without being obedient? Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Yet, the Hebrews writer states: "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Here we can plainly see that having faith is commanded. If baptism was essential to obedience because Christ commanded it, why is not faith essential because it is also commanded? What is the difference, when both faith and baptism are commanded? If baptism is essential to obedience because Christ commanded it, is not faith also essential because Christ commanded it? There can be no doubt that faith is commanded. Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31). If faith is commanded to be saved and the jailer had to be obedient to the command, why was faith any more essential than baptism? That question posed a problem to this author sixty-three years ago. It is still a problem today—a problem that has not been answered till this day.

Why have men been so determined to do away with baptism? It is because of the false teaching of "faith only."

Article nine of the *Methodist Discipline* states:

> 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 deservings: — Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort (*Doctrines* 18).

WHAT BAPTISM DOES

Baptism Puts One into Christ

The apostle Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal.3:27). Here the great apostle plainly says that one enters into Christ by baptism and therefore puts on Christ. The Bible presents no other means by which a person may enter into or put

on Christ. Through baptism we enter into Christ, in Christ is where all spiritual blessings exists: "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). All spiritual blessing are in Christ. There are no spiritual blessings out of Christ. How could one have any spiritual blessings out of Christ—the greatest of which is salvation? Yet, the only way to get into Christ is to be baptized!

Baptism Puts One into the Death of Christ

"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). All Bible believers will agree that we are saved by the sinless blood of Jesus Christ. The Hebrews writer said, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto" (9:14). Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (9:22). Jesus offered Himself, shedding His own sinless blood in His death (9:28). Paul, the apostle said, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Again the writer of Hebrews said, "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" (4:15). Jesus did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22). Yet, "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). The apostle John said, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Let us notice again that we are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus. "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

Now note the importance of baptism. We are baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3). We are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, where He shed His sinless blood; thus we being baptized into His death contact the cleansing blood without which we cannot have salvation. How could we be saved by only believing in Christ? We have redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of trespasses (Eph. 1:7). The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). The only way to contact the blood is in Christ's death; the only way to enter His blood is in baptism.

Baptism Saves One from Sin

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). The coordinating conjunction ***and*** makes believe and baptize of equal importance. One is just as necessary as the other. The fact that Peter says that baptism saves us disproves that which is stated in the *Baptist Manual*—"Baptism is not essential." Notice what Peter says concerning baptism:

> 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. 3:21).

Baptism Is for Remission of Sins

On the day of Pentecost, when the Jews that murdered Jesus were convinced of their guilt, they showed their faith by asking a very important question. They asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "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). Now watch what they did: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

These three thousand people wanted to have their sins forgiven, so they were baptized to be forgiven of their sins. It is not difficult to understand what baptism for remission of sins means. It cannot mean that they were baptized because their sins were already forgiven, and thus they were saved before they were baptized. Let us compare Acts 2:38 with Matthew 26:28 so we can understand the expression. Jesus states: "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Mat. 26:28). Now notice: Did Jesus shed His blood because sins were already remitted? Certainly not! It took the shedding of the blood of Jesus so man could have his sins forgiven. The very same is true in Acts 2:38: Repent and be baptized unto, in order to, the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism Is to Wash Away Sins

Saul of Tarsus, who became the great apostle Paul, waited three days for someone to tell him what to do to be saved. When Jesus appeared to Saul on the Damascus road, Saul asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10a). Jesus told him to go to Damascus: "And there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (Acts

22:10b). After Saul had fasted and was blind for three days, Ananias came to him with the answer to the question. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

If Saul was already saved before he was baptized, he did not know it. He was waiting for someone to tell him what to do. Likewise, Ananias did not know it, because he told Saul to "arise and be baptized and wash away his sins." How could Saul be saved and still be in his sins? Saul's sins were washed away **when** he was baptized. If Saul was saved before his baptism, he was saved in his sins.

Baptism Puts One in the Body of Christ

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

As the Spirit directs, one is baptized into one body. That one body is the church (Col. 1:18). There is but one body (Eph. 4:4). If there is one body and that body is the church, then there is one church. Baptism puts one into the church.

Baptism Starts the New Life

To become a Christian one must die to sin (Rom. 6:2). This is done by repentance. Then one is buried with Christ in baptism (6:4). As Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in the newness of life (6:4). Paul then explains this action in the next few verses.

> For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; 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. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus (6:5-11).

It is evident that in baptism the old man that was crucified is buried, just as Jesus was crucified and buried. Then, as Jesus was raised from the dead, we are raised from the death of sin and resurrected to a new life. How could one be saved before he dies, is buried, and raised to walk in a new life? It is only in Christ that one is a new creature. 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). He is a new creature only in Christ, and Paul said we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). It would be impossible to be saved before one becomes a new creature. A new creature is one that has died to sin, was buried with Christ, and raised to walk a newness of life in Christ. One is baptized into Christ where all spiritual blessing are. How could one be saved before he is baptized?

Baptism Makes One Free from Sin

After reading Romans 6:1-11, we see the form of doctrine that man must go through to be made free from sin. We die to sin (1-2). Then we are buried with Christ in baptism (3-4). Then we are raised from baptism to walk a new life (4). Thus, in the likeness of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, we die to sin, are buried with Christ in baptism, and are raised to walk in the newness of life. That is the form of doctrine that makes us free from sin. Notice Romans 6:17-18:

> But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.

How could one be saved before he is baptized, before going through "that form of doctrine"?

Baptism Is an Answer of Good Conscience

The apostle Peter tells us that baptism is not a bath to wash away dirt from our bodies, it is rather the answer of a good conscience toward God. Hear what Peter says:

> In which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, 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. 3:19-21).

Much more could be said on the necessity of baptism. There are many more passages that deal with the importance and essential need for baptism. Those that have already been discussed are sufficient. Why then all the time for such attention to this subject? The reason is because of the liberal element in the church has put forth an all out

effort to change the direction of faith, worship, and the plan of salvation in the body of Christ.

How strange to hear supposed members of the church putting forth arguments against baptism. The very thing that they are now promulgating is what this scribe gave up sixty three years ago. While this author had previously been taught that baptism was not necessary to salvation, he was taught the difference between truth and error on this important subject. Now to hear that some preachers and college professors are teaching the false doctrine which this penman gave up so long ago is shocking. When we hear statements from change agents, such as, "We should continue to say that baptism is important, but that it is not essential to salvation and we should recognize that there are many non-immersed believers who are saved," such is the very false doctrine which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This is the exact same false doctrine which the Baptist Church teaches, as is evidenced in their *Manual*. Denny Boultinghouse denied that man has any part in his salvation when he wrote, "Are we saved 100% by the grace of God? Yes ... Our salvation is completely by grace. We contribute nothing to our salvation."

Max Lucado teaches the same false doctrine as the Baptist Church. Max is the preacher for the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas. This congregation used to be called the "Oak Hills Church of Christ." Max replaced the sign with one that says "Oak Hills Church." Thankfully, he is no longer affiliated with churches of Christ. He brought instrumental music into their worship and has fellowship with false teachers. Notice what Lucado said at the end of his radio program. He wanted people to pray this prayer to be saved:

> "Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins. I give my tears. I give my fears. I give my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you Father, to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen."

Then the announcer said:

> And friend, if you prayed along with Max Lucado just now, here on **UpWords**, we want to welcome you into the family of God. We hope you will contact us and share your personal testimony. If you are already a believer, we thank you for praying for these new brothers and sisters in Christ. Now Max Lucado returns with a special word for those who received the gift of salvation just moments ago in prayer.

Max then said:

> Today is the first day you've ever prayed a prayer like that. Could you do me a favor? Could you write me a letter? I don't have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I would like to send to you. I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church. I want to encourage you to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved.

He has become very popular and well accepted by all people who claim to be believers in Christ.

When Bible professors state there should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether baptism is *for* or *because of* the remission of sins, we can see what liberalism is doing to the true teaching about baptism. This author has at this writing, twenty four scholars from six outstanding denominations, and every one of them translates the Greek word *eis* (for) to mean in the direction of the forgiveness of sins. Not one of them says that *eis* is because of. Yet, we have those among us that are saying that one does not have to know that his sins are being forgiven when he is baptized. Jimmy Allen wrote:

> It is my belief that the New Testament teaches when a penitent believer in the crucified and risen Savior is immersed in water to fulfill righteousness or obey God, the Lord forgives his past or alien sins (although he may not know that sins are remitted or that the Holy Spirit is given at the time) (39).

Believing that one does not have to understand the purpose of baptism opens the door for acceptance of those who have been baptized in the denominational world, but then the liberals have been seeking to get us to accept the denominations for years. Consider what Rubel Shelly wrote:

> Surely there are individuals in practically all the denominations known today who have learned of Jesus, looked to him in sincere faith, turned away from their conscious rebellions against his will, and embraced him as Savior through their immersion in his name (126).

CONCLUSION

We have a new breed of liberals. They have arisen from our own ranks. They are teaching false doctrine and they are determined to change the church. Faithful Christians must take a firm stand! They must meet every false teaching with all of the fervor of their being.

Liberalism is very popular! It gives people what they want instead of what God says. The desire to be popular with the masses is a great danger. Liberals are willing to surrender Truth in order to be popular. Max Lacado is a very good writer. He has sold his books all over the world. He has been able to enlarge his congregation to over four thousand members. No doubt he has been able to amass a great amount of money through his popularity. His popularity does not give him the right to change or alter God's teaching. No one has the right to tamper with the Word of God. Let us make sure we always respect that Word.

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THE STATE OF THE CHURCH TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this chapter is "The State of the Church." It depends upon the one to whom you are speaking. To some the state of the church is all *doom and gloom*. To others there is nothing in the church but *warm fuzzy feelings*. These two concepts have always been around. Elijah had a bit of the *doom and gloom* attitude when he said:

> And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away (1 Kin. 19:10).

Elijah felt like he was the only true believer left, but God let him know otherwise. "Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kin. 19:18). So, it was not all *doom and gloom*.

Then there are others who have their head in the clouds, and they never see any wrong. Those who have the *warm fuzzies*, as this writer likes to call them, have always existed as well. They can be seen in the false prophets of Jeremiah's day. Jeremiah said, "They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Oh, there are many who cry "peace, peace," when it should be a cry to battle (cf. Eze. 33:2-9). The truth has to lie somewhere in between these two thoughts.

What is the truth about the state of the church? How can we answer this question? Let us try to deal with this question from three points. First, let us look at some **statistics**. Second, the state of the church can be **seen** in what we do. Then third, the state of the church truly depends upon **self**.

STATISTICS CONCERN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Statistics are useful, up to a point. When we are looking at statistics, it is important to keep this in mind. Mac Lynn has done a great amount of work in this area. He writes:

> The number of Churches of Christ in the United States and her territories totals over 13,000. The majority are sufficiently alike in doctrinal matters that full fellowship exists between them. While some issues have proven divisive over the years, the congregations are linked by a common heritage and mutual respect. However, despite the similarities that bind the churches into a common family, differences on particulars have polarized the membership into specific camps.
>
> Some 3,274 or one-fourth (25%) of the congregations are distinguished by some uniqueness in matters of teaching and practice. However, these congregations are generally smaller and hold only 13% of the total membership within Churches of Christ. In most instances, these congregations have isolated themselves by insisting on stances that the majority have not shared. They often use directories which include only churches with a like mind. The "mainstream" (a designation used to signify the majority) has tended to recognize the separatist attitudes of these congregations and has, in effect, excluded those who resist centralist positions. Only minimal fellowship is maintained between the mainstream and the separatist groups. Those churches that represented non-centralist positions cluster into four fellowship groups, commonly known as "Non-institutional," "Non-class," "One Cup," and "Mutual Edification."
>
> Perhaps the most pronounced issue that brought about separation from the mainstream has been "institutionalism." The largest segment of the separatist churches are the Non-institutional (NI) churches, which number 2,055 and claim 16% of the total number of the Churches of Christ. They comprise 63% of the separatist churches and are found in 48 states. States with largest number of Non-institutional congregations are Texas (297), Alabama (208), Kentucky (170), and Florida (152), although the highest percentage of Non-institutional churches are found in Maine. The four leading states account for 40% of the congregations and 47% of the members. These churches broke with the mainstream primarily over whether a local church could give financial support to institutions such as orphan homes and whether

churches could participate in missionary cooperatives that made use of a "sponsoring church." This break was complete by about 1960.

Other churches which embrace "non-institutional" tenets became isolationist in the earlier part of the twentieth century. A major focus at that time was the modern "Sunday school" with its individualized classes. Today, nearly 1100 congregations in the U.S. remain non-class churches. These churches are themselves divided over whether individual containers may be used to serve the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. In 539 congregations (designated NC or NCp in this directory), individual containers are used; in 549 churches (OC, OCa, OCb, OCc), one cup is used. Each group claims 4% of the total number of congregations in the U.S. Non-class (NC/NCp groups are found in 28 states and comprise 1.7% of the members of Churches of Christ. One Cup congregations are located in 34 states, but constitute only 1.4% of the total membership. Non-class groups are prominent in Texas (186), Oklahoma (63), and Arkansas (53); Oklahoma claims the highest percentage (8%) in its church population. Leading states for the One Cup churches are Texas (103), California (58), Missouri (50) and Oklahoma (49). One Cup groups claim the highest percentage of the churches in Pennsylvania (9%).

It should also be noted that Non-class brethren disagree among themselves over the use of a located preacher. Many of the Non-class churches maintain a policy of having no fellowship with those Non-class churches which use a located preacher or which fellowship class brethren. The practice of "chain fellowship" binds these churches in a tighter fellowship group. And although the majority of the One Cup folks use unfermented grape juice and believe each participant should break the loaf, others either break the loaf before distribution or insist on wine.

While "mutual edification" as a belief and practice characterizes the One Cup churches and the majority of the Non-class churches, a few congregations have adopted multiple cups for the Lord's supper and Sunday schools, but have held to mutual ministry. Mutual edification (or mutual ministry) suggests that the engagement of a person as the exclusive "preacher" for the congregations be disallowed in favor of giving all capable male members an opportunity to "edify" the church in public assembly. Mutual Edification churches (exclusive of the One Cup and Non-class churches) are concentrated in Missouri (37, 30% of their number). They total only 130 bodies. In this directory Mutual Edification (ME) refers to those congregations which disallow a located preacher, use multiple cups in the Lord's supper, and approve of Sunday schools. Some of those designated as Mutual Edification churches in this directory participate with mainline churches in the support or orphanages and missions. Since mutual education as a belief also characterized the One Cup churches and the majority of the Non-

class (NC) churches, about 8% of the Churches of Christ practice mutual ministry.

There are 1,241 congregations (9%) which have a predominantly black membership. These account for 13% of the members and 10% of the attendance within the Churches of Christ. Predominantly black churches generally report a larger ratio of members to attendees than do others. The stats show 171,974 members, 222,354 adherents, and only 130,646 in attendance on any given Sunday. Only a few of the predominantly black churches are identified with the "non-mainstream" ideas noted above. Although there are differences between many black churches and most white churches (e.g., in the concept of the ministry), these differences have not impaired relationships. Generally, these churches are conservative theologically. Of course, there are many blacks who are members of predominantly white congregations, but the blacks are under represented in relation to the national population. A few churches have predominantly black membership but seek to be "integrated" congregations, with active outreach to non-black populations.

A vastly under represented group of Americans are the Hispanics. Only 240 independent Spanish-language congregations are known. This breaks down into 9,931 members, 11,940 adherents, and 10,211 in attendance. Seventy percent of Hispanic congregations are in Texas and Puerto Rico. An additional uncounted number of Hispanics worship in Anglo churches which maintain Spanish-speaking services but do not separate their counts.

Other ethnic and/or language assemblies exist in small numbers. There are congregations of Koreans (14, with Korean language worship offered at 9 others). American Indians (10, with outreach to Indians at 2 others), Chinese (8 churches with an additional 10 Anglo churches with Chinese language classes or worship), Haitians (6, plus one other outreach), Cambodians (2, with Cambodian language worship at 2 others), Laotian-Thais (2, with native language services at 12 other churches), Filipinos (1), Japanese (1), and Pohnpei (1). Many Anglo congregations have internationals in their memberships without offering special language services. At least one (1) does work with Iraqis and one (1) has a service in Hindi.

The average size of a congregation of the Churches of Christ in the United States is 97 members. The average mainstream church is 112. Non Institutional congregations average 59 members; Non-class churches average 40 members, One Cup churches average 32 members; and Mutual Edification congregations average 32 members.

Attendance at the medial church is 55. However, half of those attending a Sunday morning worship service will be in a congregation of 160 or above. The largest 1,001 congregations (out of over 13,000)

> will house 37% of the attendance. Ten percent of the churches will be over 200 in attendance and account for 40% of the attendees.
>
> For a detailed analysis of the Churches of Christ at the end of the 20th century, see the Preface to the 2000 edition. In the opening years of the 21st century, little has changed. However, with the collection this time, churches tended to report higher membership, adherent, and attendance figures than in the previous decade. A record 13,197 congregations are included in this directory (up from 23 from 1990). The reported membership represents and increase of 12,326 over 2000, although this is still 7,578 fewer than in 1990. The adherents reported are 10,860 over 200 but 28,367 lower than in 1990.
>
> Given the difficulty of acquiring statistics, one should be hesitant about making generalizations. Perhaps the safest statement can venture is that the reports continue to verify the presence of 13,000 congregations in the U.S. and that collectively; these congregations are maintaining their strength. There is no appreciable difference in the size of congregations, in the national distribution of churches, or in the demographic make-up of the churches. Perhaps, just perhaps, the decline overall has ended and a new period of growth has commenced. However, mission outreach to other parts of the nation remain critical. Large counties in the Northeast still have no congregation and the Midwest continues to struggle to keep their number. Declines present a particular challenge in California, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and West Virginia (13-15).

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH CAN BE SEEN

There is no doubt that the state of the church can be evaluated from statistics, but if you want to see the state of the church, look at what is being done. The state of the church can be seen. To the seven churches of Asia Minor, John wrote, "I know thy works" (Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). John could see and know what these congregations where doing. Guess what? The community around us knows us. They know if we are caring, compassionate, concerned, committed, Christ-like, clean, content, and confident people. On the other hand, they know if we hypocrites! When the world looks at us, what do they see?

The state of the church can be seen in our **actions**. We are to be a body that is active. The church has a work; we are to evangelize the world. This was the mission of Christ. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It was the mission that was given to the Apostles of Christ.

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,

> baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:18-20).
>
> And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).
>
> And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).
>
> 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).

To teach others should be our desire. Paul wrote: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Too often our heart's desire is far from the lost. We are caught up in the *rat race* and have little or no time for God. Many are caught up in the things of the world, even though John warned us:

> Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

One thing we can learn from statistics is that congregations get *labeled* as this or that. Our actions will also label us. When someone looks at your congregation, do they see Christians who care about the lost?

Our actions should include edification. *Edification* denotes "the act of building; this is used only figuratively in the N.T., in the sense of edification, the promotion of spiritual growth (lit., the things of building up)" (Vine 2:17).

Apparently, it is easy to tear down. There will be many who will point out every little mistake you make. Constructive criticism is one thing; being abusive to destroy someone is totally different. One is trying to help, while the other is trying to destroy. We should be active in edification. The question might be: "How can I edify someone else?" The writer of Hebrews suggested, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). We should pro-

voke each other to love and good works. Love is not always easy. Paul, to the church at Corinth, said:

> Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

We can lift others up through our zeal. "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many" (2 Cor. 9:2). Zeal is contagious. Where are most people tempted to attend—a place where everyone is excited about the preaching, singing, and praying, or a place where nothing favorable is ever said about the worship service? This author believes that one of the reasons we have such a difficult time getting individuals back for Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services is that all they ever hear is negative! Maybe their friends and family can only say something negative. That will not build up; that will tear down. Take time to encourage someone at church. Christ took time to say, "Be of good cheer" (Mat. 9:2; 14:27; Acts 23:11). When someone looks at our congregation, do they see encouragers or discouragers?

Benevolence may be the action which draws the most attention and points directly to the state of the church. James wrote: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jam. 1:27). From Vine we learn that to *visit* is "to inspect, to look upon, care for, exercise oversight" (4:190). We are to care for those who are less fortunate. Paul bragged on the church at Achaia for their commitment to this (2 Cor. 9:2). Paul did not make a distinction between saints who need help and non-saints, which need help. He spoke of their "liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*" (2 Cor. 9:13). The *them* of verse 13 refers to the saints, whereas *all men* refers to those other than saints. Paul wrote to the church at Galatia: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

This was the mindset of Christ. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). On two occasions He fed multitudes. "And

they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children" (Mat. 14:21). "And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children" (Mat. 15:38). What is the church to do in benevolent situations? Are we to turn our backs on victims of floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, and earthquakes? Are we to ignore the orphans and widows, simply hoping that someone else will help them or maybe if we close our eyes, they will go away? Our prayer should be that this is not the state of the church. May we as the church be more like the Samaritan who took time to give help to the one who needed it (Luke 10:33-37). What does the world see when it looks at us—people who are compassionate or unconcerned?

The state of the church will be in seen in our **attitudes**. Our attitude will determine our emphasis. Do we not grow tired of hearing: "We can't do that." The truth is *can't* never could and never will. A congregation that dwells on the negative, on the *can't*, will never grow. What we need are more congregations, which will not be denied. They are going to recognize the urgency of God's work and not allow the boo-birds to prevent them from accomplishing what God would have us do. Paul told the church at Phillippi: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi. 4:13). Keep the statement in its context. Paul is saying I can do everything God expects of me for salvation. God has not, nor never will, demand of us things we are not capable of doing.

From where does this defeatist attitude of "I can't" come? It is a ploy of Satan. He uses our failures and turns them into defeats. He causes us to lose sight of the real goal. Paul said:

> For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Paul could have said because of all the hardship I have faced, I just cannot go on. Thank God, he did not! He did not lose sight of what was important. There is a crown of righteousness waiting those who fight, finish, and keep. Peter tells us that God is with us. "For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). Christ promised that He would be with us (Mat. 28:18-20). We may

have setbacks in our lives, but Satan should never convince us that God has forgotten or forsaken us. Do not allow Satan to create in us this defeatist attitude. Are we guilty of emphasizing the "I can't" or the "I Can"?

Our attitude will determine our position. Some brethren cannot be warned. Paul warned Timothy: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Paul suggested that there is a way to recognize these false teachers:

> 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 (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

This is still a valid way to recognize these who are false teachers. This does not fall under egos but facts! We have a responsibility to verify what individuals are teaching. We should follow the example of the Bereans: "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). The fact that one has preached for a long time is not why we should support that person. The fact they one has written a book does not mean that we should follow them regardless. The fact that an individual once taught the truth does not mean that he will always teach the truth. This is the reason we have the Word of God. We can examine the teaching of an individual, and come to know whether or not they are teaching truth or error. If he is teaching error, we have a responsibility to God, not the false teacher. Paul said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11). Our attitude toward truth will determine how we deal with those who would teach false doctrine. Our attitude should be that our allegiance is to God, not man! What is our attitude?

Our attitude will determine our **altitude**! Christ understood that sin originates in the heart of man. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark 7:15). It is our heart that will control our actions. Certain Jews confronted Paul when he came to Rome. They wanted to know about *this sect* (Acts 28:22). Paul presents his argument:

> And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening (Acts 28:23).

What we need to see is their reaction to what Paul teaches: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (Acts 28:24). We can see two attitudes. One caused them to believe, while the other lead to unbelief. Our attitudes will determine where we spend an eternity. If we cannot believe: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), how can we believe: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)? It is for sure that if we do not believe, we will never obey (Mark 16:15-16). Our attitude will determine our response toward error and truth. It will determine whether we believe or not. What is our attitude toward the Word of God?

How we deal with **authority** will show the state of the church. This could be the underlying factor in the state of the church. Whether or not we respect authority, will determine how we deal with situations. Christ said:

> All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:18-20).

There is every kind of *ism* in the world. How we look at authority will decide where we will stand. From Anti-ism to Premillennialism, it is out there. Many clamor for change, just so they can be a part of some *ism*. May wiser heads prevail. We need more Jeremiahs who will call people back to the correct pathway. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16). We do not need to accept extremes. We are warned:

> 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).

Some will be guilty of getting on the bandwagon because it is the popular thing to do, not because they have investigated the situation and determined it is the right thing to do. When we have the proper respect toward authority, we will be careful about the decision we make.

How we view authority will determine what we allow in worship, salvation, fellowship, women's roles, and the list could go on and on. For example, if we do not believe we have to have "book, chapter, and verse," for what we do in worship, then the door is wide open. Sadly, many have marched through this open door, challenging those who call for the authority for what they are doing. Paul told the church at Corinth, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). When we are walking by faith, we are walking according to the directive of God (Rom. 10:17). Those who ask, "Where is the passage that says we can't do it?" fail to have a proper understanding of God's Word. What they should be asking is, "Where is the passage **that says you can**?" This is the way to determine authority, not the other. To ask the question, "Where is the passage that says we can't do it?" is the same old weak argument that denominationalist have used forever. How sad it is that some of our brethren have joined their *choir*.

In the final analysis, our respect for or lack of respect for authority will show the true state of the church.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH RELIES ON SELF

The state of the church basically boils down to the individual Christian. We have the old expression: "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." The church will only be its best when every Christian is doing his best. Someone suggested that *P.R.* is killing the church. What do we mean by P.R.? It is not Public Relations, but Personal Responsibilities. How seriously do we take our personal responsibilities?

The church grows when *I* grow. Peter stated:

> As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2).
>
> And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (2 Pet. 1:5-9).

> But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen (3:18).

The church goes when *I* go. It was Christ's mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He gave that mission to us (Mat. 28:1-20; Mark 16:15-16). If we are going to carry out that great commission, *I* must go. There is not a single Bible that is going to go by itself. There is not a single sermon that will be preached by itself. There is not a single soul that will be saved unless he comes in contact with the message of hope. If the church goes, it goes by *my* feet, hands, hearts, and love. Paul wrote:

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

The church glows when *I* glow. Christ said:

> Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Mat. 5:13-16).

Christ pointed out who we are and what our responsibility is. It is not my light, but the light of Christ that is shining in me. Brethren, let your light shine!

The church is compassionate when *I* care. Talk, talk, talk, talk, and talk is all some do. James warned:

> What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? (Jam. 2:14-16).

People do not care what we know, until they know how much we care.

The church is strong when *I* stand. We must stand up and be counted. Ezekiel sought for those who would stand up and be counted. "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it:

but I found none" (Eze. 22:30). If Ezekiel was looking for that one to "stand in the gap" today, would he find him?

The church is family when *I* am a brother or sister. There is more to a family than two adults and some children. There is a unity, a bond that is inseparable. Paul spoke of the house (or family of God) to Timothy. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). It appears to this writer that many in the church never reach this level, which could be one of the reasons why it seems to be easy for some to walk away from the church. There is no real bond, nothing to tug at their heartstrings; therefore, when a problem arises, the easy solution is to disassociate themselves. The church ends up being treated more like a social club than a family.

Maybe if we want to get a clear picture of the state of the church, we need to do what James suggested:

> For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (Jam. 1:23-25).

May we take an honest stare into the mirror and fix what needs to be fixed.

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HOW TO RECOGNIZE A LIBERAL CONGREGATION

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INTRODUCTION

Liberalism! We hear this word used frequently in the world today. Just exactly what does the word mean? Well, it all depends upon the context in which it is used. What the term means in politics has a different meaning as it applies to one's generosity. To be a liberal giver to the proper cause is always correct (Pro. 11:25). To be a political liberal is to give money away, yes, but the liberal politician does not give his own money away: he spends others money upon programs and such that many times only serve to *empower* people to remain in their lackadaisical and generally irresponsible lives.

When a person uses *liberal* in religious contexts, there are various definitions to be ascribed to the term. When one discusses the religious world at large and uses this term, this person is probably coming from the point of *modernism*. All modernists are liberals, but not all liberals hold to modernistic belief (McClish 349). Modernism is a person's rejection of pertinent biblical facts as being historically accurate or actually being truthful. A Modernist is one that refuses to believe in the

historicity of subjects such as the Virgin Birth, the Vicarious Death of Christ on the Cross, the Bodily Resurrection, etc. (Machen 6).

As it is most often used today in the context of members of the churches of Christ, the person using the term generally has some of the following ideas in mind. Those congregations and individuals who are actively engaged in restructuring the Lord's church first have to change how one views and interprets the Word of God. The most significant false doctrine to come out of this major category is the teaching of a "New Hermeneutic" (Mitchell 379). Those espousing this position reject the idea of a pattern being given in the Bible. They reject the idea of logical reasoning being applied to the interpretation of the Bible and generally ridicule "Aristotelian logic" as being an invention of men. In the context of this particular false doctrine and how it is applied by most members of the church that accept it, it can be reduced to various false positions. The members of a liberal church will most often reject the idea of "objective truth." Subjectivity and relativism are applied to any biblical subject that conflicts with the beliefs of these people. When confronting these liberal members with the Truth, one often hears this retort: "Well, that is just your opinion and interpretation. After all, great men have differed on these topics before and one cannot be expected to have identical beliefs within the church today." This may be the truth when applied to optional matters, but the liberal applies this thinking to matters of obligation. What becomes apparent very quickly is, the modern day liberal within the Lord's church espouses the identical false doctrine of a denominationalist (Mitchell 380-381). What the liberal congregation ends up being is a group of unfaithful children of God who have formed another denomination (Mitchell 372-373).

A very distinct and predominate characteristic of liberalism is the liberal congregation's use of inaccurate and perverted *versions* of the Bible (Taylor 220). Some of these people want a version that reads like a comic book. The fact is, if one has a Bible that reads like a comic book, a person will treat its contents like a comic book. Sound brethren need to oppose these inaccurate and perverted new versions because they are inaccurate and perverted, not because they are new. If a new version is correctly and accurately translated, then it can contribute positively to this world.

Second, these congregations and individuals are continually pushing for a change in worship. The liberal congregation does not always want

to put the mechanical instrument of music into its worship but would have no definitive scriptural argument to oppose it (Gilmore 412). Arguments that the denominational world have made for years will often be heard coming out of the mouths of children of God, as it relates to this issue. "Well, the Bible does not say we cannot do it!" This type of response is given due to the overwhelming ignorance of the Bible and how God authorizes. Another practice of the liberal church is that of the *praise* or *worship team*. This is nothing more than a choir. God requires that we have congregational singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12) (Mitchell 386-387). Another well-worn practice of the liberals is that of the divided assembly. They feel that it is worthwhile to not partake of the Lord's Supper as a complete body, but to divide the young from the old into special worship services (1 Cor. 11:20). There is no authority for doing this, and God therefore will not approve of it (Col. 3:17; John 4:23-24).

Three, these churches appoint women to positions and assign roles of function for them that are not authorized in the Word. The issue of the woman's role in the church was an issue that one would have assumed would seldom be a problem understanding and accepting. However, partially due to the Feminist Movement of the last 40 years, the Lord's church has seen the insurgents of people espousing the error of a woman's taking a leadership position in every aspect of the work of Christ. Some have advocated the use of women preachers and every other role God reserved for male members of the kingdom (Jackson 274).

Four, there is a general disregard for the plan of salvation, at best, and, at worst, they are compromising the Word of God as it relates to the God-given plan of Salvation. Some within liberal congregations have rejected the biblical teaching of grace and have accepted the denominational error of being saved *wholly* by grace (Mitchell 383). Along with this error on grace, one usually finds these members believing that law, grace, love, and works are all mutually exclusive (Clayton 295). Some have even gone so far as to reject the teaching of baptism being essential to one's salvation.

Five, these congregations do not follow the biblical guidelines of fellowship. The liberal church will fellowship almost anyone or any church. They generally mis-define the meaning of the "doctrine of Christ" as found in 2 John 9-11. They say that the doctrine of Christ only refers to the truth regarding His Deity. They do this so they can

differ and still fellowship people that disagree regarding doctrines that they do not esteem as being very *important* (Elkins 235-45). The liberal congregation operates in this area with the idea that feelings and emotions are to be the litmus test for whom they fellowship.

Six, these erring brethren do not hold fast to the biblically designated moral standard. The tell-tale sign of a liberal church in this area is the way they handle those who have violated the teaching of the Bible as it relates to marriage, divorce, and remarriage (McClish 364). The liberal congregation will ignore those that are living in adultery so as to gain them as *contributing* members. Let it be stated, the way to stand against liberalism in this area is not to take positions that would exalt man's law above God's Law. God's Law is always superior to man's law (Parker 3-65). While it is the case that several subcategories could be listed to point out additional specific errors, these mentioned encompass the mindset and general practice of a liberal church (McClish 361-65).

One must be very careful in his determination of what constitutes a liberal church. Some have accused congregations of the Lord's church of being liberal based on that congregation's practicing things that are authorized yet different to what the accuser is accustomed. In optional matters we are to show kindness and accommodation.

Some have taken the position that a liberal church is nothing but a *red herring*. They accuse faithful brethren of building up a straw man and then disassembling him to make a name for themselves. While it is true that some can see a liberal *behind every bush*, this is not to say that liberalism is not alive and well in much of our brotherhood. It is just as wrong to *put one's head in the sand* and pretend that there is not a problem as it is to become paranoid and affirm that everyone is a liberal that differs in any point of personal scruples.

There are some specific characteristics of liberalism and congregations that do obeisance to this very popular idol. This chapter will not so much deal with these specific practices that are characteristic of liberal churches as much as the ideology/philosophy behind these practices. If a person can identify the thinking behind these practices, then one will have no problem in identifying a liberal congregation. The specific unscriptural practices of these liberal churches may change from time to time but the thinking of the liberal will remain the same.

WHY A CONGREGATION ACCEPTS LIBERALISM?

Often one hears faithful brethren sadly ask, "What happened to the _____ church? They used to be so sound?" The answer to this question is not so easily answered as some would think. It is certain that a congregation's journey into apostasy does not happen speedily, and it certainly does not always follow the same downward path. Just because a congregation is seen as being *sound* does not mean that it is. A church is only sound to the extent that its members are sound. This is an often repeated mistake that many make. Those on the outside of a congregation often confuse the leadership's soundness with that of the membership. Sometimes a congregation's digression into liberalism is observed by those on the outside of that church as being a quick transformation, when in reality, the seeds of liberalism had been planted and nurtured many years before its fruition.

So, why does a seemingly sound church leave its biblical moorings and drift into troubled and damning seas? Here is a list of things that contribute to a church's demise and will hopefully serve as a warning to those within sound churches and unfortunately will serve as a summary of the past to those who already have sunk to the depths of liberalism.

A list like the following must have at the head of that list what this writer believes to be the predominate characteristic of why churches accept liberalism. This characteristic is a lack of respect for the exclusive authority of the Word of God (McClish 355). There are various tributary ideologies and false doctrines that feed into this most primary characteristic. To begin with, often is the case that sound congregations will start down a road to the acceptance of the idea of rejecting Bible authority by simply becoming complacent and negligent as to its members' Bible knowledge (Hos. 4:6). The church is woefully lacking in the area of sound Bible class materials—generally speaking. So many congregations do not have a challenging and systematic approach to Bible study. If this is the case as it relates to the congregation, it is often the case that the individual Christian does not put forth the proper effort in Bible study either. If a church persists in a type of *status quo*, it will eventually have on its hands a generation untaught and unlearned in the Scripture. The apostle Peter makes clear that when this is the case, people will twist and pervert the Word to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15).

Another issue that plays a part in bringing a church to the ungodly position of rejecting biblical authority is the development of an inordinate desire to please men. Due to this attitude, the church will not practice church discipline on its members that are not living as they should. They do not approach them about their sin, and they will not attempt to teach them the Truth about their sin. They certainly will not withdraw fellowship from these people. When men feel that they are to operate under the dictate of not wanting to offend anyone for anything, they have become "pleasers of men" and thus have ceased being the servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

What logically follows is that the congregation no longer has a sound teaching staff to take care of the needs of the congregation, and instead of taking these people out of the program to better educate them, they leave them in it. What results is a general *pooling of ignorance* within a class session instead of sound Bible teaching. Thus, the atmosphere of a congregation is primed and ready for what could be termed as the *last nail* in the coffin that will hold the dead body of this once alive and active church. It usually goes like this, "We need a preacher change." What had been so characteristic of the congregation throughout the years now changes. That is, men of truth and virtue had always occupied the pulpit, but instead of holding to this pattern, the leadership hires a man that has drunk deeply in the wells of liberal thought and actions. He probably has attended a school that caters to the world; a school that holds to liberal teachings and teachers is where he probably attended. Instead of fighting the good fight of faith while there, the new preacher had surrendered to the enemy and now fights on the other side. What a great tragedy! When the church gets a few years of this type of preaching from this preacher, it is now ready to not only accept liberalism—it will open the doors wide and invite it in unabated.

Let it not be overlooked, the ultimate fault of a congregation's accepting liberalism resides firmly in the lap of the eldership. An eldership is obligated by the Word of God to stop the mouths of the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9-11). But, instead of some elderships doing this, they will permit a false teacher to continue their false teaching, and they will not do anything to stop them. *False teacher* is used for a reason. While it is true that all liberals are false teachers, it is not true that all false teachers are liberals. A false teacher does not have to be a liberal for there to be a need for an eldership to oppose them.

However, not all churches are faithful even though there is no liberalism within it ranks. An eldership that allows false teachers to exist and false doctrine to be taught, whether it is of the liberal ilk or not, is an eldership that is not qualified and will not fare well in the Judgment (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1; 1 Pet. 5). These men need to repent and step down, but most of them will not. They will continue allowing false teachers to have their platform and false doctrine to be spread, all under the excuse of *being patient* with those in error. When in reality, these men have no backbone and are a *bright shade of yellow*. What shameful disregard for the Truth! What arrogance displayed by men that should only be loyal to the King of kings and Lord of lords; instead they *play politics* and are afraid to oppose those that are offending the very God of Heaven.

It is often the case, that where faithful brethren exist in a congregation like the one described, they are the ones looked at as *trouble makers*. Those that oppose the error and the false teacher are falsely accused by the unfaithful of being the problem. They fight against ungodliness and ungodly men and, more times than not, are forced out and sent on their way where they form a much smaller yet faithful group of Christians.

If only this was an isolated incident within our brotherhood, but it is not. Saving only the changing of some names and specific situations, this scenario is repeated time and again to the overwhelming joy of those who "love to have it so."

A CONGREGATION'S ARROGANT ATTITUDE IN ACCEPTING LIBERALISM

It is the epitome of haughtiness for a congregation to reject the Truth of God's Word in preference for an ideology that is morally and scripturally bankrupt. The Word gives various examples of those that were liberal in their attitudes and actions. While it is true that liberalism manifests itself in some of the specific items that were listed above, it is a philosophy that has been around for a long time. It is a certain attitude and approach to religion that is unwilling to be as strict and definitive as God is in His Word (McClish 348). This attitude is characteristic of all liberals. They may not admit this to be the case, but the fact is, this is the implication of their position. There are several examples of this very attitude within the Word.

Our mother Eve demonstrated this attitude in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3). God's instructions were not ambiguous in the least. Eve even told the serpent what God required. She did understand the instructions. This proves that at the heart of every sin lies the motivation of selfishness and self-gratification. These are two of the sins that reside within the foundation of liberal thought. Eve was tempted through the avenues of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15)—she yielded to these temptations. Our Lord was also tempted in these three avenues, but He did not yield to the temptations (Mat. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15). He was actually tempted in this situation; His being Deity did not insulate him from choosing to sin if he so desired. What made the difference in each case? Eve knew what God demanded; Jesus knew what the Word demanded, as well. The difference resided in the fact that Eve did not believe the command of God, and our Lord firmly and confidently believed the Word and applied its precepts to His life. We today can be benefitted the same way our Lord was by properly applying the Truth in our lives (Psa. 119:11).

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron and priests of God, decided that they were going to reject and ignore the law of exclusion as it related to the sacrificial system of the Jews (Lev. 10:1-2). Though the liberal of today, as always has been the case, ridicules this biblical principle, it is indeed a sound and valid one (Heb. 7:14). The arrogance displayed by these two men in acting in such a presumptuous way, men who knew what God had commanded in his Word, resulted in their being executed for their action. God demands that we only operate by His authority and not our own (Col. 3:17).

David, the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," "the man after God's own heart," decided on his own impulse to move the Ark of the Covenant in an unauthorized manner (1 Chr. 13). David knew the Law of God but chose to disregard it, based on his assumed desire to please God. This sounds contradictory, and it is. Just because David thought he was pleasing God by doing this thing, did not mean that he was doing so. In 1 Chronicles 15, David properly applies the Word of God proving that he did understand what God had commanded. He states, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever" (15:2). Because of David's previous action in moving the Ark in an unauthorized way (they built a new cart for the oxen to pull), Uzzah

was killed by God for touching the Ark when it threatened to fall off the cart (13:1-14). The act of Uzzah demonstrates that sincerity and honesty, divorced from the authority of the Scriptures, is a farce. One of the problems of the liberal is his incessant verbiage about how sincerity is the basis if **all** actions, even if some of these actions are sinful (McClish 348). David admits that he was wrong by moving the Ark in the authorized way. He states that they had "sought him not after the due order" (15:13). Millions of souls today reflect this same sinful attitude of David when he first tried to move the Ark. The liberal church believes that they have somehow improved upon what God has commanded and are attempting to *move the Ark* in the way they think best. They are convinced that God will *go along* with what they think is correct. Oh how tragic! Oh how sad!

THE ALLEVIATING OF LIBERALISM WITHIN A CONGREGATION

The outlook for a liberal congregation's ever coming back to the Truth is, unfortunately, bleak. This has been observed within this scribe's lifetime. Churches which have digressed into liberalism and attempt to turn things around for Truth seldom succeed. It usually starts when some of the members who have not gone along with the apostasy attempt to get people to repent. This normally ends with the faithful brethren having to leave and start a sound congregation, but sometimes it can engender a turn around within the leadership.

The possibility could exist in some of these liberal churches that, some have accepted liberalism out of ignorance and have just not been educated in its degenerate precepts. If a leadership will get back to studying their Bibles, many times they can see the Truth and start requiring its application in their own lives as well as the congregation's life. Also, the leadership of some of these liberal churches has been known to take a stand against the most influential liberal within the church—the liberal preacher. If these having-been-enlightened leaders will take a definitive stand for Truth, get rid of the liberal preacher, and then ask a faithful brother to come and work with them, there is hope. At this time comes the hard part, when all the newness of being in a fight for Truth has worn off, and the reality of the situation becomes apparent. Will the leadership maintain their stand for what is right or cave in? While it is true that some of the liberal element has probably left the congregation to attend a church that holds to their error, what

is more likely is that some of the liberals have remained. Their purpose for doing so is to constantly ridicule and pressure the leadership to return to liberal error. They make a point in criticizing everything the preacher has to say. They will make a point of trying to undercut and minimize every proper decision made by the leadership. If the leadership is not prepared for a long term fight, it is often the case that they will acquiesce to the liberal element thinking that this will bring about some peace. The fact is, this will only bring about a more concerted effort on the part of these liberals to demand that the church go back to what it used to be. What faithful brethren must do to assure that the church remains faithful to the Truth is to discipline those who are causing the problems. If a leadership and congregation ever expects to maintain faithfulness to the Lord, they must be willing to discipline the unfaithful even to the point of withdrawing fellowship from those who refuse to be taught the Truth and refuse to turn from liberalism.

When a church within the area where you live starts its long path back to faithfulness, the faithful brethren within sound churches need to do as much as they can to support this attempt. It is a wonderful blessing indeed to observe the liberal congregation turn back to the Truth. Unfortunately, it is often the case where a liberal church will not maintain this faithful attempt, and the church slips back into apostasy.

What can a liberal church do to come back to the Truth or what can a faithful church do to remain faithful to the Lord? In brother Goebel Music's monumental work, *Behold the Pattern*, the final chapter is some of the best material that has been written on the question of faithfulness and it being maintained. The principles that are given within this section when applied to every Christian's life will stop liberalism in its tracks.

First, brother Music states that there is no substitute for a thorough understanding of the Word of God (Music 580). If one is to have this characteristic in life then, one must be intellectually honest (Music 581). When one makes the Bible his only standard of authority, this will ultimately solve the sin of liberalism.

Second, one must incorporate an attitude of complete surrender to the Will of God if one is to combat liberalism (Music 584). With this firmly in mind, one will not adhere to the teachings and ideas of men but will respect God's Word as he should. Specifically, he will apply its teaching to their his life and live as a Christian should.

Third, if we are to avoid liberalism we must learn to be "critical listeners" (Music 586). Jesus tells us that we are to take head *how* we hear and *what* we hear (Luke 8:18; Mark 4:24). This demands "a critical examination" of everything with the standard being the Bible (cf. Acts 17:10-11; 1 John 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 13:5; Acts 20:28-32; Gal. 2:11-14; etc.) (Music 587).

Fourth, the church stays sound, leaves liberalism, to the extent that an individual Christian takes personal responsibility and applies the Truth of God's Word in his or her own life (Music 587-88).

Fifth, one must believe that applying God's Word to his life is essential to his salvation, if he is to be what God wants him to be (Music 589).

Sixth, while it is *fine and dandy* to know the Truth on this issue, it is worthless knowledge if not put into practice. Christ's religion is one that requires action, obedience, doing (Music 590-94).

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, *liberal* is not as precise a word as some think. When one observes the actions and attitudes of a congregation that has been described above, biblically speaking, this church is lost, unfaithful, puffed up, shipwrecked, lukewarm, false, and any other designation that the Word gives it (Luke 19:10; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 11:26; 1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 4:10; Rev. 2:10; 3:15-16). This is what a liberal congregation is.

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STEMMING THE TIDE OF LIBERALISM

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INTRODUCTION

The New Testament church is described by various figures to help us better understand its design, its purpose, and its work. It is, for example, the beautiful bride of Christ (Rom. 7:4), the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), the army of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3), the husbandry of God (1 Cor. 3:9), the saved (Acts 2:47), the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12), the body of Christ (Col. 1:18), and it is the blood-bought (Acts 20:28). It is to the body figure that we want to pay especially close attention.

It is this author's desire to demonstrate, that as the body of Christ, the church is susceptible to various viruses and malignities which plague the body even yet today; that Scripture not only warns us of such but provides both the vaccine and the antidote. Thus the ability of the body to resist or fight off infection and disease stems from its health (i.e. soundness, cf. Psa. 38:3, 7; Isa. 1:5-6).

Considering the topic at hand, "Stemming the Tide of Liberalism," this topic demands that we see liberalism as a foreign pathogen that is harmful to the body of Christ, and stemming its tide a vital and valiant responsibility of every member of the body. Paul spoke of this accountability in Ephesians 4:16, wherein he wrote:

> From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in

> the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

It is therefore the purpose of every member of the Lord's church to so think, speak, and act as to benefit the entire body.

A DEGREE OF CLARITY

Definition of *Liberalism*

Liberalism may be one of the most ill-defined words in modern man's vocabulary. W. H. Brands writes:

> Liberalism has had a hundred definitions since the concept surfaced in England in the early nineteenth century; these have ranged from antimonarchical individualism to anticlerical secularism to antitrust progressivism to antinuclear environmentalism, from abolition to prohibition to states' rights to civil rights to human rights. There are economic liberals, social liberals, philosophical liberals; liberal realists, liberal idealists, liberal sentimentalists.
>
> Liberals define themselves as defenders of the downtrodden against the rich and powerful, as upholders of equality in the face of inequality, as apostles of compassion and tolerance in a world distressingly devoid of both (viii).

After World War II, *liberalism* came to refer to "left of center." Thus, in political and cultural discussions you will often hear people speak of both liberals and conservatives as radicals, because they are both *off-center*. That is, neither liberalism nor conservationism reflects *mainstream America*. On the other hand, if God's Will is the center, then liberalism (left of center) is loosing where God has not loosed, and anti-ism (right of center) is binding where God has not bound (cf. Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Mat. 16:19; Rev. 22:18-19). This is the manner in which we will use *liberalism* and *anti-ism* within this lecture. A note about conservatism is in order here for proper balance of the topic at hand. *Conservatism* is from "*conservare,* in Latin, means to protect, preserve, save; the noun of agency." This is in agreement with the use of the New Testament word *soter* which Thayer says this word means, "*savior, deliverer; preserver*" (612). Louw-Nida says, "to rescue, to save, one who rescues or saves—'deliverer, rescuer, savior'" (1:240). Thus a conservative is one who preserves the pattern of the New Testament. He is one who is concerned with holding onto and echoing apostolic doctrine and traditions (2 The. 2:15; 3:6; Acts 2:42).

Definition of *Stemming the Tide*

Stem (and its various forms) is a verb meaning "to stop or hold back by or as if by damming; stanch. To plug or tamp (a blast hole, for example); *Sports:* To point (skis) inward. To point skis inward in order to slow down or turn" (*American Heritage*). Stemming the tide of something simply means "to make headway against."

The question arises then, "How are we going to stem the current tide of liberalism?" This question can be answered twofold: vaccine and antidote. It stands without argument that the healthier his body the better prepared a man will be to ward off problematic infections and diseases. It just so happens that God prepared three epistles that discuss the health of the local church. We will seek to exegete these three letters (1 and 2 Timothy; Titus) in search of God's vaccine for and antidote against liberalism. According to the epistles, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and sent Titus to Crete (Tit. 1:5) for just this purpose.

A NEEDED VACCINE AGAINST LIBERALISM

Vaccine is defined as

> a substance prepared from dead or living microorganisms that is introduced into the body through inoculation. The vaccine causes the development of antibodies, which produce immunity to the disease caused by the microorganism.

It is this development of antibodies, which produce immunity to liberalism that will be the heart of this section. In other words, this is preventative maintenance to help keep a congregation healthy and away from liberalism.

The Gospel in its purity must be proclaimed in its entirety (cf. Acts 20:20, 27). The following have been the themes for many majestic hymns sung by Christians of every generation. Jesus came into the world to save the sinner (1 Tim. 1:15-17). He is the one mediator between God and man (2:3-7), and was God manifested in the flesh (3:16). Our Lord is the Savor of all who truly believe (4:10), the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (6:15-16). God saved us and called us with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:8-10); Christ is of the seed of David (2:8-13). The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men (Tit. 2:11-14).

Appointing qualified bishops is a powerful immunization against liberalism. Every congregation needs elders, but more than

that, they need capable men to serve as shepherds. The church needs men who are fit in character, in domestic accountability, and in their ability to carry out their work. A man without strength of character, determination displayed in grit and backbone in facing adversity, is not qualified to serve as an elder in the Lord's church (cf. Acts 20:28-31; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-13). Elders need to get rid of preachers whether they are lazy, liberal, anti, or moderate. The liberal ones are infecting the Lord's body with diseases. The lazy and liable ones are allowing it to be so, and all must go!

Along with the bishops, selecting qualified deacons will help inoculate the congregation against liberalism. Having men who are qualified servants of the local church and who can establish a good example in life and teaching will go a long way in promoting a healthy body (1 Tim. 3:8-13). When trouble arose in the first century church, under the guidance of the apostles, they appointed capable men to take care of the problem with godly service (Acts 6:1-6). Luke records that after this was done that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (v. 7).

Having qualified preachers and teachers will boost a congregation's immune system to ward off liberalism (Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:42). The Lord's church (by its very nature) is a teaching institution, and therefore, by definition must train, seek, and maintain an eligible and skilled teaching staff. This would include faithful attendance at assemblies (Heb. 10:24-25), being a paradigm of behavior (1 Tim. 4:12), applying oneself to study (2 Tim. 2:15), to reading, exhortation, doctrine, and meditation (1 Tim. 4:13, 15a).

A NEEDED ANTIDOTE FOR LIBERALISM

Antidote is defined as "an agent used to neutralize or counteract the effects of a poison or an agent that relieves or counteracts" (*Stedman's*). It may be as simple as something that is designed to induce vomiting or walking as an antidote to nervous tension. Thus, in this part of our study we are looking for that agent(s) that will counteract damage that has already been done by liberalism. This is what needs to happen when the pathogen of liberalism has already begun to take hold of a congregation.

We must be strong and war a good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2:1, 3-4; 4:7; Tit. 1:9-13). Diplomacy simply does not work

with Satan and his messengers, therefore, we are to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam. 4:7), "whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9). Paul would tell the church at Ephesus to "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). We have raised far too many politicians in the Lord's church in recent years and are in need of a little more backbone to be able to stop the mouths of these men (Tit. 1:11). Elders must come to realize that there will be casualties in war!

We must hold fast and continue to preach the Word (2 Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:9). There are nine imperatives listed in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 that clearly show the importance of the work of Gospel preachers in keeping the church healthy and recovering it from foreign microorganisms, such as liberalism. Preachers are to **preach** the Word (v. 2; cf. 1 Tim. 1:3). How? by being **ready** to **reprove**, **rebuke**, and **exhort**. To what extent should they preach? To the extent that they would be willing to suffer long. When should this be done? It is to be done "in season and out of season" or in the immortal words of Marshall Keeble: "When they like it and when they don't." Why should a preacher preach in this fashion? For the time will come when some will not stand for sound doctrine; they will prefer false teachers to tickle their ears because they have turned from the truth unto fables. Far too many members today would rather have a dramatic presentation of the Gospel or a fifteen minute humorous, after dinner speech.

Preachers are to **watch** circumspectly. Furthermore, a preacher that is not willing to **endure** suffering because of the Word is not worth his salt. If we preach like Jeremiah, we must be willing to end up in the dungeon (Jer. 37-38). A preacher must **do** the work of an evangelist. We must never forget our primary responsibility is to tell the world about the good news of Jesus Christ (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47). Is it possible that some Gospel preachers get too wrapped up in fighting against error within that they fail to reach out to the lost? Brethren, we must **make full proof** of our ministry. "The best way to make full proof of our ministry is to fulfil it, to fill it up in all its parts with proper work" (Henry 849).

We must continue to charge men not to teach any other doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:1-6; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 3:1-7; 4:1-4; Tit. 1:14; 3:9). *Unwholesome words* will mutate the body into a denomination (this is the importance of the document *The Last Will and Testament of*

the Springfield Presbytery). The man who preaches unwholesome words is

> proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness (1 Tim. 6:4-5).

His words will "eat as doth a canker" (2 Tim. 2:17). Therefore, we must carry on the charge of young Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:2).

We must sharply rebuke the men who are given over to liberalism (Tit. 1:9-13). There are multiple exhortations by the apostle Paul to his sons in the faith, to teach, teach, and re-teach. Timothy is to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3); to "put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ" (4:6). He is instructed to "command and teach" (4:11) while giving "heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (4:16). He is to administer his duties without "partiality" (5:21) and to commit the things he has learned to faithful men who will be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). He is charged to preach the Word in season and out of season to reprove, rebuke, and to exhort (4:1-2). Titus is told to speak the things that befit sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1) and to put the brethren in mind of certain things (3:1). Can anyone be surprised then that Paul would encourage these two preachers to "withdraw thyself" and to "sharply rebuke" those who stubbornly refuse to adhere to the sweet message of the Gospel?

Once any man or any congregation has given over to liberalism, we must withdraw ourselves (1 Tim. 6:5). This final step will be discussed further under a needed amputation of liberalism.

Finally, **we must continue to engage in the work that God has given us**. There is a flood of information given in these three epistles concerning the continued work of various groups within the body. Each group is encouraged to live in a particular fashion respective to their calling: Men in general are to continue to lift "up holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8); while the older men are to "be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Tit. 2:2). The younger men are instructed to be sober-minded as well (2:6) and to flee youthful lust (2 Tim. 2:22). Women on the other hand are instructed to adorn themselves with modest apparel (1 Tim. 2:9-10), to love their husbands and their children, and be keepers at home (Tit. 2:4-5; 1 Tim. 2:15). Women are to learn in silence with all subjection and not to teach or to exercise

authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:11-12). The older women are to exhibit holy behavior and to be teachers of the younger women (Tit. 2:3-4). The younger widows are to marry, lest they become idle, tattlers, and busybodies (1 Tim. 5:14). The older widows who meet the qualifications are to be put to work and supported by the church (1 Tim. 5:4-10). Servants are to honor and obey their masters (1 Tim. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10). All this is to be done so "the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:5); that "the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (2:8); that we may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (2:10).

A NEEDED AMPUTATION OF LIBERALISM

Amputation is "the surgical removal of all or part of a limb, an organ, or projecting part or process of the body. *Amputation* is the removal of a body extremity by trauma or surgery. As a surgical measure, it is used to control pain or a disease process in the affected limb, such as malignancy or gangrene" (*Stedman's*). Generally speaking, this is a last stitch effort to remove the pathogen from the body.

Paul illustrated the serious nature of unwholesome words (1 Tim. 6:3), by saying that "their word will eat as doth a canker" (2 Tim. 2:17). In plants, some cankers are treatable with fungicide or bactericide, but many are not. Often the only treatment available is to destroy the infected plant to prevent the disease from spreading to other plants. With reference to humans, we do not have to destroy the whole body but may simply amputate the infected area. It is imperative that we educate ourselves as to the **categories of sin** and the **church's responsibility**:

The Personal Transgressor

Biblical Instruction:

> Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Mat. 18:15-17).

Congregational Liability:

The local church has no responsibility in the beginning. This is a personal matter between two brethren and needs to begin there.

Brethren, it is just as wrong to circumvent God's instructions as it would be to violate them! The church is to get involved in this matter only when it is clear that the two parties cannot work out their own differences (cf. Phi. 4:2-3). Once the matter comes before the church and inquiry has been made according to biblical standards (Deu. 19:18; 13:14; 17:4; John 7:51; cf. 1 Tim. 5:21), then a decision on the matter at hand is made. A man that will not live by that just decision is to be amputated from the body of Christ.

The False Teacher

Biblical Instruction:

> Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Congregational Liability:

The duty of the local congregation herein is clear. Once all the evidence is considered and the investigation has been finalized, a man that is a false teacher is first marked and then avoided. Notice the simple sentence: "brethren, mark them...and avoid them." "Marked" comes from *skopeo*, meaning "to look at, observe, contemplate; to mark; to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to" (Louw and Nida 1:279). A love for the brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17; 1:22) demands that we point out exactly who these individuals are for others to see and to avoid as well. Compare this command with the example of Paul to Timothy in dealing with false teachers (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17; 3:8); deserters of the faith (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10); and outspoken enemies of the cause (2 Tim. 4:14-15).

The second step in this instruction is to avoid, which comes from *ekklino* meaning, "to turn aside, deviate (from the right way and course); to turn (one's self) away, to turn away from, keep aloof from one's society; to shun one" (Louw and Nida 1:450). It is translated: *eschew* once (1 Pet. 3:11), *avoid* once (Rom. 16:17), and *go out of the way* once (Rom. 3:12), in its three uses throughout the New Testament. A congregation that would give a marked false teacher a platform to teach and influence without noting that man and his teaching is in violation of Scripture. The extent of their heinous crime is found in the cautionary words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 7:15-20)

that they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Both Peter (2 Pet. 2) and Jude would give a detailed description of their motivations, their ways, and their eternal rewards.

The Immoral Individual

Biblical Instruction:

> It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you...he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.... In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.... Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.... I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:...if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 4-5, 7, 9, 11, 13).

Congregational Liability:

One would have to have a lot of help to misunderstand the simple instruction of this chapter. Consider:

"taken away from among you" (2)
"Purge out" (6)
"not to company with" (9)
"not to keep company" (11)
"with such an one not to eat" (11)
"put away from among yourselves" (13)

Therefore, once all the evidence is considered and the investigation has been finalized, a man that is immoral and refuses to repent, "when ye are gathered together" (i.e. at the next public meeting, v. 4) you make note of that man and withdraw yourselves from him.

The Disorderly Walker

Biblical Instruction:

> Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men* (1 The. 5:14).

> Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 The. 3:6).

Congregational Liability:

Herein the instruction is clear but the category may be unknown. What is a disorderly walker? Brother Guy N. Woods, in answering the question: "Is forsaking the assembly grounds for church discipline?" answered simply, "Yes," and then gave further explanation.

> It is significant that the words "walketh disorderly" translate a Greek phrase with a military connotation, signifying *out of step, not in proper order*, and it is remarkable the Arndt and Gingrich say that involved literally is "irregular religious services!" Quite obviously, a person who is not in attendance because of carelessness, love of the world, etc., is "out of step," and not in "proper order" with the rest of the congregation, and thus an object of disciple (137).

This category is what this writer likes to call an open category. Any sin that is not included in the other classifications will certainly fall herein. Please take notice that the church is liable for withdrawing from such individuals that refuse to repent of any sin.

The Heretic

Biblical Instruction:

> A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Tit. 3:10-11).

Congregational Liability:

Our accountability to God and our love for the souls of men should be evident in dealing with this pathogen known as a party man. Here is a man that will pick and choose his doctrinal beliefs based upon a party system. His study and his preaching lack integrity; he is a schismatic. The Corinthians were admonished by Paul to stop this kind of behavior because it was both dangerous and childish (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:1). The local congregation is responsible for warning this man that his behavior is both wrong and subverted and will lead men to damnation. Pay close attention to the passage: the church exceeds the will of God when if fails to withdraw or chooses to give three or more admonitions to this man.

CONCLUSION

Brethren, the body of Christ has been infected with the deadly pathogen of liberalism. Thus, the blight of liberalism is evidenced by various factors such as: a failure to recognize the importance of pattern theology and the silence of Scripture, immoral behavior on the part of

preachers and members alike, and a lack of integrity in our study and application of God's precious Word. Thanks be to our God that we have the answer. The real question is: Do we have the resolve and stamina to apply it?

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“MODERATES” PAVE THE WAY FOR LIBERALISM

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INTRODUCTION

One is either unconcerned, ignorant, or both if he is not aware of the damage that liberalism is doing to the Lord’s church. God has revealed to mankind His Word, and it is incumbent upon each individual to understand the unchanging Will of Jehovah. It is not how “I see it” or how “you see it,“ but how **God sees it** and **said it**! The unchanging God (Mal. 3:6) has given us in His Word an absolute, objective, inerrant standard that must be believed and obeyed if one is going to save his soul (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

A rejection of God’s knowledge or a failure to study the Bible supplies all the proof needed that one does not fear or respect Jehovah. Solomon was correct in saying: “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; *But* the foolish despise wisdom and instruction” (Pro. 1:7). The prophet Hosea declared that his people were “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6), and the apostle Paul warns those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). It is sad that many brethren today “have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2).

Far too many brethren today are content to **listen** to what someone else says about God and His Word. These brethren are not inclined to search the Scriptures to see if what has been taught them is true or false (cf. Acts 17:11). It is a sad commentary on those who profess to be

Christians when they will readily read what some **man** has said about religion, but they will refuse to read what **Christ** has said about sacred matters! It is never good for the Lord's church when brethren become so *passive* in their Christianity that they refuse to **stand** and "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). If brethren will read, believe, and obey the Word of God, it will prevent the *moderates* from paving the way for liberal *takeovers*.

The world in which we live is **not** the pattern for the Lord's church. Society as a whole expects less and less of man, and we are not a better people as a result of such low expectations. This type of thinking has rubbed off on many congregations and consequently many brethren have deceived themselves in thinking that almost nothing is required of them to go to Heaven.

The people of Micah's day refused to see that the abuse of legitimate ordinances would never please God. They could not offer prescribed sacrifices and expect God to accept them while living ungodly lives (cf. Mic. 6:6-7). The kinsmen of those who were guilty of such hypocrisy are alive and well today!

One can rest assured that there were *moderate* Jews who gave *lip service* to being in opposition to inventing ordinances of their own choosing and borrowing pagan customs from heathen nations. Here, however, is what happened. The Psalmist says:

> But mingled themselves with the nations, And learned their works, And served their idols, Which became a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, And shed innocent blood, Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood (Psa. 106:35-38).

Micah's message should have been heeded. This loyal spokesman for God said: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8). If one is loyal to "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7), he will never become a moderate pawn who paves the way for liberalism!

DEFINITION OF A MODERATE

The definition that *The American Heritage Dictionary* gives that applies to our study states that a *moderate* is one "opposed to radical or extreme views or measures, especially in politics or religion." The dictionary also defines the action of this person as seeking "to lessen

the violence, severity, or extremeness of" and states that the "central meaning" is "to make less extreme or intense."

A moderate politician will strive to temper his message and position in such a way so he offends neither the one who is "conservative" or "liberal" so deeply that he will not receive their vote. The moderate member of the Lord's church does likewise in the sense that he refrains from *rocking the boat* when liberal propaganda is proclaimed and unscriptural practices occur. Even though it is a matter of doctrine that is being assailed and undermined, a moderate may opt to leave the matter up to God to judge. The moderate may say that he is not in full agreement with what is being advocated and practiced at the congregation that he attends, but neither does he believe in *stirring up trouble* and being *divisive*. He may take the position that it is not he but the elders who will give an account for what occurs within the congregation. A moderate may also quickly point out that no congregation is perfect; thus, one just has to do the best he can regardless of the circumstances.

Let it be noted that there will always be differences of opinion in matters of expediency and judgment among members of a local congregation. It is also true that no one is perfect, but this should never become an excuse to overlook or tolerate doctrinal error! A member of the body of Christ always has the obligation and responsibility to **uphold** the Word of God; to "exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). Especially, of course, is this true of elders who are the watchmen and shepherds of the flock.

A MODERATE, NEUTRAL POSITION IN MATTERS OF DOCTRINE IS SINFUL

Members who attend a congregation and give of their means as God requires them to do (1 Cor. 16:1-2) **support** and have **fellowship** with the activities and practices of said congregation. If the congregation is involved in unscriptural practices (error), then all members who sit quietly by (although mentally opposed) are in error. A soldier of the cross has the obligation to rise and do battle against those who would trample underfoot the cause of Christ. One does not "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) by taking a moderate or neutral position against liberalism and doctrinal error. The Lord's church is in a battle for the souls of men, and all faithful members of the Lord's army will "war the good warfare" (1:18).

A moderate child of God is a *fence-straddler* who does not have the intestinal fortitude to be either for Christ or against Him! Two examples are given in the Bible that address such an attitude. First, Balak wanted Balaam to place a curse against Israel (Num. 23:7). God did not allow Balaam to honor Balak's request, and Israel was blessed instead of cursed (23:11). Balak was incensed at Balaam, but the prophet answered: "Must I not take heed to speak that which Jehovah putteth in my mouth?" (23:12)? Balak then pleads for Balaam to take a moderate position in saying: "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all" (23:25). Balaam's sin is in continuing to try and please Balak after Jehovah has spoken (23:26-27).

Second, even though Pilate was convinced that Christ had done nothing worthy of death, he desired to placate the Jews who demanded that the Lord be crucified. Pilate, the moral coward that he was, took a moderate position and "washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye *to it*" (Mat. 27:24). Brethren, if we allow the Word of God to be trodden under foot while advocating a moderate (neutral) position, we are just as much a moral coward as was Pilate (cf. Heb. 10:29).

Let it be clearly understood that a moderate, neutral position is in stark contrast to the soldier of the cross who readily and effectively wields the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). A moderate is opposed to Christ and makes Him sick to His stomach, and two Scriptures affirm that this is true. First, Christ heals a blind man who is possessed with a demon, and the hard-hearted Pharisees who witness the miracle choose to credit it to the power of Satan (Mat. 12:22-24). The Lord then declares: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (12:30). H. Leo Boles remarks:

> In the great conflict between life and darkness, good and evil, the kingdom of God and of Satan, there is no middle ground; there is no neutral position; there is no third power to which these miracles my be attributed. These Pharisees were obliged either to join Christ or to be against him. They had to become allies of God or co-workers with Satan; there was no other alternative. "No man can serve two masters" at the same time (Mat. 6:24). The teachings of Jesus with his unanswerable arguments forced the conclusion upon these Pharisees, and they must now take sides with Jesus or join issue with him; the choice is theirs; sufficient instruction, evidence, and light have been given them for the choice; hence the responsibility of the choice rests upon them. To make the matter clear and easy for them to see, Jesus

> presents only two alternatives—if they are not with him, they are against him (268-69).

Second, the Lord characterizes the moderates in the church at Laodicea in this manner: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). Adam Clarke captures the meaning of Christ's words quite well in saying:

> Ye are neither heathens nor Christians—neither good nor evil—neither led away by false doctrine, nor thoroughly addicted to that which is true. In a word, they were listless and indifferent, and seemed to care little whether heathenism or Christianity prevailed. Though they felt little zeal either for the salvation of their own souls or that of others, yet they had such a general conviction of the truth and importance of Christianity, that they could not readily give it up (975).

The moderate is a lukewarm soul who manifests an "I don't care" or "I don't want to be involved" disposition. Such an attitude from a member of the body of Christ is nauseating to the Lord. Christ is never pleased with lukewarm individuals or lukewarm congregations! Moderates in the Lord's church are an ally to Satan and his cause and serve to pave the way for liberalism to run rampant.

There is a fine line between a moderate and a full-blown liberal. A moderate will tolerate and participate in practices in the church that are not sanctioned by God's authority. A moderate will occasionally **not** participate in a certain practice (such as hand clapping after a baptism, etc.), but will continue to attend and **support** the congregation that allows such to occur. A moderate will sometimes visit a sound congregation and pay a compliment to the preacher by saying, "It has been 40 years since I've heard a sermon like that. That is the kind of preaching I was raised up on, and you just don't hear it anymore." Correction! This moderate does not hear sound Gospel preaching at the congregation where he is a member. He does, however, tolerate the short, motivational talks void of Scripture and the denominational dribble that flows from his congregation's pulpit each week. Brethren, this is the reason we kindly but truthfully and bluntly say that the moderate paves the way for liberalism to flourish in congregation after congregation throughout the brotherhood.

The remainder of this manuscript will focus on practices that are liberal and not warranted by Scripture but have nevertheless been successful in infiltrating congregations throughout the land because

moderates dressed in casual clothing instead of Christian armor never raise a voice or unsheathe the Sword of the Spirit to protest. What a shame and disgrace it is to be a moderate and pave the way for liberalism!

MARRIAGE-DIVORCE-REMARRIAGE

The devil needed the help of moderates in this troublesome area, and he has received it. There is no more emotional or volatile subject than that of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. There is hardly a family that has not known the pain of divorce among its loved ones, and as this problem grows, congregations will find a greater percentage of their members will have been divorced. What does one do? Many moderates are quick to quote Matthew 7:1, which says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." These same people never remember that the Lord instructed the Pharisees to "judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

Several years ago this author preached on marriage, divorce, and remarriage at a Gospel meeting. The statements made regarding what the Bible had to say about this subject had this congregation's preacher *bent out of shape*. He accused this writer of saying something he did not say, and the tape proved him to be wrong. His agitation did not dissipate, however, and we met the next morning to discuss the matter. His moderate approach to the subject is evidenced by his statement: "I am as opposed to divorce as you are. It is not right, and the Bible condemns it. However, I am not willing to sit in judgment on people like you are. I elect to let God sort these things out at the judgment."

Brethren, many people *play dumb* and ignorant of God's Truth on this matter so the Lord's church can be filled with adulterers! The Lord was given an opportunity to *tread lightly* in this area. The Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful *for a man* to put away his wife for every cause?" (Mat. 19:3)? Christ did not answer: "Perhaps!" Instead, Christ said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (19:6). The Lord then gives the **only** exception for divorce and remarriage in saying: "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" (19:9). Fornication, must be the **motivating cause** for the marriage to break up for the one innocent of such sin to have the God-given right to remarry.

When a couple states that their marriage failed and ended in divorce because they could not get along with one another, one has the information with wich to make a "righteous judgment." No one can read another's heart or mind, but anyone can read the Bible and know that, **except** the divorce be for fornication, it cannot be a scriptural divorce. When a couple who has divorced and remarried admits that fornication was not the cause of their divorce, then godly elders and preachers will stress that this marriage is adulterous and not acceptable in God's sight.

Far too many times, however, moderate elders and preachers do not want to do or say anything that will cause a loss of members. A moderate is more concerned about the contribution and the attendance than he is in one's soul. It is sad indeed that those who take a moderate position on Marriage, divorce, and remarriage contribute to the Lord's church being filled with unrepentant adulterers.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Some who would strongly deny that they are moderates take a moderate position regarding the use of the instrument in connection with the singing of religious songs. The following statement is from a lady who considers herself to be faithful to the Lord and His cause. In discussing the use of instrumental music in worship, she said: "I just don't know if my daughter will be lost if she worships using instrumental music." The question is: "Will God accept instrumental music in worship?" The answer is a resounding **no**, regardless of the moderate position that this lady holds. The command from the Lord is that His followers **must** worship God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Can one know what truth is? The Bible declares that God's Word is truth (17:17). Does God's Truth (His Word) authorize worship to Him using instrumental music? No! Is there a single New Testament example of the early church worshiping God using instrumental music? No, not a single one! If worship to God must be according to Truth, and there is not one word in the New Testament to sustain or authorize one worshiping with an instrument, then instrumental music will make one's worship vain.

Christians are commanded to **sing** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The New Testament reveals that Jesus and His disciples **sang** hymns (Mat. 26:30; Mark 14:26). Paul and Silas **sang** while in prison (Acts 16:25). Paul mentions **singing** with the "spirit" and with "understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15). The Hebrews writer says, "I will declare thy name unto my

brethren, In the midst of the congregation will I **sing** thy praise" (2:12). James admonishes those who are cheerful to **sing** praise (5:13). What is conspicuously absent in the Scriptures that mention singing praises to God? That is right, it is the instrument, which must be **added** by man as it is **missing** from God's Word. It is a shame that moderate members of the Lord's church refuse to teach their children that the usage of instrumental music in worship is sinful and thus pave the way for liberalism in churches of Christ.

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

Some moderate church members are now saying that they cannot say that God will not choose to save someone who has not been baptized for the remission of his sins. This opens the door wide for people who have never obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation to find acceptance and fellowship in certain churches of Christ throughout the land. The Word of God clearly states that salvation is located **in** Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Where is the Scripture that states that hearing, belief, repentance, or confession puts one into Christ? One will search in vain for such a Scripture! To the Galatians Paul said, "For as many of you as **were baptized into** Christ **did put on** Christ" (3:27). One is not **in** Christ who has not been scripturally immersed for the remission of his sins (cf. Acts 2:38). Belief does not wash away one's sins. Baptism will, however, wash away one's penitent sins. The Bible gives us such an example in Saul's conversion. Ananias goes to Saul and says: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

Let it also be noted that Bible baptism is always a **burial**—not a **sprinkling**. Romans 6:4 declares:

> We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

One will observe that **newness** of life comes after one has been baptized and not before. The Bible makes it clear that one is **not** a new creature who is not **in** Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Thus, one who refuses to be scripturally baptized is lost in his sins! Moderates in the Lord's church who cannot decide if one must be baptized to be saved simply pave the way for liberalism to destroy precious souls.

ACCEPTING APOSTATE BRETHREN WHO HAVE NOT REPENTED

It is a common occurrence today for member's of the Lord church to leave a faithful congregation and align themselves with a liberal congregation. The liberal congregation continues to deteriorate spiritually to the point that some families decide to return to the sound congregation from whence they departed. They drift back into their old congregation after being involved in outrageous apostasy for a year or two and are accepted with open arms with never a word of repentance.

Moderate members quickly point out that everyone should be thrilled that these who turned their back on Truth and willingly embraced error are now back and occupying their normal pew. The concern is that, if you admonish these brethren to repent, you will drive them away. The concern should be whether or not these apostate brethren have repented of their public and well-known sin! A moderate position in this area will pave the way for the liberal concept that God's grace will cover one no matter whether repentance is forthcoming or not.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline is not a subject that most people want to discuss. So many people have a flagrant disregard for discipline because the powers that be fail to administer it correctly and swiftly. This is the **only** reason that discipline is not the deterrent God intended it to be. The Lord's church should influence the world instead of the world influencing the church. It seems, however, that what is popular and in vogue in society finds its way into the church of our Lord. This is precisely what has happened in many congregations today, thus, making it rare to find even the Lord's people practicing discipline regularly, consistently, and scripturally.

Moderates will boldly declare that you cannot withdraw fellowship from someone who no longer wishes to be in fellowship. The argument is that the local body cannot withdraw fellowship from one who has ceased to fellowship the local body. Moderates will also point out that the elders or the leadership of a congregation are not to act as policemen. In other words, they are saying that there is nothing that can be done to discipline the sinful, unrepentant actions of a brother or sister in Christ.

Why would the church eventually withdraw fellowship from a member who insists on living in sin (Col. 3:5-7)? First, because it is commanded. To the brethren at Thessalonica Paul says:

> Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us (2 The. 3:6).

Disorderly is used of a soldier not keeping rank or who breaks rank and is out of step. The context here has to do with the sins of the idle person and the busybody, but not only would *disorderly* apply to the idle and the busybody but to **anyone** who is out of step with the Word of God!

Second, the church should withdraw fellowship from one who refuses to repent of his known sins, because it is the **loving** thing to do. An effort must be made to restore the one who has fallen (Gal. 6:1), but if he refuses to repent, the withdrawal is a continuation of that effort to try to bring one to his or her senses and save the soul (1 Cor. 5:5). Withdrawal of fellowship also serves to keep the church pure as a little bad leaven will contaminate the entire lump (1 Cor. 5:6). The moderate's approach to church discipline will pave the way for liberal and sinful habits to go unchecked.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The elders and preachers of so many congregations today have a liberal agenda and specialize in the *felt needs* approach to religion. Many times moderate members take the position that they are not *comfortable* with a certain practice, but they tolerate it because they believe that others have the right to choose what is meaningful to them. A case in point is the unscriptural, vain, and flippant use of the Lord's Supper at a wedding ceremony. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ and not a memorial to celebrate a man and a woman's marriage (cf. Mat. 26:26-29). No one has the right to take a sacred act of worship that is to be engaged in at the assembly of the saints on the Lord's Day as a memorial to the Lord's death (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:24-26) and use it as dramatic appeal at a social event such as a wedding ceremony. The Lord's Supper must not be abused by treating it in a selfish, flippant, or frivolous fashion to satisfy a human whim.

When moderates occupy their neutral position and neither condone or condemn the abuse of partaking of "communion" at wedding ceremonies involving church members, it allows this unscriptural practice

to grow in popularity and spread throughout the brotherhood. Again, moderates who refuse to declare war on such abuse of sacred matters pave the way for liberalism to run rampant in the Lord's kingdom.

NEVER SAY, "WE'VE GOT THE TRUTH"

The February 23, 2004 edition of the *Abilene Reporter News* states that Mark Henderson declares that members of the church of Christ should never say "We've got the truth" (qtd. in Massey). Moderates pave the way for this liberal ploy by convincing themselves that it is arrogant or self-righteous for one to think that he has "the truth" on religious matters. Does not God's Word state that one can "know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Brethren, those who advocate false, liberal doctrine realize that Truth is narrow and restrictive. If Bible authority is needed in religious matters (and it is), then man-made ideals, innovations, and opinions must be rejected as they count for naught. If one takes the position that no one can claim that he has the Truth on religious issues, then this frees up some wiggle room to peddle private interpretations, beliefs, and concepts. After all, if one does not have a *corner on Truth*, then he cannot say with any certainty that another's beliefs are wrong.

The moderate must remember that the apostle John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). If one does not have access to all the Truth regarding New Testament Christianity, then how will he able to **prove** whether or not some teaching is true or false? Truth does not allow false doctrine to gain an entrance or foothold within a congregation. False teachers realize this fact, and thus the claim that one cannot know whether or not he has the Truth. The searchlight of God's Truth **always** exposes false teaching for what it is—error designed to lead precious souls astray.

DIVISION

Brethren of moderate persuasion stress the importance of unity and harmony in the body of Christ and will normally tolerate almost anything to avoid division. Unity is precious to God and was on the mind of the Savior shortly before His death (John 17:20-21). Biblical unity, however, is not determined by man but by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:3). The Holy Spirit reveals the truth that there is but "one body...one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [and] one God"

(Eph. 4:4-6). Thus, unity in diversity is **not** a scriptural solution to doctrinal matters!

Even though a moderate member may desire to remain neutral, the Lord's people **must** divide from time to time. To the brethren at Ephesus Paul said:

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

To divide and refuse to follow those that reject God's Word is not sinful!

Most of the time a *moderate* prefers unity at almost any price. The Bible, however, does **not** teach that false teaching and error are to be tolerated within the body of Christ for the sake of unity. Even though division is sinful and cannot be attributed to God, there are times when division cannot be avoided. Neither is it right to accuse faithful brethren of **causing** the division and splitting a congregation when they stand firm for the truth and refuse to go along with error!

GAMBLING IS WRONG, BUT IF I CAN BENEFIT STUDENTS

David Lipscomb's President, Steve Flatt, says that he is "opposed to a lottery" (Brewer 1). He also believes that if the lottery is instituted, he should be able to benefit from it. Flatt wrote a letter that no doubt will satisfy many *moderates* throughout the land. The letter is quoted in its entirety as follows:

> November 18, 2002
>
> Dear Brethren,
>
> A recent Associated Press article distributed statewide detailed my appointment to a task force charged with determining how funds generated by a potential state lottery will be used to assist students as they pursue a college or university education. There are several points I wish to make clear.
>
> I have always been opposed to a lottery. I believe that a lottery is the most regressive and unfair system of taxation our state government could employ. I will continue to oppose a lottery as public debate continues on this issue. I was systematically appointed to the task force because of my roles as board chair of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association, and board member for the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation.

> Despite my preference, the state's voters have indicated that they favor a lottery. If the lottery is approved, hundreds of thousands of dollars in public funds will be made available to Tennessee students who wish to earn a college or university education.
>
> My role on this task force will be to insure that the administration of these funds is balanced and considers the needs of students who wish to attend one of 35 private institutions in Tennessee, including Lipscomb University and Freed-Hardeman University. I object to a lottery, the source of these funds. While I may find the source of these funds distasteful, as are many other sources of public funds, the good that can be accomplished by helping young people attend independent colleges and universities in the state is paramount.
>
> I remain consistent in my opposition to a lottery as a source of public revenue. I also have concerns about the social and moral implications of taxes derived from other sources such as tobacco and alcohol. In the case of the lottery, the citizens of Tennessee have made the decision to overrule objections by me and many others. Since they have made that decision I want to do all I can within my responsibility to make certain that the students and families who need financial help in order to receive an education at Universities like Lipscomb are treated with equity in the administration of these funds.
>
> I solicit your prayers—on behalf of our state, and on my behalf as I represent the Christian young people of our state who would benefit from increased funding of higher education scholarships.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Stephen F. Flatt (qtd. in Brewer 1-2).

Jerry Brewer wrote an excellent article exposing Flatt's letter of explanation, and here are excerpts of Brewer's response:

> The chief priests who paid Judas to betray Christ, Pontius Pilate who absolved himself of any responsibility in Christ's death, and David Lipscomb's President Steve Flatt have a few things in common.... For its shameless lack of moral principles and its prototypical, postmodern, political correctness, few things can compare with this letter. Flatt is apparently devoid of moral scruples as manifested by his compromise with legalized sin in Tennessee.... His "opposition" to a lottery is not based on the fact that gambling is sin, but on its "regressive and unfair system of taxation.... He doesn't call the lottery sinful. It's just a matter of his own preference and since the voters of Tennessee approved it, he may as well get his share. Gambling is legal in Nevada. Would Flatt advocate that brethren out there install slot machines in their class rooms to get some of that money that may come in "despite their preference?".... One wonders why those priests didn't just appoint some kind of task force to "insure that the administration" of those 30 pieces of silver was fair and that deserving young people

> were helped. At least they had *some* scruples. David Lipscomb, N. B. Hardeman, and A. G. Freed would have fought gambling with every fiber of their souls, and we can be certain that none of them would have accepted money from legalized sin. Flatt finds the "source of these funds distasteful" but he's willing to use those 30 pieces of lottery silver to fund his school. In his own words, this is "paramount" which means obtaining ill-gotten gain takes precedence over the Truth of God because of "the good that can be accomplished by helping young people and independent universities.... Perhaps Flatt has forgotten another group of citizens who long ago "made the decision to overrule" Pilate's objections. Or perhaps he believes he can cleanse his own hands of culpability by making "certain that the students and families who need financial help in order to receive an education at universities like Lipscomb are treated with equity in the administration of these funds (1-3).

How often have *moderates* through the years used the "if it does good" approach in an attempt to justify sinful association or practices?

A CLASSIC STATEMENT THAT PAVES THE WAY FOR LIBERALISM

One will never read a more moderate statement that paves the way for religious apostasy than the one given by the elders of the Broadway church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. The statement is titled "The Franklin Graham Festival, 2000," and is quoted below in its entirety.

> In the coming weeks you will hear a great deal about the upcoming Franklin Graham Festival 2000. The Festival will be coming to Lubbock in the spring of 2000, and Max Lucado will be coming this winter to "kick-off" the events that will lead up to the Festival.
>
> Some of **our fellowship** will hail this event as a powerful opportunity to have the name of Jesus held high in our community and consider it an opportunity to teach any who may seek further study. Others will not believe members should participate. In short, the Festival has the potential to be a very divisive issue.
>
> In the **spirit of unity** and **in Christ's love**, we, the elders of the Broadway Church of Christ, feel that the Broadway congregation cannot serve as an official sponsor of Festival 2000.
>
> We, as an eldership, make this request of our Broadway family. For those of you who might be uncomfortable with any participation in Festival 2000, we ask your prayers and encouragement for those of our family who may attend or work for the crusade. Their desire is that souls are saved and doors opened for the gospel of Christ. For those of you who might feel called to attend or work for Festival 2000, we ask your prayers and understanding for those who might be uncomfortable

> with any role in the Festival. Their desire is also that souls are saved and doors opened for the gospel of Christ.
>
> We know that Broadway has people wanting to attend or serve in various capacities; and, out **of this same desire for unity in Christ**, we want them to know that they have **the blessings** of the **Broadway eldership**. In a paraphrase of what Paul says in Romans 14...what may be wrong for one brother is not necessarily wrong for another.
>
> Our goal is for people to be open and receptive to the gospel of Christ, and that God receive all the glory and honor for what we do. We pray for God's blessings for our congregation as we serve this diverse family of believers [emp—MLW] (Elders 3).

Max Lucado is hailed as the one to "kick off" the denominational campaign. No one makes mockery of the Lord's church more or embraces denominationalism more closely than Max! It is obvious that those who consider Festival 2000 as "an opportunity to have the name of Jesus held high in the community" are considered in *fellowship* at Broadway. But please notice—the decision by the elders for Broadway not to serve as an official sponsor is in the "spirit of unity and in Christ's love." Is that not a moderate statement designed to not offend any member of the Broadway congregation?

According to the elders, those who desire to attend and work at the crusade and those who are uncomfortable in participating have the **same** desire—"for souls to be saved and doors opened for the gospel of Christ." Is there more than **one** Gospel to be proclaimed to a lost and dying world (Gal. 1:6-9)? No—there is not! Thus, if **the** Gospel is being taught and proclaimed, every member at Broadway and in Lubbock should support the effort. If a perversion of the Gospel is being taught and proclaimed, no member of the church of Christ should participate in the campaign. Neither Franklin Graham nor his father, Billy Graham, preaches the Gospel of Christ in its purity! They are members of a man-made denomination and believe and teach that one can be saved in such.

Now note that it is because of this "**same desire for unity in Christ**" that those members desiring to support Franklin Graham and Festival 2000 will have "**the blessings of the Broadway elders**." Never will you see more blatant hypocrisy practiced! In the "spirit of unity and in Christ's love" the elders will not allow Broadway to be a sponsoring congregation, but in the "**same desire for unity in Christ**," they do not hesitate to place their *blessings* on all who desire to participate in the Festival. They run to Romans 14 in an attempt to

justify their sanction of those who participate, but Romans 14 is not discussing matters of doctrine or that which is sinful in and of itself. This is nothing short of a moderate position designed to placate everyone and offend no one.

Denominationalism is condemned by Scripture (1 Cor. 1:10-13), and those who support and encourage it commit a grievous sin against the Lord and His church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). Jesus never spoke truer words than when He said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Mat. 15:13-14).

Christians are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Instead of attempting to act in such a way as to preserve *bodies* and *money*, **godly elders** would not hesitate to hold "to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that [they] may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9).

Faithful brethren who truly love the Lord and His church will demonstrate that love by **marking**

> them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18).

Faithful brethren will refuse to tolerate moderate statements that pave the way for liberalism and uphold denominationalism—enemies of the Lord's church!

A LIBERAL'S MODERATE APPEAL TO MODERATES

Rubel Shelly strongly encourages and supports all of the Billy Graham Crusades, but reference here is made to the Crusade conducted at the Adelphia Coliseum in Nashville, Tennessee on July 1-4, 2000. On February 23, 2000, Rubel issued a plea for support of the Graham Crusade in his newsletter. The first part of that plea says:

> God willing, Billy Graham will be preaching for four nights at Adelphia Coliseum this spring. I hope you have marked June 1-4 on your calendar... I hope you are praying over your "Operation Andrew" list of people you plan to invite to the crusade. The likelihood that you know an unsaved person who would attend one or more nights of the Graham Crusade is very high. For one thing, curiosity alone might be enough to motivate that person. Hearing Dr. Graham speak in one of

> the final crusades his age and health will allow him to conduct could get someone there—and the Spirit of God can handle things from there. The preached Word of God can be his instrument to touch that person's heart.

Let the faithful be bold to say that Billy Graham has **never** preached the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) in his life. Jesus warns of false teachers in saying, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Mat. 7:15). Both Rubel Shelly and Billy Graham are "ravening wolves."

What needs to be emphasized in this lesson, however, is the moderate approach Rubel uses in an attempt to influence moderates to follow his request to support the Graham Crusade. Rubel continues:

> Many Churches of Christ choose not to participate in Graham Crusades because Dr. Graham does not end his lessons with a call to baptism. The truth is that most of the people who respond at such events are not ready to be baptized. Their hearts have been touched by the story of Jesus, and they are eager for the life-change that has been emphasized in the message. How they can open their hearts to God's grace is still unclear to them. That's where you come in.... People who hear Dr. Graham preach are asked to "make a decision to accept Jesus Christ." When they respond, they are linked to counselors whose task is to help them turn their decision into discipleship. A counselor meets with someone, affirms the decision to follow Jesus, and begins a process of teaching that brings that man or woman to baptism, identification with a local church, and growth in Christ. Respondents identify their church background or preference and are referred to people from that tradition. In Middle Tennessee where so many people have history with Churches of Christ, a high percentage of those who respond will be looking for someone out of that background to follow through with them. Will you help?

Rubel appeals to moderates to believe that many churches of Christ do not participate in the Graham Crusades **only** because Graham's lessons are not ended with a call to baptism. To my moderate brethren this author says, listen carefully! The reason God's faithful do not participate in the Graham Crusades or in any other denominational effort is that they believe the teaching of the Bible to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

It is agreed that those who respond at a Graham Crusade are not ready to be baptized. They may respond to "the word of Graham," but they have not responded to "the word of God." Why? The reason is that Graham has not presented the Gospel plan of salvation. Rubel unwit-

tingly told the truth when he said: "How they can open their hearts to God's grace is still unclear to them!" God's Truth is unclear because Graham **has not** proclaimed it! One will always be *unclear* of God's truths while listening to denominational preachers expound man-made doctrine!

According to the Bible, those whose hearts were pricked by a pure presentation of the Gospel were ready to be baptized immediately. Philip preached "good tidings concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12), and both men and women were baptized. He preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch and upon coming to a "certain water" (Acts 8:35-36) the eunuch requested to be baptized. The "word of the Lord" was preached to the Philippian jailor, and he was baptized "the same hour of the night...immediately" (Acts 16:32-33). The Bible declares that God's grace is perfectly clear to those whom the unadulterated Gospel has been preached. Neither Billy Graham nor Rubel Shelly believes in preaching the saving Gospel in its unadulterated purity!

Paul teaches, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Regardless of what Rubel advocates, the inspired Word of God forever condemns denominationalism. Instead of taking a moderate position that allows fellowship with false teachers, the Bible states that false teachers must be **rebuked**.

ANOTHER MODERATE MESSAGE OFFERS CONGRATULATIONS TO GRAHAM

From the preacher's column of the bulletin of a liberal congregation within eight miles of this writer comes these *moderate* words designed to please all who read them:

> My congratulations to Dr. Billy Graham and his team for the huge "Metroplex Mission" that attracted over 200,000 worshipers to Texas Stadium last week. Despite torrential rain and traffic gridlock, the event was hailed a monumental success. Over 12,000 streamed to the front of the stadium to personally respond to the message they heard.
>
> My congratulations to those 12,000 plus—young and old—whose spiritual lives were awakened by the 83 year old evangelist. I'm excited for them. I really want to believe that these 12,000 plus souls have begun a spiritual journey that will culminate in eternity with our blessed Lord.

> I say "begun a spiritual journey" because the Bible teaches that hearing the Word preached (Rom. 10:17), believing that word (Heb. 11:6), repenting of our sins (Acts 17:30), and even confession of Jesus as the Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) are not the end of the journey. All of those are indeed part of the process, yet there is more. Throughout the New Testament we see that earnest adult believers were immersed into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4) and thereby forgiven of all their sins (Acts 2:38), sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), and added to God's forever family (Acts 2:41), the church of the firstborn. Yet, even baptism is not the end of the journey. For the rest of our years as disciples we study (2 Tim. 2:15), we give (Luke 6:38), we serve others (John 13:14), we worship (Acts 20:7), we daily take up our cross and follow (Luke 9:23).
>
> In Acts 18:26, a godly couple draw the excited believer, Apollos, aside to "teach him the way of the Lord more perfectly." We will be praying for opportunities to do the same with those whose hearts were touched at Texas Stadium last week (Scott 1).

That sounds rather nice, does it not? There is no doubt but that it pleased all the *moderates* at Saturn Road. Why congratulate Billy Graham for preaching error? Why congratulate the 12,000 plus who "streamed to the front of the stadium to personally respond to the message they heard?" Did they hear what to do to be saved? No, and Scott admits there is more for people to hear, and he is right about that. Does Scott really believe Graham's teaching his audience what to do to be saved is a parallel to the case of Apollos? Apollos was not aware that John's baptism was no longer valid, and when he was informed of the truth, he corrected his mistake. Does Scott really believe that Graham will correct his mistaken view of salvation if he is taught the "way of the Lord more perfectly"? Hardly! Such has been tried and Graham is not receptive to the truth as was Apollos. How many of those 12,000 that **responded** to Graham's message will Scott and the Saturn Road congregation have the opportunity to teach?

Can anyone imagine the Lord congratulating the Pharisees and Sadducees for teaching error and being glad for the people who respond to such error? The Lord said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Mat. 16:6). One will do well today to beware of the leaven of John Scott and Billy Graham!

ANOTHER LIBERAL'S ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE MODERATES

"Don't Bother Your Brother" is the title of an unscriptural sermon that was preached to encourage moderates to remain neutral in defending the Lord's church against denominationalism. In his infamous explanation and misrepresentation of Mark 9:38-41, Rick Atchley states:

> Let's not limit the kingdom of God to the size of our brotherhood... I was raised in churches of Christ...maybe this wasn't said, but this is what I heard...the only people that could go to heaven were in churches of Christ... I'm going to suggest to you not only is that not Biblical, but it is in fact a violation of the very restoration plea to which we are heirs...let me say this clearly...A Christian is determined by his affiliation with Christ, not with any particular group.... I have brothers and sisters in Christ who may be in churches where I couldn't worship.... But if grace will cover moral error, why are we so afraid to let it cover doctrinal error? First, about our past...if we're the only Christians, and we've only been around since the early 1800's, where were all the Christians the first 1800 years of the church.

Here are some questions for moderates to consider? Do we "limit the kingdom of God" when we exclude fellowship from those of denominational persuasion? Absolutely not! Are we wrong in teaching that **only** those who are going to heaven will be member's of the Lord's body—the church of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:4; Rom. 16:16; Eph. 5:23)? Again, the answer is "No!" Does not the statement that "a Christian is determined by his affiliation with Christ, not with any particular group," endorse denominationalism? Absolutely! Is there *grace* to cover error outside the Gospel? Absolutely not (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1; Gal. 3:26-27)! Has the church of my Lord existed **only** since the 1800s? No! Does Atchley and those he can influence believe the church of Christ was founded by Alexander Campbell? The truth is that the church of Christ has existed since Pentecost, A.D. 33, and the precious *seed* (Luke 8:11) produces the same thing today as it produced then. If moderates are not for the church that Christ built (Mat. 16:18), then they are opposed to it!

ELDERS

Many congregations today have elders who are moderates. One will search the Bible in vain to find this attribute listed as one of the qualifications for godly bishops. It is sad to see so many elders today who instead of being shepherds of the flock have become pawns of

moderate brethren. Moderate elders are stuck in neutral as they take every precaution to not *makes waves*, *cause a squabble*, or *run anyone off*.

The thinking that permeates many congregations of the Lord's people is that to experience growth and *fill the building*, they must become more *tolerant* and less *legalistic* in their views. In other words, they must be *moderates*. Brethren, either the tail will wag the dog or the dog will wag the tail. Which is it? Does the Bible teach that godly elders are to submit to moderate members of the congregation? This writer thinks not! Instead of polling the moderate members of a congregation to see what they believe about some matter, let godly elders consult the Word of God and act upon a "thus saith the Lord."

Godly elders will not make *moderate* decisions to pacify its moderate members. A congregation with which this writer is very familiar turned the selection of their preacher over to a preacher search committee. Not only that, but a **woman** was a member of the search committee. It is a fact that one of the members of that committee said, "One thing is for sure: we will not be hiring anyone that is a product of the Memphis School of Preaching." How did this person on the search committee know that no one who was a Memphis graduate would be hired, if as the elders stated to those who inquired, the final decision was left up to them? It is because the preacher search committee **only** recommended the names of preachers that **they** endorsed to the elders. It does not matter to the preacher search committee which of the three recommended men the elders choose. Brethren, a preachers search committee who routinely blackballs and culls capable, godly preachers and instead rubber-stamps three spineless candidates so the elders can choose one of them is wrong!

Some elders lament the fact that they cannot do their God-given work for trying to sooth the ruffled feathers of moderates and liberals and put out the brush-fires that these people have caused. How do you think such an excuse will sound to the Lord in the Day of Judgment? Here is what some moderate elders would find to be a novel ideal:

> Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18).

Brethren, godly elders will demand that *moderates* get on or off the fence! Godly elders will not **allow** *moderates* to pave the road that liberalism travels down. Godly elders will rise up to do battle with liberalism any time it rears its sinful head and **stop** it dead in its tracks!

CONCLUSION

The cry that is heard far too often today is the same cry that was heard in Isaiah's day. The people said "to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Moderates today are willing to ignore God's Word so the congregation can accommodate some member's ungodly lifestyles. Such should never be tolerated or allowed by those faithful to the cause of Christ.

The moderate member of the Lord's church does not mind the Bible being preached provided no one is offended. One can preach on Galatians 5:19-21 as long as he does not offend the fornicators, drunkards, idolaters, etc. One can preach on 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 as long as he does not condemn and offend "the abusers of themselves with men." These are what the morally bankrupt today call *gays*, but God calls them "sodomites" (1 Kin. 14:24; cf. Gen. 19:5-13; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27).

Moderates will cry, "Don't preach a negative gospel." Does it seem fair that a *moderate* can use "don't" without being negative, but a conservative who uses "don't" is negative? Let us never be tempted to lower godly standards to lure and draw people to the services of the church. The apostle Paul identifies the problem the Lord's church faces today:

> For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Nonetheless, young Timothy was instructed to "preach the truth" (2 Tim. 4:2).

May we do all within our power to keep *moderates* from paving the road for liberals to travel. Never forget the apostle Paul's words: "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). Whose servant are ye?

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REACTION TO LIBERALISM—ANTI-ISM

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INTRODUCTION

Liberalism is indeed a major enemy to all efforts that are "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Liberalism is at one extreme while anti-ism is at the other. Both approaches to religious practice are sinful. Determining the exact cause of anti-ism is very complex. This writer can think of brethren who turned from anti-ism to liberalism, such as Carl Ketcherside (Thomas 70), but this writer (or other preachers, elders, and faithful Christians he has asked) cannot think of one liberal who turned to anti-ism. In fact, it seems from interviews this writer has had with Christians who were active in the Lord when the anti-ism split occurred in the 1950s and 1960s that envy and arrogant power struggles were just as much, if not more, the cause of anti-ism among churches of Christ than was a reaction to liberalism. Nevertheless, because anti-ism still thinks that liberalism is the result of those who do not accept its every position, anti-ism as a reaction of liberalism is a relevant discussion. This chapter will examine the principles of binding and loosing, define anti-ism and compare it to liberalism, and study expediency.

"BINDING" AND "LOOSING"

Shortly after Peter's monumental confession that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:16), Jesus told him "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). Later, the same instruction of *binding and loosing* was given to the rest of the apostles (Mat. 18:18). Understanding the tense of the verbs in these verses is necessary to any study of *binding and loosing*. It is not the case that Jesus was saying that whatever Peter and the apostles *bound* or *loosed* would be later ratified in heaven, as if they were the ones deciding what should be *bound* and what should be *loosed*. Rather, the verbs behind the translation, "shall be bound in heaven... shall be loosed in heaven," are in the original language future perfect.

Upon first reading, one might think that "shall be bound" is from one verb, and "shall be loosed" is from another verb. However, in an interesting pairing of verb tenses, each part consists of two verbs with different tenses. The verb *shall be* in both parts is the future middle form of *eimi* (εἰμί). The *bound* and *loosed* are from perfect passive participles of *deo* (δέω), translated "bound," and *luo* (λύω), translated "loosed." The perfect tense refers to a point (punctiliar) action that took place in the past that has continuing, present effects. There is no exact equivalent of the Greek perfect tense in English; thus most English translations do not convey the full meaning. To translate with the full force of the verbs, the verse reads: "Whatsoever you may bind on earth *will have already been bound* in heaven, and whatsoever you may loose on earth *will have already been loosed* in heaven."

By using this future perfect tense construction, the Lord was giving Peter and the other apostles the authority only to teach and preach the God-given terms by which one was admitted to or excluded from the kingdom. The apostles had no right to communicate anything different from that which God had already determined. For this reason, they were given the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to guide them into "all truth" (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13). Their being inspired to communicate all truth, of course, did not guarantee their sinlessness (cf. Gal. 2:11-14), but it did guarantee that the message they preached was one hundred percent accurate, the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:6-15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The "will have already been bound in heaven, and...will have already been loosed in heaven" principle was so serious that "though

we [apostles], or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9)! If not even an apostle or an angel from heaven could teach something different from what God had already decreed in heaven, then one can conclude that no preacher, elder, Bible class teacher, or human being living today has a right to bind what God has loosed or to loose what God has bound.

ANTI-ISM

Why religions in general and brethren in particular "bind" and "loose" what they do is at the heart of any study concerning liberalism and/or anti-ism. *Liberal* in religious academia is usually reserved to refer to those *Biblical scholars* who deny the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. In the remainder of this chapter, however, the word will refer to members of the church of Christ who loosen what God has bound. A basic definition of liberalism is "loosing what God has bound." Liberals, therefore, are those who loosen the standards that God has set through His inspired Word.

In contrast to liberalism, anti-ism may be defined as "binding what God has loosed." Antis, therefore, are those who make stricter the standards of God by binding doctrines that God has not bound. This writer has found from his experience in talking with these brethren that the doctrines most antis bind are in the area of expediency (discussed below). Thus, perhaps a more accurate label for these brethren would be "anti-biblical expediency" brethren. For the most part, these brethren take matters of judgment and bind their opinion as if it were what God had already bound in heaven! These matters of judgment may include whether or not to build a kitchen in the church building, whether or not to support a benevolent work involving *non-saints* from the church treasury, or whether or not to cooperate with other local churches of Christ in supporting missionary work.

To further illustrate taking matters of judgment and binding opinion as if it were God's law, consider the point about having a kitchen in the church building. Surely, all rational Bible students would agree that God has authorized a church building. Inherent in God's requirement to assemble (cf. Heb. 10:24) is a place to assemble. A building, of course, is not necessary (a church can assemble by the river, under a tree, etc.), but is permitted. Why a local church would want a kitchen in the church building is a matter of judgment. The Bible authorizes

members of the church to have fellowship (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3), and eating together is one way to show fellowship with one another (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). Inherent in eating together is food being prepared. Therefore, a church building is authorized to have a kitchen by the authority to have fellowship with one another. Also, when one considers that the first century church often met in people's houses (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), and people's houses may have places where food was prepared, one realizes that the place of assembly is not the sacred part about worship, but rather the process and practice (John 4:24). Is a kitchen necessary? Of course not! In fact, a kitchen may even be detrimental in some buildings because of the attitude of some members of the church. It may be best not to have a kitchen in some circumstances. However, to say that it is wrong in all situations to have a kitchen in the church building because, in one's own opinion, it is best not to have one in certain situations, is anti-ism! For more examples of the doctrines of anti-ism refuted see the appendix of the Florida School of Preaching lectureship book, *What Does It Mean to Be a Christian Like Paul?*

COMMON ELEMENTS OF ANTI-ISM AND LIBERALISM

As strange as it may seem, anti-ism and liberalism have two interesting characteristics in common. Individuals in both groups would probably deny upholding these two positions, but on a practical level, there is no escaping their adherence to them. First, both anti-ism and liberalism teach that explicit statements are the only way the Bible authorizes. The liberal will affirm that since there is no explicit Bible statement that says, "thou shalt not...," a Christian has authority to perform any action. For example, the liberal will say, "Since the Bible does not say, 'Do not clap hands while singing during worship,' we are free to clap hands in praise to God." Of course, the liberal obviously does not realize that asking, "Where does the Bible say I cannot," is asking the wrong question. The question should be: "Where does the Bible teach I can."

The anti, on the other hand will affirm that since there is no explicit Bible statement that says "thou shalt...," a Christian has no authority to perform an action. For example, the anti will say, "Since the Bible nowhere commands the local church to support an orphan home, a local church is not free to support an orphan home from its treasury." Of course, the anti does not realize that the Bible nowhere commands a local church to have a bank account, pay a utility bill, take out an ad in

the yellow pages, etc. In fact, none of the Bible was explicitly written to any local church existing today. This is not to say that the Bible was not written for local churches today, because it was (cf. Rom. 15:4), but it is to say that if **only** explicit statements authorize, then how can one say the Bible applies to the local church today?

A second common element to both anti-ism and liberalism is that both are easy to apply, at least in their extreme states. Faithful living requires diligent studying and "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15—ASV). Studying is hard work (cf. 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:5). However, it is easy to say, as does the liberal, "Anything goes unless the Bible explicitly says 'Thou shalt not,'" or, as the anti says, "Nothing goes unless the Bible explicitly says 'Thou shalt.'" Learning what God actually binds and/or looses is not always easy. The faithful Christian must study, learn, and grow (2 Pet. 3:18). He or she must be humble enough to receive more thorough instruction, as did Apollos when he was wrong about baptism (Acts 18:24-28). For the most part, the Bible is easy to understand and follow (if one is willing—John 7:17); however, there are still some parts and applications that are "hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16). Studying is what is necessary, not the easier, extreme, "either/or" (fallacy) approaches of anti-ism or liberalism.

EXPEDIENCY: MAJOR PRINCIPLE MISUNDERSTOOD BY ANTI-ISM

In English, *expedient* means that which is "useful for effecting a desired result; suited to the circumstances or the occasion; advantageous; convenient" (*Webster's*). There is also a negative sense in which the word is used (such as getting gain for oneself regardless of what is right or just), but the basic meaning of the term is that which gives advantage. The English word *expedient* is found seven times in the King James Version (John 11:50; 16:7; 18:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:10; 12:1). The Greek word *sumphero* (συμφέρω), from which "expedient" is translated, occurs in nine other places. It is translated in the King James Version as "profit" (1 Cor. 7:35; 10:33; 12:7; Heb. 12:10), "profitable" (Mat. 5:29-30; Acts 20:20), "better" (Mat. 18:6), "is [not] good" (Mat. 19:10), and "brought...together" (Acts 19:19).

Of particular interest are the references in 1 Corinthians: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (6:12),

and "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (10:23). In these verses, the Greek word translated "expedient" [helpful—NKJ] (from *sumphero*) means "to help, confer a benefit, be advantageous or profitable or useful...something that is useful or helpful" (Bauer 780). Two truths about *expedience* must be realized. First, no unlawful action can be done expediently. That is, there is no circumstance that God allows one to advantageously do something unlawful (cf. Rom. 3:8). Second, merely because an action is lawful does not mean that it is always expedient. All lawful actions do not necessarily edify (1 Cor. 10:23; cf. 1 Cor. 8:1-13). Furthermore, the unlawful pursuit of a lawful thing constitutes bondage and thus results in sin (1 Cor. 6:12; cf. Rom. 6:16).

The principle of expediency applies as follows. All actions must have Bible authority (Col. 3:17; cf. 2 John 9-11). The Bible authorizes by its explicit statements, revealed examples, and implication. These avenues of authority must be ascertained by "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15—ASV). In most authorized actions there are areas of expediency. For example, the Bible authorizes Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week and to use unleavened bread and "fruit of the vine" (Mat. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7). However, the Bible gives no exclusive pattern as to what time on the first day of the week the Lord's Supper must be served. Thus, the time of day at which the congregation partakes of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week is a matter of expediency. There is just as much authority for partaking of it at 9:30 a.m. as there is at 2:30 p.m. The congregation (elders, if there are any) must determine which time gives the most advantage. Expediency is also involved in other God-authorized actions such as in what body of water one should be baptized (a baptistry or a natural body of water), singing (with songbooks, data projector, or by memory), preaching the Gospel (in the pulpit, on television, or radio), etc. Where there is no exclusive pattern given for fulfilling a God-authorized obligation, and as long as the obligatory action is not altered or omitted, any expedient action (which is not inherently sinful) may be used. Remember, an *expedient* is that which gives advantage.

An example of how "anti-biblical expediency" brethren bind what God has loosed may be seen in the following real-life illustration. This writer engaged in an e-mail debate with an anti brother over whether or not it was scriptural for a local church to support the Florida School of

Preaching (hereafter referred to as FSOP). The anti brethren think it is a sin. Although FSOP is used specifically, the principles of the following argument would, of course, apply to other good works. This was the argument used:

1. All Scriptural efforts to train preachers are efforts which can be supported by all Christians (individually and/or congregationally).
2. FSOP is a scriptural effort to train preachers.
3. Therefore, FSOP is an effort which can be supported by all Christians (individually and/or congregationally).

Since this argument is valid in its form (in logic, this syllogism figure is known as AAA-1), if both premises are true, the conclusion must **necessarily** be true!

Premise 1 is true: All Scriptural efforts to train preachers are efforts which can be supported by all Christians (individually and/or congregationally). The Great Commission passages include all Christians, whether individually or congregationally (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Certainly, training others to teach the lost would be included in "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen" (Mat. 28:20) and in "the gospel" (Mark 16:15). No rational person would deny that both the individual Christian and the local church has a responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission. To illustrate the irrationality of anti-ism, to be consistent with their often unnecessary distinction between "individual action" and "collective action," they would have to say that the Great Commission only applies to the individual, not to the local church. What passage explicitly tells a local church: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? Timothy (an individual) was explicitly told, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). If it is the case that fulfilling the Great Commission is a responsibility of both individual Christians and local churches (which it is), and if it is the case that training preachers is part of fulfilling the Great Commission (which it is), then it is the case that training preachers is an authorized responsibility of both individual Christians and local churches.

Premise 2 is also true: FSOP is a scriptural effort to train preachers. The following argument was used: All total situations the component

parts of which are scriptural are total situations which are scriptural. The "component parts" of FSOP are all scriptural (i.e., faithful teachers, Bible as main text, classrooms, civil government compliance, etc.). Since all "component parts" are scriptural, the "total situation" is scriptural. So far as this writer is aware, there are only three "components" which anti-ism says are unscriptural. First, they say that, because FSOP is governed by a board of directors rather than a local church eldership, it is unscriptural. The God-approved right of people doing good works that are not overseen by a local church eldership will be examined in more detail later, but for now the question is relevant: Where does the Bible teach that all good works must be done under the oversight of a local eldership? Second, because the school is not overseen by a local church eldership, they say that the acceptance of money from local churches is an unscriptural. To put it another way, they say if FSOP were solely supported by individuals, then it would be scriptural. Third, they say that since FSOP is doing the work that God authorized for the local church to do, then a local church supporting it is sinful because it is supporting a work that usurps God's plan for the local church. To show the ridiculousness of that idea, note the following: If it is true that FSOP usurps God's plan for the local church, then why would it be scriptural for an individual to support FSOP, a work that supposedly usurps God's plan for the local church?

The latter two objections (and to some extent the first) are attempts to draw one away from the gist of the main argument—training preachers is the responsibility of all Christians (individually and/or congregationally). The third objection **assumes** that God has only given authority to local churches in training preachers, but consider again the proof of the premises. Since both of the main argument's premises are true, the conclusion must necessarily follow: FSOP is an effort which can be supported by all Christians (individually and/or congregationally).

SEEMINGLY SOUND DOCTRINES THAT ARE ACTUALLY ANTI-ISM

Binding what God has loosed is nothing new in religion. A biblical example of what may be termed anti-ism is found in 1 Timothy 4:1-4. There were some in Paul's day who were "forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats" (1 Tim. 4:3a). These two *anti* doctrines were not necessarily a response to liberalism. Rather, Paul

was likely referring to some form of incipient Gnosticism, which held that all flesh was evil and only spirit was good. Thus, the more one denied oneself of fleshly appetites, the more spiritual he or she became (cf. Col. 2:20-23). God never bound celibacy on Christians (except on the guilty of fornication spouse in a scriptural divorce—Mat. 19:9). To the contrary, God said: "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). True, there were some circumstances in which it was best not to marry (1 Cor. 7:7-8, 26, 28), but even if one married in those unfavorable circumstances, "thou hast not sinned" (1 Cor. 7:28)! It is one thing to say that it is better not to marry (1 Cor. 7:38), but it is anti-ism to say that one **must not** marry.

Likewise, the eating of *meat* from which Paul said some were commanding to abstain (1 Tim. 4:3) was allowed by God. In the same context, Paul said that God created meat to "be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth," and then he added, "For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (4:3-5). It took a heavenly vision for Peter to learn that truth (Acts 10:9-16), but truth it is! True, there are some circumstances in which one sins by eating meat; namely, if eating meat causes a brother to stumble (1 Cor. 8:7-13), or if eating meat violates one's own conscience (Rom. 14:20-23). However, it is one thing to say that there are certain occasions where one ought not to eat meat, but it is anti-ism to say that one **must never** eat meat.

In the church of Christ today, there are current, somewhat popular doctrines among some that are nothing more than reactions to liberalism, and, as such, may be termed anti-ism. This writer realizes that what follows may not sit well with some and that his soundness may be questioned in some circles, but for the sake of truth and harmony among the faithful, he is willing to take the risk.

CONCLUSION

Liberalism is a serious threat to the well-being of the church of Christ, but so also is anti-ism. Like with liberalism, the only sure way to protect the church against anti-ism is to diligently study the Bible and to make sure that what is believed and bound on earth has already been bound in heaven. Now more than ever, Christians must study the Bible for themselves. The pat answers of the past must not be blindly accepted. One must compare them with what the Bible teaches, not

what some preacher has said or written. Sometimes, the answers of the past were no more than reactions against liberalism, not what the Bible truly taught. May God help all who read this article to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

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LIBERALISM AND "CHRISTIAN" SCHOOLS

John West

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INTRODUCTION

In the past, *Christian* colleges have been valuable to the church. Members of the church sent their children to these colleges to receive an education based in Christian values. Subsequently, these children came out of college well-grounded in the truth of God's Word. Today, however, this is not true because these so-called "Christian Schools" do not stand where they once stood. They have become a source of digression and apostasy in the Lord's church. More and more people who attend one of *our* colleges today turn from the truth into error. Sound preaching is neither heard nor accepted in many of these schools. In this chapter, we will look at some of *our* prominent colleges and expose the error being taught in them.

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Abilene has been known for years as one of the most liberal schools associated with the churches of Christ. They continue to digress further from the truth year by year. Since there is so much going on at Abilene we will not discuss all the error being taught. We will only notice some departures they have made.

First, Carroll Osburn, retired ACU faculty member (August 2004), is a leader in the departure of ACU from the Faith. In 1993, he wrote a book titled *The Peaceable Kingdom* in which he attacks the churches

of Christ today for being "sectarian." He considers anyone sectarian who stands firm on a doctrinal issue without wavering. He states in his preface, "churches of Christ are in an era of transition from a sectarian past to an unknown future" (v). He states in the next paragraph, "most now appear to be less concerned with divisive issues employed to distinguish 'true believers' from the rest" (v). As he begins chapter one, he discusses these issues he considers to be divisive and teaches them as opinions.

> Intramural issues arose (such as instrumental music and missions societies) which, in the hands of polemicists and debaters, proliferated to over eighty-five issues which have divided churches and contributed to the current crisis. Although most of these issues were not truly *biblical* matters, some were pushed to the center of attention to the point that they were allowed to form an "identity" for the movement. Sermons on "identifying marks of the church" were given in terms of selected issues. Books were written on "What is the Church of Christ?" with chapters concentrating on those issues. Although the issues differed from place to place, enough consensus existed to provide thrust for a movement along those lines in the thinking of many during our recent past. Sectarian disdain for unity dominated (5).

Osburn argues that instrumental music and missionary societies are not *true* biblical issues. He states later in his book that these issues should not be adequate reason for schism (45). He, along with others at ACU, apparently has torn Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 from their Bibles. Osburn accuses those standing for a capella singing as sectarian, but in reality, it is Osburn who is sectarian. A capella singing was the method used in first century worship. It was not until several hundred years after the Bible was completed that men departed by adding the instrument to worship. Osburn must think that brothers Paul, Peter, John, and the others in the first century were also sectarian, since there is no example that these men used the instrument in worship.

He outlines his three ways for the churches of Christ to overcome sectarianism. He states:

> Three things must be given priority. First, the arrogant and delusive appropriation of "all truth" must be replaced with an on-going quest for truth in a philosophically sound context. Second, rampant "proof-texting" of the Bible in support of inherited constructs from the past must be replaced by firm literary and historical controls in biblical analysis and responsible theological inquiry. Third, significant interaction with the culture in which the church exists is mandatory if

> biblical truths are to be implemented in culturally-responsible ways (51).

Osburn thinks the quest for truth should come through philosophy rather than the Bible. We are considered "arrogant and delusive" when we search and find "all truth." Osburn does not think that "all truth" lies with one religious body but with all who believe in Christ. It is sad that men try to justify denominations and allow them to go to hell rather than standing up and teaching them the Word of God. It is interesting that in Osburn's book very little Scripture is even used. When he uses it, it is to attack those that he sees as "sectarian" today. He is following his point one (just quoted) by finding his *truth* in philosophy instead of the Bible. Jesus teaches that He is "the truth" (John 14:6) and that the "word is truth" (John 17:17). If Osburn believes that it is "proof-texting" and "sectarian" to teach the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16, then this author is proudly sectarian.

Throughout his perverted book, he calls for *tolerance* to those in other religions. He is tolerant to others but not to members of the church of Christ today who do not agree with him.

In the chapter "Identifying Marks of the Church," he states: "The identifying marks of the church do not consist of how we differ from our religious neighbors...*on any issue*!" (134). He goes on a few pages later and states: "We should not be surprised if churches look a little different from one another, reflecting the same sort of unity in diversity as it evidenced in the New Testament churches themselves" (137). Osburn must prove from the Bible that the first century church practiced "unity in diversity." Since he does not believe in "proof-texting," he will not answer. It is convenient to spew this poppycock (to use Wayne Coats' words) and then deny proof-texting. The false doctrine of unity in diversity is alien to the teaching of the New Testament. The only unity of which Christ spoke is the unity taught in God's Word (John 17:17-22). When the apostles and divine writers saw error in the church, it was quickly corrected, not brushed aside as an opinion. Study the scathing rebuke that Paul gave brethren in 1 Corinthians.

Second, Mike Cope (Bible Professor at ACU) fellowships denominations. In a sermon delivered on April 21, 1996, in the Fifth and Highland Church of Christ, he states:

> I would love to have a Sunday when **Phil Christopher**, the minister at First Baptist, and I exchange pulpits. Not just a chance to show that we are progressive. I'm not interested in that.... But as an opportunity

> to express our mutual faith to other believers and to witness to unbelievers through the unity of God's people (qtd. in Brown 3).

Cope is openly expressing fellowship with denominations and says that it is not "just a chance to show that we are progressive." That is not the only reason he wants to do it, but it is one reason. The Baptists teach false doctrine on many subjects and cannot be fellowshipped. Abilene, however, does not care about the Bible's teaching concerning fellowship. Paul writes that we are not to have "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). This writer knows the Baptists are following the works of darkness because of their doctrine about instrumental music, premillennialism, worship styles, etc. It is time that brethren wake up and stand against the goings on at ACU.

Third, Vic Vadney wrote an email letter to Jack Reese of ACU and outlined the false doctrine being advocated at ACU. For the complete exchange between the two, see *Contending For The Faith*, June 2004. Brother Vadney sent a petition to ACU and outlined concerns about things that were taking place on campus. Notice just a few:

> ACU has changed to allow dancing and a recognized dance club. A Bible professor was shown in the *Abilene Reporter News* drinking wine. Instrumental music in worship has been made a non-fellowship issue by many faculty members. Students who are members of denominations have been allowed to organize religious activities on campus (21).

The following examples describe briefly some particular disturbing occurrences:

> 1. The 2004 ACU Lectureship organizers sought speakers who taught matters contrary to Scripture. Simultaneously ACU announced their choice of the Outstanding Alumnus of the year, choosing Max Lucado for that honor, a man who has abandoned the use of the name "Church of Christ" and has abandoned the belief that baptism is necessary and essential for salvation.
>
> 2. ACU invited Katie Hays, a radical feminist who is the preacher for the West Islip "Church of Christ" in West Islip, NY, and whose church has female shepherds, to critique the ACU advanced preaching students' sermons, and to deliver a sermon at chapel.
>
> 3. ACU invited Tony Campolo, a Northern Baptist (the liberal wing of the Baptist church), to speak at ACU in Chapel, where he recruited students to work in his evangelistic ministry. Several denominations were allowed to use Moody Coliseum for an inter-denominational joint "revival" with Campolo as the evangelist. Letters were sent out to churches by "Habitat for Humanity" encouraging people to attend

> and stating how glorious it was going to be when "Christians" of all the denominations raised their voices in fellowship and worship.
>
> 4. At least some ACU Bible professors have a functionally different belief regarding baptism. One professor is in print advocating fellowship between those who believe that baptism is "for" the remission of sins and "because of" the remission of sins and thus equally treating as brothers and sisters in Christ those of various denominations who have not been scripturally immersed for the forgiveness of sins. Such teaching compromises the clear New Testament teaching that baptism is essential for salvation.
>
> 5. ACU exhibits examples of conflicts of interests with denominations, at the financial level, and at the level of preaching regarding the Gospel and the Kingdom (church).
>
> 6. ACU gives unclear and misleading teachings about the nature of the New Testament church.
>
> 7. These teachings and practices have led some ACU students to abandon sound doctrine as well as the churches of Christ, and attend denominations instead, or return home to foment rebellion and division in unsuspecting churches (21).

Many of the things mentioned above are on the ACU website and confirm what brother Vadney writes.

Fourth, ACU has been involved in unity meetings with the Christian Church. There have been hugs and kisses and apologies made for division caused over one hundred years ago. It is the Christian Church that needs to apologize and repent of leaving the faith and going into apostasy. The general position at Abilene is that we are still brethren who need to mend fences. The Christian Church apostatized into a denomination. Those in the Christian Church now are not our brethren. The sad fact is that many of our own brethren, even some who claim to be sound in the faith, will accept a person from the Christian Church on his Christian Church (denominational) baptism. It is time that brethren wake up and stand against this heresy before many more lose their souls.

Fifth, ACU had a unity meeting in 2004 with the International Church of Christ cult. Again, it was a fence-mending meeting to see what could be done to restore fellowship.

Sixth, in April 2004, the ACU department of Theater presented "Godspell," a musical dinner theater. It was based on the "gospel according to Matthew and is one of the biggest Broadway and off-Broadway successes of all time" (Kilmer, "Godspell"). If that is not enough, the A cappella chorus performed "Elijah" on Thursday, April

15, 2004. "The performance will tell the story of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal, said Dr. Michael Scarbrough, director of the A Cappella Chorus" (Kilmer, "A Cappella"). This penman does not remember brothers Paul, Peter, or John having drama plays in the Bible to act out the things of which the Holy Spirit was teaching them. Where is the Scripture for the use of drama to teach the Bible?

Seventh, the students of ACU participated in the "prayer walk" across the campus on December 2, 2004. This prayer walk consisted of walking across campus while praying for the faculty, staff, students, their families, and campus departments. During the walk, groups stopped and prayed over "various buildings and those who work or live there and for the individual requests submitted by those in the building" (Kilmer, "Prayer Walk"). Sounds like some Catholic slipped past Tony Campolo and convinced ACU to bless the buildings on campus.

Eighth, almost twenty years ago, Abilene had professors teaching theistic evolution in the classroom. Bert Thompson documents this and states:

> It is not surprising that youngsters are so willing to accept theistic evolution, considering what "competent scholarship" urges upon them. In 1986, for example, students in the biology classes of two professors at Abilene Christian University (ACU)—Kenneth Williams and Archie Manis—were taught that "the fact of evolution is beyond dispute." Dr. Manis urged his students to study the Genesis account (he had given them a photocopy of Genesis 1 from his personal Bible, with the words "myth, hymn" scribbled in the margin beside Genesis 1:1).

ACU tried to sweep this under the rug, but the problem would not go away. In 1988, the school released a volume titled *Evolution and Faith*. M. E. Sadler wrote a chapter in which he states:

> Experimental evidence indicates that we live in a universe that was created over 10 billion years ago, after which the heavier elements were formed. The age of our solar system is about 4-5 billion years (qtd. in Thompson).

Dr. Sadler continued:

> The Bible does not say how old the earth is, much less the solar system or the universe. **To judge as heretics all those who believe that the present universe has evolved from a big bang is unfair and creates controversy over something that is certainly not a central part of Christianity** (qtd. in Thompson 93—emph. BT).

Those involved have a low regard for the power of God and His ability to create the earth in six literal days. Is denying God the right

and ability to create the earth "a central part of Christianity?" **Of course it is**! It shows a lack of faith.

Arlie Hoover (ACU professor)

> published an article on "God and the Big Bang" in which he suggested that "it is entirely possible" that "God used a big bang as His method of creation." Dr. Hoover went on to suggest: "Because the Bible does not specify how God did it, we are left to choose the hypothesis that seems to have the best supporting material." He concluded his article by stating: "The big bang theory is far from being established, but we should not reject it as if it necessarily contradicted the biblical account of Creation" (qtd. in Thompson).

He admits that it cannot be proven, then states that the big bang does not contradict the Bible. This author guesses he must be reading the version of Genesis one that states: "In the beginning the big bang created the heavens and the earth." Everyone knows that the true text of the Bible reads: "In the beginning, **God** created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). We expect a heathen in the world who does not believe in God to teach evolution in college, but we should not expect to send our children to a college where someone claiming to be a Christian would teach such damnation.

Ninth, we cannot forget Randy Harris, one of the ACU professors, who coauthored a book with Rubel Shelly, titled *The Second Incarnation* (at the time the book was written Harris was on the faculty of David Lipscomb University). In this book the authors deny "pattern theology" and ridicule those who teach it. They state: "We reject a rigid 'pattern theology' " (31). Later they wrote, "It [Scripture] certainly does not present an absolute blueprint for building a church" (36). It is amazing that men can read the Bible and deny the obvious blueprint for Christian living. Men like Harris and Shelly simply reject God's Word to appease other sectarians.

Tenth, ACU has professors supporting the homosexual movement. Wayne Jackson writes about Arlie Hoover, a professor of history at ACU, who wrote *The Abilene Reporter News* about his disapproval of homosexuality and his approval of the Supreme Court upholding the Boy Scouts' right to withhold membership to avowed homosexuals. Jackson remarks about Hoover and states:

> Hoover pointed out that the practice of homosexuality has been viewed as "sexual perversion" for untold centuries. He then called attention to the more recent trend to "sanitize" sodomy by:
>
> 1. inventing a new nomenclature (e.g., "gay");

> 2. searching ancient history for notable characters who reputedly practiced this vice (e.g., Alexander the Great, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.); and,
>
> 3. arguing that the practice is "genetically" precipitated, etc.
>
> The professor further argued that once homosexual conduct is legitimized, there really is no stopping point for the contention that other bizarre sexual aberrations must also be treated as "normal," (e.g., incest, pedophilia, bestiality, etc.). He pressed the point that once one rejects an objective standard of morality, any form of sexual abuse may be justified. This ideology found recent expression in the theory that the tendency to "rape" is a male characteristic that is a remnant of man's "evolutionary" ancestry.

Hoover is exactly correct in his statement about homosexuals. The shocking part is a letter that appears a few days later in the same paper:

> In a letter to the **Reporter News** a few days later, Darryl Tippens, also a professor at ACU, wrote the following:
>
> > "It is important that readers of this newspaper know that Dr. Arlie J. Hoover spoke only for himself in his Nov. 12 guest column concerning homosexuality. He did not speak for Abilene Christian University, and most certainly he did not speak for Wayne Barnard, Angela Brenton, Thom Lemmons and myself, his colleagues and co-workers.
> >
> > "We wish to express our personal disappointment with Dr. Hoover's intemperate remarks. In particular, we are pained that persons sincerely struggling with sexual issues in their lives might have felt insulted and demeaned and therefore less willing to seek help or to communicate with people of faith about the matter. We are grieved that young Christians struggling with same-sex attraction might feel injured by his remarks.
> >
> > "Our view is that all of us are created in the divine image and therefore deserving of profound respect. For those dealing with various sexual issues—and for those who have loved ones who are—may we say that compassion and understanding characterize most members of our academic community" (Jackson).

It is so sad that professors at an acclaimed *Christian* university would cry for tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality. In Romans 1:25-32, Paul calls homosexuality "vile" (1:26), unnatural (1:27-28) and having a "reprobate mind" (1:28), but some at ACU call it normal and acceptable.

Much more can be said about the ecumenical leanings of ACU, but space will not permit. Please see the website www.acu.edu and they will expose themselves. Read past issues of *Contending For The Faith* especially February 2003, June 2004, and July 2004 for more recent happenings at ACU. Also, read *The Gospel Journal*, especially the **Editor's Clippings** throughout 2004.

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

OCU is another "Christian college" where many biblical errors are either taught or condoned.

First, OCU has a science professor that teaches evolution. In 1999, Mike Gipson, a science professor, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Daily Oklahoman*. His letter appeared in the "Your Views" section of the paper on November 24, 1999. It was a response to an article that ran November 14, 1999 in which the editor of the paper was discussing a state-proposed "disclaimer" to be used in all books that teach evolution.

> The editor...suggested that the disclaimer (which pointed out to students that evolution is not a fact, and is only one possible explanation of how the Universe and its contents came to be) was "elegant and non-offensive" (Thompson).

Dr. Gipson strongly disagreed with the editorial. He states the disclaimer "implies no gradualism at all in the fossil record." He also complained that it "suggests that the hundreds of transitional forms claimed by paleontologists automatically have no merit. In my judgment, this is not...intellectually honest" (A-8). He concluded by saying:

> Evolutionary theory, like all science, is tentative. Within the realm of faith, many of us hold religious explanations for the source of the diversity of life around us. Within the realm of science, **evolution**—though theoretical—currently **appears to be the best explanation** (A-8).

We fear for our young people going to state colleges because of the evolutionary thought that will be pushed down their throats. At least in state colleges, we know it will be taught. Parents are surprised to find out that a *Christian* university teaches evolution. Dr. Gipson himself states that evolution is the "best explanation" for the universe. He fails to truly have faith in God and in Genesis 1:1 where we read that it was **God** who created the heavens and the earth—not evolution through the process of millions of years.

Second, in the fall semester of 2002, Dr. Glenn Pemberton, Associate Professor of Bible, taught a class, titled "Advanced Old Testament

Introduction," in which he taught error. The following quotes are from an audio CD from a former student in the Master's program at OCU. Pemberton begins by denying the scholarship of Moses. He gives an example of someone preaching or teaching, and in the process that person might say, "Moses wrote in Genesis chapter five" (qtd. in Popejoy 9). He then asks "What's wrong with that?" He answers by saying that

> the scholarly world in the Old Testament and people who have been exposed to that will look at you and wonder if you have any idea what you were talking about not just about Genesis but about the Bible period. You will lose credibility with them like that (snaps fingers) (9).

He is concerned with what the *scholarly world* thinks more than what the Bible teaches and proves. He also states in that class, "Jonah is just a short story, and further might even be regarded as historical fiction" (9). He does not believe in the biblical account of Jonah, even though the Lord confirmed it. In Matthew, Jesus calls Jonah a prophet (12:39), but Pemberton thinks Jonah is a myth. If this story is fictional, then the Bible lied, and Jesus also lied. Can we follow a liar as our Savior? Will Pemberton call Jesus a liar, or will he repent of his lies? On that same CD, he states in class:

> The early church might not have had a problem saying that Max Lucado was an inspired writer...and that doesn't mean always right, but they can see the spirit of God working through him. I mean we see the early church documents talking about non-biblical writers as inspired, (pause) now I'm in trouble! (9).

Pemberton thinks that Lucado, a man who denies baptism for remission of sins, a man who dropped the title "church of Christ" from the church sign, a man who states he would make a good Baptist, is inspired of God and that the "spirit of God is working through him." Pemberton also discusses in this class about Isaiah 7:14 and *alma* being translated "virgin" in most versions of the Bible. He tries to deny that *alma* means virgin. He states:

> Linguistically, what does "alma" mean in Hebrew? Linguistically it simply means a young woman. Might it be a virgin? Yes it might, but in Isaiah chapter seven is that the point? That's not the point. The point is there is a young woman who is pregnant who's getting ready to give birth to a child and we're going to name him God is with us, because God is really with us. That's the point of Isaiah chapter seven. Was she a virgin in Isaiah chapter seven? Apparently not, she's

> already pregnant or shortly will be. The issue is not virginity in Isaiah chapter seven, in the original context with the linguistic evidence (9).

This heretic does as a few other reprobates have done in the past and has denied the virgin birth of Jesus. He states she is not a virgin because she was already pregnant or shortly would be. Matthew writes: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her **is of the Holy Ghost**" (1:20). Matthew further writes: "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS" (1:25). The **Holy Bible** states that Joseph "knew her not" (did not have sexual relations) with Mary until after Jesus was born. This heretic at OCU teaches that, since she was pregnant, she was not a virgin. Normally, that would be the case, but since "that which was conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost," Mary was still a virgin while she was pregnant. Liberals will stop at nothing to deny the miraculous way that Jesus came into this world.

Third, one of the professors at OCU, Dudley Chancey, is one of the officers of the "Winterfest Group." "This para-church organization is no part of the church, but they annually feature their 'Fallfest' or 'Winterfest' programs to draw the youth of the church into their web of deceit" (Waldron 14). Part of their program has "contemporary Christian performers" which use instrumental music with "songs of praise and worship" (14). Jeff Walling is a regular speaker on the program and has been for many years. Those involved in this organization seek to push liberalism through our young people. Many young people have been led away from the truth with the likes of Jeff Walling and other false teachers. Parents and elderships better wake up and be aware of where the paid babysitter (i.e., a youth minister) is taking them.

Fourth, *The Christian Chronicle*, published by Oklahoma Christian University, for years have been a catalyst for the liberal movement within the churches of Christ. This paper claims to report the news of the churches of Christ. However, it has very liberal leanings and glorifies the liberalism taking place in the church, while at the same time either downplaying or outright misrepresenting the true church of the Bible.

In the March and April 2000 issues of *The Christian Chronicle* a series of articles appeared to favor the Community Church idea. Michael Weed states:

> For several decades the church growth movement has urged Christians to learn from "the **laws of collective behavior**" and "**mob psychology**." Thus, religion must be adapted to the entertainment-saturated and **self-preoccupied** consumer of religion. Worship, especially church music, must be "fun and attractive," "exciting"—even entertaining.
>
> It should also be clear that these strategies are more easily adopted by some religious traditions than others. Those traditions that emphasize personal experience and stress emotions and "heart religion" more easily adapts to the contemporary culture. The community church movement, for example, is a joining of older revivalist traditions with contemporary trends. Nineteenth-century revivalism was largely a para-church development, stressing person experience above **doctrine** and church membership. In the community church movement, this tradition is combining with modern and so-called baby boomer mentalities that **resist commitments** and **loyalties beyond the self**. The quasi-**charismatic exuberant** worship of the community churches, with names like Praise Tabernacle and Victory Center, appeals to products of the dominant consumer/entertainment culture (qtd. in McDade "Community").

The Chronicle says nothing about the error in the Community Church; the paper appears to support this movement. The article discusses entertainment-oriented worship, especially singing, which is becoming more prevalent in religion today. These liberals are not as interested in glorifying God in worship as they are in entertaining themselves. This article also states that the Community Church, like nineteenth-century revivalism, stresses a person's "experience above doctrine." To the liberal, doctrine is of little or no importance any more. The Bible, however, places a great deal of emphasis on doctrine. Paul writes, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Fellowship is to be withheld for those who do not follow Bible doctrine. Paul tells the Romans to mark and avoid those "which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" (Rom. 16:17). John states that we are not to "bid Godspeed " to those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). *The Chronicle*, and thus OCU, does not believe God's Word concerning doctrine. If this paper is not upholding the false doctrines advocated by the Community Church, then the paper should have exposed this in the article. In the opening statement, Flavil Yeakley introduces **The Purpose Driven Church**. In this article he writes:

> Then the big one—Rick Warren's book **The Purpose Driven Church** tells the story of the Saddleback Community Church, Orange County, Calif. Rick is a Baptist, and his church is a Baptist church, but he wanted to reach out to the unchurched and felt the name "Baptist" might be a barrier.
>
> This approach is a step in the direction of non-denominational Christianity, and I think that Stone, Campbell and other Restoration Movement pioneers would rejoice to see this development. It is not enough, but it is a step in the right direction (qtd. in McDade "Community").

Yeakley believes the restoration pioneers would rejoice that a man dropped *Baptist* because of the stigma attached to it. It does not say that Warren is giving up on the Baptist doctrine, but that he dropped the name to win more people. It appears that Warren is being deceptive to build his church and help his numbers. Many in the Lord's church are doing the same thing. This scribe wonders if Yeakley thinks by dropping "church of Christ" it will win more people.

The Christian Chronicle often has articles concerning joint meetings with the Christian Church denomination. In The December 2004 issue an article titled "Church of Christ, Christian Church leaders test waters." A statement is made by participant Jim White, who is minister of the Southwest Church of Christ in Omaha, Nebraska in which he said, "This is not about our giving up our position on A cappella music. It is about finding common ground regardless of 'what side of the keyboard' we are on" (Adams). This entire article is about this "unity meeting" in hopes of *reconciling* the church of Christ with the Christian Church. *The Chronicle* **never** in this article says anything negative about these groups "testing the waters." The *Chronicle* continues to support liberalism within the church today. The only meeting that needs to be held with the Christian Church is the one to teach them to repent of their sins of denominationalism and the split they caused one hundred years ago with their false doctrines.

HARDING UNIVERSITY

Harding University and Harding University Graduate School of Religion have been at the forefront of liberalism within the church for many years.

First, *The Christian Chronicle* published an article titled "The Community Church Trend," in which they give a favorable review of the Community church concept. In it, Flavil Yeakley, a professor at

Harding University is quoted concerning this matter. Yeakley believes that by dropping the name "church of Christ" helps a church to be nondenominational and causes a church to place a "high priority on evangelism." Brother Gary McDade, in the October 2000 issue of *The Spiritual Sword* quotes Yeakley from the March 2000 issue of *The Christian Chronicle.* He writes:

> Flavil Yeakley, a self-proclaimed church growth expert who teaches Bible at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas and has helped start Covenant Fellowship Community Church there, has said, "This approach [the Community Church] is a step in the direction of non-denominational Christianity, and I think that Stone, Campbell and other Restoration Movement pioneers would rejoice to see this development. It is not enough, but it is a step in the right direction" (qtd. in McDade 46).

It really does not matter what Stone, Campbell, or any other restoration leader would think about it; that is not the standard by which we will be judged. The restoration leaders, however, left denominations to restore the simple teachings of the New Testament, not go back to them as Yeakley and others are doing. In the April 2000 issue of *The Christian Chronicle*, John Mark Hicks, professor of Christian doctrine, at Harding University Graduate School of Religion, is quoted as having ties to the Community Church. The article states that he is part of the Cordova Community Church and is a shepherd.

> Our primary goal is evangelistic while remaining nondenominational and Gospel-based. Part of meeting that goal was to provide an openness to more expressive and vibrant communal worship. This includes an emphasis on intimacy and relationship with God ("Challenges").

How does changing the name help make one "nondenominational?" Maybe this author missed Paul's letter to the Roman Community Church where he wrote them that the "community churches salute you." Why be ashamed of "church of Christ?" Hicks, Yeakley, and others must be ashamed of the name for them to change it.

John Mark Hicks has a website in which he outlines the goals, objectives, and beliefs of the Cordova Community Church. To show the acceptance of Harding University of this movement, the Cordova Community Church meets at Harding Academy. In reality, this is an endorsement by the school for allowing this group to meet on campus (2 John 9-11). On the website, under the heading, "New Church Plant: Theological and Strategic Statement," in the introduction it lists that this church will be involved in "contemporary, dynamic worship

assemblies." Contemporary worship usually consists of drama, skits, plays, solos, choirs, etc., which are not authorized by the Bible (John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:33, 40). This church also teaches that all of life is worship. Notice that statement under the heading, "The Mission of this new church plant":

> Worship is the primary function of the church. We worship God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. We worship God through our lives and through our devotions. We worship as private individuals, families and as a community of believers. Through this worship we testify to God's gracious presence in the world through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit and we experience his gracious fellowship as we enter into his presence (Hicks).

He goes on to say "arising out of this meaningful worship, both corporate and private, both **lifestyle and assembly**, the church emphasizes four functions of the corporate body" (Hicks, emph.—JW). John Mark teaches that we worship God "through our lives and devotions" and in "both lifestyle and assembly." This is the old false doctrine of all of life is worship. The Bible neither teaches this doctrine nor alludes to it. There needs to be Scripture given to uphold this doctrine if true. It is interesting that in this document, he gives very few Scriptures as proof of anything that this church believes. In this section of the *mission* of this group, there is not a single verse offered as proof of why each point is believed. If he is going to speak, then he needs to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). He makes several statements about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

We will notice several quotes from various sections followed by comments on them. In the section of the "goals of this new church planting" he states: "This church will equip its members for ministry through the full use of the gifts the Holy Spirit has distributed throughout the body of Christ." Under the section "Theological Presuppositions" Hicks states: "through faith God graciously puts to death the old person of sin, and makes us alive in the power of the Spirit when we are immersed in water." In the same section, he writes about the seven ones of Ephesians 4:4-6 and states: "There is *one Spirit*, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us as a deposit of our inheritance, **empowers our ministry** [emph.—JW], and transforms our character by producing his fruit within us." Further in this section under the subheading of "*The doctrine and practice of this new church planting*," he states:

> The Holy Spirit works **powerfully** [emph.—JW] in the lives of believers to produce his fruit, and while he no longer distributes

> miraculous gifts to believers in the post-apostolic period (e.g., investing the gift of healing in specific individuals), he is not thereby limited from acting in miraculous ways according to God's good pleasure.

John Mark uses *empowers* and *works powerfully* in this new church, but states that the Holy Spirit "no longer distributes miraculous gifts" today. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully in the first century through the means of miracles. How does He work *powerfully* today without them? Notice that he also states that there are no more miracles but then adds: "He is not thereby limited from acting in miraculous ways according to God's good pleasure." John Mark, needs to tell us if the Holy Spirit is doing miracles today or not. He states one time that He is not, but then states that He is not "limited from acting in miraculous ways." Notice that he only lists the "gift of healing" as that which is no longer used today. Does John Mark and Cordova Community Church believe that the other gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 are used today? It is evident by his statements that he believes that the Holy Spirit is working today separate and apart from the Word of God in the life of a Christian. John Mark states that this new church follows the "cell church strategy." He explains this as "a small group of 8-16 adults who gather weekly to share, pray, and study the Bible.... These groups may meet any time during the week, but most will probably meet on Sunday evenings in various homes." Rather than the church coming together for worship on Sunday evenings, this church will divide the assembly and meet in "various homes." The Bible, however, gives the example of the church coming together (1 Cor. 11) to worship. John Mark states concerning the Bible: "God has revealed his pattern for his people in Scripture.... It is not a blueprint of specific details but a call to image God in this world." He believes it is a *pattern* for people, but not a *blueprint*. If it is a pattern, then it **is** a blueprint. If you listen to a liberal for a short period of time, he will contradict himself often as Hicks does here.

Under the subheading of *The Doctrine and Practice of this New Church Planting*, he states: "We derive our historical and theological roots from the Churches of Christ. We have a critical, but appreciative, stance toward the Churches of Christ." He goes on to say, "We are not slaves to that Historical tradition nor do we accept their theology without criticism." He admits that their roots are from the churches of Christ, but are critical toward the church and they do not accept

theology without criticism. If they are going to be critical of the church and our *theology*, then why have **any** ties to the church of Christ at all? The church of Christ, does not have her own *theology* and *doctrine*, but the church follows the doctrine of Christ. More can be said about The Cordova Community Church, such as women taking a lead in worship, the denial that instrumental music as a salvation issue, etc.

John Mark Hicks is not the only one at Harding University Graduate School of Religion who is involved in the Community Church movement. Evertt W. Huffard, Dean of the school, helped to establish five Community Churches in the Memphis, Tennessee area. "Dean Huffard has played a leadership role in the formation and furtherance of the five Community Church Movement-type churches in the Memphis area" (McDade, "Believers" 1). McDade states:

> The *Harding* magazine reported Dean Huffard was "the impetus behind the forming" of the Downtown Church and stated, "He has spent the last two years directly involved with the church's planting...." The so-called contemporary worship consisting of the use of a praise team, hand clapping, testimonials, and the use of religious art in worship (a 25-foot mural of Jesus Christ on the cross) are all presented in the *Harding* magazine article ("Believers" 1).

Harding University Graduate School of Religion was slated to have Jack W. Cottrell, Professor of Theology at Cincinnati Bible College and Seminary, speak at the W. B. West Lectures in 2004. "Mr. Cottrell is a Christian Church preacher and the educational institution with which he is identified is affiliated with Independent Christian Churches" (Bailey 21). Harding Graduate School has now resorted to using denominational preachers on their lectures. Why stop at the Christian Church? Why not invite a Baptist preacher, or Methodist, or even a Catholic Priest? It is as much a sin to fellowship one as it is the other.

Next, Monte Cox, Director for World Missions at Harding University, said in a *Christian Chronicle* interview (July 2001) that within fifty years missionaries will be working "under nationals in institutions as para-church organizations" (McClish 28). Dub McClish says, "The idea of missionaries working in and under 'institutions and para-church (i.e., 'along-side and separate from the church') organizations' arrests my attention big-time" (28). He goes on to say, "Para-church organizations among us are not new. The original one was the ill-begotten and

unauthorized American Christian Missionary Society, founded in 1849" (28).

Jimmy Allen, retired professor of Bible at Harding University, has written a book titled *Re-Baptism? What One Must Know To Be Born Again* in which he sets forth the thesis that understanding remission of sins is not important. In the chapter, "Why Write This Book?" he gives several reasons for so doing. Reason number thirteen is: "Because of a desire to promote the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17:20-21)" (30). He tries to justify this book and his belief by using David Lipscomb for proof. He writes that Lipscomb's view (and his) is "that one need only to be baptized in obedience to the Lord and he will receive remission of sins although he may not know the exact time when forgiveness is granted" (30). Then Allen states:

> If I read him correctly, my friend was saying we will be more effective in reaching others and achieving unity if we will emphasize "the primary reason for baptism" (i.e., obedience). I do not think he meant we should cease to teach baptism's essentiality (31).

Jimmy Allen wants to use a man (i.e., Lipscomb) to justify his false doctrine concerning baptism. When Peter preached on Pentecost, he told the Jews present that they were to: "Repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The ones present on Pentecost understood that the baptism would be to remit sins. Paul was told by Ananias, "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Paul understood that baptism would "wash away" his sins. Jimmy Allen, however, does not feel that it is important enough to teach a person. In chapter three of his book ("Obedience Is The Key"), he writes:

> It is my belief that the New Testament teaches when a penitent believer in the crucified and risen Savior is immersed in water to fulfill righteousness or obey God, the Lord forgives his past or alien sins (although he may not know that sins are remitted or that the Holy Spirit is given at the time). If the thesis is correct, the key word is obedience (39).

Later in this chapter he writes:

> Some of my brethren have difficulty believing that men are to be baptized as Jesus was baptized.... Everyone I have read sets forth the view that Jesus was baptized to do what was right or to fulfill the will of God (46).

In the last paragraph in this chapter he writes:

> There is simply no higher motive or greater reason for being baptized than the one Jesus Christ had (48).

He then states:

> Surely, all right-thinking people will admit that to be baptized to fulfill righteousness (i.e., obey God) is even a higher motive for immersion than being baptized in order to obtain remission of sins. This is the reason why some are unwilling to parallel the Lord's baptism with ours. If it is allowed to stand and it can be shown that one was immersed from the same motivation that moved the Savior; although that person may have been ignorant of remission, his baptism must be regarded as scriptural. Hence, the concept that one must grasp the exact significance of "remission of sins" at the time of baptism is incorrect (48).

Allen is teaching nothing more than re-fried Baptist doctrine about baptism. Every Baptist with which this scribe has studied believes that baptism is only to obey God, not for remission of sins. Jimmy Allen states the same thing in his book when he said baptism to obey God is "even a higher motive" than being baptized for remission of sins. Allen believes that, as long as a person "obeys God" in baptism, God will sneak him into the kingdom without him even knowing it. How can a person be *admitted* to any institution, whether human or divine, without knowing what he is entering and why he is entering it? The New Testament is clear that the one who is baptized understands the purpose of baptism and what it does. No one denies that one obeys God in baptism; however, a person must understand why he is being baptized.

DAVID LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Lipscomb University has been involved in liberalism since the 1980s. For instance, in 1989 DLU had Rabbi Stephen Fuchs (a Jewish rabbi), to speak on campus about Judaism (Coats 2). For a review of this event, see Wayne Coats' booklet titled *Rabbi Fuchs at Lipscomb*. In 1991, Ray Waddle, the Religion News Editor, of the *Nashville Tennessean* wrote an article titled, "Conservative churches may foster incest, panel says." In the article he quotes from Gayle Napier:

> We've so distorted the concept of "headship" and "submission" that we've produced a pathological family model.... The wife is treated second-class, treated like one of the kids.... Headship in the New Testament had nothing to do with control and power but was seen as the source of love. Guys, love your wives the way Jesus loves the church (3).

Waddle states in his comments:

> Napier said many marriages among Church of Christ members and other conservative Christians resemble a "father-daughter" relationship because the husband has become a "power-controlling addict" or dictator, not a loving head of a household (3).
>
> The wife will say, "He sounds like my dad, and I don't want to have sex with Daddy" (3).

Waddle then says "after some 15 years of emotional incest, the wife quits having sex with her husband, and after 20 years she's ready to end the marriage" (3). Napier then said that

> sexual incest might follow when domineering fathers turn to their daughters if their frustrated wives withdraw from a sexual relationship.... The more conservative the church, the more incest you have in families (3).

Gayle Napier is a sick person mentally and spiritually when he starts accusing people, especially his own brethren who do not agree with him, with incest. Gayle, where is your proof? He offers none in his lecture, he only spews his poison to keep the liberals as liberal as possible. Those who follow God's Word know the true relationship of the husband and wife. Of course, this is a ploy to push the women's role movement further, to allow women to take a leadership role within the church. Such teachings should make faithful Christian see the direction David Lipscomb University has taken.

In 2003, David Lipscomb University had Dr. Fred Craddock speak at "Spiritual Renewal May 12-14" (www.Lipscomb.edu). He is the minster of Cherry Log Christian Church in Cherry Log, Georgia. He is the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, Emeritus, at Emory University. This is not the first time DLU has used denominational preachers. Freddie Clayton wrote Steve Flatt concerning Craddock and other liberals speaking at DLU. He questioned Flatt about why Lipscomb was having men like Jeff Walling on the program. He wrote that Flatt assured him that he was going to turn things around and to give him a year or two to get it accomplished. Clayton then writes:

> A year or so later when I contacted the number attached to an announcement about the youth workers university concerning a "pastor" from Hawaii, I was told that "he is a Christian, but he just doesn't go to the church of Christ" (28).

Those who know Lipscomb are not surprised that sectarian, denominational preachers are being invited. It is becoming the norm more than the exception.

Gary Holloway, professor of Bible, along with Michael Weed, coauthored a paper titled *The Gospel in Urban Vessels: Churches of Christ Face the Twenty-First Century*. In this paper Holloway and Weed endorsed

> the Foster-Hughes contention that the 'Church of Christ' denomination started as an exclusive sect in the early 19th century. Both reject the biblical doctrine of the apostolic pattern of the church (Choate, *Seminar* 14).

This should not surprise anyone since Rubel influences so many people in the Nashville area. In this paper Holloway and Weed propose three options

> as possible replacement models (paradigms) for the churches of Christ as they enter the 21st century (Choate, *Seminar* 14).
>
> The models are namely: The Willow Creek Community Church model; (2) the Vineyard (Third Wave Pentecostal) Movement model; and (3) the "Neo-conservative," or "moderates" which identify with postmodern theology (Choate, *Seminar* 14).

In postmodernism, there are no absolutes. Postmodernism denies a pattern or standard of truth exists. No wonder liberals are rushing to push postmodernism on us today. This philosophy opens the door for any doctrine possible to enter the picture. Jesus teaches that absolute truth exists through Him and the Word (John 14:6; 8:32; 17:17).

Lipscomb University continues to promote false doctrine through the lectureships and seminars which are filled with false teachers. Joe Beam has spoken on a number of occasions at Lipscomb. Beam is a well-known change agent liberal in the brotherhood. Notice his statements about the Holy Spirit: "Some people will never be free from sinful addictions in their lives without God's intervention" (Smith). Beam believes the Holy Spirit works in three ways: (1) through the Word, (2) through spiritual wisdom, (3) awakenings or promptings (Smith). What does Beam mean by *intervention*, *awakenings*, and *promptings*? If there is any question notice these examples which Toney Smith gives:

> 1. In counseling a young couple, Beam stated he asked God to let him know when either lied. After some time in the counseling session, he stopped the young man and told him that God had just told him that he had lied!

> 2. On another occasion, he claimed he was led by the Spirit to a home where he surmised that the man was having an affair, without any evidence to sustain his allegation.
>
> 3. He said a prisoner's soul was saved because God led him to a trash can where someone had discarded some Bible material.
>
> 4. He alleged a Texas preacher was able to keep a man from committing murder because God sent him to stop the would-be killer.
>
> 5. Once, he asked God to speak to him. He turned on the radio and pushed buttons until a woman came on singing a song that related directly to him.
>
> 6. He stated that sometimes he listens to his speeches and hears himself saying things that he never knew before.
>
> 7. He saw a denominational program on television concerning a man who had not been able to speak above a whisper for ten years and God miraculously restored his voice. He then affirmed that God cannot be put in a box and that His fellowship extends beyond the church of Christ (Smith).

For more information concerning Beam's teaching about the work of the Holy Spirit, see David Brown's article in *Contending For The Faith* (December 1997) which contain additional quotes.

F. LaGard Smith, Scholar in Residence of Christian Studies, is known far and wide for his liberal ideas. Smith worships in England six months out of the year with a denomination that uses instrumental music in worship (Choate, *Explaining* 10). In 1988, at the Pepperdine Lectures, Smith argued that God "will destroy [the soul]. Not punish it. Not dangle it. Not torture it. Destroy it" (Jackson 2). Jackson goes on to say:

> After some communication with brother Smith on this matter...it is my devout prayer that our friend will study himself out of this position eventually, though I must say that, at this time [August 1999], I have no indication of any inclination in this direction (2).

As of 2005, nothing to this writer's knowledge has been stated by Smith that he has changed this position. F. LaGard has been known as a writer of many books. Space will not permit a review of his books. Notice briefly a paragraph by Daniel Denham concerning Smith's books:

> His book *The Cultural Church* advocated a hermeneutic that combines both objective truth and subjective feeling. Another book titled *Baptism: The Believer's Wedding Ceremony* held the door open for the possibility of salvation for some at the judgment without the necessity of baptism. The book that is now before me is his work titled *Who Is*

> *My Brother?...* The basic thesis of the book lies in Smith's contention that there are "five levels of fellowship." The book is a well-crafted attempt to justify certain forms of cooperation and participation with the sects, forms in which LaGard Smith has long been engaged, while maintaining some form of reservation (mostly mental) as to their standing relative to salvation, *et al.* (Denham, "Fellowship" 7).

John Mark Hicks was discussed earlier in the section about Harding University. Hicks is a professor at Lipscomb and part-time professor at Harding Graduate. Mark Black, another professor is one of the "ministers" at the Woodmont Hills Family of God. These are among the many faculty members who are leading young people away in heresy.

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) has been widely accepted as one of the more sound schools among our brethren. While the blatant liberalism is not now seen as in many of the schools already discussed, FHU is not without the problem of liberalism. The problem at present does not appear to be in the classroom, as is the case with most *Christian* colleges today. While a student at FHU in the Master's program, this scribe only had one class with which he disagreed with a professor doctrinally. The main problem that this writer sees is that every year FHU invites known, blatant false teachers to speak on the lectureship.

One speaker that is on the lectureship yearly is John Dale, who was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Freed Hardeman in 2001. John Dale is infamous for his appearance at the St. Leo Catholic Church in Murray, Kentucky, in September 2000. In his speech, he stated that he was not restricted in what he had to preach. He could have preached anything to the Catholics to teach them the truth, but he failed to do it. Instead, he delivered a lesson that could have been preached in any denominational building and would have offended no one. He talks a lot about the blood of Christ saving and God granting remission of sins to those who come after Him. The problem is in the fact that John Dale did not go in detail about how to come in contact with the blood of Christ. Later in his lesson, he reads from Acts 2, but does not explain any part of it. He even mentions that there are things with which he would differ with some present, but states it is a joy to live in an area where there can be differences, yet still talk about it. His example of this was the wet/dry issue that came up and he said that there would be

those on both sides of the issue, but it was great that there could still be communication.[1]

Dave Miller was on the lectures in 2002. Dave has written good books in the past against liberalism, but then he speaks on the same program and fellowships liberals. Dave, while in Texas, began teaching the false doctrine of "elder reaffirmation" (see McClish "Reaffirmation" for a complete study of this issue). As early as 1990, Miller preached a sermon at Brown Trail advocating this doctrine (Weir 25). Dub Mowery, a gospel preacher, met with Dave Miller and Maxie Boren to voice his concern. He states:

> I visited with Dave Miller and Maxie Boren in Maxie's office at the Brown Trail church building on Wednesday, July 17th. Both...defended the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders. In fact, brother Boren acknowledged that he had initiated the process of the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders for the four remaining elders during the period of time. I pleaded with those two brethren to use their influence to stop that process at Brown Trail. They both upheld that unscriptural practice (Weir 25).

Weir continues in his article and gives the guidelines followed at Brown Trail. "If an elder did not obtain 75 percent or more approval from the congregation he would be removed from the eldership" (25). This resulted in the removal of one of the elders on July 14, 2002. This was twelve years after Miller was first confronted about his false doctrine. To this penman's knowledge, Miller has yet to repent of this error. It is sad that some of our brethren who claim to be sound continue to use Dave Miller instead of rebuking him for his teaching on this matter. Miller and others who believe this doctrine need to give book, chapter, and verse where this doctrine is taught in the Bible or cease its practice.

James Maxwell of Southwestern Christian College, who spoke on FHU lectures in 1998, teaches that only the Christian is amenable to God's law concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He writes:

> There are many honest and sincere Christians who believe that if a sinner in the world is divorced and remarried, not for fornication before becoming a Christian, that he must put away his second spouse, go back to the first one, if possible, or remain single for the rest of his life, in order to become a Christian. Not only do I believe that this is not a practical and logical interpretation, I do not believe that it is Biblical (183).

Maxwell does not believe it practical, logical, and biblical to teach Matthew 19:9 the way God does in the Bible. Maxwell does not believe the above position because he does not think the sinner is subject to God's law. He writes further: "God RECOGNIZES marriage outside the church as well as inside, but GOD DOESN'T REGULATE the marriages of sinners in the world; only principles and regulations" (184). He states that God "doesn't regulate" sinners then states it is only in "principles and regulations." Does He or does He not regulate the sinner. It cannot be both ways and be consistent. Maxwell seems a bit confused about his doctrine. Another reason he does not believe that the sinner is subject to God's law is:

> The people of God and the people of the world are in two different kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. (Col. 1:13). The people in the kingdom of darkness are REGULATED by the regulations of Satan, and the people of God are REGULATED by the word of God (185).

There may be two kingdoms in this world, but there is only **one** law. The thing that makes people part of the kingdom of darkness is the failure to follow the law. If the people of the world are truly not subject to God's law, then why teach them the Gospel? How could we say those in the world are going to be lost if the Bible and hell do not apply to them? Maxwell believes that a person living in his second, third, or even tenth marriage, may stay in his current marriage when he obeys the Gospel. The Bible teaches that a person must repent and come out of sin to be saved. In Colossians 3:5-11, Paul tells the Colossians to mortify (put to death) sin and even lists some. This is not an exclusive list, but shows that a sinner must repent of past sins to be saved. He writes: "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them" (3:7). Paul teaches that a person in sin (alien sinner) can *live* in sin and thus be held accountable before God (3:8-10). Maxwell does not believe an alien sinner can live in sin because he is not subject to the law of God. While a student in the Master's program at FHU, this author was taught the truth on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Knowing the strong position the Bible faculty takes on this subject, why was a man who teaches blatant error allowed to speak on the lectureship? Does the lectureship committee agree with Maxwell? If not, why was he allowed to speak? Does the lectureship committee consult the Bible department about such matters before inviting someone to speak? Does the lectureship committee even care what the

Bible faculty believes on **any** given subject? While this penman was a student at FHU, he voiced concerns about some of the speakers and was told that many in the Bible faculty did not agree with all of the speakers on the program.

In 2002, Glenn Jobe was invited as one of the speakers on the annual FHU lectureship. Jobe aligns himself with Mac Deaver and teaches that people today receive Holy Spirit baptism. "Among other things, this teaching implies a **direct operation on the heart of the alien sinner**" (Denham, "Spirit" 21). He affirmed this doctrine in September 2001 at the annual Robertson County Lectureship in Greenbriar, Tennessee. Does the Bible teach anywhere that people today receive Holy Spirit baptism? The New Testament **never** once **commanded** Holy Spirit baptism. The Bible teaches Spirit baptism as a promise, not a command—and that to the apostles.

Much more could be said about other speakers on the lectureship (Jerrie Barber, Jim Bill McInteer, etc.), but these will suffice to show that even Freed-Hardeman is not standing where it once stood on the fellowship issue. We pray that one day FHU will stop allowing these false teachers to speak on campus where young, impressionable souls can be led away.

FAULKNER UNIVERSITY

This scribe was a student from 1989-1991 at Faulkner University where he received his B.A. degree in Bible. This writer did not worry about what he was being taught in the Bible classes. The professors taught the Truth and encouraged the students to follow the Truth. Can this be said about the current head of the Bible department? Cecil May is notorious for speaking on lecture programs across the United States with **known** false teachers. May spoke on the 2002 Spiritual Growth Workshop in Orlando, Florida with a number of false teachers. Would Cecil agree with the doctrines taught by these men? Notice a list of some of the speakers on that program: Keith Lancaster, Jim McGuiggan, John Clayton, John Smith, Evertt Huffard, Charles Hodge, Larry West, Harold Shank, Ervin Jackson, Calvin Warpula, Eddie Levick, etc. Speaking with these men does not seem to bother Cecil. He not only speaks with them but defends his actions. In 1999, Cecil wrote an article in the *Gospel Advocate*, titled "Guilt By Association," in which he tried to defend appearing with liberals. In his *Preacher Talk* paper he publishes, he has written several things defending this idea. In

the February 2000 issue he writes under the heading "Have No Fellowship" where he quotes Ephesians 5:11, then comments:

> "Have not fellowship with" is do not participate in, do not be a partaker of. "The unfruitful works of darkness" are evil deeds, sins. "Do not engage in sinful deeds," the passage tells us, "but speak against them." It does not say, "Don't ever associate with anybody who disagrees with you."

He quotes the right passage, but deviates when he said the passage does not teach: "Don't ever associate with anybody who disagrees with you." This is Cecil's justification for speaking with liberals. If not bad enough, he goes further in this belief. In the June 2000 issue of *Preacher Talk* he writes:

> I do not believe it necessary to attack so vehemently and viciously as to guarantee never to be invited again, but faithfulness does require clear and deliberate efforts to move folks from where they are toward where they ought to be. Some speakers accused of guilt by association clearly show they agree with the errors taught. They are guilty, but not just by association. Jesus was not a glutton or a drunkard, but he was accused of both, because of his associations. If guilt by association is valid, Jesus was a sinner. He is not! Association alone is not sin.

Cecil tries to pull at the heartstrings by taking out of context a part of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not associate with sinners to make them feel good and preach a topic assigned that would not bring about disagreement. He went to the sinners to teach them to change. In His preaching, He made many people mad. It was not to be disagreeable, but to teach the Truth. The Bible **does** teach that there is guilt by association and that it is a sin. 2 John 9-11 teaches that, if we bid Godspeed to someone in sin (error), we are just as guilty. Romans 16:17-18 teaches to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Paul teaches to *mark* and *avoid* those dividing the church through contrary doctrines. A host of other Scriptures condemn association with sin and error (Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 The. 3:6, 14). Cecil must not believe the Bible since he sees nothing wrong with associating with false teachers.

Cecil contradicts himself in another issue of his paper. In the May, 2001 issue of *Preacher Talk* he has an article titled "Extremes" in which he *exposes* extremes on both the left and the right as to put himself in the middle. In the section titled *Extremists on the right*, he states that they are extremists because they "exclude from fellowship

anyone who appears on the same program with anyone who differs with them, gradually drawing their definitions of faithful brethren narrower and narrower." Cecil finally admits (and denies) that his appearance on these liberal programs is fellowship. Notice an extremists is one who "excludes from **fellowship** anyone who appears on the same program."

Cecil digs deeper when he states in the 2001 and 2002 lectureship booklet for Faulkner's annual lectureship: "We believe all of our lectureship speakers are sound in the scriptural sense of that word: healthy and biblical in conviction, Christ-like in attitude, and faithful in life as well as teaching." We shall see if the speakers on the lectureship live up to what Cecil writes about them.

In 2001, Jimmy Allen spoke at the Faulkner Lectures. (See Harding University section for the false doctrine of Jimmy Allen.) To briefly state his belief, as long as a person is baptized to "obey God," understanding "remission of sins" is not necessary. Does Cecil believe Jimmy Allen is faithful in his teachings? Does Cecil believe that H. A. (Buster) Dobbs' (2002 and 2003 lectureship speaker) teaching that "all of life is worship except sin" doctrine is sound and scriptural? Does he believe Wayne Dunaway's "grace only" doctrine? Notice some statements made by Wayne Dunaway. On the Ohatchee Church of Christ website under the section titled "Our Message," Dunaway writes: "We believe and teach that salvation is totally by the Grace of God which he bestows on us through the blood of **Jesus**. We rest our hope fully, not partly or mostly, but *fully*, on God's Grace (1 Pet. 1:13)." The Bible does teach we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8), but not by grace alone, as Dunaway teaches. Dunaway states under the heading of "Our Mission": "If you are looking for a church home perhaps God has led you here. If so, we welcome you into our spiritual family." God has *led* you here? Dunaway must believe in the direct guiding and *nudging* of God to bring people to them. God guides men today, but it is through His Word (2 The. 2:13-14). Does Cecil think the Dunaway's "grace only" doctrine is sound? It is interesting to note that Wayne Dunaway speaks on the Faulkner Lectures almost (if not always) yearly. Wayne Dunaway also believes the same false doctrine being taught by the Deavers. He has a sermon titled: "Does the Holy Spirit dwell in the Christian personally (in addition to the Word) or representatively (only through the Word)?" In the introduction, number six he states there are only three ways when it comes to the indwelling

of the Spirit: "(a) Separate and apart from the Word, (b) The Word dwells in us separate from the Spirit, (c) The Spirit dwells in us in conjunction with (in addition to) the word." He then states: "I personally reject positions A & B and I accept C—i.e. that the Spirit dwells in the Christian in conjunction with and in addition to the word of God." If He dwells in addition to the Word, what does He do? This is nothing more than warmed over Baptist doctrine that the Deavers have been advocating for almost ten years.

Another speaker that Cecil believes is sound is Ervin Jackson. Ervin has spoken on both the now defunct Nashville Jubilee as well as the Pepperdine Lectures. He has also spoken with Cecil on the Spiritual Growth Workshop. How can a man who is "sound in the faith" fellowship the Nashville Jubilee and worse, the Pepperdine Lectures. Pepperdine uses Victor Knowles almost yearly. Knowles preaches for the Christian Church denomination. This would not bother Ervin Jackson because he does not mind fellowshipping denominations. In an advertisement for the Shoals area we read:

> September 11 Lest We Forget
>
> "In The Interest of Justice and Peace"
>
> Sheffield Churches Open For Meditation & Prayer: 6:00 - 7:00 pm.
>
> Monday, First Presbyterian
>
> Tuesday, Grace Episcopal, Grace Fellowship Church of God
>
> Wednesday, First United Methodist, Church of God Prophecy
>
> Thursday, First Nazarene
>
> Friday, Park Terrace Cumberland Presbyterian
>
> Saturday, **Sterling Boulevard Church of Christ** [emp. added].

Ervin is the senior minister for the Sterling Boulevard Church of Christ. This advertisement shows an open fellowship with these denominations. This scribe knows Ervin personally, and it does not surprise the author about him. The Bible nowhere authorizes fellowship with those teaching doctrinal error on any subject (1 Tim. 4:16; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11).

Does Cecil believe that Jim McGuiggan is sound on his marriage belief? He believes that *adultery* in Matthew 19:9 goes past the "sexual" aspect and is the breaking of a covenant. According to McGuiggan, the breaking of the covenant could come in the mind in lust, or by simply mistreating the wife (McGuiggin). Does that give the wife scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage, even though it only

occurred in the mind or by mistreating her. How far can this false doctrine be taken? The Greek word *porneia* has to do with the sexual aspect physically, not by failing to treat the wife as a queen. This is the doctrine that Shelly has been advocating for years.

This penman finds it hard to believe that, with the resources available to Cecil May, he cannot find out what the speakers teach **before** inviting them. He needs to find out before he makes statements like, "We believe all of our lectureship speakers are sound in the full sense of the word."

This also brings another question to mind: "How can the other speakers, who claim to be sound, speak on a program with these known false teachers, while parading around the brotherhood as the friend of Jesus?" These speakers need to read and re-read Romans 16:17-18. After reading that passage, they need to repent for fellowshipping false teachers, instead of marking and avoiding these men who are in error.

These are not the only false teachers to ever *grace* the presence of Faulkner University. In 1994, Joe Beam and Buddy Bell were invited to speak on a new program called Focus. Focus '94 was a source of great turmoil for Faulkner. Many alumni of the school, including this author, wrote letters, called, and pleaded with the administration not to have these known false teachers. Billy Hilyer, in his normal spineless way, wrote a general letter concerning this event and assured those concerned that he was not aware of any error being taught by these men. To justify Joe Beam's soundness he stated that Joe "spoke at David Lipscomb University, Harding University and Lubbock Christian University this summer" (Hilyer), but he failed to mention his regular appearance on Jubilee in his letter. Hilyer failed to realize it, but he did not help Beam's case by admitting that he had spoken at three liberal universities that year.

Faulkner has followed the same path as the other "Christian colleges" and has allow error to be taught and fellowshipped without regard to biblical Truth or to the effects it will have on the students it is trying to educate.

CONCLUSION

The intent of this material is not to *slam* any college. It is not to build up an ego. The **only** purpose for writing this material is to document and show that the *Christian* colleges in our brotherhood are far from being what they should be. Everything stated about these schools

has been documented and verified. It is sad that these schools, which once stood for the Truth, have digressed into apostasy. When sound brethren quit supporting, financing, and promoting these schools, then, and only then, can something be done to bring them back to the truth.

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END NOTES

[1]Thanks to David Lemmons for sending me the transcript of John Dale's lesson delivered at the Catholic Church.

LIBERAL PUBLICATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

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Mark graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching with the equivalent to a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Religion. He also graduated Summa Cum Laude from Southern Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He is currently enrolled at Southern Christian University working toward a Masters in Family Therapy

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INTRODUCTION

This author has often said that if you want to be really depressed, just assemble in a room with a group of faithful Gospel preachers. It seems that liberalism has become so enormous that there is indeed a plethora of subjects to discuss and learn. Therefore, faithful Gospel preachers, being aware of the liberalism, often discuss it. There is a need to be aware of our enemy. Jesus taught His disciples such:

> But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way (Mat. 13:25).
>
> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Mat. 7:15; 24:11, 24; cf. Mat. 10:16; Luke 10:3).

Concerning our enemies, Paul taught:

> For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29).
>
> For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:13).

Likewise Peter taught:

> 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 (2 Pet. 2:1).

Yet with these admonitions given by God, many are unaware of the dangers of liberal brethren and liberal activities. What has increased such a lackadaisical attitude is the postmodern influence rampant within our society. Since the days of Pilate (John 18:38) many are questioning truth. Postmodernisms' thinking grew out of modernist attack on truth. Postmodern thinking took modernism to the next level and laid hold of the concept of no absolute truth as seen in Relativism and Pluralism. Relativism teaches that truth is simply relative to the individual—thus subjective and not objective in nature. Pluralism teaches that all belief systems are of equal value. Therefore to say one system is wrong is considered today "politically incorrect." If this were true, then there would not be any need to write this article, for one could not determine if a particular paper or workshop is liberal and thus wrong. Yet, God is the determiner of absolute truth, and from His Word we can ascertain truth. This paper will look at the need for brotherhood papers and workshops, how one can determine if they are liberal, examples of such, and how we can continue to fight for right and truth.

THE NEED AND AUTHORITY OF BROTHERHOOD PAPERS AND WORKSHOPS

The Bible proclaims there are three institutions of divine origin. There is the church. Jesus declared: "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; cf. Col. 1:18). There is the home. Jesus also declared:

> Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mat. 19.4-6; cf. Eph. 5:19-33).

There is also the state. Paul declared:

> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they

> that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake (Rom. 13:1-5).

While all three institutions are distinct and separate there is also some cooperation. We as Christians have a responsibility to government (Rom. 13). Much has been said about the separation of church and state. While it is true we do not need a church state governing how we worship, we do not wish to leave God out of government and have an immoral society. The church also has a responsibility to the home to care for it when it fails. James declared, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jam. 1:27). The Antis (an extreme to liberalism) took this to mean individual action only which does not apply to the local church. They would not support the orphans homes from the treasury because it had a board of directors over it. Yet arguments were made, and rightly so, that the church must remain the church and not take the place of the home just as it cannot take the place of the state. As long as it remains a home, it can be supported by the treasury or by individuals. Yet each institution must remain its own entity, for the church cannot replace the home nor the state. For this reason the missionary society was rejected, for it took the place of the church. As long as an institution does not take the place of the church nor take away from the work and glory of the church, it remains a good work and therefore is authorized by God.

One of the contentions this author had toward the Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes Inc. was the local church attending the convention under the rules and regulations of the Board of directors without regard to the position of the church toward versions of the Bible, liberal congregations, etc. The local church had to give up its authority to be a part of such. However, when the local church does not have to give up its support of truth and authority, there can be cooperation. For example, one can have some expertise in the area of marriage relationships and conduct workshops throughout various congregations in helping families remain as God would have them. One may see the need to get information out to the brotherhood through a magazine or

newsletter and that information can be helpful to the local congregation. Unless that paper supports error or is associated with error, it can be supported by the local congregation.

HOW WOULD ONE DEFINE A LIBERAL PAPER OR WORKSHOP?

Liberalism can be determined in three ways: by its association, by its authors, and/or by its message. The old statement, "If you walk like a duck, and talk like a duck, and hang around ducks, then you must be a duck," is true. Many may object to the idea that one is in error because he associates with those in error, but the Bible teaches such. For example Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16). When people rebel against biblically delegated authority, they rebel against God. Therefore, God brought judgment upon them; He not only judged them but all their company gathered with them (Num. 16:11). Those that stood with Korah, though they never said a word, were just as guilty. When Nadab and Abihu sinned in offering strange fire before the Lord and God killed them with fire from heaven, Aaron held his peace and would not mourn for them, lest he be associated with them and proclaim to Israel God was wrong (Lev. 10:1-3).

When we associate ourselves with those who teach error, we thus endorse what they teach. Paul proclaimed, "evil communications corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33—ASV). John proclaimed that we must be in fellowship with God for there to be fellowship with each other (1 John 1:3-7). Therefore John proclaimed: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11). John did not say one had to teach false doctrine to be in error, but simply endorsing the false teacher makes one just as guilty.

Rather than endorsing them, Paul gave a different command: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Robertson defines *to mark* as "to keep an eye on" (428). Vine says it means "to look at, behold, watch, contemplate" (725). It is possible that one may get the idea that it would be all right to be among a liberal congregation so he could keep a close eye on them. Yet the purpose of watching them is to avoid them. Vine states *avoid* means "to turn aside" (93). Peter helped us to understand what this means when

he wrote we are to "eschew evil" (1 Pet. 3:11). We are to go in the opposite direction and disassociate ourselves from error. The Lord through the apostle John made this abundantly clear: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

Some, in trying to answer this principle, make mention of the church at Sardis where they were dead, but there were a few that had not defiled their garments (Rev. 3:1-4). Yet John was not dealing with false doctrine. This congregation was simply keeping house and not involved in the work (Rev. 3:2). There was a remnant, however, that were working for the Lord, and thus had not defiled their garments. In connection with false doctrine, he dealt with that issue within the congregations of Pergamos and Thyatira. However, it is possible for one to be at a congregation and notice false doctrine growing and trying to stop it. Yet there comes a time when further fighting is futile and leaving is the only alternative from becoming a partaker of the error.

One can determine if a paper or workshop is liberal by the authors of the paper and conductors of the workshop.

> 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. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:1-4).

It should be noted that Peter gives some identifying marks of a false teacher: they bring in "damnable heresies," "deny the Lord," use "feigned words," and are interested in money ("make merchandise").

Paul proclaimed to Timothy that they speak "lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). Then Paul sets forth two examples of what they will teach: "Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats" (1 Tim. 4:3a).

Jesus declared that they will look like sheep but are really wolves (Mat. 7:15). Therefore, Jesus said to judge them according to their fruits (Mat. 7:20). There is a way to identify a false teacher and, once identified, to avoid them (Rom. 16:17).

This writer has often heard people who attended the congregation of a false teacher declare that on that occasion they saw nothing done or said against the Bible. It may be the case the one who attended is not aware enough of the signs of false doctrine. The Hebrews writer declared that if we do not study the Bible correctly, we will not be able to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). It also may be the case that on that particular occasion nothing was said. Yet, there has been adequate publications and evidence to clearly mark certain men as false teachers. One simply needs to hear the name Max Lucado or Rubel Shelly and associate those names with their false doctrine. If you see these men associated with a paper or workshop, then you know those works to be liberal.

The last way to determine if a paper is liberal is by its message. The message must be true to the Bible. If error is taught in a publication or workshop, unless it is corrected publicly, it will forever remain liberal. This author was discussing Jeff Walling with a member of the church who declared that Bro. Walling had repented of his earlier false statements. When asked for the publication, he said that Walling had stated it to a few friends. This scribe replied that the statements were made public, bringing reproach against the church, and therefore the confession must be made as public. James declared, "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another" (Jam. 5:16). Yet, Jesus said if the sin is private sin between two brothers than they should reconcile it between themselves (Mat. 18:15). Therefore the confession should be as public as the sin.

EXAMPLES OF LIBERAL PAPERS AND WORKSHOPS

If you were to type in *workshop* on an internet search engine you would receive more than you would be able to read in one day. There are workshops on prayer, for children, for evangelism, marriage. There is even a workshop for losing weight (The Weigh Down Workshop). Let us consider a few workshops and papers that have been associated with Liberalism.

Brotherhood Workshops to Consider

Red River Family Encampment

From their history page on their internet site, we read:

> **The Red River Family Encampment, Inc.** began in June of 1987 as an effort to strengthen families and churches of Christ in Northern New Mexico. We were the dream of **Harold and Sally Paden**,

> missionaries to Northern New Mexico, who had seen a similar program known as the Yosemite Family Encampment in California. During our first two years of operation, we were overseen by the Elders of the Southwest church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas and financially supported by the Montgomery Blvd. church of Christ in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Skillman Avenue church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, and interested individuals. After the 1988 encampment the Elders in Amarillo placed the encampment under an independent Board of Directors and incorporated the encampment as a Not-for-profit Corporation in New Mexico. **Edwin F. White**, preacher and Elder for the Eastside church in Phoenix, AZ serves as the **President** of the RRFE Board; **Harold Paden**, now deceased, veteran missionary to Italy and Northern New Mexico served as our first **Vice-President**; **Sally Paden**, widow of Harold, and veteran missionary herself, serves as the **Secretary** of the Board; **Vernon Robinett**, former Elder of the Southwest church in Amarillo, and one of the founding Elders, serves as **Treasurer**; **Jerry C. Lawlis**, Stateside Mission Coordinator for **Q**uito **S**chool of **B**iblical **S**tudies, Quito, Ecuador, serves as the **Executive Director**; **Hal Blackburn**, Youth Minister, Canyon, TX; **Richard Jones**, Pulpit Minister, Madill, OK; **Jesse Ortiz**, Missionary to Northern New Mexico; **Mike Scott**, Pulpit Minister, Prescott, AZ; and **Gary Williams**, Italy serve as the board.

Jerry Brewer shows the liberalism of this workshop over the past eighteen years. He noted three areas to show its liberal bias: "1) The speakers believe in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, 2) They believe and preach a subjective/experiential religion. 3) They read their heresies out of the *New International Version*" (1/61). In addition to the message being liberal, the speakers were themselves liberal (Joe Beam, Jim Bill McInteer, to name a couple). Since the message and the speakers teach that which is false, then this workshop should be avoided.

Spiritual Growth Workshop—Orlando, Florida

To know whether or not this workshop is sound, one simply needs to view its speakers. Steve Flatt was a Keynote speaker in 2001. Steve Flatt has been a speaker on the Nashville Jubilee and associated with men like Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, and Mike Cope to name a few. Others associated with this workshop are F. LaGard Smith, who fellowships various denominations and has stated that commitment to Christ is more important than baptism. Is he suggesting that baptism is not a commitment? In his book, *Who is My Brother?*, he list different levels of fellowship similar to Rubel Shelly's big "F," little "f" fellowship. F. LaGard Smith teachers error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage,

stating that a non-Christian is not amenable to the law of Christ. It is possible to name a number of others who speak on this program, but if there were just one who opposes truth on the program, such would be a liberal program.

Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop—Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Tulsa workshop alternates between two congregations: Garnett Road where Marvin Phillips preaches and Memorial Drive where Terry Rush preaches. Terry Rush in his book, *The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense*, denied the Deity of Christ prior to His baptism and places Jesus on an equal plain with us while on earth. Marvin Phillips in teaching a class at Kentucky Christian College in 1986, stated he would like to have Christian church preachers on the workshop. One simply needs to see the list of false teachers listed on their website to know this workshop is liberal.

Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes, Inc.

Some might believe this is this penman's hobby, but it is simply brought up of its association. One can determine a work to be liberal because of its association. Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes has men who conduct workshops throughout the United States. Yet they have no guidelines where they go. They are simply promoting their program. They have conducted workshops at congregations that have been marked as liberal. How then can we support such without endorsing that activity?

Brotherhood Papers to Consider

Wineskins

The history and guidelines are stated on their website:

> NEW WINESKINS' name comes from Jesus' parable in Matthew 9:17, which reminds every generation that the saving message of Christ will always be carried in containers appropriate for the times. The magazine was started in 1992 by Phillip Morrison, Rubel Shelly, and Mike Cope. The magazine has roots in the Churches of Christ and many readers are members of the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. We are seeking a wider evangelical Christian audience, however, as we include Christian writers of many backgrounds and denominations. We want to connect with Christian churches in all denominations that wrestle with issues of church restoration and renewal. We are committed, therefore, to searching for bold but responsible action in obeying Christ's call to take the gospel to the world. This journal is built on a conviction that restoration and renewal

> are on-going tasks. Our goal is to be one of God's many tools for those who seek to experience the living Christ (rather than just talk about the Christ who lived). For our readers, we want to help them engage their culture with this living Christ.

It is commendable to take the Gospel to the world. However, rather than helping denominations come out of error and restore New Testament Christianity, they are promoting denominational error. Probably one of the most damaging articles to be published in *Wineskins* is the article titled: "Christmas at Matthew's House" written by Andre Resner in November, 1992. In this article he ridiculed the virgin birth of Christ.

Gospel Advocate

While the *Gospel Advocate* has over the years been a reliable paper and even today has articles written by sound Gospel preachers, there was a questionable article in the July 1999 issue titled: "Today's Pharisees." This article stated:

> Our modern-day Pharisees are the same. All they want to know is where you go and who you know. If you do not associate with people they deem faithful, you must be unfaithful. They think that they can dictate with whom you should or should not fellowship. They have their lists and measure you by their lists instead of the Bible.

It always interest this writer that some will label you for labeling others. This scribe does not know of faithful Gospel preachers who list false teachers without comparing them to the Bible. As already noted, our associations must be closely kept and guarded.

Christian Chronicle

The purpose of the *Christian Chronicle* is stated on their website as such:

> The Christian Chronicle® is owned and published monthly by Oklahoma Christian University at P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100. Founded in 1943, The Christian Chronicle is a newspaper committed to the highest standards of journalistic excellence and seeks to inform, inspire, and unite churches of Christ worldwide.

The problem is they make no distinction between error and truth. There is an attempt to unite all who are in error with those who oppose it. You will find advertisements for all the various lectureships, workshops, and congregations, regardless of their stand. To answer this objection they place this clause on their website:

> The Christian Chronicle is **not a teaching publication**, but a newspaper with news and opinion content in sections clearly labeled. Therefore, news coverage does not necessarily represent endorsement, but rather represents statements of fact according to the cited sources. Likewise advertisements do not necessarily represent endorsements. Signed columns and reviews reflect the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors and the staff of The Christian Chronicle or the university. The staff holds to the fundamental beliefs and doctrines of churches of Christ [emphasis mine—MM].

The question that must be answered by the publishers of the *Christian Chronicle* is, "How can you be committed to the highest standards when you do not have one? How can you unite churches of Christ worldwide without the standard of God's Word?"

CONCLUSION

While there are liberal papers in the brotherhood, we should also realize there are sound publications that do give spiritual strength. Some are: *Bulletin Briefs*, *Carolina Messenger*, *Christian Courier*, *Contending For the Faith*, *Defender*, *Gospel Gazzette Online*, *House to House Heart to Heart*, *Plumbline*, *Reason and Revelation*, *Seek the Old Paths*, *The Gospel Journal*, *The Gospel Preceptor*, *The Harvester*. There are still many who have not bowed down to the feet of liberalism. Yet, when reading any publication, one must read it in connection with the Bible as the standard of truth and accept only that which God authorizes. With regard to various workshops, this author realizes that there are workshops conducted by individuals who offer training in evangelism, singing, and marriage enrichment. They are a source of income for some and a way to raise money for their work. It is therefore easy when involved in such to overlook the errors of a congregation and conduct the workshop. Yet if we do not avoid those in error, we not only sin, we encourage it and thwart those who are doing their best to put an end to it. May we always be conscientious of what is taking place in our brotherhood.

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LIBERALISM'S VIEW OF LAW AND LOVE

Preston Silcox

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INTRODUCTION

The subject and content of this chapter affects a large segment of Christians and non-Christians alike. Some are dangerously swayed by proponents of a fine-tuned theological position while others are merely content with a pleasant misconception that enables them to ease through life free from any meaningful responsibility to God. Those in these categories proclaim and perhaps sincerely believe that they love God with their entire beings, but, to them, love for God has little, if anything, to do with submitting to the laws of God. The material that follows examines this popular position to see whether or not it lines up with God's Word.

A POPULAR POSITION

A Modern Charge

From prominent pulpits and printed pages, in so-called churches of Christ, preachers, teachers, elders, and members in general cry out to fellow disciples and also to the masses: "Stop believing that you can get to heaven by obeying commands—love, not law, is the path to God." One defector from the faith, Darwin Chandler, put it this way: "We must forget about serving God via obedience to commands and concentrate on loving Him and other people" (qtd. in Waddey[1]). Those who make such a charge believe it impossible for one truly to love God

and man, and at the same time declare that commandments must be kept. In fact, they would wipe out all the commands of Christ, save one: "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself."

Lest there be any misunderstanding, allow the following quotes by Darwin Chandler to clarify this popular position (qtd. in Waddey):

> One may make a list of every individual law contained in the Bible, then strike through all of them and write over them, "Love others as you love yourself" (4).
>
> ...under the Royal Law of Liberty we do not memorize rules, we just live by love.
>
> If we live under this new standard of love, we do not need a list of "rights and wrongs" because the Divine impulse of love reliably leads us to do what is right.
>
> Nothing is immoral unless it harms other people or dishonors God (38).
>
> One cannot be saved by obeying Christ's law any more than one can be saved by obeying Moses' law (41-42).
>
> People can worship and serve God in as great variety as true love can motivate. It is literally true that there is no limit to the ways one may offer loving worship to God. He will accept every expression of love including those that other humans judge ridiculous (31).

While these comments come from one who has officially departed the churches of Christ, the sentiments he expresses echo the cry of many still claiming to be members of the Lord's body.

An Ancient Doctrine

Of course, the charge noted above—this popular "Law Over Love" theory—is not some new doctrine lately dreamed up by dissatisfied preachers in modern churches of Christ. Rather, it is a common form of an ancient doctrine known as "Antinomianism." Martin Luther first used this word in the sixteenth century to describe a doctrinal position held by his friend, Johannes Agricola. Agricola "taught that the moral law of God was in no way binding upon those who are justified by faith alone" (qtd. in Mathew). While Luther opposed this theory, *faith alone* in its strictest sense would indeed eliminate law; his friend was right. Actually, not only would "faith alone" eliminate law, it would also eliminate the need to love, which is, after all, a command to be obeyed (cf. Mat. 22:36-37)!

Anyway, *antinomian* comes from two Greek words that together mean, "against law" (Mathew). Consider the following history and explanation of Antinomianism, especially in regards to the subject of this chapter:

> The spiritualization of the law into the one precept of love to God, taught and exemplified by Jesus, encouraged some over-enthusiastic devotees to believe they had been exalted to such a height of spirituality and overmastering love to God that they needed to have no regard to moral precepts or to outward conduct (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* as qtd. in Waddey).

These individuals believed in *lawlessness*.

The fact is, we could go back even further than the Sixteenth Century to find this theory:

> For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness**, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

These treacherous teachers against whom Jude spoke were using grace as a cloak for indecent and immoral behavior. To them, God's grace **freed them from law**, and being freed from such, they were at liberty to live in excess. Concerning the topic at hand, one could easily substitute *love* for *grace* and see the underlying problem with those who promote love over law. Liberalism views love as a license to do just about anything!

Peter deals with the same problematic position mentioned by Jude:

> For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (2 Pet. 2:18-19).

The misuse of God's grace and the promise of an all-encompassing liberty move men to deny the law of the Lord and rebel against the commandments of Christ. Liberalism uses grace, love, and liberty to excuse a multitude of sins.

To be fair, liberalism's view of law does not necessarily exist to justify illicit behavior, but the route of lawlessness it uses to accomplish its purposes is the same path trodden by the immoral. Rather than humbly submitting to the guidelines of God, both groups reject law that they might live and act in accordance to their own personal preferences.

Sadly, where most can see the foolishness of using grace to justify freedoms in morality, few see the folly of using love to justify liberties with God's pattern. Of course, there are plenty in the camp of liberalism who use their brand of love to overlook, tolerate, and even endorse certain immoral behaviors—adultery being one of the most common. "Surely," they say, "A loving God would not require a man and woman to dissolve their marriage—especially when the couple loves one another and their children so much." The law of Matthew 19:9 says differently, but those holding the popular position under consideration see no need to conform to this law (that, in their minds, might or might not exist anyway).

A Common Belief

While it is true that liberalism and antinomianism view law as either unnecessary or altogether non-existent, other groups hold the popular position of lawlessness in a *practical* manner. By *practical*, this author means that some who are not rank liberals or *scholarly* theologians go through life ignorant of the claims of change agents and antinomians, yet by their actions—not necessarily by their rhetoric—demonstrate that they subscribe to the basic tenets of such. These *love* God and believe that they are just fine, spiritually speaking. Those of this stripe exist both in and out of the church.

As for those outside the church, they sincerely believe that as long as they love God, they can go about their lives without being hemmed in and inconvenienced by the Bible or what they consider *organized religion*. These are not necessarily immoral or unjust individuals; oftentimes they are good, upstanding citizens who believe in God, are fairly certain that Jesus is His Son, and that the Bible is His Word. They might even teach their children to *love* God, but this is about the extent of their faith. They love in word and in tongue, but not in deed and in truth (cf. 1 John 3:18).

There are also members of the Lord's body who have more in common with the above non-Christians than they do with dedicated members of the household of faith. These are ones who obeyed the Gospel in the past, but have since that time adopted the philosophy of "love over law." Some from this group rarely attend the various services of the church, while others might frequent the building on a regular basis but neglect the responsibilities placed upon them by the Master. They seldom open their Bibles, they never evangelize, and

accordingly they do not grow spiritually. They proclaim with their lips that they love God, but display with their actions that they are far from Him.

While there are plenty of people in prominent pulpits who cry out that love trumps law, there are even more who simply go about their daily activities holding the very same position in a practical way. They are not die-hard change agents, and they have not studied the intricacies of antinomianism. They are merely "good people who love God" and prove that the subject of this chapter centers around a very common belief.

An Important Plea

The plea this writer has in mind with this sub-point is quite simple and very plain: "Go to the Bible!" Jesus warned that mankind shall be judged on the final day by the standard of God's Word. Listen to the Lawgiver, Himself: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). It is essential that we go to the Bible to see whether the popular position under consideration has heaven's approval. It would be utterly foolish to go through life believing, practicing, and endorsing this doctrine without knowing for sure that God is its author! Unfortunately, many never see or realize the necessity of heeding this important plea.

SOME PARTICULAR PROBLEMS

When men refuse to go to God's Word for answers and clarifications, all sorts of problems arise. Two particular problems concerning the subject at hand that result from overlooking or even ignoring the Scriptures are (1) a misunderstanding of God-approved love and law, and (2) a misuse of the terms and ideas associated with love and law. Those who are guilty of these two errors will fall into one of two categories: they are either innocently ignorant or intentionally irreverent. The former group is made up of individuals who simply do not know the truth. While ignorance is inexcusable (cf. Hos. 4:6), this group clearly differs from the other group as far as motive and attitude are concerned. The latter group willingly chooses to ignore plain truth—though they know it and have been encouraged to align their thinking with it, they fight it and those who preach it. With these matters in mind, consider the differences that exist between the ideas of men and the revelations of God regarding love and law.

The Declarations of Men Regarding Love

One writer hit the proverbial nail on the head when he said, "the definition of 'love' by many is some touchy-feely, ooey-gooey, superficial, and syrupy feeling or expression of feelings" (McClish *What Love* 3). In the minds of these multitudes, then, love for God and fellow man has to do more with subjective affection than God-directed action.

About the only action these see love requiring is that of blind acceptance. Consider two comments made by faithful brethren who have observed this very same point:

> When love and doctrine are perceived as being in conflict, "love" will trump Bible doctrine every time with the majority of people. With far too many folks, since they do not want to hurt the feelings of others, their perception of love includes such things as overlooking error, not bringing up controversial issues, and even agreeing with false teaching in order to avoid offending the one doing the teaching (Price 22).
>
> While proudly boasting of being motivated by "love," liberalism tolerates *almost* anything (Liddell 568).

Of course, one thing that liberalism will **not** tolerate is a thorough and biblical critique of its error on love—even if that evaluation is done out of love for the truth, love for God, and love for those being influenced by counterfeit love.

The Declarations of Men Regarding Law

Those who exalt love over (and even to the exclusion of) law view and argue their popular position from a number of different perspectives. Following are three of these.

First, some see law as a thing that stifles one's relationship with God and perhaps one's experience in service and worship to God. Bear in mind that we are discussing the idea of *lawlessness*. In the civil realm, many who wish to do away with law desire to violate some precept of existent law—if they can eliminate the law, they can eliminate the transgression and penalty that accompanies such. So it is in the spiritual realm; those who wish to eliminate law do so because they wish to engage in something either forbidden by it or not authorized by it. These wish to do their own thing, and to justify such desires and actions, they must eliminate the element that forbids them. They cannot help but to view law, then, as that which stifles and restricts them (no doubt, this desire is behind the claim of Chandler who says that there is no limit to the ways we can offer loving worship to God).

A second way some view law is in this manner: something used by *legalists* to earn their way to heaven. What does *legalism* mean? Webster says it is "a strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code." Like it or not, Jesus requires conformity to the law of God (Mat. 7:21)! Actually, those who use *legalist* to describe those who see the New Testament as a law to be obeyed, hope to classify such with the first-century scribes and Pharisees who called for "strict conformity" (McClish *Legalism* 2). While Jesus condemned these groups, He never did so because of their insistence upon obedience to God's will—He rebuked them for placing human traditions above the Law of God and also for emphasizing some parts of the Law while neglecting other parts (cf. Mat. 15:3, 6-9; 23:23). The fact is, God demands and rewards obedience to His will—and He rebukes and punishes disobedience (based on this, this writer would rather be a legalist than an *il*legalist!). Please bear in mind that God-approved obedience comes forth from a loving heart (Rom. 6:17); it is not the mindless and heartless checking off of items on a chore list for the presumptuous purpose of somehow placing God in debt to the person who merely went through the motions.

Finally, some view law as that which does not even exist in the present. Ironically, they will go to the Bible in an attempt to prove that we do not need to go to the Bible! One passage to which they turn in hopes of proving that we are not under any sort of law is Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." While promoters of the no-law philosophy misuse this verse to teach we are under no law whatsoever, the context of the chapter and the book in general say something else.

In Romans 6:14, Paul is contrasting the Old Testament system (what he refers to here as "the law") with the New Testament system (what he refers to here as "grace). That Old Testament system, with its animal sacrifices, could never ultimately free men from their sins—by the continual sacrifices of bulls and goats, they were repeatedly reminded that sin was not finally and forever removed. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 10:1). The New Testament system however, with the perfect sacrifice of Christ—the ultimate display of God's unmerited favor (His *grace*)—sets men free from their sins, finally and forever when they submit to its precepts.

Having escaped the doom of the Old Law, it would have been foolish for the Roman Christians to do something that would place themselves back into a position of condemnation—specifically, continuing in sin (cf. Rom. 6:1). They had been freed from the shackles of sin by their sincere obedience to the liberating system of grace!

Another point can be made from the general context of Romans 6:14: just three verses down, Paul commends his Christian audience for **obeying the pattern of doctrine** that had been delivered to them! (One might notice, by the way, that this text contains three terms highly disliked by proponents of the no-law theory: *obeyed*, *form* or pattern, and *doctrine*). Saying that Paul was teaching in Romans 6:14 that we are under no law whatsoever, and thus under no obligation to obey anything, would have the apostle contradicting himself, not only in the same book, not only in the same chapter, but even in the very same paragraph. How absurd!

While other views of law exist in the minds of those who choose to be liberated totally from law, these are some of the more prominent—and they are indeed false, for God requires loving obedience. The following two points cover this very matter.

The Decrees of God Regarding Love

Wayne Price notes, "The Greek verbs *phileo* and *agapao* are the dominant terms used when the concept of love is found in our English translations of the New Testament" (22). In conjunction with this observation, McClish points out the following:

> The *agape* family of Greek words represents the very highest concept of love. This word conveys the idea of seeking the very best for others, with or without affection for them, and whether or not they are worthy of our benevolent attitudes and actions. It is basically an act of the will that can be commanded (Jn. 13:34), rather than a spontaneous emotion of the heart. The emotional and affectionate aspects of love are conveyed by the *philos* family of words (*What Love* 2).

Passages such as Romans 12:10 and 1 Peter 3:8 reveal this affectionate and emotional side of biblical, *philos* love. These texts call on Christians to be "kindly (or, tenderly) affectioned one to another with brotherly love," possessing single-mindedness, compassion, and pity.

At the same time, biblical, *agape* love, as demonstrated in passages like John 3:16 and demanded in Scriptures like Matthew 5:44-46, 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, and 1 John 3:18, goes beyond the mere emotional. This kind of God-approved love sometimes even calls on its

practitioners to do things that are not necessarily enjoyable—things that do not always go along with "the natural inclinations" (qtd. in Price 23). Consider the following:

> In Mark 10:21, we learn that Jesus *loved* (*agapao*) the rich ruler, yet what He told him made the ruler grieve as he left, since he was quite wealthy. Here we learn that *love* includes telling folks what they need to hear, even though it might be unpleasant to the hearer, and even though one is kind in delivering that message (Price 23).

So in spite of the declarations of men, God decrees that love is quite demanding. As Rubel Shelly correctly observed:

> A man does not love God in any real and full sense if he is soft and compromising with the gospel. He does not love his fellowmen if he allows them to go on believing, teaching and practicing error without calling that error to their attention. Why have we allowed ourselves to be deceived into thinking there is something unChristian about opposing error? (qtd. in Liddell 570).

The Decrees of God Regarding Law

In spite of the daring—or more appropriately, *derelict*—declarations of men, God plainly points out in the New Testament that a law exists to which all men must lovingly submit if they desire to be saved eternally. Consider the following evidence.

First, several passages speak very directly of this law, thus proving its existence and man's amenability to it.

> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).
>
> And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law (1 Cor. 9:20-21).
>
> Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).
>
> This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them (Heb. 10:16).
>
> But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (Jam. 1:25).
>
> So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty (Jam. 2:12).

In addition to these texts, and their use of the specific word *law*, a study of the New Testament reveals several synonyms for this term. Jesus spoke of "the truth" in John 8:32 and his "commandments" in John 14:15. Luke mentioned "the word" in Acts 8:4 and "the doctrine" in Acts 13:12. Additionally, Paul wrote of "the gospel" in Romans 1:16, and Jude talked about "the faith" in Jude 4. Those who proclaim that modern men are under no law and/or are not required to obey commands **obviously** ignore these and other crystal clear passages of the New Testament.

Next, the New Testament's constant commendation of obedience and its consistent condemnation of disobedience stresses that precepts by which men **must** live definitely exist. Notice Matthew 7:21-23 as one prime example of this fact:

> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Here are individuals who surely had some sort of affection for Christ. Affection or not, however, they were punished for their disobedience. Interestingly, *iniquity* at the end of verse 23 means, "lawlessness." Apparently, those portrayed in this text ignored the law of Christ and acted in accordance with their own standard—the wrong standard! The fact that they are described as, and punished for being, workers of lawlessness implies that a law exists—one which men must obey, one which shall ultimately serve as the standard of the final judgment (cf. John 12:48).

Finally, John's description of sin proves that a spiritual law does indeed exist: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Place this explanation alongside passages such as Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8, and one **must** conclude that law exists. These two verses proclaim that sin is a present and universal matter, but if there is no law, there can be no transgression (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13). Since there **is** transgression (sin), there **must** be law (the law of Christ)!

There is a song that mentions fighting the law and the law winning. While men might fight against the law of Christ by twisting and ignoring the Scriptures, God's Word (His law) cannot be defeated—it

wins every time! When it comes to both law and love, let God's Word be true but every man a liar.

A FEW PRACTICAL POINTS

Having noted what the Scriptures say in regards to both law and love—especially in contrast to the deceptive doctrines of false teachers and the apathetic attitudes of ignorant masses—carefully consider the following passages that demonstrate the biblical harmony between Christ-commanded love and God-given law:

> If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).
>
> He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him (John 14:21).
>
> He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me (John 14:24).
>
> 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).
>
> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3).

In light of these passages, McClish observes, "There is no way to demonstrate genuine love for the Son of God except by obedience to Him" (*Legalism* 4). With this biblically based fact in mind, think about the following points, points which serve as a general summary of the subject at hand.

Man's love for God is initiated by God's love for man. John observed, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Notice Romans 5:6-8 with John's comment in mind:

> For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Commendeth in verse eight carries the idea of "introducing" or "exhibiting." God thus demonstrated His tremendous and gracious devotion to His creation by the selfless sacrifice of His only begotten Son (cf. John 3:16). When the tenderhearted hear this "wonderful story of love," they respond with the deepest of affection, desiring to demonstrate their own love to such a giving God. The following point deals directly with this display of devotion.

Man's love for God is expressed by his obedience to God. Though an oft-repeated point in this chapter, this fact simply cannot be over emphasized. After all, there really is no other means available to man by which he can demonstrate his appreciation to God for the blessings heaven has showered upon the human race. The law of Christ, then, is not a burden, but a blessing! It provides the person who is moved by God's display of love and devotion a way to reciprocate (as much as possible) love and devotion. Especially when witnessing (and comprehending to the best of his ability) the great price Jesus paid on Calvary, the spiritually honest individual asks, like Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Upon finding in the Bible the answer to this question, the grateful soul bows in loving and grateful submission to the commands of Christ, obeying the Gospel, serving the Savior, and growing as a disciple!

Man's love for God is maintained by continuing in the doctrine. Jude gives an interesting command in verse 21 of his pointed epistle: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Sometimes, husbands and wives proclaim that they do not love each other anymore. Those making such statements attempt to trick hearers into believing that the circumstance is out of their control—that they just "fell out of love." Actually, the comment is a confession of sin when we consider that biblical love is a command to be obeyed. Here are individuals admitting that they are refusing to do what they ought to be doing!

Well, what applies to relationships between husbands and wives, also applies to the Christian's relationship with God. Those who refuse to obey the commands of Christ demonstrate that they do not love God—perhaps as they once did. No wonder Jude tells us that we must *keep* ourselves in the love of God. This we do by continuing in the Word of Christ (John 8:31), continuing in His commandments (John 15:9-10), continuing in the grace of God (Acts 14:26), continuing in the faith (Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23), continuing in the goodness of God (Rom. 11:22), and continuing in the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). These matters indicate that we must keep the Word (Luke 8:15), keep His commandments (John 14:15; 15:10), and keep the ordinances (1 Cor. 11:2)—lovingly obeying the law of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The concluding matters of the preceding material emphasize again the point made throughout this chapter: liberalism's view of law and

love is foreign to the Scriptures. Though it might be popular, though it might be appealing, the lawlessness of liberalism is wrong and will condemn the souls of those taken in by it. Rather than heeding the antinomian arguments of false teachers and instead of going along with the indifferent attitudes of faithless crowds, let us determine to live by the words of our loving Master: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

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ENDNOTE

[1]The inclusion of this material does not imply an endorsement of John Waddey.

LIBERALISM AND CALVINISM[1]

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INTRODUCTION

One of the components involved in the brand of Liberalism troubling the church is made up of doctrines drawn from the teachings of the French theologian John Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564). Closely related to Calvinism and often overlapping in their substance are the doctrines of Lutheranism, Arminianism, and Wesleyanism. All of these systems share certain doctrines, which stem from the common stock of Augustinian theology.

Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) is viewed by many as the most influential theologian from the late fourth century A.D. onward. Due to his influence on Roman Catholicism and thereby on emerging Protestant doctrinal systems, his legacy lives on to the modern day. All of the other Reformers were influenced in their thinking and teaching by Augustine, especially in their views of man and God. Calvin, in particular, owed a great many of his ideas to him. So when we are referring to Calvinism's influence, we ultimately must also have in mind that of Augustine.

Many of the current adherents to Calvinism do not hold to the classic form of Calvinism articulated by Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Pure Calvinism is now relatively rare, but the influence of the system and its modified forms, intertwined oftentimes with the systems of Lutheranism, Arminianism, and Wesleyanism,

exert a profound hold on many today, including some in the Lord's church.

It is the scope of this study to examine briefly Calvinism's impact through liberalism upon the church and stress the need to be diligent in combating it and its doctrinal equivalents. It is not enough to be for the truth; we must also be against error (cf. Psa. 119:104; 1 The. 5:21-22; 1 John 4:1).

CALVINISM'S BASIC DOCTRINAL SYSTEM

Calvinism has been popularly summarized under the acrostic **T-U-L-I-P**. "T" stands for *Total Depravity*, which holds that man is so morally depraved and incapacitated from conception that he is unable to do good, but rather sins continually. Man then is viewed as unable to do anything toward his own salvation. He is a born sinner, and the guilt of Adam's transgression attends him from conception.

This, in turn, gave rise to the next key tenet represented by "U," which refers to *Unconditional Election*. This dogma holds that God, by His sovereign will and in keeping with man's depravity, then arbitrarily, individually, and unconditionally elects some to be saved and all others to be lost. There is thus nothing that man can do toward his salvation. Grace alone is the means by which one is saved. The number of the elect is so sure and certain that it will never be diminished, nor can it ever be increased.

From this tenet, then comes the third. "L" stands for *Limited Atonement*. It must then be the case, Calvin postulated, that Jesus died and made atonement with His blood for only those *so* chosen. Thus, the atonement was limited to them, and is not universal in scope or accessibility. This view also gives rise, as an aside, to the concept of *transferred righteousness*, which holds that the personal, sinless, righteousness of Christ is either directly transferred to those receiving the benefits of His atoning work or is "put to the account" of the same as though they too possessed it. It is an essential part of the doctrine of limited atonement, as it seeks to explain how the benefits of the atonement are given to those who have been unconditionally elected. It stands primarily on the assumption of a double imputation (though some Calvinists speak of a triple imputation.) The theory holds that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all men to such a degree that all are totally depraved from conception and, conversely, the personal righteousness of Christ is imputed to the elect on the basis of their faith, which is actually given to them by God.

The fourth key tenet is represented by "I," which stands for *Irresistible Grace*. If the number of the elect is so certain that it cannot be increased nor diminished, then some surety of action is required to bring about this end. Thus, Calvin proposed that the Holy Spirit so operates upon the heart of the elect at a time and under circumstances of God's sovereign choosing that He immediately and directly effects moral change by first regenerating the heart of the sinner and then justifying him on the basis of faith only, which the Spirit personally places in his moral faculties as a gift. The Spirit cannot be successfully resisted.

The final tenet also follows from its predecessors. It is represented by the letter "P," which stands for *Perseverance of the Saints*. Under classic Calvinism the affirmation is that, because of this irresistible operation of the Spirit and the absoluteness of the number of the elect, it must be the case that God will bring **all** those so elected safely into Heaven. They therefore can never so sin as to be eternally, irretrievably lost. They will, through His sovereign grace, persevere despite all trials. They can never fall from grace. Hence similar names are: "once saved, always saved," "preservation of the saints," "the impossibility of apostasy," etc. There are variations of this view in other systems.

CALVINISM'S INFLUENCE ON THE LORD'S CHURCH

The influence of Calvinism today is seen in various ways. Randy Mayeux, like some, has been openly boastful of his Calvinism. Many are not as open about their beliefs. Others flip flop back and forth from Calvinism to Arminianism to Wesleyanism, as it suits their perceived needs in covering for their teachings or, more often, out of a profound ignorance of the systems they are teaching.

Grace Only, Imputed Righteousness, and Total Depravity

Grace only is one of the clearest marks of Calvinism's influence among our brethren. The notion that God has done or does everything and that man can do nothing toward his salvation is a sure mark of Calvinism. Some brethren brazenly act as though they have rediscovered the doctrine of the grace of God, not realizing, evidently, that their version only goes as far back as to medieval Geneva, Switzerland, and not to the city of Jerusalem of A.D. 30!

The *grace only* gurus in the Lord's church have grown fond of producing books that foster the views of *grace* found in Calvinism. Often these books wind up in the Bible classes, church libraries, and

preachers' recommended reading list. Two books by liberal Baptist preacher Rick Warren, founder and leader of the Saddleback Community Church, are even being used by congregations of the Lord's church for Bible classes, ladies' classes, youth studies, and pulpit material. These books purport to be patterns for "doing church" in the 21st Century. They are titled *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life* and are filled with blatantly Calvinistic and Charismatic teaching.

Among our brethren, Jack Exum has authored a work promoting his version of grace only called *The ABC'S Of Grace*. The book evidences that brother Exum ought to go back and study the alphabet again. He commits the old Ketcherside error of defining the Gospel of Christ as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Exum ridicules the place of works in our salvation by writing, "Only a fool attempts to do heaven's work with human power!" (10).

He teaches that good works always follow salvation, adding, "They are the result of the New Birth—not the cause of it" (15-16, 45). John Calvin and the local Baptist preacher could not have expressed their views any better!

Exum also writes:

> Are you saved by grace? You say, "Yes, I am!" Then as you travel you will grow in the GRACE OF GOD in praying, singing, going, giving, saving, sacrificing, reading, encouraging, studying and meditating. The Grace that saves you will be the grace that keeps you. You cannot be saved by the power of God and be kept by the power of man.

He then adds:

> For by Grace are ye saved through Faith. One hundred percent of salvation is by grace! We don't deserve any of it. We can't earn it, buy it, or in any way merit it (45-46).

Notice, he said that we are saved "through faith." Who provides that part? If no human power is involved and salvation is one hundred percent by the grace of God, then what about faith? He catches himself in the same dilemma that Calvinists and Arminians have been caught up in for 500 years! What about repentance and confession (Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Mat. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10)? Does God do these things for the one who is to be saved? Or might there be even the smallest fraction of human power involved in these things being done?

On page 48, Exum contradicts himself. After having ruled out all human power in being saved, Exum says, "Everything (100%) that we

receive from God comes by his grace! Everything (100%) of all we receive by grace is accepted by faith. Our faith is a response to God's grace." Exum flip-flops between Calvinism's "grace only" and other views, like Arminianism and Lutheranism, which stress "faith only." He contends that we are not under any law, but we ought not to act lawless!

On pages 71 and 72, he issues a false and pernicious indictment of the Lord's Church by claiming that (1) the last 50 years we have neglected the subject of grace, (2) we have taught a "HUMAN-LAW-WORKS-SYSTEM," and (3) we have taught subsequently: "Salvation by human works only." Is preaching that baptism is essential to salvation preaching "salvation by human works only?"

He bemoans insistence on doctrinal purity by writing, "We fight over issues we wouldn't die for. We divide over doctrines that would cost no one his life. We 'shoot at each other' with points of doctrine that in a real duel, no one would show up!" (86). Jack Exum tells us here more about his attitude toward apostolic teaching (doctrine) than he really, I believe, intends! Is the truth worth dying for? Does it make any difference whether we worship God in the way He has commanded (John 4:24)? Is it worth giving our lives for to please God and be accepted by Him (Heb. 11:6)?

Another book promoting Calvinism or some variant thereof is Bill Love's tome, *The Core Gospel*. This book was published by Abilene Christian University Press. The book is rotten to the **core**, and its core is rotten! It purports to be an effort to restore emphasis to the "core Gospel," which is limitedly defined as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Love's *research* effort involved examining sermon titles and tabulating from the titles alone the number of times certain leading preachers spoke on "grace," "the gospel," and such like. The research is itself shoddy and vacuous from the start. Its author excoriates the preaching of good men. He especially attacks in vicious tones the work of Foy E. Wallace Jr., J. D. Tant, and N. B. Hardeman. He ignores the simple, salient fact that when one preaches on the one church, he is preaching Christ and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ (cf. Acts 8:4-5, 12). When one teaches the plan of salvation, he is preaching the marvelous grace of God (Acts 8:26-40).

Milton Jones, preacher for the ultra-liberal Northwest Church of Christ near Seattle, Washington, penned a book, titled *Grace: the Heart of the Fire*. The book was published by the Christian Church firm,

College Press. The forward was written by Max Lucado, who denies the necessity of baptism and advocates the saying of the mythical "Sinner's Prayer" to be saved. The fact that he endorses this book should give any reflecting mind good indication of the liberalism it contains and the warped view of grace it conveys.

Jones compares the commandments of God to an archery target (92-93). He affirms, "Some commandments are more important than others." He compares them also to pennies and dollars. He asserts that some are of greater value than others, though all have some value (96-97). Of course, the doctrine of grace is stressed above all else. This is but a sampling of the errors in his book. Which commands are in the bull's eye? Which are worth 20 points? Which lie on the periphery of the target? Which doctrines are worth a $1000 dollars or $100 dollars? Which are not even worth 2 cents? These things he does not really tell us.

Another recent book is from the pen of William Mural Worthey of Hopewell, Virginia. The book is titled, *Jesus, Our Righteousness* and was published by brother Worthey. The book proposes to prove the doctrine of "imputed righteousness." Worthey claims to reject the notion of "transferred righteousness," but he winds up in the same camp with Calvin and Luther. He avers that the personal righteousness of Jesus is accounted to the believer on the basis of his faith in Christ (8). He also holds that when a child of God sins, the sin is not accounted to him: for whenever God looks at the sinning child of God, all He sees is the righteous life of Jesus! Sin is not charged against the Christian. Yet he says that he does not believe in "once saved, always saved" (50, 58, 160-161, 165-166).[2]

One of the ways in which Worthey arrives at his conclusion is on the *a priori* assumption that salvation is by grace only. He asserts, "The most dangerous doctrines of justification are those that combine faith and works. Many seem to believe that this method biblically harmonizes Paul and James." He claims that to do so leads one to produce "'another gospel' which ought not to be preached" (25). He applies James 2:24 to the Christian alone. Thus, the works of James have no bearing whatever on the subject of salvation (132). He does not, however, explain what James meant by the clear, precise statement, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified" (v. 24). He also ignores the fact that James uses in verse 23 the *same* text as Paul in Romans 4:3 which Worthey applies to salvation! Elsewhere he writes,

"The good works that Christians do are accomplished *because* we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, not as an effort to obtain our salvation" (emph.—DD). He then adds, "Salvation comes first, by grace through faith, and then works of faith follow. The good works show our faith, love, and appreciation to God" (27). In other words, one does good works **because he has been saved** and **not to be saved**. Billy Graham could not have expressed Baptist doctrine any better!

Our brother writes: "Concerning our salvation, it simply will not do to begin talking about man's part and God's part. To do so is equivalent to talking about man's part in the creation of the world" (17). The implication is that man does not have a part. Worthey's illustration with the creation poses a problem in that it implies that man is not only totally lifeless, and thus so depraved that he is unable to aid in his own salvation, he does not even exist! The illustration out-Calvins Calvin!

Worthey asserts, "Grace and works are, therefore, mutually exclusive. That is, if you have one, you do not have the other. But faith-righteousness and grace are compatible in every way" (67). But he refutes his own assertion by his admission that faith is essential to salvation. He seems oblivious to the fact that faith itself is a work (John 6:29). Even faith would be excluded by his major premise! Our brother, in a dizzying array of self-contradictions throughout his book, nonetheless goes on to write about "works that [are] included in justification" because they are "directly connected to faith" (74). So, **all works are excluded, but some works are included in justification**. He generally disparages obedience by pejoratively calling it "commandment keeping," etc., and by stating that good works are not "the ground of justification," which is *non sequitur* to the specific issue.

Worthey appeals to the gift illustration relative to salvation, but ignores the fact that the giving of the gift demands the receiving of it for the gift to be enjoyed and experienced, and the receiving of it then requires at least something be done to do so, which something can be accurately described as a work of the agent doing the receiving. It involves a human action then essential to salvation.

The errors of this book are many. He implicitly teaches "faith only" (126), and then promptly explicitly repudiates it (127), while all along still affirming that salvation is by "grace only." He commits the fallacy of equivocation in the defining of terms and the either/or fallacy, as in his assertion that one must either accept the Reformers view of righteousness (e.g., as in the writings of John Calvin and Martin Luther,

whom he repeatedly praises) or the view of Roman Catholic theology (163). He also clearly misrepresents the views of good brethren, whether in attacking those views or trying to use them to bolster his own. Among good brethren whose material suffers in his use are: Alexander Campbell, Guy N. Woods, Roy H. Lanier, Sr., James Burton Coffman, Robin Haley, and Keith Mosher, Sr. The research is slipshod, and in many cases the materials are completely out of context. For example, he uses a quotation from brother Mosher on a flyleaf (81) introducing chapter 7, titled "Nothing to Everything." The quotation is: "However, men are said to be righteous, but only in a relative sense. Man can be said to be righteous in the absolute sense only if God declares them so to be." Worthey tries to prove in the chapter that therefore God gives the personal righteousness of Jesus by way of imputation so we can go from "nothing to everything." Had our brother been a more careful reader of the Mosher material, for this surely must be the cause for his blunder, he would have certainly noticed that Mosher was actually **refuting** the very notion Worthey is trying to prove! Mosher's point is that only God has the right and power to declare man righteous, and He does so on the basis of man's obedience to the Gospel, which was made possible by the blood atonement of Christ. On the basis of one's obedient faith, God then declares him to be righteous (which is the proper force of Romans 4)—and this not in a relative sense but in its absolute sense, so the record is wiped clean that **fellowship** with Deity may now exist. Thus, the central idea of atonement is reconciliation. There is a world of difference in the system taught by brother Worthey, which Mosher opposes, and the biblical system that brother Mosher defends.

He spends much time praising Augustine, whom he claims held a "high view of grace," John Calvin, and Martin Luther (95, 140, 163). He cites the *baptism* of Methodist Paul Harvey as bearing great lessons to us **on the true significance** of baptism (129), and references approvingly the writings of Presbyterian hyper-Calvinists like R. C. Sproul and C. W. Hodge; he even praises Harry Emerson Fosdick, the ultra-modernist who sought to promote a view of the Bible by teaching that it is filled with myths and legends, as a "Christian speaker" (149). Amazing! The only brethren in the Lord's church that he properly represents relative to their views or else seems to endorse, without qualification on the subject of grace are: Charles Hodge, Tommy South, John Mark Hicks, K. C. Moser, and such like. He quotes approvingly

of brother Charles Hodge's diatribe, "We don't believe in grace...even people who brag about it, don't! Face up! We believe in achievement!" et al. This article was carried in the *Keynoter* (bulletin of the Sixth and Izzard Church of Christ) (121).

Worthey devises a three-fold imputation model (39-41) that interestingly parallels that of Calvinism. First, God imputes sin to man through Adam (Worthey strangely substitutes death for sin, of which a bit more will be said). Second, man's sins are then imputed to Christ (neither Calvin nor brother Worthey explains why universal salvation does not follow from this model, if this imputation was indeed intended to set at naught the complete effects of Adam's original sin). Third, the personal righteousness of Jesus is then imputed directly to the believer on the basis of his faith, which Calvin believed God gave to him anyway in a direct and immediate operation of the Spirit. Oddly he cites in support of his three-fold imputation Caspar Wistar Hodge, a Presbyterian Calvinist of the deepest dye, from an article in the old *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. C. W. Hodge was the son of the Charles Hodge, who was a Calvinistic professor at Princeton in the 19th Century. C. W. Hodge was every bit as hard-line Calvinist as his father, who authored a *Systematic Theology* which the son *cut his teeth on* in his indoctrination. He even succeeded his dad in the prestigious chair of "Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology" at Princeton when its divinity school was heavily staffed with Calvinists. It is clear also from the article itself what Hodge meant by his view of a three-fold imputation. It is raw, unmitigated Calvinism. Even the portion that Worthey quotes relative to the sin of Adam involves the absurd and self-contradictory position that, while Adam's personal sin is not charged to all men, they are nonetheless guilty of it because the guilt is so imputed, according to Hodge. So all men are guilty of the personal sin, but the personal sin is not ascribed to them! Notice as well that Hodge talks about sin, not death, which is imputed. Death in the form of hereditary total depravity is the consequence of this imputation (C. W. Hodge 3:1462-66). Either brother Worthey is in agreement with Hodge's position, or else he, perhaps once more, failed to read the article carefully and has appropriated Hodge's comment out of context.

Total depravity is alluded to several times, if not implicitly taught, by William Worthey. "Helpless man could not provide salvation for himself. Sinful man is described as being 'dead in trespasses and sin.' (Ephesians 2:1.) Salvation must come from God. It comes from above

and not from below," thus writes our brother. He then immediately overdraws Paul's image in Ephesians 2:1 like any Calvinistic apologist. He asks, "When lying in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the dead, what part of this work can he do? Concerning eternal life, what part of that life can we help God provide?" (17). Our brother forgets dead men do not have faith, either, nor can they repent, or confess with their dead lips, or with active and willing minds submit to baptism. The argument he makes is for grace only, but even more than this, it is for unconditional election, though he evidently does not realize the point! Not even faith then would be necessary for regeneration. Faith is only needed for justification and even then, under such a system, it itself becomes a gift that God superimposes upon the will of the elect by His Spirit. God forces the one unconditionally elected to believe. As Joe Gilmore has so poignantly observed, "Calvinism substitutes force for God's unmerited favor," which latter phrase is the proper meaning of *grace*.

On pages 82-83 Worthey discusses the old ladder illustration and states that man in sin "cannot reach even the first rung on the ladder" (83). This is reminiscent of Rubel Shelly's use of the old Calvinist saw, "Dead men don't climb ladders!" Dead men do not do a lot of things, such as believe, repent, confess, etc., which Worthey elsewhere admits they must do to be saved (127-29). One will observe an almost tortured way in which our brother tries to remove baptism from the classification of works, all of which he had already summarily removed from having anything to do with salvation. After praising Augustine's view of man over that of Pelagius, he finally admits that the former did hold to a form of total depravity for all human beings, except as it pertained to Mary the mother of Jesus. He does not really state whether he accepts or rejects that view, though elsewhere his language seems decidedly in favor of the Augustinian view (137-38).

A book titled *Having the Faith of Abraham*, published in 1986 by 20th Century Christian (now 21st Century Christian) and authored by David Chadwell, has also sought to popularize the doctrine of the imputation of Jesus' personal righteousness to the believer. Chadwell sets his tone in chapter two by writing:

> The fundamental truth concerning the role of faith in the life of a Christian is this: it is through faith that a Christian can exist in a righteous relationship with God. One cannot produce a righteous relationship with God through any form of obedient behavior (9).

So, he places faith and obedience in an antithetical position to one another. He does not seem to understand that the kind of faith that God demands is an obedient faith—one that works by love (Gal. 5:6; Jam. 2:18-26). He also seems to miss the point that faith itself is an obedient response to God's inspired revelation. Faith itself is called a *work* (John 6:29). It is a work that one must do to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Our brother declares on page 13 that:

> At the same moment the person's sins are being given to Christ, the person is receiving something from Christ. When he accepts Jesus' sacrifice by entering Christ through baptism, God takes the perfect righteousness of Jesus and clothes him in that righteousness.

He quibbles that this is the significance of being "in Christ" and in "putting on Christ" in baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27—Worthey makes these same quibbles). First, one will observe that he has contradicted his premise from chapter two quoted above, when he ties the reception of Jesus' righteousness to one's *obedient* submission to baptism, which is a divine command (cf. Acts 2:38; 10:48). He will, second, also observe that Chadwell asserts that it is the personal righteousness of Jesus that is imputed (14). Third, one may as well conclude from this that the baptized believer also receives the personal omnipotence and omniscience of Jesus, as the righteousness of Jesus is just as much an essential part of His being and as proper to Him as these. They are all immutable, absolute, and nontransferable. This is the basic problem that even Calvinists acknowledge, though they otherwise ignore the discrepancy in their teaching. Chadwell cites Calvinists in support of his teaching, as on pages 13-14 where in his footnote one is directed to the late Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, a Presbyterian Calvinist, in support of his assertion. Not only is it enlightening as to the parentage of Chadwell's views, it is interesting in that Hughes would have been the first to take Chadwell to task on his inconsistency relative to baptism in the text, which Chadwell holds as essential for one to receive the righteousness of Jesus despite having summarily ruled it out with his statements on obedience! Chadwell evidently does not understand the very system that he professes to believe. Like Hughes before him, he ignores the salient fact that God Himself **can** set the terms upon which He can in an absolute, objective sense **declare man to be righteous**, which is what Paul in Romans 4 teaches. Finally, Chadwell clearly delineates between the state of being righteous in an objective sense and the personal righteousness of Jesus on page 14, which implies in

turn that the saints of God have not really been changed but rather given a false facade so that all that is seen is Christ. The implication of such teaching is the doctrine of "once saved, always saved," though he appears to reject that conclusion. He, like Worthey, establishes false dichotomies between grace and all works, faith and works, etc. Chadwell even talks at times as though salvation is unconditional, though he professes belief in the plan of salvation including the necessity of water baptism (68-69).

Other dangerous books espousing *cheap grace* of the Calvinistic or kindred variety are: *Righteousness Inside Out* by Mike Cope; *How Do I Know I Am Saved?* by Norman L. Bales, who rejects the idea that "grace is God's part in salvation and that obedience is man's part" (6-7) and is fond of "the protective umbrella of grace" notion (27); and *From Slavery To Sonship* by Jerry Jones, who charges:

> The topic of grace hasn't been frequently discussed during the restoration movement. When grace has been preached, the message has been either, "You can fall from it!" or a reaction to the false claims of "once saved, always saved."

Jerry Jones affirms, "In the death of Jesus, man's sins were given to Him (Isa. 53:4-6), and His righteousness was given to man" (12). He clearly refers in the latter point to the personal righteousness of Christ. What is sad is that the books by Bales and Jones were both published by the Gospel Advocate Company, many of whose past editors and publishers would take the current bunch to the woodshed for their publishing this kind of tripe.

Another area wherein Calvinism has infiltrated the Lord's church is in some of the false teaching being done on the implications of *grace* on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Especially this is true of the various positions that justify the remarriage of the guilty fornicator who has been justly put away on the grounds that: "The umbrella of the grace of God will cover it!"

The Holy Spirit Craze

The Holy Spirit craze is an outgrowth of Calvinism and its cousins' influence. It bears a special appeal due to emotionalism. The pied pipers of the movement are many. In Nashville, Tennessee, the Belmont church at one time had two self-appointed *apostles*, who claimed direct guidance by the Holy Ghost—Don Finto and Jim Bevis. It is this writer's understanding that Bevis is no longer with Finto. Steve Flatt, Lindsey Garmon, and Terry Rush have been leaders in pushing the idea

that spiritual gifts continue today. Rush authored a book titled, *The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense*, which avers that God speaks to man today by means of the Bible **and** the Holy Spirit. His Christology is outright blasphemous. He teaches a form of Gnosticism relative to the Incarnation. He writes of Christians being "magnetically powerful" (71), "energetically useful" (72), and as having "invisible, direct strength" of the Holy Spirit "to do kingdom work" (77). He decries our "leaders" who have "denied us full employment of the Holy Spirit because they are afraid where it might lead" (116). He bemoans our depriving "ourselves of Spirit-power by 'playing-it-safe,' " and admonishes us to "free ourselves from the shackles of debaters" in determining the truth on the subject (117).

Terry Bell also is pushing the Holy Roller agenda in the church. Under the heading "Supernatural Firepower," in his book *Reviving Tired Faith*, he writes, "We have virtually *desupernaturalized* the church" (emphasis his—HDD). He adds:

> But the Christian faith is to be a supernatural thing. It was revealed in a supernatural way. It takes root in the heart in a supernatural way. It sustains us in a supernatural way. And if the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not supernatural, then why are we Christians? The Second Coming is the ultimate in supernaturalism (15).

He asserts on page 17, after having demurred on page 16 that his use of "supernatualism" demands the bestowal of miraculous gifts today:

> Revival must begin by a filling and leading of God's Holy Spirit. Then the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will raise our churches from the dead, because many of our churches don't just need reviving, they need resurrecting!

Observe the fallacy of equivocation on the use of *supernatural*, which in one place he uses as a synonym for the miraculous, but then elsewhere it is distinct from it.

Another popular heresy making the rounds among the Holy Rollers in the church is the notion that Holy Spirit baptism is for today. The doctrine is that when one is baptized in water, he also receives Spirit baptism. David Hogan, Richard Oster, Bruce Terry, Richard Rogers, and Robert Leon Gibson have openly promoted this view. Gibson authored a book, titled *Christian, You Were Baptized In Water And Spirit*, which was printed by Star Bible. Gibson cites numerous Baptist and Presbyterian writers in support of his conclusions without even bothering to notice whether their original intent was to promote

Calvinism, Arminianism, or Wesleyanism. He leaves the door ajar for those who would like to introduce present-day *miraculous gifts* to our teaching (138). He asserts relative to the question of miraculous gifts for today: "Certainly the church should not divide over the issue. Men of the Restoration Movement made room for many varying opinions. So should we; it is the only way to unity" (138).

Numerous websites evidence the growing influence of this movement in larger congregations. The Denbigh congregation in Newport News, for example, clearly promotes the doctrine in several articles or sermons from its preacher Charles Tucker, Jr., as well as in class notes on the subject. Tucker has boasted that he is an Arminian and, defending the New International Version's butchering of the noun *sarx*, believes that men have a "sinful nature."

Special mention is here made of the recent teaching of Mac Deaver, his sons Todd and Weylan, Glenn Jobe, and the late Bob Berard, who have promoted the notion of a direct and immediate (without means) strengthening of the Christian by the Holy Spirit from within and the doctrine of present-day Spirit baptism that they have implicitly tied to it. The doctrine of direct and immediate strength in sanctification, as well as the providing of special wisdom distinguished from that given through the study and application of the Word of God in the life of the believer, draws more on the Wesleyan view of the work of the Spirit. John Wesley considered himself a Calvinist in his basic theology, though he differed in key points from Calvin.

Mac's principle vehicles for promoting his views have been through his public debates with Marion Fox, Bill Lockwood, and Jerry Moffitt, his now defunct paper *Biblical Notes Quarterly*, lectureships like that at Robertson County, Tennessee, and more recently Tennessee Bible College, where Malcolm Hill and his faculty have joined the alliance to defend the doctrine, and through the efforts of individual congregations.

In his debates on the Holy Spirit, Mac early on referred to what he termed "the supra-literary influence of the Spirit." The phrase reflects the idea that the Spirit is doing something in addition to the influence He wields through the Word of God. When questioned about its meaning, Mac tried to tie the Spirit's work in providence to the phrase, but it gradually has become more clear that he also intended a supernatural influence from **within** the saint, which influence is **in addition to and distinct from** the Word. In his debate with Moffitt, Mac affirmed

the following proposition: "Resolved: The Bible teaches that in addition to His sanctifying through His Word, the Holy Spirit operates directly to sanctify the heart of the faithful Christian" (101).

Deaver's article in the Spring 2004 issue of *Biblical Notes Quarterly* provides an extensive look into some of his more recent speculations on the work of the Spirit. It is interesting to note that there has been a subtle, but telling shift in brother Deaver's charge against those who oppose his teaching from the claim that brethren should not divide over the **indwelling** of the Spirit to the claim in more recent times that they should not divide over the **work** of the Spirit. He holds that the Spirit does things **in addition to** the Word within the heart of the Christian essential to sanctification tying these to Spirit baptism.

Deaver has fully adopted, along with Berard and Jobe (Denham *Gospel* 21-23), the heresy of present-day Spirit baptism. In one of his most recent letters, he expressed the desire that one day we would stand together "on the work of the Holy Spirit" in this regard. Berard was baptized again because he decided that his prior water baptism was invalid without this understanding of its purpose. Both, along with Jobe, have tried to convince brethren that water baptism and Spirit baptism are the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Thus, one plus one equals one, according to their new math! They even tie the baptism in Spirit to the New Birth in their use of John 3:5.

Caught up in all of this is Goebel Music, whose massive ill-advised book on the Holy Spirit, which purports to be a compendium proving not only a personal indwelling but also that something is being done by the Spirit inside the agent essential to his sanctification, has pulled him into the dispute. The book lacks the careful study and scholarship that have previously typified brother Music's writings. He cites numerous authors, like Gibson, without noting the various theological biases that they possessed on the subject. In many cases had he extended the quotes a bit further, the *authorities* he uses would have drawn him clearly into rank Calvinism, Arminianiam, or Wesleyanism in their conclusions. Only enough information is given to support a predetermined conclusion that happily accords with the Deaver doctrine, at least as it stood when the book first made its appearance.

When Goebel addresses the writings of some of the restoration leaders and their heirs, his work is very selective, limited, and self-serving. It is with a jaundiced eye that he examines the writings of Campbell and ignores salient materials that show that the restorer's

views were in a state of flux early on but becoming more settled in later years. He also implies that Campbell **always** limited the term sanctification in such a way in his discourses on the Spirit that he was not discussing the work of the Spirit in the everyday life of the saint, but this is not always the case, even in the works that Music cites.

Rubel Shelly has also authored a book, *In Step With The Spirit*, which sets forth the typical touchy, feely tripe common to the movement. The desire for special guidance, empowerment, enlightenment, and strengthening by the Spirit separate and apart from the Word of God supplies the thrust of Shelly's thinking on the Spirit. Another heretical work from Shelly in collaboration with fellow ultra-liberal Randall Harris is *The Second Incarnation*, which avers—among the many errors of its "pilgrim church" theology—that the Lord's Church is a "second incarnation" not unlike that which occurred in the person of Jesus Christ. This effect is tied by Shelly and Harris to a direct and immediate indwelling of the Spirit that involves a literal conjoining of the Spirit with the human spirit. This implies that Christians are little *gods* (or *godlets*). This doctrine is especially popular in the Third Wave Charismatic Movement. One not well-known facet of Calvinism, as with other Augustinian systems, is the doctrine of Christian deification that is premised on such a uniting of Deity with human spirits. While incarnation is a form of indwelling, the indwelling of the Spirit is not an incarnation. An incarnation involves the joining and thus blending of the two natures (divine and human) in the one person, and demands that the person *so* indwelt is himself Deity. Mac Deaver's view of the indwelling hints at much of the same conclusions.

Rubel Shelly and Max Lucado—Would-be Leaders of the Pack

In an article titled "Arbeit Macht Frei," Shelly, who has been the most prominent proponent of Calvinism among brethren, compared the teaching that some works are essential to one's salvation to the perverse and twisted Nazist teaching in the infamous sign that read in English, "Work Makes One Free." He then went on to say, "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). In the furor that immediately arose over this blatantly false charge, Shelly tried to backpeddle by stating that he was talking about "the ground" of our salvation, which refers to the atoning work of Christ, to the effect that

we do not "contribute to the ground (i.e. Christ's atoning work) of our salvation."

However, in a visit to the Hixon Church of Christ near Chattanooga, Tennessee, not long afterward, Shelly once more reverted to the diatribes that have become common in his attacks on the plan of salvation. He denounced as a "damnable heresy" the doctrine that we can contribute one whit to our own salvation. He ridiculed the idea of there being five steps in salvation. He also cited a "friend" who likes to say, "Dead men do not climb ladders," relative to the subject of salvation. This latter statement asserts the doctrine of total depravity and the inability of men to have any part in their own salvation. The illustration, however, overdraws Paul's metaphor in Ephesians 2:1-2, and the Calvinist *meets himself coming* just as soon as he begins to talk about the need for faith and repentance, which is just what Shelly did. Dead men do not have faith; dead men cannot repent; dead men cannot confess with their cold, lifeless lips the Deity of Christ. Yet even the most fervent Calvinist admits that these are involved in man's salvation! The statement shows that Shelly was not misunderstood at all in the "Arbeit Macht Frei" article, but was understood all too clearly.

Max Lucado has openly ridiculed the doctrine of the necessity of water baptism to obtain the forgiveness of sins. He also has gloated that he would make a good Baptist in his theology and has regularly calls upon listeners to his radio addresses to pray the mythical "Sinner's Prayer" to be saved. It is fascinating that somehow with these folks *praying through*, which involves human effort, does not *earn* one's salvation!

False Bibles and Tainted Versions

A final area, wherein the church has been influenced by Calvinism and such like, is in the use of some of the modern **perversions** of the Scriptures themselves. *The New English Bible* inserts Calvinism into the text of 1 Corinthians 2:14 by changing the word translated "natural man" (KJV and ASV) to "unspiritual man," to promote the idea that one must first be supernaturally regenerated to be enabled by God to accept and believe the Word of God to be saved. Galatians 2:16 is perverted to teach that one "is justified **only** through faith in Christ" (emph.— HDD). *The Today's English Version*, also known as *Good News for Modern Man*, promotes both Calvinism and Arminianism. In its handling of Romans 3:27-28, it removes "the law of faith" and

inserts that one is "justified only through faith." It drops the participial construction "hearing by the word of God" in Romans 10:17 so the text reads that faith comes by "hearing." Some "still small voice" may easily be substituted for the clarion message of the Gospel. This perversion also commits the same error on 1 Corinthians 2:14 as does the *The New English Bible*. In Romans 8, it translates the Greek word ***sarx*** as "human nature" to teach total depravity.

The *New International Version*, which is being widely used by brethren is blatantly Calvinistic. Its text in Psalm 51:5 reads: "Surely, I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." That is hereditary total depravity! It, too, butchers 1 Corinthians 2:14. Some seventeen times in Romans and Galatians, it translates ***sarx*** as either "sinful nature" or "sinful man," but fails to apply the same rendering to John 1:14, 1 John 1:14; 4:2 relative to the incarnation of Christ. If ***sarx*** means "sinful nature" or such like, then why ignore these texts pertaining to the incarnation of Christ? The *New International Version* also rewrites Ephesians 1:13 to have people "in Christ" at the point of hearing the Word of God. It reads, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth." It butchers Romans 10:9-10 ignoring the linear action of the Greek present passives and the prospective force of the preposition ***eis***, to teach, "For it is within your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

The New Jerusalem Bible, whose translators were influenced heavily by Augustine, translates Psalm 51:5 to read: "Remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception." *The Living Bible Paraphrased*, *translated* by Calvinist Kenneth Taylor, also mistranslates Psalm 51:5 to teach total depravity, thus: "But I was a born sinner, a sinner from the moment of conception." It teaches salvation by "faith only" in John 1:11-12, Romans 1:16-17, and Romans 4:12. It attacks the necessity of water baptism in its handling of John 3:5 (in the footnote) and 1 Peter 3:21. Numerous other ills are to be found in all of these and other modern *versions*. Some of the so-called "Study Bibles" are especially designed to promote Calvinism and such like in their "notes" and "helps." These include the popular Ryrie and Schofield Bibles.

CONCLUSION

Many brethren, including elderships, are unaware of what is taking place in their midst through the activities of the change agents. They are unaware also of the theological poison being disseminated through liberal publishing firms and universities for pulpit and classroom use. They are equally oblivious to the tommyrot that fills the modern *versions* that they are using. Sermons, books, periodicals, and even false "bibles" are promoting, defending, and supporting Calvinism and such like.

This author did not leave a Calvinistic denomination just to sit back and watch reprobates and apostates turn the Lord's church into one. Let us arise and meet the challenge that is before us before it is too late! Let us be for the right and against the wrong always!

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ENDNOTE

[1]Parts of this lecture are drawn from other lectures delivered by the author at various times, including: "Calvinism's Influence on the Church." *Changes in the Church of Christ*. Ed. Bobby Liddell. Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1994. 389-410.

[2] For more study on this point, study this author's chapter in *Studies in Romans* (425-429) and *Studies in Ephesians* (383-406) along with others books of similar nature.

LIBERALISM'S ETHIC

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Some of Tom's efforts in Malvern include a daily radio program, a weekly article for the local newspaper, and editing the *Examiner*, a quarterly publication sent to over 10,000 homes in the area.

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INTRODUCTION

Liberalism has been a problem throughout the history of mankind and is a crisis that plagues us this very hour. *The Blight of Liberalism* is indeed a timely topic, and needs to be discussed among the people of God. Judges, one of the saddest books in all the Bible, tells of this very blight in biblical times.

> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them

> into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies (Jud. 2:7-14).

Paul also warned us of this very evil:

> 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).

Remember, the inspired scribe of Judges pointed out that apostasy is only one generation away (2:10). As a result of this, the older generation has an obligation to teach the younger generation the Truth. The younger generation has an obligation to be concerned about the Truth. As Judges 2:7-14 clearly points out, when the people of God forsake Him, they can no longer stand before their enemies.

That God is concerned with liberalism is easily seen as we study through Holy Writ. Notice what Moses writes by inspiration:

> If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee (Deu. 13:1-5).

The Psalmist penned the sentiments of the Almighty when he said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.... Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way" (119:104, 128).

Liberalism is one of the greatest dangers the church has ever had to face. Liberalism works like termites on a building. Often you do not know there is a problem until the building is about to fall. Liberalism, unless it is met head on and defeated, will destroy the church of our Lord. Liberalism completely undermines the Father, Christ, the Bible,

the Gospel, and the church. Its aim is to destroy the church, as you and I know it, and to create a denomination among denominations.

Because of liberalism, it is imperative that we give heed to the words of Jude:

> 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 (3).

Faithful soldiers of the cross will "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), and will "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

As we begin our study of "Liberalism's Ethic," let us define our terms.

> First of all, what is "Liberalism?" "Basically, the problem of Liberalism is a philosophical one. Philosophy relates to basic attitudes, positions, thoughts, and principles out of which come actions, conduct, and related thinking. My actions in the political realm will be the product of my basic political philosophy. My conduct with regard to the Bible teaching will be the product of my attitude toward the Bible. If I regard the Bible as being a miraculous product from God to man, then my conduct will be of a certain kind. If I regard it as being a purely human product, then my conduct will be of an entirely different kind" (Deaver 3).

Liberalism is an attitude toward God and His Word that denies divine authority; rejecting the idea of a standard or pattern in religion, to do one's own will instead of the Almighty's.

> Liberalism believes in God, but not in the God of the Bible. Liberalism believes in Christ, but not in the Christ of the Bible. Liberalism believes in inspiration, but not in the inspiration the Bible claims for itself. Liberalism believes in "truth," but not in "truth" as presented in the Bible (Deaver 4).

In this study we will use *liberal* as defined by such biblical terms and phrases as "heretick" or "factious" (Tit. 3:10), "abideth not in the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9), "ungodly men" and "dreamers" (Jude 4, 8), "wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13), "them which cause divisions and offences" (Rom. 16:17), "an heathen" (Mat. 18:17), "disorderly" (2 The. 3:6, 11), those who "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1), "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29), "ravening wolves" (Mat. 7:15), or "false teachers" (2 Pet. 2:1).

Second, *ethic* is defined as "the discipline dealing with what is good or bad and with moral duty and obligation; a set of moral principles or

values; a theory or system of moral values; the principals of conduct governing an individual or a group" (*Webster's*). Thus, in this study we will be looking at the standards of conduct that govern the unbiblical actions of our liberal brethren.

THE ROOTS OF LIBERALISM'S ETHIC

"Liberalism's Ethic" is better understood when we consider the mindset of a liberal. At the very foundation of liberalism is the taproot of **rebellion**—the **rejection of biblical authority**. In Peter's discussion of false teachers (liberals), he states:

> But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption (2 Pet. 2:10-12).

Liberals are very obstinate in their attitudes concerning authority. They are stubbornly disobedient and are persistently defiant of authority and restraint. Peter called them *self-willed* (2 Pet. 2:10). Thayer defines *selfwilled* as being "self-pleasing and arrogant" (83)—a "self-loving spirit" (Vincent 695). It is this "self-loving spirit" that rejects God's wishes for their own wants. They are not willing to deny self and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). At the root of liberalism is *self-will*! Have our liberal friends forgotten the words of Jeremiah? "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).

Being self-willed, the liberals give allegiance to subjective standards —standards based on one's feelings and opinions. Putting one's feelings and opinions above the requirements of God shows disrespect for His authority. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). Liberals disregard God's authority and simply do what they want to do, thinking that they have a better way than God. At Mount Sinai, the children of Israel built a golden calf because that was what they wanted, but God punished them for it (Exo. 32). In the period of the judges every man did that which was right in his own eyes, in other words, as each person desired, but their conduct resulted in disrespect toward God (Jud. 21:25).

Liberalism dares to put itself on the throne of God, rejecting God's authority, thus, making men equal with God. Notice what our Lord claimed, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat. 28:18). Our Lord's claim is warranted because He "is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18), and because His words will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Satan is the spiritual father of liberalism (Gen. 3:1-6), and therefore every liberal is a child of the devil.

> Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not (John 8:42-45).

Another root in "Liberalism's Ethic" is their **desired fellowship with the denominations**. Sadly, liberalism welcomes, defends, upholds, and applauds the enemies of the cross. In their desire to be *politically correct*, and their desire to be accepted by men rather then God, the liberals desire the praise of men more than the praise of God.

> Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43).

When one desires the praise of men more than the praise of God—he has received his reward.

> Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.... And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.... Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward (Mat. 6:2, 5, 16).

The same truth holds true concerning liberalism in general. Our desire should be to be accepted of God: "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (2 Cor. 5:9).

It seems as though our liberal brethren would rather have fellowship with the denominational world than they would with faithful children of God. It is appalling to realize that they praise the very ones leading so many into the gates of hell, all the while condemning those who walk in the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16). We must be in fellowship with and encourage, not condemn, those who courageously "stand in the gap" (Eze. 22:30)—those who "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). Truth cannot fellowship error!

> If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:6-10).

The apostle Paul declared, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).

> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

How can anyone truly claim to be a faithful child of God who stands by and allows the truth of God to suffer? We need to act like men (1 Cor. 16:13), and not sissy-boys!

Still another root in the "Liberal's Ethic" is **materialism**. Concerning this very mentality, consider the words of the apostle Peter:

> And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.... Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:3, 14-15).

Revenue (the gross income returned by an investment) is a very powerful root in the liberal's ethics. In the case of 2 Peter 2, as in many other situations, the investment of time and energy by the liberals in setting forth their false doctrines have brought them much revenue from their happy hearers. "It was 'through covetousness' that these false teachers endeavored to 'make merchandise' of their hearers (2 Pet. 2:3). They taught what they taught because they had hearts full covetousness (2 Pet. 2:14)" (Clarke 1).

The attitude of many liberals is much like that of the Old Testament prophet Balaam. Balaam, we are told, "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15). God would not give Balaam authorization to curse Israel, but Balaam, it seems, decided to give Balak some "off the record" advice. He told Balak to "cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). Why would Balaam do such a horrible things? Peter tells us he did it for money!

In answering the question, "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" Jeremiah condemned them all, "for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jer. 8:10). This is precisely the problem spoken of in Micah 3:11:

> The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is* not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

It is sad when preachers preach only the things that the hands that feed them want to hear. Friends, this is exactly what a liberal preacher will do! This kind preacher shows no concern for the flock.

> But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep (John 10:12-13).

Many are fleeing from the truth because they do not really care for the flock. Parents, who are drinking of the waters of liberalism, do not truly care for their children.

> (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end

> *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things) (Phi. 3:18-19).

Liberals are the enemy of God! Why? Because they care only for themselves.

We need to have the attitude of Paul:

> *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,... For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27).

We must not omit the profitable things for fear someone might not like it—that will make one like a "**cake not turned**" (Hos. 7:8). We must preach the whole counsel of God. A failure to do so produces liberalism. All too often we allow *things* (worldliness) to guide us. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). We must not allow the things of the world to direct us spiritually! Materialism destroys the church! Materialism breeds liberalism!

LIBERALISM'S ETHIC

This author believes that the most prominent ethic of a liberal is **Deception**. In describing the deceiving nature of false teachers (liberals), Peter writes:

> 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. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.... And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 13-14).

Notice that the inspired apostle says that false teachers bring in their heresies of destruction "privily." *Privily* is a metaphor for "spies or traitors introducing themselves into an enemy's camp" (Vincent 689), one who creeps in unaware. *Privily* carries the idea of "slipping in by the side of," and indicates that these false teachers (liberals) had artfully

and slyly introduced their false doctrines by the side of truth in such a fashion as to deceive those who accepted them.

The false teacher rarely begins his sinister work publicly; he first establishes a core group of followers in private settings like Bible classes or meeting in the homes of members. The liberal will start his work of deception quietly and privately by establishing the new ideas with a few before boldly proclaiming the new ideas publicly from the pulpit. If they meet resistance—they pull back, and try again at another time. Their relationship with others is but a scam to get their foot in the door to teach their false doctrines.

> And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you (2 Pet. 2:13).

The liberal does not attempt to meet the truth head-on, or attempt to *try* to refute the truth openly, but comes in the back door trying to deceive honest souls with their false doctrines.

Deception, though, is not a new tactic—it began in the Garden of Eden, and will continue as long as time exists.

> Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:1-5).

Here we learn more of what Jesus meant in John 8:44:

> Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Satan lied to Eve, and she believed him. Satan is still lying today through his spiritual children (liberals)—and many believe his lies to the destruction of their souls. Notice that in Satan's lie to Eve he added only one little word. God said they would die if they ate of the forbidden tree—Satan said they would **not**. This is how Satan works on us today—through deception. Sadly, the liberals are giving aid to Satan's tricks.

Another example of this liberal ethic is found in 1 Kings 13. Shortly after the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was divided, and soon Jeroboam instituted false worship (1 Kin. 12:26-28). He wanted them to forget Jerusalem and wanted to make things easy for the people. Soon after this, a young prophet from Judah was directed by God to deliver a prophecy against Jeroboam's altar (1 Kin. 13:1-3). This prophecy was literally and precisely fulfilled 330 years later (2 Kin. 23:15-20). Jeroboam was upset that the young prophet was there to cause him trouble (1 Kin. 13:4). To get rid of him, Jeroboam tried force, but the Lord was with the young prophet. Jeroboam next offers him money (1 Kin. 13:7), but the young prophet understood the Lord's command.

> And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel (1 Kin. 13:8-10).

God said do not stay in Bethel—they had turned from God in that place, and the Almighty wanted His faithful to remain that way—so He says to have no fellowship with them. The young prophet resisted the invitations of Jeroboam, and was on his way home by a different route. The young prophet would not listen to the evil king; *his guard was up* because he was a known enemy of God.

There was an old prophet in the area, though, that had heard about the young prophet and went out to see him.

> Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, I *am* a prophet also as thou *art*; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied unto him (1 Kin. 13:15-18).

The old prophet lied! Because the old man was a fellow prophet, the young man of God *let down his guard* and listened to him without consulting God. The Lord said the young prophet would never make it home. A lion killed the young man of God because he listened to the deception of the old prophet (1 Kin. 13:29-32). The apostle Peter

declared, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Beloved, the devil is walking about like a roaring lion devouring those who are falling prey to the deception of the liberals. Be careful that you be not deceived by a *sacred cow*—always consult God's Word on the matter.

In the New Testament, Jude referred to certain false teachers in this fashion: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). These false teachers "crept in unawares," that is, they slipped in by the side door—deception! That is why Jude declared we are to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Liberal teachers do their work with "feigned words" (2 Pet. 2:3). *Feigned* comes from a Greek word meaning "to mold as one would a piece of clay." Thus, these words of deceit were formed for the occasion. We know we have caught a liberal doing this when they come back with such phrases as, "You misunderstood me." Any preacher *worth his salt* should be able to speak so as not to be misunderstood. Some use "feigned words" by the redefining of terms or by using some strange and newly developed term—all with the intent to deceive and cloud the issues. The liberal will argue with "cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet. 1:16), using clever stories, or hypothetical situations, with the intent to deceive.

The liberal's ethic of deception is further manifested in his promising that which he cannot deliver. The apostle Peter described this type of deception as "wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (2 Pet. 2:17). Though these false teachers presented themselves as offering the refreshing waters of life, they were actually wells without water. Liberals are as clouds that are driven about by the wind and that send down no rain upon the earth. These clouds, as the liberal, promise rain only to be followed by disappointment.

Another liberal ethic is that of **tolerance**. Liberalism operates on the basis of compromise—tolerating what God will not. This mentality is described in Matthew 15:9: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men." Tolerance is ignoring doctrinal error and being unwilling to deal with sin in the way that God has prescribed. The liberal prides himself as having *love* as his prime

mover, all the while tolerating almost anything. Biblical love is much different from the kind of love the liberals manifest. Love requires that we keep the commands of God (John 14:15), not ignore them. As a result of this tolerance ethic, the liberals have opened their arms in acceptance of the denominational world. "A widespread conspiracy has taken shape in recent years that blurs the distinction between the church of Christ—the New Testament—and the spurious counterfeits constructed by men, i.e., the denominations" (Miller 282). The liberals are bombarding the church with the propaganda of tolerance.

> Under the guise of "unity," we are being goaded into a permissive, tolerant posture of ambiguity that is at odds with the penetrating thoughtfulness, discriminating diligence, and the spiritual clarity associated with faithfulness to God (Miller 282).

Liberalism tolerates almost anything, but one thing they will not tolerate is the faithful brother who is truly preaching the truth in love. Is it not strange that these *tolerating* liberals will call stalwart soldiers of the cross "knuckleheads," "ultra-conservatives," "legalistic," "tradition bound," "mean-spirited," and "intolerant"? In other words, they are willing to tolerate everything but the truth.

Change is another of the Liberal's Ethic. *Change* is a major standard of the liberal's conduct. One of the major battles now being fought in the Lord's church today, is how one interprets the Bible. Why?—Because the liberals want to change and restructure the church.

Hermeneutics is the procedure by which certain logical principles are applied to a document to ascertain the author's original meaning. All literature is subject to hermeneutical analysis. In this country, we have a branch of government, the Judiciary, which has been designed to practice "legal hermeneutics," that is, to interpret the law. Sacred Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation. Everyone, to a greater or lesser degree, either correctly or incorrectly employs hermeneutics.

All too frequently, one hears about the so-called "New Hermeneutic." The *New Hermeneutic's* philosophical and theological roots are embedded deep in denominational doctrine. The major reason this *New Hermeneutic* is being pushed by our liberal brethren is their dislike for the *Old Hermeneutic*. These liberal brethren give most of their time to criticizing the hermeneutic methods of direct statement, example, and implication. Actually, this New Hermeneutic is not new, it has been going on from the Garden of Eden—since the time man decided he

wanted to do things his way instead of God's way. Another reason this New Hermeneutic is being pushed with such vigor is the desire for the churches of Christ to have full fellowship with the denominational world.

Consider this very vital point, if we need a new hermeneutic to understand the Bible properly today, then the members of the Lord's church who preceded us in death, never were able to understand the Bible. In fact, how could they have known they were really members of the Lord's church? On the other hand, if those who used the *old hermeneutic* were able to ascertain biblical truth, could understand the Bible enough to be saved, then why is there a need for a new hermeneutic? Are our liberal brethren trying to tell us that, though the Bible has been complete for almost 2,000 years, we are just now learning to interpret it? Where I grew up, this is called *hog-wash*!

The supporters of the New Hermeneutics ridicule the idea that the Bible is a blueprint, a pattern, a law, or code-book by which we are to adhere to be pleasing in the sight of the Lord. They say that the Bible is nothing but a *love letter*, and is not legislation from God. It is true that God has expressed His love to us in the Bible, but the Bible is not a love letter like a boy would write to his girlfriend. Who ever wrote to his girlfriend about such things as circumcision, eating meats sacrificed to idols, and discipline? The primary purpose of Holy Writ is to show us how to respond to God's love!

That the Bible is a pattern, a blueprint, and our guide in religious matters is easy to establish from the Scriptures.

> And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*. (Exo. 25:8-9).

> Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should *so* say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again*, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between us and you. God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that *is* before his tabernacle (Jos. 22:28-29).

> Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:16).

> Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount (Heb. 8:5).

Only the blind of heart are not able to see clearly that the Bible is truly our pattern in religion.

The proponents of the New Hermeneutic charge that the old hermeneutic is too dependent on logic, inference, and reasoning. If the truth were known, the Bible repeatedly exhorts us to use sound reasoning and rational thought in handling its inspired words. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isa. 1:18). The apostle Paul used reasoning and logic as he delved in the Scriptures.

> And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (Acts 17:2-3).

The Hebrews writer uses logic in Hebrews 3:4: "For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God." The Hebrews writer logically infers from this known truth that "every effect must have an adequate cause." If the Bible uses logic, should not we?

The New Hermeneutic is rooted in subjectivity and relativism in its approach to the Scriptures. Thus, we see a people guided by the *do your own thing* and *believe what you want* mentality. These misguided souls say that *attitude* is more important than *action*. The truth is, attitude and action are obligatory in pleasing God. Jesus said, "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John. 4:24). Here we see that attitude and action is involved in pleasing God in worship. Joshua writes: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (24:14). Again, to please God, there is attitude and action involved. The inspired wisdom of Solomon declares: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man" (Ecc. 12:13). The whole duty of man—the whole of man—involves attitude and action. Attitude and action must be found together to please God.

For example, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-12), there was right action—giving to the Lord, but wrong attitude or motive—lying about the giving. As a result, the Lord smote them. Another example is seen in the account of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6-7); there was wrong action—touching the ark, but right motive or attitude—not

wanting the ark to fall. Jehovah smote Uzzah. Attitude and action are a must in being well-pleasing unto the Almighty.

Interwoven in the philosophy of the New hermeneutic is **agnosticism**. These confused souls say that the Bible is not for the purpose of informing us how to please God. Many would say that truth is relative, subjective, and unattainable. But in reality, the very opposite is true. Solomon said, "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Pro. 23:23). Thus truth is objective and absolute. Furthermore, truth is attainable, for Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). If a man cannot know truth, it is because he is not honest (Luke 8:15) or does not love the truth (2 The. 2:10).

CONCLUSION

The only need for a New Hermeneutic lies in man's unwillingness to accept as authentic the meaning that God intended in the Bible. Is ascertaining and obeying God's will all that difficult? Let Moses answer the question:

> For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deu. 30:11-14).

The Liberal's Ethics are the prime mover in the destruction of the souls of men. In reality their ethics are rather unethical. Any ethics steeped in deceit, tolerance of evil, and change for the worse is to be rejected at all costs. Liberalism is a blight and a menace to every Christian walking in the old paths. It is this author's prayer that our elderships will stop liberalism in its tracks! Every Gospel preacher needs to have the courage to preach the whole counsel of God! This penman prays that every Christian will love the truth enough to stand up to, oppose, and mark the liberals. Let us all take a stand for what is right!

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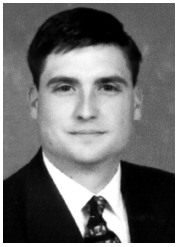
LIBERALISM AND MORALITY

David B. Smith



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INTRODUCTION

Not long ago, a good elder in the Lord's church was conducting research on the Internet in hope of finding material related to a topic of interest. Since the subject was related to the Bible, he devoted some of his research time examining articles by fellow members of the household of the faith. Most articles of this kind are either linked to an individual congregation's website or are part of the website itself. During the course of his research, he happened upon an article addressing his topic of interest—which was posted on an individual congregation's website. The site itself was very nicely done, with plenty of pictures and a nice background. Eye-candy like this has the usual effect of provoking greater interest; so the elder decided to explore some of the other areas of the site (including the "ministries" page). One of the *ministries* of this congregation was something of an "outdoor adventure" group, and the site listed photos from recent excursions in which members of the Lord's church (so-called) were engaged in wild adventures. Wild indeed! It is bad enough that people would employ the name of the Lord and His treasury for recreational purposes, but the worst part of this discovery was the pictures. There was no difference in what these members of the church were wearing (rather, not wearing) than what a person would expect to see in a trashy music video. The men were all shirtless, and the women were sporting the latest *look-at-my-body* bikinis. Nothing was left to the imagination,

except to wonder why members of the church would shame both themselves and the precious body of the Christ with immoral activity—even more, why they would display their nudity for the whole world to see.

Shocking as the discovery may have been, it is easier to understand the reason such trash was posted when other parts of the same website revealed a liberal agenda for the congregation. What the elder found on the website was not atypical, because liberalism and immorality go hand-in-hand. One is the natural consequence of the other. Perhaps it is even right to say that immorality is a form of liberalism. However, most view the two as somewhat distinct for the purpose of discussion; that is, religious liberalism breeds moral degradation.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Declining morality among members of the Lord's church (even in the world) is only a symptom of a much deeper problem. The world is being bombarded by a hedonistic, love-for-self philosophy. It is a battle of wills, whether man will allow God to be the master of his life or set his own course based on personal pleasure. Moses may have shunned the temporary pleasures of sin for the true happiness found in obeying God (Heb. 11:24-26), but not many men today are like Moses. People in general carry a bag full of hate toward the authority of the Scriptures, because authority implies responsible submission. When the authority of the Scriptures is rejected, there is no restraint on a man's course of life except what he decides to enforce upon himself based on personal preference:

> Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, *As for* the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? (Jer. 44:15-19).

Morality becomes entirely subjective. There is no more *real* right or wrong, which is exactly what men would have for themselves. It is a way for a man to justify in his own mind that he is right in being wrong.

Environment is a large part of the problem, when it comes to fading morality in the context of the Lord's church. It is not the total problem, but it adds definite curb-appeal to the "be you own master" mentality now expressed by so many. "Every one else is doing it," they argue, "and every one else seems to be doing quite well." This same problem is addressed in Israel's personal choice for a king (1 Sam. 8:5-20)—instead of allowing God to work in His own way on His own time to fulfill an earlier promise (Gen. 17:6). The plea "that we also may be like all the nations" is actually a more honest answer than the standard plea of some today, "I don't see anything wrong with that." Both answers are nevertheless wrong. In the end, it is all about being like every one else—of following the path paved by the world that provides momentary pleasures and popularity but ends in destruction (Mat. 7:13-14). It is somewhat ironic that men who claim to be so individual are just like everyone else in the end.

Values are shifting in the world because standards are changing. John F. Alexander has written a good treatise on the shifting values of the world in a book titled *The Secular Squeeze: Reclaiming Christian Depth in a Shallow World*. While the book misses the mark on some points, the author offers an accurate description of the problem:

> In the 1660s Rembrandt painted himself helping crucify Jesus. In the 1960s Andy Warhol painted Campbell's soup cans. That change reflects the curious emptiness of modern culture. We have gone from the depths of God to the shallowness of technology.
>
> You see, in modern, secular culture, human beings are nothing but pieces of meat—with nothing special or transcendent about us. We are not sinners who crucified God but consumers who eat canned soup.... Every culture has its symbols, its icons that reveal how it tries to fill its hollowness. Once our icon was the crucified God; now its Campbell's Soup cans. Once we venerated Christ on the cross; now we venerate material success. We worship soup cans! We don't think of it that way, of course, but if we are devoted to getting a good job and having a nice house, we are worshipping soup cans.
>
> So churches rarely tell the story of Jesus straight. Instead, they tell versions of modernity. They preach Jesus in odd combinations with secularism and romanticism, materialism and nationalism... Except for certain outward forms, churches are often hard to tell from the sur-

> rounding culture. They have exchanged the gospel for a culturally acceptable cross of gold.
>
> Our culture has lost all depth. We have been squeezed flat.... We have nothing with which to fill our hollowness but hollowness itself.... Except of course, ourselves. We fill ourselves with ourselves...they put self at the center. At the center of all the emptiness, where God is meant to be (15-18).

In application, does this not describe modern liberalism in the body of the Christ perfectly? Is not the liberalism under question with this theme the same that is characterized by "new hermeneutics," by shallow preaching (if it may be called *preaching* at all), by a venomous attitude toward authority, and such like? Liberalism produces moral decline, because the turn from God and His Word results in man filling himself with himself. The pleasures of sin become man's great desire and his only sense of satisfaction, albeit pseudo-satisfaction.

It is no surprise that some members of the body of the Christ, even some congregations as a whole, have no problem with immodest apparel, dancing, or drinking intoxicating beverages. When there is no respect for the authority of God (which is liberalism in a nut-shell) anything goes in the realm of morality. Parents, elders, members, and preachers alike who have no respect for the high standards presented on the pages of the Sacred Text are plaguing the church by their fascination with the moral corruption of the world. The deadly result is a slow but sure loss of the distinguished identity of the church. This is exactly the reason that John provides the following inspired warning:

> Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

David F. Wells provides an excellent practical treatment of this principle, saying:

> Sometimes Scripture uses the term *world* to signify this whole way of life; sometimes it uses the term in reference to how these general assumptions come to expression through individual people. In the latter instances, however, the individuals are representatives of all those who are unredeemed and at enmity with God. It is important to note that worldliness has this *collective* sense about it: there is public approbation for the private desires and appetites that are hostile to God and to his truth (Rom. 3:19; 2 Cor. 5:19). The "world" is a godless

> curia demanding that its teaching be obeyed, rewarding those who acquiesce, exacting sanctions on those who do not, and generally making belief and trust in Christ difficult. Christ himself was alienated from the "world." He was not of this world (John 17:14; 18:36) (40).

He concludes the point by saying:

> If we stay with John, we can easily see how sharply he differentiates these two spiritual realms. Those who belong to the church have been born of God (1 John 3:1-3); those who belong to the world have not (1 John 4:4-6). The church belongs to Christ (1 John 3:7-10); the world belongs to Satan (1 John 5:19).... Love for God, therefore, is utterly incompatible with love of the world (1 John 2:15) (40-41).

Immorality is carried on the wings of liberalism, because the disrespect for God's Word that defines liberalism translates equally into the love for self that defines immorality.

A MORE SPECIFIC LOOK AT THE EQUATION

To make the point more clear, several examples from the Bible are necessary. In each of the following examples, one will find a consistent illustration of the equation stated above—that liberalism (disrespect for God and His authority) results in corrupted values. Whether one finds such explicit language in the Bible, it is always the case that immorality involves a *cutting off* of God to some degree or another. The principle can be reversed to show that real morals involve God and His Precious Book Divine.

Genesis 6:1-8 is the most memorable illustration in the Old Testament. It is not more significant than others, but it does seem to stick in the memory easier than others because of the worldwide scope of both the wickedness and the consequence. Also, much more is said throughout the remainder of the Bible on this event than what is stated solely in Moses' account in the book of Genesis. Many writers address the complete lack of morality at that time: the violence that covered the earth (Gen. 6:11-12), the sexual debauchery (Gen. 6:2), the adopted hedonistic mentality and rampant materialism (Luke 17:27-28), and the general disregard of God's pattern for the home (Mat. 24:38). It is easy to see the parallel between Noah's generation and today's moral decadence. Peter's inspired commentary on this event completes the picture:

> For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuf-

> fering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

Cutting through all of the symptoms and secondary issues, the problem of Noah's contemporaries was the same hatred of God's authority as expressed in the preceding section. The pre-flood civilization put God out of their minds and rejected the preaching of Noah. By doing this, the reference point for morality was removed, and all that was left was the vanity which says "every man for himself" and "do as you please."

This same principle is illustrated twice in the Psalms, both in Psalm 14:1 and in Psalm 53:1-6. The psalmist admits that as quickly as one refuses the knowledge of God he turns to *beast-like* ethics. Since God restrains wrong behavior through His Word, there is no end to the moral decline of the man who refuses God. Only God is the true reference point for morality, and only a fool would try to deny the connection.

Paul provides the most exhaustive New Testament treatment of this principle. Beginning with Romans 1:18, the apostle charts the course of such destruction step by step. It begins first with their refusal of the knowledge of God. Here is a summary of the account:

- Evidence for the existence of God (the reference point of morality) is supplied abundantly in the created universe (vv. 19-20).
- Every rational being is therefore amenable to that knowledge (v. 20).
- In spite of this knowledge, some preferred a different way of life—a life where man is the master of his own universe and God is not (v. 21).
- By rejecting God, these men were turned from a life with pure goals and purpose to a life of darkness and despair (v. 22).
- To placate their own conscience, they rationalized their new way of life by pseudo-wisdom (v. 22).
- In essence, they defiled the creation (v. 23).
- Being the essence of true love, God allows men their freedom of choice. Though He does not approve of their activity, He will not force service from men (v. 24).

- The result for these men was a life of complete debauchery. Their path is hedonistic (vv. 25-32).

It may not be popular among liberals, they may even disavow association with those exposed in Paul's treatise, but this is the connection between liberalism and immorality. With God in the picture, man has a reference point for morality. He can know what is right from what is wrong. Without God—which is to say that a man refuses a knowledge of God personally or rejects the teaching of God through His Word—his end will be like those in the days of Noah: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). This is the inevitable end of liberalism. For those who insist that they *know* God as advocates of a liberal agenda, John provides these words:

> 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. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6).

THE MORAL GOAL OF MEN

There is a tendency in discussions about morality to overlook the importance of man's nature, of being made in the image of God. This one truth alone can help solve scores of questions men have about who they "should be" or what they "should do." In other words, understanding this important principle takes the guesswork out of ethics (which liberalism tries hard to throw into the discussion). It makes moral issues black and white, not fuzzy and grey.

The first two chapters of the Genesis record are extremely important to the discussion. It is shown in that record that both Adam and Eve were the products of the supernatural act of God and that at the point of their creation by God the man and the woman were "in the image of God" morally, spiritually, and intellectually (Gen. 1:26-27). Both of the first two chapters, along with the witness of science, prove that the universe was created with an apparent age. This means that everything was created in a mature state, though it was new. Accordingly, the state of the man at the beginning was *ideal* morally, spiritually, and intellectually. It had to be, since God declared that it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Man was created as he should be; he was created in perfection.

Naturally, no man or woman since that time enters the world by a supernatural-creative act. Rather it is by the process of procreation (Gen. 1:28). This does not change the fact that men still exist in the image of God (Gen. 9:6), but there is a notable difference in that image and the image of the first man and woman. Adam and Eve possessed an *ideal* image. They were intellectually, morally, and spiritually mature. Men today possesses the *potential* for that ideal state. For example, Adam and Eve possessed a full-grown wisdom, whereas men today must labor to attain such a knowledge. This emphasizes the importance of Jesus' role as an example and the need for the revealed Will of God.

Think of this principle in terms of a seed. Its growth and productivity are always there in potential. However, the right internal and external circumstances must be present for that potential to be realized. No man is born with sin, though he must work for that desired stated of maturity. There is a difference between the two statements, and this is where Calvinists miss the mark.

The Bible therefore calls for a renewal of man's image: "And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10; cf. Eph. 4:20-22). This is the point where Jesus enters the picture. No one can dispute that His mission was to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10) and to make an atonement for sins (2 Cor. 5:21), but He also provided the help necessary for man to achieve the moral goal set by God. According to John, there is more to "only begotten" than the miracle of the incarnation of the Christ. John explains the full ramifications of God becoming flesh: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*" (John 1:18).

In addition to telling men what they must do to be saved (Mark 16:16), Jesus shows men how God thinks and what He is like. The responsibility of man to be *like Jesus* is nothing short of a requirement for man to act and think like God, since Jesus is God and represents the Father.

The moral goal of man is to be like Jesus—to be like God. This has always been God's goal for man. Under the Law of Moses, men were to be holy because God is holy (Lev. 19:2). Nothing has changed for men today, as men live under the Gospel of the Christ:

> As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is

> holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

The Scheme of Redemption worked to this end (1 John 2:6; 2 Cor. 3:18), that men would look to the Christ so as to reflect the moral values imposed by God. This can only occur as men adopt the mind of Christ Jesus (Phi. 2:5; 4:8), which according to Paul is presented through the words of the Bible:

> Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:6-13).

When man obeys the Word of God, he is fashioning his own life in the likeness of the very Son of God and becomes more like God. It does not mean, of course, that man will ever be God. It does mean that the ideal state of man is a reflection of the image of God. Notice:

> According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

Practically speaking, the moral goal of man is to do as Jesus did (to be like Him)—not merely to ask, "What would Jesus do?" Being a moral man is not merely memorizing the Bible; it is applying the Bible correctly in each situation and in every moral choice (Mat. 4:1-11). It is more than merely claiming Jesus as Lord (Luke 6:46); being moral is about doing the very things He requires.

It is at this point that liberalism fails and fails miserably. New, progressive interpretive methods—disguised under a cloak-and-dagger

term like *new hermeneutics*—prevent men from obeying the truth (1 John 2:21). Morality is based on truth and not lies (John 17:17). Distant from the truth, men cannot be like Jesus. Weak, spineless preaching does nothing for the morality of the church, either. Men who are ashamed to preach the whole counsel of God are only helping the church to be like the world—which is terribly shameful. On and on the list goes, but there is no glory in members of the church displaying the morality of the world. Dancing, drinking, premarital sex, trashy movies and music, immodest apparel, and such like, are objectively wrong and transgress the doctrine of God. Even if liberals deny association with these practices, they cannot deny that their approach to the Word of God results in this type of moral atrophy.

CONCLUSION

When a man's respect for the Word of God diminishes, he cuts the rope that ties him to the anchor of true morality. One writer draws an excellent conclusion to the matter:

> In the last half of the twentieth century, we have lost control of ourselves because we have walked away from our Creator and his moral prescriptions. We have put ourselves in his place. We are legislating our own morality—a morality that violates his.... The trade has already shown what poor gods we make. We are reaping the whirlwind of our own creation. The signs of devastation are everywhere for those who choose to see. To stop the destruction, we must return to the Creator and seek to order our lives and culture according to his ways, not ours (Watkins 248-49).

This is not a trivial matter. Souls are at stake, both in and out of the church. With that, the final word comes from Jesus in His mountain-top masterpiece: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5:20). Let liberalism desist, and may every man and woman in the world desire to reflect the image of God's dear Son.

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LIBERALISM AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Clifford Newell, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

As the opening chapter of the Bible closes, Jehovah declared, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31). Thus, at the conclusion of His creation, the statement it was "very good" is quite interesting with what had been said just prior.

> Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Thus, woman was the pinnacle of God's creation. God was well pleased with the glory and luster that Eve added to His creation, and Adam was just as delighted.

The case is now that some have sought and are continuing to change the role that God made for her; and, as a result, they have a very liberal agenda for the woman. In fact, we will demonstrate how liberalism does **not** respect woman. If there were the proper respect of woman, the law of limitation placed upon her by Jehovah would be respected. This law would be viewed as a shield of protection instead of one leading to

digression. Therefore, our purpose is to examine God's design for the woman and to lift her up to Jehovah's standard, as in the beginning!

THE DUE ORDER FOR WOMEN

The divine principle for studying this topic or any topic must be, "For because ye *did it* not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not **after the due order**" (1 Chr. 15:13). All authority ultimately resides in God. The authoritative God has spoken to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), to whom has been given all authority (Mat. 28:18). Boettner stated:

> The answer that we are to give to the question, "What is Christianity?" depends quite largely on the view we take of Scripture. If we believe that the Bible is the very word of God and infallible, we will develop one conception of Christianity. If we believe that it is only a collection of human writings, perhaps considerably above the average in its spiritual and moral teachings but nevertheless containing many errors, we will develop a radically different conception of Christianity, if, indeed, what we then have can legitimately be called Christianity. Hence we can hardly over-estimate the importance of a correct doctrine concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures (9).

As authors have stated, there can be no doubt that the great issue confronting the church has to do with authority in religion. We must know and defend the truth concerning the nature of the Word of God, and we must apply ourselves constantly to the performance of its truths in our lives.

GENDER JUSTICE

One of the key buzz phrases of the liberals in their attempt to promote women as equal to men in every aspect is *gender justice*. Lance Pape, one of the ministers of the West Islip Church of Christ, manages a website dedicated to the promotion of "gender justice." According to Pape:

> Gender justice means recognizing that men and women are created by God, redeemed by Christ, and gifted by the Spirit truly without distinction or partiality. In Christian community, gender justice means encouraging both men and women to exercise their Spirit-given gifts in the church's work, worship, and leadership, and celebrating the truth that the Spirit grants such gifts without respect to gender. Concretely, gender justice in the Church of Christ includes opening traditionally masculine leadership roles and activities (deacon, elder, minister, worship leader, preacher, teacher, etc.) to women, and

> encouraging men to discover and cultivate their gifts for activities traditionally performed by women.

Pape, through his website, lists the following "Churches of Christ" as identified with embracing the concept of "gender justice":

> Bayside Church of Christ (Eynnum, Brisbane, Queensland, Austrailia)
> Bering Drive Church of Christ (Houston, TX)
> Brookline Church of Christ (Boston, MA)
> Cahaba Valley Church, An Ecumenical Church of Christ (Birmingham, AL)
> Cahaba Valley Church companion site (includes audio of recent sermons)
> Central Dallas Church (Dallas, TX)
> Culver Palms Church of Christ (Los Angeles, CA)
> Malibu Church of Christ (Malibu, CA)
> Manhattan Church of Christ (New York, NY)
> Michigan Avenue Church of Christ (Chicago, IL)
> Southwest Central Church of Christ (Houston, TX)
> Stamford Church of Christ (Stamford, CT)
> Stoney Creek Church of Christ (Stoney Creek, Ontario)
> Troy Church of Christ (Troy, MI)
> West Islip Church of Christ (Long Island, NY).

Dale Pauls, minister of the Stamford Church of Christ, in Stamford, Connecticut, has written nine drafts regarding "faith and gender" for the Stamford church. The preamble is from the elders:

> We urge each of you to read and consider this update carefully and at length. We asked Dale to write this revision so that we might have a current record of our deliberations on these important matters. This also allows new members and others who are interested to catch up more quickly on some of our thinking to this point ("Faith").

Pauls, in another article, states:

> Men and women have both played vital roles in the life and ministry of the Stamford Church of Christ since its founding in 1966. Now after years of study, prayer, and reflection, it is the teaching position of the Stamford Church of Christ that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). We understand this to mean that distinctions of roles, privileges, rights, and status on the basis of birth (that is, on the basis of race, gender, and class) are ended in Christ. We base this conclusion on a careful and exhaustive study of Scripture ("Neither").

Tom Robinson, minister of the Manhattan Church of Christ, presented a sermon titled, "A Community Without Barriers." Robinson stated:

> Where do I believe the scriptures lead us? With all my heart I believe that the scriptures show us that **every Christian—man or woman,**

> **boy or girl—has the privilege granted by God to use every spiritual gift that God has given to them in any setting, public or private, so long as they are genuinely advancing the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and acting in a way that manifests love to others**....
>
> I believe that **the limitations that are placed on women** in two congregations in the New Testament—in Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34-35) and in Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:11-12)—**are imposed for cause**. They are **not universal and arbitrary punishments** placed on women for being born women and not men. Though they do respond to a society and culture in which any open participation by a woman in a public assembly was considered scandalous and offensive, in these cases the cultural context was combined with **particular offenses committed by these groups of women that brought on the specific limitation spelled out in the letters** (emphasis his).

In the article, "About Brookline: Women and Public Worship," it is written:

> When worshipping at Brookline you will notice that women participate in public worship more than you may be used to in most Churches of Christ. If you are familiar with other traditions our practice will not surprise you, but if the Church of Christ is your religious home we recognize that you may be jarred. Why do we do things the way we do?...
>
> Brookline seeks to use the gifts God has given us without regard to gender because we have found two distinct imperatives that compel us to do so. The first imperative is clear in the doctrine of creation. God created humankind as equals—"male and female he created them". Sin shattered Eden and the Christian faith holds that the course of holy history since has been the recreation of the connections between God and human beings. At the same time there has been the concern that God's creation recognize its oneness, a oneness that encompasses all creation, animate and inanimate, and a creation ultimately to be taken up again by God. Over the course of history barriers have slowly fallen in accord with Paul's summary in Galatians 3:28: "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus." The issue is not the "rights" of anyone, but recognizing the unfolding will of God (Brookline).

An elder (Mac Dauphin) and a deacon (Emily Jones Rushing) of the Cahaba Valley Church of Christ wrote:

> On Pentecost Sunday of 1990, four women were appointed deacons along with seven men. No other changes were made, leaving the public worship practice unaffected and people on all sides of the issue wondering just how much things had really changed. The wisdom of the elders included a provision for continued discussion, often in small

> prayer groups, and the hope that those who did not want the change would take time during the first twelve months to adjust to the idea...
>
> ...the addition of women to no fewer than one, and no more than two, of the duty rosters for Sunday morning worship. In our worship, this includes reading scripture, serving and presiding at communion, praying, leading singing, and preaching from the pulpit.

Our purpose in quoting these articles is to get before all of us their exact words in regard to the role of women within the church. The foundational belief of these articles is that women can do anything that a man can do in worship.

THE RIGHTFUL ROLE OF WOMEN

From the very beginning of time, though often unnamed and out of public sight, women have played a major role in the events that have shaped human history. There is nothing more beautiful than a woman robed in holiness, and there is nothing more repulsive than a woman seeking to perform what God has forbidden.

It has been observed that "in no nation in the ancient world were women honored as they were among the Hebrews" (Nichol 37). In fact, the Bible does not suppress women, it elevates and honors them. Within the historical context, observe what Nichol said in 1938: "Though customs change, let it not be overlooked that principles do not change; nor does a principle depend on any one community, or country for its righteousness" (69).

THE LIBERAL AGENDA FOR WOMEN

The liberal agenda for women and the role they play in the kingdom of God can be expressed in three words—"no big deal." This very attitude is the fruit of a changing culture, as noted by Anderson, "The expanding new wine of today's cultural changes will eventually burst the traditional, ecclesiastical containers" (24). Anderson believes that, since the culture is changing, the church must change or die. In his words, "Unless we change our way of 'doing church' we will only become more obsolete and less effective" (36).

Liberalism must be seen for what it is. As Chesser observed, "It is diabolical; It divides; It deceives; It darkens; It desecrates; It extracts; It dominates; and It destroys" (183-198). Murrell has correctly pointed out, "In this author's opinion this issue will be to the church facing the twenty-first century what mechanical instruments of music were to the church facing the twentieth century.... The real issue is people's attitude

toward the Bible" (2). This writer finds it most interesting that some who once stood against liberalism have now become the leaders in that digression. For example:

> The purpose of this book is twofold: (1) to inform faithful brethren about what is going on in the church and (2) to help combat the errors of liberalism which are posing such a serious threat to the truth. The purpose of these lessons is not to create tension and division among faithful followers of Christ, but to awake Christians to the sinister doubt, compromise and worldliness which are fostered by liberalism. There is no virtue in sitting by in silence while liberalism rages among the people of God and works to destroy them! (Shelly 3).

History has a way of repeating itself. As in generations past, the issues that were fought find a way of resurfacing again. The age-old issue that is really before us is not the role of women in the church, but a matter of interpretation. We have had those from the time of the restoration movement onward who just are not content with the way the Scriptures have been viewed; and, we might add, they have been viewed correctly. It is rather interesting to hear someone say, we must prepare for the twenty-first century. Friends, that is exactly what inspiration was showing: that truth will not change from day to day, month to month, year to year, century to century. The apostles were preparing the church for the second century and onward regarding truth.

An example of this very attitude is taken from Allen's writings. In regard to the new women, he quotes a discourse between David Lipscomb and Silena Moore Holman, an elder's wife from Fayetteville, Tennessee:

> She responded to Lipscomb and the question of woman's place. She boldly challenged some of the traditional assumptions, provoking sharp and lively exchange with Lipscomb that continued on and off for many years.... In several lengthy articles she examined these passages, underscoring the active and public ministries of women like Deborah the judge of Israel (Judges 4-6), Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:37-38), Priscilla who taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), the women assembled with the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2), and Phillip's four daughter's who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). All of these provided biblical examples, she thought, of a public role for women that did not "usurp authority" over men (127).

In fact, Holman

> made clear her agreement with Lipscomb on one thing: "the man is the head of the woman, and should take the lead, most especially in the

> family relation." But she strongly disagreed that women were thereby completely removed from public leadership roles and confined entirely to the private and domestic sphere (Allen 127).

AN EXAMINATION OF KEY PASSAGES

It is alleged by the liberals that "societal forces and cultural premises that operated centuries ago have colored the way we see God and scripture, and faith and gender" (Pauls "Faith"). For some time now, we have been told that we have a much-too-narrow view of the Scriptures. Pauls wrote:

> Traditionally Churches of Christ have held, as most churches have until recently, to an understanding of 1 Cor. 14:33-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 that does not examine historical context and that even denies the relevance of historical context, and, on that basis, they have prohibited women from exercising "leadership roles" in their public worship. This prohibition has amounted to the almost complete silencing of women in our central worship services ("Faith").

Robinson wrote:

> Where do I believe the scriptures lead us? With all my heart I believe that the scriptures show us that **every Christian—man or woman, boy or girl—has the privilege granted by God to use every spiritual gift that God has given to them in any setting, public or private, so long as they are genuinely advancing the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and acting in a way that manifests love to others**.

Since there exists a misunderstanding (among some) regarding certain Scriptures, we will examine the role of women in light of Jehovah's Word.

> I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

Although women have a great work to do in the church, even some teaching, yet they are not free to teach everywhere and under every condition as men are. The Holy Spirit makes this very clear in verse 12. Men (*aner* meaning *males*) are to pray everywhere (1 Tim. 2:8), but

women are not. They must be careful not to teach nor usurp authority over men. According to Thayer, *teach* means in this passage "to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses" (144). This passage forbids a woman to preach or do anything that would be taking man's authority to herself. She must remember her relationship to man: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God" (1 Cor. 11:3). There are four reasons according to Genesis 2:18-23, why man has authority over the woman:

1. Man was created first.
2. Woman was created for the man.
3. Woman was created from the man.
4. Woman was named by man.

Dodson observed, "This principle of male authority was applied by inspiration to the woman's role in the work and worship of the church (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15)" (501).

Thus, 1 Timothy 2 emphatically states that a woman cannot teach under certain circumstances, neither is she to usurp authority over the man. The case is a woman must not usurp authority over the man when she teaches the Word of Jehovah. The woman is not forbidden to teach, she is forbidden to teach in a position of authority over the man. It is argued by some that women may be given authority over men as elders or deacons or some man may permit such. The literal idea of *usurp* is to have dominion, and no man possesses the authority to confer upon a woman the responsibility of leadership. Therefore, no woman has the authority to take a position of authority over a man. She is to be in subjection! Hence, 1 Timothy 2:12

> stands regardless of what a group of liberal agents clamoring for the total restructure of the Lord's church write with their pens or say with their liberal lips. First Timothy 2:12 is Jehovah's counsel; it is NOT Paul's culture in exhibited form (Taylor 37).

The second passage we will consider regarding the woman's role in the church is 1 Corinthians 11, with its reference to headship.

> Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God. Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

> For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God (1 Cor. 11:2-16).

Paul, by inspiration, points out for us that woman has man as her head, man has Christ as his head, and Christ has God as His head. Paul further makes reference to women praying and prophesying; and, as a result, some have erroneously assumed that this was done in the public assembly. Although women were in possession of the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:8-9), we do not have the occasion where women publicly prophesied in the church. In reality, 1 Corinthians 11-14 deal with confusion in the worship service. Paul, through inspiration articulated the principle that transcends every culture for all people throughout man's history. He speaks of headship which clearly refers to authority. Good people, God intended for women to be subordinate to men in worship. It seems that the women in Corinth removed their veils and came forward to lead in their abilities. This would have been a direct violation of the subordination principle. Paul's allusion to creation in verses seven through nine seems to highlight the fact that Paul saw the restrictions on women as rooted in the order of creation.

The third passage under consideration regarding the role of women is 1 Corinthians 14, with the emphasis upon women keeping silence in the church.

> For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? (1 Cor. 14:33-36).

The assembly recorded here was during the miraculous age of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, must be interpreted within that context. Since that type of assembly does not exist today, we conclude that this passage offers no aid to those who cite it as a proof text that women can do whatever men can do. One writer sums up this assembly with these words:

> Women were apparently adding to the confusion by asking questions. It is likely here that the women under question were the wives of the prophets. The same Greek word which is translated as women can also be translated as wives. The mention of "their husbands" in verse 35 confirms that wives, not women in general, are meant (Rutherford 662).

It is this writer's opinion that "as also saith the law" is suggestive that God's role for woman has not basically changed through the ages. That which is prohibited in this passage is that women must keep silent in the church; i.e., they are not permitted to teach or speak in the assembly!

The fourth and final passage we will entertain for our discussion involves Paul's statement to the Galatians, in which he demonstrates that there is an equality between men and women.

> For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27-28).

This verse is one of the *sugar sticks* of the liberals whose agenda is to thrust the woman into a prominent role of leadership within the church. One of the most amazing positions to rear its ugly head is the notion "there is neither male nor female" and suggest that whatever one can do the other can do with God's richest blessings. Paul is here discussing salvation, and thus points out that, regardless of the distinctions which were made in that culture, all are saved on exactly the same basis insofar as their relationship to Christ is concerned. As Merideth noted, "The gospel is for all on equal terms and all who are in Christ are heirs of the promise which God made to Abraham" (132).

It is the contention by the liberal thinkers that Paul forevermore has abolished sexual differences, enabling men and women to function in identical capacities in public worship. This has led some to ordain women to serve as elders, deacons, preachers, and song leaders—also to wait on the Lord's Table, and to lead in public prayer. Good people, anyone, including the liberals, who seek to tear down the barriers God

has set between males and females must be rejected. As Wacaster aptly observed:

> (1) It ignores the context of Gal. 3:28. Paul is here dealing with equality in the matter of salvation. All classes of humanity have the same opportunity to inherit the promise.... In the case of Scriptural exegesis, any position advocating equality of authority or role in the church does not allow the natural meaning of the passage to come forth.
>
> (2) Second, it ignores the fact that subordination does not imply or demand inferiority.... Consider the equality of God and Christ, but point out that Jesus was Himself subordinate to the Father (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 5:8). So likewise, the President and Vice President of the United States are equal in worth and value, but who would affirm that both therefore have equal roles? (104-105).

CONCLUSION

Friends, the silent majority in the church must not continue in keeping silence. The people of God must be informed and alert on issues of the day and have the courage to speak and live divine truth. The Bible stands as unalterable and eternal in its declaring Jehovah's will on this subject. It will be by the words of Scripture that we will be judged: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Our prayer is that we all will bow humbly and submissively unto the God of heaven in compliance to His word!

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LIBERALISM'S SUPPORT OF HOMOSEXUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

It is the goal of an immoral minority to advance the general corruption and normalize depravity in America. The pushing of the homosexual lifestyle seeks to make a nation composed of the sexually immoral people who are nothing but creatures of sex. The issues that once were spoken of in obscure places of darkness are now brazenly advanced in the streets throughout America without shame.

A moral war is advancing in our culture leaving souls spellbound in sin. The homosexuals and their supporters have as their goal to make wickedness, immorality, and sin look normal. They seek to change the makeup of the family to a perverted lifestyle celebrating depravity and desensitizing people to homosexual perversion.

The foundation of American society should be the Christian home. America needs homes that are devoted to God, seeking to please Him through obedience to His Word. America needs homes that teach morality and integrity. We need homes that will stand for the sanctity of marriage. Yet, the godless home is glorified, and the nation is permeated with homes that are overflowing with immorality, are irreligious, and have lost their moral compass. Homes are being primed to

accept the homosexual lifestyle as normal. It is past time to prepare for battle because the war is already raging. Paul said:

> 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. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places* (Eph. 6:10-12).

Christians must take a stand against all sin because they love God and the souls of all mankind. God loves man so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for all sinners. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Christians must take a stand against homosexual behavior because it is unhealthy, unnatural, abnormal, mentally destructive, and sinful in the sight of God! Christians must take a stand against homosexual behavior because radical homosexual activists will not relax until the church of Christ is silenced by threats or legal action! Are you prepared to contend for the moral standard given by God? "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).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Homosexuality is forbidden and viewed as an abomination. "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination" (Lev. 18:22). *Abomination* is defined as that which is a "loathsome, detestable thing" (Unger and White 1). Everything that is an abomination to God man should abhor, reject, cast away, and view as detestable. Homosexual behavior is condemned in the New Testament. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind..." (1 Cor. 6:9). *Effeminate* is translated as "homosexual" in the *New King James* version. It means "not simply of a male who practices forms of lewdness, but persons in general, who are guilty of addiction to sins of the flesh" (Unger and White 195). It describes a man who allows himself to be used as a woman in a sexual relationship. *Abusers of themselves with mankind* is defined as a male bedfellow.

The apostle Paul warned against those who have abandoned God. They will harvest the recompense of their own wickedness. He said, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22). Men abandoned the truth God gave for their own foolish fantasy. One of the many wicked things men foolishly accepted was homosexuality. It is written:

> For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:26-27).

When people reject the moral standard given by God, they accept a perverted lifestyle—one that is filled with depravity, degrading, and dishonorable passions. They become creatures of sex. They turn the God-ordained relationship between a man and women within marriage to something abhorrent, detestable, reprehensible, and vile. Women leave the natural relationship with men for an unnatural relationship with another woman. This is called "lesbianism female homosexuality." The men who leave the natural relationship with women to commit that which is against nature are called "sodomite homosexuals."

Sin always affects the moral thinking of the mind. When it is practiced long enough, it can even have the appearance of normal. This is the condition of those who are pushing homosexuality in America and throughout the world. They will receive the reward of their action.

> 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).

Those who reject truth for untruth, virtue for filth, and purity for corruption, will receive compensation of their wickedness.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF HOMOSEXUALITY

During the last thirty years the moral thinking of Americans has been changing. There was a time when people in general believed in an absolute moral standard to live by and make judgments. The advancement of postmodernism has affected the thinking of many people. Postmodernism teaches that there is no standard. Each person's thinking is guided by his own conscience. Postmodernism has no boundaries

and no restrictions. Its adherents teach that there is no absolute truth and that truth is decided by each individual.

In 1996, Barbara Crafton, a progressive "Episcopalian pastor," taught that there was not any absolute truth and that one could not rely on the Bible as the source of absolute truth. Her being an *Episcopalian* and a *pastor* shows that she had already deserted the Scriptures. The Bible plainly teaches against denominationalism and against women as *pastors* (John 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Tim. 2:8-12).

In her sermon titled, "When John and Jim say I Do," she said, "Whether you're attempting to discern the spiritual discipline appropriate for you or to discern your moral judgment of a sexual act, you're not going to be able to follow the Bible to the letter." She went on to say, "We will not find easy-to-follow recipes for our behavior in Scripture. Our primary tool is our own intelligence." This is post-modernism. Do away with an absolute standard—then anything goes, which encompasses homosexuality. There is an absolute standard: God's Word, the Scriptures. Why would God give mankind the Bible if it is not the standard, the truth to follow? Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Paul said:

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

Why would he teach that one should live a life pleasing God if there was not an absolute truth or standard to live by?

There is an absolute truth to live by, but liberals seek to advance their own intelligence over the revealed will of God. They want to encourage perverted sexual acts and desire to open the door to depravity. It is their goal to push homosexuality on all mankind. The only way they can advance homosexual perversion is to get people away from the absolute standard of the Bible.

The church of Christ must stand on firm ground, the Scriptures, to refute the error being advanced by the liberal minds in America. When men obey God's Word, they are walking in the path of truth.

Everyone who does not believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible is like a man floating in space; he has no standard to hold him

firm. He has no moral goal to reach. He is floating around without a life line. He has no anchor.

When the biblical standard is thrown out the door to advance post-modern thought, truth becomes flexible. Life will spin out of control and no sexual perversion can be rejected. The same arguments that advance sexual unions between two men or two women will promote sexual unions between four men or four women. It will foster moral decay and give license for the progression of pornography, abortion, euthanasia, and pedophilia. If there is no absolute truth, anything goes. If not, why not?

THE WALLS OF MORALITY HAVE BEEN COMING DOWN

The last twenty years has seen walls of morality being destroyed. Religious leaders in many of the major denominations have been affirming homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Homosexual rights advocates have been in Washington and in all the state capitals to plead for same-sex marriages. In the past year liberals supporting the homosexual agenda in California and Massachusetts have been trying to force homosexual marriages on the whole country.

"In 1983, 30 percent of Americans said that they knew someone who was homosexual. By 2000, that figure had skyrocketed to 73 percent. In 1985, only 40 percent of those polled said they were comfortable around individuals who practice homosexual behavior. By 2000, that number had risen to 60 percent" (Sears and Osten 17). What has affected the moral change in the minds of many Americans? The gradual eroding of morals from World War II has aided the deterioration, decay, and breakdown of the ethical thinking of a vast number of Americans. This moral decay has affected the legal ruling of the courts.

The United States Supreme Court helped to advance the homosexual timetable in June 2003. They ruled the Texas sodomy law was unconstitutional by a 6-3 decision. In November, 2003, Massachusetts took the lead in the national debate. Their highest court joined in the moral war on the side of immorality by legalizing homosexual marriages. The ruling set the stage for the nation's first legally sanctioned homosexual marriages on May 17, 2004.

The paradox of the homosexual cause took place in March 2004. It was set in California, one of the most liberal states in the country. The California Supreme Court ordered an immediate halt to homosexual marriages that were taking place in San Francisco. Teary-eyed homo-

sexual men and women were turned away at the city hall. There were about 4,000 seeking state approval for their sexual depravity.

THE ELECTION OF 2004

The advancement of the homosexual docket in America got the attention of President George W. Bush. He took the moral high road on the issue on July 30, 2003. He said, "I believe in the sanctity of marriage. I believe a marriage is between a man and a woman." This statement helped to win the election of his second term on November 2, 2004.

In 2000, Vermont's legislature passed a law legalizing unions between same-sex couples. This legislation gave homosexuals the same benefits and protections that married couples are afforded under Vermont law. In the election of 2004, eleven states voted on constitutional amendments to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. This would mandate that no such legal status be given to unmarried individuals. Moral values won. All eleven states passed their constitutional amendments defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

The election of 2004 put homosexual supporters on the defensive. The exit polling showed that moral values were at the top of the voters concerns, especially in the eleven states where voters defined marriage as between one man and one woman. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force rejected the idea that homosexual marriages caused the backlash. Barney Frank, an openly homosexual Democratic representative from Massachusetts, believes that it hurt the homosexual agenda. "Frank is among many political observers who credit the anti-gay marriage amendment with giving the president's conservative base a reason to go to the pools in crucial battleground states like Ohio" (Leff A1).

Geoffrey Kors, the executive director of Equality California, the largest homosexual rights lobbying group in California, places the fault on the Democratic Party "for failing to campaign with its own definition of moral values" (Leff A1). Kors' statement reveals one avenue of offense the supporters of the homosexual lifestyle have and will pursue. They seek to redefine morality. Liberals have been using those types of tactics to confuse the issue for years. The standard of morality does not change! God is the one who established the standard. Neither homosexual activists nor the Democratic Party can change it!

If the homosexuals are successful in redefining marriage as between two men or two women, what moral principle could be used to stop the defining there? Could not the pedophiles define a marriage as between a man and a little boy? Or a woman and a little girl? If not, why not? When one gets into the redefining of morality, anything goes. It could be even argued that one could marry an animal or a dead body. This is the logical progression of sin. When God and His standard are lost to society, truth is at the mercy of the morally depraved. Paul spoke of perilous times and dangerous men who love sin more than God.

> 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).

Certainly, the times are dangerous to the souls of mankind today.

HOMOSEXUALS USE OF COERCION

Homosexuals and their supporters use coercion as a tool to advance their immoral life style. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. In recent years they are entertaining the idea of downgrading pedophilia. Why would they make such a decision? Is it fallacious and pseudoscientific reasoning? Their decision was forced by militant intimidation of homosexuals.

In 1970, Irving Bieber, one of most prominent psychoanalysts in America, was invited to speak in the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association. He was speaking on homosexuality and transsexuals. While he was speaking, militant homosexuals used intimidation, shouted taunts, laughing in derision at him to destroy his speech. The result was pandemonium during the meeting. This brutal assault led to the American Psychiatric Association changing their view of homosexuality by removing it from its list of mental disorders.

Another militant group is ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power). The goal of ACT-UP is to disrupt events that do not support their agenda. Their mission statement is:

> We are a diverse non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. We advise and

> inform. We demonstrate. We are not silent (Ankerberg and Weldon 13).

Because of the intimidation of militant homosexual groups many are willing to accept that which is against nature and the truth of God's Word. If America is to survive, Christians must be active in teaching the moral values given in the Scriptures.

HOMOSEXUALS SEEK TO OVERHAUL AMERICA

The homosexual movement has a planned agenda to destroy the moral values in America. In 1987, homosexual activists, Marshall K. Kirk and Erastes Pill (Erastes Pill is a pseudonym used by Hunter Madsen), wrote an article titled, "The Overhauling of Straight America," along with the book *After the Ball* published in 1989. Both works show how homosexual activists execute their scheme to change the moral thinking of Americans.

In the article, Kirk and Madsen saw the primary barrier to overcome was the public's perception of homosexuals and their activity. They wrote:

> The first order of business is the desensitization of the American public concerning gays and gay rights. To desensitize the public is to help it view homosexuality with indifference instead of with keen emotion.

It is easily seen from this quote they seek to take away the sensitivity of Americans toward sexual depravity. The homosexual movement has been very successful in their pursuits of this goal. The perception of many Americans about homosexuality has changed during the last decade.

They do not expect a full understanding of homosexual activity from the average American. They just want Americans to be indifferent to their sexual activity. Kirk and Madsen wrote: "You can forget about trying to persuade the masses that homosexuality is a good thing. But if only you can get them to think that it is just another thing, with a shrug of their shoulders, then your battle for legal and social rights is virtually won." This same type of strategy has been used by the entertainment industry for years. The immoral forms of entertainment on public television, music, and the movies during the past twenty to thirty years have progressively gotten worse. The perverse activity today would have had actors and directors put in jail or their careers destroyed thirty years ago.

There are six principles or points to the strategy in Kirk and Madsen's article to change American's thought. They are as follows:

"Talk about Gays and Gayness as Loudly and as Often as Possible"

They are seeking to erode the moral thinking of Americans with this strategy. These homosexual activists wrote: "The principle behind this advice is simple: almost any behavior begins to look normal if you are exposed to enough of it at close quarters and among your acquaintances." Homosexual supporters are seeking to wear-out the moral thinking of Americans. This principle has worked in the past, and it is not original with the homosexuals. All one has to do is look at the *religious world* today. People are accepting every sort of outrageous behavior as normal in *Christianity*. Sadly, many Christian defenders are wearing out in their defense of the Faith. Paul said, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

Kirk and Madsen seek to belittle Christianity or pressure Christianity to accept their harmful behavior. They wrote:

> While public opinion is one primary source of mainstream values, religious authority is the other. When conservative churches condemn gays, there are only two things we can do to confound the homophobia of true believers. First, we can use talk to muddy the moral waters. This means publicizing support for gays by more moderate churches, raising theological objections of our own about conservative interpretations of biblical teachings, and expose hatred and inconsistency. Second, we can undermine the moral authority of homophobic churches by portraying them as antiquated and backwaters, badly out of step with the times and with latest finding of psychology.

Their reference to psychology had been discussed earlier in this chapter—how the homosexuals used coercion and militant intimidation to pressure the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexual activity from its list of mental disorders.

The "muddying of the moral waters" was used by Satan in the beginning of time to get Eve to reject the authority of God (Gen. 3:1-6). The denominational world is set for the picking of the homosexuals because they have rejected the authority of Christ years ago. All the homosexuals need to do is show their inconsistency with the Scriptures, and they will be able to convince many to follow their immoral lifestyle.

The moral war is raging and Christians must get themselves prepared to speak boldly the Word of God. Paul wrote: "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).

"Portray Gays as Victims, Not as Aggressive Challengers"

Homosexuals will win over the public if they are mistreated by Christians. Kirk and Madsen understand this principle very plainly. This puts the responsibility on all Christians to stand boldly against their immoral behavior using Christian character and principles. It is not Christianity to physically harm anyone because they are sinners. Christian love demands addressing the issues plainly and clearly without wavering, but use Christian integrity in the process. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Mat. 10:16).

"Give Protectors a Just Cause"

Homosexual defenders are using media campaigns to cast homosexuals as society's casualties. "They have accomplished this through the manipulation of statistics on teen suicide, the creation of Christian boogeyman" (Sears and Osten 22).

The entertainment industry is one of the more zealous supports of the homosexual cause in America. Homosexuals are portrayed as innocents and victims on television and the movies. They portray those who are opposed to the homosexual lifestyle as bigots or religious radicals. Hollywood has never portrayed Christianity as it truly is in the New Testament.

"Make Gays Look Good"

This point is advanced from different directions. They use postmodernism to rewrite history, seeking to convince society that many famous people who are dead and cannot defend themselves were homosexual. An example of this is the movie directed by Oliver Stone about Alexander the Great. In the movie, he portrays Alexander as bisexual. This cannot be documented from history. They seek to advance their cause by walking over truth.

It does not make any difference who were homosexuals in history. Even if Alexander the Great was a bisexual—or some other famous person in history a homosexual, it is still sin in the eyes of God!

"Make the Victimizers Look Bad"

Kirk and Madsen said, "The public should be shown images of ranting homophobes whose secondary traits and beliefs disgust middle America." It is the objective of homosexuals and their benefactors to take the worst example of *Christians* and to prop them up as representatives of all *Christians*.

The way to undermine their efforts is do all things with Christian character. Defend the truth with zeal and integrity. Prepare to do battle as a Christian. Peter 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). Never exhibit a hateful or unwholesome attitude toward anyone! Christians can be their worst enemy in addressing error.

"Solicit Funds"

Homosexuals and their followers understand that an aggressive campaign to raise money is needed to advance their cause. Kirk and Madsen state: "The buck stops here." Thus, they seek funds from homosexuals, foundations, and corporate America. It is interesting what they say about seeking funds to advance their immoral agenda: "And because those gays not supporting families, they usually have more discretionary income than average, they can afford to contribute much more." It is true they do not have a family to support—only their sexual depravity.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has wholeheartedly embraced the homosexual agenda and appointed as its new executive director in 2001 Anthony Romero, who is an openly homosexual person with a record of activism (Sears and Osten 25). They have millions of dollars at their disposal to advance any cause they seek to get behind. Homosexual civil liberties is one of them.

Some of the corporations that have supported the homosexual agenda are: Walt DisneyWorld Company, Proctor and Gamble, IBM, Dow Chemical, Ford Motor Company, Motorola, and Microsoft. There is a growing list of companies willing to support the homosexual program.

With their war chest overflowing, it can be seen that the war will be expensive. However, it does not matter what the expense might be, truth must be defended.

DEPRAVITY ON THE MARCH

The next logical step in the homosexual movement is even more disgusting and vile—it is sex with children. The North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) is one of the groups advancing the next step in depravity. Those who are teaching that there is no standard may not have thought what the next step would be, but the NAMBLA organization is promoting perversion to its natural conclusion.

"NAMBLA takes the view that sex is good, that homosexuality is good not only for adults, but young people as well...sexual liberation cannot be achieved without the liberation of children" (Magnuson 14). The goal of NAMBLA is to gain social tolerance of their behavior by breaking down moral prohibitions.

The critical role of higher education in advancing the NAMBLA goal should not be surprising. Some college professors have been promoting pedophilia for a number of years. Contemplate the following pattern of some of their behavior:

> In 1996, San Francisco State University Professor Gilbert Herdt stated in an interview with Paidika (an academic journal that promotes pedophilia) that "the category 'child' is a rhetorical device for inflaming what is really an irrational set of attitudes against sex with children."
>
> John Money, professor emeritus of Pediatrics and Medical Psychology at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, wrote in his 1987 book *Boys on Their Contacts with Men*: *A Study of Sexually Expressed Friendships* that those who oppose pedophilia do so because of "self-imposed, moralistic ignorance" (Sears and Osten 84).

In 2002 the University of Minnesota published a book written by Dr. Judith Levine titled *Harmful to Minors: the Perils of Protecting Children from Sex.* The title suggests that she has written a book to help children overcome the temptations of sexual immorality. In the book, Levine makes the argument that children as young as twelve should be able to have sex with adults.

> Levine believes that the real danger to children is not pedophiles but parents who "project their fears and their own lust for young flesh onto the mythically dangerous child molester" (Sears and Osten 85).

Those who seek to harm children are not "mythically dangerous." Children who undergo immoral devastation by sexual predators are scarred for life. The evidence is diametrically opposed to Dr. Levine's statements. Sexual predators are projecting their depravity on children.

> In a 2001 study, it was found that 46 percent of homosexuals and 22 percent of lesbians reported that they had been molested during their childhood, compared to 7 percent of heterosexual men and 1 percent of heterosexual women (Sears and Osten 83).

Homosexual activists have been very successful in introducing their immoral behavior on college and high school campuses. Gospel preachers are turned away at the door if they seek to teach about Jesus and the moral standard in the Scriptures. The Bible describes the wicked, and their character has not changed.

> Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward (Isa. 1:4).

Solomon depicts the arrogance of the wicked who believe they have gotten away with their sins: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11).

Those who harm children God will punish. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mat. 18:6).

EFFECTS OF HOMOSEXUALS ON SOCIETY

The homosexual lifestyle leads to many problems beyond their own community. "As a group, homosexuals release both disease and crime into society to an extent far in excess of their percentage of the population" (Magnuson 48). The repercussion of diseases in the homosexual community is enormous, and has already affected the rest of society. Before the AIDS epidemic, homosexuals gave blood that was tainted with the HIV virus. Both adults and children came in contact with this disease because of contaminated blood donated by homosexuals and drug addicts.

Homosexuals in America make up about five percent of the population. Yet they "are responsible for half of the nation's cases of syphilis" (Magnuson 48). It is reported that seventy-eight percent of the homosexual community have been affected with diseases such as venereal warts, herpes, hepatitis, and intestinal parasites at least once in their life. "Diseased homosexual food handlers in public restaurants have been responsible for major outbreaks of amebiasis and hepatitis" (Magnuson 48). The homosexual lifestyle is not only dangerous to

themselves but also many other people. The liberals who support homosexual activity have closed their eyes to many of the health problems that comes with such activity. Thus, they cause harm to the public in general and homosexual community they seek to protect.

CONCLUSION

Thousands of Americans have chosen sexual depravity over Christian morality. A great number believe that sex among consenting adults is not society's business. Homosexuals and their liberal supporters are eager to advance this same concept. What they fail to see is that immorality destroys the moral fiber of any society. The antediluvian world was filled with people who turned from God to walk their own immoral path and had grown indifferent to God. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Man's heart was preoccupied with sin. Today the heart of those seeking the homosexualization of America are only attempting to fill their fleshly appetites.

The homosexual movement is characterized by the demand of total acceptance. The grossly materialistic attitudes and inordinate devotion to pleasure has opened the door for society to accept their demands. The past two decades have seen a flagrant disregard for the sacredness of the marriage relationship and the rejection of the inspired Word of God. Preoccupation with illicit sexual activities is eating away at the soul of many in the American society. The result is that a great number of people's hearts are continually on evil.

God has never allowed wickedness to advance and permeate society too long before He puts an end to it. The flood waters washed away the wickedness of the antediluvian people. It can only be imagined what disaster is ahead for the American society if we continue down the path of depravity.

A firestorm is on the horizon in the war between good and evil. The soldiers in God's army must have the courage to stand for what is morally right in the eyes of God. The only weapon needed in this war is the Word of God. It is written:

> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith

> ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:13-17).

Christians must never let evil people intimidate them or cause them to give up the battle. God is speaking today through the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

All Christians need to have the heart of a mighty soldier of God. Look into the eyes of sinful men and be able to give the response like the prophet Micaiah gave to the malignant Ahab: "*As* the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14).

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LIBERALISM AND THE HOME

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INTRODUCTION

No more needful theme could be chosen in our generation than that has been chosen for this lectureship. Liberalism, in one of its many facets, affects every individual that now lives in our blessed nation. It is our goal to understand how this tragic trend affects God's wonderful bond of marriage and the home, especially in the area of social liberalism, which has gained control of the minds of many. To say that this is a serious problem would be an understatement.

During World War II, housing was in short supply. A lady with good intentions expressed sympathy to a little girl whose family did not live in a house. She said, "It's too bad your family doesn't have a home." The five-year-old replied, "We have a home. We just don't have a house to put it in." In World War II there was a housing shortage; today we have a home shortage, and because of the liberal tendencies of our society, God-approved homes are getting harder and harder to find.

GOD'S CREATION AND DESIGN UNDER ATTACK

As we know, marriage is the oldest (in time) of three divine institutions. It is older than civil government and older than the church. The Scriptures reveal that this most important of all human relationships was instituted by God in the beginning of time: "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). Thus, we have the home being designed and created by God in the way that He wanted it to exist.

From a study of the Scriptures, we can learn many things about this wonderful relationship. We learn that marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4), marriage is good (Pro. 18:22), marriage ought to be a joy-filled relationship (Pro. 5:18), and marriage serves as a place for the physical desires between a man and a woman to be fulfilled (1 Cor. 7:2, 8-9). We also learn that marriage is a sacred bond, and it is that sacredness which has come under attack.

It should surprise us no little bit that, due to man's foolish pride, all of God's divinely ordained institutions are being subjected to the same evil plague. That plague is liberalism, which has brought incalculable distress upon civil government, the church, and the home now for many years.

GO TO THE RIGHT SOURCE

If one is asked today what book he might go to first for advisement concerning marriage and the home, he might give any number of responses. Some might say that they first refer to *Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage that Will Go the Distance* by Dr. James Dobson. Others might say that they go to *Lessons in Life, Marriage, and Family* by Dr. Phil McGraw. Amazon.com, an online bookseller, has literally hundreds of books, videos, and other reference guides designed to *teach* one how to have a successful marriage and a happy home.

These books, however enlightening they might be, are not the correct source for advisement on how to have a truly successful marriage and a home filled with godly joy. Jesus informed us that there is a book that we should read, and that it will tell us all that we need to know to have a godly home. When the Pharisees came to Him, asking questions concerning marriage, He referred them to this source: "Have ye not **read**, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Mat. 19:4-5). The only reliable source to which we can turn is the inspired Word of God.

LIBERALISM AND THE ROLES OF THE HOME

We understand that in any institution, it is required that members have varying roles for that institution to function. Likewise, God has

clearly defined that in the family relationship, there should be specific roles for each member.

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord (Col. 3:18-20).

First, He indicates that the wife in the home is to be in subject to her husband. We have in the church today a movement to change God's role for the participation of women. Such influences have also made their way into the home. Active proponents of the liberalistic feminist movement would have us to believe that, while the woman might have held a subjective role in generations gone by, this is unrealistic in a twenty-first century society. Surely, in the enlightened age in which we live, one cannot expect a woman to be in subjection to a man—this is degrading to her status as an intellectual human being.

Does the subjection of the wife really reflect on her worth or intelligence? Concerning this claim, Winford Claiborne makes this apt analogy:

> I am subject to the elders of the church where I preach. I am an older man than any of them, but I am still subject to them. There is a good reason for my being subject to the elders of the church: The Bible demands it (153-54).

Though the liberal mindset of Americans today says that no one wants to be subject to any higher power, we know that because God said it should be this way, so it must be. God's way is without question the best way, and in this case it is the only way that the home can be organized in the way that He wants it to be.

Next, He informs that the husband must love his wife. In describing this love between the husband and wife, Paul says that it is comparable to the love between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25-27). Robert R. Taylor, Jr., points out the interesting fact that Paul did not refer to the kind of love that Jacob had for Rachel, Boaz had for Ruth, Elkanah had for Hannah, or Joseph had for Mary to serve as the standard for the love that should exist between husband and wife (80). The love of Christ for His beloved bride is one that transcends all other love known to man.

In our increasingly liberalistic and materialistic society, the love that the husband is to have for the wife is not often understood. We now have literally thousands upon thousands of husbands who believe that, if they generously provide a physical living for their wife and children,

this is the equivalent of godly love. Others feel that, if they engage in physical intimacy with their wife, then that is all that is required in this type of love. Such is a gross underestimation of the type of love that God desires to be present in this marvelous relationship.

Where the husband and wife have the proper depth of love for one another, a happy home cannot help but be found. There will never be any problem with leadership nor subjection in the home where both husband and wife have this deep, abiding love, and express that love in the appropriate ways.

Finally, the admonition is given to children to be obedient to their parents in all things. This is further clarified in Ephesians 6:1-3, where we learn: "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."

We find today that more often parents are obedient to the whims of children than are children obedient to parents. Parents seem to be afraid of their children! Obedience is an attribute that must be taught if it is to be exemplified in the home. Claiborne goes so far as to recount this story of a university professor with a Ph.D. in psychology:

> The professor had a six-year old boy. When my friend visited in the home of the psychology professor, the six-year old took his knife and was punching holes in the couch. The professor kept telling his son, "Now, son, I wouldn't do that" (182).

What has happened to the respect that was once found within the home between all members of the family? Parents who fulfill their obligations as leaders of the home (providing for both the physical and spiritual needs of the family) are due the respect, love, and obedience of their children.

Children, just as adults, are admonished to grow to become more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). You will notice that Jesus gave us the perfect example of how to behave toward parents as He returned with his parents from Jerusalem during His twelfth year:

> And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (Luke 2:51-52).

We ought to imitate Christ in our obedience to our parents, understanding that there is only one rule above the parents' rule, and that is God's (Luke 2:49).

What we must keep in mind with regard to the roles in the home is that God's Word is unchanging—it remains constant no matter what generation falls under its rule. Just as Paul and those Colossians living contemporary to him were living under the Christian Dispensation, so are we. The roles that God has instituted for the marriage relationship have not changed in the last twenty or so centuries, nor will they change until the time that Christ comes again.

Furthermore, we should not allow the desires of a liberalistic society to dictate the roles that we play in the marriage relationship. We are, after all, called upon to be different from the world (Rom. 12:2). We are living among scores of people who have been once-born, yet we as Christians have been twice-born (John 3:3-8). Thus, we ought not allow worldly people to define for us what our family roles should be.

LIBERALISM AND THE LOSS OF PURITY

God has created man with the ability and obligation to make moral decisions. We can choose to what extent we want to follow the Will of God—whether we want to follow Him completely or not follow Him at all. He has also created within us some natural desires, and has decreed that those desires ought to be fulfilled in one particular place—in the marriage relationship. Notice the commands of God:

> Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.... I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7:1-4, 8-9).

There is nothing inherently wrong with the natural desire that man has for physical intimacy—it was instilled by God. These desires have a particular place in which they are to be satisfied—within the bond of holy matrimony.

The Gallup Organization, best known for their polls of public opinion, have conducted regular surveys of the American people concerning their views on premarital physical intimacy. Note the following:

> Pre-marital sex was once taboo in American society, giving couples at least one powerful incentive to marry. In 1969, Gallup found that premarital sex was frowned upon by two-thirds of Americans, while only 21 percent felt these relations were acceptable. But that critical view of premarital sex dropped sharply by the early 1970s to 47 percent, and in 1985 Gallup found a majority of Americans on the other side, with 52 percent saying premarital sex was morally okay. According to a May Gallup poll, only 38 percent of U.S. adults today say it is wrong for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage, while 60 percent disagree with that belief.

These statistics represent an extremely dangerous trend that has developed in our great nation over the past forty-five years. Moral values are now at an all-time low, and we must now make a stand for the truth of God's Word as it relates to physical intimacy and the home.

The Bible further addresses this matter, instructing us once again of the sanctity of the marriage relationship: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

LIBERALISM AND DIVORCE

To understand the terrible problem that is posed by divorce in our nation today, one should have to go no further than to note the statistical increase in the divorce rate over the last 100 years:

> "When the United States government first began to keep divorce statistics—around 100 years ago—there were only 5,000 divorces. In just one hundred years, the number of divorces has increased from 5,000 to 1,000,000" (Claiborne 45).

This number peaked to over 1,191,000 by 1998, and no doubt continues to rise. This trend is based partly on man's current view of marriage—we see it now more as a legal union than we do a holy union. It is also partly due to the fact that it is easier today than ever before to obtain a legal divorcement.

As this author was browsing through his local office supply store recently, he came across a product marketed by Made E-Z Products that piqued his interest. Interestingly enough, for the low price of $15.95, one can purchase a kit with the following content: "Includes the easy-to-use legal forms, instructions and information you need to file and handle your own uncontested divorce." Who would have imagined fifty years ago—a Do-It-Yourself Divorce Kit! What society would be complete without access to such a useful tool?

Do you further realize that there are currently numerous companies operating in the United States that do nothing other than process requests for divorce? This is a great moneymaking operation, with these dealers of unrighteousness making such claims as: "Obtain a fast divorce in as little as 24 hours! The process is quick, easy, legal, and affordable." They even go so far as to encourage divorce for any reason, simply for the money that can be made from this tragic abrogation of God's sacred union.

What other than an ultra-liberal society would encourage the marketing of such products and services as these? Such violates the very principles and traditional family values upon which our society has been based and which have served mankind so well for so many thousand years.

God's law for divorcement has not changed, nor has His view of its seriousness. We note that the only cause for which one can nullify a marriage while still being eligible for remarriage is for the cause of fornication (Mat. 19:8-9). Regardless of what the social liberals of our time may put into common practice, God's Word still stands supreme as our sole authority, and for that cause we must stand firm in this statement—God hates divorce! To make it something that is "quick, easy, legal, and affordable" is to make a mockery of God's plan for the home.

LIBERALISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Though another lesson in this volume will be devoted to an in depth analysis of the horrible abomination of homosexuality, a study a Liberalism and the Home would not be complete without a passing mention of this travesty. There is currently a trend in the United States of America, a nation founded upon *Christian* principles, to allow what God refers to as abomination to become commonplace. We refer, of course, to "same-sex" marriage (the very name of which is a contradiction in terms).

In May 2004, marriage licenses were granted for the first time to same gender couples. An activist court in the state of Massachusetts voted to do this by a 4-3 decision. It was not a decision made by the majority of the people, but by certain ones with an agenda to destroy marriage and the home as God has defined it.

In fact, this homosexual agenda is now so commonplace that it has corrupted once again the English language. *Marriage* now joins such

words as "gay," "straight," and "queer" as those tainted with its grotesque influence. Notice how Webster, in the *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary*, now defines marriage:

> Marriage: *n*. **a** (1) : the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (2) **:** the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage <same-sex *marriage*>.

This definition is, at its very best, only half-correct. God could not have defined marriage any more clearly than when He said, "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). What right does man have to toy with God's definition of this divine union? Marriage is not just a union between two people; it is a union between a man, a woman, and God. You can be sure that God will not be present in any union that violates His commands.

The social liberals of our time want a new national policy—a policy that will redefine the American home permanently. Such people are comparable to Lot of Old Testament times:

> Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly (Gen. 13:12-13).

America is pitching its tent closer to Sodom each day, and we will receive our just reward (Jude 7).

THE DANGER OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM

This penman likewise feels that this lesson on Liberalism and the Home would be incomplete without mention of this very important point. The majority of this chapter has been devoted to discussing the effect that the growth of social liberalism in the United States has had upon the home. We would be remiss, however, if we did not say that the danger of religious liberalism creeping into the home also exists and can cause great harm both emotionally and spiritually, if not handled appropriately.

As has already been stated, the marriage relationship is the most important physical relationship in existence. That is not to say, however, that it is **the most important relationship**. Our relationship with God (the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit) and our

spiritual family (the church) far overshadows any physical relationship, even the marriage relationship. Notice what Jesus had to say about this:

> Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Mat. 12:47-50).

Certainly no one would say that Jesus did not value the relationships that He had maintained upon this earth with His mother and brethren in the flesh, but He also understood that these were not the most important relationships under consideration. The most important relationships are those that we are privileged to experience in Christ.

It may be the case that at some point, religious liberalism somehow find its way into our homes. The question that many might ask is: "What do I do? Whose side do I choose? Should I compromise on this religious matter to maintain a relationship at home, or should I stand fast in the doctrine of the Lord?" Again, notice the point that Jesus makes: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Jesus is not, of course, saying that we need to literally **hate** those who we count the dearest to us upon the earth. What He is saying is that we must love Him **more** than we love anyone else. We show that we love Him by keeping His commandments (John 14:15;15:10).

CONCLUSION

One of the saddest facts of our age is that so many will be turned away from presence of God on the Day of Judgment because of liberalism. It has a devastating effect on society, and all who follow its dangerous trends will surely lead themselves to destruction.

We understand that there is a sure and simple solution to this problem of liberalism. We must learn to follow the pure, undefiled Word of God—conforming ourselves to the image of Christ and putting out of our lives the harmful influences of the world.

The former physical nation of Israel had a most serious problem with this concept. They had a recurring desire to conform themselves, not to the likeness of God, but to the immoral practices of the world.

This liberal concept affected their homes as well. Notice the commandment of God under the Old Covenant:

> And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly (Deu. 7:2-4).

These commandments were given by God to His children for their betterment (1 John 5:3). They were given so the children of God would not fall into the danger of having their hearts turned away from Him. We see that when it comes to the home, God truly does know what is best:

> But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father (1 Kin. 11:1-4).

Just as God had said that it would happen, so it did. His commandments concerning the home, and all other aspects of life, are for our good (2 Tim. 3:17). They are given to lead us to heaven.

The physical Israel often failed in their faithfulness unto God. Their covenant relationship with God, however, ended with the death of Christ upon the cross of Calvary (Gal. 3:28). Under the Christian Dispensation, that covenant relationship is enjoyed with the spiritual Israel—those who belong unto Christ (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 6:3-4). As was the case with the physical Israel, we likewise have been given commandments concerning God's plan for the home. Let us not be guilty of allowing the cares of the world to turn our hearts away from the living God, but rather keep the home pure and undefiled in the sight of our heavenly Father.

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LIBERALISM IN THE COURTS

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INTRODUCTION

The mention of "Liberalism in the Courts" will almost automatically convey a certain concept to those who consider themselves to be conservative. It might even be thought within the church that everyone would have the same impression. However, that is not necessarily true. Regrettably, some Christians ignore what is occurring within our nation and how it relates to the Scriptures. Others will follow a political party regardless of its position on matters that stand in direct opposition to God. Therefore, it is important to lay something of a foundation before giving a more detailed discussion within the allotted space.

For our purposes a common dictionary definition of *liberal* will be used. It is defined as:

> 1. Having, expressing, or following social or political views or policies that favor non-revolutionary progress and reform. 2. Having, expressing, or following views or policies that favor the freedom of individuals to act or express themselves in a manner of their own choosing (American).

It is interesting to note that also listed is: "5. Tolerant of the ideas or behavior of others" (American). This definition is rather ironic to this writer because those who are generally labeled as *liberal* speak of being

tolerant of others, but, generally, they appear to be less inclined to be considerate of any opposing views. This writer is also inclined to believe that *liberals* are more likely to favor a big government that is involved and dictates every aspect of life. This in turn necessitates higher taxes and then redistribution of the money as the government deems appropriate. This is a redistribution of wealth. Those who actively promote *liberalism* by virtue of being activists are more likely to place themselves in a category of the elite who knows what is best for the mass of humanity. The very nature of this form of thinking lends itself to bending or removing religion with its moral constraints. Christians stand in direct opposition to this form of thinking. The Bible provides structure and restraints that will not harmonize with liberalism.

Christianity molds individuals according to the Word of God, which does not permit doing whatever they desire. The will of God controls, rather than the will of man. It does not require any serious research to see the great outpouring of anguish and anger before and following the 2004 presidential election against those who held what might be called basic traditional values. However, this conflict could be seen developing over the years as the nation adopted more liberal views on such matters as divorce, abortions, homosexuality, control over families, disrespect for the flag and nation, immigration, United Nations, etc. Many of these matters have and will continue to find their way into our courts. Of primary importance are the decisions that are reached by the United States Supreme Court. State courts and lower Federal courts will have an impact but not to the extent of the United States Supreme Court. The discussion must therefore be limited to that body of judges.

Those who are inclined to be conservative are very likely to consider the liberals primarily responsible for the ills of this nation. In turn, those who are liberal are likely to lay any blame at the feet of those considered to be conservative. If this is true, the reason is probably that each is convinced that he knows what is needed for society in the United States and possibly the world. The battle is fought in society, in the legislative bodies, and ultimately key issues will reach the Supreme Court where the final battleground is the meaning of the United States Constitution.

As might be expected the scope of the subject reaches into a number of areas. To do the subject justice would require not only historical background but also the evaluation of a number of court cases which

paved the way to our present status. A number of books and articles have delved into various aspects of trends of the courts. The allotted space will not permit an in depth or broad discussion. Under the circumstances, it will first be assumed that this nation has taken a liberal stance in a number of areas which have ultimately been supported, at least to some degree, by the courts. The primary thrust of this chapter will be to focus on some factors, which are believed to have played a part in fostering liberal positions. Attention will also be given to one opposing view, primarily to show some of the thinking of how our Constitution should be interpreted and where it can potentially lead.

To bring this more in focus, consider the thoughts either made by, or attributed to, two members of the Supreme Court. It may be that some have never considered these issues, but it is easy to see the impact they have on decisions rendered by that elite body of judges.

HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION?

How does each reader of this article view the United States Constitution? Is it a *dead document*, or is it a *living document*? Here is what is attributed to United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia:

> Scalia has claimed he has no choice but to consider the Constitution "dead," since he believes that a dead Constitution was the original intent of its framers. He also believes that interpreting the Constitution as a living document, whose words can change with time, merely empowers Supreme Court justices to "pursue their own objectives and desires." A "dead" constitution, on the other hand, limits the power of judges to interpreting its words as they were used by its eighteenth-century authors (Dershowitz 556).

Clearly, another approach is to view the Constitution as a *living* document that is to be viewed and interpreted according to the times. This approach leaves considerable latitude to the court, as they are free to determine what in their opinion the Constitution means at this moment in time. It may mean something entirely different, faced with the same issue, at a later time. A change in members of the court and in philosophical views would also seem to have a greater impact when the Constitution is viewed as a *living* document. Our Supreme Court has indeed reversed itself and at times this has occurred with a change in the justices. The idea of the Constitution as a *living* document provides ready rationale for reversing decisions when the real reason

may be personal, political, or moral beliefs. The judge may be influenced by what he perceives to be trends in society and his personal leanings more than what is contained in the Constitution, precedent of past cases, or statutes. To the extent that this occurs it lends itself to less stability, as no one can ever be sure of what the law is, since our final court of authority may change the meaning at any time.

PACKING THE COURT

How does the reader view the concept of *packing the court*? That, of course, relates to a United States President appointing new members to the Supreme Court who very heavily favor his views. If a president has the opportunity to place a number of new justices on the court, the appointments can be expected to have a great impact on the decisions rendered by that court for many years. Note that the matter under consideration is not the following of the law or the constitution, but the position of the President or party in power at that particular time.

Consider the position taken by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, William H. Rehnquist, after defining what it means to pack the court:

> Thus a president who sets out to pack the Court does nothing more than seek to appoint people to the Court who are sympathetic to his political or philosophical principles.
>
> There is no reason in the world why a president should not do this...yet the institution has been constructed in such a way that, because of the mortality tables, if nothing else, the public will, in the person of the president of the United States—the one official who is elected by the entire nation—have something to say about the membership of the court, and thereby indirectly about its decisions (209-210).

Although legal training, experience, etc., are no doubt of some importance, it is clear that Chief Justice Rehnquist is perfectly satisfied with packing the court. It is of course an accepted practice. This is not limited to the Supreme Court. In both State and Federal Courts, when judges are appointed, it is very common for them to be selected from those who are in good favor with the party in power.

If the appellate courts at all levels hold judges of inferior courts to a strict following of the law, it is not so likely that serious harm will follow. They will be required to follow the law rather than make law, or their decisions will be overturned. However, when justices are appointed to the United States Supreme Court with a view not so much on their ability to follow and administer the law but more on how their

view coincides with the party in power, there is a potential problem. This is further enhanced when the United States Constitution is viewed by justices as a living document that is subject to being interpreted according to the times instead of leaving it to be amended, as deemed appropriate, by the means already provided. The fact that the United States Constitution is not easily amended might be easily viewed as an indication that it was not expected that the Supreme Court would reinterpret the meaning of the Constitution as society changed. Would it seem reasonable that our founding fathers intended that a few who were not elected to office (judges) could easily change the meaning of our Constitution when they had otherwise made it difficult to be amended?

It is worth noting that there are those who take the same approach with the Bible. They argue that we live in a far different time than when the Bible was written, and it should be interpreted according to our time because it is out of date. We know man and his needs have not changed, and the Bible will forever meet our needs. Our Constitution cannot compare with the Bible, but it loses its significance if it means what the Court decrees today, but it may mean something entirely different tomorrow.

LAWS MADE BY JUDGES

It is not uncommon to hear accusations of judges **making** laws. Very simply, they do so when they go beyond what is stated in the State/Federal constitutions and/or laws. No doubt, they are of the opinion that this was necessary to obtain the right decision or to do what (in their opinion) the constitution or laws intended. Other judges are more inclined to take the position that, if the remedy sought is not provided for within the constitution/law, then the recourse is not through the courts—but through a change of the constitution or law. The writer adheres to the latter position, and this was what was taught in the law school that he attended.

It is in the area of judges making laws by their rulings that we should appreciate the division of authority in our three branches of government. The basic concept is that the executive branch proposes, approves/disapproves, and enforces laws; the legislative body passes the laws; and the courts interpret the laws. At times there is a struggle as to which branch will exercise the greatest power. It may be particularly noticeable when there is a strong president whose party has

control over both houses and his ideology is favored by a majority of the court. Even without the full support of the other branches of government, such a president may be able to push through his agenda.

Stability is promoted when there is a reasonable method for changing the constitutions and laws. In the United States it is contemplated that changes in our laws will be accomplished by those elected by the people for that purpose. When it is left to the courts, and ultimately the Supreme Court, there is less stability and accountability. Once appointed to the United States Supreme Court, the justices are there for life. If they treat the United States Constitution as a living document to be interpreted according to the times, then they are virtually without any restraints. Laws passed by Congress and state legislatures can be declared to be unconstitutional even if they have existed for many years. Precedent has little meaning. Even matters previously decided by the Supreme Court can be overturned, which adds to the importance of selecting new justices to that court. Picture a case where a slim majority makes the decision and it is expected that one or more justices will be appointed in the near future. Should that occur, and depending on the political party in power, it can be anticipated that that same issue will soon be presented to the court with the expectation of obtaining a reversal of the previous decision. This practice could, of course, mean becoming either more lenient or more restrictive; however, this writer would argue that in general (in or out of court) it is much easier to become more lenient.

DO COURTS FOLLOW OR LEAD SOCIETY?

As a general rule in the past, courts tended to follow rather than lead movements in society. In part, the reason is that courts addressed the issues that were brought before them and applied existing laws and procedures. The courts were not inclined to break new ground as previously discussed. Their function was to apply the law to the facts, which did not include going beyond what was provided in the laws or regulations. A trend or problem is likely to already exist in society before any laws are passed pertaining to the matter and even later before a case is presented to a court. People have been smoking for many years, and it has been known that the habit is detrimental to our health. However, it has only been in more recent years that it has become such an issue that there has been legislation and litigation.

Although legislative bodies make laws, the real meaning of the laws are not known until they are interpreted by the courts. In interpreting statutes, the courts will generally seek to determine the intent of the legislative body and will examine the legislative history. It is not a matter of what would the legislative body have intended if it was passing the law today, but what did it **intend** when the bill was written? However, except for action by appellate courts to curtail such conduct, courts may go beyond the law and by **interpretation** reach conclusions that were never intended by those who drafted or passed the law(s). Obviously, the United States Supreme Court, as the final legal authority in the United States, is in a position to expand on both laws and the Constitution. This applies not only in matters involving our federal government but also state laws and decisions of the state courts.

THE COURTS ARE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LOWER MORALS AND LIBERAL TRENDS

What is there that leads anyone to the opinion that our courts have become more liberal? Very likely it is the general perception that our society has moved further and further away from what may be considered basic moral values. Areas of particular note would be with respect to religion, abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and divorce. As the barriers in these areas are breached, it is not unreasonable to anticipate that efforts to make even greater inroads will follow. As elements of society have worked to push their agenda, the issues have ultimately reached our legislative bodies and courts. One does not have to compile statistics or research the statutes and court decisions to have a general grasp of what is permitted or prohibited in the areas listed above. There are many alive who can recall a far different and less liberal society. Abortions were not legal, homosexuality was unacceptable (without any thought of them being permitted to legally marry), language commonly used on television today was not tolerated, divorces were not so easily obtained, and religion was not taboo in schools and elsewhere. Our courts must share part of the blame, for they have played an essential part in lowering the barriers. When the courts find rights that are contrary to the Bible and are neither mandated by the Constitution or laws, they become authors of sin and injure the well-being of the nation.

NOT EVERYONE IS IN AGREEMENT

Although it may generally be thought that our courts are in a liberal trend, it is only fair to recognize that not everyone will agree. At least one recent book takes the position that the courts are becoming more conservative. The authors go back, particularly to Madison, and state:

> James Madison was by far the most influential advocate of religious liberty in the early Republic, and also the most articulate exponent of the principles that guided the drafting of the First Amendment (Hammand, Machacek, and Mazur 20).

They later state:

> Madison envisioned a broad and expanding scope for the free exercise of conscience. The inalienable freedom of the conscience led, in Madison's mind, inevitably to the freedom of religion, the press, speech, and association; and these freedoms led inevitably to the conclusion that government should be powerless to meddle in these affairs (40-41).

Thereafter, *conscience* appears to be the criteria that the authors argue should be the deciding factor. Among the issues discussed in the book are abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality. In each instance it is maintained that matters such as morality should not be a factor but "conscience" (111-123). This writer has neither the desire nor intent to misrepresent the authors of the referenced work. Readers are encouraged to read this book and others for their own edification. Several other quotes from this book will assist in demonstrating the direction that some are pushing society and how they view court trends.

Without considering the cases referenced in the quote, consider the following statements:

> Conservative voices exclaimed that the *Lawrence* decision signaled "the end of morality legislation." So, we would argue, it ought to be because in a society that respects the freedom of conscience the government has no business dictating morality. Whether homosexuality is moral or immoral in an absolute sense is not a matter for legislatures or courts to decide. Instead, the mandate of the Courts is to protect the right of the individual to make moral assessments, unless the state can demonstrate some compelling interest in the outcome of such assessments. Even if the conclusions reached by the individual are wrong, in matters of conscience the First Amendment protects the right to err unless that error leads to some demonstrable harm. Indeed, from the perspective developed here, the freedom to make only what some people believe to be the "correct" assessment of religions and moral matters would be no freedom at all (123).

> Where conservatives see favoritism for "secular humanism" and moral depravity, we see even-handed enlightenment, liberty, and protection of conscience. Our view, however, is under assault, with significant support already on the Supreme Court of the United States (125).

After discussing the appointment of justices to the Supreme Court (going back to President Eisenhower), the authors state:

> In his 2000 campaign, President George W. Bush indicated, when asked, that he would choose to appoint as Supreme Court justices people like Scalia and Thomas, thus declaring his intention of furthering the move toward regressivism of the Court.
>
> In sum, the Court has declined in its separationist stance because an increasingly conservative executive branch and an increasingly conservative legislative branch have been nominating and approving increasingly conservative persons to serve in the judicial branch (136).

In a further discussion the following statements are made:

> In the church-state area, this jurisprudential outlook has led to a remarkable insensitivity to the variety of religious perspectives found in America.... These cases, and others like them, close rather than open the gap between church and state. They are refusals to acknowledge the sanctity of conscience (138).

They further predict, depending on the outlook of the next few appointees to the Supreme Court, that Court may further reduce the thrust and undo much that earlier Courts did to protect individual rights, including religious liberty (137).

The above referenced work takes the position that the United States Supreme Court is becoming more conservative rather than liberal. The 2004 national election may reflect that a greater segment of the United States voting population is likewise becoming more concerned and conservative. Should this be true, it is surely far more desirable than the trend the nation has been following. Nevertheless, it is important to return to the more direct issue of liberalism in the courts. Even if there is a turning to a more conservative view, it seems highly unlikely that the clock will be turned back so as to eliminate many of the ills that have already gradually crept in and plague our society. In fact, it seems most plausible that those who so bitterly speak of the divided nation following the 2004 election do not have political issues in mind. It is more likely the liberal element sees issues, such as morality, as limitations on their freedom. To them it is a morality that has been promoted by those who proclaim themselves to be Christians with the Bible as their guide. The closer anyone fits this image the more they

will be counted as enemies. It likewise appears to be a natural position of the liberal element that decisions made by those in government must be made without being influenced by Christianity and the United States Constitution, laws and regulations interpreted accordingly. Laws and court decisions are not and cannot be made in a vacuum absent influences from any source. What influences should be substituted if all Christian influences could be completely erased? Whatever they might be, they would only lower the status of man.

There is an interesting observation. The foreword to the book *Religion on Trial* is written by Derek H. Davis, Director, J. M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. One cannot help but wonder if the powers that be at Baylor University believe and promote the idea that this nation was founded upon the concept of freedom of conscience in opposition to a strong belief in God and His Word?

FOLLOWING PRECEDENT

There is another relevant factor relating to judges. Some may oppose a position, but once a decision has been rendered by a superior court they will follow the precedent in future cases involving the same issue. For most attorneys/judges this is the proper course of action and provides stability in the law. When it will benefit their client, attorneys can be expected to argue that the circumstances warrant setting a new precedent, but they will normally not prevail. Observe the impact when judges hold differing views on how the Constitution should be viewed (living versus dead). While some will continue to follow the precedent set by prior cases, other justices may ignore precedent. A judge in a lower court who does not follow precedent may find his rulings reversed by an appellate court which tends to keep him in line. However, it is a different matter with the justices in our court of last resort. Justices who follow precedent will rule accordingly, even when they do not personally favor the outcome of future cases. They are also more likely to apply laws as written when they in fact do not violate the Constitution, even though they do not personally agree with the laws. They will rule accordingly regardless of who appointed them to the bench. Those who take a more liberal view are more likely to be influenced in their decisions by whims of society or their personal/political leanings. Although either approach can ultimately lead to the Court

upholding liberal views, it can be readily seen which justices are more likely to move in that direction and at a greater pace.

THE JUNIOR SUPREME COURT

There is another area that has apparently led to a more liberal approach by the United States Supreme Court that may not be realized. The justices are assisted by law clerks. Some have labeled them the "Junior Supreme Court" and have expressed concern over their expanding role. Basically the primary function of clerks is to do legal research. However, the following quotation reflects not only the expansion of their responsibilities but the basis for real concern:

> In recent years the Justices have given their clerks an ever-larger share of responsibility, including even the writing of opinions.
>
> Complaints against the clerks' role have been common, including a noted 1957 article in *U.S. News & World Report* by William H. Rehnquist himself. Rehnquist stated that the Justices were delegating substantial responsibility to their clerks, who "unconsciously" slanted material to accord with their own views. The result was that the liberal point of view of the vast majority of the clerks had become the philosophy espoused by the Warren Court.
>
> The situation has, if anything, gotten worse in recent years. "In the United States," notes a 1986 *London Times* article, "'judges have clerks', i.e. assistants who prepare and frequently write judgments which their masters often merely adopt and which a qualified observer can easily recognize as the work of a beginner."
>
> An even harsher view of the clerk system was expressed by Professor Philip B. Kurland, a leading constitutional scholar, a year after Chief Justice Rehnquist was appointed. As he notes, the law clerks now exercise a major role in the two most important functions of the Justices: (1) the screening of cases to determine which the Court will hear and decide; and (2) the drafting of opinions. "I think Brandeis would be aghast" (Schwartz 370).

It is difficult to know the real impact of the law clerks on the ultimate decisions by the court. It would be necessary to first know the extent of instructions and supervision given to the clerks in selecting the cases to be heard. This is a very critical point as it makes it possible to steer the court toward general areas of interest to the clerks and to those cases that place specific issues before the court. The drafting of the opinions can readily move the court in a particular direction. The potential for abuse does not mean that it exists, but the issue has clearly been raised. One would like to think that those who are justices in the highest court of our nation are not only well versed in the law but also

know the cases they desire to hear. It should further be expected that they determine their position on the issues and the clerks merely serve to carry out instructions. However, that is subject to abuse—especially if members of the Court are lazy or rely too heavily on their clerks by permitting them to exercise responsibilities that should be carried out by the justices.

CONCLUSION

At this point a possible course of thought would be to consider key cases in a several areas including history that led to those issues coming before the court. In conjunction with this analysis would be consideration of the president who appointed them and the background and leanings of the justices. With this information it might be better understood, if not appreciated, why the Court moved in a more liberal path at one point and at another time was a bit more conservative. In spite of any conservative movement, it is believed that the general trend has been liberal and away from God. As desirable as such a discussion might be, it is far beyond the limitations of this writing.

Hopefully, if nothing else, at least some readers will have a greater appreciation of why there is at times such a great fight over the appointment of members of the United States Supreme Court. Consider the background of the individual under consideration. Usually, he is already serving as judge, and his opinions and rulings on most issues can be known. Of equal importance is the nature and ferocity of the opposition. This will provide an excellent indication of the path they (those under consideration and the opposition) want the nation to take regardless of what they otherwise say. How many of those involved in the appointing process are honestly seeking a judge who: (1) Is a legal scholar, (2) Can put aside his personal beliefs and the whims of society, (3) Strictly adhere to interpreting the laws and Constitution without adding to them, and (4) Has a high degree of personal integrity and wisdom?

May God have mercy on this nation if it does not reverse itself and turn to Him who created all things! This nation has been blessed beyond our wildest imagination. Anyone who does not think so should look at the way most of the world lived in the past and today. We are like the Jews of the Old Testament. The blessings they received should have made them draw closer to God, but they turned from Him. We are acting in the same manner. How much are we like Jerusalem whom

Jeremiah warned over and over of the coming destruction, which they could have prevented, but they would not listen.

APPENDIX
APPOINTMENTS TO THE U. S. SUPREME COURT

The following chart is included to provide some concept of the manner in which the court has changed as a result of presidential appointments (Irons 502-506):

	Member	Position	Appointed By	Yrs. Of Service
1.	John Jay	Chief Justice	Washington	1789-1795
2.	John Rutledge	Associate	Washington	1789-1791
3.	William Cushing	Associate	Washington	1789-1810
4.	James Wilson	Associate	Washington	1789-1798
5.	John Blair, Jr.	Associate	Washington	1789-1796
6.	James Iredell	Associate	Washington	1790-1799
7.	Thomas Johnson	Associate	Washington	1791-1793
8.	William Paterson	Associate	Washington	1793-1806
9.	John Rutledge	Chief Justice	Washington	1795
10.	Samuel Chase	Associate	Washington	1796-1811
11.	Oliver Ellsworth	Chief Justice	Washington	1796-1800
12.	Brushrod Washington	Associate	J. Adams	1798-1829
13.	Alfred Moore	Associate	J. Adams	1799-1804
14.	John Marshall	Chief Justice	J. Adams	1801-1835
15.	William Johnson	Associate	Jefferson	1804-1834
16.	Henry B. Livingston	Associate	Jefferson	1806-1823
17.	Thomas Todd	Associate	Jefferson	1807-1826
18.	Gabriel Duvall	Associate	Madison	1811-1835
19.	Joseph Story	Associate	Madison	1811-1845
20.	Smith Thompson	Associate	Monroe	1823-1843
21.	RobertTrimble	Associate	J. Q. Adams	1826-1828
22.	John McLean	Associate	Jackson	1829-1861
23.	Henry Baldwin	Associate	Jackson	1830-1844
24.	James M. Wayne	Associate	Jackson	1835-1867
25.	Roger B Taney	Chief Justice	Jackson	1836-1864
26.	Philip P. Babour	Associate	Jackson	1836-1841
27.	John Catron	Associate	Jackson	1837-1865
28.	John McKinley	Associate	Van Buren	1837-1852
29.	Peter V. Daniel	Associate	Van Buren	1841-1860
30.	Samuel Nelson	Associate	Tyler	1845-1872
31.	Levi Woodbury	Associate	Polk	1846-1851
32.	Robert C. Grier	Associate	Polk	1846-1870
33.	Benjamin R. Curtis	Associate	Fillmore	1851-1857
34.	John A. Campbell	Associate	Pierce	1853-1861
35.	Nathan Clifford	Associate	Buchanan	1858-1881
36.	Noah H. Swayne	Associate	Lincoln	1862-1881
37.	Samuel F. Miller	Associate	Lincoln	1862-1890

38.	David Davis	Associate	Lincoln	1862-1877
39.	Stephen J. Field	Associate	Lincoln	1863-1897
40.	Salmon P. Chase	Chief Justice	Lincoln	1864-1873
41.	William Strong	Associate	Grant	1870-1880
42.	Joseph P. Bradley	Associate	Grant	1870-1892
43.	Ward Hunt	Associate	Grant	1872-1882
44.	Morrison R. Waite	Chief Justice	Grant	1874-1888
45.	John M. Harlan	Associate	Hayes	1877-1911
46.	William B. Woods	Associate	Hayes	1880-1887
47.	Stanley Matthews	Associate	Garfield	1881-1889
48.	Horace Gray	Associate	Arthur	1881-1902
49.	Samuel Blatchford	Associate	Arthur	1882-1893
50.	Lucius Q. C. Lamar	Associate	Cleveland	1888-1893
51.	Melville W. Fuller	Chief Justice	Cleveland	1888-1910
52.	David J Brewer	Associate	Harrison	1889-1910
53.	Henry B. Brown	Associate	Harrison	1890-1906
54.	George Shiras, Jr.	Associate	Harrison	1892-1903
55.	Howell E. Jackson	Associate	Harrison	1893-1895
56.	Edward D. White	Associate	Cleveland	1894-1910
57.	Rufus W. Peckham	Associate	Cleveland	1895-1909
58.	Joseph McKenna	Associate	McKinley	1898-1929
59.	Oliver W. Holmes, Jr.	Associate	T. Roosevelt-R	1902-1932
60.	William R. Day	Associate	T. Roosevelt-R	1903-1922
61.	William H. Moody	Associate	T. Roosevelt-R	1906-1910
62.	Horace H. Lurton	Associate	Taft-R	1909-1914
63.	Charles E. Hughes	Associate	Taft-R	1910-1916
64.	Edward D. White	Chief Justice	Taft-R	1910-1921
65.	Willis Van Devanter	Associate	Taft-R	1910-1937
66.	Joseph R. Lamar	Associate	Taft-R	1910-1916
67.	Mahlon Pitney	Associate	Taft-R	1912-1922
68.	James C. McReynolds	Associate	Wilson-D	1914-1941
69.	Louis D. Brandeis	Associate	Wilson-D	1916-1939
70.	John H. Clarke	Associate	Wilson-D	1916-1922
71.	William H. Taft	Chief Justice	Harding-R	1921-1930
72.	George Sutherland	Associate	Harding-R	1922-1938
73.	Pierce Butler	Associate	Harding-R	1922-1939
74.	Edward T. Sanford	Associate	Harding-R	1923-1930
75.	Harlan F. Stone	Associate	Coolidge-R	1925-1941
76.	Charles E. Hughes	Chief Justice	Hoover-R	1930-1941
77.	Owen J. Roberts	Associate	Hoover-R	1930-1945
78.	Benjamin N. Cardozo	Associate	Hoover-R	1932-1938
79.	Hugo L. Black	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1937-1971
80.	Stanley F. Reed	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1938-1957
81.	Felix Frankfurter	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1939-1962
82.	William O. Douglas	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1939-1975
83.	Francis W. Murphy	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1940-1949
84.	Harlan F. Stone	Chief Justice	F. Roosevelt-D	1941-1946

85.	James F. Byrnes	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1941-1942
86.	Robert H. Jackson	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1941-1954
87.	Wiley B. Rutledge	Associate	F. Roosevelt-D	1943-1949
88.	Harold H. Burton	Associate	Truman-D	1945-1958
89.	Fred M. Vinson	Chief Justice	Truman-D	1946-1953
90.	Tom C. Clark	Associate	Truman-D	1949-1967
91.	Sherman Minton	Associate	Truman-D	1949-1956
92.	Earl Warren	Chief Justice	Eisenhower-R	1953-1969
93.	John M. Halan	Associate	Eisenhower-R	1955-1971
94.	William J. Brennan, Jr.	Associate	Eisenhower-R	1956-1990
95.	Charles E. Whittaker	Associate	Eisenhower-R	1957-1962
96.	Potter Stewart	Associate	Eisenhower-R	1958-1981
97.	Byron R. White	Associate	Kennedy-D	1962-1993
98.	Arthur J. Goldberg	Associate	Kennedy-D	1962-1965
99.	Abe Fortas	Associate	Johnson-D	1965-1969
100.	Thurgood Marshall	Associate	Johnson-D	1967-1991
101.	Warren E. Burger	Chief Justice	Nixon-R	1969-1986
102.	Harry A. Blackmun	Associate	Nixon-R	1970-1994
103.	Lewis F. Powell, Jr.	Associate	Nixon-R	1971-1987
104.	William H. Rehnquist	Associate	Nixon-R	1971-1986
105.	John P. Stevens	Associate	Ford-R	1975-
106.	Sandra D. O'Connor	Associate	Reagan-R	1981-
107.	William H. Rehnquist	Chief Justice	Reagan-R	1986-
108.	Antonin Scalia	Associate	Reagan-R	1986-
109.	Anthony M. Kennedy	Associate	Reagan-R	1988-
110.	David H. Souter	Associate	Bush-R	1990-
111.	Clarence Thomas	Associate	Bush-R	1991-
112.	Ruth B. Ginsburg	Associate	Clinton-D	1993-
113.	Stephen G. Breyer	Associate	Clinton-D	1994-

Notes:

1. A President is not listed if he did not appoint a member of the Supreme Court.
2. Starting with President T. Roosevelt, who took office in 1901, the political party of the presidents are shown with either an "R" for Republican or a "D" for Democrat following their names.
3. John Rutledge (listed as number 2 and then again as number 9). Note that in number 9 only the date 1795 is given. He had previously served as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1789 to 1791 (number 2). From 1791 to 1795 he was the chief justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina. In 1795 he was nominated to be chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He presided during the August term, but the Senate refused to confirm his nomination.

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LIBERALISM IN POLITICS

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INTRODUCTION

Many find it difficult to define *Liberalism*. In politics, liberalism is perceived as anything opposite of conservatism. Such a perception requires a definition of *conservatism*. Thus, for most individuals today, there is an ever-changing reference point. The reason for this is that once something new has become the normative, then it is considered conservative. Anything going past that is considered liberal.

An example should help explain this point. At one time in America's history, welfare programs were considered outside the realm of proper responsibility of the government. However, since the populace became accustomed to welfare programs, anyone wanting to keep welfare programs at the present levels is considered a conservative. Anyone wanting to expand them is a liberal. It has even come to the point that a conservative is one who wants to expand programs only so far. The liberal is one who wants to expand it too far (in the eyes of the conservative). As it can readily be seen, the reference point for liberal versus conservative is ever changing with this definition, and the liberals nearly always win.

For the purposes of this chapter, *political liberalism* will be defined as any government action, law, or philosophy opposed to the principles outlined in the Holy Scriptures. While it is believed

by many today that Democrats are liberal and Republicans are conservative, this is a false delineation. Most Republicans today support political programs which years ago would have been considered wrong by the majority of Americans. Most politicians of both parties, and most Americans, now consider these programs the proper actions of government; anyone against them is considered "right-wing fanatical," "ultra-conservative," or a "far-right wacko."

It is true that those who promoted free-enterprise economics and a republican form of government in the 1700s are referenced as classical liberals. At the time, most governments were monarchies or dictatorships. Most of those governments promoted either mercantilism or state run economies. This is true whether one looks toward Europe, Asia, the Americas, or Africa. Thus, anyone who does not support the status quo is considered a liberal. Those who support the status quo are considered the conservatives. The label of classical liberals was made years after the fact.

Liberalism is considered to question the status quo. Liberals believe they are working for the rights of the individual. They want to break past the rules of the past and present. Liberals will quickly say that they are the real freedom lovers.[1] They consider many of the rules and regulations of the past as shackles of tradition. They want all individuals to have the freedom to do whatever they want. (Of course, they have their limits but hesitate to tell the truth of the matter. Usually it boils down to everyone being able to do what he/she wants except those who disagree with that philosophy.) Today's liberals promote the idea that they are working with the same thinking as the Founding Fathers.

While it is true that the Founding Fathers were fighting for individual freedoms, they based their actions primarily on the Bible. Of all the writings we presently have by the Founding Fathers, 34 percent of the quotes are from the Bible. Some historians say that the Founders based their beliefs on John Locke and others. However, John Locke cited the Bible 80 times in his first treatise on government, and 22 times in his second treatise. If the direct quotes from the Bible and all the quotes from men they referenced who based their writings on the Bible are added up, 94 percent of all quotes by the Founding Fathers were based on the Bible (Barton).

Liberalism in politics today supports the following: no death penalty, animal rights, complete gun control, social security, homosexual rights, open-minded ethics, neutral government stance on morals, gov-

ernment supported and controlled health care, government controlled education, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, civil rights, human rights, multiculturalism, welfare programs, Keynesian economics, and a host of other things that they want the government to control or become involved in.

Some of these sound innocuous and are even supported by members of the church. Unfortunately, when put to the scrutiny of Scripture, these programs fail the test. The Christian should always compare man's intents with God's Word. God's traditions are eternal. The Christian should be wary of any idea, philosophy, action or program that attacks either directly or indirectly God's Word. It is a sad fact, that there has been very little written in these areas by members of the church. Thus, most Christians do not believe the Bible addresses them. It is not the purpose of this chapter to address all of the above. The author will attempt to briefly discuss a few.

THEOCRACY

The first thing that needs to be addressed is the poorly understood term *theocracy*. It comes from two Latin words: *theos*, God, and *kratos*, rule (DeMar xiv-xv). Thus, a theocracy is a society ruled by a god. In the case of the United States, the Founders intended our government to have Jehovah God as the ultimate source of rule and authorship. Our nation was intended to be a theocracy in spite of the denials of many today.

This author has heard it stated many times that the United States of America is not a theocracy (stated by non-Christians and Christians, including preachers). Those who are religious and hold to this idea will argue that Israel was a theocracy. What is missed is that Israel was a theocracy, but it was more specifically an ecclesiocracy. An ecclesiocracy is where a particular church or religious organization also controls the civil arena of life. An ecclesiocracy will always be a theocracy, but a theocracy may not be an ecclesiocracy.

If the United States is not a theocracy, then the Christian has no basis to argue for laws on the basis of God's Word: the Bible. This author has even heard and read from, in the past few years, preachers of various religious backgrounds arguing that Christians should not argue for laws from the Bible.[2] It is declared that Christians should only use scientific research to back any attempted legislation. Such leaves no alternative but for law to be based on the latest research and whims

of the people. There can be no Heavenly higher authority for any law. If legislation in accordance with God's Will becomes law, it is happenstance. It is simply good fortune for the Christian. Such thinking can only lead to one conclusion: God has nothing to say regarding how man is to govern man.

This cannot be true. If such is true, then God did not give us everything profitable for instruction in righteousness and correction that we might be furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It would seem to be self-defeating to pray for leaders of nations yet refuse to influence them with Scripture. It would seem contradictory for God to declare governments as His ministers for good, to execute His wrath, yet supposedly not want Christians to actively influence leaders with Scripture (Rom. 13:4; Pro. 29:2); such would be senseless if a Christian is not to rule in civil affairs by God's Law.

If such thinking is correct, then Esther was wrong to influence her husband the King to do good for her people—God's people. If such thinking is correct, then Jesus was even wrong in telling Pilate that His power came from Heaven (John 19:11).

As a nation moves away from God as the Higher Authority, the secular state (those individuals in power) will claim for itself more and more ultimate authority. If a Heavenly God cannot be the basis of law, then man must be. If God did not intend for civil governments to be under His authority (Luke 18:2-6), then Jesus is not Lord of Lords, and King of Kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). He is not the ruler of kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5; Psa. 119:46-47; Psa. 82:1-2). Then, in actuality, kings do not reign by Him (Pro. 8:15). If he is not to be served by civil governments, then He has put the Christian in a precarious position by commanding them to be submissive to them (Rom. 13:1-3). He stated that man cannot serve two masters. If God is not to be the Authority over governments, then only Satan can be over governments. Thus, the Christian would be trying to serve two masters (Mat. 6:24).[3]

Even the House Judiciary Committee of the United States Congress understood this in 1854 when the following was included in the Congressional Record: "The great vital and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Woodrow Wilson is quoted in *The Myth of Separation* as stating:

> A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do

> a futile thing if we do not know where we came from or what we have been about.... The Bible…is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God and...nature and needs of men.

REPUBLIC VERSUS DEMOCRACY

Liberals in politics would have us believe that they stand for true freedom. They claim that America was founded with many old-fashioned, out-dated principles. Only by throwing off the shackles of restrictive religion will Americans be free. (Liberal theologians attempt to meld antinomianism with Scripture thus allowing them to agree with the atheist/humanist.)

Jedidiah Morse, stated the following in a sermon on April 25, 1799:

> To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions, in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism. I hold this to be a truth confirmed by experience. If so, it follows, that all efforts made to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them must fall with them (Draper 2).

Our nation was created as a Republic. This is a form of democracy but not simply a democracy. The Founding Fathers believed a democracy to be a dangerous entity. A simple pure democracy is rule by the people: the final authority is all the people. The people themselves decide from moment to moment what is right or wrong. In a Republic there is a set law, the Constitution in our case. This document sets forth a set code of action and rules, in our case based on biblical principles. Then the people elect representatives to work within that Constitution to lead them. These men are to be wise and men of virtue (in the same vain as those Moses selected to rule over hundreds and thousands after the advice of his father-in-law—Exo. 18:14-27.) (It is also interesting that God did not design the church as a democracy. Special representatives with proper qualities and qualifications are chosen to rule over them under the church's Constitution, the Bible.)[4]

A democracy always ends in mob rule. A properly working republic has stability. In a democracy, whoever educates the masses the most effectively directs the law to change their way. In a republic, there is set

law. Those in power in a so-called *democracy* must either pass contradictory law or change the meaning of the words in the law code to match what they desire.

It is a liberal idea that the United States is a pure democracy. Liberals have convinced most Americans that we live in a pure democracy when in actuality it is a modified democracy—a republic. The liberal knows that it is easier to implement change in a democracy. Democracy indicates an ever changing and evolving rule and authority.

Chief Justice Earl Warren spoke of "evolving standards of decency," by which the Eighth Amendment is to be interpreted. President Woodrow Wilson sought "progressive" legislation, asking the Court "to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle" (Eidsmoe 90).

The Founders saw democracies as contentious and incompatible with personal security or rights of property. They knew that democracies were always short-lived and violent in death. This is the end result when a populace who has no higher authority than themselves and sets out to make rules for themselves. Since they have no Ultimate Truth, they must attempt to make truth. Rousas John Rushdoony points out in his book, *Politics of Guilt and Pity*, "When a society doubts the truth of its foundations, it seeks truth anew, renouncing the error, because it refuses to live in terms of a recognized lie" (98).

Thus, in a democracy there is no Ultimate Authority as source of law. Since all authority is supposed to be in the people, Americans today are taught that God is not relevant to legislation. Add to that the fact that the Bible is said to be a hodge-podge of fable and half-truths, and Americans doubt that God is relevant to politics. Since they doubt it, they even run from Him and His Word in the political arena as if it were a lie, and they seek new truth. The liberal is there, waiting as a Patristic Father. The liberal is ready to teach his ideas and concepts as Truth, and he is willing to take the role of Guider and Counselor for the masses. For remember, the liberal's desire is to leave behind tradition.

Aristotle defined man as deriving his meaning and liberty from the state (the state being comprised of those in power). Plato held that the very right to be born was subject to state approval. As a saving order, the state concerns itself with cradle-to-grave security, because it must play the role of god in man's life (Rushdoony 145).

TRUTH IS OUT

In modern times, the philosophy behind pure democracy is stated well by Engels in his eulogy of Karl Marx.

> Our dialectical philosophy abolishes all the notions of absolute and definitive truth, and any absolute human conditions which correspond to them. For dialectics nothing is definitive, absolute or sacred; it reveals the relativity of all things and nothing exists for it but the uninterrupted process of development and change (Rushdoony 154).

(Most Americans are not aware that political liberals are spouting the same communistic dialectic of Engels and Marx. This is true whether the one stating such is Democrat, Republican, or any other party.)

Of course this leads to exactly what we have happening in our country today. If there is no truth, if all ideas and beliefs are equal; if there is to be total liberty for all positions, then there is only one crime—the denying of those positions, Christianity. (Liberals in the church end up demonstrating the same thing. There is to be love and tolerance given to all positions, except those who believe that not all positions are to be loved and tolerated.)

Associate Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote, "To say therefore that the search for 'truth' is not man's mission may seem to some to be the ultimate sin. But those who construct a political system on the basis of their 'truth' create totalitarianism" (3:35). Notice that truth according to him leads to totalitarianism. He wants you to believe that those who do not believe in truth are the ones to bring freedom. Remember, the liberal wants to break ties to the traditions of the past. According to them, traditions shackle, liberals free. He also stated:

> Truth is not the goal, for in most areas no one knows what truth is.... The goal may change from age to age.... If we are to have freedom of the mind in America, we must produce a generation of men and women who will tower above the press, as well as the crowd, and make tolerance for all ideas the symbol of virtue (3:36).

Douglas, a leading liberal judge, a man who was supposed to interpret and make judgments on our laws, stated without reservation that there is no truth. Instead of basing decisions on any firm foundation, he wants to simply let any idea stand as equal to any other. Virtue is not in believing in absolutes, but in not believing in anything. He goes so far as to say "that government has no concern with thoughts and beliefs" (3:11). One has to wonder if he includes his own thoughts and

beliefs. Why would anyone want such a person sitting on the highest Court in the land?

Unfortunately, even our newly elected President and his party are part and parcel of this thinking. While proclaiming a strong belief in God and His Word, they make policies and statements in support of the equality of pagan religions. President Bush, when asked if Muslims were going to Heaven, stated that indeed they were. He said they were simply taking a different road. What did Engels and Marx believe and strive for—the abolition of absolutes. How can the Bible be believed as absolute truth if those who deny its very truth are going to Heaven? It is certain that President Bush would deny being a Marxist, but his philosophy and theology are consistent with it.

INDOCTRINATION

Another chapter will deal with liberalism in education. However, it must be stated here that liberals know very well that children educated properly in the new religion of humanism will readily accept and embrace liberal philosophy. John Dewey, as quoted by Rushdoony, stated:

> In such dim, blind, but effective way the American people is conscious that its schools serve best the cause of religion in serving the cause of social unification; and that under certain conditions schools are more religious in substance and in promise without any of the conventional badges and machinery of religious instruction than they could be in cultivating these forms at the expense of a state-consciousness (707).

John Dewey was one of the main leaders of the modern education movement. Dewey was intricately involved in influencing liberal political action of the Federal Government takeover of American schools. What Mr. Dewey was saying was that the schools can actually be more religious than churches when it comes to promoting a state-consciousness. This state-consciousness was designed to bring about social unification. While this may not sound so bad to the average Christian, it should be pointed out that Dewey was profoundly impressed with the Soviet system of communism. So, in actuality, while using the word religion and thus pulling the wool over the eyes of the unsuspecting, Dewey was promoting the idea that the schools should teach the new religion of humanism embodied in a Socialist/Communist political philosophy.

FOREIGN POLICY

R. J. Rushdoony states in his book, *Politics of Guilt and Pity*:

> A nation bent on the world establishment of the concept of identification will operate on the premise that the goal must be unity or union and will work to that end, sacrificing itself constantly in terms of that hoped-for consummation. But a nation aware that some issues are irreconcilable, while avoiding any ungodly plunge into conflict, will recognize that there can be no compromise, and that peaceful coexistence in such instances is an illusion (85).

Romans 12:18 tells us to live peacefully with all men—if it be possible. There are some nations that will not allow peace to reign. Some nations will attack other nations. Nations will need to defend themselves and help other nations defend themselves. God told the Israelites to live peacefully with the nations around them that desired to live peacefully. The Israelites were not to attack nations outside of the promised land boundaries unless as retribution of justice.

Much of the foreign policy today is designed with the false idea that there can be toleration of all beliefs while creating unification of governments. This false ideology is core with many well-meaning liberals. There are, however, those who know full well that such thinking will not lead to freedom among all nations while promoting unification, but actually to totalitarianism and slavery. Space does not permit continuing this line of thought.

Foreign policy should center on actions that promote peace with all that want peace. However, that action must also take into account proper rules of economics among other things. The same economic laws for our nation should guide our dealings with other nations. Otherwise, both the economies of the other nations and our own will suffer.

ECONOMICS

President L. B. Johnson on January 15, 1964, stated: "We are going to try to take all of the money that we think is unnecessarily being spent and take it from the 'haves' and give it to the 'have-nots' that need it so much" (Rushdoony 213).

It only makes sense that if there is no Higher Authority in Heaven, there is no real basis for scriptural benevolence. Scriptures teach us that benevolence is to be done by the church and individuals (Exo. 22:1-25; 2 Cor. 8:1-4; 9:1-3). True benevolence is done in love. Forced benevolence is not benevolence—it is coercion. Paul informs us that, even

if we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, if we do not have love, it will profit us nothing (1 Cor. 13:13). Paul told the Ephesians that a man was to work so he might have to give to him that needed (Eph. 4:28). Personal obligation and love are to be the basis of benevolence. When the state usurps this responsibility, benevolence becomes impersonal, perverted, and produces sluggishness. This statist approach ignores giving and places all emphasis on receiving. Giving is supplanted by taking.

Scripture tells us that the profits a man makes are his to do with as he wishes. His profits are his reward for his labors, and they are his portion of God's gifts (Ecc. 5:18-19; 2:24; 8:15). No one has the right to take his portion from him involuntarily for benevolence. God does say that we are to pay our taxes, but those taxes are to be used properly by the government in the areas in which God has designed for it. Now there would be nothing wrong with non-Christians getting together and passing legislation to create a governmental benevolence program—as long as no one that does not want to contribute has funds taken from him.

Contributions to help the poor must be done in love if it is to fulfill God's plan for man. Government does not have God given authority to delve into benevolence. Under God's plan, the church and the individual decide who is truly worthy of benevolence. Under the government's plan, God's regulations on worthiness are ignored. Thus, government benevolence tends to encourage poor self-responsibility by the receivers of funds and goods. A simple example is 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12. If a man is not willing to work if able to work, then he is not to eat. A man is to work and eat his own bread. As President Johnson admitted, the government is simply looking at who has and who has not. Then there is forced redistribution of funds. There is absolutely no love involved in such a program.

As the state takes on more and more of the role of Benevolent Father, it replaces God as such. Instead of God getting credit for the loving benevolence, people give the state credit. Instead of looking to God and His church, people look to the state as the supplier of all things. Christians in the First Century willingly sold possessions to give to fellow Christians. Now we have elderships telling those in need that they should get on such and such governmental welfare program. In the First Century, Christians were told to do good to all men especially those of the faith. Today, we have Christians and professed Christians

in denominations applying for funds to participate in government programs.

The present administration got legislation passed which created a way for "faith-based" benevolence programs to obtain government funds.

"In America we print on our coins 'In God We Trust,' and yet we are evolving a government that will create a situation in which we will be forced to trust it for our help, our food, our security, our all" (McIntire 13). Many times such help and aid is done under the guise of social justice. Part of that social justice is the stated end of equality of all. What the well-intentioned liberal does not understand is what Alexander Hamilton noted: "Inequality will exist as long as liberty exists. It unavoidably results from that very liberty itself." The liberation theologian falsely equates inequality with injustice and oppression.

Major evangelical books written since 1960 about social justice mostly reject and condemn political conservatism as cruel, heartless, uncaring, and out of step with an informed biblical view. Antonio Martino says social justice "owes its immense popularity precisely to its ambiguity and meaningless.... Its obvious appeal stems from its persuasive strength, from its positive connotation, which allows the user to praise his own ideas" (Nash 5). The unsuspecting but well-intentioned citizen believes the liberal when it is stated that social justice must be done. But it is obvious that there is no biblical justice when there is forced benevolence. It is not justice to the one receiving, nor is it justice to the one who labored to have it.[5]

There is so much more that could be written on the topic of economics. God condemned a false balance (Pro. 11:1) and praised a just weight and balance (Pro. 16:11). Their balance was involved in weighing the precious metal or other form of payment for goods. When the United States government started using sandwiched coins, they were using a false balance. The coin was now actually worth less than the value it was given. The same holds true when government prints more paper money than there are reserves to back the money. It is this practice that actually causes inflation. While the citizen sees more "dollars" and gets a sense of wealth, the buying power of that "wealth" is actually decreased. Such practices by government do not follow biblical principles.

Private enterprise is the basis of some of Jesus' teachings. In Matthew 20, we read of the owner of a vineyard. He has the right to hire employees as he sees fit. The employees are free to accept the salary they see as appropriate. The workers are free to accept work or not accept work. The workers are not free to complain about unfairness of their wages while under the contract they voluntarily accepted. There is no biblical precedent for a third party such as government to enter into the contractual work setting and make either the employer or the workers to accept something involuntarily.

In a free society each man suffers for his personal laziness. In the liberal's statist society, all workers absorb and share in his laziness. Statist interventionism inevitably deteriorates individual responsibility, destroys man's initiative, and even his opportunity for growth as an individual personality. The Christian should not allow himself to deteriorate in any system: he has a higher calling. But the Christian should not support unbiblical economic programs and interventions either. The Christian should keep God's principles taught in Proverbs 6:6-9, 12:24, 13:4, and 20:4 in mind. The sluggard should not be encouraged, and the diligent worker should not be discouraged (Bales 94).[6]

Redistribution programs encourage rather than discourage covetousness. God declared covetousness of any kind a sin in Exodus 20:17. Yet, in the liberal's world, all a man has to do is cry foul because his neighbor has nice things and he does not. The *loving* government will come to the rescue.

In the liberal's society, men are made to feel guilty for all things *unjust* and for everyone. All the starving, all the needy, all oppressed, all indigents, all criminals, all diseased are declared to be the burden of those who have. Men are made to believe that they cannot do much except to care for their own family. Therefore, the state must be delegated with the task and the elite government planners are given the authority. By giving it to them, the state and planners become gods and governors of all things, and they are encouraged to remake the world in terms of their *superior* wisdom (Bales 45).

The "counsel of love" of the liberal requires a supine submission to evil; for anger, resistance, and conflict constitute the essence of sin. In the liberal's world, love, peace, and unity are more valued than truth or freedom.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has only scratched the surface of liberalism in politics. Suffice it to say that our nation is in grave danger of sliding completely away from biblical principles as the underpinning of our government. One of the problems is that many professed Christians do not understand that the liberals use religious terminology but have redefined the words.

> The United States is a battleground between humanism and Christianity and, while there is no question as to the power and established forces of humanism, even their form assumes semi-Christian guises because of the pressures of grass-roots Christianity (Draper 93).

James Madison reportedly proclaimed:

> We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions...upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments (qtd. in Barton 120).

The Founding Fathers intended for our nation to operate according to biblical principles. They created our government as best they could according to God's commandments.

Elderships, lectureship directors, and every member of the Lord's church should spend more time in studying what God has to say regarding proper government. Then they need to do all they can to proclaim those principles throughout the nation. If they do not, they can rest assured that principles contrary to Scripture will reign. The only result of such is not freedom, but chaos and then slavery of some fashion.

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ENDNOTES

[1]The Latin *liber* means free.

[2]President Ronald Reagan's son, Ron Reagan, at the 2004 Democratic Convention stated that people are entitled to their theology, but that it should not be allowed to guide scientific research. The late Christopher Reeve stated: "When matters of public policy are debated, no religions should have a seat at the table." Eleanor Clift, in *Newsweek*, praised Candidate John Kerry, "He's not going to impose his religious beliefs on the country" but will govern by "rational decision making." Her article was titled "Faith versus Reason" ("Tyranny of Rationalism" *World* Magazine. October 30, 2004. p. 11).

[3]Montesquieu (1689-1755): "The Christian religion, which ordains that men should love each other, would, without doubt, have every nation blest with the best civil, the best political laws; because these, next to this religion, are the greatest good that these men can give and receive." "Society, not withstanding all its revolutions, must repose on principles that do not change." "And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that those liberties are of the gift of God," stated by Thomas Jefferson. "God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both," stated by John Witherspoon (qtd. in David Barton. 196, 245).

[4]Liberals like to quote from Alexis de Tocqueville. He was a Frenchman who came to America to research the difference between the French democracy and the United States democracy. Tocqueville uses *democracy* to describe the political system in the United States. However, he uses the word in up to seven different ways. Liberals misuse him to attempt to support their desire for the United States to be a democracy. What they always ignore is that Tocqueville came to the conclusion that what made the United States great was the people's strong belief in God and the Bible. He said their religion was the basis of their strong nation.

[5]Nash notes that *social justice* is primarily used by those politicians advocating Statism more than it is by those promoting individual free enterprise (p. 6). Social justice is the moral justification for those who reject God's plan of economic justice. Nash notes that this is nothing new. Socrates wrote of the leaders of his time passing such dangerous legislation past the inattentive masses by using ambiguous terms like *justice* (p. 27).

[6]James Bales gives several sources documenting that the socialists and communists infiltrated churches and worked to purposely dupe ministers into supporting their goals. This infiltration and work has resulted in large numbers of professed Christians actually believing in liberal, collectivist, welfarist, socialist governmental policies and programs.

LIBERALISM AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Gary W. Summers

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are the parent of a fourth grader and your child wrote the following paragraph: "I'm goin to has majik skates. Im goin to go to the disenelan. Im goin to bin my mom and dad and brusr and sisd. We r go to se mickey mouse."

Would you be appalled at the spelling (*disenelan* is Disneyland)? Even more disconcerting is the fact that the teacher wrote, "Wow!" on the paper and gave it a check-plus for above average work (Sykes 92). This same source provides another sample of student writing, on which the teacher wrote, "I love your story, especially the spelling." If the student were your child, you might not agree with such generous comments on this *literary masterpiece:* "Once a pona time, I visited a tropical rian forist. It was very pretty. There were lots of trees and anamlas. My fifl anaml was a Jacwier. My ffifit insect was a wihite buterfly, my fifit riptil was a comilin."

In 1994 a school in Middletown, California (75 miles north of San Francisco) was attacked by vandals, causing thousands of dollars worth of damage to computers and other equipment. The eighth grade class from this school wrote letters addressed to the perpetrators, in which they expressed their outrage. In the 26 letters, which were published in the *Times Star*, *vandal* was spelled ten different ways. Below is a sample of one of the letters, but several others were just like it:

> Dear Vandules,
>
> I am verey made at you and it herts to see my teacher's cry. Youhave to be a rill peep to do some thing so mean. Ther is know punishment that can fix whate hapend. I thenk that some one should go into your beadroom and do this to you but then we wold be just as bad as you and we are not. You touch awey our classroom and we are on the flour riteing this leter to you peeps. I hate you.

The editor was lambasted by teachers and administration alike for publishing these letters as they were written. She then published their protest letters and replied thus:

> We could have edited and corrected the letters prior to publication, but by doing so, a number of us felt that we would be guilty of covering up a crime far greater than vandalism. Whether it was right or wrong to publish the letters "as is" is to me not the issue. The issue is the failure of the school system to be able to teach "the basics" to our children (Stormer 6-7).

Are these instances some sort of fluke? No, unfortunately this approach to teaching is current liberal thinking regarding education. An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, titled "Bad Spelling Now Viewed as Inventive," reported the following circumstance:

> After hearing the story "Jack and the Beanstalk," 6-year-old Pablo wrote a story of his own and read it to his summer teacher in a halting voice. "If I would have magic beans, I would save the beans. And when I save the beans, then I will give them away. The end." Teacher Michele Chabra smiled at her student's brief recital. Then she looked at what he had written: "If I wd hf mg ics I wd save the bses and one I sav the bes the I wi g thmn way the end" (Stormer 5).

From at least 1993-96 parents of first graders in California were sent letters that included these words about this *inventive* process:

> Invented spelling is when the child sounds out the word and writes it as it sounds. This is an important part of fostering a positive attitude for writing in your child. Please do not correct this spelling when they write at home.... Correcting all of their spelling mistakes at this point will only discourage them and keep them from writing their true thoughts (Stormer 6).

When the writer of this chapter was working on a Master's degree in English and teaching Composition, all student teachers were likewise told to de-emphasize spelling. "After all, if college students don't know how to spell by now, they probably never will. Besides, that's what spell check is for." However, we were instructed to only ignore spelling in the first draft of their essays so as not to *interfere* with the creative

process, but they were never allowed to turn in a final draft without proofreading it themselves and by one other person. (This is a practice that many preachers would do well to follow when submitting manuscripts.)

So, how extensive are the problems in public education, and what is the philosophy that drives it? Ironically, or perhaps not, the same philosophy that is guiding public education is equivalent to the ideology which has captured many in the church: liberalism. The goals of this chapter are to: (1) show the symptoms of our current school problems, (2) provide a historical sketch of our educational system, (3) consider current problems in the classroom, and (4) compare the methods of liberals in the church with liberals in public education.

AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE FAILING

Many of the statements made in this chapter, one must realize, are generalizations. Not all schools are humanistic to the core, and not all teachers in schools teaching along humanistic lines believe that doctrine themselves, but the criticisms leveled at our public school system are legitimate and overall applicable. Many parents have no idea about the development of our public schools, what has occurred in the past, or what is even happening now. Thomas Sowell assessed this reality thus: "If every parent in America knew what was really going on in the public schools, there would be a revolution" (Stormer ix). A summary of the symptoms of the problem ought to make us want to delve deeper into this topic.

Mathematics

Comedians have joked about the *new math* for nearly three decades, but sadly American students cannot do simple calculations without calculators and have fallen behind the rest of the world. "As of 1991, only 11 percent of the eight-grade students in California's public schools could solve seventh-grade math problems" (Sowell 1). Having occasionally taught mathematics, this writer had a stock answer for students when they asked if they could use calculators in class or on a test: "I know that the calculator can do the work; I need to know if *you* can do it." Yet many of the public schools have opted to take the easy way out.

> When a Westport, Massachusetts mother...found that her daughter couldn't do simple third grade math without using a calculator, she was told that the school wasn't going to teach the multiplication tables.

> She formed a parent's group, filed for the school board and despite being labeled a "religious radical" was elected.... She and her husband...have withdrawn their three children from the public school district where she serves on the board. They'll go to a private school which teaches the multiplication tables. She told the superintendent, 'My kids are not guinea pigs. They have one chance at education. I can't risk sacrificing them for your theories' " (Stormer 4).

Most people are aware of the math deficiencies in society from experience. How often has someone been charged an amount such as $10.27, handed the clerk a twenty, and then said, "Oh, I have the twenty-seven cents"—only to see a blank stare, as if someone just told him three of his teeth fell out? "I already rang it up," he will say—and then meticulously count out the $9.73 that the cash register told him to return to the customer. The reason is not that he is stupid (well, maybe); he has never been taught or trained how to calculate anything for himself.

Thomas Sowell tells of "an international study of 13-year-olds which found that Koreans ranked first in mathematics and Americans last." Perhaps the reader has heard a talk show host or a comedian comment on the additional significance of the study: "When asked if they thought they were 'good at mathematics,' only 23 percent of the Korean youngsters said 'yes'—compared to 68 percent of American 13-year-olds" (3). Americans, therefore, did the worst of all the countries in the study, but more than two-thirds thought they were doing a good job. We have failed to keep our children competitive in mathematics, but we have been tremendously successful in building up their self-esteem.

The reality is, however, that we are hurting ourselves. "As of 1989, just over one-fourth of all doctorates awarded at American universities were awarded to foreigners," noted Anthony DePalma of *The New York Times*. He also reported: "In mathematics and engineering, half or more of all Ph.D.s awarded at American universities have been earned by foreigners" (qtd. in Sowell 269). The National Science Foundation discovered: "Only 40 percent of the Ph.D.s in engineering awarded in the United States in 1990 went to Americans" (Sowell 286).

U.S. World and News Report published an article in 1982, titled "Why Johnny Can't Count." Sadly, the fact is that all

> Soviet students study Algebra, for example, compared with only half of American students. Calculus is taken by all Russian high-school

> students, but by only 3 percent of students in U.S. schools (LaHaye 20).

Not only are American students not being competitive, some are going to find it difficult to simply function in daily life. Students were asked: "If a doctor's prescription advises that you take one capsule every twelve hours, how many capsules should you take a day?" Incredibly, one out of four could not figure it out (LaHaye 23). Having a high self-esteem is poor compensation for ignorance.

History

So many of the courses now being taught have a different emphasis than those in the past. Things once regarded to be of significance in understanding the development of this nation have been replaced by discussions of both minor and popular figures. Why fill children's minds with stuffy old historical details, such as the hardships of Valley Forge or the Gettysburg Address when they can learn about Marilyn Monroe and the National Organization of Women?

Having done a considerable amount of substitute teaching from 1979 to 1985, this penman was privy to what was being taught in a wide variety of classes from woodworking to typing to physical education, as well as the usual English, mathematics, science, and various social studies courses. One history teacher (also a coach) constructed his class in the same way every week. On Monday and Tuesday he would discuss some things pertaining to that unit of study, and the students would have class time to write out the definitions of 25 terms. On Wednesday and Thursday he would show movies relating to the historical period. Friday would be the test over all the material. The first person finished the exam in three minutes. Five minutes was average; some took as long as seven. There was no assignment given for the rest of the class period. How did the students complete their work so speedily? The test was a standardized one that came with the textbook, and it consisted of ten questions. Some were fill-in-the-blank. Others were multiple choice. What happened to the essay questions that were once required to demonstrate that the student had a grasp of history?

First of all, the facts in many cases go untaught. Second, it is hard to assemble theories and reason from the data when that foundation has never been established. Kilpatrick observes that "students coming out of American high schools simply don't know many facts." He goes on

to mention that a significant percent of graduates cannot find the United States on a map and cannot distinguish World War I from World War II. Then he adds: "As for critical thinking, a 1989 survey of *college seniors* found that one quarter of them could not distinguish between the thoughts of Karl Marx and the United States Constitution" (116-17).

When students know neither facts nor content, something is drastically wrong.

> A substitute teacher in a Virginia suburb who polled his students in three advance government classes a few years ago found that fifty-one out of fifty-three of them saw no moral difference between the American system of government and that of the Soviet Union. The two who could see a difference were both Vietnamese boat children (Kilpatrick 124).

For years we have been hearing of the failure of our schools. Gary Allen reported in 1979 that one poll revealed that "only three percent of the nation's high-school seniors can correctly identify Alaska and Hawaii as the last two states admitted to the union" and that "fifty-six percent cannot identify the nation's most populous state" (LaHaye 15). Young people may not know many historical facts, but they feel good about themselves. In Los Angeles, about twenty years ago, a reporter spent some time speaking with graduating seniors; he described his conversation with one young man who was reputed to be "the smartest student in his class." When asked what he had learned that year, he answered: "I learned that in the Vietnam War, North and South Korea fought against each other, and then there was a truce at the 38th parallel, and that Eisenhower had something to do with it."

The Korean War was fought between the years of 1950-53. Eisenhower was president when the armistice was signed. However, all of that had nothing to do with the Vietnam war. The reporter asked this *smartest* student if it would bother him to know that his knowledge was incorrect? He replied:

> Not really. Because what we really learned from Miss Silver was that we were worth listening to, that we could express ourselves and that an adult would listen, even if we were wrong. That's why Miss Silver will always be our favorite teacher. She made us feel like we mattered, like we were important.

Since when has it been the function of a history class to teach that students full of misinformation are worth listening to? The students may have liked Miss Silver because she was their *buddy* and con-

tributed to their self-esteem; any of them who decide to go to college, however, will have a rude awakening. Most college professors are academically inclined and too busy to worry about ill-prepared students with bruised egos. Incredibly, the *smartest* student's teacher viewed her job just as the students perceived it:

> I want to be real in class and be a human being.... And I want my students to know that they can be themselves and I'll listen to them. I want every one of them to have a chance to express himself or herself. Those are my priorities (Sowell 5).

Many teachers are *real*, but they also teach the material in a course that students need. If she views her job to be a listener while students express themselves, she should have gone into counseling. Her smartest student possesses only a vague concept of history; Miss Silver's priorities are wrong, and she was not hired to set her own personal goals above the needs of the student. Teachers like her are failing to **educate**.

Reading

For a number of years, there has been a running battle between teaching reading by Phonics versus Look-Say. Studies have shown that phonics is superior. In 1955 Rudolph Flesch published a landmark book, titled *Why Johnny Can't Read*. He listed eleven studies that had been done at that time and commented: "All of them gave results in favor of phonics-first; not a single one favored look-and-say. The scientific proof was complete and overwhelming" (qtd. in LaHaye 36). In 1981 he published *Why Johnny Still Can't Read*. By this time there had been 124 studies completed in which both methods were evaluated. Flesch asks: "How many of them proved the superiority of look-and-say? Not one—not a single, blessed one" (qtd. in LaHaye 36).

The pleas to return to phonics in reading have been largely ignored in public schools. Sykes mentions a 1985 study, titled *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, which was commissioned by the National Institute of Education. Their results were likewise clear: "Classroom research shows that, on the average, children who are taught phonics get off to a better start in learning to read than children who are not taught phonics" (103). Look-Say is also referred to as the "whole language" approach, and it is "an extension of child-centered and progressive educational ideas in vogue in John Dewey's time" (108). (More on John Dewey will be presented in the next major section.) Sykes makes no bones about his personal view of this system:

> The classic example of the repetition used to bolster the look-say method was the mind-numbingly inane Dick and Jane series of books. In 1930, the Dick and Jane pre-primer taught a total of 68 different words in 39 pages of text; by 1950, the pre-primer had grown to 172 pages, but the number of words had been cut to 58 (102).

Samuel Blumenfeld sees something sinister in the adoption of an inferior system of reading. Commenting on Flesch's studies proving phonics superior, he said:

> What Flesch didn't know is that professors already knew that. They knew it when they ***devised*** the look-say method [emph—GWS]. Dewey had in fact already admitted that children taught by look-say would not read as well as those taught by phonics. Huey happily admitted that children taught by look-say would misread all over the lot, Hall had shamelessly extolled the virtues of illiteracy, and Gates had acknowledged that slow learners found look-say "overwhelmingly difficult" (120).

Although these comments may sound radical or prejudiced, their validity will become clearer in the next section that discusses the history and philosophy of public education.

SAT Scores

Declining SAT scores can scarcely be news to most Americans. Perhaps the Look-Say method is partially to blame for this deterioration (as television might also be). Blumenfeld records the SAT verbal skills rising two points from 1952 to 1963, reaching a high of 478. Three years later, those scores had fallen eleven points to 467. By 1970, they had fallen further to 460, and in 1977 they were 429 (94). Imagine how badly public education was failing—to drop almost fifty points in verbal skills in only 14 years! To make it worse, it was discovered that the SAT tests themselves had been dumbed down, making them 8 to 12 points easier after 1963 than before. LaHaye quotes Copperman's interpretation of these deceptive scores.

> Thus, the real drop in verbal aptitude between 1963 and 1977 was not 49 points, it was approximately 59 points, and the real drop in math aptitude was not the indicated 32 points, but 42 points. The 59-point drop in verbal aptitude means that 75 percent of the high-school seniors taking the test in 1977 scored below the average recorded in 1963 (19).

Of course, the *up* side is that we all feel good. As Sykes points out, the traditional teacher was a "distributor of knowledge"; in progressive classrooms, the teacher is a "guide to educational experience" (273). He

also observes that in 1983 "40 percent of seventeen-year-olds could not draw inferences from written materials; four-fifths were unable to write a persuasive essay; two-thirds were unable to solve mathematical problems with multiple steps" (238). He cites several other pieces of evidence that corroborate these figures and then points out what should be obvious: "Where early reading materials are dumbed down, later materials tend to be dumbed down as well" (129).

Teachers

A contributing factor to dumbed down materials and students is that many of the teachers are just a tad on the dim side. Again, no offense is intended to the thousands of quality and conscientious teachers doing their best, but some of their colleagues do not match their level of competency. The reader may have, at one time or another, seen sessions of "Jay-Walking," when Jay Leno of *The Tonight Show* interviews people on the street to test their general knowledge. The viewer literally drops his jaw at what people do not know. Some attribute the Civil War to a time in the 1900s and the Revolutionary War to 1850! The worst thing about some of these people is that they admit to being teachers!

Stormer records an appalling fact:

> Before granting teaching certificates to new college graduates, Massachusetts decided to give 200 of them a basic reading and writing test. When 56% flunked, the State Board of Education at first decided to grade on a curve so that only 44% would fail. Then because of the public outcries it reversed itself so that all 56% or 1200 did fail (13).

The Massachusetts House Speaker said he has seen the tests and could not understand why a prospective teacher could not "define a noun or a verb." He rather pointedly stated that those who gave these teachers degrees were "idiots" and then added: "The teachers' colleges are conferring degrees that are as meaningless as a piece of used Kleenex that's been lying in the gutter after last week's rainstorm" (13-14). Unfortunately, this problem is not confined to one state or one region of our country. Nash imparts the following relevant information:

> In 1983, for example, school teachers in Houston, Texas, were required to take a competency test. Forty-six percent failed the math section while 26 percent could not pass the writing exam. As if this weren't bad enough, 763 of the more than 3,000 teachers taking the test cheated (77).

Time magazine even noted the problem by publishing a cover story with the title: "Help! Teacher Can't Teach!" on June 16, 1980. Among

other things the article mentioned that a third-grade teacher in Chicago wrote the following on the blackboard: "Put the following words in alfabetical [sic] order." A fifth-grade teacher from Mobile, Alabama, sent the following note home to a boy's parents: "Scott is dropping in his studies he acts as if he don't care. Scott want pass in his assignment at all, he had a poem to learn and he fell to do it" (78). Besides the use of the wrong words (*want* for *won't* and *fell* for *failed*), there is a comma splice and a run-on sentence. How this person obtained a Master of Education degree from a university is a marvel.

Thomas Sowell tells of an *extreme case* of a teacher in South Carolina, whose English could be rated as substandard. The school board wanted to get rid of her:

> At a hearing where she was given a ten-word vocabulary test, she could neither pronounce nor define the word "agrarian." She could pronounce the word "suffrage" but defined it as "people suffering from some reason or other." The word "ratify" she defined as "to get rid of something." In her own defense, she said: "I'm not saying I was the best, but I don't think I did more harm than anyone else." A judge ordered her reinstated (23).

Several authors validated the conclusion drawn by this writer concerning education courses. It was the unofficial belief that at the university he attended that, if someone could not get a degree in an academic field, he would obtain one in Education—because they required much less work. In one ***graduate*** level course, the reading was minimal, the largest assignment was to write ten summary paragraphs of articles in various periodicals, and the tests were multiple choice. The *A* was easily achieved, and the work it required was about an hour a week (as opposed to about ten hours a week for most graduate classes).

Thomas Sowell affirms that students in education are the least qualified of any in the university and that their professors are "the least respected by their colleagues." He further adds:

> The word "contempt" appears repeatedly in discussions of the way most academic students and professors view their counterparts in the field of education....
>
> When the president of Harvard University retired in 1933, he told the institution's overseers that Harvard's Graduate School of Education was a "kitten that ought to be drowned." More recently, a knowledgeable academic declared, "the educationists have set the lowest possible standards and require the least amount of hard work." Education

> school and education departments have been called "the intellectual slums" of the university (23-24).

The reader may be thinking, "What a gloomy outlook on American education! Students are not learning; teachers can't teach; we're falling below the levels of other nations in verbal skills and mathematical abilities." Yes, all these things are so, but the worst is yet to be discussed.

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Many people may be unaware that the thirteen colonies began with no *public* education system comparable to what exists today. "Contrary to popular belief, the Constitution of the United States makes no mention of education" (Blumenfeld 1). As early as 1636, Harvard University was established. Common schools were also begun, as well as grammar schools in more populated areas. Eventually, laws were enacted to establish these schools, but private schools were already in operation. "By 1720, for example, Boston had far more private schools than public ones" (Blumenfeld 4). Incidentally, "wherever state governments showed an interest in promoting schools, private schools were also eligible for subsidies," and the fact is that "most parents preferred them to the public ones" (Blumenfeld 5).

Most of this country's early grammar schools taught Latin and Greek, and they were not ashamed to teach the Scriptures. Many times teaching had two purposes in view. One was so people could read the Bible; the other was to prepare people for various occupations. Many families had what was called a *Hornbook*. It consisted of a piece of paper glued to a small, flat piece of wood—not unlike a ping pong paddle. Its name derives from the transparent coating put on it, which came from the horn of a cow. It contained the alphabet and a verse of Scripture, such as what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer."

The New England Primer was an actual book. According to *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, the earliest edition that survives was published in 1727 (although one was published as early as 1690), and it sold millions of copies, proving popular even into the nineteenth century. It contained the alphabet, rudiments of reading, rules of behavior, hymns, a history of the martyrs, and the prayer, "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" (710). The decided religious emphasis was perfectly acceptable to our founding fathers; how ironic that just about all references to God, the Bible, and prayers must be absent from today's schools. God was

part and parcel of the lives of the settlers of this country; excluding God from public life would undoubtedly have been unthinkable, not to mention unimaginable, to them.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

What could a Swiss-born, French philosopher possibly have to do with American public education? The answer is that he has had as much influence upon us as did a Prussian king. Rousseau (1712-1778) wrote his greatest and most influential works in Paris: *The Social Contract* (1762) and *Emile* (1762). He believed in what Humanists call autonomy—that man is his own authority (Benet 941). He extolled nature and glorified the emotions, making him the Father of French Romanticism (Benet 879-80). Emile is a young boy who is educated by the principles of nature. He learns by experience and observation, an idea which will be developed in this chapter shortly (Benet 312).

Rousseau "believed that we should encourage the natural development of young children and not impose adult ideas upon them before they can truly understand them" (Hirsch xiv). Thus the idea of "content-neutral" education has its roots in Rousseau. Sykes credits Rousseau as "the original philosopher of child-centered education" and cites author Robin Barrow's description of *Emile* as a blueprint that:

> challenged no less the presumption that [children] should be fed a body of information and socially hallowed maxims, that they should be veneered with knowledge, and that they needed moulding [sic], shaping and directing if they were to be responsible adults (201).

"In Emile's education, there is no emphasis on vocabulary" (202). Presumably, without an emphasis on vocabulary, the mechanics of spelling will likewise be absent; is this kind of teaching beginning to sound familiar? "Rousseau argues that it was unimportant for students to know how to find Beijing on a map. Instead they would spend their time acquiring 'useful knowledge'" (202). In Rousseau's child-centered education, youths study only what interests them. Rousseau, who was both a Catholic and a Protestant during his life, must not have had much use for the book of Proverbs (22:6, 15).

The movement away from particulars, details, and facts, however, was only part of Rousseau's ideology. "Children should not learn morality from books" (202). Just as they were to be unguided in education, they should naturally discover their own morality as well. As previously mentioned, Rousseau was the father of French Romanticism; Kilpatrick's evaluation of this philosophy is accurate:

> The Romantic movement rediscovered art, mystery, and irrationality. And it rediscovered emotions. In fact, it elevated emotion to a position it had never before held in the history of thought.... It was Rousseau who developed the doctrine of natural goodness in its most attractive form.... Since all individuals are different, each child would develop differently. But all would unfold in a positive direction: that is, into roses, marigolds, and sunflowers—not into poison ivy or skunkweed (103-104).

Rousseau could also be considered the father of the New Age movement due to his self-absorption. In his autobiographical *Confessions*, written between 1766-70, he paid tribute to himself, lamenting: "The person who can love me as I love is still to be born." He was further convinced that no one could show him "a better man...a heart more loving, more tender, more sensitive." Certain was he that, "If there were a single enlightened government in Europe, it would have erected statues to me" (Kilpatrick 104).

The French *genius* does have his statues. Whenever someone mutters the words, "Whatever feels right is right," there is a shrine to Rousseau. What began in American popular culture in the sixties are simply monuments to this man. Anyone who is "getting in touch with his feelings" or "letting it all hang out" is following in the footsteps of this man (106). Debbie Boone crooned, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right," which pays homage to him. Alabama's "Feels So Right" and dozens of other pop and country songs have provided him the attention he thought he deserved.

Of course, the original purpose for education, as already noted, was in part to educate young people morally. *McGuffey's Readers* were widely used to teach children. In fact, from 1836 to 1920 they "were so widely used that they sold more than 122 million copies—second in sales only to the Bible" (Sowell 7). Historian Henry Steele Commager, who taught at Harvard, was asked to write an introduction to the reissue of *McGuffey's Fifth Reader* in 1960. He noted that in all six levels of the series that:

> the morality is pervasive and insistent, there is rarely a page but addresses itself to some moral problem, points up some moral lesson—industry, sobriety, thrift, propriety, modesty, punctuality—these were essential virtues and those who practiced them were sure of success.... The world of the McGuffeys was a world where no one questioned the truths of the Bible, or their relevance to everyday conduct (Stormer 41).

Anyone who has even a slight knowledge of our public school systems knows that the philosophy of Rousseau has won out over the teaching of morality and biblical values. Where does selfishness and self-absorption lead to? We might make a convincing case that it leads to young people taking weapons into schools and killing their classmates and teachers before killing themselves. It would probably not be difficult to imagine that a great deal of the coarseness and crudity of modern society springs from this emphasis upon the glorious Self. In Rousseau's case, we know how his wonderful theories of casting off self-restraint and "doing his own thing" played out. All five of his children he abandoned to orphanages (Kilpatrick 105). But what could be expected from a man who, at the age of 55, wrote:

> I love to dream, but freely allowing my mind to wander without enslaving myself to any subject...this idle and contemplative life... becomes to me daily more delicious; to wander alone endlessly and ceaselessly among the trees and rocks about my dwelling, to muse or rather to be as irresponsible as I please...finally to give myself up unconstrainedly to my fantasies...that, sir, is for me the supreme enjoyment... (208-209).

He could have been the poster child for the song, "Call Me Irresponsible." Unfortunately, many of his anti-morality and anti-broad education ideas have been made a part of American schools—and with the same evil results.

Robert Owen

Public education, in the form we now have it, did not develop here until the 1840s. Many probably have no idea of the impetus behind this movement; Blumenfeld explains the process:

> The idea of a state-owned and –controlled education system did not even originate in America. It was imported from Prussia, where an authoritarian monarchy used centralized government-owned and –controlled schools and compulsory attendance for its own political and social purposes (1).
>
> That system had been set up in 1819, and Robert Owen claims in his autobiography that the Prussian system was built on his ideas.... But the Prussian system was a model of centralized control, and it had the one feature that Owen considered indispensable for a successful state system: state training schools for teachers. It was acknowledged by the Prussians that you really could not control education until you controlled the teachers and their indoctrination (15).

In 1818 Robert Owen of Scotland announced to the world that "he had discovered the basic principle of moral improvement" (10). Of course, Owen's theories of moral improvement were entirely devoid of God or Christianity; he was an atheist—in fact, the atheist who debated Alexander Campbell in Cincinnati in April of 1829. His ideas of family, children, and education, therefore, were not based on Christian principles. In this debate, for example, he stated: "The invention of unnatural marriages has been the sole origin of all sexual crimes" (127). By *unnatural marriage* he referred to those who feel forced to remain married when love has departed. People ought to be free to divorce and remarry at will. Actually, his philosophy on this point has been adopted, and now society is faced with the mess that has been created.

Concerning children he had much to say about the future kind of society that he considered ideal. His tenth point is: "All children born in the new state of existence shall be from their birth under the special care of the society to which they belong" (134). Is this the more verbose way of saying, "It takes a village"? Owen would be generous enough to allow parents to "have free intercourse to and with their children" during the period of their character formation, but his twelfth point is that character "can never be well formed under any single family arrangement" (134). The eleventh point provides that all children "shall be trained and educated together, by the society, as the children of one family" (134). No wonder he is called "the father of socialism" (Blumenfeld 10). Some of the principles implemented currently in education can be traced to Owen—especially what he presented in the debate under point number 24:

> As soon as the members of these communities shall be educated from infancy in a knowledge of the divine laws of their nature, trained to act in obedience to them, and they shall be surrounded by circumstances all in unison with these laws, there shall be no individual punishment or reward.
>
> All these educated, trained, and placed must, of necessity, at all times, think and act rationally, except they shall become, physically, intellectually or morally diseased, and in this case the council shall direct the best mode of cure, by removing them into the hospital for bodily or mental invalids until they shall be recovered by the mildest treatment that can effect their cure (136).

This description is chilling; it has all the makings of a Robin Cook thriller, which could even be titled, *The Mildest Treatment*. The statement also brings to mind George Orwell's *groupthink*. What happens

if someone wants to be an individual—if he wants to think for himself? He will have to be "treated" for such a malady. Owen thought that education was too important to be left "to chance," by which he meant allowing it to remain in private hands (Blumenfeld 11).

Owen generated many followers throughout the 1820s, one of whom was a feminist named Frances Wright. She stumped for national education, "conducted under the guardianship of the state, at the expense of the state, for the honor, the virtue, the salvation of the state" (13). Owen's popularity waned after this decade due to the failure of his experiment in New Harmony, Indiana, financial reverses (Benet 748), and the sound defeat of his principles suffered at the hands of Alexander Campbell.

Horace Mann

Owen's followers were not the only ones who wanted a public education system, however. Nash comments: "The major impetus for change within in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts came from the ever increasing influence and power of Unitarians in New England in the first half of the nineteenth century" (115). He names Horace Mann as the single most influential person. "Horace Mann was to education in the nineteenth century what John Dewey was to the twentieth century" (LaHaye 38). In fact, he led the campaign to make public education compulsory (38). Nash claims: "Massachusetts became the first state to abandon state support for private schools and adopt a government monopoly for funding schools." Unitarians deny the doctrine of the Trinity and somewhat correspond to modern-day Sadducees: they do not place much emphasis on the working of God (either His use of miracles or His providence); their reliance upon man and his abilities puts them into the Humanist camp.

Many had begun to turn away from the Bible for answers, looking at psychology and the theories of men for inspiration. German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) "replaced the objectively real God with a subjective Pantheism in which man was revealed as the highest manifestation of God in the universe" (Blumenfeld 14-15). This kind of thinking, as Rousseau's did, exalted man—who just needed to be liberated from his restraints. To emphasize the secular more and the religious less, "the Harvard-Unitarian elite would look toward Prussia for their statist models" (15). Was there a clamoring for public schools on the part of the populace? Not at all.

> The free market favored private education, and the new private academies were springing up all over the country, particularly in Massachusetts where the town-supported common schools were being abandoned by the middle class (13).

When the principles of the Prussian system were translated into English in 1833, "it was exactly what the public school movement needed, and it was distributed among American educators who began to arrive at a consensus that the Prussian system was the way to go" (15).

Thus the groundwork had been laid for public education by "the Owenites, Unitarians, and Hegelians." Horace Mann was a gifted orator and a lawyer elected to public office (rather than an educator); he was the only one who was able to overcome the objections concerning statism.

> The key to Mann's success was in his peculiar sense of mission, combined with his practical political experience as a legislator, and the strong financial, cultural, and social backing of the Harvard Unitarian elite (16).

Horace Mann is thus considered "the father of public education" (LaHaye 63).

John Dewey

The people discussed in this section really had an impact on public education. Any education course will discuss these men—but probably not from the same perspective given in this chapter. To our universities these men are heroes, but to Christians they are not; they and their ideas have made public education into what it is today. Probably the most influential person of all is John Dewey (1859-1952), a man who (in this writer's judgment) could take more words to say something unintelligible than anyone. To read even one of his philosophical paragraphs is to subject oneself to torture of the cruelest kind.

Dewey is called "the father of progressive education"; he was a committed world socialist and a signer of Humanist Manifesto I (La Haye 47). That document defined *humanism* as believing that the universe is self-existing (rather than created), that man is here by means of a continuous process (evolution, in other words), and that "there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural" (Stormer 35). Dewey's beliefs and influence have chartered the course for this nation's schools.

He "argues that education for too long had been focused on 'the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself' " (Sykes 203), thus echoing Rousseau. Dewey also shows similarity with him in this assessment: "A knowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present, but not otherwise" (Sykes 204). It ought to come as no surprise, therefore, that in Dewey's book on education, *Schools of To-morrow*, he "acknowledges Rousseau as the chief source of his educational principles" (Hirsch xv). Truly, Dewey summed up much of the current philosophy of education with these sentiments:

> We violate the child's nature and render difficult the best ethical results by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies, of reading, writing, geography, etc. out of relation to his social life…the true center of correlation of the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities (Stormer 36).

Some of those who built on Dewey's "learn by doing" approach transformed that idea "into an educational philosophy in which the child came before the subject matter" (Sykes 209). Under this ideology, instead of subject matter being paramount, teachers aim at educating "the whole child"; this approach is also referred to as "child-centered education" (Sowell 93). Hirsch comments on the fallacy of this method:

> Dewey assumed that early education need not be tied to specific content. He mistook a half-truth for the whole. He placed too much faith in children's ability to learn general skills from a few typical experiences and too hastily rejected "the piling up of information" (Hirsch xv).

Historian Lawrence Cremin observed Dewey himself "pronounced progressive education a failure" in that it destroyed a better organized system with one that failed to do better (Sykes 208). Unfortunately, Americans are left with textbooks that are inferior and a system of public education that is failing, as demonstrated at the outset of this chapter.

CURRENT PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

A fallacy of child-centered education is that it assumes that children will not learn what they are not interested in; the fact is that people learn things they are not particularly fond of all the time. Frequently, people do not see the value of what they have learned until months or

years later. Hirsch is correct when he says that "it's chiefly to young children that the curriculum needs to be taught. They like to pick up adult information long before they can make sense of it" (130). For this reason young people are taught to memorize Scriptures: they learn them on one level at a young age, although they may not realize the significance of them until later.

Public education, from kindergarten to the college level, de-emphasizes memorization (rote learning) and treats it as some sort of holdover from the antediluvian world, but the fact is that memorization has great value in that it develops the mind in a way that other types of learning fail to do. Therefore, many see no value in memorizing the multiplication table or a poem. The value of learning the mechanics of spelling has been minimized (as already shown).

Even grades are of little use—so far as some teachers are concerned. Elementary school teachers have been heard to lament: "I just hate to give grades; some students are just so devastated." When this writer was in kindergarten, the system was quite simple: **S** stood for "Satisfactory," and **U** stood for "Unsatisfactory." Not only did pupils find out where they needed improvement; they got to learn two polysyllabic words. None of the kids ever showed up at the school the day after report cards were sent home with a long face, mourning a **U** (unless their parents gave them a stern physical reminder). Everyone had forgotten all about it by then. Now some elementary students are receiving **C** for "Consistently," **S** for "Sometimes, and **N** for "Not yet," which, as one parent pointed out, are ambiguous and meaningless (Sykes 242).

Many years ago schools adopted the policy that they would not fail a student. Once the budding geniuses figured out that they would advance to the next grade regardless of their poor performances, they had no motivation to study. This writer once substituted for a math teacher and took an entire class session to review the material they had already been taught. No one had any more questions with about ten minutes remaining in the period. In fact, one youngster was so knowledgeable that he kept trying to play with the toy cars he had brought that day. Grading the test revealed that very few knew the material; many scored below 50, indicating a lack of oxygen to the brain; others were barely comatose. One student commented: "He [referring to the regular teacher] only counts three points off for each incorrect answer." Since there were 25 questions on the test, that

system gave them a hefty gift of 25 points for free. As the Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff would say, "What a country!" Overheard in the hallway later was the solution to this puzzling dilemma. One student said to another: "Half the sixth grade is flunking, but they know that they'll be passed anyway."

Some colleges tried the Pass-Fail option for a while, instead of using the traditional grades. Most of them have given it up because students began to understand that working diligently was a waste of time. Why, after all, strive for an **A**, when a **D** will do the job just as nicely? Competition brings out the best in people. One individual convinced two volleyball teams to play "just for fun" and not keep score. Some immediately protested, but everyone cooperated with this new innovation. The lack of a goal (such as there being an end to the game), however, made the whole project seem pointless (no pun intended). It did not take long until everyone's performance became lackluster. What point is there in striving for excellence if achievement equals failure?

When this writer was working on a Master's degree, he taught freshman composition. His supervisor bemoaned the necessity of grades. Not evaluating the work of a student in a meaningful way, however, is a disservice. Many would choose to put forth little effort and settle for mediocrity; in fact, some do so even with grades. Each class contained a few students who thought they could succeed with a minimum amount of effort, and though they were assured on the very first day of class that this educational technique would not work, some were always skeptical, thinking surely they could squeak by. They were wrong. Many of our schools today are fostering a *just get by* attitude—one that is fearful of damaging a child's psyche, as though youngsters possess no resiliency whatsoever. Young people need to be challenged.

Self-Esteem

What is the current curriculum like, and what is the philosophy of the educational elite today? Several categories must be considered to obtain the full picture. As already alluded to frequently, teaching self-esteem seems to be more important to many than imparting knowledge. Rousseau believed "that a child's positive self-concept is the true key to learning" (Hirsch 119). Kilpatrick agrees that self-esteem is important—"but for the right reasons" (42). Feeling good about oneself

must result from doing a good job—not from mindless and meaningless praise. As noted earlier, American students feel good about their math skills even when they come in dead last in competition. While it is appropriate to congratulate students when they do well, the opposite effect is achieved when a youngster is praised for being close (2 + 2 = 5, for example). Self-satisfaction ought to be derived from doing the work well.

Did students suffer from poor self-esteem when schools were allowed to have a religious flavor? Imagine what things might be like if young people were taught that we are all made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), that one soul is worth more than the entire world (Mark 8:36-37), and that Jesus died for each individual's sins (1 John 2:2)! Instead, most are taught, either directly or by implication, that we are the product of random chance, that our bodies are physical only, and that when we die, our life ends. How depressing and fatalistic is that? No wonder people have the desire to think and act selfishly.

New Age

Primarily, New Age thinking moves away from the principles of rationality and Christianity. This writer frequently heard university professors make the comment: "If I were going to be religious, I would choose an Eastern religion, such as Hinduism or Buddhism." New Age doctrine is but a Western version of the same old mysticism that has been around for centuries. The focus of attention is the Self; the entire system is one of subjectivism, which explains why little (or nothing) can be termed *immoral*. "When Marilyn Ferguson wrote *The Aquarian Conspiracy* in 1980 she noted that" more New Agers were " 'involved in education than in any other category of work' " (Kilpatrick 214). These were teachers who had "broken with certain key elements of Western thought."

Some of these other ideas include the worship of earth, encouragement to experiment with the occult, and the veneration of American Indians. Over thirty years ago (1974) one high school was using the text, *Psychology For You*, by Sol Gordon, a signer of Humanist Manifesto II, which plainly endorses atheism, evolution, amorality, and autonomy. One parent described the book (being taught to high school juniors) as "a 'how to' manual to the occult world. It suggested devising an experiment with a Ouija board." Eight pages were devoted to meditation, Transcendental Meditation, and yoga (Schlafly 141-42).

A fourth-grade class in an Iowa school was taught how to make their own medicine bags. Made from deerskin, the pouch was "filled with special things, such as a red stone that symbolized" each student's place "on the medicine wheel astrology chart. This magic pouch would empower" students during times of special needs, such as when taking tests. Many of the students wanted to show the pouches to their parents, but the teacher forbade them to do so (Kjos 15).

Classrooms in one school "displayed at least one *dreamcatcher*—a magical spider web inside a sacred circle," which is supposed to protect students "from evil spirits and nightmares by catching the bad dreams but permitting good dreams to pass through the center." One fourth-grade teacher believed that "the amber crystal in the center of her dreamcatcher meant proper spiritual alignment with the energy of the universe" (Kjos 23).

Robert Muller Schools are thoroughly saturated with Eastern religion. When Berit Kjos visited the original one in Arlington, Texas, the director showed her two books which were crucial to understanding those schools. One was *Education in the New Age* by Alice Bailey; the second was the *Robert Muller World Care Curriculum Manual*, which stated plainly: "The underlying philosophy upon which the Robert Muller School is based will be found in the teaching set forth in the books of Alice A. Bailey by the Tibetan teacher, Djwhal Khul..." (41-42). In the event that the inference is not clear, Bailey served as a *channeler* for the departed Khul.

Most public schools would not go quite so far, but some teachers, at least, are not too far away. Environmental teachings can become pantheistic, which is also a tenet of New Ageism. A fifth-grader in California, during a field trip, was encouraged by a counselor "to stop to absorb the moment and hug the trees." He told the class: "You are the tree. You are one with all natural things" (Kjos 107). One father looked at his nine-year-old daughter's writing assignment, which was "What Bugs Me." He found that she had written that she was disturbed by a number of things, the first three of which were: (1) Prejudiced people, (2) People who kill, (3) Lumberjacks. The father commented on the connection of these three items in a letter to the *Washington Post*:

> It suddenly occurred to me why she should harbor this raging animus: Lumberjacks cut down trees. And in school, young children are being taught—or at least are coming home with the idea—that cutting down

> trees is the moral equivalent of genocide.... Her class had spent the last two months fretting about the rain forest. They had celebrated bio-diversity, learned to treasure our irreplaceable natural resources, and been invited to contemplate dire scenarios of eco-Armageddon. They had been steeped, in other words, in crisis (Kjos 113-14).

Obviously, children in many schools systems are being taught what some of the *politically correct* crowd believes: songs and poems that encourage the worship of the earth, Indian chants and prayers to the Great Spirit, a "pledge of allegiance to the Earth," etc. (Kjos 128). With all of the New Age tenets being taught in the public schools, it is not difficult to understand why American children are falling behind in basic skills.

Political Correctness

All kinds of agendas are being pushed by some teachers. One mother was surprised when her third-grade daughter came home from school, singing: "I hate housework. It is just no fun. Ladies on TV are paid to smile." The teacher had played this cute song by Marlo Thomas and Carol Channing for what purpose—to get them to grow up thinking that housework is demeaning and to be feminists (Schlafly)? One teacher used nursery rhymes to teach against gender stereotypes and gave an assignment to imagine "themselves as members of the opposite sex." A game is even available for the kids, called *Opportunity Knocks*; its purpose is to combat sex stereotyping. Girls are rewarded for subscribing to *Ms. Magazine* or joining the National Organization of Women but lose ground if their parents tell them to be neater and to act more like a lady (Sykes 153).

On the college campuses, political correctness is a major industry. A freshman student at Harvard, "trying to help some strangers find a table on which to eat lunch in a crowded dining room," removed a sign at a table which read: "Reserved HRGLSA." Unfortunately for him, those letters stood for Harvard Radcliffe Gay and Lesbian Students Association, a group as perverted in their compassion as they are in their sexuality. A public apology was not good enough; he was put on disciplinary probation just prior to the Christmas holidays—even though the Dean's Office knew he was already laden with personal problems. His father had been killed in an automobile accident, and though he was a high school football star, a physician had recently told him he could not play in college. He never returned to the campus

where he had been humiliated and interrogated as though he were a rapist/murderer. He committed suicide (Sowell 152-53).

In his book, *Illiberal Education*, Dinesh D'Souza presents several chapters on this subject, but one of the most striking examples of the prejudice and inflexibility that permeates political correctness is related by Thomas Sowell. He rightly assesses the situation as "the academic Dreyfus case of our time." Stephen Mosher elected to do an anthropology dissertation on conditions in China. What he found in the course of his studies was incredible. He

> shocked much of the world by revealing that country's widespread compulsory birth control program, including compulsory abortions, imposed on Chinese Women by the Communist government. He published a book on this subject, called *Broken Earth*.

If anyone would seem to have a lock on a Ph.D., it would be Mosher— but not at Stanford. The book became a best-seller, but the left wing anthropology department was irate. The fact that the Chinese government denounced Mosher's activities in their country did not help. People now had a different and more honest view of Maoist China. Mosher was terminated as a graduate student at Stanford and refused his degree. "Not one stated requirement for the doctorate in anthropology was even claimed to have been violated, nor the facts of his book challenged" (191-92). Both Harvard and Stanford ought to be ashamed.

Values Clarification

"Values Clarification got its start with the publication of *Values and Teaching* by Louis Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon—all professors of education" (Kilpatrick 80). Materials are now being used in the public schools that promote this ideology; some are using a curriculum "based on the approach formulated by Louis Raths, who in turn built upon the thinking of John Dewey." Raths, and therefore Values Clarification itself, "is not concerned with the *content* of people's values, but the *process of valuing*" (Sykes 162). Christina Hoff Sommers affirms that young people need to distinguish "between moral and nonmoral decisions. Values Clarification blurs the distinction" (Nash 55). The reason is that the "emphasis is on *learning how*, not on *learning that*. The student does not learn *that* acts of stealing are wrong; he learns *how* to respond to such acts" (54-55). What the teacher does with the class is somewhat what a psychiatrist typically

does with his patient, when, instead of discussing right and wrong, he asks, "How do you feel about that?"

A few samples of this technique may make the insidiousness of the approach clearer. Health and psychology textbooks used in public schools are making statements like these:

> It is not always wrong to challenge rules. Questioning, and even rebelling against some rules, is part of growing up.
>
> Everyone must develop his own set of principles to govern his own sexual behavior.
>
> Your decision about using marijuana is important to you. You should be the one to make it (Stormer 83).

This kind of teaching is both unethical and dangerous. Young people need guidance. To tell them to decide for themselves on something that violates their religious values, their parents' morals, and the laws of the land is unconscionable. What we see in Values Clarification is Rousseau's ideology gone to seed. Who gave the public school system the authority to teach against the laws and morality of society? Children are being asked questions, such as:

> What disturbs you most about your parents?
>
> Who is the "boss" in your family?
>
> Do you believe in God?
>
> How do you feel about homosexuality?
>
> Is there something you once did that you are ashamed of (Sowell 45)?

This is outrageous and an invasion of the student's (and his family's) privacy. In Tucson, a high school health class was asked: "How many of you hate your parents?" (Sowell 49). In March of 1984, hundreds of parents "traveled to one of seven locations to testify at U.S. Department of Education Hearings on proposed regulations for the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment." Of the 1,300 pages of testimony recorded, Phyllis Schlafly selected portions for her book, *Child Abuse in the Classroom*. Some parents' complaints related to values clarification being taught. Some reported questions being asked that a town gossip would thrive on.

> Do you believe in a God who answers prayers?
> Do you love your parents?
> Do you believe God created man in His own image?
> Would you rather live with someone else?
> Why did your parents get married?
> Do your parents ever lie to you (29-30)?

> Are you going to practice religion just like your parents?
> Do you have your own bedroom?
> What is your parents' income?
>
> How much time do your parents spend watching TV?
> "The trouble with being honest is _____."
> What would be the hardest thing for you to do: steal, cheat, or lie?
> How many of you ever wanted to beat up your parents (57)?
>
> If there really was a heaven, I'd go there if I die.
> Nothing is too good for me.
> To whom would you tell a secret? Your friend; Your teacher; Your parent.
> Which of these would you want most as a neighbor? A young blind person; A young crippled person; An old person (94).

In addition to questions and exercises such as these, there are scenarios, such as the famous one involving a young girl who sleeps with a man called Sinbad to help her "true love" out; a number of variations exist in the story. Students are invited to discuss and evaluate the actions of the five principle characters, sometimes even rating them on a morality scale (79-82). In a Preventive Guidance Counseling Program, children were forced to do things that embarrassed or humiliated them:

> One child, an 11-year-old girl, was placed in front of her counseling class to tell her "feelings" when she found her father dead.
>
> A second child was forced, under threat of a pink slip—a disciplinary action—to stand in front of a class and tell all the "feelings" and experiences of parents going through a divorce (34).

Such horrifying actions should have never occurred. Such schools are rotten from the inside out. Values Clarification has no part of the education system; it is a blatant attempt on the part of the schools to control the lives of the students and interfere in the lives of families. It forces children to make decisions without there being a proper foundation or ground for making them. With so much emphasis being placed upon things that are not the business of the school, it is hardly surprising that children are not learning information.

Undermining Parents

Some teachers have an unhealthy attitude toward parents, which is odd, since schools are financed in great part by taxpayers (which includes parents). "Any parent who has traditional ideas about right and wrong and the conduct of family life is likely to suffer by comparisons with facilitative teachers. 'Your parents don't understand you, but we

do,' seems to be an implicit message in the affective classroom" (Kilpatrick 39). Many parents may not even be aware of the different values that their children are being taught. "John Dewey...conspicuously omitted any mention of home or family in his otherwise exhaustive *Democracy and Education*" (252). How could the value of the home be left out entirely? "Paul Vitz' 1983 study of elementary school textbooks concluded that 'traditional family values have been systematically excluded from children's textbooks' " (252).

Not surprisingly, teachers are not eager for the parents to find out what they are doing in the classroom. Many "classroom group sessions end with the admonition, 'Don't tell your parents' " (Kjos 203). Stormer observes that the "Don't Tell" admonition is common (29). The final page of a "guidelines" packet for young people had **CONFIDENTIAL** stamped on the last page with the accompanying message: "Sometimes we might discuss things that are personal and private. We will not tell others what we hear in our meetings" (30). If it were not a matter of public record, few could believe that the following communication was sent to the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association to state representative in 1997:

> Counselors, teachers and administrators are...professionals who are able to take the needs of our students into account in a somewhat more objective manner than can parents. The idea that parents know what is best for their children is flawed at best.... A parent is much too close to the child and has seen them in far too different a set of circumstances to always be objective to their needs.... The issue of parents' rights is to a large extent an emotional rather than a logical one (84).

If this is not an arrogant statement, one wonders what it would take to qualify for one. A housewife from Portland, Oregon testified that fifty young people, age 14 and up, were told: "Your parents' values are different from yours. They grew up at a different time and have a different field of experience" (Schlafly 50). This *consultant* added that, up to now, their parents had " 'got away with' directing or controlling them. Every mention made of parents was negative." In another workshop in Oregon in 1980, students were encouraged "to air their gripes and discuss myths—meaning the restraints and restrictions that their parents and society place on them. They were left with the impression that they were smart enough to make *all* their own decisions without parental influence" (51).

Drugs

Unfortunately, Values Clarification techniques are used on a wide variety of topics, including drugs, sex education, death education, and socialistic endeavors. One study that ostensibly deals with drugs is called Quest. One expert who evaluated the program found that, out of a total of seven units, Quest had only one that provided factual information: "The subject is not drugs but selves" (Kilpatrick 40). One eight-year-old boy learned the message well. When his parents asked him what he got out of it, he replied that he learned that he should choose "for himself no matter what his parents might say." One of the program's exercises is the one titled "Emotion Clock." The student is to keep a record of "everything that makes you feel good or uncomfortable for one day" (40).

This *drug prevention* program has actually contributed to the increased use of drugs (46), which is no mystery, considering the techniques being used to teach it. Values Clarification never provides reasons why students should not use drugs; it encourages them to find their own way in the matter—how they *feel* about it. Naturally, in the absence of absolute standards, many will discover that they *feel* good about drinking, smoking pot, or moving on to even more damaging substances.

Sex Education

Unfortunately, this topic would fill a book all by itself. The same results that humanistic drug programs have are shared by humanistic sex education programs. Effie Quay wrote:

> All are agreed on one thing: Sex education in the schools has done nothing to curtail sexual activity among students but, rather, has stimulated promiscuity with a resultant upsurge in teenage pregnancies and venereal disease—the very problems that sex education is supposed to correct (LaHaye 161).

Many of the materials given to students, however, encourage sexuality, beginning with auto-eroticism and ending with an endorsement of young people living together outside of marriage. One school showed the film, *Achieving Sexual Maturity* without parental consent, a presumptive act that most schools would probably not do. It contained nudity and was explicit in its content (LaHaye 129).

Sweden and Denmark are examples of the bad results of liberal sex education programs (162-63). Anything that has anything to do with

SIECUS (the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States) should be avoided. *The SIECUS Circle* still makes interesting reading, and Tim LaHaye devoted an entire chapter to them in his book. One sampling involves Albert Ellis telling 1,000 Oklahoma State University students that "sex activity before marriage usually is not harmful or immoral" (122). With all of this wonderful advice, no one can be surprised that among 15 to 19-year-old females the pregnancy rate rose from 68 per thousand in 1970 to 96 per thousand in 1980.

Needless to say, failed programs do not deter liberals. A 1980 health textbook is certainly no deterrent: "Adolescent petting is an important opportunity to learn about sexual responses and to gratify emotional desires without a more serious commitment" (Stormer 49). A 1981 textbook gleefully remarks: "Delbert and Sally are living together while they are in college. They do not expect to marry...they feel that living together provides each with love, affection, and support" (49-50). The statistics just continue to worsen: "By 1993, one out of five children," from the ages of 13 to 15, said they had had sexual intercourse. An unbelievable 72 percent said they were "sexually active before they were old enough to have a driver's license" (Sykes 165).

Senator Sam Hayakawa protested before the U.S. Senate the Values Clarification techniques being used on children: "To inquire into the sexual attitudes and beliefs of 8-year olds, to probe into their psyche and emotional problems, real or imagined, rather than into the level of their intellectual achievements, these are serious invasions of privacy" (Schlafly 194). He is right, but some have adopted the practice of mixing sex with religion, reminiscent of Baal or the prostitutes of Corinth. Those that lean on the New Age philosophy are passing on Pagan concepts, as in the Sun Bear books, in which this quote may be found: "Many native cultures refer to making love as sharing energy or merging energy.... [I]n the natural cycle of life, the most powerful thing we can do is share our energies with each other." Starhawk wrote a similar message: "Sexuality is a sacrament" (Kjos 92).

What can the adults who put together these types of materials be thinking? Each year society experiences more pregnancies, more abortions, and more problems associated with venereal disease. In fact, it was announced earlier this year that a brand new one has been discovered. How long will it be before *educators* begin to catch on to the fact that abstinence works? Many young people have been convinced that they are protected if they use condoms, which do not work

10 percent of the time, but if a woman is under eighteen, the failure rate nearly doubles—18 percent (Sykes 60). The AIDS virus is 410 times smaller than sperm, which means that pregnancy is not the only problem.

Young people should abstain from all sexual experimentation because God created us, He knows what is in our best interests, and He has condemned sex outside of marriage (Heb. 13:4). Humanists decry that notion and attack it head on. In a widely used text for junior high and high school students, *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives*, young people are told: "If you feel your parents are overprotective...or if they don't want you to be sexual *at all* until some distant time, you may feel you have to tune out their voice entirely" (Sykes 53). After noting that many "Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims believe sex outside of marriage is sinful," they suggest, "You will have to decide for yourself how important these messages are for you." Is this approach not equivalent to what Satan did in the Garden of Eden? He argues that God was holding back something that was good for them to have. Likewise, these humanists do everything they can to extol the pleasures of sex, knowing that young people will be curious and want to experiment anyway. One factor that kept many teenagers from fornication in years past was their knowledge that both religion and society pronounced such actions sinful. Now the schools say it is okay, and many religions look the other way. Public education has not helped the family or society.

Death Education

One would almost suspect that the zero population growth advocates have had a hand in planning curriculum for the schools. In addition to readin', writin', and 'rithmetic, many schools are teaching about **death** in the elementary grades. Children are being taken on field trips to morgues or to funeral parlors. Sowell posits that the purpose is desensitization. Some "death education" courses include assignments in which students are asked to write their own epitaphs or even a suicide note. They are also encouraged to discuss deaths that have occurred in their families (37). The trip to the mortuary includes learning about decomposition and embalming techniques (LaHaye 211). Sometimes teachers ask students if they believe in heaven or hell and then ridicule those who do, thus intimidating their participation in any future

discussions (LaHaye 215). Besides desensitization, some have a second goal:

> An eighth grader in the Peoria public schools, after a tour of a local mortuary, asked his teacher, "Why did we go there? That place gives me the creeps!" The answer... "By seeing how really peaceful people are in death, you will realize that euthanasia isn't so bad after all" (LaHaye 221).

Is that the reason so many were willing to accept the death of Terry Schaivo? "She will be more at peace; she will be better off," are comments frequently heard. Are some promoting a culture of death in our society? Both euthanasia and suicide are being glorified.

> During the 1992-93 school year 6th and 7th grade students in Palm Desert, California were shown a video titled, *CARL*. Sequences in the film showed a boy being teased and praying to God for help. Then the hymn "Amazing Grace" played as the video showed the silhouette of the boy's body hanging in his room. The funeral message was: "We are here to celebrate the death of Carl, for he is now experiencing happiness that eluded him in life.... From this day on he will find a better life" (Stormer 55).

What kind of lesson does this teach impressionable young children, if not that, when things get rough, rather than gird up the loins of one's mind and become tougher, the simplest thing to do is to take "the final solution"? Rather than regard death as the ultimate enemy of mankind (which has historically been the predominant view), death has now been dressed up and disguised to look like a friend. In 1962 the nation recorded 550 young people taking their own lives; since "death education" programs have been instituted, almost 6,000 teen suicides are occurring annually.

Socialism

If students are being taught socialistic dogma today, it is simply another legacy of John Dewey, who said: "Children who know how to think for themselves spoil the harmony of the collective society which is coming, where everyone is interdependent" (36). What? To be sure, individualism is under attack. B. F. Skinner of Harvard, whom *Time* magazine called the most influential American Psychologist, wrote a popular book—*Beyond Freedom and Dignity.* Paid for by tax dollars, he assaults what most of us believe in:

> My book is an effort to demonstrate how things go bad when you make a fetish out of individual freedom and dignity. If you insist that

> individual rights are the "summum bonum"; then the whole structure of society falls down (Carter 102).

What is the alternative to individual rights? God made us as individuals with a free will, and our Constitution guarantees various rights as citizens of this nation. Many of the *educated* are not satisfied with either of these. In 1975 Henry Steele Commager wrote a Declaration of Interdependence which promoted Globalism. Marjorie Holt objected to it; part of her rationale is given below.

> I want the record to show my strong opposition to this Declaration. It calls for the surrender of our national sovereignty to international organizations. It declares that our economy should be regulated by international authorities. It purposes that we enter a "New World Order" that would redistribute the wealth created by the American people. Mr. Speaker, this is obscenity that defies our Declaration of Independence (Carter 103).

Many in public education, not to mention liberals in the Senate, would like to see our nation move in this direction. Some, in fact, are extreme in their support of world socialism. Chester M. Pierce, a Harvard professor, actually spoke these words in a 1972 keynote address before the Association for Childhood Education International:

> Every child in America entering school at the age of five is insane because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being.... It's up to you, teachers, to make all of these sick children well by creating the international children of the future (Kjos 160).

Not only do these eggheads think they are right, they think normal, everyday parents have made their children mentally ill because they have not achieved the superior intellect of a college professor. Samuel L. Blumenfeld wrote a significant book about the National Educational Association, which he titled, *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*. Its history and philosophy take up the entire book, but he definitely declares: "The NEA is as pro-socialist as John Dewey." His following summary statement portrays that organization accurately.

> All in all, the NEA is everything the communists believe a labor union in America should be: it is forming coalitions with other unions to exert maximum pressure on candidates and legislators; it backs Marxist revolution in Central America; it never criticizes the Soviet Union; no form of anti-communism can be found in its publications; it wages incessant warfare against conservatives, fundamentalist Christians and organizations of the New Right; it is working to bring all teachers and all private schools under government control through

> certification and accreditation laws; it hates capitalism and loves socialism; it is uncompromisingly atheistic in its adherence to evolution, behavioral psychology, and humanist moral values; it advocates sex education for children, abortion on demand, and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment; it advocates gun control in violation of the Second Amendment; it wants a nuclear freeze and disarmament. In short, for all practical purposes, the NEA might as well be the socialist party of America (199).

A one-world government (new world order) is one of the tenets of Humanist Manifesto II; it is not surprising that the NEA in particular and many schools in general are promoting these concepts.

Textbooks

Many of the textbooks in the past actually dealt with the subject matter of the course being taught. That was before Values Clarification, subjectivism, and political correctness invited themselves into the picture. Now things have changed considerably. Today's *algebra* book has lectures on "endangered species, air pollution, facts about the Dogon people of West Africa, chili recipes, a discussion of hot peppers and the role zoos should play in today's society" (Stormer 2). No wonder students look blank when asked about the Pythagorean Theorem. Senator Robert Byrd examined this *textbook* and concluded that it was

> a mush of multiculturalism, environmental and political correctness.... This awful textbook fails to do in 812 pages what Japanese textbooks do so well in 200. [That's why] the average math score in Japan is 80. In the United States it is 52 (Stormer 2).

Textbooks on the subject of marriage, being used in 8,000 college courses being taught across America were examined by the New York-based Institute for American Values. Their conclusion was: "These textbooks repeatedly suggest that marriage is more a problem than a solution" (47). New York University professor Paul Vitz studied more than 60 social studies texts and 640 stories in elementary reading books. He found that for social studies texts for the first four grades

> not one had one word of text that referred to any religious activity representative of contemporary life.
>
> In several sixth grade world history or world culture texts, Mohammed's life gets more coverage than that of Jesus.
>
> Many texts mention the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving but never acknowledge that they were giving thanks...to God (87).

The American Textbook Council found a number of deficiencies in the history textbook, *The United States and Its Neighbors*. Abraham Lincoln merited only two paragraphs—not much for one of four presidents on Mount Rushmore. Valley Forge receives no mention at all, thus eliminating a major time of hardship and sacrifice in our war for independence. "World War II is covered in less than four pages, introduced with the subhead, 'Another War'" (Sykes 134). "Another text made mention of Joan of Arc but made 'no reference to any religious aspect of her life'" (138). "In one textbook, students are told that global warming will melt the polar ice caps, causing floods that will cover coastal cities" (139). The slanted materials presented to grade and high school students persist in college. Below is an edited article that was published in *Spiritual Perspectives* on September 20, 1998, under the title "Anti-Bible Bias in College Textbooks."

> One of our college students...was shocked to discover the following at the very beginning of her history book. In answer to the heading question (Was Columbus the first to believe the earth was round?) the writer, Gloria Deak, comments:
>
> > Not at all. Every educated man in his day believed it was a sphere, and every European university taught the concept in geography classes. There were, of course, some who clung to the ancient biblical notions that the earth was a flat disk with Jerusalem in the center and that one could fall off the edge (3).
>
> This quotation appears in Volume I of *Our Nation's Heritage*, edited by Larry G. Bowman and Randolph B. Campbell.... The editors, in their glowing praise of Ms. Deak prior to the chapter's beginning, comment that "she provides her readers sensible answers to some of the more persistent misconceptions concerning Columbus' adventures" (1).
>
> It would appear, from the editors' comments and the writers' remarks, that academia is in sad shape. Graduate students are taught to document their facts. Their introductory (and obligatory) research course requires about ten to fifteen hours a week in the library. When the instructor assigns questions, he expects documented answers. At least, ten years ago that was the way the system operated. Apparently, those who write textbooks...are exempt from such petty scholarly annoyances.
>
> Deak makes two unsubstantiated statements: 1) That all the elite minds of Europe knew the world was round; 2) That only Bible-believers (obviously ignorant souls) believed the earth was flat with Jerusalem in the center. The inaccuracy of the latter statement forces one to question the former—or anything else this writer says. The student should ask some questions at this point.

> 1. What source is cited to establish what every European university taught about geography? Could the writer not list even one book that gives a summary of the beliefs of European university professors, with specific quotations? Ms. Deak has heard of footnotes, hasn't she?
>
> 2. To what ancient "biblical" notions does the writer refer? Presumably, if they are "biblical" notions, they could be traced to the Bible. Exactly what verse says the Earth is a flat disk? One cannot turn to Isaiah 40:22 for that information. God is described as "He that sits above the circle of the earth."
>
> 3. And what passage proclaims Jerusalem to be the center of the Earth? Students can only hope that Ms. Deak knows history better than she knows the Bible (which she has obviously not studied).
>
> But the real damage is that a number of young people (who have never read the Scriptures) will take courses (filled with prejudices) and emerge from them convinced that the Bible is full of superstitions and myths. How ironic that, in an age of information, ignorance such as Deak's is propagated in the name of higher education!

John Dewey's philosophy of education has been followed and has contributed to the *dumbing down* of public education. By not emphasizing fundamental facts that build up a student's knowledge in favor of social skills, young people are now being given inane assignments (from a highly creative and motivating teacher, no less) such as "picking up cereal with tongue depressors, an exercise that was supposed to simulate the way birds feed" (Sykes 5).

In *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey taught:

> I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, in all his training or growth.... I believe therefore that the true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's social activities, I believe, therefore, in the so-called expressive or constructive activities as the center of correlation (Blumenfeld 67).

One teacher, following in the footsteps of Dewey, decided that, in teaching science, the students did not need to know such traditional things as the nine planets and how far they are from the sun, since these are "facts that are not used." She wanted to develop in them higher-order thinking skills that come with a hands-on approach. She had the students (ready for this exciting science?) grow mold. Ah, but that is not all. Afterward, the students got to make a poster-board presentation of: How We Grew Mold. Sykes comments on this daring experiment.

> There was, the teacher says, "a lot of communication and a lot of observation. We really exercised the higher order thinking skills."

> What she meant, of course, was that they talked about mold, looked at mold, and compared mold. This is no more rote mold. Not simply information about mold. This is *higher order* mold (223-24).

The problem is that students are not prepared for either life or college. One high school student was pleased to be in the National Honor Society, but in her first semester of college she flunked both math and English (Stormer 12-13). Not only have curricula been dumbed down, so have grades. Students are passing courses with a knowledge far less than their grades indicate. The president of one college said: "We've turned colleges into high schools. After the babysitting of high school, we've asked colleges to give students the education they should have gotten" (11).

The purpose of this section has been to give a brief review of the content (or lack of it) being taught in many of today's public schools. With death education, sex education, drug education, values clarification (including asking questions which are not the business of the school) added to the curriculum and the textbooks being devoted to political correctness, who can fail to grasp the reasons that both schools and students are failing? Teachers need to be allowed to teach the basic subjects once again: history, science, mathematics, and English. A foreign language would also be of great value. Standards should be set for each subject and each grade level—and attained. If this course of action is not pursued, we are going to produce a population that cannot use critical thinking skills and is satisfied by easy answers, slogans, and sound bytes. Children do not lack the intellectual equipment to learn, think, and reason. They (in many areas) are being denied the development and training that they need.

True educators should not be intimidated by the NEA, even if that organization does think:

> Teachers who conform to the traditional institutional mode are out of place. They might feel fulfillment as a tap dancing instructor, or guard in maximum security prisons, or proprietors of reducing salons, or agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but they damage teaching children, and themselves by staying in the classroom (Carter 110).

Instead, educators should do what they know works and provide the education that children need.

TEN PRINCIPLES USED BY ALL LIBERALS

Whether it is politics, education, or spiritual matters, liberals are liberals, and they use the same techniques to effect change. Liberals do

want to change the status quo (unless they are in charge). Change can be accomplished in a short amount of time. Have brethren not said that it only takes one generation for apostasy to gain control of the church? The Special Committee to Investigate Tax Exempt Foundations, from the 83rd Congress, recognized over half a century ago: "Theoretically a society could be completely made over in something like 15 years, the time it takes to inculcate a new culture into a rising crop of youngsters" (Stormer viii). Dr. James Dobson made a similar assessment: "The pre-dominant value system of an entire culture can be overturned in one generation, or certainly in two, by those with unlimited access to children" (ix). Abraham Lincoln, however, said it first: "The philosophy of the classroom in this generation will be the philosophy of politics, government, and life in the next" (31).

In the book of Judges we see each generation after the faithful one falling into apostasy; men always arose to lead God's people astray. The same process has occurred in the church; we have called these misleaders "change agents" for the past fifteen years. Remarkably, they are called the same thing in education. Those who have actually planned to transform schools call themselves "change agents" and "are training an army of like-minded revolutionaries for our local schools" (Kjos 10).

Tim LaHaye cites a newsletter published by The Barbara Morris Report, titled "Change Agents: The Washington Report" (183-86). The detailed report provides considerable information on the federally-funded change agent programs and curricula. But these ideas are not new. In January of 1969 The NEA Journal, *Today's Education*, stated:

> For one thing, the basic role of the teacher will change noticeably. Ten years hence, it will be more accurate to term him a learning clinician. This title is intended to convey the idea that schools are becoming clinics, whose purpose is to provide individualized psychosocial treatment for the student, thus increasing his value both to him and society (Schlafly 293).

Why not provide this kind of treatment, since children enter school insane? Big Brother is ready to help change children into what the humanists think they should be. As Marilyn Ferguson wrote in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*: "You can only have a new society...if you change the education of the younger generation" (Kjos 13). Is there some reason that liberals have control of just about all of *our* Christian

Colleges and publish just about all the curricula available to our Bible classrooms? Hmm. Change agents are nothing, if not shrewd.

Most of the general public have heard discussions on the current rage in schools, Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Dr. Benjamin Bloom, the grandfather of this system, said: "The purpose of education is to change thoughts, feelings, and actions of students" (Stormer 135). Reforming the schools in the nation's capitol became a priority during the Clinton presidency. The 50-page plan included a concluding section called "How We Plan to Do it." Appearing on a letterhead with Hillary Clinton's name on it was this paragraph:

> Getting there will require more than new policies and different practices. It will require a change in the prevailing culture—the attitudes, values, norms and accepted ways of doing things.... The question is how to bring about this kind of cultural transformation on the scale we have in mind...and to organize in such a way that the growth of the new culture is geometric (Stormer 106).

Without question, change agents in the church have been likewise creating the desired effects. They do not have control of children several hours a week, as do the public schools, but they reach them through apostate colleges, youth events, and written materials. Following are the ten principles that change agents use.

1. **De-emphasize content and thinking skills**. Plenty of evidence has already been presented to establish that the schools have taken this approach. One Harvard professor, Charles Willie, went so far as to say "that the goal of education should not be 'excellence,' because that is a matter of personal choice and requires sacrifice. Instead schools should be concerned with 'adequacy' " (Sykes 65). Others operate by the philosophy that specific achievement is not nearly as important as children finding happiness "in tackling a job together" (212). In the politically correct school, "the key is not how well a student speaks a language, 'but how he *behaves* toward his fellow man of a different nationality, political faith, creed and race' " (213).

Liberals in the church also dumb down content and emphasize attitudes, such as love and tolerance. One can attend a liberal congregation for years and never hear a message that pertains to the plan of salvation, the one church, or true worship. They have dumbed down content by not preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Many are no longer able to reason correctly from the Scriptures. Some can no longer discern that John 16:12-13 is a promise to the apostles and that

the Holy Spirit is not guiding Christians *today* into all truth; brethren are currently so slack that they are taking positions that denominationalists were championing years ago. Getting along, for some, is far more important than truth.

2. **Lower standards**. In the schools some teachers are using "modified holistic scoring," since it does not take into account "grammar, mechanics, and usage to any real extent" (Sykes 96). Thus, students pass courses without being able to even write a complete sentence. Liberal churches have likewise lowered their standards. Many do not encourage their members to read the Bible daily or to memorize verses or passages of Scripture. In the name of *church growth* many have grown silent with respect to preaching against divorce, social drinking, immodesty, or any other sin that entices brethren. When was the last time anyone heard Max Lucado or Rubel Shelly speak out against gambling—or even homosexuality?

3. **Learn the fine art of "spin."** Of course, even *spin* is an example of the subject under discussion: We are actually talking about lying and deception. Some parents may recall being told that the school their children attend is above the national average in test results. This *fact* is based upon dumbed down achievement tests. "More than two thirds of American students—70 percent—were being told that they were 'above average' based on the test scores" (Sykes 145). Incredibly, not "a single one of the fifty states reported that its students scored below average" (145). Consider how well one college president was able to use what George Orwell called Doublespeak: "There is no quota system at U-M. We've never had quotas. We seek a student body composition that is reflective of the national composition" (Sowell 180). The difference is...what? One university's alumni were assured: "At Stanford, we don't have a double standard with regard to admissions." They did, however, take into consideration the race and ethnicity of minority students which "may give them an edge over other outstanding candidates" (180). One school superintendent acknowledged: "We have actually been given a course in how not to tell the truth. How many of you are administrators? You had the course in public relations where you learn to put the best spin on things" (Kjos 10).

Spin is not just putting a position in the best light; it involves lying and cover-up. Teachers routinely tell parents who are complaining about the content of an assignment or the effects of a course on their

child: "No one has ever complained about this before." Liberal elders in the church use the same tactics to make conscientious members feel as though they are the only ones out of sync with the rest of the congregation. They have also mastered the art of equivocation (not to mention prevarication). All who lie are of their father the devil (John 8:44).

4. **Maximize opportunities for success**. In other words, nothing should be left to chance. "Planned Parenthood...has instructed its followers on how to create the appearance of a demand for its programs: 'Pack the board room with your supporters' " (Sowell 254). This writer has seen *brethren* do the same thing in connection with the operation of a *Christian* school. Several packed the meeting with rehearsed speeches, making demands on a course of action. It is especially effective when others were unaware of any problem and had had no time to prepare an answer. Winning, in this instance, is not based on the merit of a position.

5. **Attack opponents**. Rudolph Flesch, who exposed the weaknesses of the Look-Say method of reading, was attacked by the establishment, who called him an "ignoramus, a propagandist...a crank, a menace to the cause of good education" (La Haye 34). "But they never answered his charges." Liberals regularly attack anyone who would deign to question them by calling opponents *Legalists*. They will not debate the substance and the content of their teachings; it is much easier to call names and belittle those who disagree.

6. **Defuse opponents**. Liberal educators know that some of the course matter they present (particularly on sex education) is likely to upset parents; they prepare for an adverse reaction. They will publish documents to help the "change agents," such as "How To Defuse Far Right Attacks On Schools," "Guidelines For Handling Extremists," and "The School Censorship Movement—Is Your School Prepared?" (Stormer 177). Just looking at the way these documents are titled is enough to show the haughty attitudes of these people and the slanderous way they view any opposition. One effective ploy is for the facilitator to tell parents when they offer unfavorable comments, "That's outside the scope of what we are dealing with today" (Stormer 194).

Liberals among us share the same basic attitudes towards those who hold to the truths of the Scriptures. We are to them "far right fundamentalists" and "extremists." This writer experienced firsthand the tech-

nique cited above. A man was conducting a workshop in which he advocated that members of the church promote *Christian* music because it is a better alternative than popular music which advocates casual sexual relationships, violence, etc. When he was challenged concerning this viewpoint, he quickly said, "This is not the time to discuss it." He brought up the topic and stated a false position, but suddenly it became inappropriate for anyone to discuss it. The elders of the congregation (who had invited him to speak) let him get away with it. (What he could not handle was the observation that we ought not replace one wrong practice with another.)

7. **Keep people happy**. Educationists are designing curricula to the student's specifications. The idea seems to be: "Whatever it takes to keep them happy, let's do it." Sykes points out that children need to discover the rest of the world, "a world that is not part of them and is not controlled by their wants and desires. This used to be called growing up" (52). Yet, in one course, children are warned against "denying your feelings" (41). The philosophy of many liberal elders is to do whatever it takes to keep the congregation happy. If the members want a youth minister to take their children to all sorts of social activities, then give them what they want. If they want 20-minute sermonettes, make sure that caliber of man is hired. Caving in to these demands will keep the members from the genuine spiritual growth that they need, and our young people will find other social (worldly) activities to be involved in when they grow older and will thus have no motivation to remain with the church. Biblical elders provide the flock with what it needs rather than what it wants.

8. **Deny absolutes**. Nearly fifty years ago John Keats, in *Schools Without Scholars*, wrote concerning the upshot of the new curricula being designed: "there are no absolutes, hence no objective standards in education. The mind cannot be disciplined by means of assigned tasks" (Sykes 13). Many liberals in the church have tried to undermine the absolute standards given in the Scriptures. They have redefined words in an effort to substantiate false doctrines. They have questioned inspiration—even the virgin birth of Christ ("Christmas at Matthew's House"). Some have insisted that *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 should be "young woman." Liberals continually challenge truth—not traditions—but truth. "Things cannot always be black or white." They seemed pretty clear to Israel when God gave them the Ten Commandments. Rubel Shelly once made a great case against instrumental music

in Centerville, Ohio, but then said, "For all I know, I may be mistaken." God revealed the Bible, in terms that His created beings could understand, spiritual truths. Many of these involve absolutes, which man has always been reluctant to acknowledge. We try to find loopholes, which is indicative of a wrong attitude. Far better is it to be obedient to God; we shall be happy here and even more blessed later.

9. **Use faulty logic**. With respect to defending the Values Clarification questions, it is said that they are only designed to help students think what kind of people they want to be. Sykes replies that the variety of questions used seems to imply that different choices all apparently are of equal weight, "like choices on a personality buffet line: Will you win the Nobel prize or experiment with pot? Subscribe to *Playboy* or change your religion? There is no suggestion that growing a beard or cheating on your wife might be decisions that carry rather different moral weights" (163). Liberals in the church tend to confuse people by trying to equate a serious matter with one of lesser importance. They have compiled lists of things that have divided brethren, such as the use of one cup in communion, restrooms inside or outside the building, padded pews, air conditioning, but they intersperse these minor problems with the use of instrumental music and fellowshipping denominations. Perhaps this is the liberals' way of using Values Clarification on us.

10. **Trivialize serious subjects**. Liberal educators admit to the possibility of bias in what they are saying and doing, but "this is like saying that Abraham Lincoln and Adolph Hitler were both imperfect human beings. It is true in itself, but more than a little misleading. That defenders of contemporary academic trends so frequently resort to misdirection and trivialization does more to establish the substantive bankruptcy of their positions than the worst critics could do" (Sowell 278). How often have we heard liberals in the church say, "God is not going to insist that we be 100% correct on doctrine on the Day of Judgment"? That attitude is to say that a person can be in error on the correct nature of worship, the organization of the church, the plan of salvation, and anything else of paramount importance because none of us is perfect. Thus, fundamental issues of the faith are trivialized.

Sykes comments: "Educationists are addicted to jargon precisely because it allows them to dress up the trivial and the obvious in the trappings of pseudo-profundity" (83). Liberals in the church likewise have a gift of talking in circles and answering questions without really

saying anything. Like educationists, they "can make even the most trivial subject sound impressive and the most commonplace observation immeasurably profound" (85).

CONCLUSION

As regards our nation's schools, we need to recognize the bad ones and do something about them. The Department of Education needs to be done away with, as Ronald Reagan had desired to do, and the NEA needs to be ignored by government officials—especially in light of their radical stances on so many key issues. Sykes recommends that we do away with tenure (285), which only encourages mediocre teaching, and we must have minimum competency standards for teachers. Public schools should return to our roots—to what made America great in the first place. They should not have to apologize for teaching moral values to students. In fact, they **will** teach values. When they stopped emphasizing moral principles, they began (whether they knew it or not) teaching immorality. In his Farewell Address, George Washington affirmed what all of society should have learned by now: "religion and morality are indispensable supports" of the American commonwealth (Hirsch 99).

The church needs to return to its roots—the New Testament. This was the thrust of the restoration concept. It is the only ideology that ever works. Forgetting the traditions and innovations of men, we must find our authority for what we teach and practice in the New Testament (Col. 3:17). Truth does exist. Nash explains the concept in a secular way:

> When person A says the world is flat and person B claims the world is round, it hardly follows that there is no objective truth about the matter. Similarly, when person A says that abortion on demand is morally acceptable and person B says it is wrong, it does not follow that the morality of the practice is purely a matter of taste (63).

Have we not made the same argument for years? If person A says that baptism is not for the remission of sins and person B (agreeing with the Bible) says that it is, it hardly follows that the issue is just a matter of opinion and that we cannot therefore know the truth. Mortimer Adler observed: "We may differ in our judgment about what is truth, but that does not affect the truth of the matter itself" (63). God has revealed all truth to us (John 16:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Although writing about the public schools, Nash correctly notes that religion suffers from some of the same problems as education:

> But I know lots of Christians who have not yet seen the importance of sound doctrine. It is important *that* we believe (spiritual concern); but it is also important *what* we believe (theological concern) (99).
>
> Some Christians don't know the Bible or Christian doctrine as well as they should; don't pay attention to what's going on in the world; don't read serious books; ignore the development of their minds (in spite of such biblical admonitions as Rom. 12:1-2). It is a tragedy that so many Christians possess such a weak understanding of their faith that they are unable to explain to others exactly *what* Christians are supposed to believe (100).

Amen!

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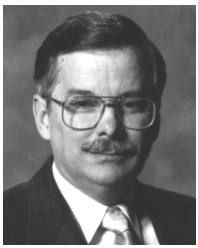
LIBERALISM IN THE MEDIA

Tom Wacaster



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INTRODUCTION

A careful study of liberalism is always a relevant topic. The ideological mindset commonly referred to as *liberalism* is as old as history itself. The devil tempted Eve with liberal thinking (Gen. 3:1-6). Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable to God because of liberal thinking (Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4). Nadab and Abihu substituted strange fire for that which was divinely authorized (Lev. 10:1) because of liberal thinking. King Saul thought to reject the divine pattern and in so doing was caught up in the sin of rebellion (1 Sam. 15:8-23), all because he was infected with a liberal mindset. The list goes on and on. Liberalism is a way of thinking. It is a mindset, a philosophy if you will. Any attempt to understand what constitutes liberalism presents some challenging problems. Ancient Greek Mythology tells of a sea-god by the name of Proteus, an assistant to Poseidon—the sea-god. Though very wise, and often sought for his guidance, Proteus displayed one exasperating quality. He could assume different forms when touched, an arm would become a leg, a hand would become a foot, and so on. The result of any effort to converse with Proteus would lead to discouragement, and even fright. Liberalism is like this mythological character. Any attempt to corner the liberal into giving an honest answer as to what he believes is not only frustrating, it is almost impossible. Those who have attempted to discuss religion, politics, morals, or any other subject for that matter, with someone of a liberal mindset, find it frustrating, to say the least. Some years back the following email was sent to this author.

It depicts how some Bible events might have been reported by the liberal media:

> On the Red Sea crossing: *"Wetlands trampled in labor strike; Pursuing environmentalists killed"*
>
> On David and Goliath: *"Hate crime kills beloved champion. Psychologist questions influence of rock."*
>
> On Elijah on Mt. Carmel: *"Fire sends religious right extremist into frenzy. 400 killed."*
>
> On the birth of Christ: *"Hotels full. Animals left homeless. Animal rights activists enraged by insensitive couple."*
>
> On feeding the 5,000: *"Preacher steals child's lunch. Disciples mystified over behavior."*
>
> On healing of the ten lepers: *"Local doctor's practice ruined. 'Faith Healer' causes bankruptcy."*
>
> On healing of the Gadarene demoniac: *"Madman's friend causes stampede. Local farmer's investment lost."*
>
> On raising Lazarus from the dead: *"Fundamentalist preacher raises a stink. Reading of will to be delayed."*

Liberalism, then, is a multi-faceted philosophy that threatens everything it touches. Religiously, liberalism is the antithesis of faithfulness. Frank Chesser defined liberalism thus:

> "No big deal." These three words sum up the spirit of liberalism. In spite of its intense denial, liberalism has no respect for the absolute, unmitigated authority of the Word of God. Liberalism is self on the throne. It is self with a propensity for its own way. It is emotions over mind, flesh over spirit, and man over God. Liberalism is man's refusing to "cease from his own doings, nor from his stubborn way" (Judg. 2:19). It is man's doing that which is "right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). It is man's moving in harmony with a pattern that he has "devised in his own heart" (1 Kings 12:33). Liberalism is man's feigning reverence for God and His Word while paying homage at the shrine of self-will (13).

Politically, liberalism seeks to trash governmental systems that provide freedom to its citizens and replace it with governmental control over the lives of its people. Leaders ignore the established laws, or at best seek to *redefine* those laws so as to accomplish their desired end. Morally, it is a philosophy that casts off any restraint or hint of an absolute standard of right and wrong. Theologically, the liberal exchanges the "truth of God for a lie," and worships and serves "the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25). This lecture addresses the role that media has played and

continues to play in promoting the liberal mindset. The media has become *the voice* of the liberal philosophy. The last fifty years have witnessed the capture of the media by atheists, agnostics, radicals, homosexuals, humanists, and haters of God. Almost every avenue of mass communication is now under the control of the ungodly element of society. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and even the fresh-on-the-scene internet are being used by those who hate God to promote their agenda, and they are being very successful in changing the thinking of America. Homosexuality is now considered a legitimate *lifestyle*, gambling an honorable means of monetary gain, imbibing of alcohol acceptable behavior, and abortion as the right of every woman who wishes to terminate a pregnancy. These changing attitudes toward moral and ethical issues are the direct result of the influence that the media has had upon the thinking of society.

There are some who are blind to the role the media has played and continues to play in shaping the thinking of society. Some throw up their hands in despair at the moral mess this country is in, but then quickly pick up the remote control and tune in to a sitcom on television that drags God's name through the mud or ridicules things that are high and holy. This lecture does not plow new ground. In the last twenty years there have been an abundance of books published that point out the danger of the liberal media. Other chapters in this book detail some of the characteristics of liberalism, so we will not take the time to define or describe the tenets of liberalism. We will approach this chapter by answering some questions that are either **being** asked, or **need** to be asked.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "MEDIA"?

Media in general has to do with communication. Media, as it is used in this study, would include television, movies, the internet, newspaper, and any other means that is used to communicate a message on a wide scale. While the ancients would carry their message by more outmoded means, the fact is that liberal thinking has long sought to influence those to whom their message is sent. In many cases the message itself has been slanted and/or changed to achieve the goal of the one sending the message. The only difference between now and more remote generations is that we have much quicker access to more material. The past fifty years there has been a steady takeover of the media by the liberal left in our society. From the entertainment industry, including

television and the movies, to the news media, with few exceptions, the message is one of immorality, biased politics, unethical behavior, and complete irreverence toward God, Christ, and the Bible.

HOW MUCH INFLUENCE DOES THE MEDIA EXERT ON SOCIETY?

The power of the media simply cannot be ignored. Jerry Murrell has pointed out that "the media are the major force that has reconstructed the post modern world in which we live" (98). Brother Murrell then quotes Andrew Fletcher: "If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation" (98). Obviously, then, whoever controls the means of communication will eventually influence people's thinking and actions. When we speak of the *media* the first thing that comes to mind is the television. This is because television has had a greater impact upon its audience than any other form of mass communication. People do not read the newspaper like they used to, movies have become overly expensive for many, but television continues to be made available through the public network and airways at no charge (cable service being the exception). What kind of influence is the media having on this generation? Is the media more of a *reflection* of social norms, or does it actually *mold* social norms. Consider these quotes:

> What I think must be said is that television is not just a great force in modern life, but that it virtually is modern life. What, one might ask, doesn't it do? It gives us—be we rich, poor, snowbound, bedridden or slow-witted—the time, the weather, the small news, big news, sport news, now in spoken headlines, now in pictured narrative, now at the very scene of the crime or the coronation itself. It plays, sings, whistles and dances for us, takes us to movies and theaters, concerts and operas, prize fights and ball games, ski jumps and tennis tournaments. It delivers babies, probes adolescents, psychoanalyzes adults. It dramatizes floods, fires, earthquakes, takes you to the top of an alp or the bottom of an ocean or whirling through space; lets you see a tiger killed or a tiger kill. It becomes a house of worship; guesses your age, your weight, your job, your secrets, guides you through prisons, orphan asylums, lunatic asylums; lets you see a Winston Churchill buried or a Lee Oswald shot. It teaches you French, rope dancing, bird calls and provides debates and seminars and symposiums, quizzes and contests and it tells you jokes, gags, wheezes, wisecracks, and jokes (Kroneberger 17).

> The power and influence of television, movies and radio can be illustrated in the amount of exposure they receive in the lives of young

> people. For example, from the age of six to eighteen, the average child spends 16,000 hours watching television, compared to only 12,000 hours in school. A typical child only spends more time sleeping than he does watching television. A 1982 Nielson Report on television viewing habits of American families reported that the average family keeps the TV on forty-nine and one-half hours a week. The average high school student will have watched the equivalent of ten pairs of forty-hour weeks. By his senior year He will have viewed approximately 150,000 violent episodes and 25,000 killings (Methvin 49).
>
> When television was the new kid on the block, Edward John Carnell, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, warned "that TV's limitless possibilities for good are never unmixed with the limitless possibilities for evil. Whatever is dynamic enough to merge as a dictator over the minds of men for good, will also bear along with it the power to mold the minds of men for evil." (Claiborne 59).
>
> If you can write a nation's stories, you needn't worry about who makes its laws. Today, television tells most of the stories to most of the people most of the time. Television is the most pervasive medium we have and most people consider what they see on television as the norm, as the standard (Miller 62).

When television made its debut, there were those who recognized the power and influence it would have upon society and thus sought to maintain strict control over what was allowed to be aired. As our country moved through the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the good intentions of some of the original programmers and owners of network television were cast aside for a more liberal way of thinking:

> In 1927 the Radio Act stated that the public owns the airwaves. In 1934 the Federal Communications Commission was established to set guidelines and standards for radio and any future technologies. However, the situation that we face today is the fact that the networks (NBC, ABC and CBS) and the cable systems are not regulated by the FCC. In 1922 major movie studios formed the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in order to set up guidelines of self-censorship. In 1934 this organization drew up a production code. Here are some of the guidelines from that production code: "No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith... Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationships are the accepted or common thing... The sympathy of the audience shall never be given to the side of crime, wrongdoings, evil or sin... Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail... Complete nudity is never permitted." This code was maintained until 1966 when Jack Valenti became president of the Motion Picture Association of America (new name for MPPDA). He issued a "Code of Self-Regulation" on September 20,

> 1966, establishing a movie rating system using, G, PG, R and X to indicate the content of each movie. From that time on, movies were no longer censored because of content. Today we know how debased the movies and TV programs have become. The morality of television and movies has reached a low ebb (Swetmon 299).

There is little doubt, then, that the media is a formidable foe to the cause of Christ and a strong ally to those who are liberal in their thinking.

IS IT TRUE THAT TELEVISION IS JUST ENTERTAINMENT?

Television is more than just entertainment. It communicates a message, and for the most part, it communicates a message that seeks to set forth the agenda of those who design, produce, and broadcast what you see on television. What is said of the television is just as true of the movie industry. Take a stroll down the isle of your local Blockbuster or Hastings video store and look at the titles, subject matter, and even the packaging jackets of the DVDs and video tapes in those stores. Some years ago a study of the media *elites* of America revealed some shocking facts about the attitudes and beliefs of those who provide television programming, movies, and even the local news. By a great majority, this media *elite* are godless individuals. Eighty-four percent of them reject state regulation of sexual practices, ninety percent of them agreed that a woman should have the right to decide if she wants to kill her unborn child, seventy-five percent disagreed that homosexuality is wrong, eighty-five percent supported the right of homosexuals to teach in schools, fifty-four percent did not consider adultery wrong, and only fifteen percent strongly agreed that extramarital affairs are immoral (Lichter and Rothman 48). One author correctly observed:

> You cannot separate news, programming, or TV information from the philosophy of the person giving the information, whether related to abortion, homosexuality, pornography, criminal rights, welfare rights, the economy, or national defense. The reporter's belief or unbelief in God and His moral absolutes will influence what he presents and the way he presents it (LaHaye 48).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the larger segment of the media caters to liberal and immoral thinking. The agenda of the liberal mindset is the agenda of the media in this new generation.

WHAT INFLUENCE HAS HUMANISM HAD ON THE MEDIA?

The media is largely dominated by humanism. Kevin Perrotta writes on this very point:

> Television, like the other media, views the world without Christian coordinates. That media-world of fact and fiction considers right and wrong in humanistic terms, never in terms of God's authority to set standards and to renew and punish. It defines freedom in material and political terms, rather than as liberty from the dominion of sin and evil. It insists on knowing only the natural world and on ignoring the supernatural. In the television world divine providence and faith in God are simply aspects of some people's religion, rather than fundamental dynamics of human life. On television truth is absolute only for those who think it so, but belief in human progress, individualism and democratic political methods are hidden absolutes.... In point of fact, television rarely portrays genuine Christianity at all, merely its own smug, snickering and wildly erroneous stereotypes (qtd. in Swetmon 300).

We sometimes hear preachers speak of an individual's "world view." Basically, human behavior is affected by the view that individual holds with regard to life. The fundamental questions: "Where did I come from?"; "Why am I here?"; and "Where am I going?" and how one answers those questions will have a direct bearing upon how that individual lives, acts, and makes moral and ethical decisions. The media in general, and Hollywood in particular, have fed from the trough of humanism for more than fifty years and their *world view* is reflected in their individual behavior and in the message they communicate. Billingsly concluded:

> While there are notable exceptions, the dominant Hollywood worldview is, politically, that of McGovernite liberal-leftism, with occasional forays into what the British call the "loony left." This view sees the United States as a bully and exploiter, at home and abroad. It advocates isolationism, appeasement, and unilateral disarmament, and becomes positively hysterical whenever the United States acts, such as in the case of Grenada. Its central certainty is that the Unites States is bad, an outlook entirely negative and destructive.... Socially, the views are those of the adversarial culture, particularly indulgent toward the homosexual and feminist lobbies. The Neanderthal idea that violent criminals are victims of society also finds favor in these regions. It is from a preponderant, ever-encroaching government that all things flow. The religious outlook is a kind of secular fundamentalism, or in some cases an inclination toward Eastern mysticism and New Age nostrums. This is coupled with a marked hostility to the

> Judaic-Christian tradition in general and any sort of conservative Christianity in particular. If one may judge by recent presidential elections, these are not the views of the majority of Americans. But this is the *Weltanshauung* that informs the commercial cinema, especially its message movies (129-130).

There is more than abundant evidence to support the claim that most of Hollywood, the major television networks, the movie industry, and in most cases even the news media, leans liberal. Consequently, the message of the media is that there are no moral absolutes, man is his own savior, and "public virtue is a kind of ghost town into which anyone can move and declare himself sheriff" (Billingsly 119).

WHAT ABOUT THE MEDIA AND REASON?

The media exalts human reason above divine revelation. Right here we need to define what we mean by *reason*. Perhaps the better word would be *rationalization*. The liberal rejects anything that claims to be truth if that so-called truth conflicts with his *rationalization*. James Bales characterized this particular facet of liberalism when he noted:

> The words *rational* and *rationalization* are related to one another in that rationalization is an effort to use reason to make the unreasonable appear to be reasonable, the unjustifiable justified, and the unacceptable acceptable (11).

We experience this particular aspect of liberalism when attempting to discuss issues of a religious nature with our neighbors only to hear the oft-repeated phrase, "Well, I don't see anything wrong with it." Sometimes our friends are completely irrational when it comes to reasoning properly from the Scriptures. Or, as one individual put it: "If stupidity in religion were painful, many religious leaders would need morphine constantly to help them bear the excruciating, unrelenting pain." When was the last time you saw anything on television, in the newspaper, the movies, or magazines that warned of the danger of human rationalization? The Bible clearly warns of the danger of feelings and intuition. "O Jehovah, 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 which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12; 16:25). The media would have us to believe that man is his own god, capable of rising to new heights of achievement and perfection.

DOES THE MEDIA PROMOTE ETHICAL PURITY?

The producers and promoters of the entertainment industry began their journey into the abyss of impurity and immorality shortly after they jettisoned the Hayes Code in 1966. Like their ancient forefathers, they cry out: "Let us break their [God's] bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us" (Psa. 2:3). The impact of this facet of liberalism can be seen in religion, morality, politics, and social norms. The *hippies* culture sought freedom from the *establishment* and ushered in the sexual revolution in the early 1960s. Sexual freedom, freedom to destroy an unwanted pregnancy, freedom to live the homosexual life-style, freedom to lie, cheat, kill, et al., lie at the very roots of liberalism. In the realm of religion we have witnessed a virtual explosion of independent religious groups that cater to the whims and wishes of its parishioners. The media, and specifically the television and movie industry, has promoted and fostered an unholy and unethical agenda. Frank Capra gives us an assessment of Hollywood's transition into this immoral abyss:

> The winds of change blew through the dream factories of make-believe, tore at its crinoline tatters.... The Hedonists, the homosexuals, the hemophilic bleeding hearts, the God-haters, the quick-buck artists, who substituted shock for talent, all cried: "Shake 'em! Rattle 'em! God is dead. Love, live, Pleasure! Nudity? Yea! Wife-swapping? Yea! Liberate the world from prudery. Emancipate our films from morality (qtd. in Summers 374).

In 2000, Joe Lieberman, Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate, said: "Television executives too often portray sex as just a joke or as any casual form of recreational behavior without consequences" (qtd. in Garner).

WHAT ABOUT THE MEDIA AND HISTORY?

Liberalism suggests that historical criticism is necessary to determine the legitimacy of our historical legacy. While there is great value in an examination of literature and history, the liberal goes beyond an honest and open investigation of history and seeks to actually **rewrite** it. In the realm of religion, the authenticity and reliability of the Bible are attacked with bias. Higher criticism has chopped away at the Bible till there is nothing left upon which to *hang our hat*, as it were. Socially, we are witnessing a full scale attack by the liberal left on basic fundamentals established by the forefathers of this country. Every attempt is being made to depict our forefathers as completely secular,

void of any religion and/or moral uprightness. In an effort to influence societal norms, the media has undertaken a campaign to rewrite history, or at best to ignore history. It is not that the producers of media programming do not have access to historical documents; it is not that history is unavailable for study. It is, rather, that the media has simply chosen to report those things that promote its agenda. Take just a couple of examples; George Grant wrote:

> Louis Jennings was a pioneer in American journalism. The editor of the **New York Times** during the last decade of the nineteenth century, he helped to build the reputation of that paper, ultimately making it the premier daily in the entire nation. He was also a committed Christian and a stalwart in the struggle for life. In 1870, Jennings began a crusade against abortion on the editorial pages of his paper that finally led to the criminalization of the procedure in every state in the Union. He understood the power of the printed page and used it expertly. He knew only too well that it would be necessary to provoke a public outrage over the issue, not simply a stiffening of legislation that might go unenforced. It was his leadership, and the national visibility of his paper that ultimately swayed both the legal and the medical establishments to publicly denounce abortion as murder (qtd. in Summers 367).

Where is the outcry today on the part of the media regarding the health dangers, not to mention the moral inequity of abortion? A second example can be seen in the complete lack of disclosure as to the benefits of Prohibition. When history is studied without any agenda to prove or uphold, it is readily seen that Prohibition of the sale of alcohol was successful in curtailing the evils associated with it. The media no longer reports the positive outcome of the era of Prohibition but paints a picture of crime, bootlegging, and underground activities as a result of the **laws** opposing alcohol—rather than the evils associated with the use of alcohol. Indeed

> the news media is a willing accomplice in forgetting and de-emphasizing our past. They have not shown themselves eager to put their resources to use for the public good. In fact, they do not uphold morality and decency, nor do they even favor getting the truth of any important matter into the people's hands, which could be their most valuable asset (Summers 371).

WHAT DOES THE MEDIA THINK ABOUT RELIGION?

The Hays Production Code served as the *operating philosophy* in Hollywood from 1922-1966. This code stated, "No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith" and that religious workers

"should not be used as comic characters or villains." Jerry Murrell wrote in the 1999 Bellview Lectures on *Worldliness*:

> Maybe even more dangerous to the cause is the spin that the entertainment division puts on people of faith. Most "Christians" on network television are pictured as hypocrites. The Parents Television Council has found that 78.9% of the portrayals of the "Christian laity" is negative. For example, on a January 4 *Profiler* (NBC) we learn that a murder suspect went bad because he was "abused by very traditional religious parents." On a May 20 installment of a mini-series, *True Women* (CBS), a woman comments that "religious slave-holders were the cruelest." On a November 4 *Soul Man* (ABC) a "bishop" worries that a "minister" will "alienate the entire congregation, particularly the fornicators, and they're some of our biggest contributors" (104-105).

The television industry has become so lop-sided in its presentation of religion that Randal Terry concluded: "You don't have to be a prophet to recognize that much of television—both entertainment and 'news shows'—has become a veritable pipeline of anti-Christian sleaze" (87). When the larger percentage of the media elite seldom attend church, approve of homosexuality, believe adultery is acceptable, and that abortion is a legitimate means of birth control, why are we so surprised that ethics and responsible moral behavior are virtually non-existent in the media?

Liberalism thinks that ethics are separate and independent from any authority of religion and theology. Consequently, religion, and leaders of religious groups, are depicted in an unfavorable light. In times past, Hollywood produced rather decent (albeit inaccurate) portrayals of biblical stories and/or themes. *The Ten Commandments, King of Kings, Samson and Delilah, Ben Hur, The Robe,* and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, to name but a few. Even more recently, Hollywood produced a movie that paid some semblance of respect for religion in the life of the not-too-distant past in *Places in the Heart.* For the most part, Hollywood (as well as other avenues of the media) tend to denigrate religion and cast it in a rather poor if not foolish light. In *Norma Rae*, the minister comes across as unintelligent and somewhat *seedy*. The missionary lady in *Murder On The Orient Express*, starring Ingrid Bergman, is drab, unlike the other characters in the movie. Billingsly pointed out that "a prevailing attitude in Hollywood is that the Christian religion is roughly equivalent to the Ku Klux Klan or American Nazi Party" (141). Other productions from Hollywood which poked fun at, or ridiculed religion or religious leaders, includes such titles as *Elmer*

Gantry and *Inherit the Wind*. Billingsly emphasized the contrast between the entertainment industry of years gone by and that of today:

> In the days of the Code, studio bosses deleted the phrase "rattling a tambourine" from a script because they thought it might offend the Salvation Army. [Now] the portrayal of religion in contemporary films runs from ignorance to ridicule to outright hostility (143).

This particular aspect of liberalism has led to an ever increasing rejection of religion. The right or wrong of an action is no longer measured by what the Bible teaches, but all such decisions in the realm of moral and ethical actions are measured by what is popular or how one might feel at the moment.

WHAT ABOUT THE MEDIA AND OBJECTIVITY?

On a number of occasions we have experienced some of our own so-called *brethren* bowing before this facet of liberal thinking. Liberals want to tolerate instrumental music, unholy living, unauthorized innovations of every shade and color. To their way of thinking these things are, as brother Chesser aptly put it, "no big deal" in the mind of the liberal. The only ones the liberal will not tolerate are those who refuse to tolerate sin.

> Narrowing the range of "acceptable" thought and expression, however, is promoted by the news media. If one opposes homosexuality, for example, he is classified with racists and bigots and denounced in both the news and entertainment media. Has anyone ever noticed that those paragons of objectivity, the national news anchors, use voice inflections and facial expressions to indicate their attitudes about some of the stories? And they have absolute power to select or ignore any newsworthy event, which explains the popularity of cable news and talk radio, both of whom will cover that the "mainstream" media deems unworthy (Summers 364).

Few of the media sources demonstrate true objectivity in the facts as well as the way they report the news. Robert Bazell of NBC stated in 1986, "Objectivity is a fallacy... There are different opinions, but you don't have to give them equal weight" (Terry 92). Another was honest enough to state: "There is no such thing as objectivity. Any reporter who tells you he's objective is lying to you" (Olasky 59). A perfect illustration of this point is seen in NBC's feature movie "Roe vs. Wade," which aired May 15, 1989. First, there was the timing of the movie. It aired while the Supreme Court was considering a case that easily could have overturned the Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973. The debate about abortion had reached a pitch surpassing that of the late 60s

and early 70s. It was then that NBC decided to film and promote this drama. Thomas Sowell wrote:

> Anyone who believes the airing of this film at a time the Supreme Court is considering a case which could limit or overturn abortion on demand is pure coincidental is a potential customer for a bridge in Brooklyn (qtd. in Terry 93).

Second, the move denigrates adoption as a viable option to abortion. Third, the two women in the film, Jane Roe and Sarah Weddington, the feminist attorney, are portrayed as heroines. Everything about their character evokes sympathy and support from the viewing audience.

Another case in point: In 1990 a "Rally for Life" was conducted in Washington D.C. Somewhere between 300,000 to 500,000 men and women came to the nation's capital to show their support for life. CNN gave the rally none of the extensive coverage it gave to the pro-abortion rally conducted just a few days earlier.

What we are witnessing in media coverage is more *propaganda* than it is the reporting of news. Consequently:

> with the news media's reluctance to report facts, people's perceptions of things, for all practical purposes, becomes reality. It is not necessary to squelch all opposing ideas, so long as exposure to them is kept to a minimum. If error is repeated with great frequency and truth seldom mentioned, which one will most people likely become exposed to and therefore believe? (Summers 370).

CONCLUSION

A nation cannot long endure when it drinks from poisoned water. While there are signs of the pendulum swinging back to the right, for the most part the liberal media still controls the message that is communicated via television, movies, and newspapers. This author was once asked, "How long is God going to wait before He judges this nation?" Dear reader, it is this author's humble opinion that God is **already** judging this nation. The degradation of our morals, coupled with the searing of our national conscience is the beginning of Divine judgment:

> Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

> Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due (Rom. 1:22-27).

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